Desistance in men who have previously committed sexual offences: An

exploration of the early processes

Rebecca Jane Milner

PhD

University of York

Psychology

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to explore the early stage of desistance in men who have previously committed sexual offences with a view to understanding the process further, and to make recommendations regarding assessment and treatment. Secondly, to explore the role of the Circles of Support and Accountability project (an intervention aiming to reduce sexual offending), in the desistance process.

The research used a prospective, longitudinal design with a mixed methods approach. Pre and post narratives/interviews about the experience of desistance and psychometrics relating to the proposed protective factors for desistance were collected from 39 previously convicted sexual offenders living in the community and engaging in a Circle. Eighteen sexual offenders on probation licence in the community formed a comparison group, and completed the same tasks approximately 12 months apart. The qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis (Nvivo 10) and linguistic word analysis (Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count).

Bringing together the results of all of the methodologies, a new, continuum-based model of early desistance for sexual offenders was proposed. This was tested using two methods of cluster analysis and a correlational analysis, and found initial support for the model. Possible protective factors and obstacles for desistance from sexual offending were suggested. It was also proposed that optimum levels of certain factors, previously described as obstacles to desistance (such as shame and stigma), may in fact act as maintenance factors.

A key direction for further research is to test the predictive value of the variables within the model for longer-term desistance. This research makes an important contribution to the understanding of the early process of desistance in sexual offenders and also offers practical recommendations regarding implementing the findings of the model during assessment and treatment.

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Declaration

This thesis comprises the candidate's own original work and has not been submitted previously or simultaneously to this or any other University for a degree. All experiments were designed and conducted by the candidate under the supervision of Professor Joanna Clarke. Selected aspects of the research described in this thesis have been presented elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Forthcoming presentations

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Chapter One Literature Review

Whilst the field of research into desistance in general and violent offending has grown, much less is understood about desistance in men who have committed sexual offences. Studies tend to show that the reoffending rates for sexual offenders are low (e.g., Hanson, Harris, Helmus, & Thornton, 2014), indeed lower than for other types of offending, but no one can debate the seriousness of a sexual re offence in terms of the harm to others alone. As such, it is important to try and understand desistance in sexual offenders with a view to facilitating, or even accelerating, it during treatment and/or community supervision.

This chapter will review the literature around the process of desistance. Key theories proposed to explain desistance and the internal (psychological) and external factors that may promote desistance in offenders will be included. It will go on to present the key studies that have been carried out to date on desistance in sexual offenders and highlight the current debate in the literature. Chapter Two will introduce Circles of Support and Accountability (Circles) - a community-based project aimed at reducing recidivism in sexual offenders, and consider the role of Circles in the desistance process. Gaps in the literature regarding sexual offenders and desistance will be highlighted, and research questions will be formulated and presented at the end of Chapter Two.

1.1. Definitions and Measurement

Early work by criminologists tended to regard desistance from crime as an event, the point at which an individual stops offending. For example, Shover (1996) postulated (rather vaguely) that "desistance is the voluntary termination of serious criminal participation" (p. 121). Laub and Sampson (2001) draw a distinction between the termination of offending and desistance, which they define as "the causal process that supports the termination of offending" (p. 2). The idea that desistance is a process has been hailed by more recent theorists, for example Maruna (2001), who argues that desistance should be seen as a process of maintaining an offence-free lifestyle, rather than the termination of offending.

Bushway, Piquero, Broidy, Cauffmann, and Mazerolle (2001) suggest that desistance "is the process of reduction in the rate of offending … from a non zero

level to a stable rate empirically indistinguishable from zero" (p. 500). If desistance is defined as the termination of offending, then the question is raised about when the measurement should begin: after the last offence, or after an offence-free period? Questions are also raised about how many years of non-offending are needed to establish desistance (Bushway et al., 2001). Baskin and Sommers (1998) propose that a 2-year crime-free gap is required, but others have argued against this e.g., Farrington (2007), who states that, even after a 10-year period, it cannot be said with certainty that offending has stopped. Researchers have also asked if desistance is relevant after one offence (Laub & Sampson, 2001) or whether a previous pattern of offending is required.

If desistance is defined as an event, the termination of offending, then desistance by definition is the absence of offending. It is difficult to measure the absence of an event. It is noted by Maruna (2001) that "desistance…. is an unusual dependent variable…. because it is not an event that happens, but the sustained *absence of a certain* type of event" (p. 17). Questions are also raised about when the measurement should stop; for example, whether monitoring should continue until the incapacitation or death of an offender (Farrington & Wikstrom, 1994). Another issue is when there is a decrease in the severity of the crime of an offender, and whether such a reduction from violent offences to lesser offending should constitute desistance. As desistance is now typically viewed and defined as a process, this provokes another difficult question; how do you measure a process?

In summary, it is largely now accepted (e.g., Harris, 2005) that desistance is a process but there is no general consensus about where the process begins, and where it ends, or indeed how it should be measured. It is helpful to consider Maruna's definition of desistance here, which incorporates the notion of primary and secondary desistance. Primary, or early, desistance is the absence of offending and is followed by secondary desistance, which is indicated by the presence of a new, non-offending and reformed identity (Maruna, LeBel, Naples, & Mitchell, 2009). This thesis will use this as a working definition.

1.2. Theories of desistance in the general offending pe.gopulation

Three main groups of theories will be discussed here; natural desistance (aging), criminological theories (informal social control) and psychological theories (cognitive transformation). This will be followed by a description of the recent testing of these theories and how they may apply to sexual offenders. Finally, a theory of desistance for sexual offenders will be presented.

1.2.1. Natural desistance

Aging out of crime has been widely studied across many populations, countries and time periods (Laws & Ward, 2011), and is generally acknowledged as the most robust variable to explain the cessation of offending (e.g., Glueck & Glueck, 1950, 1968; Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1983; Moffit, 1993). Research evidence suggests that, as age increases, recidivism decreases (Farrington, 1986); however, the picture for sexual offenders is more complicated. Although there is evidence that recidivism also decreases with age for men who have sexually offended (Thornton, 2006), there is considerable evidence that some men continue committing sexual offences into old age (Nicholaichuk, Olver, Gu, & Wong, 2014) and the age crime curve is certainly less dramatic. Hence, other factors need to be considered in explaining desistance for this group.

1.2.2. Criminological theories of desistance

Life Course Theory of Age-Graded Social Control (Sampson & Laub, 1993, 2003).

It could be argued that desistance as a theoretical concept began to emerge from the work of Sampson and Laub (1993), who reanalysed data from the Glueck studies (Glueck & Glueck, 1950, 1968) of 1,000 men in Boston, Massachusetts, and proposed the life course theory of age-graded informal social control. Sampson and Laub proposed that crime is more likely to occur when an individual's bond to society (work, family, education) is weak and that strong adult social bonds can modify pathways to crime.

In 2003, Sampson and Laub conducted a 35-year follow up on the Glueck men as they reached the age of 70, conducting interviews with a subsample of 52 men. They concluded that desistance is more than a process of aging out of crime, and

instead proposed that an individual turns away from crime as a *result* of various situational factors (or social controls). Sampson and Laub identify family, work and military service as key events that interact with human agency, choice and motivation to provide the context for the desistance process. They describe how factors such as the military or marriage provide an opportunity for an individual to "knife-off" (p. 149) from their environment, including delinquent peers. They also highlight that individuals are active participants in the desistance process and that desisters engage in "transformative action" (p. 50), whereby they develop a matured identity as a "family man, hard worker, good provider" (p. 50) and therefore a new sense of self that is incompatible with committing crime.

The major strength of their research is the long-term evaluation study following offenders, plus controls, for over 50 years (teenagers until age 70). However the research fails to offer any findings regarding non-White, non-male, non-American offenders, or specific types of crime. Despite this, the resulting theory has been widely generalised. One major critique has been the issue of self-selection bias in marriage and other key events (Gottredson & Hirschi, 1990). This has raised questions about whether there is a difference between those who self-select (opt in) to marriage and jobs and those who do not, and whether this explains the findings. Sampson and Laub responded to this by providing statistical evidence and a quantitative model of within-individual change, whereby stable aspects such as age are held constant, allowing for the impact of a life event to be manipulated. They found that, when in a marriage, for example, the likelihood of crime was lower than when not in a marriage, and the results held true across military service and employment. They conclude that such life events are likely to provide turning points for desistance.

The value of the social bonds key to the theory may well have changed since the study began in the 1930's. For example, the importance of military service, marriage and family is different today from what it was 80 years ago and the world of employment, job prospects and education has changed considerably. Kazemian (2007) recommends a reconsideration of the measuring of social bonds based on contemporary society's norms and values.

1.2.2.1. *Developmental Life Course Theory (Farrington, 2007).*

The Cambridge study on Delinquent Development (Farrington, 1973,1991,1995) is a prospective longitudinal study of 411 males living in an inner-city area of London, UK, first recruited in 1961 at the age of 8. This theory considers the influence of childhood risk factors, protective factors, and life events on development, and attempts to explain how juvenile delinquency starts and whether future criminal behaviour can be predicted. He reports the most important (childhood) risk factors to be family criminality, risk taking, low school attainment, poverty and poor parenting (Farrington, 2007).

Farrington's focus on establishing the risk factors for anti social behaviour led him to propose the Integrated Cognitive Antisocial Potential (ICAP) Theory (2005). Anti social potential (AP) - the potential to commit anti social acts - stems from an accumulation of long-term risk factors and an absence of protective factors. Potential transformation to anti social behaviour depends on the individual's level of AP and interaction with the social environment, particularly around opportunities and victims. The factors that determine behaviour in an actual situation are short-term risk factors (e.g., boredom or male delinquent peers). Desistance is explained by a decrease in anti social potential via life events, such as getting married, having a job or moving house away from criminal peers (Farrington, 2005a).

The strengths of Farrington's work are again the extent of the follow up (more than forty years) and validation of the risk factors for delinquency in studies across geographical areas the Pittsburgh Youth study (Farrington & Loeber, 1999) and in Stockholm (Farrington & Wikstrom, 1994), allowing for some generalisability. Also, recommendations can be made for policy around early interventions to treat the risk factors. The main critique of this risk factor approach is that it fails to explain why some individuals offend while others do not, even when they are subject to the same accumulation of risk factors. Secondly, as with much research into risk factors, causality cannot actually be concretely implied. Causal risk factors are complicated to measure and many other variables would need to be excluded in order to be able to state categorically that a certain risk factor leads directly to recidivism (Mann, Hanson, & Thornton, 2010).

Criminological theories present years of detailed research looking at the external, social factors that may be accountable for onset, development and desistance from crime. However, several studies (e.g., Kemshall, Marsland, Boeck, & Dunkerton, 2006) have shown that those involved in crime have higher levels of social disadvantage and are less likely to build social capital yet still desist from crime. This suggests that there are other internal, psychological factors influencing desistance and it is this area that is covered by the next group of theories.

1.2.3. Psychological theories of desistance

This group of theories focuses on the idea that those who desist make changes to their personal identity, or internal narrative, and develop a new identity that no longer fits with offending. These theories have typically been examined through phenomenological research, raising issues in terms of subjectivity and the ability to replicate the research. However, this type of research offers rich, qualitative data that have assisted in tapping into the underlying processes and mechanisms, and which is unattainable with quantitative based studies.

1.2.3.1. The Liverpool Desistance Study (Maruna, 2001)

Maruna (2001) was interested in the internal stories, or scripts, of offenders and the cognitive transformations that occurred as they either chose to continue or turn away from crime. His approach devalues the importance of the "turning point" (p. 301) preferred by Sampson and Laub (1993), arguing that everyone experiences such events and it is the meaning and importance of them that is key to understanding desistance from crime. The Liverpool Desistance Study (LDS) used a narrative approach systematically to compare two groups of offenders - one a group of 30 (self reported) desisting ex-offenders and the other a matched group of 20 offenders still actively offending. Maruna's research attempted to capture the stories of men (and women, who compromised 20% of sample) who were currently attempting to "make good" (p. 85), *as it happened.* The groups were matched on sociological factors associated with the likelihood of desisting, including age, gender, type/number of offences, race, parents' occupation and education (Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985; Glaser, 1964; Moffitt, 1993). Maruna utilised the Life Story interview (McAdams, 1983) to obtain a narrative, his goal being to construct a "single composite portrait of the

desisting self" (Maruna 2001, p. 51), (a desister), and a similar description of the offending self (persister).

The narratives were analysed using the constant comparative method of analytic induction; a grounded theory technique which searches for similarities and differences between cases, and in doing so builds a theory that is close to the data (Glaser, 2008). In this research, each case was compared to the developing model of "desister" and "persister" (p. 51) that emerged from the data, with each case adding to the model until saturation point was reached. Content analysis was also performed on sections of the narrative to code themes such as agency. This was done using established content dictionaries (e.g., McAdams, 1992) and aimed to explore the differences between the persisters and desisters, as well as the aspects that they shared.

Maruna described the narrative of the persisters as a *condemnation* script. Here, the offender sees their life script as pre ordained, that they have no choice but to offend, and they lack self efficacy and hope. The desisting group had a *redemption* script. This narrative allows the offender to "rewrite a shameful past into a necessary prelude to a productive and worthy life" (Maruna, 2001, p. 87). He describes this cognitive process, or transformation, as "making good" (p. 85). Maruna postulated that the scripts of desisters differ from that of persisters in three key ways (p. 88).

1) an establishment of the core beliefs that characterise the person's "true self".
2) an optimistic perception or personal control over one's destiny
3) the desire to be productive and give something back to the next generation.

The clear strength of Maruna's work is the rich and prospective data. It highlighted the cognitive processes undertaken by desisters, as they happened, adding to the psychological understating of the concept in a way that previous models, focussing on external events, were unable to do.

As acknowledged by Maruna, finding a truly desisting sample was a difficult task, and although the sample was recommended by external sources, (e.g., probation officers), as well as self report, there is no way of knowing if they were actually desisting. It should be noted that this will be true of any desistance work and it is

difficult to find a solution to this. It is arguably the differences between these two proposed groups that potentially hold the most value. Maruna used pre-established scoring templates constructed by McAdams (1992) and others to quantify these differences. Whilst this provided clear categories to compare between the sample groups, it was perhaps limiting in that it ruled out the possibility of unearthing new and valuable themes. In using content analysis to carry out a quantitative comparison, Maruna's work tried to ameliorate some of the problems associated with subjective, qualitative type research.

Maruna's critique of Sampson and Laub's model was that it failed to explain *why* some individuals turn away from crime following events such as marriage while others do not. In a similar vein, it is not entirely clear *why* members of the LDS sample desisted, i.e. why some have the capacity to redeem and some do not. In this early work, Maruna does not describe the redemption script as being linked to any external changes. Later research looks at the interaction between the two factors, and additionally which may come first (LeBel, Burnett, Maruna, & Bushway (2008).

1.2.3.2. Theory of Cognitive Transformation (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002).

Giordano et al. (2002) developed a symbolic-interactionist perspective on desistance. This emphasises the role of the individual in the process, rather than the control that social bonds (marriage, stable job) create as proposed by Sampson and Laub (1990). Giordano et al. believe that environmental factors provide "hooks for change" (p. 992). However, it is the individual's role in creating and selecting these opportunities that is key, rather than the opportunities merely being a constraining influence. In brief, Giordano et al. highlight four types of cognitive transformations;

1) a shift in the individual's readiness to change
2) a positive attitude to exposure to a hook for change and a recognition that the attitude is incompatible with continued criminal behaviour
3) creation of a non offending identity
4) transformation in the way the individual sees criminal behaviour - no longer positive or relevant.

Giordano et al. used a 13-year follow-up of 210 delinquent boys and girls from a state institution in Ohio to test the theory. In addition to the re-offence rate and related demographic variables, they also collected open-ended life history narratives from 97 women and 83 men to further the cognitive transformation hypotheses. It was concluded, based on the narratives, that those with an advantaged set of circumstances require less cognitive transformation. There was also evidence of the four hooks to change, described by the theory. Two key hooks for change for men in particular were experience with formal organisational settings (e.g., prison treatment programmes), and intimate relationships. The authors called for further research to investigate the gender differences found.

From a critical perspective, the study required the interviewees to think retrospectively and comment on how they had changed. Therefore, the cognitive transformations recorded had the benefit of hindsight and were, according to the model, viewed as a transformed self. Future research could attempt to take a prospective approach to cognitive transformation in order to provide the most valid results/model.

In later work (Giordano, Longmire, Schroeder, & Seffrin, 2008; Giordano, 2016), Giordano points out the limits of the original linear model that denotes that individuals go through a series of steps to reach desistance. As she has continued to follow up and analyse the data, Giordano has refined the model to one that is cyclical. In particular, the model now postulates that the original fourth step of revising attitudes about crime is key throughout the change.

In summary, the later psychological and criminological models, although initially stemming from different perspectives, all postulate that desistance is an interaction between external influences/controls and internal factors, including the agency of the individual and the process of cognitive transformation. The research outlined in the next section focuses on how these factors may interact.

1.2.4. Interactionist approach

Serin and Lloyd (2009) postulate that desistance takes place when external and internal factors combine. They propose that the process "includes gradual changes in

behaviour, perspective and attitude that bridge the disconnection between the once active offender and now desisted offender" (p. 351). This change occurs, they argue, through a weighing up type process of the pros and cons of criminality, resulting in the desisting offender who has a powerful collection of pro social internal and external influences. Serin and Lloyd (2009) present a model of desistance that follows the age-crime curve. Empirically established risk factors, such as anti social attitudes and criminal associates lead to crime. Over time and with a commitment to change, a set of "desistance correlates" (p. 358) (age, marital status, employment, contingency shifts, substance recovery and pro-social associates) and "intrapersonal moderators" (p. 358) (agency, hope and self efficacy, attributions, outcome expectations, identity/self concept and change beliefs) combine to facilitate a crime free life. It is the intrapersonal (cognitive) moderators that induce change during the transition period. Serin and Lloyd, as yet, do not offer any insight into how the factors combine, or how and where the "commitment to change" (p. 358) develops. They do however offer a testable model, and attempt to start to measure the factors that they call "intrapersonal moderators" (p. 358), which they believe to be linked to internal change.

In testing these moderators, Lloyd and Serin (2012) used a sample of 122 incarcerated Canadian male offenders to develop two scales for measuring agency for desistance and outcome expectancies (expected outcome for crime and desistance). Overall, the scales showed strong internal consistency (.77 and .90 respectively) and good concurrent and construct validity. The authors present a simple conceptual model that demonstrates that agency is strengthened by positive expectancies of a desistance outcome. As acknowledged by the authors, the sample size is small, arguably too small to construct a valid and reliable measure, and the study needs replicating. Psychometric properties also need investigating through factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis, so establishing a link with re-offending would be valuable. However, this research makes an important start in measuring the internal, psychological changes that are proposed to occur during the transition to desistance.

Other studies in support of an interaction of factors include LeBel et al. (2008), who attempted to disentangle the effect of internal (subjective) and external (social) factors and the order in which they influence desistance. They highlight key

subjective themes taken from the literature: *hope and self efficacy*, *shame and remorse*, *internalizing stigma* and *alternative identities*. Using Farrall and Bowling's (1999) work as a basis, they propose three models to describe how social and subjective factors work together:

1) Strong subjective model (super agents) - events are unimportant and it is the mind set of the individual that determines desistance.
2) Strong social model (super-dupes) - the arrival of life events and social circumstances determine desistance.
3) Combined subjective-social model (interactional) - both factors have an influence either independently on recidivism, or the subjective mind set affects social events (e.g., pursuing stable employment) which then impact on recidivism.

The models were tested using data from the Oxford University Dynamics of Recidivism study (Burnett, 1992, 2004), in which 127 male repeat offenders from UK prisons were interviewed as they approached release, and again 10 years later. Using logistical regression methods to predict recidivism, the authors found support for the subjective-social model; specifically, that the measures of hope and a mind set including regret for past crime and identification as a family man were predictors of desistance and indirectly impacted on social factors after release.

The small sample size limited the analysis in terms of how many factors could be added to the model, but this research constitutes the first empirical attempt to determine the interaction between these factors. It should be noted that the social factors were measured in a subjective way, by asking the ex-offender. Seeking information/corroboration from relevant others may have improved the objectivity of this factor.

Finally, Bottoms, Shapland, Costello, Holmes, and Muir (2004) constructed an interactive theoretical framework for their prospective Sheffield Pathways out of Crime Study (SPOOCS) of over 100 young male recidivists in the UK. They initially identified five concepts that they postulated were relevant to an interactionist perspective; *programmed potential* (potential for reoffending based on background

(risk) factors), *structures* (external social structures acting as constraints, e.g., job), *culture and habitus* (assumptions derived from the culture), *situational contexts* (specific situations) and *agency* (self-understanding of actions). Bottoms and Shapland (2011) later propose that desistance is an active maturational process that is influenced by two factors; programmed potential (personal, social and criminal history) and social capital. As their programme of research has continued, Bottoms et al. have added various other facets to their model, including the role of moral values and views on conformity in the desistance process (Bottoms & Shapland, 2011), the role of self control (Bottoms, 2013) and ethical virtues (Bottoms & Shapland, 2014).

As the study is based on a particular city in Northern England, there may be specific features of young men growing up there that cannot be generalised outside this geographical area. However, the theory ties together the key factors described by other researchers, and adds an interesting dimension of emotional and ethical elements.

1.2.5. Recent theory testing and the debate about identity transformation

Cid and Marti (2012) considered the informal social control and cognitive transformation theories, testing them on a group of 39 male acquisitive offenders imprisoned in Spain. They also considered the role of strain-support theory (Cullen, 1994) which hypothesises that the amount of social support that an offender receives regulates the strain of events, such as losing a job, which can then lead to offending. Interviews were conducted prior to, and around one year after, release. Similarly to Giordano et al. (2002), they found that social controls (e.g., a new partner) typically preceded cognitive transformation. It was these "hooks of change" (Giordano et al., 2002, p. 992) that were also responsible for maintaining desistance. However, the majority of the support was for the strain-support theory, with the authors concluding that receiving support is a "catalyst for desistance" (p. 15) and helps to maintain desistance in spite of the difficulties faced by the participants. Further support for this perspective is provided by Visher and O'Connell (2012), who found that support whilst in prison explained the development of cognitive transformation. Additionally, Dufour, Brassard, and Martel (2015), drawing on interviews with desisters in Canada, argue that the instigation of desistance arises from the social structure, providing offenders with the support necessary to access the hooks for change.

The main critique of the Cid and Marti (2012) study was that, in the desisting group, only the absence of official reoffending was investigated, rather than true desistance (maintenance of pro social identity and lifestyle). Additionally, the attrition rate was high (approaching 50% overall), especially for the desisters in the sample, meaning that less can be postulated about the road to desistance in this group.

Skardhamar and Savolainen (2014) were interested in the timing of the process involved in desistance. Using the Norwegian (crime) Registry, they compared the monthly offending rates of 783 men, pre and post life course transition events (marriage/employment), in order to see which of the different theoretical perspectives (turning points/hooks for change and maturational) best matched the empirical data. Following a series of studies, they report that the decline in offending had already occurred prior to life events such as marriage or employment and these should be viewed as key to maintaining rather than triggering desistance. Skardhamar and Savolainen (2014) contend that the gradual fall in offending prior to these events is more suited to the maturational theory. They argue that focusing on specific events to explain desistance is too narrow, and given that this is not supported by the data, they propose that desistance could be viewed as a sequence of events, perhaps where several hooks for change work together to reinforce the process. The generalisability of the results is contentious. As the authors acknowledge, Norway has a strong job market, a liberal attitude to relationships and a less punitive criminal justice system than the UK and US from where the key desistance studies stem.

Liem and Richardson (2014) investigated the role of the cognitive transformation narrative in 67 individuals (mainly men) in the US who had served life sentences. Around half had been re incarcerated. The key finding across both the paroled and re incarcerated lifers was that most had a cognitive transformation story. This is in contrast to Maruna (2001) and Giordano et al.'s (2002) work, which postulates that a cognitive transformation and redemption script is present for desisters, but not for non desisters. The authors postulate that incarcerated men, trying to get parole, are "schooled into presenting a narrative of redemption" (p. 706); hence this was present for both of the groups. The key difference between the two groups was the sense of agency - the re incarcerated men lacked agency (linked with a condemnation script) and displayed minimised responsibility for their offending

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behaviour. This led the authors to conclude that it is a sense of personal agency, coupled with a positive social context, that accompanies desistance, rather than the creation of a new identity. The study used additional evidence to support claims of desistance by the participants, which was missing from most other studies. It would be helpful to know the size of the sample pool from which the non-incarcerated men were selected. Given that these individuals self selected into the research, it may be that those who chose to abstain had different stories of desistance to tell.

Finally, Bachman, Kerrison, Paternoster, O'Connell, and Smith (2015) investigated the role of creating a new identity in a group of male and female drug-involved offenders in the US. They collected qualitative data from a group of 304 individuals and found that the vast majority (80%) who were desisting had first undergone a cognitive transformation. This was in contrast to the persisters who still had an offender identity. They also found that the creation of a new identity was necessary *prior* to ex offenders being able to use desistance opportunities, such as employment and new relationships. They summarise that these factors only become important after identity change, becoming a way to support change rather than a trigger for desistance. Again, the role of human agency is emphasized in the process. The results suggest that there was a sub group (20%) of desisters who had not created a new identity but who had stopped offending. It would be useful to explore the mechanisms by which this sub group stopped offending, if this was not a result of identity change.

1.2.6. Testing the theories with sexual offenders

Harris (2014) examined the extent to which the three main theories of desistance (natural, informal social control and cognitive transformation) explained desistance in a group of 21 released male sexual offenders in Massachusetts. Using interview data, Harris found that a small group (*n=3*) had aged out of offending, but the majority attributed their desistance to cognitive transformation (*n=18*). There was no support for the informal social control theory, namely because the stigma of their offending prevented access to informal social control opportunities, such as an intimate relationship or employment. Interestingly, cognitive transformation was largely viewed as having been achieved through engaging with sex offender treatment programmes.

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The author acknowledges the lack of a control group, and that the participants were self reporting desisters. From a critical perspective, the researcher was unable to verify the offending histories due to anonymity requirements, which resulted in no formal analysis of risk being conducted, apart from a consultation with the participants' therapists who reported the group as a whole to be low risk. Using a group of low risk offenders to explore desistance also raises issues, as the sexual reconviction rate for lower risk men has been shown to be as low as 1% after four years (Barnett, Wakeling, & Howard, 2010). Therefore the group was likely to desist anyway. However, this study is among the first to explore the process of desistance in this group of offenders. Attempts were made to prioritise older men, and those who had been released from prison for longer periods, hence giving the participants the greatest chance of desisting. The sample size for a qualitative analysis was meaningful and the author also focussed on obstacles to desistance for sexual offenders, giving a new direction to the literature.

In a follow up study, Harris (2015) focused specifically on the theory of cognitive transformation using the narratives of a group of 45 male sexual offenders living in the community. She found that most of her sample was desisting despite the lack of opportunities for informal social controls, without having any motivation to change, and without forming a new identity. Instead, they desisted out of fear and a desire to avoid custody. Harris concludes that the existing theories do not account satisfactorily for the "near inevitable phenomenon" (p. 18) of desistance and raises questions about how sexual offenders do desist despite the labelling and sanctions to which they are subjected. These questions should form the basis of future research.

In summary, it seems fairly well established that cognitive transformation, agency and informal social controls/hooks for change are key in the desistance process. However, the order in which these factors occurs is still heavily debated and their relevance to sexual offenders remains elusive.

1.3. Theories of desistance for sexual offending

1.3.1. The Integrated Theory of Desistance from Sexual Offending (ITDSO) (Göbbels, Ward, & Willis, 2012)

This theory constitutes the first attempt to apply knowledge about desistance to the population of sexual offenders. Göbbels et al. (2012) aim to provide a comprehensive model of desistance that includes important elements drawn from other recent models and research. The authors propose four stages to the desistance process (p. 454).

The first is *decisive momentum (initial desistance)*. This phase is likened to the concept of a turning point (Sampson & Laub, 2003) although, unlike the idea of a fixed life event that acts as an opportunity to knife off from crime, in this model, desistance is a process that is more fluid and dynamic. The key notion is that an offender has to be open to change and to possess the social support and emotional and cognitive ability to use presenting life events as an opportunity to critically evaluate his current identity as an offender. This self-reflective process leads to a dissatisfaction with the current identity and a readiness to change, and culminates in the emergence of a "positive possible self" (p. 456).

The second phase is *rehabilitation (promoting desistance),* which is concerned with a reconstruction of the self and the acquisition of new skills, drawing heavily on the Good Lives Model of rehabilitation (GLM) (Ward & Maruna, 2007). The GLM proposes that human beings seek to attain a range of primary goods (e.g., creativity, inner peace), which if attained lead to an increase in psychological wellbeing (and a divergence from offending). Offending is as a result of a lack of, or imbalance in, primary goods, or an attempt to achieve them in a flawed manner. Rehabilitation assists offenders to recognise and achieve a balance of primary goods, and although this can be through a treatment programme, this is not essential. The end result of this phase is a reconstruction of the self, via the realisation of primary goods.

The third stage is *re entry (maintaining desistance)* and is concerned with the long-term process of successful re-entry into the community. Maintenance of a commitment to change is key, in spite of barriers such as stigma and lack of employment that will threaten the new identity. Careful planning (Willis & Grace, 2009) and the presence of social capital (a resource that relates to the network of social relationships with others) can facilitate re-entry (Farrall, 2004).

Normalcy (successful maintenance of desistance over a long period of time) is the fourth stage of the model and takes place when the ex- offender sees himself as a non-offender, referring to his criminal history in the past tense. Again, social capital is key to success, and this stage requires sustained determination to live an offence free life and overcome the barriers.

The theory describes desistance as an interaction between environmental, social and psychological factors and gives a role to human agency, social capital and reconstruction of the self. The inclusion of the key factors highlighted by the literature and an attempt to integrate them are the strengths of the model. The authors provide support for the theory from a range of existing theories and recent research on offender desistance. Notably, the first three phases of the theory map closely onto the Prochaska and DiClemente (1982) trans theoretical model of behaviour change, although it is unclear if the desistance model allows the individual to travel tentatively backwards and forwards through the process, as in the model of behaviour change. The model also relies heavily on the GLM, which still awaits rigorous empirical testing. Additionally, it provides a guide for treatment (through use of the GLM) and comments on policy making (e.g., the impact of sex offender registration). However, the model remains empirically untested on any sample of offenders and this must be addressed in order for the theory to be viable. In addition, whilst the model was created with sexual offenders in mind, the authors are also unclear about how the process of desistance differs for sex offenders, given the special challenges they face. For example, there is no explanation of how sexual offenders overcome strong risk predictors such as a sexual interest in children or sexual pre occupation (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005) in order to achieve desistance. This is a key factor and will be discussed further in Chapter Three (section 3.1.2.).

Göbbels, Willis, and Ward (2014) recently investigated the re entry stage of the ITDSO model by using it as a theoretical framework to assess community re entry for sexual offenders at five treatment sites in North America. The programme directors were interviewed, and final assignments completed by the participants were analysed using themed analysis (*n* not provided). Eleven themes were found by two raters. The authors conclude that the findings were encouraging, with the programmes included attending to key conditions that may facilitate successful community re entry

(according to the ITDSO). From a critical perspective, there is no indication of the size of the sample, and the themes were arrived at by only two raters. The kappa ranged from. 4 (unacceptable) to 1.0, with a mean of .88. The major critique is that the raters were also the main authors of the ITDSO model and no attempt was made to validate the themes found using an independent rater. Therefore, the study cannot be said to validate the model in its entirety, but it does provide suggestions for improving re entry practice for sexual offenders.

1.4. External and internal factors that facilitate desistance

Having reviewed the theories and models of desistance, attention will now be turned to the external and internal factors suggested by the literature to promote desistance.

1.4.1. External factors

1.4.1.1. Marriage/intimate relationship

The effect of a marriage/intimate relationship on general offending has been studied in-depth, with many studies reporting that getting married results in a reduction in offending (Sampson & Laub, 2005; Theobald & Farrington, 2009). Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich (2007) propose that a "respectability package" (p. 1643) of a good marriage and a good job play a role in the onset of desistance. It has been noted that it is not the act of marriage in itself that is important, but the attachment to an intimate partner (Sampson & Laub, 1990), and that a relationship is only associated with desistance if the quality of it is good (measured by commitment, satisfaction and warmth) (Simons & Barr, 2012). A good marriage/relationship to a non-criminal partner provides structure, disrupts criminal associations, psychologically is a model for pro-social behaviour and introduces non-criminal associates.

The effect of a good marriage or intimate relationship on sexual offenders has not been extensively researched in relation to desistance. One study by Kruttschnitt, Uggen, and Shelton (2000) of 556 convicted sexual offenders in Minnesota found that marriage had little effect on desistance, however the authors do note that they did not measure the quality of the marriage, which may have accounted for the results. It could also be argued that being in a relationship may enable access to children, and

this may be a reason for a lack of impact on desistance. However it could be postulated that marriage/intimate relationships would impact on desistance, given that the lack of an intimate relationship has been found to be a risk factor for sexual offending (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Mann et al., 2010); and also that theories of sexual offending are based on the premise that sexual offenders have a range of intimacy deficits and that offending can be a way of meeting these needs (Marshall & Barbaree, 1990). An important recent paper in this area (which is discussed more fully below) is by de Vries Robbé, Mann, Maruna, and Thornton (2014). They propose a set of eight factors that may be related to desistance in sexual offenders, and include engaging in a positive intimate relationship.

1.4.1.2. Employment

Stable employment has been found to be a correlate of desistance (Benda, 2005) and to differentiate between successful and unsuccessful parolees (Bahr, Harris, Fisher & Armstrong, 2010). Laub and Sampson (2003) propose that stable employment acts as a social control and can be a turning point for desistance.

The impact of a stable job on the desistance process in sexual offenders has not been comprehensively studied, however having a stable job appears to have the same positive benefits found in other populations, while not having a job increases risk. The study by Kruttschnitt et al. (2000), described above, also found that a stable job significantly reduced reoffending in convicted sex offenders. This effect appears to be stronger when the participants have undertaken sex offender treatment. It may be that the combination of these two factors contributes towards a new, offence free identity in a way that is particularly protective. Employment instability has been highlighted as a meaningful risk factor using an extensive data set of over 30,000 sexual offenders (Mann et al., 2010). Employment has been put forward as a possible protective factor for desistance in sexual offenders by de Vries Robbé et al. (2014). A job provides structure to the day, a legitimate source of income, respectability and non-criminal peers. Psychologically, it can also provide opportunities for gaining social capital and a chance to validate a new, pro social identity.

1.4.1.3. Substance abuse

Hussong, Curran, Moffitt, Caspi, and Carrig's (2004) research into anti social behaviour in young adults found that substance abuse blocks the desistance process and suggested that interventions that reduce substance abuse will "accelerate desistance" (p. 1044). Drug treatment was found to be a key factor in parole success by Bahr, Harris, Fisher, and Armstrong (2010), who postulated that drug treatment can provide a hook for change (as per Giodarno et al., 2002) and also increase self-efficacy. Substance abuse is thought to be related to anti social behaviour/crime, as it entrenches people in a pattern of anti social behaviour (Reiss & Roth, 1993) and an illegal economy (Blumstein, 1995). Additionally it leads to impaired judgement, is disinhibiting (Taylor & Chermack, 1993), and reduces the likelihood of other protective factors, (e.g., a good marriage or stable employment) (Bachman, Wadsworth, O'Malley, Johnston, & Schulenberg, 1997).

Whilst some sexual offenders do abuse substances, and use substances, (e.g., alcohol) as a disinhibitor during offending, substance abuse has not been highlighted by the existing research as a risk factor per se for sexual offending (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Mann et al., 2010). However, substance abuse tends to be classified under lack of self control or lifestyle impulsivity in research with sex offenders, both of which have been found to be meaningful risk factors for predicting sexual recidivism (Mann et al., 2010). A recent study of the empirical literature on protective factors for desistance in sexual offenders highlighted sobriety as a possible domain (de Vries Robbé et al., 2014).

1.4.1.5. Family support/pro-social relationships

There is much research detailing how released prisoners rely on family and friends for support after release (e.g., Berg & Huebner, 2011), and Cid and Marti (2012) emphasise the role of support in their theory-testing study described earlier. Bahr et al. (2010) examined the re-entry of 51 parolees in two cities in the US and found that the support of non-criminal friends and family were indicators of parole success. The research benefits from being conducted across two cities, thereby increasing its generalisability. Similarly, the Sheffield Desistance study (Bottoms et al., 2004) found that parental support and support from non-criminal peers produced an effect on desistance. Positive support provides an opportunity for pro social

activities and hobbies, a model for pro social coping and problem solving, a steering away from criminal peers and activities and a reduction in loneliness.

In relation to sexual offenders, Gutiérrez-Lobos et al. (2001) found that (perceived) extra familial social support was low for violent male sexual offenders, and that they particularly lacked support from other men. In a qualitative study of Israeli prisoners, Elisha, Idisis, and Ronel (2012) found that parental support and social acceptance were key in increasing the participants' feelings of belonging and in turn enhanced the rehabilitation process. Again, de Vries Robbé et al. (2014) highlighted having a constructive social network as a possible protective factor for desistance in sexual offenders. It is likely that this factor will be particularly relevant for sexual offenders. This group are often left socially isolated and with a lack of support upon release from prison due to the nature of their crimes, which may have been committed against members of their own family. A lack of social/relationship skills and fear of disclosure may contribute to sexual offenders' inability to access family support systems. Being able to access such systems may impact on desistance through a sense of increased self esteem and belonging, achieving a more fulfilling life through the attainment of a primary good (GLM, Ward & Stewart, 2003) and being able to share relapse prevention plans.

1.4.1.6. Community

Connection to friends, neighbours and the community is important in the transition process (Martinez and Abrams, 2013) and it is these ties that have been termed "social capital" in the literature (Sampson & Laub, 1993, p. 556). This is a resource that can be used to achieve goods and goals in life (Coleman, 1988) and benefits both communities and the individuals living within them. Links have been made between social capital and crime and it has been found that those communities with lower social capital have a higher rate of violent crime (Farrall, 2004). Bottoms et al. (2004), in their studies of desistance, highlight present social capital as a key feature influencing all individuals.

Recent research indicates that sexual offenders face numerous obstacles in accessing social capital that impacts on their successful re entry to the community. Burchfield and Mingus (2008) assessed experiences with social capital using

interviews with 23 sex offenders in Illinois. These offenders described several problems, including community barriers (harassment), individual barriers (own shame and fear), and formal barriers set by parole (house arrest and electronic monitoring). Despite the low response rate and limited geographical diversity, this study offers important insights into the specific issues sexual offenders face regarding accessing and using social capital to desist from offending.

1.4.2. Internal factors

1.4.2.1. *Hope and optimism*

LeBel et al. (2008), drawing on the work of Giordano et al. (2002) and others, highlight hope and self-efficacy as established themes in the desistance literature. Maruna (2001) focussed on hope in the Liverpool Desistance Study and found that desisting offenders seemed to have a more positive and optimistic view of their future whereas persistent offenders saw their lives as a pre determined negative outcome, which is referred to by Maruna as "doomed to deviance" (p. 74). Martin and Stermac (2009) demonstrated, during research in Ontario with 100 prisoners, that those with lower levels of hope were at a greater risk of illegal behaviour, and that having hope is a protective factor that results in less risk. This study included male and female prisoners which adds a useful dimension but fails to explain why and how hope works, or which comes first: hope or desistance.

Moulden and Marshall (2005) note that there is no research exploring the relationship between hope and sexual offending, but propose that hope is important in the treatment of sexual offenders, particularly in instilling a sense of hope and self-efficacy for release to enable them to cope. Additionally, they propose that there may be a relationship between hope, coping and mood state, with hope being a mediator in the relationship between using sex as a coping strategy and negative mood state. The links made in this paper are theoretical and need to be tested through empirical research; for example, through measuring levels of hope throughout the desistance process. De Vries Robbé et al. (2014) put forward hope and optimism as protective factors for desistance among sexual offenders.

1.4.2.2. Agency

Recently, there has been an abundance of research into agency and the desistance process. There are several definitions of agency, including one by Liem and Richardson (2014), who describe it as "the capability of individuals to act independently and to make their own choices within the social structure" (p. 701). Theories of desistance have historically taken opposing views of the role of agency, with criminological theories attributing desistance to the social control exerted by factors in the environment (Sampson & Laub, 1993). Narrative/psychological models have emphasised the role of agency as individuals make their own choices and decisions and construct a narrative of change (Vaughan, 2007; Giordano et al., 2002) or pursue opportunities to repair their past actions, redeem and create a new identity (Maruna, 2001). The interactionist theories of Lloyd and Serin (2012), Le Bel et al. (2008) and Bottoms et al. (2004) all specifically name agency as a key factor driving individuals through the desistance process.

King (2013) examined the early desistance process in a group of 20 desisting probationers in the UK. Using thematic analysis, she found that moral agency started to develop in the early stage of desistance as the individuals began to envisage a new identity and distance themselves from the past. King acknowledges problems of self-reported desistance, and of the limited sample. No control group was used, so it is difficult to establish if the themes found were indicative of early desisters only or of any probationer. However, the research makes an important start in investigating this crucial phase. Maruna argues that studying the early stage of desistance is not useful, as this is often temporary. Termed by Healy (2010) the "liminal" stage (p. 35), both King and Healy argue that study of this stage is essential in order to understand how individuals leave this stage and achieve long-term desistance, or return to crime.

As described briefly earlier, Liem and Richardson (2014) analysed the narratives of lifers on parole (desisting group) and a re incarcerated group (non desisters) in the US. They found that the "striking difference" (p. 705) was their sense of agency. The desisters had a strong sense of control over their life whereas the non-desisters presented a passive role in their crimes and the likelihood of success or failure in the future. The authors confidently state that the desisting group was desisting. However, recorded recidivism was used as the measure of desistance, and

this is known to under estimate the true frequency of offending (Doren, 1998). Unofficial data and self-report would have added important data to the study.

Little specific work has been undertaken in relation to sex offenders and agency. Farmer, Beech, and Ward (2012), in their themed analysis of desisting versus active child molesters in the UK, found a sense of agency to be a theme in the desisting group. They also postulated that an internal locus of control was more relevant for desisting offenders, although this was not tested psychometrically. Agency is postulated to be an important feature for this group, given its inclusion in the Göbbels et al. (2012) model of desistance in sexual offenders and the GLM (Ward & Stewart, 2003), currently being used as a model of treatment for sexual offenders in several countries. Research is needed to explore how sex offenders experience agency and how this relates to the process of desistance.

1.4.3. Summary of the potential factors of desistance for sexual offenders

The key factors which are hypothesised to promote the desistance process for sexual offenders include a high quality intimate relationship (high levels of commitment, satisfaction and warmth), a stable and productive job, sobriety, and social capital in the form of support from family, peers, neighbours and the community. In addition, the individual must possess a strong sense of hope and have a keen sense of personal agency and internal locus of control. Reading this list, it is clear that most sexual offenders will not possess these factors, and achieving all or any of them may well be extremely difficult; for example, achieving social capital due to the nature of their offences, or formal sanctions such as Sexual Offences Prevention Orders limiting opportunities to employment. It is likely that sexual offenders will have a different experience of desistance from non-sexual offenders, given the specific barriers they face in overcoming stigma, fear and being accepted back into their communities (Laws & Ward, 2011).

1.5. Key studies on sex offenders and desistance

There have only been a few studies to date that have focussed specifically on sexual offenders and desistance, and these will be reviewed here.

Kruttschnitt et al. (2000) investigated how informal (marriage and employment) and formal social controls (supervision, treatment requirements) predict desistance in a retrospective study of 556 sex offenders on probation in Minnesota. The results showed that reoffending reduces significantly for those with a stable job history who received court-ordered sex offender treatment, demonstrating an interaction between formal and informal controls. However, the authors note that those placed on treatment had certain static risk factors that are likely to reduce offending (older, longer probation sentences and incest offenders) and as such could explain why this sub group was less likely to offend.

The paper demonstrates an important interaction and makes recommendations for probation policy based on its findings. However, it should be noted that no comparison group was used and the sample was not representative; there was an under representation of the most serious offences and an over representation of child molesters. Therefore, it is difficult to generalise the results. It was also unclear why job stability acts as a protective factor, although it can be hypothesised that, psychologically, this increases social connectedness and purposeful activity. Additionally, whilst claiming that sexual offenders can be managed safely on probation with supervision, court-ordered treatment and stable employment (the re offending rate was 5.6%), the follow-up period was only five years. Previous research has noted that adopting a risk period of five years would miss 63% of all new charges for child molesters (compared to a period of 25 years) (Prentky, Lee, Knight, & Cerce, 1997). Measuring recidivism in sexual offenders is notoriously fraught with problems and, given that only official re arrest rates were used, it is possible that the true rate of reoffending was higher. As such, the results of the paper should be interpreted with caution.

Farmer et al. (2012) compared the Life Story Interviews (McAdams, 1983) of five desisting and five (potentially) active child molesters undertaking sex offender treatment in the UK. The groups were divided into desisting and active, using a single-blind rating of situational risk factors by the programme therapists. A phenomenological analysis found that themes of Redemption, Communion (sense of union), Belonging and Agency were particularly relevant in the desisting group. In the (potentially) active group, the offenders had lower Agency, higher Alienation

(disconnectedness), higher Contamination ("that which was good…becomes spoiled or ruined" p. 933) and more prevalent Pessimism themes. The authors acknowledge the small sample size but note the richness of the data. It is also the first study that has attempted to understand desistance from the perspective of the sexual offender, and adds potential new themes to existing knowledge.

The authors also acknowledge that the method of distinguishing between the (potentially) active and desisting group is untested. This is the main critique of this study, as all of the results are based on this clinical judgement method, which essentially could have little reliability in determining between the two groups. Additionally, the sample pool consisted of only men in treatment, thus a selection bias occurred and it could be argued that those in treatment are already much more likely to be desisting. A comparison group from outside treatment, or widening the sample pool to those not in treatment, would have been more methodologically sound. It should also be noted that the desisting group was generally lower risk (as measured by RM2000), so the differences may have been due to a different collection of, or the existence of fewer, risk factors between the groups. Only child molesters in treatment were used, so the results cannot be generalised. The paper also describes the groups as differing regarding their internal locus of control. This was not measured psychometrically and supplementing narrative data with psychometric data would be a useful direction for future research.

Lussier and Gress (2013) examined the dynamic risk factors (using Stable, Hanson & Harris, 2001) linked to successfully re entering the community and their influence on the path to desistance. They used a prospective longitudinal design to follow 169 sexual offenders placed on either intensive supervision or regular probation in Canada. The results showed that those more likely to breach conditions upon community re-entry were younger, higher risk and had more negative social influences and self-regulation deficits. None of these results are particularly surprising, and the previous literature would have probably predicted these outcomes.

However, those more likely to breach were also under intensive supervision, and this type of intense supervision weakened the impact of negative social influences on re entry into the community. Those with higher self-regulation deficits were more

likely to offend under this type of supervision. In explaining the results, the authors suggest that those under more intensive supervision conditions were also more likely to be caught due to the increased monitoring and be prevented from associating with criminal peers. No reasoning is given why those with higher self regulation deficits fare poorer under intensive supervision, but it should be noted that this group was higher risk and had more self regulation problems than the regular probation group. As impulsivity has a well-established and significant relationship with reoffending (e.g., Farrington, 1995), any difference in the groups could simply be down to this confounding variable. In addition, an effect of labelling could also be considered with the intensive group. In line with labelling theory (Matza, 1967), being labelled as needing intensive supervision may well give rise to a self-fulfilling prophecy and this may account for the differences between the groups.

This study was not a randomised control trial, but in essence was the next best thing; a quasi-experiment as a result of insufficient funding being available to introduce intensive supervision everywhere. With a reasonable sample size and a strong design, this is an important study in starting to understand the relevant factors for re entry and desistance in this particular population.

De Vries Robbé et al. (2014) reviewed the (limited) literature on protective factors for sexual offending and proposed a set of eight possible areas that could be related to desistance from sexual offending. These comprised:

- healthy sexual interests
- capacity for emotional intimacy
- constructive social and professional support network
- goal directed living
- good problem solving
- engaged in employment or constructive leisure activities
- sobriety and hopeful
- optimistic and motivated attitude towards desistance.

The authors acknowledge that, due to the sparse literature in this area, the factors presented do not have any empirical backing. However, this review of the literature

represents the first attempt to categorise factors related to desistance for this group and provides a useful starting point for future research.

Farmer, McAlinden, and Maruna (2015) interviewed a group of 25 desisting men (defined as having been offence free for at least five years) who had previously been convicted of sexual offences against children and compared them with a group of seven men previously convicted of sexual offences against children, but only offence free for a year. The main findings were that the men were desisting out of an agented choice about the consequences of sexual offending, and that the shock of arrest and sex offender treatment/supervision had contributed towards this. Relationships and employment were important to them, but not necessary to start the process of desistance. This is in contrast with findings from some studies on non-sexual desistance, that report that such factors are key to kick starting desistance. However, the results do support the work of Bachman et al. (2015), who also found support for the role of agency and that pro social relationships and employment are not necessary to trigger desistance (Skardhamar & Savolainen, 2014).

As the authors acknowledge, it is very difficult to find a group of non-desisting sexual offenders who are willing to be interviewed and used as a comparison group. Therefore, they chose an interesting ("imperfect but pragmatic" (p. 324)) way to split the groups into desisting and non desisting, based on the time since offence. This is probably the best way forwards, although it could be argued that the groups were simply at different stages of desistance rather than desisting or non-desisting. The study provides a good basis for examining these issues further, particularly the differences between the experiences of sexual offenders compared to non-sexual offenders.

In summary, five key studies exist which examine the process of desistance and proposed desistance factors for sexual offenders. There is currently no published study that takes a prospective design and provides an empirical analysis of the experience of desistance, or addresses how and why the proposed desistance factors/correlates work for sexual offenders.

1.6. Conclusion

The research shows that sex offenders do desist, however it is poorly understood how the process works for this population. The theories of desistance for general and violent offending do not fit well, and the current theory presented for sexual offenders is untested. Researchers have identified several key internal and external factors that appear to encourage the desistance process, but these remain largely un established for sexual offenders. There is a clear gap in the literature with regard to how this specific population experiences desistance and empirical testing of the proposed factors that promote desistance is required. Practitioners need to understand these issues further in order to facilitate desistance during treatment and supervision, prevent further victims, reduce victim harm, and enable this group of men to lead worthwhile and purposeful lives.

1.7. Research aims and the methodological approach

The overall aims of this prospective longitudinal research are to explore the early stage of desistance in sexual offenders and to shed light on how proposed desistance factors work for sexual offending with a view to informing practice. Additionally, to comment on existing theories and add to the debate on whether the creation of a new identity is necessary in order to desist; and, finally, to start exploring how sexual offenders manage their sexual interests in order to desist, an area which has not yet been the subject of any published research.

The overall methodology is a prospective, longitudinal, narrative approach with a fixed mixed methods design. The decision to use mixed methods was made at the start of the project, as the research questions attempt both to measure and explore the process of desistance in sexual offenders. Hall and Howard (2008) suggest that the sum of using mixed methods is greater than using either approach in isolation. A convergent parallel design will be used. In this type of design, the quantitative and qualitative data will be collected concurrently, the methods have equal priority and the two methods will remain independent until the two sets of results are merged during the overall interpretation (Cresswell, 2013).

The next chapter will describe an intervention (Circles) currently being delivered both nationally and internationally, which aims to help sexual offenders to desist from offending. It will also present the research questions for the thesis.

Chapter Two Circles of Support and Accountability

Circles of Support and Accountability (Circles) is a community-based project that works to reduce sexual offending by enabling men who have previously committed sexual offences to desist. In the (original) model a small group (typically four or five) of trained, community volunteers form a Circle around a socially isolated, usually high-risk sex offender. They provide support and hold the offender (known as the core member) accountable for his behaviour. Circles do include women, who have committed sexual offences, but these tend to be rare, and this research will focus on Circles for men only.

This chapter provides a short history of the development of Circles and the model of change, reviews the key evaluation studies, and explores the links between Circles and the desistance theories described in Chapter One. It concludes with the overall research questions for the project, formulated from the gaps in the current knowledge around desistance, Circles, and how they work.

2.1. History of Circles

Circles originated in Ontario, Canada, in 1994. It was the vision of a Mennonite minister who put together a Circle of community volunteers from his congregation to provide support for a high-risk, high status sex offender and to hold him accountable for his behaviour (Wilson, Philpot, & Hanvey, 2011). The success of this approach resulted in the spread of Circles across Canada and into the US. By 2000, the idea had arrived in the UK. By 2002, pilot schemes were in place and there are now 15 local projects serving specific geographical areas across the UK. They all operate under the umbrella organisation of Circles UK, launched in 2008. The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) funds Circles UK, and local Circles projects are funded by local probation trusts, charitable foundations and, occasionally, the police (McCarten et al. 2014). The National Lottery and Ministry of Justice have also provided recent financial support for several individual projects.

Circles has since spread to New Zealand, Australia, Japan, China and Europe, where it is operating in various countries, including Holland and Belgium. The European model differs slightly from the original Canadian and US model, in that community volunteers form what is termed the inner Circle. These are supported by

the outer Circle, which are the statutory agencies, such as police and probation services. The Circle Co-ordinator (a qualified professional) supervises the inner circle and acts as a liaison between the inner and outer Circles (Wilson, Bates, & Völlm, 2010).

2.2. Models of rehabilitation and Circles

Whilst Circles is not hailed as an intervention, it is useful to try and understand the underlying models of rehabilitation that may be responsible for its reported effectiveness. The first Circle was a result of a concerned individual making a decision to try and protect his community whilst simultaneously trying to help an offender. Contrary to other models of intervention, the model of change and theory on which Circles is based was formulated *after* the introduction of the intervention rather than before. This had led to some discussion amongst researchers around to which model of rehabilitation Circles aligns the most.

There are currently two distinct approaches to sex offender rehabilitation in the literature and practice. The first is the Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) Model (Andrews & Bonta, 2006). This focuses on recruiting the highest *risk* offenders for treatment, targeting their individual criminogenic *needs* during treatment, and doing so in a manner that is *responsive* to the offender's specific learning abilities. Research has shown that models of rehabilitation built on the RNR core principles are effective in reducing recidivism rates, and that this is a direct result of adhering to the model (e.g., Andrews & Dowden, 2006). However this model has received criticism, most notably from Ward and contemporaries, who argue that the RNR's focus on the deficits of an offender is restrictive and neglects the role of agency, societal, cultural and biological factors, in addition to ignoring the role of treatment alliance and the therapeutic process (Ward, Collie, & Bourke, 2009). In response, Ward and Stewart (2003) propose the GLM, which focuses on the strengths of an offender and the assertion that all human beings seek primary goals or goods. The achievement of these goods results in a more fulfilled life and increased level of functioning. Ward et al. (2009) argue that this leads to a reduction in (dynamic) risk factors and promotes desistance, and that treatment based on this model is positive and motivational for both offender and therapist. The model is still in development and later versions pay more attention to risk management through a case formulation and treatment plan.

Although it influences the basis of rehabilitation for sex offenders in several countries, including the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the US, whether adhering to the principles results in a long term reduction in recidivism is yet to be established.

Circles prefers to align itself with the GLM model and its ethos (Wilson et al. 2011), the model of change being that released offenders are helped by the Circle to achieve the beneficial human goods necessary to lead a fulfilled and offence-free life. They are assisted in making good choices and meeting their needs in a pro social manner, and in a way that those not offered a Circle are unable to do (Wilson, Cortoni, & McWhinnie, 2009).

However, Circles is arguably based on an amalgamation of the two approaches; it *supports* and is concerned with helping the offender to lead a more fulfilling a positive life, in keeping with the more holistic and strength-based GLM. Additionally, consistent with the deficit-based RNR, it provides *accountability,* aligning itself with risk management and criminal justice agencies (particularly in the European model). Between these agencies and the Circle volunteers, more monitoring and risk management strategies are employed than if the individual were not in a Circle. Circles also targets the highest risk offenders and conducts a risk assessment of the dynamic risk factors (the Dynamic Risk Review) with the purpose of assessing if there has been a reduction in risk factors throughout the life of a Circle.

This integration of approaches arguably offers the benefit of taking the best elements of competing theories to build a framework that has more power of explanation in addressing the problem than singular theories. Whilst this may not have been the aim at the outset, Circles' underlying model of change is arguably akin to "theory knitting" (Kalmar & Strenberg, 1988, p. 153), and fully embracing this approach in order to understand how Circles works would be a useful way forwards.

2.3. Model of Change

In recognition of the differences between cultures in the initial Canadian model, and developing practice in England and Wales, a theoretical framework was developed to provide a constant reference point and enable a focus on the key

objectives of Circles (Wilson et al., 2011). Three key principles, Support, Monitor and Maintain, (Saunders & Wilson, 2003), were used as the basis for the UK Circles Intervention Model, and included sub factors such as reducing isolation and emotional loneliness, improving public protection and holding the offender accountable. These overarching principles were seen to be key in reducing offending and aiding risk management, and can be easily traced back to the two models of rehabilitation outlined above. All the standards and requirements of the Circles UK Code of Practice originate from this theoretical framework. However, no testing of the various factors underlying the three principles was undertaken, and whilst it provides a useful theoretical starting point, it is not a validated model.

Höing, Bogaerts, and Vogelvang (2013) propose a modernised theoretical model, which they base on up-to-date literature (desistance theory) and qualitative research of core members' experiences of a Circle. Höing et al. (2013) focus on the notion of "human and social capital formation" (p. 270). Human capital focuses on intimacy deficits, offence supportive cognitions and self-regulation skills, all of which are strongly linked to sexual recidivism (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Mann et al., (2010). They theorise that attending a Circle increases human capital and promotes desistance. Social capital consists of the quality of the social network (bonding in intimate relationships) and the quality of the environment, and again these factors are related to recidivism (Willis & Grace, 2009). The authors argue that a Circle provides a "surrogate social network" (p. 271) and that this is the most important theoretical influence of a Circle.

Höing et al. (2013) analysed narratives of 38 Circle members including core members, volunteers and co-ordinators in the UK and the Netherlands using the grounded theory approach. Theoretical concepts were developed and then further refined through the use of a repeated single criterion card sort procedure, supported by an interview. Based on the analysis, and incorporating the literature, they propose a model, which postulates that Circles works by helping to develop a positive self-narrative, and human and social capital. Effective Circles are a result of positive group development, and successful Circle strategies (inclusion and risk reduction). In addition, volunteer and core member characteristics and commitment are important and practical preconditions must be met (e.g., training of volunteers, selection of core

members and co-operation of outer and inner Circle). The authors acknowledge the small sample size in the second stage of the qualitative analysis (only 11 Circles) and the possible differences between the experience of Circle members in the UK and the Netherlands. However they do provide the beginnings of a testable model, with initial data to support it. They are able to make recommendations for practice and the links made with desistance theory start to provide an understanding of how and why Circles works; by improving human and social capital.

What is unclear from the model is how the human capital factors that are postulated to be targeted by Circles (e.g., intimacy deficits, offence supportive cognitions and poor self-regulation), operate as desistance factors. These factors are well-established dynamic risk factors, and it is already known that sexual reconviction is associated with the presence of these factors (Thornton, 2002). Hence, it is unclear if the model is proposing that desistance factors are the simply the opposite of these risk factors, (and therefore desistance is possible if these risk factors are treated), or if desistance operates in a different way. Therefore, on this matter, the model is not offering anything new above what is already known. Deviant sexual interest and sexual preoccupation are the most strongly established risk factors (Mann et al., 2010). It would be useful to have an insight into how Circles is thought to address this area of risk, given that it is thought to be the most difficult to treat and has the strongest link to recidivism.

2.4. Circles and the link to the desistance literature

There have been some attempts to try and link Circles to the desistance literature. The key factors that may promote the desistance process for sexual offenders (outlined in Chapter One) include a high quality intimate relationship (high levels of commitment, satisfaction and warmth), a stable and productive job, sobriety and social capital in the form of support from family, peers, neighbours and the community. In addition, the individual must possess a strong sense of hope and optimism and have a keen sense of personal agency/internal locus of control. It was noted that these factors are likely to be rare among sexual offenders. However, it could be postulated that Circles has a meaningful impact on each of these areas. Circles provides the support of the community (social capital) and, on a practical level, may support and assist with finding a productive activity and/or job. Circles

may also help in developing the skills required to form relationships, and as a place to seek advice around initiating an intimate relationship. It could be hypothesised that attending a Circle could impact on hope and agency, and indeed increased hope is highlighted by the Höing et al. (2013) model as a result of being in a Circle.

The Höing (2013) model also highlights the development of a positive self-narrative as being an outcome of attending a Circle. Although the link is not specifically made by Höing et al., the creation of a new identity is proposed by Maruna (2001) and Giordano et al. (2002) (see Chapter One) as necessary in order to desist. There is currently a debate in the literature (Harris, 2015) about whether sexual offenders need to create a new identity in order to desist. It would be useful to test this hypothesis with men participating in Circles.

In a recent study in the Netherlands, Höing, Vogelvang, and Bogaerts (2015) investigated the internal and social shifts in 16 core members using interviews and 11 self report questionnaires conducted pre and post Circle. The results showed a significant difference pre to post on measures of emotion regulation and internal locus of control, and improvements in the desired direction on self-esteem and self-soothing. Scores on participation in society and size of social network (not validated scales) showed no increase. The authors conclude that the qualitative results showed evidence of a "transition towards desistance" (p. 17), with the most predominant changes being internal changes (agency, self reflection, esteem and confidence) and external, behavioural skills (problem solving, assertiveness and social skills). Again, social factors showed less improvement. They observed that the cognitive factors preceded the behavioural factors.

The lack of a control group and small sample size means that these results should be deemed exploratory in nature. Additionally, the qualitative themes found (and compared across time periods) predominantly related to only one or two of the cases. However, the prospective design and the progress made in starting to understand the way in which Circles may support the desistance process is positive and the authors call for more work in this field.

Although not specifically in relation to Circles, King (2013) postulates that one of the factors that could account for early desistance is the testimony that others believe that an individual is doing well. Similarly Maruna (2004) argues that de-labelling by others is key and that this positive feedback from others leads to "earned redemption" (Bazemore, 1998, p. 768). The Pygmalion effect, where the high expectations of others help the individual to believe that he can change, could also be very relevant within Circles. Similar to a positive self-fulfilling prophecy, the optimistic beliefs of others influence the individual and s/he starts to believe in him/herself too (Maruna, LeBel, Mitchell, & Naples, 2004). It could be argued that the support and acceptance provided by the community volunteers in Circles would offer a testimony of success, de-labelling and help to instil a belief that others think that the individual can change. These approaches all highlight the dynamic of the meaningful human relationship as being the key to success. Bates, Williams, Wilson, and Wilson (2013) suggest that it is this "magic ingredient" (p. 19) that is the strength of Circles.

In summary, there have been links made between Circles and the desistance literature and it could be hypothesised that Circles works because it impacts on the factors of desistance so far identified. It would be useful to test this hypothesis. There is currently a debate in the literature about whether sexual offenders need a new identity to enable desistance, and no published literature about whether Circles contributes towards the formation of a non-offending identity. This could usefully be explored. Finally, the theoretical suggestions that propose that it is the impact of the human relationship that contributes towards desistance (positive testimony, de-labelling, Pygmalion effect) could also be explored within the context of Circles.

2.5. Evaluation of Circles

Research on Circles and its impact on recidivism is growing steadily, and is starting to demonstrate a positive and significant effect on reoffending rates. Wilson et al. (2009) evaluated a Canadian National sample of Circles, using 44 high-risk sexual offenders matched with 44 sexual offenders not in a Circle. The follow up time was 35 months on average. The groups were carefully matched on several factors; for example, previous treatment, release to same geographical region and within 90 days of each other. There were no differences between the groups regarding risk factors

such as age or phallometric results for deviant sexual preferences. Those attending Circles showed an 83% decrease in sexual offending, 73% decrease in violent offending and 71% decrease in general offending compared to the comparison group. They also acquired 74% fewer charges and convictions.

However, there was a significant difference between the groups on one of the two actuarial risk measures used (STATIC-99), with the comparison group being more at risk. Whilst this does serve to confound the results, the authors argue that both groups were still of moderately high risk, and that the differences between the groups in offending were so large that this did not have an impact. They did undertake further statistical analysis, controlling for the risk score, and the results indicated that the Circles group still had significantly lower odds of recidivism than the controls. As the further analysis reduced the sample by half, this research would benefit from being replicated with a larger sample size. From a critical perspective, it could be argued that the key difference between the two groups was one of motivation - Circles is not mandatory so all of the individuals in this group had voluntarily opted in. Therefore, they may have been more motivated to desist than the control group, which could explain the results. Additionally, the follow up was relatively short for sexual offenders, although some would argue that sexual offenders are most likely to offend within two years of release (Hanson, Steffy, & Gauthier, 1993).

Duwe (2013) conducted the first (and only) randomised control trial (RCT) of Circles using 31 Circle core members and 31 controls in Minnesota. Eligible offenders who wished to take part in Circles were randomly assigned to either condition, hence addressing the confounding variable of motivation. Ethical concerns were addressed, as rather than Circles being withheld, there were insufficient volunteer resources to provide a Circle for all those willing. The average follow-up time was two years for both groups and there were five measures of official recidivism, including new criminal offences and revocation of licence. The results showed that the Circles group offended at around half the rate of the controls (25% versus 45%) for any offence. The only significant difference (at the $p < 0.05$ level) between the groups was for re arrest (Circles 38.7% versus control 64.5%). Out of all the offenders, there was only one re arrest for a sexual offence (in the control group), indicating the low base rate for sexual recidivism. The authors also carried out a

costs-benefits analysis and reported a saving of 11,716 USD per person as a result of attending a Circle, an 82% return on investment.

As acknowledged by the authors, the sample size was small and the follow-up short. However, RCT designs are recognised as the gold standard, so the results can be interpreted with a degree of confidence. Additionally, the cost benefits analysis adds a convincing angle to the effectiveness of the projects, with the researchers reporting that Circles ranks almost top in cost effectiveness for adult treatment programmes. It is noted that, despite the effectiveness, it is on a small scale given the resource intensive nature of Circles. It should also be noted that Circles is effective in spite of the increased monitoring and accountability that the core members receive compared to the controls (i.e. they have more people checking on them), and this fact holds true for all of the research reviewed here.

Bates et al. (2013) conducted an evaluation of the first 10 years of the Circles South East project in the UK. Seventy-one core members were compared with a group of 71 sexual offenders, matched for risk, who were selected as suitable for Circles but did not attend. The average follow-up was 4 years and 7 months. Violent and sexual offending was higher for the comparison group but the difference was not statistically significant, with Circles members reoffending (sexually or violently) at a quarter of the rate of the comparison group. There was a reduction in harm effect for the Circles members, with none of them committing a contact violent or sexual offence.

Importantly, the comparison group was all initially motivated to participate in a Circle, but did not attend due to Circle unavailability or their withdrawal from the process. As such, whilst there may have been some issues around motivation confounding the research (as some of the comparison group later withdrew), the authors did try to control for this. Additionally, it is unclear if the groups were matched on other risk factors such as age, and this could have confounded the results. Hence, the use of a comparison group improved the design, although not to the degree of a RCT or a closely matched control group.

Clarke, Brown, and Völlm (2015) conducted a systematic review of the effectiveness of Circles using studies from the UK, Canada, US and the Netherlands.

There was only one RCT (see Duwe, 2013, above). The authors investigated the impact of Circles on recidivism, but also on risk, psychosocial outcomes and cost effectiveness. The results showed that the studies did not report a reduction in sexual recidivism for individuals undertaking Circles. However, there was some evidence that the controls were reconvicted more for non-sexual offending, and where there were significant differences, the Circles groups fared better than the controls. There was also some evidence that psychosocial outcomes were better for the Circles groups, however there was little availability of a comparison group for these results.

The limitations include that there was only one RCT, a small sample size (making it more difficult to establish statistically significant differences) and the follow-ups were short. In conclusion, the results are encouraging, but the methodological limitations of existing studies mean that firm inferences cannot be drawn in terms of Circles reducing (sexual) offending.

In summary, the emerging results on the impact of Circles on re offending are positive and promising, if not always statistically significant, but there has been no long-term, prospective, independent large-scale study in the UK or elsewhere on the impact on recidivism. It is argued that long term follow-ups of 20 years are needed for sexual offenders, and that shorter term follow-ups, such as those used in the existing evaluations of Circles, cannot provide conclusive evidence (McCarten et al. 2014). Randomised control trials have been called for as the gold standard of evidence, although Wilson et al. (2011) caution against this approach, arguing that, as there is enough evidence to show that Circles can reduce recidivism, withholding a Circle for research purposes would be unethical. Instead, matching controls with Circle members on predictive variables (of recidivism) at the time of Circle acceptance is hailed as the way forwards.

Reducing recidivism, and in a manner that has cost related savings, is of fundamental importance. However these factors may not be the only important measure of success of Circles, and the ethos of Circles is more than one of crime reduction. Reduction in harm (to victims) could also be argued to be an important outcome, and has been demonstrated to be so by at least one study (Bates et al. 2013). In addition, one of the mottos of Circles is that no one is disposable, highlighting the

importance of improving the lives of the core members. Two recent studies have investigated the impact on the core members besides desisting from offending. Thomas, Thompson, and Karstedt (2014) conducted interviews with 30 core members in the UK, who reported an increase in confidence, gaining a wider social circle, and that their relationships with statutory agencies, such as the police and probation services, had improved. It should be noted that the participants included in the study were hand selected by the Circle Co-ordinators. It is possible that a bias towards selecting those presenting as positive about Circles may have occurred. Höing et al. (2013) analysed narratives of 13 Circle members from the UK and the Netherlands. They found the effects on the core member included improved self-regulation and social and relational skills and a more positive outlook on life and self-perception. Whilst the sample size is limited in the Netherlands research, these studies demonstrate the additional improvements in the lives of the core members themselves.

2.6. Research questions

The Circles of Support and Accountability project has demonstrated initial success in supporting sexual offenders and helping them to desist. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding how and why Circles works, and more specifically the psychological role that Circles plays in the desistance process. These introductory chapters have also highlighted the lack of empirical knowledge around the process of desistance for sexual offenders. Research questions for the thesis are presented below.

1. Are the potential factors for desistance in sexual offenders, identified in the literature, relevant in the early stage of desistance, and how do these change over time?

2. How do sexual offenders experience the early stage of desistance, and does this change over time?

3. How does attending a Circle impact on the potential psychological factors of desistance for sexual offenders already identified?

4. What is the impact of the human relationship in Circles?

Additionally, it is proposed by the psychological models of desistance outlined in Chapter One that an offender must create a new identity in order to desist, and there is some debate about whether sex offenders go through this process (Harris, 2015). This research will therefore explore whether sexual offenders create a new identity as part of desistance, and how Circles contributes to this process

5. Do sexual offenders create a new identity as part of the desistance process?

6. How does Circles fit within the theoretical models that propose a new identity is necessary for desistance?

Finally, deviant sexual interest and sexual preoccupation have been identified as the most strongly established risk factors (Mann et al., 2010) for sexual offending. There is no published study or model that contributes towards an understanding of how these factors operate within the desistance model. Therefore, this research will aim to explore how sexual offenders manage their offence-related sexual interests during desistance.

7. How do sexual offenders manage their offence-related sexual interests in order to desist?

Chapter Three A qualitative exploration of the process of early desistance in men who have previously committed sexual offences

The overall aim of this chapter is to explore the early stage of desistance in sexual offenders using a prospective longitudinal, narrative design and a themed analysis. Following a short review of the key possible factors for desistance suggested by the literature, and the methodological approach, the results will be presented in two sections. The first section (3.3.3.) explores the themes that arise for a group of men who are trying to live offence-free lives in the community, and if these change over time. The second section (3.3.4.) focuses on the experience of men being supported by Circles, and if this differs from a comparison group of sexual offenders living in the community, but not engaged in a Circle.

3.1.1. Potential correlates of desistance for sexual offenders

Chapter One provides an extensive overview of the potential correlates of desistance for sexual offenders. In brief, the key factors that may promote the desistance process for sexual offenders include a high quality intimate relationship, a stable and productive job, sobriety, and social capital. In addition, it is suggested that the individual would benefit from a strong sense of hope and optimism and have a sense of personal agency and internal locus of control. Research has tended to focus on general and violent offending and strong empirical evidence is available to support the above factors being relevant to desistance from this type offending. There is less empirical evidence to support these in relation to sexual offending, although a recent theoretical paper by de Vries Robbé et al. (2014) includes all the above factors as potentially relevant and deserving of exploration.

In addition to the potential factors highlighted above, further themes have been highlighted by the qualitative research. Five studies are summarised here for the purpose of extracting themes that may be relevant to desistance from sexual offending, but for a full review and critique, see Chapter One. Farmer et al. (2012) applied a phenomenological analysis to interviews with desisting and non-desisting child molesters (total $n= 10$), and found that themes of Redemption, Communion (sense of union), Belonging and Agency were particularly relevant in the desisting group. In the (potentially) active group, the offenders had lower Agency, higher

Alienation (disconnectedness), higher Contamination and more prevalent Pessimism themes.

Farmer et al. (2015) interviewed a group of desisting men who had been previously convicted of sexual offences against children *(n=25)* and a comparison group *(n=7)*. The main findings were that the men were desisting out of an agented choice about the consequences of sexual offending, and that the shock of arrest and sex offender treatment/supervision had contributed towards this. Relationships and employment were important to them, but were not necessary to start the process of desistance.

Using qualitative narrative analysis, Harris (2014) aimed to explore sexual offenders' experiences in relation to three published theories of desistance (*n*=21). The results showed that natural desistance (aging) was relevant for a small group and that cognitive transformation was relevant for the majority. Other themes arising from the data were related to obstacles to desistance and included the struggle to find accommodation, employment and relationships.

In a follow-up study, Harris (2015) focused specifically on the theory of cognitive transformation using narratives taken from a group of 45 male sexual offenders. She found that most of her sample was desisting despite the lack of opportunity for informal social controls, without having any motivation to change, and without forming a new identity. Instead, they desisted out of fear and a desire to avoid custody.

De Vries Robbé et al. (2014) reviewed the literature on the protective factors for sexual offending and proposed a set of eight possible areas that could be related to desistance from sexual offending. These comprised of healthy sexual interests, a capacity for emotional intimacy, a constructive social and professional support network, goal directed living, good problem solving, engaged in employment or constructive leisure activities, sobriety, and a hopeful, optimistic and motivated attitude towards desistance.

In summary, five key studies exist which suggest themes that may be relevant to the process of desistance in sexual offenders. There is currently no published study that takes a prospective longitudinal design to explore these themes in sexual offenders. One key theme that has not appeared in the literature, but is of crucial importance in understanding sexual offending (and therefore desistance), is offence-related sexual interests. The following section will explore this potentially relevant theme.

3.1.2. Sexual interests

Deviant sexual interest and sexual preoccupation are the strongest established risk factors for sexual offenders (Mann et al., 2010), and it is these risk factors that arguably set this group of men apart from other offenders. In terms of prevalence, not all men who have sexually offended have offence-related sexual interests, however Schmidt, Mokros, and Banse (2013) found that 26.8% of child sexual abusers fitted the diagnosis of pedophilia (DSM-1V-TR) and Seto (2008) found a rate of 50-65% in offenders with child victims. There is more disagreement about how many rapists have a deviant sexual interest, but some large scale studies suggest up to 30% (Marshall, O'Brien, & Marshall, 2009). Whatever the exact prevalence rate, having offence-related sexual interests has a strong link to recidivism and therefore it is important to understand how men manage such an interest in order to desist. No published study to date has attempted to explore this research question.

The treatment of offence-related sexual interests has been viewed as an essential part of therapy, with the initial underlying assumption that such sexual interests are learnt. A selection of behavioural techniques has been widely used in order to try and modify offence-related sexual interests, with varying degrees of reported success (Marshall et al., 2009), and little to suggest long-term change (Seto, 2012). The use of anti-libidinal medication has also been used with this group, usually alongside traditional cognitive-behavioural treatment programmes. Seto (2012) has recently argued that pedophilia can be viewed as a sexual orientation (and therefore as stable over time). He argues that, if this is the case, then treatment may be more effective if it focuses on managing sexual interests via self-regulation work. It would be useful to understand how these men cope with, and view their sexual

interests in the community and what strategies they use. This could be potentially invaluable information for guiding treatment.

3.1.3. Themes highlighted as potentially relevant to sexual offenders engaging in Circles

Höing et al. (2013) proposed a theoretical model, hypothesising that Circles work by helping to develop a positive self-narrative, and human and social capital. The authors argue that a Circle provides a "surrogate social network" (p. 271), and that this is the most important theoretical influence of a Circle.

Although not specifically in relation to Circles, King (2013) postulates that one of the factors that could account for early desistance is the testimony that others believe that an individual is doing well. Similarly, Maruna et al. (2004) argue that de-labelling by others is key and that this positive feedback from others leads to what Bazemore (1998) terms "earned redemption" (p. 768). The Pygmalion effect, where the high expectations of others help the individual to believe that s/he can change, could also be very relevant within Circles. Similar to a positive self-fulfilling prophecy, the positive beliefs of others influence the individual, and s/he starts to believe in him/herself, too (Maruna et al., 2004). It could be argued that the support and acceptance provided by the community volunteers in a Circle offer a testimony to success and de-labelling, and help to instil a belief that others think that the individual can change.

In summary, links have been made between Circles and the desistance literature and it could be hypothesised that Circles works, as it impacts on the factors of desistance so far identified. This chapter will seek to explore the themes that are relevant to desistance in a group of sexual offenders engaging in a Circle.

3.1.4. Methodological Approach

A narrative design was selected in order to try and tap into the stories of men who are experiencing life following being convicted of sexual offences. Narratives are a naturally occurring conversation or interview, providing biographic data, narrated by the person who is living it (Chase, 2005). This narrative design was selected

instead of a structured interview, as it allows a free flow of information, which is important in exploratory research when the themes are not already fully defined.

Thematic analysis was chosen to analyse the narratives regarding this element of the research. Thematic analysis searches across a data set and identifies and analyses repeated patterns (themes) in order to find meaning in the data. It works to reflect reality by reporting the experiences and meaning of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and was chosen as, essentially, the research was seeking to discover something new about the process of desistance in sexual offenders, rather than to confirm an existing theory.

One of the first decisions to be made when using thematic analysis is whether the analysis will be inductive or deductive. Inductive analysis is a method of coding data without being driven by established theory or pre conceptions. Deductive analysis codes material into categories that are pre determined by existing theory or research hypotheses. The analysis in this chapter will be similar to the hybrid approach used by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), who used a combination of inductive, data-driven analysis and deductive, theoretically-driven analysis. This method was chosen for the current research as there already exists some literature in the sex offender field that points towards certain factors being relevant to the process of desistance. However, the research is limited, particularly for example in relation to how sexual offenders manage their sexual interests in order to desist. It was therefore considered important to allow the themes to emerge from the data without trying to fit them into a pre-existing framework. Research questions were formed around this hybrid approach.

A second question that arises when designing a qualitative study is what type of data will be collected and how many data are required. Interviews with/written narratives of sexual offenders living in the community were chosen. It was considered that this would provide data that could be analysed both deductively and inductively. There is no easy answer in terms of how many data are needed in qualitative research as this varies between studies. In this study, the number of interviews/narratives included was determined by how many men it was possible to recruit within the study period. Being led by the amount of data available is an acceptable method, and

whether sufficient data have been collected can be checked at the analysis stage (Richards, 2014).

Finally, computer assisted analysis using NVivo 10 for Mac was chosen to analyse the data. NVivo is software that supports qualitative and mixed methods research. It helps to organise, store, analyse and find connections in unstructured or qualitative data in a way that is not possible manually. It assists the achievement of credibility and rigour as a computer can work more thoroughly and can check for completeness of data.

Thematic analysis has formerly received unfavourable press and has not often been acknowledged as a rigorous methodology. However, its supporters argue that rigour can be achieved if explicit stages are followed, and that an evidence trail throughout the research process is essential in order to demonstrate credibility (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Hence a series of steps based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) seminal paper, and informed by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) and Richards (2014), will be followed. In order to provide the evidence trail suggested, the Method section below will carefully detail the steps followed.

3.5. Research questions

1. Are the potential factors for desistance in sexual offenders, identified in the literature, relevant in the early stage of desistance, and how do these change over time?

2. How do sexual offenders experience the early stage of desistance, and does this change over time?

3. How does attending a Circle impact on the potential psychological factors of desistance for sexual offenders already identified?

4. What is the impact of the human relationship in Circles?

5. Do sexual offenders create a new identity as part of the desistance process?

6. How does Circles fit within the theoretical models that propose a new identity is necessary for desistance?

7. How do sexual offenders manage their offence-related sexual interests in order to desist?

3.2. Method

3.2.1. Design

The research used a prospective, longitudinal qualitative methodology and hybrid approach of inductive and deductive thematic analysis. Interview/written narrative and demographic data were gathered from two groups of sexual offenders (Circles and comparison) at two time points, approximately twelve months apart.

3.2.2. Participants

All 57 participants in this study were male, over 18, and had previously been convicted of a sexual offence. There were 39 participants in the Circles group (men who were currently engaged in a Circle). The comparison group consisted of 18 men on probation licence in West Yorkshire for committing sexual offences, but not participating in a Circle. The selection and recruitment of the participants is described in detail in the Procedure section below. All participants gave informed consent for the study, were free to withdraw at any time and were not offered any incentive for participation. The only exclusions made were female offenders.

3.2.3. Materials

A method for recording the narrative, known as the 'My Story' (see Appendix A), was developed by the researcher. It was designed to allow the participant to give as much information about his experience as possible. To aid focus, and also to enable pre to post comparisons, several prompts were given that were based on the desistance framework (the actual questions asked can be seen in Appendix A). These included;

- Identity; how the individual sees himself, his offending and the world (Maruna, 2001; Giordano et al., 2002)
- Social capital and connectedness; how he sees others and the community (e.g., Burchfield & Mingus, 2008)

- External correlates; jobs, housing, relationships (e.g., Sampson & Laub, 2003)

- Turning points for desistance (Maruna, 2001; Farmer et al., 2012)

- A prompt about Circles/the Supervision experience

- Optional question about sexual interests and how the participant was managing these. This last question stems from the clear gap in knowledge in the desistance literature around how sexual offenders manage this key risk factor.

Following the development of the first draft of My Story, a focus group of four Circle Co-ordinators was brought together to discuss the tool; specifically whether it was suitable for the core members, the language used, and any other comments regarding improvements/changes. In order to improve the readability, several changes were made to the language used in My Story following this exercise. A pilot of the My Story task was carried out by two Circle Co-ordinators with two of their core members. No changes were deemed to be necessary following the piloting of the form.

3.2.4. Ethical approval

The Departmental Ethics Committee, Psychology Department, University of York, the National Offender Management Service Research Board, and the Circles UK Research Board all granted full ethical approval for this study.

3.2.5. Procedure

3.2.5.1. Circles group

Following permission being granted by the national umbrella organisation, Circles UK, a selection of local Circles projects in England and Wales were approached and invited to participate in the research. Circles UK proposed the selection based on knowledge of which projects would have the time to complete the research. Due to resource issues and prior commitments to other research, a total of five projects agreed (Yorkshire and Humberside, Manchester, Cumbria, North East and Circles South East). Permission was sought at Director level from each local project. Following agreement by the Director, the researcher attended a Co-ordinator meeting in each local project area and presented the research aims and protocol. The Co-

ordinators set up and are responsible for the running of each Circle within a particular area. They provide a link between the volunteers and the statutory agencies, and build good relationships with the core members. Instructions about introducing the research to the core members were discussed and a standardised instruction sheet was provided for each Co-ordinator (see Appendix B), along with a standard consent form (see Appendix C). There were two tasks for the Co-ordinator to complete with each core member:

1) Introduce the consent form and seek informed consent prior to the start of the Circle
2) Facilitate the collection of the My Story at the beginning and end of the Circle

Due to resource limitations in the Manchester Circles project, the researcher and a research assistant interviewed the men in this region. In Manchester, Cumbria, Circles South East and the North East, it was agreed beforehand how many men would be included, and this number was limited due to resources (n=16 in total). However, each core member who was starting a Circle within Yorkshire and Humberside during the data collection period was asked during a pre Circle assessment meeting if they would like to take part in the research. Over the period of the data collection (between August 2013 and March 2015), this meant a total of 35 core members in Yorkshire and Humberside. Nine declined to take part in the research overall, and two declined to take part in the narrative task, so 23 men from Yorkshire and Humberside participated in this stage of the research. Those who agreed were asked to sign the consent form and then completed the My Story. The task was repeated at the end of the Circle, and the data were then sent to the researcher for analysis.

Demographic information relevant to the literature around sexual offending for each participant was gathered from a central database held by Circles UK. This included age, ethnicity, risk level (RM2000), current offence, gender of victim, type of victim (adult or child), number and type of previous convictions (sexual and non-sexual), completion of previous treatment, sentence type, and date of last sentence (to establish time at risk). Self-report data were also collected on level of family contact and relationship status, to try to establish a level of social isolation and emotional loneliness at Time one. These data were corroborated by the information entered onto

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the Circles UK database by the Circle Co-ordinators. Given that a comparison group was also being used, it was important to try and check that the Circles group was no more isolated than the comparison group at Time one, as this is a criterion for selection into a Circle.

3.2.5.2. Comparison group

The comparison group consisted of 18 men who had been convicted of sexual offences and were currently on probation licence in West Yorkshire. They were identified from the central database held by West Yorkshire Probation. The parameters were that the participants were male, convicted of at least one sexual offence and were not currently engaged in treatment for sexual offending or in a Circle. They had to be over the age of 18 and on license for the period of the study, with an Offender Manager based in West Yorkshire. A hundred sexual offenders fell into this category between October 2014 and May 2015.

The procedure for gathering the data differed slightly between the groups. In the Circles group, the data were gathered by the Circle Co-ordinators (with the exception of Manchester, where it was gathered by the researcher). In the comparison group, the data were collected by the researcher and a research assistant (both with forensic experience), as requested by the NOMS Research Board. At the time this information from NOMS was provided, the data collection with the Circles group by different Circle Coordinators was underway. The impact of the different methods of data collection therefore had to be considered. The choices were not to involve a comparison group, or to collect data using different methods and take this into account during the analysis and data interpretation processes. This situation was not ideal, but is a reality of applied research with offenders. On balance, it was considered that having a comparison group would be a real strength of the study. The potential implications of this will be returned to in the Discussion (section 3.4.2)

Therefore, the Offender Managers for each participant were approached and given the instruction sheets about the research (Appendix B). They were asked to introduce the research to their Service User at their next appointment and asked whether the researcher might be allowed to meet them for the next stage of the research. All one hundred were approached and 82 declined to take part. If the

participant agreed, he was seen individually by the researcher or assistant at the local probation office, usually directly after an appointment with his Offender Manager. Informed consent was sought and the My Story completed verbally onto a Dictaphone. The instructions given to both groups were identical, the data collection happened around the same period and all of the data collectors were experienced in working with sexual offenders.

Following the data collection, the participants were thanked for their help, and the researcher checked that they would be amenable to meeting again in 12 months' time to repeat the task. In order to try and limit the attrition rate, after approximately six months, the researcher wrote to the participants, reminding them of their role in the research and encouraging them to attend at Time two (see Appendix D). At 12 months, the participants were contacted again via their Offender Managers, an appointment was arranged with the researcher at the probation office, and the My Story task was repeated. Sixteen men participated at Time two. Attrition will be commented on in detail in section *3.3.3.1*. The participant was thanked for his involvement in the research and no further contact was made. The same demographic information as for the Circles group was recorded from the West Yorkshire Probation database.

3.2.6. Data preparation

The interviews were transcribed using proficient audio typists and uploaded into NVivo 10 for analysis. The data were analysed at the time of collection, meaning that the Time one data were analysed before the Time two data. This meant that learning from Time one could be incorporated and considered at Time two.

3.2.7. Data analysis

It is imperative to show that the method of analysis is rigorous and systematic. Below is a description of the exact procedure undertaken, based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) suggestions about a series of steps to follow and incorporating guidance specifically on how to code data in relation to use with NVivo (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

1) Familiarise self with data

The researcher and a research assistant (an MSc graduate student from the University of York) conducted all of the Time one and Time two interviews in person. Where possible, the participants were seen by the same interviewer at both Time one and Time two. As such, the researcher was familiar with the majority of the data prior to the analysis. The researcher read through each interview/narrative and made comments on passages of text that were interesting or related to the concepts previously identified in the literature. The data were then uploaded to NVivo for analysis.

2) Generating initial codes

"A code is an abstract representation of an object or phenomenon" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 66). Attaching codes to text means that data can be organised and retrieved later, which facilitates analytical and interpretative thinking. A "broad-brush" approach to coding was used initially (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. 71). This means that the data were coded in large chunks, and multiple codes were often used (simultaneously) within the same passage of text in order to capture what was happening (Richards, 2014). In NVivo these are known as nodes. Theoretically-derived (deductive) nodes were added to the NVivo database and these reflected the categories found in the desistance literature and research questions; for example 'hope/optimism' and 'forming a new identity'. Additionally, inductive nodes were derived based on repetition of the same or similar concepts arising from the data. These arose directly from the data and did not have any basis in the literature. The process started by coding general categories and then asking the questions: "what's interesting", "why is that interesting?", "why I am interested in that?" (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. 72).

After the researcher had coded around 30 interviews, it became apparent that no new nodes were being generated and that saturation point had been reached. This also indicated that enough data had been collected. At this point, a reliability check was applied to the data. Checking reliability in qualitative analysis has a different purpose than establishing reliability in quantitative research. In qualitative research, it is recommended that another researcher reviews your coding with the aim of discussing what has been found and seeking to ensure reasonable consistency. The key aim is to determine whether any categories arising from the data have been missed. As such,

the research assistant read through each narrative and checked the coding, noting any differences in the coding into the nodes, and also whether there were any new categories that the researcher had not noticed. Following this exercise, a review of the coding system was necessary.

3) Review codes

The next step was to review the initial nodes in order to create a structured coding system for use with NVivo. To do this, the researcher and research assistant listed all of the nodes identified and began sorting the nodes into a clear structure. Some nodes were collapsed and merged together; for example 'stigma' and 'keeping conviction a secret'; others were clearly stand-alone categories, such as 'hope and optimism'; whereas others formed part of a broader category that had its own subcategories, (e.g., 'turning points' contained the subcategories of 'treatment', 'effects on self and others' and 'arrest and prison'). NVivo works with categories in a "branching tree" system (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013 p. 95), which allows categories and sub categories to be organised into groups to facilitate the analysis. Using this method, each node was reviewed and either given the status of a stand-alone category, or placed together with other nodes that formed part of the same concept.

4) Moving on with the coding

Following the review and the creation of a structured coding system in Nvivo, each case was re-read and coded according to the new system. New cases were then added and coded by the researcher as the data were gathered. At this point in qualitative analysis, the researcher is required to "move up" (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. 97) from the data; moving from coding themes for descriptive purposes to thinking analytically about what the themes/nodes mean for the concept being studied. Again to assist with reliability, the research assistant read and checked the coding of all cases.

3.3. Results

A description of the whole sample at Time one is presented in Table 3.1. below, followed by a short section detailing any differences between the two groups. The results section is then split into two sections. Section 3.3.3. explores the themes found at Time one for the whole group and any changes over time. Section 3.3.4.

focuses on the experience of being in a Circle, and any differences between the groups regarding the themes described in section 3.3.3. The results are presented in the order of the research questions.

3.3.1. Demographic information

Table 3.1.

Demographic information at Time one

	Circles group (n=39)		Comparison group (n=18)		Total sample (n=57)	
	n	(%)	*n*	(%)	*n*	(%)
Ethnicity						
White British	33	(84.6)	17	(94.4)	50	(87.7)
White Irish	1	(2.6)	0	(0)	1	(1.8)
Any other	3	(7.7)	0	(0)	3	(5.3)
White	1	(2.6)	0	(0)	1	(1.8)
Black /British	0	(0)	1	(5.6)	1	(1.8)
Asian/British	1	(2.6)	0	(0)	1	(1.8)
Age						
18-25	2	(5.1)	1	(5.6)	3	(5.3)
26-35	6	(15.4)	2	(11.1)	8	(14.0)
36-45	10	(25.6)	2	(11.1)	12	(21.1)
46-60	15	(38.5)	8	(44.4)	23	(40.4)
61+	6	(15.4)	5	(27.8)	11	(19.3)
RM2000						
Low	9	(23.1)	9	(50)	18	(31.6)
Medium	6	(15.4)	6	(33.3)	12	(21.1)
High	8	(20.5)	2	(11.1)	10	(17.5)
Very High	14	(35.9)	1	(5.6)	15	(26.3)*
Missing	2	(5.1)	0	0	2	(3.5)
Sex Offence						
Adult	4	(10.3)	6	(33.3)	10	(17.5)
Child	21	(53.8)	8	(44.4)	29	(50.9)
Adult/child	1	(2.6)	1	(5.6)	2	(3.5)
Internet only	9	(23.1)	3	(16.7)	12	(21.1)
Breach of Order	1	(2.6)	0	(0)	1	(1.8)
Not known	3	(7.7)	0	(0)	3	(5.3)
Has sexual pre cons	31	(79.5)	1	(5.6)	32	(56.1)
Contact with family	21	(53.8)	13	(72.2)	34	(59.6)

Table 3.1.

In a relationship	4 (10.3)	5 (27.8)	9 (15.8)
Completed treatment	36 (92.3)	9 (50)	45 (78.9)*
Mean time at risk (months)	13.88	24.17	17.44

* Denotes a significant difference between the groups at *p*< .0125 (Bonferroni correction applied)

3.3.2. Demographics and differences between the groups

A preliminary analysis was undertaken to explore if there were any differences between the groups regarding the demographic variables of ethnicity, age category, Risk Matrix category, type of offence and treatment status. As the frequencies in each cell were fewer than five, the age categories were collapsed (18-35 and 36-61+) as were the Risk Matrix categories (Low/Medium and High/Very High) to allow for analysis. Only the categories of Adult and Child were used in the type of offence categories. As the cell sizes remained small, Fisher's Exact test was utilised. The Bonferroni correction was applied (*p*< .05/4= .0125)

There was no significant difference between the groups regarding age category (*p*= 1.0, two tailed) or type of offence (*p*= .331, two tailed), but there was a significant difference between the groups regarding the Risk Matrix categories (*p*= .004). The frequency data show that only three of the men in the comparison group fell into the High/Very high category compared to 22 in the Circles group. Therefore, the Circles group was higher risk than the comparison group. There was also a significant difference (*p*= .001) between the groups regarding treatment status, with the Circles group being more likely to have completed treatment for their sexual offending.

The frequency data in each cell were too small to allow for analysis in the ethnicity category, although it can be clearly seen that most of the men were White in both groups. Cell size was also too small for analysis in the sexual pre-conviction category. The data reveal that the Circles group (*n*=31) was more likely to have sexual pre convictions than the comparison group (*n*=1).

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Data were collected on two variables (contact with family and being in a relationship) to try and ameliorate for the potentially confounding variable of social isolation. Circles men are specifically selected for the intervention based on the fact that they are socially isolated and lonely. Fisher's Exact test did not find any differences between the groups.

Mean time at risk also needed to be considered, as Table 3.1. shows that the comparison group had a higher mean time at risk (24.17 months) than the Circles group (13.88 months). There was one outlier in the comparison group, a Life sentenced prisoner who had been at risk for 142 months (11.8 years), and who substantially impacted on the mean. It could be argued that this outlier should be taken out of the data set, as he was not part of the intended sample set (men in early desistance). Taking him out of the set reduced the comparison group mean for time at risk to 16.27 months, which is comparable to the Circles' mean of 13.88 months.

In conclusion, the Circles group were higher risk, and more likely to have sexual pre-convictions (which will have contributed to their higher risk status) and to have undertaken sexual offender treatment than the comparison group. These factors should be considered when interpreting the results. However, they were of a similar age (mostly in the 36-60+ age bracket), ethnicity (White), and mostly child offenders, with a similar time at risk (13-16 months) and the same degree of social isolation at Time one.

3.3.3. Themes at Time one

The next section is organised according to the research question, with the two tables below addressing the following three research questions. Change over time is addressed in Section *3.3.3.1.*

1. Are the potential factors for desistance in sexual offenders, identified in the literature, relevant in the early stage of desistance (and how do these change over time)?

2. How do sexual offenders experience the early stage of desistance, (and does this change over time)?

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5. Do sexual offenders create a new identity as part of the desistance process?

The following deductive themes were found across both groups of sexual offenders at Time one. These themes were previously highlighted by the literature as being potentially relevant to desistance from sexual offending. Additional examples from the narratives from all the tables in this chapter can be seen in Appendix E.

Table 3.2.

Desistance themes at Time one (deductive)

Title of code	Description of code	Example from narratives	Number of cases (total *n=56)*
Hope, optimism and positivity	Can see a future, hopeful, optimistic, positive. Has gratitude.	I have got my own flat and all I do is look to the future. I feel so good about myself and look forward to the future (P18).	26
Purposeful activity	Has an activity or interest that gives purpose, structure to the day and adds value to his life.	My moods change daily. They seem to be better if I am keeping myself busy or I am at work. If I am keeping myself occupied with general hobbies and interests, that is OK (P12).	26
Social capital	Has a place within a social group or network. Has support from family, friends or professionals. Feels like he belongs to the community.	I'll speak with my mate who comes over…he's been telling me that he has been suffering a bit of depression…he helps me sort of thing and I help him. And we have a good chinwag sort of thing…it changes your whole outlook on life (P29).	24

Table 3.2

New me	New me/Old me. Has created a new identity. Sees himself as having changed or being a different person from when he offended.	There's just me (name) now, but old (name) wasn't very nice, he was a predator, terrible, where new (name) is open, honest with people and treats people with respect, and they treat me with the respect I have never had (P5).	22
.			
Generativity and making up to others	Wants to give something back. Make up for what he has done by helping others.	I feel a lot better with my life being able to help others due to being a volunteer and giving something back to the community (P14).	16
Problem solver	Copes with problems well. Approaches problems with a strategy to solve them.	I cope with issues head on. With finance, I find out where the bill is from. I have a phone, or if it's close, I'll go and sort it out myself (P43).	8

The following themes arose from the data through inductive analysis.

Table 3.3.

Inductive themes at Time one

Title of code	Sub category	Description of code	Example from narratives	Number of cases (*total n*=56)
Stigma	Keeping conviction secret	Fear of being found out, living with a secret.	Truthfully, I'm terrified every day. I'm paranoid in case someone comes up and tries doin' me in for what I have done (P38).	30
	Stigma of being a sex offender	Experience of being labelled and stigmatised.	You do feel like you are a leper, no one wants to come anywhere near you (P36).	27
	Negative impact on work	Conviction for sexual offences limits job prospects.	I've applied to a couple…got to the interview, but once the offence was mentioned, they couldn't continue (P44).	9

Table 3.3.

Turning points	Effect on self and others	Victims, family, friends, partners, loss of home.	It is understanding what I put the victims through, the emotional turmoil, the depths of despair they must have been through (P52).	27
	Treatment	Treatment programmes, victim empathy, risk factors, medication.	Definitely the SOTP had the biggest effect on stopping me from reoffending. Because of the victim empathy, that's when I decided (P51).	16
	Arrest and prison	Shock of arrest, being found out, being in or dying in prison, recall.	The shock of the police turning up at the door- gave me enough of a shock not to want to do it again (P33).	10
	Positive future	Freedom, make/get a life, get kids back.	The turning point in my life…I'm getting older, I want to remove any labels I may have and have my kids back in my life (P42).	5

Table 3.3.

Poor me and hopeless	Victim stance, stuck in self-pity, world and others against him.	I see myself as a lonely old man…I cry a lot. I'd describe the world as unfair and pointless. There is no light at the end of the tunnel (P36).	26
Socially isolated and lonely	Lost, isolated and lonely, no place in the community.	I feel I have no place in the community, I know no-one. Feel isolated. I feel unwanted and that my neighbours don't want me there (P26).	19
Lack of purposeful activity	Living day to day. No structure, value or purpose to the day.	I just exist, existing for what? I've always lived for a purpose, whatever that purpose might be, now I haven't got any purpose (P36)	17
Damage to others	Has let people down - family, friends, victims. Remorseful and guilty. Damaged and destroyed lives.	When I am out in town, I look at people, especially families, and curse myself over and over. It hurts so much knowing what I have destroyed (P48).	16
Focus on loss	Has a sense of bereavement. Grieving for life lost, struggling to move on.	I feel saddened that I have lost so much. I feel grief for the past, the relationships and friendships that meant so much to me (P6).	15

Table 3.3.

Shame	Ashamed, shameful and disgusted at self.	Saying that I am ashamed doesn't get to the shame that I feel (P52).	12
Identity as sex offender	Cannot separate self from past behaviour. Condemnation to life as a sexual offender, describes self as a pedophile or sex offender.	Oh yeah, I'm a pedophile - I'm not proud of it. A lot of people treat you like the bottom rung of society, don't they? And they don't really understand what it is like to be a pedophile (P33).	10
Religion and church	Gives a sense of belonging. Also a purposeful activity and a vehicle for change.	Truthfully, I have managed to stay out this time because of God….. He's helped me grow up (P38).	7
Education	Impact/value of education/learning to improve life, skills, self-esteem and future.	I bettered myself, NVQs, I never thought I would get NVQs, they gave me loads of skills (P43).	6

Research question 7. How do sexual offenders manage their offence-related sexual interests in order to desist?

The whole sample were given the following optional questions, and not all of the men chose to answer them (25/57 answered).

'How often do you have unhealthy sexual thoughts?'

'How are you managing your unhealthy sexual thoughts and sexual interests?' 'What do you do to stop them, and what have you done in the past to stop them?'

Table 3.4. describes the themes found relating to managing offence-related sexual interests.

Table 3.4.

Themes relating to managing offence-related sexual interest

Code	Subcategories	Description of code	Examples from narratives	Number of cases (total $n= 25$)
Management	Cognitive - take control	Cognitive techniques. Control by thinking, battle between body and brain.	There is a monster inside my head, I am never going to lose him but I can control him….you have gotta have control. It's conscious and I manage it every day (P5).	21
	Aware of triggers	Understands situations, emotions and thinking and manages and avoids.	Thoughts about children, triggered by people on the street. If I am walking down the street, I mainly try and look at the cars and motorbikes going past (P21).	15
	Physical distraction techniques	Avoidance, e.g., turn TV off, walk other way, keep busy.	I'll turn the TV off and force myself to do 20-30 press ups (P21).	12
	External support.	Treatment and help from others. Medication, smelling salts, group work, probation, Circles, family.	I have things in place so that if I get to a dead end, I have somebody to ring (P5).	12

Table 3.4.

	Consequences	For self and others. Harm to victims.	It's got less because I have seen the damage it has done…to the victim, family, surrounding people and my family. Is that what I want to keep on doing? (P19)	11
Living with it	Acceptance	Accepted sexual interest in children. It will always be there, part of me.	It's a weakness in me that I have had to come to terms with (P41)	7
	Struggle		It is my dark secret, a curse. It would be brilliant to be normal (P28).	7
		Difficult to live with and accept. Monster inside me.		
	Orientation		I realise I am a paedophile, I'm just interested in children (P33)	4
		Part of genetic makeup. Always had it		
Why decreased?	Emotional response	Guilt, shame, fear have decreased sexual desire/thinking.	The thoughts went away when I got arrested, it scared the life out of me. Absolutely terrified, I don't want to go through that again (P31)	10
	Unknown/spontaneous	Don't know why. Just happened.	I can't claim it is any positive strength of will…it just appears to have happened (P17)	8

Table 3.4.

	Physical reasons	Stress/prison/age.	I'm just getting past it, I am too old (P22)	7
Wants to understand why		Interested in finding out why. Unsure why he is different.	Why did it happen to me and not my brother? Was it in me from birth? I still have questions (P28).	7

3.3.3.1. *Change over time*

The next section relates to how the group changed over time, and if there were any differences in the frequency of the themes between Time one and Time two. As there was a degree of attrition, this will be discussed and analysed prior to presenting the Time two demographics and data.

Ten men dropped out of the study between Time one and Time two, eight in the Circles group and two in the comparison group. This was a 17.5% attrition rate overall. Attrition is to be expected during longitudinal clinical research, and some argue that rates of up to 20% are acceptable in studies of prevention programmes (Valentine & Cooper, 2008). However, Amico (2009) cautions against using the percentage of total attrition as a guide for deciding what is acceptable or not. Instead, the pattern of attrition should be investigated and, if possible, examined between the groups to identify any similarities or differences.

There were several reasons for the attrition, including recall to prison for breaking Sex Offender Orders (both comparison and Circles group) and refusal at Time two. Full reasons for attrition can be seen in Appendix F. There was substantially less attrition in the comparison group and it is likely that this was partly because all of the data were collected by the researcher who was motivated to keep the attrition rate low. It may also have been less of a priority for busy Circle Co-ordinators to complete the Time two data. This has implications for future research.

The drop-out number was too small to compare the Circles and comparison groups, but the drop-out group as a whole was compared to the rest of the sample present at Time two to examine if there were any differences between them. This was applied to the age and risk variables only, as it was predicted that younger, higher risk men would drop out at an increased rate. The data in each cell for the drop out group were small so, as recommended by McDonald (2014), the categories of age and risk were both collapsed into two (18-35 years and 36-60+ years and Low/Medium and High/Very High) to allow for analysis. It was still impossible to use the Chi Square due to low cell frequencies, so Fisher's Exact was utilised. The Bonferroni correction was applied ($p < .05/2 = .025$).

The drop out group had a lower mean age (M= 38.5 years, SD= 13.1 years) than the Time two group (M= 49 years, SD= 13 years) and this was found to be significant at the p< .025 level, p= .022 (one tailed).

Regarding risk level, the frequency data show that 70% of the drop out group fell into the High/Very High risk category compared to 41% of the men who were still present at Time two. However, the differences between the risk categories were not significant at the p< .025 level, p= .109 (one tailed).

Therefore, it can be concluded that the men in the dropout group were significantly younger but not higher risk statistically than the men in the Time two group. This will be considered in the discussion of the results.

Table 3.5.
Demographic information at Time two

	Circles Group (n=31)		Comparison Group (n=16)		Total (n=47)	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Ethnicity						
White British	27	(87.1)	15	(93.8)	42	(89.3)
White Irish	1	(3.2)	0	(0)	1	(2.12)
Any other White	1	(3.2)	0	(0)	1	(2.12)
Black /Black British	1	(3.2)	0	(0)	1	(2.12)
Asian/Asian British	0	(0)	1	(6.3)	1	(2.12)
Missing	1	(3.2)	0	(0)	1	(2.12)
Age						
18-25	1	(3.2)	1	(6.3)	2	(4.2)
26-35	3	(9.7)	1	(6.3)	4	(8.5)
36-45	8	(25.8)	2	(12.5)	10	(21.2)
46-60	14	(45.2)	7	(43.8)	21	(44.6)
61+	5	(16.1)	5	(31.3)	10	(21.2)
RM2000						
Low	8	(25.8)	8	(50.0)	16	(34.0)
Medium	5	(16.1)	6	(37.5)	11	(23.4)
High	4	(12.9)	2	(12.5)	6	(12.7)
Very High	12	(38.7)	0	(0)*	12	(25.5)
Missing	2	(6.5)	0	(0)	2	(4.2)
Type Sex Offence						
Adult	2	(6.5)	5	(31.3)	7	(14.8)
Child	18	(58.1)	7	(43.8)	25	(53.1)
Both	1	(3.2)	1	(6.3)	2	(4.2)
Internet only	7	(22.6)	3	(18.8)	10	(21.2)
Breach of SOPO	1	(3.2)	0	(0)	1	(2.12)
Missing	2	(6.5)	0	(0)	2	(4.2)
Has sexual pre cons	6	(19.4)	0	(0)	6	(12.7)
Has no sexual pre cons	23	(74.2)	16	(100)	39	(82.9)
Missing	2	(6.5)	0	(0)	2	(4.2)

Table 3.5.

SOTP completed	30 (96.8)	8 (50.0)	38 (80.85)
Mean time at risk (months)	14.15	26.44	18.83

* denotes statistically significant difference between the groups at $p< .025$

Again, a series of Fisher's Exact tests was undertaken to test for differences between the groups where the cell counts allowed this. The Bonferroni correction was applied ($p< .05/2= .025$). There was no significant difference between the groups with regard to age, but there was regarding the RM2000 categories between the groups. The Circles group contained more men who were classified as High/Very High compared to the comparison group and this was significant at $p< .025$ ($p= .01$, two tailed).

The data relating to change over time will now be presented. The following data were drawn from a question put to the sample at Time two, "How have you changed since your last interview?", that was asked specifically to explore transformation during this early stage of being at risk. Forty-seven participants responded to this question.

Table 3.6.

Themes relating to change over time

Code	Description of code	Example from narratives	Number of cases (total *n*=47)
Social connectedness	Increased social capital, improved quality of interaction with others.	The up is me and my wife are getting along fine, we're actually closer than we have been for quite a few years (P35).	30
Positivity	Hopeful and optimistic, happier and more positive.	I don't think I have changed…apart from having a more happy cast on life, or more positive cast…and being a happy retiree (P41).	12
Interpersonal skills	Increase in empathy, self-awareness, self-help skills, more open, better problem solving. Maturation.	I think I have changed since I last saw you, in me thinking, yeah. Just the way I go about myself, the way I see things around me, the awareness (P34).	17
Confidence	Increase in self-worth/esteem. More confidence.	I am pleased and proud of how far I have come in the last year or so. I am a lot more confident about my future (P27).	6
Employability	Engaging in more purposeful activity, volunteering. Undertaken training to increase employability.	After I completed my business admin course, I put in for volunteering. I'm currently on the reception just answering the phone and greeting service users (P21).	5

Table 3.6.

Identity change	Now I wanted to change. Now I wanted to see and prove to myself that I did have a worth and purpose in life.	
	This gave way to my attitudes changing and having a different outlook on my past as well as my future (P1).	3

In addition, four key desistance themes (see Table 3.2.) found at Time one were examined to identify any changes at Time two. These were chosen as they related to established themes in the literature and the research questions. Based on the literature, it was predicted that the frequency of each theme would increase over time. The four themes were:

- Social capital
- Hope/optimism
- Purposeful activity
- New me

NVivo provides a percentage score per case of how much of each theme is present in each narrative. The mean for each theme across all cases was calculated, and then the means were compared across time. Dropouts were not included.

Table 3.7.

Mean percentage frequency for themes at Time one and Time two (n=47)

Themes	Time one		Time two	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Social capital	3.77	5.83	4.88	7.31
Hope/optimism	2.98	5.18	5.99	9.43
Purposeful activity	3.27	6.18	6.56	13.52
New me	3.20	6.60	3.32	5.19

The data were significantly non-normal and could not be transformed. Wright, London and Field (2011) caution that the assumptions of normality required of the data in small clinical samples are unrealistic and that the data are often skewed and not normally distributed. They recommend the use of bootstrapping to allow for the use of parametric testing. As such, the data were bootstrapped using 1000 samples, and a series of dependent *t* tests were performed. The Bonferroni correction was applied ($p< .05/4= .0125$). There were no significant differences between Time one and Time two with regard to any theme. However, for the Hope and optimism theme, the difference approached significance, $t(42)= -2.091$, $p= 0.02$ (one-tailed) $r= .052$. This represents a large effect size.

3.3.5. The Circles and comparison groups

This section focuses on the experience of being in a Circle. There were three research questions regarding Circles and the data presented below address all three.

3. How does attending a Circle impact on the potential factors of desistance for sexual offenders already identified?

6. How does Circles fit within the theoretical models that propose a new identity is necessary for desistance?

4. What is the impact of the human relationship in Circles?

Table 3.8.

Themes relating to the impact of attending a Circle

Code	Subcategory	Description of code	Examples from narratives	Number of cases (total *n*=39)
Impact of human relationship	Social connectedness	Social capital, social crutch. Being listened to, someone to talk to.	It's like a safety net, I can talk to them and get a proper answer, I feel like I have known them for ages and they have got time to listen (P19).	30
	Acceptance	De-labelling, seen as human, given respect and trust.	My Circle is filled with four good people who have accepted me for what I am and not what I am have done (P16).	10
	Volunteering	People giving their free time, wanting to make a difference.	I've the utmost regard for the people that give up their time and travel often for hours (P22).	7
Internal factors		Hope, optimism, goal setting, self- confidence problem-solving	The Circle is the best thing in my life, it gives me so much confidence and self-esteem (P27).	16

Table 3.8.

External factors	Accountability	Managing risk factors, stop offending	Circles has helped me in different ways, especially supporting me with managing my alcohol, thoughts and feelings, control my temper (P23).	13
	Practical assistance	Job interviews, sickness benefits, paying the bills, housing.	John got my gas and electric sorted, he said bring them in next week and we'll sort them out (P13).	10
	Purposeful activity	Help to find something to do, library, museums, gardening. Attendance is purposeful activity.	They helped me with the walking club, took me to the local library to see if I would like to join it and learn how to use a computer (P11).	9

No themes were found that suggest that Circles itself helps to form a new identity. Rather, it seems that the process has already started for some (as highlighted in Table 3.2.) and Circles helps to support it. Evidence was found for Circles supporting the internal and external factors of desistance, and there was a theme present about the significance of the human relationship, and why this is important. The findings will be explored in detail below.

3.4. Discussion

The key findings and consideration of the results in the light of current research will be discussed according to the order of the research question. Results pertaining to change over time will then be presented, followed by suggestions for continuing research and implications for practice. Discussion relating to theory will be limited here, and instead will be included in Chapter Six, when the findings of all the chapters will be brought together.

Research question 1. Are the potential factors for desistance in sexual offenders, identified in the literature, relevant in the early stage of desistance, (and how do these change over time?)

Several deductive themes suggested by the literature were found across the narratives at Time one. These included Hope/optimism, Purposeful activity, Social capital, New me, Generativity and making up to others, and Problem solver. The most prevalent deductive themes, present in 26/56 of the cases, were Hope/optimism and Purposeful activity. In terms of the literature, this study finds support for the "good problem solving", "engaged in employment or constructive leisure activities", "goal directed living" and "hopeful, optimistic and motivated attitude towards desistance" factors suggested by de Vries Robbé et al. (2014), but no particular evidence for "sobriety" (p. 14). It is possible that this is not an important protective factor for desistance in this group, or that it failed to arise during these narratives due to the prompts given. Support was also found for the Farmer et al. (2012) themes of Redemption and Communion (belonging to the community). One desistance factor not found in the current study, but prominent in the general offender desistance literature, was the presence of an intimate relationship. It is possible that, for sexual offenders, intimate relationships are less important for desistance, either because of the risks that relationships present in terms of the disclosure of previous offending or

because relationships with adults do not fit with their preferred sexual interests. The risk is that they will try and meet their intimacy needs through reoffending. However, the men in the sample reported they were not doing this, mainly due to a realisation of the damage caused to others.

Research question 2. How do sexual offenders experience the early stage of desistance, (and does this change over time?)

Several new themes were found, many of which initially appeared to be obstacles to desistance (Stigma, Shame), and conflicted with the positive psychology approach taken in key desistance papers such as de Vries Robbé et al. (2014). The stigma of living with a sexual conviction was the most prevalent theme overall, and this had an impact on job prospects. Examining stigma and the related stress has been the subject of recent research on men with pedophilic sexual interests (Jahnke, Schmidt, Geradt, & Hoyer, 2015). In an online study (*n*=104), the authors found that the fear of being discovered to have a sexual interest in children was related to lower social and emotional functioning (as assessed by a set of validated measures). They argue that this could actually increase the risk of committing sexual offences. This was a correlational study, so testing the link empirically would prove difficult. However, in light of the fact that, in the present study, the most prevalent theme was a fear of being discovered, studying the impact of stigma-related stress on recidivism would be beneficial.

Other themes found included Focus on loss (including a sense of bereavement regarding their former lives) and having a Poor me/hopeless stance. Causing Damage to others was present in 16/56 of the sample. Whilst these negative emotional states could be viewed as obstacles to desistance, given that the sample appeared to be desisting, it is possible that these states are actually protective in themselves. Perhaps offenders need to feel a certain amount of shame, fear and stigma to deter them from committing further offences. Despite the presence of these themes, the levels of Hope and optimism were surprisingly high, so perhaps it is the combination of negative emotional states and optimism that are the ingredients necessary for desistance? This could be likened to the experience of stopping smoking, where the fear of the negative aspects of the behaviour, such as lung cancer, stops people repeating the behaviour. Indeed, it is this fear that anti-smoking campaigners exploit to try to encourage people

to desist, so perhaps the same psychological mechanisms are at work in desistance from sexual offending. Hence, these factors could potentially be viewed as maintenance factors for desistance rather than obstacles.

Being Socially isolated and having a Lack of purposeful activity appeared to be more practical obstacles for the group. Similarly, Harris (2014) found that the themes arising from her narrative data with sexual offenders were related to the obstacles to desistance and included the struggle to find accommodation, employment and relationships. If these factors are obstacles, they did not seem to be obstructing desistance in this sample. Another view would be that, although these are desirable factors, and probably necessary for a fulfilling life (certainly according to the GLM, Ward & Stewart, 2003), other factors are more important in terms of understanding desistance.

In terms of further potentially protective factors for desistance arising from the data, Religion and church, and Education were present, but only for a small minority of the sample. Whilst such factors may encourage desistance, they were the least prevalent topics that the men talked about, and this suggests that it is the psychological factors described above rather than these social control type factors that take priority in the desistance process.

This study also asked the participants about their turning point in relation to deciding to stop offending. The men gave four key reasons (in order of prevalence): Effect on self and others, Treatment, Arrest and prison and Wanting a positive future. These results mainly suggested that some sort of cognitive dissonance was necessary as a turning point, although the Arrest theme was more closely related to the impact of shock, the practical implications, and seemed to be less about a weighing up process. There may be two (or more) pathways from turning point to desistance; one that involves dissonance, and one that does not. Farmer et al. (2015) found that men in their study were desisting out of an agented choice about the consequences of sexual offending, and that the shock of arrest and sex offender treatment/supervision had contributed to this. The results found here are very similar and supportive, but add an alternative perspective in terms of the psychological mechanisms at work.

The data in this study also pointed to certain aspects of treatment having the most impact on the decision to stop offending. Men highlighted the victim empathy work they had completed during the SOTP programmes as being key in their decision-making. This fits with qualitative studies of treatment programmes, where men have highlighted this aspect as the most important (Wakeling, Webster, & Mann, 2005). However there has been some debate about the usefulness of victim empathy work with sexual offenders. Hanson and Morton-Bourgon (2005) found victim empathy to be unconnected to recidivism in a large-scale meta-analysis (n= 29,450). Mann and Barnett (2013) reviewed the evidence from both qualitative and quantitative studies and concluded that, in relation to recidivism, the evidence is inconclusive. Part of the debate centres around the validity of the measures used to assess the presence of victim empathy; they are not actually measuring the concept of victim empathy. Therefore, the failure to identify a relationship between the scores for such measures and recidivism does not necessarily mean that victim empathy is unimportant, but simply that researchers do not yet know how to measure it effectively.

Mann and Barnett (2013) recommend a research programme following up men who have completed treatment and who appear to be desisting to explore the longer-term impact of victim empathy. This is exactly (albeit unintentionally) what this study achieved. In addition, the researchers in this study were not connected with the treatment programme, and did not ask specifically about victim empathy or treatment programmes. This overcomes, to some extent, the problem with potentially socially desirable responding, and was a key recommendation of the Mann paper. The men involved in the current study spontaneously and voluntarily reported treatment and victim empathy to be their specific turning point. This may trigger a cognitive transformation, and further research could usefully examine this by asking men about the specific circumstances surrounding the beginning of their identity change.

The men described stopping offending as a choice and gave their reasons for it. There was little evidence found in the data to suggest that it was the presence of social controls (such as a job or relationship) that had stopped them; indeed, many of them lacked jobs and relationships and highlighted a lack of social capital and purposeful activity as themes in their lives. Again, this points to internal,

psychological factors being relevant, and that it is a sense of agency or choice that helps them to start the process. This supports the work of King (2013), Maruna (2001) and Liem and Richardson (2014), who all highlight the specific role of agency in the desistance process. Where sexual offenders appears to differ is that they seem to be desisting in spite of a lack of jobs and relationships, driven mainly by a fear of being found out, stigma and the consequences of doing it again, both for themselves and others. This decision arises out of treatment in many of this sample.

Research question 5. Do sexual offenders create a new identity as part of the desistance process?

A theme relating to 'New me' was found in 22 men of the sample at Time one. The data suggested that these men had indeed created a new identity, and that they saw themselves as different from how they were when they were offending. The language typically used was 'Old me/New me', which stems from that used in the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Sex Offender Treatment Programmes (SOTP) in England and Wales. Another theme, Identity as a sexual offender, was also found in the data (10 men) at Time one. Within this theme, the men could not separate themselves from their offending, describing themselves as 'sex offenders' and 'pedophiles'. This split across the data reflects the finding of Maruna (2001), that (typically desisting) ex-offenders had a Redemption script. His sample had undergone cognitive transformation, where they had been able to "rewrite their pasts" (Maruna, 2001, p. 87). Present in these men was also a sense of generativity and a desire to give something back, a theme also found in this study. Maruna's still active offenders had a Condemnation script, where they saw themselves as having no choice but to offend and their lives as pre-ordained. This is similar to the 'Identity as a sex offender' theme found in this research.

Harris (2014) found that cognitive transformation was relevant for the majority of the sex offenders in her study and this is supported by the fact that almost half of the present sample described the creation of a new identity. In her follow-up study, Harris (2015) finds somewhat contradictory results; most of her sample was desisting despite the lack of opportunity for informal social controls, without having any motivation to change, and without forming a new identity. Instead, they desisted out of fear and a desire to avoid custody. Similarly, in this study, a proportion of the

men were clear that they still saw themselves as sexual offenders and had not created a new identity (10/56). Additionally, the majority (30/56) were living in fear of being found out (the most prevalent theme), saw themselves as Poor me/hopeless (26/56), were socially isolated and lonely (19/56), had no purposeful activity (17/56), and were focused on loss (15/56) and shame (12/56). This paints less of a positive picture of the men's experiences; however, none of the sample was arrested, recalled or convicted for a sexual offence during the period of this study. It cannot be claimed that all of the men had embarked on longer-term desistance but, in this early stage, their self-report, and that of their Circle Co-ordinators and Offender Managers, alongside the official reports, indicated that they were not currently committing sexual offences in spite of their challenging emotional experiences. As suggested above, the current research proposes a new perspective; these factors potentially act in combination with the more positive protective factors to drive and maintain desistance.

What the data seem to be showing is that some of the men had created a new identity while others had not. However, based on the best information available, they were all living in the community and not committing sexual offences. Most of them were living in fear and had very negative experiences of living life post-conviction (shame, loss, socially isolated). It could be that the men who had managed to create a new identity go on to remain offence free, while those who had not reoffend, but this cannot be stated without long-term follow-up data. What appears to be keeping the men offence-free in this early stage is their fear of being found out and the negative consequences of their convictions. The surprising finding to return to here is that, despite living this way, many of them were hopeful and optimistic. Perhaps this points to a separation between those who were hopeful, had created a new identity and actually appeared to be thriving in spite of the stigma, and a group who was merely surviving.

Research question 7. How do sexual offenders manage their offence-related sexual interests in order to desist?

The whole group was asked two optional questions regarding the presence and management of their offence-related sexual interests. Not all of the men answered this question. Overall, 25 men answered and admitted to having offence-related sexual

interests either currently or previously. This related to 7/18 of the comparison group and 18/39 of the Circles group, around half of each group. The remaining men either did not answer or stated they did not have offence-related sexual interests.

Apart from one case, all of the responses were related to managing sexual interest in children. The most prevalent theme was that they managed this interest through cognitive techniques/self-talk. They described taking control and the battle between body and brain. This was a daily battle for some. The self-talk techniques were reflective of those taught on the SOTP programmes. The men also talked about understanding and being aware of their triggers and physical distraction techniques (again both taught during SOTP). Two men talked about the use of smelling salts and medication. This may just be a reflection of how many men under took specific behavioural treatment during their prison sentences. The men reported these physical/behavioural techniques to be very effective. One man was entering into voluntary castration as he was determined not to reoffend. Fewer men relied on external support from others, as would be expected, given the nature of the issue. Again, as with the turning points, it was the consequences for themselves and others that also helped with their management process.

In terms of living with the issue, the men talked about coming to accept their sexual interest, with some seeing it as an orientation, but stating that it was a struggle in their lives. For some men, the frequency of their offence-related sexual thoughts had decreased since their offending. Key reasons were their emotional response to it - guilt, shame and fear - following being caught. For some men, it was spontaneous or they were unaware, while others described maturing out of it or the prison experience.

Overall, the men were motivated to manage these sexual thoughts, and they were all generally positive about how they were managing it. Whilst it is noted that this was self-report, the men appeared to talk openly and honestly about the issue. What was surprising was how many of the men talked about it when asked - not something that would have been predicted for sexual offenders living in the community. There was only one man in the sample who stated that he was struggling with management. He was dreaming about his victims, and waking up to find that he

had ejaculated. This was very distressing to him and he was seeking anti-libidinal medication.

There is no previous literature with which to compare these results. However, it is noted that the men had learnt much during their treatment programmes about self-management and were still using the strategies. It was the cognitive strategies that most of the men relied on daily rather than any specific behavioural technique. There is a little support for Seto (2012), who argued that pedophilia can be viewed as a sexual orientation, with some men in the sample describing at it their 'curse' (P43) and present since very young, 'possibly birth' (P33). Although the evidence is interesting, an insufficient number of men commented on this to draw any firm conclusions. Seto (2012) also suggests that treatment may be more effective if it focuses on managing sexual interests via self-regulation work. This is how the men in this sample reported that they managed their sexual interests.

Research question 3. How does attending a Circle impact on the potential factors of desistance already identified for sexual offenders?

The data showed that various Internal factors, including hope and optimism, problem solving and goal setting, were all relevant for the men attending Circles. These factors are all identified by the literature as being potential relevant factors for desistance (de Vries Robbé et al., 2014) and reflect the internal changes found by Höing et al. (2015) in their study of Circles. In terms of External factors, the men also reported an increase in Social connectedness (30/39) and Purposeful activity (9/39), again supportive of the literature (Höing et al., 2013). Additional benefits were Accountability (13/39) (help with managing risk factors), and Practical assistance (10/39) (help with sorting bills/benefits/job interviews). They also reported the value of human capital and relationships with the volunteers (see Research question 6 below).

Research question 6. How does Circles fit within the theoretical models that propose a new identity is necessary for desistance?

The Höing et al. (2013) model highlights the development of a positive self-narrative as an outcome of attending a Circle, although no published research has examined whether engaging in a Circle helps to create a new identity. In this study, there was no evidence to suggest that being involved in a Circle actually started the

cognitive transformation process. Rather, it appears that the process had already started for some, and that being in a Circle helped the men to continue embedding their new identities. The participants reported that the Circles volunteers accepted them as people who had sexual offending histories, rather than as sexual offenders; arguably a de-labelling process and relevant to desistance.

Research question 4. What is the impact of the human relationship in Circles?

The men were clear that the impact of the human relationship was key for them. Again, Social connectedness was the most prevalent theme (30/39), with the men describing the provision of the Circle as being like a 'social crutch'. This fits with the findings of Höing et al. (2013), who focused on human and social capital, arguing that a Circle provides a "surrogate social network" (p. 271) and that this is its most important theoretical influence.

Acceptance by the volunteers was important for the men in this study and being seen as a 'normal human being' (P5) was key. This seemed to be a process of de-labelling and de-stigmatisation. Although not specifically in relation to Circles, Maruna (2004) argues that de-labelling by others is key in the desistance process. Evidence of the Pygmalion effect (Maruna et al., 2004) was also seen within this theme. The men did not want to let their Circle down, as the volunteers believed in them and donated their spare time. The donating of spare time particularly resonated with the men; it was the fact that the volunteers were not paid that was important to them.

3.4.1. Change over time

Six themes were found in relation to the question: 'how have you changed since your last interview?' (see Table 3.6.). The themes were all positive, which was interesting theoretically, given the earlier themes found of Stigma, Shame, Focus on loss, etc., and may add weight to the suggestion that these emotional challenges serve as maintenance factors rather than obstacles. The most prevalent theme was Social connectedness, with 30/47 of the sample commenting that this had increased for them in the past year. Perhaps fear and shame are bearable if an individual feels socially connected, and it is a combination of these factors that contributes to desistance. All of the men were either in a Circle or on probation supervision, and this finding might

be related to their involvement in such activities. Three men commented on their identity change in the last year. Supportive of the results found earlier, this suggests that cognitive transformation was happening for these men at this early stage, but it certainly did not apply to them all and was the least prevalent theme. Taking the turning point data into consideration, it may be that the decision to stop offending, and therefore the start of a new identity process, had already begun during arrest, imprisonment, and treatment, as well as with the realisation of the consequences.

Four key deductive themes found at Time one were examined for changes between Time one and Time two, and included: Social capital, Hope/optimism, Purposeful activity and New me. These were selected due to their presence in the current literature. Comparing the mean frequency percentage score for each theme using dependent *t* tests produced no significant differences between Time one and two, although the means tended to increase in the desired direction. This direction of differences supports the qualitative findings described above, which found that the men reported positive changes between Time one and Time two when asked if they had changed. An examination of the means for these data reveals that they are very small. There was a lot of noise in the spoken narrative data as the men were keen to tell their stories. The written narratives of the Circles men were short, with little noise. The narratives of the (mainly) comparison men may have reduced the mean percentage scores to a level where quantitative differences were unlikely to be found.

3.4.2. Challenges related to implementing the research

A key challenge in undertaking this research was facilitating the collection of data from different organisations. Organisational preferences and resource availability led to a requirement to collect written narratives in some cases and verbal narratives in others. The result was that the Circles group tended to provide written narratives while the comparison group provided a verbal narrative through interviews. Whilst the same themes emerged across the groups, the interviews were far longer than the narratives. As such, the interview data were richer, but noisier. The men providing written narratives only tended to answer the direct question prompts. As such, it is possible, certainly with the inductive themes data (Table 3.3.) such as Stigma, that the frequencies fail to represent a true reflection of the presence of the themes. To remedy this in the future, the data from all of the men might be collected

by the same method. Future research would have to consider the research questions and aim of the research carefully, then select the data collection method best suited to the inquiry.

The impact of the therapeutic relationship between the researcher and interviewee should also be considered together with the possible practical implications for treatment and assessment. The comparison group were mainly interviewed and this may have had an impact on the information they were willing/not willing to give. For example if a therapeutic relationship had started to be established, then the participant may have been more open in his responses. Similarly it might be speculated that the men who were writing may have been more open as the interviews were not face-to-face. Therefore, they were free to write whatever they wanted without, for example, fear of embarrassment by being interviewed by a female researcher, or other such inhibitors. In comment on this, the data showed that the men who were asked during the interviews about their sexual interests were, surprisingly, very willing to talk about them, and most of the data on this theme came from the interviewed men. The researchers were, importantly, not linked with any statutory agency and set out to be non-judgmental and curious. This may have produced an effect opposite to social desirability and raises the issue that asking a man to fill in a sexual interests questionnaire may result in a less honest answer than if asked outright by an independent person. This may not always be possible in typical assessment situations, where the assessor is likely to be employed in a statutory role, but should nonetheless be considered. In the context of this research it appears that the men who were interviewed were more open and gave more information on the topic, than the men who wrote narratives.

The Circles group were higher risk, and were more likely both to have sexual pre-convictions and to have undertaken sexual offender treatment than the comparison group. However, they were no more socially isolated. As no direct comparisons were undertaken in this chapter between the groups, this is of less relevance here, although in later chapters this will be considered in more detail. As only one man in the comparison group had a sexual pre conviction, this does raise the theoretical question of whether desistance is being studied in this subgroup. Some argue that true desistance represents a stopping of a *pattern* of behaviour (Laub &

Sampson, 2001), and there is evidence that men who only commit one sexual offence are less likely to offend (Harris & Hanson, 2004). In response to this, although several of the men had only one official conviction, they often had a series of sexual offences that were dealt with through one sentencing appearance, and victimisation studies in the UK show that sexual offences are far more frequent than the crime statistics report (e.g., Oaksford & Frude, 2001). As such, many of the men may have been ceasing a pattern of behaviour despite their one conviction. As a final point, it was extremely difficult to engage men in the community in the research (82% refusal rate in the comparison group). Hence, to start excluding men based on insufficient sexual offending would have seriously impacted on the sample size. In summary, given that this is such a new area of study, any exploratory information on how men experience this phase following conviction is useful, and contributes towards building a picture of desistance as a whole.

Another issue to be considered here is that the dropouts differed as a group - they were significantly younger. Whilst it could be argued that this influenced the findings at Time one, there were no differences found between the themes analysed at Time one and Time two, suggesting that the dropouts did not have a meaningful impact on the data.

One of the issues that plagues desistance research is finding a desisting sample. This current study does not use reconviction as a dependent variable so, whilst a truly desisting sample was not important in this respect, it is useful to consider if the study is trying to draw out potential themes of desistance. All of the men self-reported having stopped committing sexual offences, and this was matched with official data, and reports of the Circles Co-ordinators and Offender Managers. Four of the men in the sample were recalled to prison during the study, all for breaching their orders. None had committed contact sexual offences and the recalls were for a variety of reasons that were considered to be risk behaviour. The details can be seen in Appendix F. This subsample would have made interesting data, and indeed two men did agree to be seen in prison. However, the group was too small for any meaningful comparisons to be made.

3.4.3. Implications for practice

The men indicated that treatment (SOTP), both in prison and in the community, had been extremely useful for them. Many reported that it was the turning point that triggered their decision to stop offending. It was particularly learning about the impact on victims, and the consequences for themselves and others that were important. This has implications for practice, as the victim empathy modules have recently been removed from the NOMS treatment programmes due to a lack of empirical evidence of their worth. This research would not support this decision.

The themes of stigma, shame and fear of discovery were very present in the sample, and interesting theoretically. In terms of what these themes mean for practice, this is something of an enigma at this point. If indeed these themes are maintenance factors for desistance, and the men report that these are the key reasons for them not offending, then to try and remove or reduce them may well have the opposite effect than desired. This would be contrary to the recommendations of Jahnke et al. (2015), whose research found a relationship between stigma-related stress and reduced social and emotional functioning in a large sample of men with sexual interests in children. However, this was correlational research, and there may be an unknown third variable at work here. This is a key issue to resolve via future research. Practitioners need to know if helping to reduce fear and stigma works with or against desistance. At this point, this research suggests that the presence of such factors actually work towards maintaining an offence-free life. Perhaps men in treatment just need to be aware that unpleasant emotional experiences such as shame may be working to protect them.

In terms of managing sexual interests, this research suggests that it is the cognitive, self-talk/regulation strategies that remained with most men, and the ones they used daily. There was some level of acceptance of their interest, despite the struggle, and perhaps an approach that allows them to accept who they are, but without condoning it as ideal. The teaching of self-regulation skills may be as effective (as recommended by Seto, 2012) as trying to modify sexual preferences, if indeed the men are living with an orientation rather than something they have learnt and need to unlearn. Clearly, this area needs more research and would require an entire shift in culture and practice, both from professionals and society in general.

For Circles, there was indication that these higher risk men were finding engaging in a Circle to be beneficial, crucially in terms of providing a social crutch, and being accepted by 'normal' people. This de-labelling was key, since it allowed those who had started to form new identities to continue with this process. Whilst this seemed to be happening as an unconscious result of the Circle process, it could be something that Circles might consider as an overt aim when training and supporting their volunteers. This implication is not limited to Circles and, to help to promote positive identity formation, SOTP programmes, Offender Mangers and other relevant individuals could help by encouraging men who have committed sexual offences not to label themselves as sexual offenders (or to do so themselves).

3.4.4. Future research

There is some evidence to suggest that the first two years at risk are the least safe for sexual offenders (Harris & Hanson, 2004), so to capture a group of men at this time and follow them for a year adds a valuable angle to the desistance research. It would be useful to follow the men up to determine whether or not they had continued to desist, and whether the themes found at this early stage correlate with later offence-free living. In particular, follow-up research could concentrate on the areas of identity formation and sexual interests, both of which are raised and explored here. A further examination of the long-term value of victim empathy and if it is this that specifically triggers identity change would also be valuable to establish if negative emotional experiences such as stigma and shame operate as maintenance factors for desistance.

Chapter Four Examining the process of early desistance using linguistic inquiry

Chapter Three provides a qualitative exploration of the early period of time when sexual offenders are first at risk, and found support for the proposed factors of desistance for sexual offending suggested by the literature. The study also found several inductive themes arising from the literature in relation to the factors that may maintain desistance. One of the research questions of this thesis aims to explore how a Circle impacts on the desistance process, and the previous chapter explored the themes related to the men's experiences of desistance and being in a Circle. This chapter will seek to explore the underlying psychological mechanisms of the early desistance process further, through undertaking an analysis of word use by a group of sexual offenders. It will then compare the narratives of a group of men engaging in a Circle to a comparison group using linguistic analysis. This introduction will outline the research on the psychological meaning of language use and why it is useful to measure this over time. It will describe the text analysis program to be used in the study and review studies that have examined word use as a marker of psychological function and change.

4.1.1. Word use as a marker of psychological function

It is well established that what people say provides a window into their cognitive and emotional worlds; this concept dates back as far as Freud (1901). More recently, researchers have begun to study the meaning behind the use of language; *how* people say something in addition to what they say. The use of positive and negative emotions in word use has been investigated, based on the premise that their emotional response to events reflects how people are experiencing the world. Linguistic analysis has been found to identify more positive emotion words when writing about positive events and more negative words when writing about negative events. Additionally, Tausczik and Pennebaker (2010) report that emotion language use correlates significantly with various other key language features and so is important regarding thinking styles, the meaning of which is not yet known.

Studies using linguistic word analysis have consistently shown that the use of the first person singular pronoun (e.g., I) is elevated in those with depression, and those who are experiencing physical or emotional trauma (Rude, Gortner, &

Pennebaker, 2004). This finding has been replicated in suicidal participants (Stirman & Pennebaker, 2001) and those with sexual abuse histories (Leonard & Folette, 2002). Linguistic analysis has also been shown to differentiate between individuals regarding status level in a group (Sexton & Helmreich, 2000), show how cohesive a group is (Gonzales, Hancock, & Pennebaker, 2009), sort between liars and truth-tellers (Hancock, Curry, Goorha, & Woodworth, 2007), indicate how close a relationship is (Simmons, Chambless, & Gordon, 2008) and distinguish between adult attachment styles (Cassidy, Sherman, & Jones (2012).

Linguistic analysis has been utilised extensively in the health and clinical literature, although the word use of offenders has also recently started to be investigated. Hancock, Woodworth and Porter (2013) compared psychopathic (n=14) with non-psychopathic (n=38) male murderers in Canada using text analysis programming and found that psychopaths focused more on their material needs compared to social needs. They also used more past tense and less present tense verbs, which the authors postulate shows an ability for higher psychological detachment. Their language was also less emotional and affable than that of the non-psychopathic controls. All of these findings are in line with the established research on psychopaths. The main critique of this study is that the language analysed was that used to describe the murders, which is an unusual event, and differs for each individual. Additionally, psychopaths may commit a different type of murder to non-psychopaths (e.g., more instrumental) and so may describe the event differently. An alternative method would be to ask both groups to describe the same factual event, and then analyse their descriptions.

4.1.3. Word use as a marker of psychological change

There has also been research into language use as a marker of psychological change (Pennebaker, Matthias, Mehl, & Niederhoffer, 2003). Studies have been undertaken of word use in response to trauma; for example, after shootings in a school in the US (Gortner & Pennebaker, 2003) and following the death of Princess Diana (Stone & Pennebaker, 2002). Cohn, Mehl, & Pennebaker (2004) studied language use associated with psychological change following the September 11th terror attacks. They analysed the online journals of 1084 people over a two-month period, pre and post the attacks. The results showed more negative emotion and a greater

psychological distancing as well as a higher level of cognitive processing and social orientation following 9/11. This effect was stronger for those who were more preoccupied with the attacks, but also present among those who were not preoccupied (measured by how often they wrote about it). Interestingly, the psychological changes remained following the 6-week analysis. It would have been useful to follow up this study longer term, as arguably the scale of the impact is unmatched, and the effect on long-term change remains unmeasured. Similarly, it is unclear how the results of this study can be generalised to other populations or other events, given the scale of the trauma. Nevertheless, the results are interesting as they provide support for using text analysis strategies to seek individual, psychological changes over a period of time.

Liehr, Marcus, Carroll, Granmayeh, Cron, and Pennebaker (2010) used Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC – see section 4.1.2. below) as a method for analysing change following a mindfulness intervention for adults in substance abuse recovery. The treatment group and a control were asked to write stories about their stress over a period of time. Self-change was assessed using the positive/negative emotion, cognitive processes, anxiety and insight and inhibition word categories from the LIWC dictionary as the dependant variables, pre to post intervention. No statistically significant differences were found between the two groups across the time period with regard to positive/negative emotion word use or cognitive processes. However, positive emotion word use increased, and negative emotion and anxiety word use decreased over time for both groups. The intervention group used fewer negative emotion words overall. Whilst the study does not provide support for mindfulness-based intervention, it does show support for the use of LIWC to measure changes over time. Additionally, the decrease in the use of negative/anxiety word use and increase in positive word use reflected the direction of change in the other measures used in the study, indicating reliability. From a critical perspective, this study had very high attrition rates (an average of around 85% across the groups) and the sensitivity of LIWC as an outcome measure may well have been impacted by the drastic reduction in the number of participants over time.

4.1.2. Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC; Pennebaker, Booth, & Francis, 2007)

LIWC is a computerised text analysis program that counts the emotional, cognitive and structural components present in written and verbal speech. Word count programs investigate psychologically the content (what) and style (how) of what is being said (Pennebaker et al., 2003), and create data that can be used for statistical analysis. The technique can measure implicit, psychological differences in word use. As people do not tend consciously to monitor their word use, this technique can overcome some of the difficulties associated with socially desirable reporting (Meston, Heiman, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 1998). This may be particularly relevant to sexual offenders, as a group who may be more likely to present in a way that is socially desirable to mask publicly unacceptable ways of thinking and behaviour.

LIWC 2007 has an internal dictionary of over 4,500 words and word stems which are grouped into various dictionary categories, including linguistic processes, psychological processes and personal concerns, arranged hierarchically. Each category is composed of a list of dictionary words that define that category. Each category in turn has a list of sub categories including, for example, verbs, swear words, cognitive, social and affective processes, work, achievement and death. LIWC reads each word and searches for a match in its dictionary. The output consists of over 80 variables. The original dictionary was developed in several steps, including the initial word collection for each category, two judge rating phases and psychometric evaluation. To establish reliability and validity, LIWC was used to analyse over 8 million words and any categories with low/poor reliability or validity were excluded. In the updated version, several hundred thousand text files consisting of several hundred million words were analysed using LIWC in order to identify new words and word categories, which then underwent the judges' rating phases (Pennebaker et al., 2007).

The internal reliability, external validity and predictive validity of the LIWC categories have been demonstrated across several studies, including Pennebaker and Chung (2007), Pennebaker, Francis, and Booth (2001), and Pennebaker and King (1999). The studies have focussed on how the words we use can reflect our individual differences and situational and social processes, and act as markers of psychological

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function and health change (Pennebaker et al., 2003). In this study, LIWC will be used to investigate psychological change.

The research is starting to produce some interesting findings regarding using LIWC as a strategy for evaluation, and word use as a marker for change. Although Tausczik and Pennebaker (2010) report that the LIWC categories have been "linked in hundreds of studies to interesting psychological processes" (p. 30), there are no known published studies to date that investigate the word use of sexual offenders and how this may change over time. LIWC was chosen specifically for this study as it is widely available and already has an established research base in clinical populations. Its use here is thought to be valuable as it can be used to explore language use over a certain time period of interest for sexual offenders, but also facilitate comparisons between an intervention group (Circles) and a comparison group, making it possible to explore if psychological health changes over this early period of being at risk, when the men may be in the initial stages of desistance.

4.1.4. Relevance to Circles

Evaluations of Circles projects internationally and in the UK have tended to focus on reoffending rates (Wilson et al., 2009; Duwe, 2013; Bates et al., 2013) and are showing promising results (see Chapter Two for details). Much has been previously written about the problems associated with using recidivism rates alone as a dependent variable for assessing the impact of sex offender intervention. The base rate of sexual reoffending is low (Harris & Hanson, 2004) and follow-up needs to be extensive in order to capture a more accurate rate of reoffending (Doren, 1988). Recidivism studies do not usually comment on decreases in victim harm or improvement in quality of life for the (ex) offender. However, it is important to understand whether Circles does impact on recidivism so that resources can be allocated accordingly. Whilst longer follow-ups are awaited, it would be useful to explore how and why Circles may work in relation to desistance. This research proposes that Circles works as it increases the protective desistance factors. As such, it could be hypothesised that there may also be an increase over time in the psychological health of the men attending Circles, and that this change could be measured through the use of linguistic analysis.

4.1.5. Hypotheses

1. There will be no difference in the LIWC variables of interest between the Circles and comparison group at Time one.

2. There will be a statistically significant difference in the LIWC variables related to improvements in psychological health (first person singular, cognitive mechanisms, present tense, social processes, positive emotion and present tense) between the Circles and a comparison group at Time two, with the Circles group showing an increase in mean scores for these variables over time.

3. There will be a statistically significant difference in the LIWC variables rated as relevant to sexual offending (sexual, affective processes, negative emotion, anger, sadness, anxiety, and insight) between the two groups at Time two.

4.2. Method

4.2.1. Design

A prospective, longitudinal, narrative design was used with two groups of male sexual offenders; a group of men engaged in a Circle and a group on probation licence in West Yorkshire and not engaged in a Circle.

4.2.2. Participants

There were 57 participants in this study; 39 men engaged in a Circle and 18 men on probation licence in West Yorkshire (the same group of participants described in Chapter Three). The selection and recruitment of the participants is described in detail in the Procedure section of that chapter, and outlined again very briefly below. All of the participants gave informed consent for the study, were free to withdraw at any time and were not offered any incentive for participation. The only exclusions made were female offenders.

4.2.3. Materials and measures

4.2.3.1. My Story

A method for recording the interview/narrative, known as 'My Story' (see Appendix A), was developed by the researcher and is described in detail in Chapter

Three. 'My Story' was designed to allow the participant to give as much information about his experience as possible, since a free flow of information was encouraged. However, to aid focus, and also to enable pre to post comparisons, several prompts were given that were based on the desistance framework. A pilot of 'My Story' was carried out and relevant changes were made (see Chapter Three).

4.2.3.2. LIWC

As there was no current research on the use of LIWC with sexual offenders, a decision had to be made about which of the 80 possible variables to include. Variables were excluded that related to the counting of numerals, words per sentence, grammar, or other structural variables that had not been included in previous research. All category and meaning variables were retained, even if they did not have face validity, (e.g., space, time motion), due to this being exploratory research. This resulted in 45 variables spread across the categories of linguistic processes, psychological processes and personal concerns. Ten forensic professionals with experience of working with sexual offenders were asked to rate each of these 45 LIWC variables in terms of their relevance to sexual offending, on a scale of 0 (low) -10 (high). The scoring template can be seen in Appendix G. A high degree of agreement was found between the raters. The average measures intra class correlation was .862 with a 95% confidence interval of .782 to .917, $F(44) = 9.466$, $p < .001$. The mean ranking for each variable was calculated in order to provide a list of the least to the most relevant. The top 10 most relevant variables as rated by the professionals were then considered in this research. These variables in order of importance were:

(1) Sexual

(-) Negative emotion

(3) Affective processes

(4) Anxiety

(5) Anger

(-) Sadness

(-) Insight

(8) Cognitive processes

(-) Social processes

(10) Positive emotion

Three further LIWC variables were included to examine the parity of the narratives collected between the two groups. These included:

- *Word count* - overall total word count per text, useful for descriptive purposes.
- *Words per sentence* - total words per sentence. This has been used to compare similarity between texts collected under different conditions (Lorenz & Meston, 2012) and therefore is useful as a reliability check.
- *Dictionary words* - counts the percentage of words within the text found in the LIWC dictionary. This is also useful for examining the equality across texts submitted from different conditions (Lorenz & Meston, 2012).

Additional LIWC variables were also selected, as the published research suggests that they may be relevant to psychological change and that it would be useful to validate these findings with a sexual offender population. Some of these LIWC variables overlap with the variables rated as relevant by the forensic professionals and are shown here again with a brief summary of the previous research.

- *First person singular* – (e.g., I, me, mine). Studies have consistently shown that a high use of these words has been associated with depression, anxiety and suicidality, and shows a high level of self pre-occupation (Pennebaker et al., 2003)
- *Social processes* – (e.g., mate, talk). This reflects how much the writer refers to others, and has been found to increase in times of shared crisis (Cohn et al., 2004).
- *Positive emotion* – (e.g., happy, good, nice). A high use of positive emotion words has been linked to improvements in health (Pennebaker et al., 2003).
- *Negative emotion* – (e.g., hurt, ugly, nasty). There is an inverse relationship between the use of negative emotions and health (Pennebaker et al., 2003).
- *Cognitive mechanisms* – (e.g., cause, know). This reflects how much the writer intellectually processes and understands the issues in their writing (Cohn et al., 2004), and an increase in cognitive word use has been linked to health improvement (Petrie, Booth, & Pennebaker, 1998).
- *Present tense* – (e.g., is, does). A focus on the present rather than the past indicates psychological distancing from previous events (Hancock et al., 2007).

4.2.4. Ethical approval

The Departmental Ethics Committee, Psychology Department, University of York, the National Offender Management Service Research Board, and the Circles UK Research Board all granted full ethical approval for this study.

4.2.5. Procedure

The procedure for selecting and recruiting participants and gathering the data in this study was the same as that outlined in Chapter Three. An outline will be presented here of the procedure for collecting the narrative data, but for a full description of how the study was set up within Circles and West Yorkshire Probation, please see Chapter Three.

4.2.5.1. Circles group

Following the granting of all relevant permission, instructions about introducing My Story to the core members across different Circles projects were discussed, and a standardised instruction sheet was provided for each Co-ordinator (see Appendix B), along with a standard consent form (see Appendix C). The aim was for the Co-ordinator to facilitate a written My Story so that the Circle would not be impacted by either the research or the presence of a researcher. This was requested by local projects and Circles UK. In the Manchester project, the participants were seen by either the researcher or an assistant due to the lack of resources. The men were interviewed rather than providing written narratives. There were two tasks for the Co-ordinator to complete with each core member;

1. Introduce the consent form and seek informed consent prior to the start of the Circle
2. Complete the My Story at the beginning and end of the Circle.

If the core member agreed, he was asked to sign the consent form and then complete the first My Story. Data were then sent to the researcher for analysis.

Demographic information relevant to the literature on sexual offending, including age, ethnicity, risk level (RM2000), current offence type, gender of victim, type of victim (adult or child), number and type of pre convictions (sexual and non-sexual), completion of previous treatment, sentence type and sentence start date, for each participant were gathered from a central database held by Circles UK.

4.2.5.2. Comparison group

The comparison group consisted of 18 men convicted of sexual offences and currently on probation licence in West Yorkshire. They were identified from the central database held by West Yorkshire Probation and full details of how they were recruited and introduced to the research are provided in Chapter Three.

If the participant agreed to participate, he was seen by the researcher at the local probation office. Informed consent was sought and then the My Story task was introduced. The My Story was completed verbally and recorded on a Dictaphone. It is noted that this method of data collection differs from the Circles group, who typically wrote their narratives with their Circle Co-ordinator, and the reasons for this difference are explained fully in Chapter Three. The potential consequences of using differing data collection methods between the groups will be explored further in the Results and Discussion sections of this chapter. At around 12 months, the participant was contacted again and an appointment set up with the researcher. The same My Story task was repeated, the participant was thanked for his participation, and no further contact was made.

4.2.6. Data preparation

The written and spoken narratives were transcribed by two research assistants skilled in audio and copy typing, and the text was prepared for analysis in accordance with the LIWC2007 Operators Manual (Pennebaker et al., 2007). The text was then entered directly into LIWC for linguistic analysis.

4.2.7. Planned statistical analysis

A series of mixed between-within subjects analysis of variance were planned to explore if there was any difference in the participants' scores between (and within) the Circles and comparison groups on the LIWC variables, across the two time periods (Time one and Time two). The use of MANOVA was considered in order to try and control for Type one errors; however, the basic assumptions of the test were not met (less than 20 in each group).

4.2.7.1. *Power analysis*

A power analysis was conducted to determine the sample size needed for a between factor ANOVA, using Gpower, v3.1 (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). This revealed that, in order for an effect of this size ($f = .50$, medium effect) to be found (80% chance), at the $p < .05$ level of significance, a total of 32 participants were needed. There were 47 participants in this study (following attrition).

4.3. Results

The issue of attrition is considered, followed by the demographic characteristics of both groups and the results of the statistical analysis.

4.3.1. Attrition

As discussed in detail in Chapter Three (same sample), ten men dropped out of the study between Time one and Time two; eight from the Circles group and two from the comparison group, with an overall rate of 17.5%. The reasons for the attrition can be seen in Appendix F. The drop out numbers were too small to compare between the Circles and comparison groups, but the drop out group as a whole was compared to the rest of the sample present at Time two to examine if there were any differences between them. Chapter Three describes how Fisher's Exact test was undertaken to compare between the groups on age and risk category. The results showed that the men in the dropout group were significantly younger than those still present at Time two. As the current study aimed to compare between and within the groups at Time one and Time two, and there were differences between the dropouts and the remaining men at Time Two, only men present at both Time one and Time two were included in the analysis. This brought the total number of participants to 47.

4.3.2. Description of the sample

Table 4.1.

Demographic information for the Circles and Comparison group

	Circles Group (n=31) n (%)	Comparison Group (n=16) n (%)	Total (n=47) n (%)
Ethnicity			
White British	27 (87.1)	15 (93.8)	42 (89.3)
White Irish	1 (3.2)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.12)
Any other White	1 (3.2)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.12)
Black/Black British	1 (3.2)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.12)
Asian/Asian British	0 (0.0)	1(6.25)	1 (2.12)
Missing	1 (3.2)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.12)
Age			
18-25	1 (3.2)	1 (6.3)	2 (4.2)
26-35	3 (9.7)	1 (6.3)	4 (8.5)
36-45	8 (25.8)	2 (12.5)	10 (21.2)
46-60	14 (45.2)	7 (43.8)	21 (44.6)
61+	5 (16.1)	5 (31.3)	10 (21.2)
RM2000			
Low	8 (25.8)	8 (50.0)	16 (34.0)
Medium	5 (16.1)	6 (37.5)	11(23.4)*
High	4 (12.9)	2 (12.5)	6 (12.7)
Very High	12 (38.7)	0 (0.0)	12 (25.5)*
Missing	2 (6.5)	0 (0.0)	2 (4.2)
Type Sex Offence			
Adult	2 (6.5)	5 (31.3)	7 (14.8)
Child	18 (58.1)	7 (43.8)	25 (53.1)
Both	1 (3.2)	1 (6.3)	2 (4.2)
Internet only	7 (22.6)	3 (18.8)	10 (21.2)
Breach of SOPO	1 (3.2)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.12)
Missing	1 (3.2)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.12)
Not Known	1 (3.2)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.12)

Table 4.1.

Has sexual pre cons	6 (19.4)	0 (0.0)	6 (12.7)
Has no sexual pre cons	23 (74.2)	16 (100)	39 (82.9)
Missing	2 (6.5)	0 (0.0)	2 (4.2)
SOTP completed	30 (96.8)	8 (50)	38 (80.9)*
Mean time at risk (months)	14.15	26.44	18.83

* denotes a significant difference between the groups at the *p*< .0125 level
(Bonferroni correction applied)

4.3.3. Demographics and differences between the groups

Preliminary analysis was undertaken to explore if there were any differences
between the groups on the demographics variables of ethnicity, age category, Risk
Matrix category, type of offence and treatment status. As the frequencies in some
cells were less than five, the age categories were collapsed (18-35 and 36-60+), as
were the Risk Matrix categories (Low/Medium and High/Very High) to allow for
analysis. Only the categories of Adult and Child were used in the type of offence
categories. As the cell sizes were still small, Fisher's Exact test was utilised. The
Bonferroni correction was applied (*p*< .05/4 = .0125). There was no significant
difference found between the groups on the age category (*p*= 1.0, two tailed) or the
type of offence (*p*= .331, two tailed). There was a significant difference between the
groups on the Risk Matrix categories (*p*= .01, two tailed). It can be seen by looking at
the frequency data that only two men in the comparison group fell into the High/Very
high category compared to 16 in the Circles group. Therefore, the Circles group was
higher risk than the comparison group. There was also a significant difference (*p*=
.001) between the groups on treatment status, with the Circles group being more
likely to have completed treatment for their sexual offending.

The frequency data in each cell were too small to allow for analysis in the
ethnicity category, although it can be clearly seen that most of the men were

Caucasion in both groups. The cell size was also too small for analysis in the sexual pre conviction category. It can be seen from looking at the data that the Circles group (*n*=23) was more likely to have sexual pre convictions than the comparison group (*n*=0).

As described in Chapter Three, there was one outlier in the comparison group: a Life sentenced prisoner who had been at risk for 142 months (11.8 years), and who substantially impacted on the mean time at risk. Taking him out of the sample reduced the comparison group mean for time at risk to 18.73 months, which is comparable to the Circles mean of 14.15 months. This participant was removed from any further analysis.

In conclusion, the Circles group was higher risk and more likely to have sexual pre convictions and to have undertaken sexual offender treatment than the comparison group. These factors should be considered when interpreting the results. However, they were of a similar age (mostly in the 36-60+ age bracket), ethnicity (White), mostly child offenders and had a similar time at risk (14-18 months).

Table 4.2. *Mean percentage frequency scores on the LIWC variables for the Circles and comparison groups*

| Variable | Circles (n=31) | | | | Comparison (n=16) | | | |
| | Time one | | Time two | | Time one | | Time two | |
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Sexual	0.38	0.49	0.43	0.55	0.27	0.21	0.23	0.23
Insight	3.06	1.22	3.05	0.97	2.63	1.23	2.92	1.10
Negative emotion	2.61	0.85	2.72	1.47	2.05	0.79	1.88	0.51
Affective processes	5.89	1.43	5.93	2.29	4.81	1.15	4.70	0.83
Anxiety	0.48	0.47	0.46	0.45	0.29	0.17	0.29	0.19
Anger	0.97	0.45	1.07	0.60	0.81	0.36	0.72	0.39
Sadness	0.45	0.37	0.89	1.78	0.35	0.35	0.24	0.16
Cognitive processes	18.12	2.55	17.74	3.86	19.20	2.03	19.40	1.78
Social processes	7.23	2.66	6.93	2.98	9.62	1.46	9.36	1.97
Positive emotion	3.20	1.25	3.14	1.46	2.75	0.88	2.80	0.55
First person singular	11.28	2.67	10.73	3.01	10.65	2.18	10.61	1.73
Present tense	10.34	3.10	10.58	2.89	11.20	1.25	12.18	1.28
Word count	1292.19	1420.66	1934.30	2323.32	3702.00	2111.65	3497.25	1836.94
Words per sentence	18.78	5.15	17.19	5.31	23.47	14.35	18.53	8.09
Dictionary words	92.76	2.45	89.99	16.86	93.11	1.56	94.29	1.05

4.3.4. Statistical analysis

A series of independent t tests were planned to explore the difference between the Circles and comparison group means on each of the three LIWC variables (Word count, Words per sentence (WPS) and Dictionary words) relating to parity. This was a reliability check on the data collection methodology, that was necessary as this differed between groups. It was undertaken at Time one only as data were collected by the same method for each individual at Time one and Time two. The Bonferroni correction was applied ($p< .05/3= .017$).

Homogeneity of variance was assumed for Dictionary words, but not for Word count or WPS. The tests of normality revealed that the data were not normally distributed for Word count and WPS. As such, these variables were log transformed across the sub groups to allow comparisons to take place. This resulted in normally distributed data when tests of normality were re run on the WPS. The data for Word count could not be successfully transformed. However, it is clear that the means are very different (Circles group $M= 1292.19$, comparison group $M= 3702$), with the comparison group mean being more than twice that of the Circles group mean. This relates to the fact that the Circles group tended to provide written narratives (the men in the Manchester project were interviewed) and all of the comparison men provided verbal narratives.

Independent t tests revealed there was no significance difference between the means of the Circles and comparison group at Time one on the WPS variable, $t(44)= -.902, p= .379$ or the Dictionary words variable, $t(44)= -.756, p= .453$. The non-significant results on these tests of reliability are positive for the research and suggest that, even though the Word count differed between the groups, the texts were similar and could be used for comparison purposes.

A series of mixed between-within subjects analyses of variance were conducted to assess if there were any difference in the participants' scores for the remaining LIWC variables between the Circles and comparison groups, across the two time periods (Time one and Time two). The data were normally distributed for the Social processes, Affective processes, Positive emotion and Insight variables. The scores were successfully log transformed for the Negative emotion, Anxiety and

Sexual variables. Assumptions were met across all analyses on the Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices and Levene's test of Equality of Variance on these variables. It was noted that the mean scores for both groups at Time one and Time two on the Insight variable were almost identical and, as such, no statistical testing was applied. As the probability levels may have been reduced by running so many comparisons, this allowed for a slightly higher probability level to be utilized. The Bonferroni correction was applied to control for Type 1 error ($p< .05/6= .008$). Effect sizes (eta squared) will also be considered in addition to significance levels. The recommendations provided by Cohen (1988, p. 284) for interpretation are:

.01= small effect,

.06= moderate effect,

.14= large effect.

Sexual

There was no significant interaction between the type of group and time, Wilks' Lambda = .995, F (1,32)= .153, $p= .698$, partial eta squared = .005, and no main effect for time, Wilks' Lambda = .998, F (1,32)= .64, $p= .80$, partial eta squared = .002. This indicates that there was no impact of attending a Circle on the mean percentage scores for this variable.

The main effect when comparing between the two groups was not significant, F (1,32)= 7.35, $p= .011$, partial eta squared = .187. Although not significant at the $p< .008$ level, this represents a large effect size. Referring to the means, it can be seen that the Circles group had a higher mean at both Time one and Time two compared to the comparison group, indicating that they used more Sexual category words.

Negative emotion

There was no significant interaction between the type of group and time, Wilks' Lambda = .992, F (1,44)= .354, $p= .555$, partial eta squared = .008 and no main effect for time, Wilks' Lambda = .994, F (1,44)= .266, $p= .609$, and partial eta squared = .006, again indicating no impact of attending a Circle.

The main effect when comparing between the two groups was significant, F (1,44)= 10.06, $p= .003$, partial eta squared = .186. This represents a large effect size.

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The Circles group had a higher mean score compared to the comparison group at Time one and Time two, meaning that they used more Negative emotion words.

Affective processes

There was no significant interaction between the type of group and time, Wilks' Lambda = .99, $F (1,44)= .06$, $p= .808$, partial eta squared = .001, and no main effect for time, Wilks' Lambda = 1.0, $F (1,44)= .018$, $p= .895$, partial eta squared = .001, showing no impact of attending a Circle.

The main effect when comparing between the two groups was not significant, $F (1,44)= 7.2$, $p = .01$, partial eta squared = .141. However, this represents a large effect size. The means for the Circles group were higher at both Time one and Time two.

Anxiety

There was no significant interaction between the type of group and time, Wilks' Lambda = 99, $F (1,35)= .021$, $p= .885$, partial eta squared = .001 and no main effect for time, Wilks' Lambda = 1.0, $F (1,35)= .001$, $p= .979$, partial eta squared = .000. This suggests that there was no impact of attending a Circle on the use of Anxiety words.

The main effect when comparing between the two groups was not significant, $F (1,35)= 7.74$, $p= .009$. Partial eta squared = .162, representing a large effect size. The Circles group had a higher mean score at both Time one and Time two showing that in general they used more Anxiety category words.

Social processes

There was no significant interaction between the type of group and time, Wilks' Lambda = 1.0, $F (1,44)=.00$, $p= .99$, partial eta squared = .001 and no main effect for time, Wilks' Lambda = .99, $F (1,44)= .47$, $p= .489$, partial eta squared = .011. This indicates that there was no impact of attending a Circle.

The main effect when comparing between the two groups was not significant, $F(1,30) = .00$, $p = .99$. Partial eta squared = .001. This shows that the scores were generally the same across both groups on the social processes category words.

Positive emotion

There was no significant interaction between the type of group and time, Wilks' Lambda = 99, $F(1,45) = .059$, $p = .810$, partial eta squared = .001, and no main effect for time, Wilks' Lambda = 1.0, $F(1,45) = .00$, $p = .987$, partial eta squared = .001. This indicates there was no impact of attending a Circle.

The main effect when comparing between the two groups was not significant, $F(1,45) = 1.85$, $p = .18$, partial eta squared = .040. This was a small effect size. The Circles group had higher mean scores at both Time one and Time two.

The data on the remaining LIWC variables of First person singular, Cognitive processes, Present tense, Anger and Sadness were not normally distributed and could not be transformed to enable mixed between-within subjects ANOVA. As recommended by Wright et al. (2011), for small samples of clinical data, bootstrapping based on 1000 bootstrap samples was applied to the data. This allowed for independent and dependent t tests to compare between and within the groups on these variables.

4.3.5. Independent t tests (Circles versus comparison) Time one

Homogeneity of variance was assumed and the Bonferroni correction was applied ($p < .05/5 = .01$). There was no significant difference at Time one between the Circles and comparison groups on the LIWC variables of First person singular, Cognitive processes, Present tense, Anger and Sadness.

4.3.6. Independent t tests (Circles versus comparison) Time two

The Bonferroni correction was applied ($p < .05/5 = .01$). There was no significant difference at Time two between the Circles and comparison groups on the LIWC variables of First person singular and Sadness.

There was a significant difference at Time two on the Anger variable between the Circles group (*M*= 1.07, *SE*= .108) and the comparison group (*M*= .72, *SE*= .100), *t*(45)= 2.11, *p*= .010 (one tailed). This is an effect size of .051 (partial eta squared) and is approaching a moderate effect. This shows that the Circles groups had a higher mean percentage score on the Anger variable at Time two. The earlier *t* tests showed there was no difference at Time one, suggesting that the Circles group had increased their scores on this variable over time whereas the comparison group had not. Dependent *t* tests are reported below, which examine this statistically.

There was a significant difference at Time two on the Present tense variable between the Circles group (*M*= 10.58, *SE*= .518) and the comparison group (*M*= 12.18, *SE*= .308) *t*(1,45)= -2.087, *p*= .008 (one tailed). Partial eta squared = .02, a small effect size. The earlier *t* tests showed no difference, and indicated that the comparison group increased their mean percentage score on this variable whereas the Circles group did not.

There was no significant difference on the Cognitive processes variable; Circles group (*M*= 17.74, *SE*= .68) and the comparison group (*M*= 19.40, *SE*= .45) *t*(1,45)= -1.626, *p*= .028 (one tailed). This is an effect size of .05 (partial eta squared). The comparison group had higher mean percentage scores at Time two, and as the earlier *t* tests show, there was no difference at Time one.

4.3.7. Dependent *t* tests (Time one versus Time two) Circles group

The Bonferroni correction was applied (*p*< .05/5= .01). There were no significant differences between the Time one and Time two mean scores for the Circles group on the LIWC variables of First person singular, Cognitive processes, Present tense, Anger and Sadness, showing that their scores had not changed significantly over time.

4.3.8. Dependent *t* tests (Time one versus Time two) comparison group

There were no significant differences between the Time one and Time two mean scores for the comparison group on the LIWC variables of First person singular, Cognitive Processes, Anger and Sadness.

There was a difference between the mean scores at Time one (*M*= 11.20, *SE*= .304) and Time two (*M*= 12.18, *SE*= .299) for the comparison group on the Present tense variable, $t(1,15)$= -3.85*, p*= .008, and this reached significance at the *p*< .01 level. This represented a large effect size of .22 (partial eta squared) and showed that their scores had significantly increased over time.

4.4. Discussion

The tests of reliability indicated that, despite the Word count difference between the groups' narratives (those of the comparison groups were significantly longer as they were all interviewed), the texts were not significantly different regarding other variables of parity. Given these results, it has to be assumed that the method of data collection had no significant impact on the data, apart from the number of words. As has been previously noted, the decision to include a comparison group with a different data collection methodology was weighed up, and it was concluded that to have a comparison group would add more rigour to the study than not including one.

The first hypothesis predicted that there would be no significant difference between the two groups' scores at Time one on any of the LIWC variables tested. No statistically significant differences were found apart from on the Negative emotion variable (and large effect size), with the Circles group having a higher mean score at Time one (and Time two) compared to the comparison group. The aim of this analysis was to establish if the groups were suitable for comparison purposes. In general, the hypothesis can be accepted, and the comparison group is suitable for purpose. However, the finding of higher scores in the Circles group for the Negative emotion variable, which is found in previous research to have an inverse relationship with health (Pennebaker et al., 2003), is interesting. The Circles group mean scores on this variable did not increase (or decrease) significantly over time, indicating that the impact of the Circle did not have an impact on this variable. Rather, the group just had a larger presence of these words in their narratives. It could be that this is a reflection of their higher risk or treatment status (treated), as both of these factors were significantly different between the groups. It is thought less likely that this is a result of treatment programmes, which are focussed on positive psychology and more

recently the GLM (Ward & Stewart, 2003). It could be the higher risk status; higher risk sexual offenders tend to have increased features of inadequacy (Thornton, 2002).

Secondly, it was predicted that there would be a difference between the groups' scores on the LIWC variables relating to an increase in psychological health (First person singular, Present tense, Cognitive processes, Social processes and Positive emotion) at Time two, with the Circles group scores increasing in the desired direction over time. The results showed that there was no significant interaction between the type of group and time, and no effect of time on the Social processes and Positive emotion variables on the within-between ANOVAs. There were no significant differences in the First person singular, Cognitive processes and Present tense variables on the *t* tests for the Circles group between Time one and Time two. This indicates that there was no impact on the mean frequency scores of these variables of attending a Circle over time. The results do not support the hypothesis that there would be an increase in variables relating to psychological health for this group. On the contrary, the results of the *t* tests showed that the comparison groups' scores had significantly increased over time on the Present tense variable. This LIWC variable has previously been found to be related to an increase in psychological health (Hancock et al., 2007). This does not support Circles in a positive way. Perhaps, for lower risk men, being on probation supervision and remaining offence free for a year is enough to increase their psychological health. Higher risk men in Circles may require more input and support, or the Circle may fail to provide what is necessary to increase health (although this would be contrary to previous research and the qualitative findings of this study).

Finally, it was also predicted that there would be differences between the groups on the LIWC variables that 10 forensic professionals had rated as relevant to sexual offending. There were no significant interactions between type of group and time, and no main effect for time for the Sexual, Affective processes or Anxiety word categories, all indicating no impact of attending a Circle. There were no differences for the Sadness or Insight variables between Time one and Time two for the groups. There was a significant difference found between the groups on Anger at Time two, with the Circles group showing a higher mean score, although this did not significantly increase over time. Again, the results do not support the prediction.

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In summary, the results do not support the hypotheses, and show that attending a Circle did not have a positive impact on the variables previously established as being related to psychological health. In fact, there was evidence to the contrary, with the comparison group showing an increase in one variable that was previously shown to be connected to psychological health. The only significant differences between the groups were on the Anger and Negative emotion variables (with the Circles group having higher scores).

In attempting to explain these results further, the obvious place to turn to is the difference in the data collection methodology employed between the groups, with (most) of the Circles group completing written narratives compared to verbal narratives in the comparison group. However, the tests of parity revealed that this only affected Word count and not the other factors, such as the type of words used. The presence of the researcher may have had an impact on the comparison group, either in terms of establishing a therapeutic relationship and/or socially desirable responding. Arguably, however, this would have been difficult to do with intent over time, and when using an implicit measure. Similarly, it could be predicted that the impact of socially desirable responding would be seen within the Circles group data, given they were seen by Circle Co-ordinators who had invested in them. There is no evidence that this was the case as there was no increase for this group in the positive word categories. There was also no evidence that the Written Disclosure Paradigm was evident here. This relates to increases in psychological and physical health simply through the act of writing (Sloan & Marx, 2004) and is a fairly well established phenomenon. This could have been a potentially confounding variable for the Circles group who mostly wrote, but it does not seem to have impacted on the data.

As mentioned above, there was also a significant difference between the groups in terms of risk (the Circles group was higher risk), previous treatment (the Circles group was more likely to be treated via SOTP) and sexual pre convictions (the Circles group had more of these, although this is also built into the risk score). It is possible that the differences are due to these confounding factors. Men in Circles are encouraged to talk about their risk factors, and may be more likely to focus on them due to undertaking treatment. Being higher risk, they may also be less likely to change. However, it could also be that for (lower risk) men, attending probation

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supervision with an Offender Manger is sufficient to increase their psychological health, and that attending a Circle has no impact on their psychological health (for higher risk men).

An alternative explanation is that the LIWC is not a good measure of change. Using word use as a marker of psychological change has been shown to be effective in certain situations, such as those associated with trauma (Stone & Pennebaker, 2002). However, it has only recently been investigated as a method for analysing change following interventions. Liehr et al. (2010) reported that LIWC analysis found no differences between an experimental group undertaking a mindfulness intervention for substance misuse and a control group. In explaining the results, they suggested that word use change was insensitive to the effect of a mindfulness intervention, and did not provide support for using LIWC to assess the effects of treatment. Similarly, it could be that the impact of Circles cannot be assessed via linguistic word analysis.

Chapter Three analyses the same narratives as found in this chapter; however, it looked for themes in the data that were given explicitly by the men, rather than the implicit methodology used here. In Chapter Three, the participants generally reported positive changes over time, including on themes of social connectedness and employability, all of which, it could be argued, would be related to an increase in psychological health. Similarly, the Circles participants reported several positive effects of the Circle, such as increases in acceptance and purposeful activity. However, these positive changes were not reflected in the analysis of the current study. The qualitative and quantitative data do not support each other, and again this may point to LIWC not being sufficiently sensitive to measure clinical changes of this nature.

Chapter Three presented the idea that negative emotional states may be acting as maintenance factors, and helping to keep men offence free. Perhaps the higher scores for the Circles men on the LIWC variables of Negative emotion and Anger are a reflection of this underlying psychological process, and that this is more relevant for high-risk men or for men undertaking Circles. Alternatively, it may be that the negative emotional states of shame, loss and fear prevent the expression of positive change; men with high levels of these factors are less likely to show improvements in

psychological health. As a final thought, it is possible that, due to their high levels of shame and fear, the men desist but without any improvement in their psychological health. Perhaps an increase in psychological health is unnecessary for desistance in sexual offenders. This hypothesis could well explain the high level of null results across the current study.

4.4.1. Future research

The comparison group did change on one of the LIWC variables relating to psychological health, and it would be useful to follow up and explore if these changes are related to longer-term desistance, and also further investigate the idea of maintenance factors and their role in desistance. This could be achieved using a longitudinal design and established psychometric measures in a group of sexual offenders through early and into second stage desistance. In order further to support or discount the use of LIWC as an implicit measure of change in sexual offenders, the study would need to be repeated whilst addressing the potentially confounding variables of the differing data collection methods, risk and treatment status.

4.5. Conclusion

The use of LIWC to explore implicit changes over time with a group of sexual offenders is an innovative and unprecedented methodology. Essentially, using this method to analyse change did not demonstrate any significant improvements in the variables relating to psychological health for men engaging in Circles, and the comparison group improved on only one of these variables. There are a variety of explanations for the results, including confounding factors between the groups, differences in methodology and LIWC being insufficiently sensitive to measure change. Theoretically, it is suggested that the null results and higher levels of negative emotion and anger in the Circles group could be related to the presence of negative emotional states working to inhibit the expression of positive change and maintain desistance.

Chapter Five A psychometric investigation of the early stage of desistance in sexual offenders

Chapter Three provided a qualitative exploration of the themes present in the early stages of desistance for a group of sexual offenders. It found support for the proposed factors of desistance for sexual offenders suggested by the literature, but also highlighted new themes, including a group of negative emotional experiences; namely, the stigma of living with the status of being a convicted sex offender, and the fear of this being discovered by others, which this research is proposing act as maintenance factors. There are no published quantitative studies to date that measure the proposed psychological factors of desistance for sexual offenders during this early stage at risk. This chapter aims to bridge that gap.

This study is also interested in the impact of Circles on the desistance process, and Chapter Two proposes that Circles may work as they impact on the possible desistance factors for sexual offenders. The longitudinal qualitative analysis in Chapter Three found that the proposed themes of desistance were relevant for a group of men engaged in Circles. A key finding was that it was the impact of the human relationship that is important; specifically, that the volunteers work on reducing the stigma that sexual offenders experience by de-labelling them and accepting them as regular human beings. A recent study in the Netherlands (Höing et al., 2015) investigated pre to post Circle differences psychometrically and found some evidence for internal changes in factors that could be related to desistance. However, more empirical evidence is required in order to understand how Circles work.

The aim of this psychometric study is to measure the proposed internal/psychological factors of desistance for sexual offending during the period when sexual offenders have either been recently released from prison or are on probation licence for sexual convictions. Termed by Healy (2010) as the "liminal" (p. 35) stage, both King (2013) and Healy argue that a study of this stage is essential in order to understand how individuals leave this stage and either achieve long-term desistance or return to crime.

5.1.1. Proposed factors of desistance for sexual offenders

Researchers have identified (and measured) several key internal, psychological factors (e.g., hope, optimism, agency) and external factors (job, marriage, social capital) that appear to encourage the desistance process in general and violent offending in particular. These are fully reviewed in Chapter One. One published paper has attempted to suggest possible protective factors for desistance from sexual offending (de Vries Robbé et al., 2014). Eight factors are postulated, including;

- healthy sexual interests
- capacity for emotional intimacy
- constructive social and professional support network
- goal directed living
- good problem solving
- engaged in employment or constructive leisure activities
- sobriety
- hopeful, optimistic and motivated attitude towards desistance.

These eight theoretical domains are derived from a review of the literature, but to date there is no published paper that attempts to test empirically the possible desistance factors for sexual offenders across a period of time at risk.

This study aims to test a selection of these potentially relevant internal/psychological factors. Following a thorough review of the literature (see Chapter One) and based on the suggestions of de Vries Robbé et al., (2014) and the results of Chapter Three, three factors were chosen as the most prominent and possibly relevant to sexual offenders:

- Hope/optimism
- Agency and internal locus of control
- Social connectedness

The reason for selecting each of the factors and their proposed relevance to Circles will be outlined below. As this research is exploratory, it would have been possible to pick several more factors to test psychometrically. It was decided to limit the psychometric testing to the three most potentially relevant factors to avoid over testing the participants.

5.1.1.1. Hope and optimism

LeBel et al. (2008), Giordano et al. (2002) and Maruna (2001) all highlight a sense of hope as an established theme in the general desistance literature. Maruna (2001) focussed on hope in the Liverpool Desistance Study and found that desisting offenders seemed to have a more positive and optimistic view of their future whereas persistent offenders saw their lives as having a pre-determined negative outcome. Moulden and Marshall (2005) note that there is no research exploring the relationship between hope and sexual offending but propose that hope is important in the treatment of sexual offenders, particularly in instilling a sense of self-efficacy for release to enable them to cope. De Vries Robbé et al. (2014) highlight hope and optimism as a potential protective domain for desistance from sex offending. They describe hope as "optimistic change-enhancing cognitive patterns" (p. 14). Increased hope works to enable desistance, as individuals are more likely to see positive outcomes arising from negative events and view treatment as a turning point. Additionally, individuals are more motivated to work with treatment providers or other helping agencies, both of which may contribute towards an individual remaining offence free.

Although no published study has linked Circles with increased hope, it is postulated that attending a Circle, where offenders are supported through a period of risk by community volunteers, will impact positively on hope and optimism. This may be through the psychological mechanisms described above; volunteers help offenders to see positive outcomes and instil a sense of self-efficacy, help them to feel more hopeful about the future, motivate them to work with other helping agencies, and encourage them to realise the positive benefits of treatment programmes.

The qualitative results in Chapter Three show that Hope/optimism was one of the most prevalent themes for a group of sexual offenders who were in the first two years of time at risk and some identified an increase in positivity when asked how they had changed in the previous year. Similarly, internal factors such as hope and optimism were reported to be impacted on by a group of men attending a Circle. The mean percentage frequency of the Hope/optimism theme found within the narratives was compared across the period of the study. This was approaching statistical significance ($p= .02$) at the $p< .0125$ level (Bonferroni correction applied) and was

found to have a large effect size (*r*= .052). This highlights that Hope/optimism is an important factor at this stage, and potentially increases over time during this significant time period.

5.1.1.2. Locus of control/agency

Agency has been defined as "the capability of individuals to act independently and to make their own choices within the social structure" (Liem & Richardson, 2014, p. 701). Recently, there has been an abundance of research into agency and the general desistance process (Vaughan, 2007; Giordano et al., 2002; Maruna, 2001 & King, 2013). Liem and Richardson (2014) found that the "striking difference" (p. 705) between 67 Lifers on Parole (desisting group) and a re-incarcerated group (non desisters) was their sense of agency. Desisters had a strong sense of control over their lives whereas the non-desisters presented a passive role in their crimes and likelihood of success or failure in the future.

Farmer et al. (2012) compared the Life Story Interviews (McAdams, 1983) of five desisting and five (potentially) active child molesters in the UK. A phenomenological analysis found that Belonging and Agency were particularly relevant in the desisting group. In the (potentially) active group the offenders had lower Agency and higher Alienation (disconnectedness). The paper also describes the groups as differing with regard to their internal locus of control, although this was not measured psychometrically. A full description and critique of this study can be seen in Chapter One.

In relation to Circles, Höing et al. (2015) investigated the internal and social shifts in 16 core members using interviews and 11 self-report questionnaires conducted pre and post Circle. The internal locus of control was measured as one of the six (five-item) subscales on the Volitional Skills Questionnaire, Long Version (Forstmeier & Rüddel, 2008). A statistically significant improvement (medium effect size) was found on the internal locus of control pre to post Circle, along with one other subscale (emotion regulation). This result is interesting and supportive of Circles, although it should be noted that the internal locus of control was only measured with a five-item subscale, so it would be beneficial to use a longer measure to validate it on a forensic population. In line with this research, it is proposed that

attending a Circle will impact positively on the level of internal sense of control. Volunteers encourage offenders to take active responsibility for their past behaviour, be accountable for their current behaviour and plan for a purposeful and offence-free future.

5.1.1.3. *Community and social capital/connectedness*

As described in Chapter One, connection to friends, neighbours and the community is important in the transition process of release from prison back into society (Martinez & Abrams, 2013). These ties have been described as social capital in the literature (Sampson & Laub, 1993), and access to social capital by offenders has received much attention in the general desistance literature, with several researchers agreeing on its importance (e.g., Farrall, 2004). In addition to social capital providing practical assistance with employment, purposeful activity or housing for example, it is thought to be important psychologically, as it helps individuals to feel like valued members of society and to achieve their goals (Coleman, 1988).

Sexual offenders tend to be lonelier, and more socially and emotionally isolated than non-sex offenders due to the nature of their offences (Marsa et al., 2004). Burchfield and Mingus (2008) assessed sex offenders' experiences with social capital using interviews with 23 sex offenders in Illinois. These offenders described several obstacles to accessing social capital including community barriers (harassment), individual barriers (own shame and fear), and formal barriers set by parole (house arrest and electronic monitoring).

As described above, Farmer et al.'s (2012) phenomenological analysis found that the theme of 'Belonging' was particularly relevant in their desisting group of child molesters, and higher Alienation (disconnectedness) in the potentially active group. De Vries Robbé et al. (2014) suggest a constructive social network to be a possible protective factor for sexual offenders.

Circles target lonely and isolated sexual offenders and provide them with social support for around a year. Circles aim to help the offender to re-integrate into the community by, for example, helping to set up volunteer or social activities that continue after the Circle has finished. Psychologically, Circles provide emotional

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support and a sense of belonging to the community. Therefore, it is postulated that Circles will impact positively on social capital and the bond to the community.

Höing et al. (2013) analysed narratives of 38 Circle members, including core members, volunteers and Co-ordinators in the UK and the Netherlands, and proposed that a Circle provides a "surrogate social network" (p. 271). They argue that this is the most important theoretical influence of a Circle. In their 2015 research, Höing et al. investigated this further by collecting self-report data (yes/no response and frequency data) from 17 core members in relation to their participation in society, and social network. This was supported by interview data from 29 professionals. The data showed that the level of improvement in social transitions was low, and that changes were predominantly found in internal cognitive functioning. It could be that social transitions take far longer than the 12 months of the study, and/or that the measure used was too blunt. Using a valid and reliable psychometric measure to tap into the internal perceptions of social capital and connectedness could be a method for investigating this area further.

In Chapter Three, the theme of Social capital was found to be prevalent in the men's narratives and the potential obstacle of being socially isolated and lonely was also present. Some men reported that their social connectedness had increased over the period of the study, but this was not found to be significant when examining the mean percentage frequency of the presence of this theme at Time one and Time two. For the Circles men in this study, social connectedness was highlighted as the most prevalent theme when describing the impact of their Circle.

This study aims to test these three factors (hope/optimism, internal locus of control and social connectedness) psychometrically with a group of sexual offenders over a period of time at risk in the community. A sub sample of these men will be engaged in a Circle. The analysis will be via a mixed between-within subjects analysis of variance.

5.1.2. Hypotheses

1. In order to establish the relevance of a comparison group, there will be no statistically significant difference on any measure between the Circle and a comparison group at Time one.

2. There will be a statistically significant difference between the measures of hope and optimism, locus of control and social connectedness between the Circles and a comparison group at Time two. The Circles group will have higher scores than the comparison group on all three measures.

5.2. Method

5.2.1. Design

This study had a prospective longitudinal design, comparing two groups of participants (Circles and a comparison group). The groups were compared on several measures (see the Measures section) in a pre-post test design at 0 and an approximately 12-month interval.

5.2.2. Participants

The participants in this study were a subsample of those who provided narratives in Chapter Three. All of the participants were male, over 18, and had previously been convicted of a sexual offence. There were 30 participants in the Circles group (men who were currently engaged in a Circle). Eighteen men on probation licence in West Yorkshire for committing sexual offences, but not participating in a Circle, formed a comparison group. The selection and recruitment of the participants is described in detail in Chapter Three. All of the participants gave informed consent for the study, were free to withdraw at any time and were not offered any incentive for participation. The only exclusions made were female offenders.

5.2.3. Materials

5.2.3.1. *Hope Scale (HS) (Synder et al., 1991)*

Hope/optimism is measured using the Synder et al. (1991) Hope scale and the State of Hope Scale (Synder, Sympson, Ybasco, Borders, Babyak, & Higgins 1996). Defining hope as a "cognitive set compromising agency (belief in one's capacity to

initiate and sustain actions) and pathways (belief in one's capacity to generate routes) to reach goals", the Hope Scale was developed and validated as a dispositional self-report measure of hope (Snyder et al., 1996 p. 321). It has been used widely and validated with several community and clinical populations (e.g., Synder, Lopez, Shorey, Rand, & Feldman, 2003: Barnum, Synder, Rapoff, Mani, & Thompson1998) and a forensic population (Martin & Stermac, 2009), although there are no published studies on validation with sexual offenders. The scale is a twelve-item scale (four each for agency and pathways, and four distractors), comprising an 8-point likert scale (1=definitely false to 8=definitely true). Kline (2014) suggests that a factor needs a minimum of seven to ten items to be reliable, and that a factor with four or five items or fewer is likely to be worthless. In order to overcome any potential criticism, only the total score for this scale will be used. The scale is internally consistent, with several published studies describing alpha co-efficients above .80 (Synder et al., 1991). The test-retest correlations are in the .80 range over a periods of up to ten weeks (Snyder et al., 1991). For this sample, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was .75. Values above .7 are considered acceptable, and values above .8 are preferable (Cohen, 1962).

5.2.3.2. State of Hope Scale (SHS) (Synder et al., 1996)

The State of Hope Scale is a six-item self-report measure of ongoing goal-directed thinking (just short of the minimum stipulated by Kline, 2014). However, Synder et al. (1996) report that it appears to meet the psychometric standards for self-report scales; it is internally consistent, the subscales show high internal consistency and it has construct validity and discriminant validity when compared with related state self-report measures. The scale uses an 8-point likert scale (1=definitely false to, 8=definitely true). A reported Cronbach's alpha of .93 demonstrates internal reliability above the acceptable range (Synder et al., 1996). Some would suggest that an alpha level above .90 is too high in non-aptitude psychological measures (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011), and that certain items are redundant as they are testing the same concept but in a different form. A maximum alpha value of .90 has been recommended. As a published alpha is a property of the scores on a test from a specific sample of participants and cannot be wholly relied upon, the alpha coefficient was calculated for this sample and found to be .86, representing a high, yet

acceptable level.

5.2.3.3. Locus of Control scale (LOC) (Levenson, 1974)

Locus of control describes the degree to which individuals feel that they have control over their lives, and how they attribute causes to events. It will be measured using an adapted version of the Levenson's (1974) Locus of Control (LOC) scale. Adapted and validated for use with male incarcerated sexual offenders, this scale forms part of the psychometric battery for sexual offenders participating in the National SOTP in prisons (Huntley, Palmer, & Wakeling, 2011). This 18-item assessment measures the extent to which a respondent believes that what happens to him is determined by external factors or whether he has control over his experiences. There are three subscales; internal, powerful others and chance. Items are scored on a 5-point likert scale, ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Eleven items are reverse scored. Items are summed to produce a scale score and higher scores indicate greater internality. High scores (40 and above) indicate a more internal locus of control (Webster, Mann, Thornton, & Wakeling, 2006). Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha of .81) and test-retest reliability ($r= .71$, p< .001) have been established (Huntley et al., 2011). In this sample, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was .82.

5.2.3.4. Social Connectedness Scale- Revised (SCS-R) (Lee, Draper & Lee, 2001)

A sense of connection/social bond with the community will be measured using the Social Connectedness Scale-Revised (SCS-R). Social connectedness is considered to be a psychological sense of belongingness, an, "attribute of the self that reflects cognitions of enduring interpersonal closeness with the world" (Lee et al., 2001, p. 310). A lack of social connectedness is related to feelings of loneliness and social angst. The SCS-R is a 20-item scale with a 6-point likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Ten of the items are reverse coded. Higher scores reflect a stronger sense of social connectedness. The internal item reliability demonstrated an alpha coefficient of .92 (Lee et al, 2001), which is again slightly over the recommended level, and as such will be tested again within this sample. The measure has been validated with community and clinical samples (e.g., Fraser & Pakenham, 2009) and with a female forensic population, although this employed a

revised version of the scale (Taylor, Convery & Barton, 2013). In this sample, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was .75.

5.2.4. Ethical approval

The Departmental Ethics Committee, Psychology Department, University of York, the National Offender Management Service Research Board, and the Circles UK Research Board all granted full ethical approval for this study.

5.2.5. Procedure

5.2.5.1. *Circles group*

The participants in this sample were a subsample of the men who provided narratives in Chapter Three. Hence, the details of what the men did in the current study will be provided in full here but, for a detailed description of how the research was set up in Circles (and West Yorkshire Probation), see Chapter Three. Circles Co-ordinators collected the data for the Circles group in all regions apart from Manchester, where it was collected by the researcher and an assistant due to resource issues. Instructions for introducing the research to the core members were discussed with the Co-ordinators at a meeting held with the researcher. A standardised instruction sheet was provided for each Co-ordinator (see Appendix B), along with a standard consent form (see Appendix C). There were two tasks for the Co-ordinator to complete with each core member:

1. Introduce the consent form and seek informed consent prior to the start of the Circle
2. Complete the psychometric battery at the beginning and end of the Circle (a period of approximately 12 months).

If the men agreed to participate, they were asked to sign the consent form and then complete pre-Circle psychometrics. The task was completed again at the end of the Circle. Data were then sent to the researcher for analysis. Demographic information relevant to the literature around sexual offending, including age, ethnicity, risk level (RM2000), current offence, gender of victim, type of victim (adult or child), number and type of pre convictions (sexual and non-sexual), completion of previous treatment, sentence type, and date of last sentence (to establish time at risk), for each participant was gathered from a central database held by Circles UK.

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5.2.5.2. Comparison group

The comparison group consisted of 18 men convicted of sexual offences and currently on probation licence in West Yorkshire, and were the same men as those in Chapter Three. For details of how they were recruited and the parameters for selection, please see Chapter Three.

If the individual agreed to participate in the research, he was seen individually by the researcher at the local probation office, usually directly after an appointment with his Offender Manager. Informed consent was sought and the psychometrics completed. As detailed in Chapter Three, the procedure for gathering the data differed slightly between the groups. In the Circles group, the data were gathered by the Circle Co-ordinators (except in Manchester where the resources precluded this), and for the comparison group, the data were collected by the researcher and a research assistant (both of whom have forensic experience). This was as the NOMS Research Board directed as, due to the resource implications, the Offender Managers did not have the time to undertake the data collection. At the time, this information from NOMS was given, the data collection for the Circles group by different Circle Coordinators was underway and, after consideration, it was decided to continue with this and note the different methods between the two groups. It is thought unlikely that the data collection of psychometrics, by different individuals across separate Circles projects and in the comparison group, would have had any impact on the results. The instructions given were the same and all of the data collectors were experienced in working with sexual offenders.

Following the data collection, the participants were thanked for their help, and the researcher checked that they were happy to meet again in 12 months to repeat the task. After around six months, the researcher wrote to the participants, reminding them of their role in the research and encouraging them to be seen at time two. This was an attempt to reduce attrition. After around 12 months, the participant was contacted again via his Offender Manager, an appointment was arranged with the researcher at the probation office, and the psychometric battery was repeated. The participant was thanked for his participation in the research and no further contact was made. The same demographic information as for the Circles group was recorded from the West Yorkshire Probation database.

5.2.6. Statistical analysis

5.2.6.1. Power analysis

A power analysis was conducted to determine the sample size needed for a repeated measure, between-within factor ANOVA, using Gpower, v3.1 (Faul et al., 2007). This revealed that, in order for an effect of this size (f = .50, medium effect) to be found (80% chance), at the p < .017 level of significance (due to using the Bonferroni correction), a total of 32 participants were needed. There were 36 participants in this study.

5.2.6.2. Missing data

Across all the scales, there was less than .5% of data missing for all of the participants and this appeared to be random. Kline (2000) advises that less than 5% of missing data is of little concern. To prepare the data for analysis, the missing data were plugged with the mean score from each scale. Given that the amount of missing data was so small, a sensitivity analysis was not undertaken and it was considered that plugging with the mean in such a small amount of cases would not impact on variance.

5.2.6.3. Attrition

In the Circles group, 30 men completed the psychometrics at Time one. There were 8 dropouts between Time one and Time two (attrition rate of 26.7%). In the comparison group, there were two dropouts between Time one and Time two (an attrition rate of 11%) (see Appendix F). This rate was substantially less than that for the Circles group, probably because the data were collected in person from the comparison group by the researcher and assistant, rather than busy Circle Co-ordinators who had less time and were possibly less motivated to collect them.

The overall attrition rate was 21% for both groups. Although attrition is to be expected during longitudinal research, Amico (2009) recommends investigating the patterns of attrition. In research where there is a comparison group, comparing the losses in one group with those in another is suggested. The dropout numbers were too small to compare between the Circles and comparison groups, but the dropout group as a whole was compared to the rest of the sample present at Time two as it was in previous chapters. This was done for the age and risk variables only, as it would be

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predicted that younger, higher risk men would drop out at an increased rate The categories of age and risk were both collapsed into two (18-35 years and 36-60+ years and (Low/Medium and High/Very High) to allow for analysis and Fisher's Exact was utilized. The Bonferroni correction was applied ($p < .05/2 = .025$)

There was no significant difference between the men who dropped out and the men present at Time two on the age categories at the $p < .025$ level, $p = .27$ (one tailed). Regarding the risk level, the frequency data show that seven of the drop out group fell into the High/Very High risk category compared to 13 of the men who were still present at Time two. However, the differences between the risk categories were not significant at the $p < .025$ level, $p = .069$ (one tailed).

It can be concluded that the men who dropped out were not significantly younger, or higher risk than the men in the Time two group. This was not in line with predictions but is positive for the research as it suggests that the pattern of attrition is not of concern.

5.2.6.4. Testing assumptions

Homogeneity of variance was assumed for the Time one and Time two scores on all four measures using Levene's Test of Equality of Error variance. However, the data were not normally distributed on the HS, LOC and SCS-R. Transformations were applied to the data in both groups on the HS and resulted in normally distributed data. The data for the LOC and SCS-R could not be transformed, and so an alternative strategy was adopted, as described below.

Wright et al. (2011) note that the assumptions of normality required of the data in clinical samples is unrealistic and the data are often skewed and not normally distributed. Given that the SCS-R scale was measuring social connectedness in sexual offenders living in the community, it was expected that the data would be non-normal. However, an examination of the SCS-R scale revealed that there was an outlier in the comparison group, which was adding a particularly positive skew to the data. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) advise examining data and removing the case if the outlier does not form part of the sample intended for the research. On examination, the one case that particularly skewed the data was the Life sentenced prisoner in the

comparison group. This participant had actually been released for over 10 years, and therefore had previously skewed the demographic data in terms of time since release. It could be strongly argued that, as he was not part of the intended sample (studying the early process of desistance), he could be removed from the sample (as in previous chapters). Further tests of normality revealed that, when the case was removed, the scores on the SCS-R were normally distributed. Given that this case was removed from the sample for not being part of the intended sample, even though his scores did not skew the data on the other scales, he was removed from the analysis in an attempt to improve the generalisability of the results. This brought the total number of participants to 37 (n=22 Circles, n=15 comparison).

On examination of the LOC scale, the post data in the comparison group were negatively skewed, with scores clustering above the mean. There were no obvious outliers. Transformation of the scores using log and square root transformation did not result in normally distributed data. As noted above, this was a small clinical sample so non-normality is not unusual. In these circumstances, Wright et al. (2011) recommend the use of bootstrapping, and this was used for the analysis of the LOC scale.

5.2.6.5. *Planned statistical testing*

A series of mixed between-within subjects analysis of variance were planned to assess if there was any difference in the participants' scores on the HS, SHS, and SCS-R in the Circles and comparison groups, across the two time periods (Time one and Time two). The use of MANOVA was considered in order to try and control for Type one errors, and it could be argued that the dependant variables are conceptually related. However, the assumptions were not met, not least a sample size of more than 20 in each cell. As such, the Bonferroni correction was applied (p< .05/3= .017). Bootstrapping proved impossible with this statistic so, for the LOC scale only, a series of t tests was conducted.

5.3. Results
5.3.1. Description of the sample

Table 5.1.

Demographic information for the Circles and Comparison group (excluding dropouts)

	Circles (*n*=22)		Comparison (*n*=15)		Total (*n*=37)	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Ethnicity						
White British	18	81.8	15	100	33	89.2
White Irish	1	4.5	0	0	1	2.7
Any other White	1	4.5	0	0	1	2.7
Black /Black British	1	4.5	0	0	1	2.7
Asian/Asian British	0	0	0	0	0	0
Missing	1	4.5	0	0	1	2.7
Age						
18-25	2	9.1	1	6.7	3	8.1
26-35	3	13.6	1	6.7	4	10.8
36-45	4	18.2	2	13.3	6	16.2
46-60	10	45.5	6	40	16	43.2
61+	3	13.6	5	33.3	8	21.6
RM2000						
Low	4	18.2	7	46.7	11	29.7
Medium	5	22.7	6	40	11	29.7
High	5	22.7	2	13.3	7	18.9
Very High	6	27.3	0	0	6	16.2
Missing	2	9.1	0	0	2	5.4
Type Sex Offence						
Adult	1	4.5	4	26.7	5	13.5
Child	11	50.0	7	46.7	18	48.6
Both	2	9.1	1	6.7	3	8.1
Internet only	5	22.7	3	20	8	21.6
Breach of SOPO	1	4.5	0	0	1	2.7
Missing	2	9.1	0	0	1	2.7
Has sexual precons	15	68.2	0	0	15	40.5

Table 5.1.

Missing	3	13.6	0	0	3	8.1
SOTP completed	21	95.5	7	46.7	28	75.7*
Mean time at risk						
(months)	11.4		18.7		14.8	
In a relationship	3	13.6	4	26.7	7	18.9
Contact with family	13	59.1	12	80	25	67.6

* denotes significant difference between the groups at $p< .0125$ (Bonferroni

correction applied.

Analysis was undertaken to explore if there were any statistically significant differences between the groups on the demographics variables of age, Risk Matrix category, treatment status and social isolation at Time one. As the cell sizes were less than five in some categories, the age groups were collapsed (18-35 and 36-61+) as were the Risk Matrix categories (Low/Medium and High/Very High) to allow for analysis. As the cell sizes were still small, Fisher's Exact test was utilised. The Bonferroni correction was applied ($p< .05/4= .0125$)

There were no statistically significant differences between the Circles and comparison groups on the age category ($p= 1.0$, two tailed) or risk status ($p= .016$, two tailed). However, there was a statistically significant difference ($p= .001$) between the groups on treatment status, with the Circles group being more likely to have completed treatment for their sexual offending.

Data were collected on two variables (contact with family and being in a relationship) to try and ameliorate for the potentially confounding variable of social isolation. Circles men are specifically selected for the intervention based on the fact that they are socially isolated and lonely. Fisher's Exact test did not find any differences between the groups on either variable.

Due to the small cell size, statistical analysis could not be undertaken for the variables of ethnicity, type of offence and sexual pre convictions. However, in the ethnicity category, it can be clearly seen that most of the men were White in both groups. It can also be clearly seen from looking at the data that the Circles group ($n=15$) was more likely to have sexual pre convictions than the comparison group ($n=0$). This is built into the RM2000 score. Finally, looking at the frequency data for the type of offence, it can be seen that there were more child offenders in each group than in any other category.

In conclusion, the Circles group was more likely to have sexual pre convictions and significantly more likely to have undertaken sexual offender treatment than the comparison group. These factors should be considered when interpreting the results. However, they were of a similar age (mostly in the 36-60+ age bracket), ethnicity (White), mostly child offenders, and there was no difference

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between their degree of social isolation as a group at Time one (based on contact with family/being in a relationship) or their scores on the RM2000. Looking at the mean time at risk, the group fell into a time period of 11-18 months, indicating that, on average, they were in the two-year period highlighted as being the most risky (Hanson et al., 2014) and arguably the liminal stage (Healy, 2010) of desistance. Descriptive statistics on the psychometric scales for each group are presented below.

Table 5.2.

Mean total scores on the HS, SHS, LOC and SCS-R for the Circles and comparison groups.

| Measure | Circles (n=22) | | | | Comparison (n=15) | | | |
| | Time one | | Time two | | Time one | | Time two | |
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
HS	41.59	8.48	65.41	11.26	43.00	9.71	63.07	9.79
SHS	31.45	10.96	34.50	10.59	33.87	10.61	37.00	7.39
LOC	64.64	10.58	69.41	10.56	64.47	11.03	67.67	11.54
SCS-R	72.59	25.22	79.55	18.39	83.60	20.10	82.20	17.52

HS=Hope Scale, SHS=State Hope Scale, LOC=Locus of Control, SCS-R =Social Connectedness Revised

5.3.2. Statistical analysis

A series of mixed between-within-subjects analyses of variance was conducted to investigate if there was any difference in scores on the HS, SHS (log transformed scores), and SCS-R between the Circles and comparison groups across the two time periods (Time one and Time two). Assumptions were met across all analyses on the Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices. The Bonferroni correction was applied to control for Type one errors ($p < .05/3 = .017$). The effect sizes were also calculated (partial eta squared). The recommendations provided by Cohen (1988, p. 284) for interpretation are:

.01= small effect,

.06= moderate effect,

.14= large effect.

5.3.2.1. Hope scale

There was no significant interaction between the type of group and time, Wilks' Lambda = .96, F (1,35)= 1.31, p= .26, partial eta squared = .036. However, this did represent a small effect size.

There was a significant main effect for time, Wilks' Lambda = .014, F (1,35)= 213.83, p= .001, partial eta squared = .86. This represented a very large effect size and showed that both groups' scores on the HS increased significantly between Time one and Time two.

The main effect when comparing between the two groups was not significant, F (1,35)= .01, p= .922, partial eta squared = .00. This indicates that the scores on the HS scale for both groups were generally the same.

5.3.2.2. State Hope scale

There was no significant interaction between the type of group and time, Wilks' Lambda = 99, F (1,35)= .043, p= .84, partial eta squared = .001.

Although both groups showed an increase in scores on the SHS over time, there was no main effect for time, Wilks' Lambda = .94, F (1,35)= 2.45, p= .13, partial eta squared = .065. This represented a moderate effect size.

The main effect when comparing between the two groups was not significant, $F(1,35)= .78$, $p= .38$, partial eta squared = .022, indicating that the scores on the SHS scale for both groups were generally the same. There was a small effect size.

5.3.2.3. Social Connectedness Scale-Revised

The scores on the SCS-R increased between Time one and Time two for the Circles group, and decreased for the comparison group. However, this did not represent a significant interaction between the type of group and time, Wilks' Lambda = .98, $F(1,35)= .89$, $p= .35$, partial eta squared = .025. There was a small effect size.

Although the Circles' group scores did increase between Time one and Time two, there was no main effect for time, Wilks' Lambda = .98, $F(1,35)= .40$, $p= .53$, partial eta squared = .011. There was a small effect size.

The main effect when comparing between the two groups was not significant, $F(1,35)= 832.56$, $p= .22$, partial eta squared = .044. This was a small effect size.

5.3.2.4. Locus of Control scale

The data on this scale were not normally distributed and could not be transformed to enable a mixed between-within subjects ANOVA. As previously noted and recommended by Wright et al. (2011) for small samples of clinical data, bootstrapping based on 1000 bootstrap samples was applied to the data. This allowed two independent and two dependent t tests to be conducted to compare between and within the groups on the LOC scale. Homogeneity of variance was assumed and the Bonferroni correction was applied ($p< .05/4= .125$).

There was no significant difference between the Circles group ($M= 64.64$, $SE= 2.24$) and comparison group's scores ($M= 64.46$, $SE= 2.91$) on the LOC at Time one, $t(35)= .47$, $p= .967$, eta squared = .006.

There was no significant difference between the Circles group ($M= 69.41$, $SE= 2.25$) and comparison group's scores ($M= 67.67$, $SE= 2.99$) on the LOC at Time two, $t(35)= .48$, $p= .644$, partial eta squared = .006.

There was no significant difference between the Circles' group scores on the LOC between Time one and Time two, $t(21)= -2.3$, $p= .022$ (one tailed). There was an increase in scores and this represented a large effect size (.14, eta squared).

There was no significant difference in the comparison group's scores between Time one and Time two, $t(14) = -1.24$, $p= .248$, eta squared = .41 (approaching moderate effect size).

5.4. Discussion

In this research, three potential desistance factors were chosen as the most prominent and possibly relevant to sexual offenders based on the published literature;

- Hope/optimism
- Agency and internal locus of control
- Social connectedness

The discussion of the results of psychometric testing of these factors over a period of around 12 months with a group of sexual offenders is presented below. The men were tested during the early stages of being at risk (group mean =14.8 months), and therefore possibly the liminal stage of desistance.

5.4.1. Hope/optimism

This factor was tested using the Hope scale, a measure of trait hope, and the State Hope Scale. Testing on the Hope Scale showed that both the Circles and comparison groups' scores increased significantly over time and that this represented a very large effect size. However, there was no significant difference between the groups. This suggests that being in a Circle had a similar impact to probation supervision on hope and optimism. Testing on the State Hope Scale revealed that both groups' scores did increase over time, and although not significant, this did represent a moderate effect size. There were no other significant differences between the groups. As the scale measures hope in any given moment, this suggests that the men had changed positively with regard to how they viewed their situation between Time one and Time two.

Synder et al. (1991), the authors of the HS, define hope as a belief in one's capacity to initiate and sustain actions (agency) and a belief in one's ability to generate routes to reach goals. The increase in state and particularly trait hope across the period of around a year for these men who were all desisting (based on the best information available) could be a reflection of their increasing agentic belief that they are able to remain offence free in the community. There is research that suggests that most re-offenses will happen in the first two years after release, and that for every year offence free, the risk of recidivism decreases (Hanson et al., 2014). This may suggest that remaining offence free (desisting) naturally increases hope and optimism, and that this occurs without specific intervention and whilst in the early stages of desistance whilst still on licence. It would be interesting to follow up this finding after the men who remain offence free have spent more time in the community (and those that do not).

These findings support the work of LeBel et al. (2008), Giordano et al. (2002) and Maruna (2001), who all suggested that a sense of hope is important in desistance, and the work of de Vries Robbé et al. (2014), who highlight it as a potential factor in desistance for sexual offenders. No published study has linked Circles with hope, measured or otherwise. The results support and extend those found in Chapter Three, where Hope/optimism was found to be one of the most prevalent themes in the narratives of a group of sexual offenders. Internal factors, such as hope and optimism, were reported to be impacted on by a group of men attending a Circle.

In summary, the results of this and Chapter Three suggest that a sense of hope and optimism is an important theme for sexual offenders and that it increases over the early period of time, when they are first at risk. The evidence suggests that being in a Circle does not have a particular impact on hope.

5.4.2. Agency and locus of control

Locus of control, the degree to which individuals feel they have control over their lives and that their fate is determined external factors, was measured using the Locus of Control scale. Testing showed that the groups' mean scores on the LOC were identical at Time one. Although there was no significant difference between the groups at Time two, there was an increase in both groups' scores. For the Circles'

group scores, this was approaching significance (p= .022, Bonferroni correction applied) with a large effect size.

It is positive that, over the period of testing, the men's sense of internal control increased, and encouraging for Circles that this seemed to have more of an impact than being on probation licence only. A larger sample size would have yielded more data and a stronger likelihood of showing a difference and this would be worth testing given the theoretical links between agency and desistance.

Webster et al. (2006) found that scores of 40 and above on the LOC indicate a more internal locus of control, and the sexual offender norms for a group of Medium/High risk untreated sexual offenders was 47.3 (OBPU, 2002). It can be seen that the mean of this current sample was very high at Time one (64.64). An increase on the LOC is desirable during SOTP, and overall 75% of this sample had undertaken treatment. These treatment programmes aim to instil a sense of taking personal and internal responsibility for thinking and behaviour, particularly offending behaviour. Therefore, these high Time one scores may be representative of the fact that the majority of the sample was treated via NOMS SOTP treatment programmes prior to undertaking this study. It also left little room for increase (maximum LOC scale score =72). The Circles group mean score was almost at this maximum range by Time two (69.41, SD= 10.56).

This research supports that of Liem and Richardson (2014), who found that desisters differed from a re-incarcerated group of Life sentenced prisoners on their sense of agency, with desisters having more sense of control over their lives. In relation to sexual offenders, Farmer et al. (2012) found an increased sense of agency in their desisting child offenders and also described them as having a higher internal locus of control than the active group of offenders, although this was not measured psychometrically. Even though the present study did not compare desisters with non-desisters, the men did not offend between Time one and Time two. They all had a very high internal locus of control, and this increased over time. This suggests that a high level of internal responsibility taking may be protecting them from reoffending at this time, when the risk of their reoffending was at its highest (Hanson et al., 2014)). In defence of potential criticism, this current sample self-reported desistance,

and this was confirmed by the official records, and corroborated by the Offender Mangers and Circles Co-ordinators. Four of the dropouts did return to prison for non-contact Breach of their SOPOs. The subsample was so small that it was impossible to perform an analysis to determine if their measures differed from those of the completers. Future research could aim to investigate the differences on the psychometric scales, such as those used in this study, between those who desist and those who do not.

Finally, this study is relevant to the work of Höing et al. (2015), who measured the internal locus of control of a group of Circles men in the Netherlands, and found a statistically significant difference (medium effect size) pre to post Circles. The measure used was a five-item subscale of a longer questionnaire (Volitional Skills Questionnaire, Long Version, Forstmeier & Rüddel, 2008) and was not validated with a forensic population. The current study used a longer validated measure, with a UK sample, and provides support for their study.

It is noticeable that the qualitative analysis of the narratives in Chapter Three did not find the presence of a specific theme related to locus of control or agency. However, as noted in Chapter Three, the men described stopping offending as a choice and had their reasons for it. There was little evidence from the data that it was the presence of social controls (such as a job or relationship) that had stopped them from offending and the data pointed to internal, psychological factors being relevant. They reported that it was a sense of agency or choice that helped them to start the desistance process. A sense of agency was also seen in the decision to create a new identity, and in the way that the men managed their sexual interests ('taking control' of the interests), rather than using physical techniques. As such, general themes of agency and personal responsibility taking ran throughout the narratives of these men, and this is supported by the very high levels of locus of control found in the group.

5.4.3. Social connectedness

Social connectedness, considered to be a psychological sense of belongingness, was measured using the Social Connectedness Scale-Revised (Lee et al., 2001). The results of the analysis showed that scores on the scale increased between Time one and Time two for the Circles group, and decreased for the

comparison group. Neither result was statistically significant, although there was a small effect size. The main effect when comparing between the two groups was also not significant, but was approaching a moderate effect size. This suggested that there was some difference between the variance in the two groups' scores, but not enough to reach statistical significance. It can be seen by looking at the means that the Circles group had a lower mean score by 11 points at Time one. This is supported by the demographic data on social isolation collected for the groups, although again the differences were not found to be significant.

In trying to establish how socially connected this group was as a whole, the initial validation of the scale (Lee et al., 2001) found a mean scale score of 89.84, compared to 78.1 in this sample at Time one. However, this was in relation to American college students and so a comparison of these means is arguably irrelevant. The validation with a forensic sample used a revised version of the scale (Taylor et al., 2013). Generally, however, it is well established that sexual offenders tend to be more lonely and isolated (Marsa et al., 2004). It is difficult to know if the level of social connectedness that the men in this sample were experiencing was acting as a protective factor for desistance, as suggested by the work of de Vries Robbé et al. (2014).

Turning to the results of the qualitative analysis in Chapter Three to help with the interpretation, less than half of the sample referred to having social capital in their lives and the mean percentage frequency of this theme did not increase significantly over time. This theme was not about the frequency of contact, but rather about having a place in the community and a sense of belonging. A third reported feeling socially isolated and lonely, and carrying a stigma (arguably a barrier to social connectedness) was the most prevalent theme across all the narratives. In summary, it seems that this group was experiencing some sense of social isolation and not belonging and that, for the Circles group, this did decrease over time (as measured by their scores on the SCS-R, they became more connected), although not significantly. It is possible that this was acting as a protective factor. Interestingly, the scores for the comparison group decreased. These men, although on probation licence, were not benefiting from meeting with a group of community volunteers once a week, so although they were more likely to be in relationships and have family contact than the Circles group, over

time, they were starting to feel less connected. Farmer et al.'s (2012) study found that there was a sense of Belonging in the desisting group but Alienation in the potentially active group. It is important that these findings are followed up in future research with a larger sample to examine if a lack of social connectedness in the early stages of desistance predicts longer-term desistance. Höing et al. (2015) found that the level of social transitions was low during the period of a Circle. However, these data were in relation to yes/no frequency data, different to the sense of belonging being measured here.

In summary the scores on the scales all increased in the desired direction for both groups, apart from on the SCS-R, where those of the comparison group decreased. There was only one significant finding; the scores of both groups increased significantly on the Hope Scale. The direction of differences has been discussed here, and is largely more positive for Circles. However, the results from comparing the groups were non-significant, with the comparison group scores largely increasing alongside those of the Circles men. An alternative explanation is that being in a Circle adds little over and above being on probation licence, and that it is the process of being regularly involved with an agency that contributes towards desistance. This would be a controversial angle and would not support the emerging positive results about the impact of Circles on reoffending compared to controls (Duwe, 2013). The recent systematic review of Circles (Clarke et al., 2015) did not show a positive result for sexual reconviction alone. Rather, men in Circles groups tend to have better psychosocial outcomes, and fewer reconvictions for non-sexual offending. It could be that attending a Circle is not enough in isolation to prevent sexual offending, but that it does impact on certain factors related to desistance such as social connectedness.

5.4.4. Shortcomings of the methodology

The main limitation of this study was the sample size (37 in total after attrition). A power analysis was conducted that determined that a sample size of 32 was needed to find a medium effect size (80% chance). This sample size was met, but in order to increase the power, replication with a larger sample would be beneficial. Nonetheless, the challenges experienced with securing a sample of previously convicted sex offenders living in the community and willing to participate longitudinally were very real. In the comparison group, the refusal rate was 82%. This

is a predictable consequence of applied research about a very specialist population who want to keep hidden and unnoticed. Given the fear and stigma they reported being subjected to, attending a probation office voluntarily (twice) to meet with an unknown researcher was a challenging request, so such a high refusal rate may not be unusual, though it was not expected to be this extreme. Participation may have been increased by offering an incentive for participation; however, given that the men were still on probation licence, this would have been an ethical concern.

The sample size was smaller than anticipated and there was an attempt to rectify this by adding a second comparison group of non-sexual violent offenders to the study. In addition to increasing the sample size, it was theorised that this would also enable comparison of the two sexual offender groups with a third, mainly for the purpose of establishing whether the results found were only relevant to sexual offenders. Ethical approval was granted and West Yorkshire Probation agreed to recruit a third group. Unfortunately, however, at the time of this study, the National Probation Service was undergoing huge structural changes in relation to the Transforming Rehabilitation agenda, which had an impact on the availability of resources for external research. After several months, the recruitment of a third group was abandoned due to the demands on the resources of the staff in the West Yorkshire Probation Research Team. This was unfortunate, but again a consequence of applied forensic research. Future work could consider comparing the findings of this research with a group of non-sexual offenders to examine if the issues are different for sexual offenders.

It should also be noted that the Circles group had more sexual pre convictions and were significantly more likely to have attended treatment. It is positive therefore that, in spite of this, their scores as a group moved in the desired direction (although not always significantly). It is possible that, as they had already been treated, there was less room for them to move on the scales, although typically their scores were lower than those of the comparison groups at Time one.

The final issue for consideration here is selection bias in the sample. The men in both groups all agreed to participate voluntarily, but many others refused. It is not known what the differences were between those who agreed to participate and those

who did not. The men who agreed were mostly treated and none were in full denial of their offending. It is possible, therefore, that the current sample reflects a group of motivated, (mostly) treated sexual offenders and this has implications for the research's generalisability to all sexual offenders. Other issues related to generalisability were that the sample was predominantly White and had previously offended against children.

5.4.5. Implications for practice

This research supports previous (mainly) theoretical suggestions that hope and optimism, locus of control and social connectedness may be important factors in desistance from sexual offending. In terms of treatment and other prison or community interventions, it would therefore follow that encouraging an increase in these factors may help to support desistance. Instilling hope and optimism may well be a difficult task due to the stigma, exclusion and lack of job opportunities associated with released sexual offenders. However, it seems that, despite this, the men were hopeful and this increased significantly over time. Perhaps current treatment programmes already instil a sense of hope and optimism. The men also had a high level of internal locus of control. Encouraging offenders to 'take personal responsibility for offending behaviour' is very much encouraged in treatment programmes, and it appears that this is working and being maintained. In terms of social connectedness and social capital, a focus on building as many resources as possible prior to release/following community sanctions would be beneficial.

Jahnke et al. (2015) call for a cultural shift and an understanding of men with sexual interests in children, postulating that if pedophilia is an orientation, then it cannot be changed. Offering men who have been convicted of sexual offences hope, acceptance and social connectedness may reduce their stigma-related stress, and therefore possibly their offending. It could be argued that this is partly what Circles does, or at least aims to do. In term of recommendations for Circles, a pre and post assessment battery that encompasses scales measuring potential factors for desistance would be advocated. For the Circles men, the attrition rate was high and collecting data was not a priority. Circles need to make a co-ordinated shift towards a comprehensive evaluation strategy in order to further the evidence base.

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5.4.6. Future research

The key issue to establish is whether the psychometrics scores taken in early desistance relate to longer-term desistance. It would be necessary to establish what early desistance is, as it may not be the start of the at risk period, and certainly there was an indication from the results in Chapter Three that the *turning point* occurred earlier than this; at arrest, incarceration or treatment. It would then be important to establish that the construct being measured (e.g., high levels of hope or locus of control) is related to desistance. Finally, it would be necessary to establish that the tests used measure the constructs sufficiently. This would require an extensive research programme. It is useful to consider what has been established in terms of empirically established risk factors, and whether psychometric scores predict recidivism in this area of research. Wakeling, Beech, and Freemantle (2011) found that sexual offenders who demonstrated clinically significant change (through treatment) on measures of socio-affective function (including Locus of Control) had lower rates of reconviction. Similarly, Barnett, Wakeling, Mandeville-Norden, and Rakestrow (2013) found that those who were classified (measured psychometrically) as treated on the socio-affective functioning domain had a lower rate of reconviction (sexual/violent) than those who still required further clinical change post treatment. However, in both studies, other risk domains were not found to be associated with a decrease in sexual/violent recidivism, nor did changes on any psychometric test add power to static risk assessment. There is clearly still research to be carried out in this area, and it could be that the tests are failing to measure the constructs accurately, as the risk factors have been linked with recidivism through meta-analyses (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005).

However, this type of research paves the way for similar research on desistance, with the ultimate aim of identifying at an early stage those individuals who may or may not desist. As discussed in Chapter One, sexual offenders do desist, with some describing it as an inevitable phenomenon (Harris, 2015). However, recent research by Hanson et al. (2014) shows that the rate of sexual recidivism is 22% for higher risk offenders when followed up over 5 years. In terms of preventing further harm, then, identifying the early predictors of desistance may allow for the process to be accelerated through treatment or other interventions.

5.5. Conclusions

The aim of this psychometric study was to measure three proposed psychological factors of desistance for sexual offending over the period of time when sexual offenders have either been recently released from prison or are on licence for sexual convictions. The participants' scores on scales measuring trait and state hope, locus of control and social connectedness increased in the desired direction for both groups, apart from on the SCS-R, where those of the comparison groups decreased. There was only one significant finding; the scores of both groups increased significantly on the Hope Scale. The direction of differences has been discussed here, and is largely more positive for Circles. Whilst the results are encouraging for Circles, there is insufficient evidence at this point to show that being in a Circle significantly increases scores on scales measuring the potential correlates of desistance. Follow up studies with a larger sample are necessary, with the ultimate aim of establishing if measures taken in early desistance predict outcome. This research makes an original contribution to the field in terms of starting to explore and measure the possible predictors of desistance in men who have previously sexually offended.

Chapter Six   Bringing it all together: Testing a model of the early stage of desistance in men who have previously sexually offended

The main aim of this thesis is to explore the early period of desistance for sexual offenders, with a view to understanding the process further and offer recommendations for treatment and practice. This chapter brings together the findings of Chapters Three, Four and Five, and relates what has been found so far to the general theories of desistance from crime, the existing theory of desistance for sexual offenders and the Circles model. It will then present a new model, bringing together the findings with those of the previous literature, and go on to undertake preliminary testing of the proposed model via two statistical methods, presented as two studies. Study one uses cluster analysis and Study two employs correlational analysis. The results of both studies will be discussed.

6.1.1. Theories of desistance from crime for general offending

The criminological theories discussed in Chapter One (Sampson & Laub, 2003; Farrington, 1997) postulate that desistance occurs as a results of external factors, such as getting married or having a job. These social controls act as turning points for turning away from crime. The reasons the men gave for turning away from sexual offending in this study were primarily a realisation of the effects of their actions on others and themselves, followed by treatment, the shock of arrest/prison and wanting a positive future (there was dissonance between where they were and what they wanted in life). No participant suggested that this turning point was a result of getting a job or entering into a relationship. Given their status as convicted sex offenders, the process of engaging in a new intimate relationship or getting a job was very difficult. Themes of social capital and purposeful activity were present and important to the men, but there were also themes of a lack of purposeful activity and social isolation; the men lacked both jobs and relationships. In summary, there was no evidence that, for the sexual offenders (mainly child molesters) in this sample, social controls were operating as the turning points for desistance, probably due to the stigma of being a sex offender preventing access. This supports the work of Harris (2014), who found similar results with a sample of sexual offenders in Massachusetts.

The psychological theories of desistance (Maruna, 2001; Giordano et al., 2002, 2016) suggest that those who desist make changes to their personal identity, or

internal narrative, and develop a new identity that no longer fits with offending. Arguably, the current sample was desisting, and although this was a short follow-up, it occurred at a crucial time when the sample was first at risk (and most likely to reoffend). Around 40% of the sample reported having created a new identity. In support of Maruna's Redemption script, the men also reported themes of Generativity/making up to others, and Hope/optimism, both of which Maruna reported would be present in the scripts of desisters. Giordano's work on cognitive transformation emphasises the role of hooks for change; environmental factors that precede identity change. Their study of general crime found prison treatment programmes and intimate relationships to be particular hooks for change. The current research partly supports this in men who have offended sexually; several men reported that attending SOTP marked the point when they decided to stop offending (almost 30%) and seemed to initiate the construction of a new identity for many. Relationships were not found to be turning points/hooks for change, which highlighted a difference between the experiences of being a sexual offender trying to desist compared to a non-sexual offender. However, almost 20% of this sample still identified as being a sex offender and could not separate themselves from their past behaviour. It is possible that these men were persisters, with a Condemnation script, and simply had not been caught or started offending again yet. Alternatively, Harris (2014, 2015) found that many within her sample of sexual offenders had not created a new identity and were desisting out of fear. It could be that there are two paths through early desistance; one where a new identity is created and one where one is not, or indeed more that have not yet been identified.

The interactionist models of desistance (Serin & Lloyd, 2009; LeBel et al., 2008; Bottoms et al., 2004) propose more explicitly that it is the combination of social controls and cognitive transformation that lead to desistance, and the more recent research described in Chapter One has focused on which comes first. The men in the current study who described identity change reported that this came first as, for the majority, social control opportunities were inaccessible. This supports the work of Skardhamar and Savolainen (2014) and Bachman et al. (2015), who found that, for non-sexual offenders, the creation of a new identity was necessary, prior to being able to use environmental factors as hooks for change. The authors postulated that environmental factors were necessary for the maintenance of desistance, not its

initiation. In this sample, there was a distinct lack of environmental factors maintaining change. Instead, for sexual offenders, the maintenance factors are proposed to centre around stigma, fear, loss and shame. As discussed in Chapter Three, a certain amount of fear, stigma or shame may be helpful, as psychologically these act as a deterrent to repeating the harmful behaviour, and so attempting to remove these may not be helpful for desistance.

6.1.2. Existing theory of desistance for sexual offending

The Integrated Theory of Desistance from Sexual Offending (ITDSO) (Göbbels et al., 2012) brings together previous research and suggests four phases in the process of desistance for sexual offenders. Whilst the current research did not set out to test these directly, it did attempt to examine the process of early desistance, and so links can be drawn with the early phases of the theory. Göbbels et al. propose that the first stage of desistance is *decisive momentum*, whereby the offender is open to change and a dissonance with the current identity occurs. Some of the men in the current study do report a period of revaluation; an awareness of the effects on the self and others (often through treatment) and a dissonance around wanting a positive future. However, almost 20% of them reported that it was simply the shock of arrest and the experience of prison that made them decide not to re-offend.

The second stage of the model is *rehabilitation,* where the self is reinvented via attaining primary goods. The current study has shown that not all of the men created a new identity (around 40% did so). There was no particular evidence that they were seeking primary goods such as inner peace and mastery. Rather, they made an agented choice not to repeat their actions, and were trying to get on with life without being 'found out'. The men did want friendships, relationships and jobs, but were mostly barred from these by their convictions (particularly the higher risk men). There were also many men (around 50%) stuck in a Poor me/victim stance, who felt hopeless. They were socially isolated and lonely, and many were 'existing' (P36) day to day. This seems to contrast with men seeking Primary goods, yet the current sample was remaining offence free.

The next stage is *re-entry* (maintenance), which is described as a commitment to change, in spite of the barriers such as stigma. The current study did observe men

who were committed to change (having a sense of hope and optimism about the future). However, the most prevalent themes were factors that have previously been viewed as obstacles to desistance, such as Stigma. In addition, the men were contending with the themes of Poor me, Shame and Focus on loss, and appeared to be desisting in spite of these. As suggested earlier, these factors seemed to play a role in the maintenance of desistance; the men were too scared of the consequences to repeat their actions, rather than being committed to change. In terms of the final stage of the model, *normalcy* is achieved. Arguably, the men in this study had not entered longer-term desistance, and as such this stage will not be discussed.

The psychometric results in the current research showed that there was a significant increase in hope over this early period, suggesting that this may be particularly relevant. Also, scores on the measure of locus of control were very high initially, and had almost increased to the maximum by Time two. This suggests that having an internal locus of control may be important during this phase, in terms of staying offence free, and indeed the men described making agented choices about offending. Offence related-sexual interest was not mentioned by the Göbbels' (2012) model and is explored within this research. The current research found that managing sexual interests is relevant to the men during this early period at risk. They primarily manage them through cognitive strategies, often on a daily basis, and there is some degree of acceptance of the interest, with some viewing it as an orientation.

Additionally, this research has found that an awareness of the consequences for the self and others may have been the catalyst for change, and that for some men this triggered an identity transformation. However, for other men, no identity change happened, and the main reason for (the maintenance) of desistance for the men overall was that they were living with a fear of being found out, and the consequences of that for themselves and others. What this suggests is that there may be several paths to desistance, and that some men undergo identity change while others do not, or it could be that those who have not changed their identity go on to recidivate. What is clear so far is that sexual offenders experience the desistance process in a different way from non-sexual offenders, seem to have more/different obstacles (which are proposed here to act as maintenance factors), and have to cope with the stigma of their convictions in a way that non-sexual offenders do not.

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In summary, the current research does not provide overwhelming support for ITDSO model; indeed, the model seems inadequate on many levels. A new model will be presented in this chapter that draws together the results of this research, incorporating the factors already suggested by the literature, and the new ones discussed here.

6.1.3. The Circles Model

Chapter Three addresses the research question about how Circles fit with the theoretical models that propose that a new identity is necessary for desistance. There was no particular evidence to show that being involved in a Circle triggered the process; rather, it helped the men to continue to grow into their new identities and was involved in the de-labelling process. Höing et al. (2013) propose that acting as a surrogate social network is the most important theoretical influence of a Circle. The current research supports this, with Social Connectedness being the most prevalent theme regarding the impact of Circles. This is further supported by the psychometric study, which found that scores on a scale measuring the social connectedness of this group increased whilst that of the comparison group decreased (although not statistically significantly). This research proposes that, in addition to social capital, the process of de-labelling and de stigmatisation (and therefore supporting an identity not related to sexual offending), is key.

6.1.4. Proposed maintenance factors; stigma, and shame

As has been previously highlighted, this research hypothesises that stigma and shame may interact in a positive way with desistance in this early, liminal stage. This is in contrast to the Jahnke et al. (2015) correlational study (*n*=104) discussed earlier, which found that a fear of being discovered as having sexual interests in children (stigma-related stress) was related to lower social and emotional functioning. They hypothesise that this negative state (combined with social isolation and low self-esteem) could lead to an increased risk of sexual recidivism. This certainly has face validity; however, the men in the current study seem to be desisting in spite of these negative states. In brief, other research on this area with sexual offenders has focused on the social impact of stigma, such as the stigma of sex offender registration (Tewksbury, 2005), but there has been little research into the psychological impact. Jahnke and Hoyer (2013) reviewed the eleven published studies on public stigma

against people with pedophillia. They suggest that stigma is highly prevalent (yet under researched), results in discrimination, social distance, suicidal ideation and negative emotional and behavioural problems and discourages men from seeking help. Ultimately, they conclude that stigma leads to a higher risk of abusive behaviour.

There is limited published research that takes an alternative view, and none with sexual offenders relative to stigma. In relation to the other negative emotional states, Walker, Bowen, Brown, and Sleath (2015) examined the narratives of 22 male intimate partner violence offenders in the UK (13 desisters and 9 persisters). They found the themes of guilt, shame and fear to be "catalysts of change" (p. 14), and it was a build-up of these negative emotional states that started to act as a deterrent and motivate change. Shame has been previously acknowledged as being relevant to the process of distancing from offending (e.g., LeBel et al., 2008). In the Walker et al. (2015) study, shame was noted among the desisters but not the persisters, hence leading the authors to conclude that shame is necessary to initiate desistance. Interestingly, the desisters were primary desisters; that is, they had only been offence-free for around a year. This is comparable to the current study. Hence, it is possible that these factors are particularly important in this early stage of desistance and allow progression in some way to secondary or longer-term desistance.

6.1.5. A proposed model of the *early stage* of desistance for sexual offenders

The data suggest that there may be two or more pathways in operation, and/or possibly two different groups within the data. This was borne out by the clinical observations. As discussed above, there was a group of men who reported themes of New me, and appeared to have undergone or be undergoing an identity change. The clinical observation was that this group was 'thriving'. They were generally more positive and appeared to possess more of the protective factors for desistance. They seemed more accepting of their sexual interests, and their turning points for change were internal, psychological triggers (Effects on self and others). The second group were the men who still identified with being a sex offender. They had not undergone a cognitive transformation, and the clinical observation was that they appeared more socially isolated, less hopeful and had a Poor me victim stance. Their turning points

for change were external; the impact of arrest and prison. This group was not offending, yet appeared to be just 'surviving' and existing day to day. It is proposed that, rather than existing as two separate groups, these men operate on a continuum on the path to desistance, and can move up and down this scale. Two models are presented below. The first is a proposed continuum of how the two groups may co-exist; The Survivor to Thriver Scale (*Figure 6.1.*). The second is a proposed model of early desistance for men who have committed sexual offences (*Figure 6.2.*). It also details the possible impact of Circles.

Survivor	Striver	Thriver
• Identity as sexual offender		• Cognitive transformation (New me)
• Poor Me	Moving towards	• De-labelled/accepted (Circles)
• Low hope and optimism	'thriver'	• Hopeful and optimistic
• Socially isolated		• Socially connected (Circles)
• Lack of purposeful activity		• Internal locus of control
• External locus of control		• Purposeful activity
• Turning points - external		• Turning points - internal/cognitive dissonance
• Management of sexual interest - avoidance/distraction		• Management of sexual interests - cognitive
• Struggles to live with sexual interest in children		• Accepts sexual interest in children as orientation.

Role of shame, stigma, fear of being found out, focus on loss, damage to others - present in both groups and acts as a maintenance factor?

Figure 6.1.

Proposed Survivor to Thriver Scale
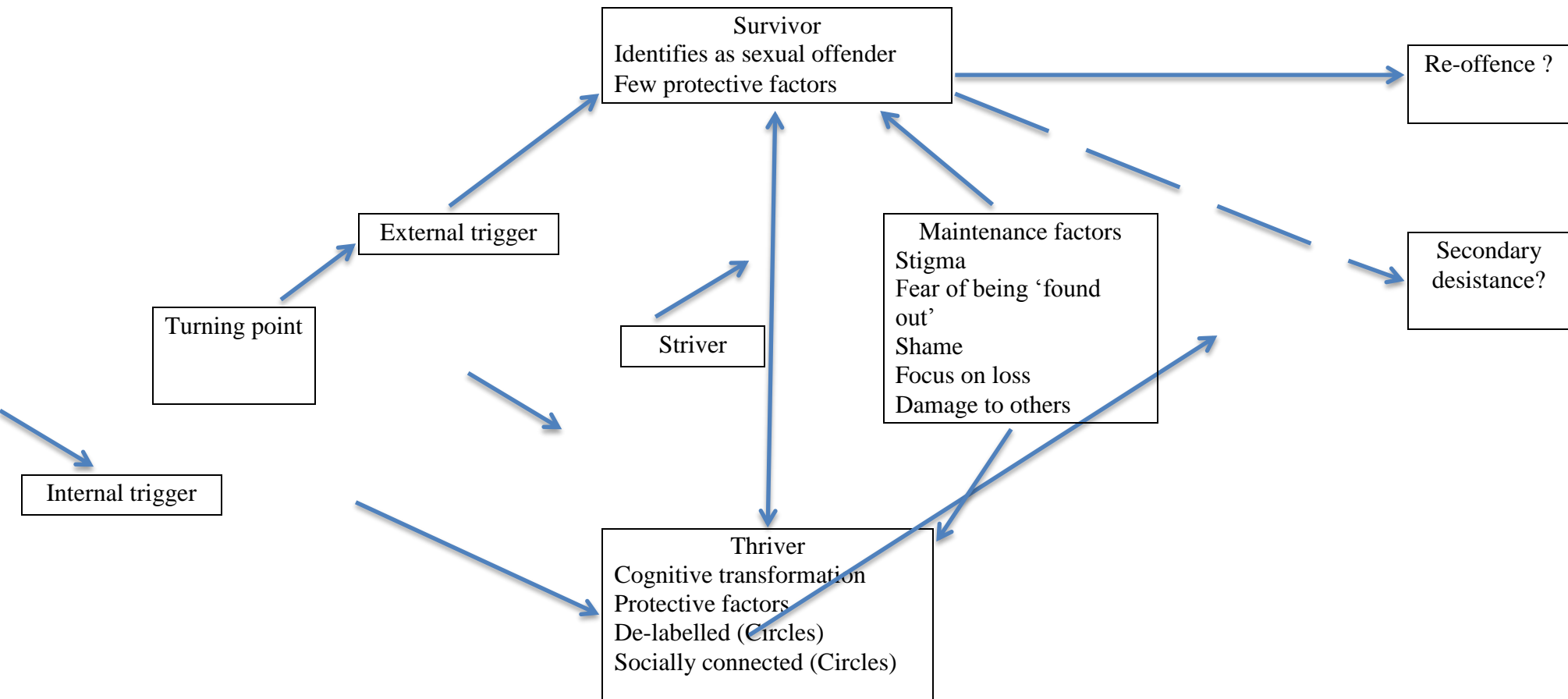
Figure 6.2.

Proposed model of early desistance for men who have committed sexual offences

6.2. Study one: An empirical validation of the Survivor/Thriver Model using cluster analysis

Key to the proposed model is the notion that there exist two groups - Survivors and Thrivers - and that these centre on the theoretical suggestion that men undertake a cognitive transformation, or not and also that these groups are characterised by a higher presence of protective factors (Thrivers) or a lower one (Survivors). It was also suggested above that the Survivor/Thriver groups may operate at opposite ends of a continuum, and that there may be movement between the Survivor group and the Thriver group over time (towards secondary desistance). This may, in turn, suggest the presence of a third group - Strivers. This group could be conceptualised as being in the process of "making good" (Maruna, 2001, p. 85). In order to test this model, the technique of cluster analysis will be used to explore the groups within the data. This method of analysis will be briefly described, followed by the specific analysis planned for the data in this study.

6.2.1. Cluster analysis

Cluster analysis is an explorative, statistical procedure that structures data in order to identify homogenous groups of cases or individuals. Within clusters, the cases are similar to each other, yet different from the cases in other clusters. This is particularly useful in investigative research, where the previous groupings are unknown. The aim of cluster analysis is to provide "objective and stable classifications" (Everitt, Landau, Leese, & Stahl, 2011, p. 4). Cluster analysis has been widely used in the fields of medicine, psychiatry and genetics, but also in developmental psychology (Caspi & Silva, 1995).

There are several different methods of cluster analysis; the hierarchical models are the most commonly used in social sciences. Hierarchical methods can be agglomerative or divisive and work by searching for the two most similar points in the data and then combining them until all of the data have been merged. The optimum cluster solution is chosen at the end of the process, typically through the study of a visual representation (dendrogram). This represents how the clusters have been merged at each step of the analysis. There are some necessary cautions to note about hierarchical cluster analysis, notably that this type of cluster analysis will always produce clusters, even if there are no groups in the data (von Eye & Bergman,

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2003). Additionally, using dendrograms to select the optimum number of clusters (by sight) is subjective, so it is difficult to establish the true number of clusters. Using the cophonetic correlation coefficient, initially introduced by Sokal and Rohlf (1962), but used widely by others, is a more objective measure of the fit of a dendrogram to the data (Saraçli, Doğan, & Doğan, 2013). However, these methods are still criticised due to the absence of a robust statistical method for analysing the most appropriate number of clusters (Mun, von-Eye, Bates, & Vaschillo, 2008). In addition to using the cophonetic correlation, these issues can be limited by using different hierarchical methods and comparing across the final cluster solutions, and also by choosing the procedure and similarity methods with care (Mun, Windle, & Schainker, 2008).

Model-based clustering is a more recently developed method that ameliorates the more subjective nature of hierarchical based models by providing a statistical fit measure of the optimum number of clusters. Model-based clustering works on the assumption that there are unobserved, heterogeneous groups within populations. Each subgroup is modelled, and then the whole population is modelled. If the best solution is one cluster, then the data are normal, and do not comprise of subgroups. The Bayesian Information Criterion (Schwarz, 1978) is a statistical procedure that is widely used to compare the models and ascertain the optimal cluster solution (Mun et al., 2008). This type of cluster analysis has been used frequently in psychology-based research in recent years (Skeem, Johansson, Andershed, Kerr, & Louden, 2007) and is appropriate for use in smaller samples (Mun et al., 2008).

6.2.2. Current analysis

Two methods of cluster analysis were used to add rigour to the study. Ward's D method was chosen as the hierarchical method. This uses F values to maximise the significance of the differences between the clusters, and has the greatest statistical power of all of the hierarchical methods (Hands & Everitt, 1987). It is also the most regularly used in psychological research. The similarity measure was the Square Euclidian Distance and this is most appropriate for use with psychometrics (Morris, Blashfield, & Satz, 1981). Model-based clustering was also used. The Bayesian Information Criteria (BIC) was used as the statistical measure of fit. Model-based clustering is suitable for finding clusters that are unknown, but are suggested by patterns in the data (Mun et al., 2008).

It is important that the variables chosen for analysis have theoretical underpinnings, as cluster analysis cannot distinguish between important and irrelevant variables (Cornish, 2007). As such, the variables chosen were the four psychometric measures. These measures were selected as they were the key factors thought to be possible protective factors for desistance for sexual offenders, as outlined in the literature. Also, these measures have previously been established as being reliable and valid. The NVivo themes were also examined for potential use with cluster analysis, but this was deemed inappropriate due to the multiple zeros in the data, making them non-normal and difficult to cluster.

6.2.3. Method

6.2.3.1. Participants

The participants used in this analysis were the same as employed in Chapter Five, the psychometric study. There were 47 men after the removal of the Lifer outlier. Data were used from Time one, as previous testing has shown that there were no significant differences between the men who dropped out and those still present at Time two. This allowed for a larger sample. In summary, the men were mostly White, had been convicted of offences against children and were in the first 12-18 months at risk following conviction. For full details of their consent, recruitment and demographics, see Chapter Five.

6.2.3.2. Procedure

Both methods of cluster analysis were carried out using R, a statistical computing package (R Core Team, 2016). Prior to undertaking cluster analysis, a visual inspection of the data was carried out using the rgl package in R to produce 3D scatter plots. The variables entered into R for analysis were the participants' scores on the Hope Scale (HS), State Hope Scale (SHS), Locus of Control (LOC) scale and Social Connectedness Scale-Revised (SCS-R). For full details of the measures, see Chapter Five. Previous analysis of the distribution of the scores from this sample has shown that they were non-normally distributed on the HS and LOC measures. The other measures had a normal distribution after the removal of the Lifer outlier. As previously discussed, clinical data are expected to be non-normal (Wright et al., 2011). Hardin and Rocke (2004) report that model-based clustering is sufficiently robust to deal with non-normally distributed data. Additionally, consultation with an

expert in cluster analysis was undertaken, who considered that the scores were not so non-normal as to exclude their use of cluster analysis (Crouch, personal communication, Sept, 2016).

6.2.4. Results

6.2.4.1. *Hierarchical clustering method*

Various visual representations of the psychometric data were created in order to explore the data prior to the statistical analysis. 3D scatterplots revealed that, when all four psychometric variables were entered, there was little indication of clusters in the data. However, when the Hope scales were entered with the LOC scale, and then separately with the SCS-R scale, there was an indication of separation in the data, with one larger, diffuse cluster, and one small tight cluster in each scatter plot. These can be seen in Appendix I. Hierarchical clustering using Ward's D method, and entering all four psychometric variables revealed the presence of two separate groups when examined on a dendrogram (see *Figure 6.3*.).
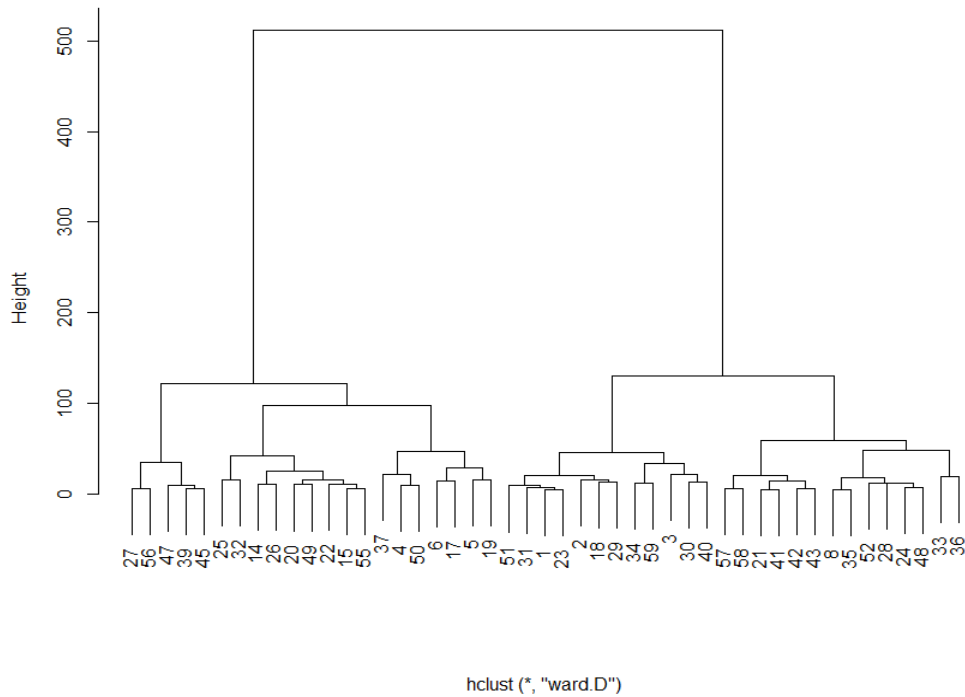
Figure 6.3

Dendrogram using Ward's D method of HS, SHS, LOC and SCS-R scores

Figure 6.3. shows the two clusters clearly, although it could be argued that there is also the presence of a third cluster on the left hand side. Therefore in order to investigate this further it was necessary to explore different combinations of the variables. Again using Ward's method, the dendrogram below revealed that, when the Hope Scales were entered with the SCS-R, but the LOC variables were excluded, there were also two very clear clusters (see *Figure 6.4.*). This is of significance and is suggestive that across the variables there are at least two sub clusters within the data.
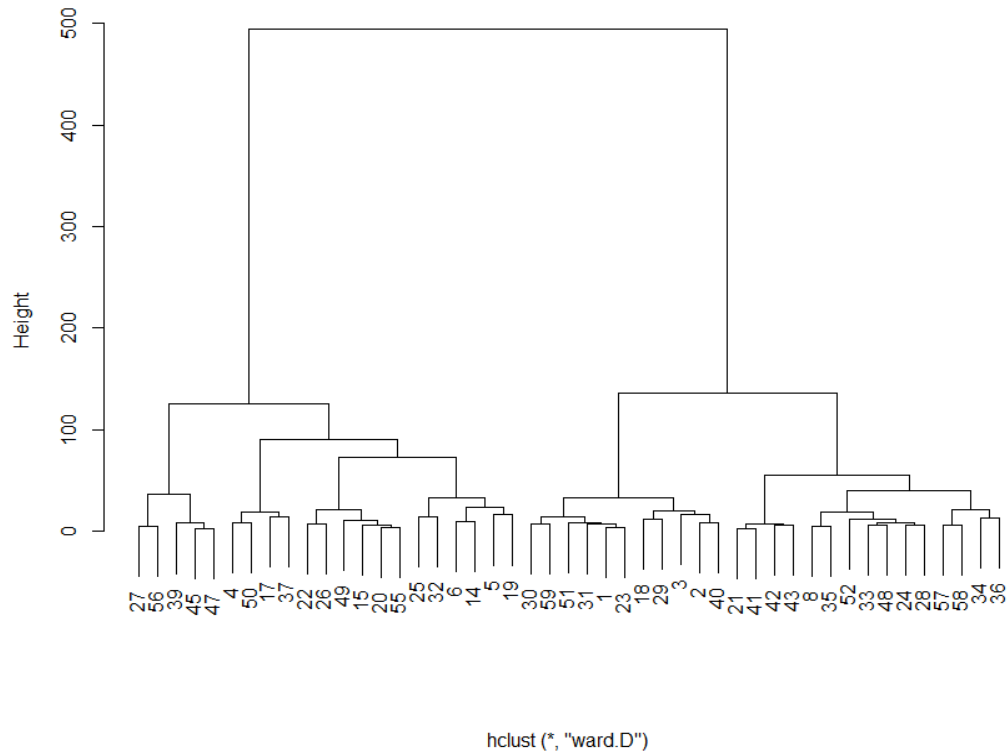
Figure 6.4.

Dendrogram using Ward's D method of HS, SHS and SCS-R scores

However, when the Hope Scales were entered with the LOC scale, and the SCS-R excluded, there were three separate clusters in the data. This suggested that the presence of the LOC variable added meaningfully to the cluster solution, while the SCS-R did not. The third cluster is not present when this variable is removed (see *Figure 6.5.*). As such there are two, possibly three sub clusters within the data that are worth exploring further. Given that dendrograms have a degree of objectivity, a more robust method of determining how many sub clusters are likely to be in the data was required. Use of the co-phonetic correlation and another method of cluster analysis with a statistical model of fit were chosen.
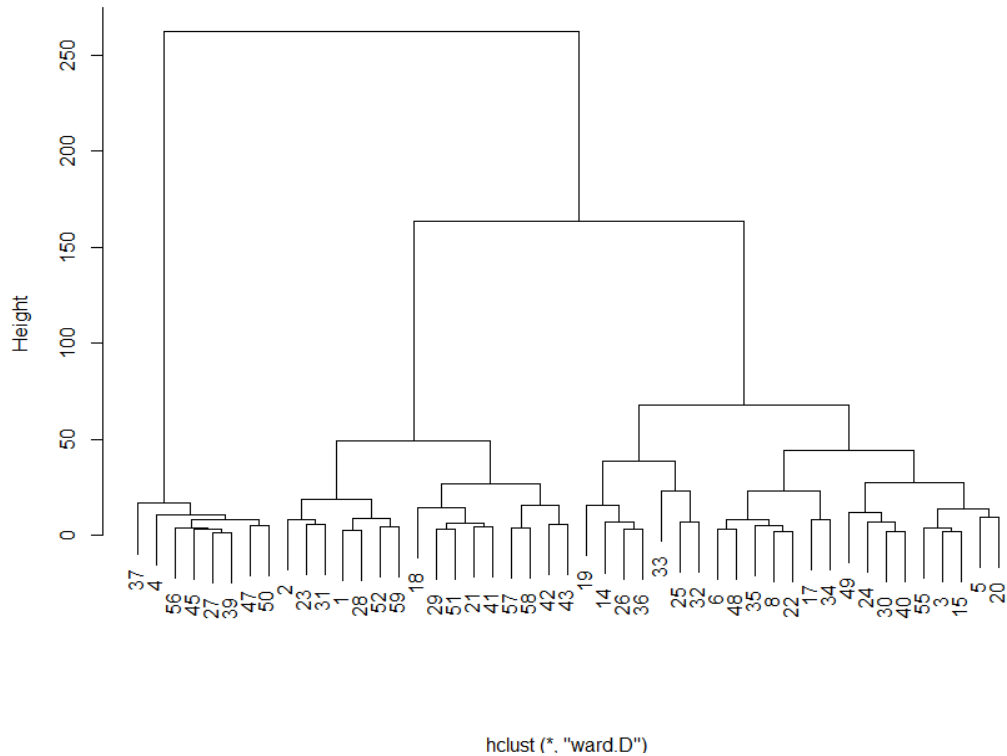
Figure 6.5.

Dendrogram using Ward's D method of HS, SHS and LOC scores

The cophonetic correlation coefficients were calculated for each of the three dendrograms presented above. This is the correlation between the original distances between the data points and those that result from the clustering technique. It is used as a measure of fit of a clustering solution to a data set, and to measure the effectiveness of the technique. Values above .70 are reported to be good (Saraçli et al., 2013). It can be reasoned that a dendrogram is a suitable summary of the data if the correlation between the original distances and the cophonetic distances is high. Otherwise, it should only be regarded as the description of the output of the clustering process. In *Figure 6.3*, the co-phonetic correlation was .66; in *Figure 6.4*, it was .65; and in *Figure 6.5*, it was .70. Therefore, it can be argued that, in *Figure 6.5*, where the LOC, HS and SHS scores are clustered, there is a better degree of fit to the data than for the other models. This provides support for a three-cluster solution.

6.2.4.2. Interpretation of the clusters

It is inappropriate to run MANOVA or one-way ANOVAS to search for the

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significance between the variables used to create the clusters. Cluster analysis splits the data into groups that have little or no overlap, so the results of tests of difference will always be positive (Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984). However, it is necessary to look at the cluster means in order to interpret the cluster characteristics.

Table 6.1

Scores compared to the sample mean for the three-cluster solution (Ward's D)

Measure	Whole sample (*n*=47)		Cluster One (*n*=8)		Cluster Two (*n*=16)		Cluster Three (*n*=21)	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Hope Scale	41.36	42	27.25	3.15	46.81	5.91	42.48	6.70
State Hope Scale	31.53	33.00	14.13	1.46	41.19	4.40	30.87	6.43
Locus of Control	64.96	9.82	55.13	4.52	75.13	5.40	61.30	7.14

6.2.4.3. Cluster characteristics

Cluster One (*n*=8) was characterised by participants who have the lowest mean scores on all measures, and these were all lower than the mean for the sample. Scores were lower on all measures than in the other two clusters. Cluster Two (*n*=16) was characterised by participants who had the highest mean scores on all the measures, and were higher than the sample mean. Scores were higher than those in Cluster One and Cluster Three on all measures. Cluster Three (*n*=21) was characterised by participants whose mean scores all fell between the means of Cluster One and Cluster Two, and were around the sample mean. Cluster Three scores were consistently higher than those of Cluster One, and lower than those of Cluster Two. In the context of the proposed model, Cluster One = Survivors, Cluster Two = Thrivers and Cluster Three = Strivers.

6.2.4.4. Clusters, risk, group status, treatment status and New me.

The results from the previous chapters and literature suggest that these factors may have an impact on psychometric scores; for example, treated men may score higher on the psychometric measures or higher risk men may score lower. Fisher's Exact test was used to examine if there was any relationship with the categorical variables of risk level (RM2000, collapsed, Low-Medium and High to Very high), treatment status and Circles group membership and cluster type. The Bonferonni correction was applied (p< .05/3= .017. There was no significant association between the cluster type and Risk Matrix scores, *p*= .306. There was also no significant association with treatment status, *p*= .536, or whether they were in the Circles or comparison group, *p*= .508. This suggests that the clusters are describing something other than what is already known about the groups.

The proposed model also postulates that the men (named Thrivers) who have higher levels of hope, locus of control and social connectedness will have undergone cognitive transformation (the presence of the New me theme). Given that three clusters have been suggested which relate to high, medium and low levels of these variables, the relationship between the presence or absence of the New Me theme with cluster group membership was investigated using Pearson's Chi Square. The results showed a statistically significant relationship and a large effect size. X^2 (2, *n*=44)= 7.49, *p*= .024, Cramer's *V*= .413. The cross tabulation tables for this Chi Square can be found in Appendix L and show that the highest presence of the New me theme was found in Cluster Two (highest scores on the measures = Thrivers), and the lowest in Cluster One (lowest scores on the measures = Survivors). This is supportive of the model.

6.2.4.5. Model-based clustering method

Model-based clustering was then applied to the four psychometric variables. A two-dimensional density plot can be seen in Appendix J, which shows that there is a separation into two or three clusters, depending on which variables are added to the analysis. In support of the hierarchical analysis, when LOC is plotted with the HS and SHS scores, there are three clusters evident, which reduces to two when this is removed and the SCS-R scores plotted. To establish the optimum number of clusters,

a total of 9 possible models can be compared simultaneously using the Bayesian Information Criterion (Schwarz, 1978) as a measure of statistical fit. The results of this analysis are presented below.
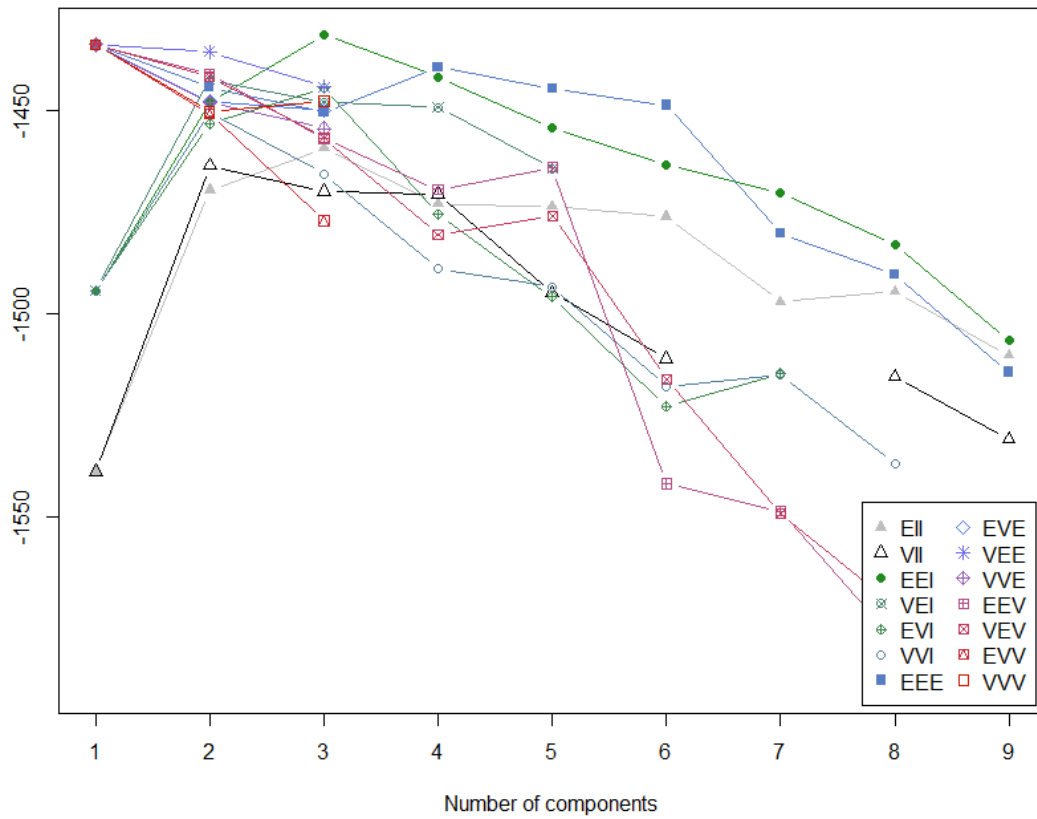
Figure 6.6.

Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC)(negative) of different cluster solutions.

The BIC represents an increasing function of error variance, so the model with the lowest BIC is preferred (Raftery, 1995). R calculates the negative BIC, so it is the model with the highest value that is chosen. As can be seen in Figure 6.6, the best fitting model according to the BIC was a three-cluster solution (BIC= -1431.30). This solution was characterized by 'EEI', which means that the clusters were diagonal and equal in volume and shape. The key to the size, orientation and shape of the cluster models shown in the graph above can be seen in Appendix K.

Likelihood ratio tests were then undertaken to calculate the probability of the observed data having arisen from the model, and also the likelihood ratio between two

alternative models fitted to the data. When the *p* value is less than or equal to .001, only the significance level of *p*< .001 is reported. The results showed that a two-cluster solution was favoured over a one-cluster solution (*p*< .001) and that a three-cluster solution was favoured over a two-cluster solution (*p*< .001). However, comparing a four-cluster solution with a three-cluster solution provided no evidence of a difference (*p*= .29).

6.2.4.4. Interpretation of the Clusters

Therefore, the three-cluster solution was chosen as the best fit for the data. This also complemented the results of the Ward's D method and therefore is suggestive that the models may act to validate each other. However, the models are derived from different methodologies, so it will be necessary to examine if the same participants are clustered in the same way across the two models. This will be addressed in section *6.2.4.6.*

In this model, there were 17 participants in Cluster One, 20 in Cluster Two and 10 in Cluster Three. In order to assist with the interpretation of the clusters, the cluster means for each measure are presented below, along with the sample mean.

Table 6.2.

Scores compared to the sample mean for the three-cluster solution (model-based

clustering)

Measure	Whole sample (n=47)		Cluster One (n=17)		Cluster Two (n=20)		Cluster Three (n=10)	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
HS	41.36	42	45.59	6.08	43.05	7.52	30.80	8.32
SHS	31.53	33.00	42.06	3.23	30.09	3.68	14.9	2.51
LOC	64.96	9.82	74.10	6.27	62.0	7.78	55.50	4.10
SCS-R	77.06	22.03	95.18	10.70	70.0	21.16	60.50	17.18

6.2.4.5. Cluster characteristics

Cluster One (n=17) was characterised by participants who have the highest mean scores on all measures compared to the other clusters, and were all higher than the mean for the sample. Cluster Two (n=20) was characterised by participants whose mean scores all fell around the sample mean. Scores fell between the means of Cluster One and Cluster Three on all measures. Cluster Two scores were consistently lower than those of Cluster One, and higher than Cluster Three for all measures. Cluster Three (n=10) had the lowest mean scores on all the measures, and were all lower than the sample mean. In the context of the proposed model, Cluster One = Thrivers, Cluster Two = Strivers and Cluster Three = Survivors. This interpretation matches that of the three-cluster solution provided by Ward's D method. However, the SCS-R scores also contributed to the model-based clustering solution, which may help to explain the different n when comparing the cluster models.

6.2.4.6. Testing for a relationship between the models

In order to test for a relationship between these two models (and therefore examine if the same observations were made in each) Pearson's Chi square was

implemented and was found to be highly significant X^2 (4, n=47)= 60.01, p= .001, Cramer's V= .799 (large effect size). The following table shows the overlap between the clusters. The full cross tabulation table can be seen in Appendix L.

Table 6.3.

Cross tabulation table showing the percentage overlap between Ward's D three-cluster solution and the model-based three-cluster solution

		Model based clusters		
		Cluster One (Thriver)	Cluster Two (Striver)	Cluster Three (Survivor)
Ward's D clusters	Cluster One (Survivor)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	100% (n=8)
	Cluster Two (Thriver)	87.5% (n=14)	12.5% (n=2)	0% (n=0)
	Cluster Three (Striver)	13% (n=3)	78% (n=18)	8.7% (n=2)

6.2.4.7. Clusters, risk, group and treatment status, and New me

As with the Ward's D method described above in section *6.2.4.4.*, Fisher's Exact test was used to examine if there was any relationship between cluster type and the categorical variables of risk level, treatment status and Circles group membership. There was no significant association between cluster type and Risk Matrix scores, p= .306, nor between treatment status, p= .536, or whether they were in the Circles or comparison group, p= .508. Again this indicates that the clusters are describing something unique about the groups.

As with Ward's D method, three clusters have been suggested which relate to high, medium and low levels of the variables postulated as being associated with the presence or absence of the New me theme. As such, cluster group membership and the relationship with the New me theme was investigated using Pearson's Chi Square. Again, the results showed a statistically significant relationship and a large effect size. X^2 (2, n=44)= 11.45, p= .003, Cramer's V= .510 (large effect size). The cross

tabulation tables for this Chi Square can be found in Appendix L and show that the highest presence of the New me theme was found in Cluster One (highest scores on the measures = Thriver). A lower presence of the New me theme was found in Cluster Three (lowest scores on the measures = Survivor), however there was an even lower presence of the New me theme in Cluster Two (where the scores on the measures were around the mean = Striver). The difference was 7% between these clusters. It can also be seen that the count for this cell is only $n=3$, which therefore violates the assumptions of the Chi Square. As such, this should be interpreted with caution. Overall, the results confer with the Ward's D model results and provide statistically significant support for the proposal that the group of men with higher scores on the measures (Thrivers) are more likely to have undergone cognitive transformation as measured by the presence of the New me theme.

6.3. Study two: Further empirical validation of the Thriver/Survivor Model using correlational analysis

The aim of Study two was to explore how the NVivo themes of New me (representing Thrivers) and Identity as a sexual offender (representing Survivors) are related to the proposed maintenance and protective factors. To examine the models further, multiple regression was considered, with New me and Identity as a sexual offender as the dependant variables, and selected independent variables (Nvivo themes and psychometrics) based on the theory and literature. However, the data were significantly non-normal, and the dependent variables were not validated measures. Additionally, using the formula given by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007, p. 123) to calculate the sample size based on the number of independent variables, the sample was only big enough to allow for the use of one independent variable. As this would have added little above using a standard correlation, a series of exploratory correlations was planned.

6.3.1. Research questions

New research questions arising from the data and tested here in relation to the proposed model include:

1. Is the New me theme associated with the protective factors for desistance suggested by the literature?

2. Is the Identity as a sexual offender theme negatively associated with the protective factors?

3. How are the turning point themes related to the New me theme and the Identity as a sexual offender themes?

4. How are the management of sexual interest themes related to the New me theme and the Identity as a sexual offender themes?

5. How are the proposed maintenance factors (Stigma, Shame, Damage to others, Focus on Loss) related to the New me, and Identity as a sexual offender themes?

6.3.2. Method

6.3.2.1. Participants

The participants were the same as those employed in Chapter Three for the themed analysis study (*n*=56). Full details can be found in Chapter Three regarding the recruitment, demographics and procedure. The psychometrics scores were from the subsample of men who completed the psychometric study (*n*=47). Full details can be seen in Chapter Five, the psychometric study. In summary, the men were mostly White, the large majority had been convicted of offences against children and they were all in the first 12-18 months at risk following conviction.

6.3.2.2. Data analysis

The data used were the Time one mean percentage frequency scores from each participant's narrative on the NVivo themes and the Time one psychometric scores. Preliminary analysis revealed that the data were not normally distributed. However, as discussed in previous chapters, this is to be expected with small samples of clinical data. As such, bootstrapping was applied to the data, and the non-parametric Spearman's rho was utilised. The Bonferroni correction is deemed very strict for exploratory correlational testing (Garamszegi, 2006) and increases the Type two errors to such a level that potentially existing relationships are not found. However, such analysis still needs to be aware of multiple testing and Type one errors. As this is exploratory work, correlations were undertaken between all of the psychometric

scales and the inductive and deductive themes, and are presented below. A significance level of $p < .05$ was set. The results should be interpreted with caution due to the likelihood of increased Type one error, and repeated with a larger sample to validate the results.

The guidance given by Cohen (1988, p. 79) for interpreting r is as follows, and these should be considered alongside the p values;
small $r = .10$ to $.29$
medium $r = .30$ to $.49$
large $r = .50$ to 1.0

6.3.3. Results

Table 6.4.

Correlation co-efficients for the New me and Identity as a sexual offender themes

Variables	New me *r*	Identity as sexual offender *r*
HS	.130	-.239
SHS	.378**	-.194
LOC	.475**	.108
SCS-R	.334*	-.170
Arrest as turning point	.109	.360*
Treatment as turning point	.522**	-.284*
Want positive future as turning point	.048	-.125
Manage sexual interests-distraction/avoidance	-.008	.092
Manage sexual interests-cognitive strategies	.328*	-.063
Acceptance of sexual interests	.104	.135
Struggle with sexual interests	.195	.021
Stigma of being sexual offender	.029	.314*
Shame	.259	.297*
Damage to others	.029	.475**
Focus on loss	.060	.221
Poor me	-.124	.335**
Generativity	.391**	.371**
Lack purposeful activity	-.088	.160
Problem solver	.351*	-.027
Religion and church	.146	-.171
Education	.110	.042

* significant at *p*< .05 (two tailed), ** significant at *p*< .01 (two tailed)

6.4. Discussion

6.4.1. Cluster analysis

Two different methods of cluster analysis were undertaken with the four psychometric measures, both of which produced a three-cluster solution as the best fit to the data. Interpretation of the clusters using the means of the psychometrics showed the same pattern (although, in hierarchical clustering, the SCS-R was not added to the solution); a group with the lowest scores on each measure, a group with scores around the mean on each measure, and a group with the highest scores on each measure. Further testing revealed that the results of the two cluster solutions were significantly related, with the same participants largely falling into the same clusters within each model, thereby further validating the procedure. This analysis alone provided support for the proposed model; a group of Survivors (with low scores on measures proposed to be protective factors for desistance), a group of Strivers (scores around the mean), and a group of Thrivers (high scores on measures proposed to be protective factors for desistance). It should be noted that there was 100% agreement between the two cluster analysis methods for the Survivor group, 87.5% agreement for the Thriver group and 78% agreement for the Striver group. If the groups do indeed operate on a continuum, as proposed, with the Strivers in the middle, then it would follow that there may be some overlap with the other categories. The Survivors seem to be more easily identifiable as a distinct group.

Key to the proposed model is that the Survivors have not undergone any cognitive transformation, the Strivers are in the process of this, and the Thrivers describe being, or in the process of becoming, a 'New me'. As such, testing was undertaken to investigate the relationship between the cluster type and presence or absence of the New me theme. Statistically significant results were found for both cluster analysis methods, with the presence of the New me theme being consistently associated with the cluster with the highest scores on all measures (the Thrivers). The results arguably provide initial support for the three groups suggested by the model, and the continuum. Further research might explore whether the participants move between the groups over time, and whether the move is associated with an increase (or decrease) in scores. Ultimately, it needs to be established whether the groups are associated with secondary desistance.

It was interesting that the LOC contributed meaningfully to the three-cluster solution in the hierarchical modelling, while the SCS-R did not. This may suggest that having an internal locus of control is particularly important (at least to the model). The SCS-R and LOC both contributed to a three-cluster solution in model-based clustering, and these results need exploring through further research with a larger sample.

6.4.2. Correlational analysis

The results of the cluster analysis suggest that there may be three groups within the data - Survivors, Strivers and Thrivers. A key factor of being a Thriver is that cognitive transformation has taken, or is taking, place (New me theme). Correlational analysis revealed a positive statistically significant relationship between scores on the SHS, SCS-R and the LOC scales, and the New me theme, and a small, positive but non-significant correlation with the HS. These findings support the model. In addition, and also in support of the model, there were significant positive correlations with the NVivo themes of Treatment as a turning point (internal trigger), using Cognitive strategies to manage sexual interests, Generativity and Problem solver and the New me theme. Interestingly, there was a small positive correlation with Shame, and this was approaching statistical significance ($p= .063$). This will be returned to later.

The Survivors still identify as sexual offenders and cognitive transformation has not taken place (Identity as sexual offender theme). Small, negative, although non-significant relationships with the HS, SHS and SCS-R scales and the Identity as a sexual offender theme were found. There was no relationship with the LOC scale. As described above, there was a positive significant relationship with the LOC and the New Me theme, suggesting that an internal locus of control is more relevant for this group. Interestingly, it was the addition of the LOC scale in the hierarchical cluster analysis that resulted in a three-factor cluster solution, suggesting the need for further exploration of the LOC. Significant positive correlations were also found between the Identity as a sexual offender theme and the Arrest as a turning point (external trigger), Stigma, Shame, Damage to others, Generativity and Poor me themes. There was also a statistically significant negative correlation with Treatment as a turning point. This

is in contrast to the New me/Thriver group, suggesting another potential difference between the groups.

In summary, the correlational analysis broadly supports the proposed model. The Thriver group (New me) score higher on the measures proposed to be protective factors for desistance, use treatment as a turning point, employ cognitive strategies to manage their sexual interests (both internal strategies), are problem solvers and have high levels of Generativity. The Survivor group (Identity as a sexual offender) score lower on measures proposed to be protective factors for desistance (aside from LOC), and use arrest as a turning point rather than treatment. They have high levels of Generativity and a Poor me stance, as well as high levels of Stigma, Shame and Damage to others themes. The model proposed that Stigma, Shame, and Damage to others may serve as protective factors; however, these preliminary results suggest an association with the Survivor group and not the Thriver group. This is discussed further below.

6.4.3. Proposed maintenance factors

The model suggests that there may be a selection of negative emotional factors, previously described as obstacles to desistance, that may help to maintain desistance. This is based on the fact that all of the men in the sample were reported to be desisting, yet high levels of these themes (particularly Stigma) were found across the sample. The results of the correlational analysis did not particularly support this. Stigma and Damage to others were significantly positively associated with the Identity as a sexual offender theme, but not with the New me theme, and as such may well act as obstacles. Whilst Stigma was the most prevalent theme for all of the men, it does seem that this is more relevant to those men in the Survivor group. In relation to the previous research, the results would offer some support to the Jahnke et al. (2015) study, which suggests that stigma is related to increased risk, and is negative for sexual offenders trying to desist.

Another explanation could be that there are optimum levels of these factors. The Survivors had high levels of a Poor me attitude, Damage to others, Stigma and Shame. It is possible that high levels are dysfunctional and not useful to desistance, inhibiting protective factors such as hope, optimism and locus of control. Thrivers,

however, may have just the right levels to act as maintenance factors, and in support of this the correlations show no (negative) relationship with the New me theme. Hence it is not the *absence* of these factors that seems to be protective.

Shame was also significantly associated with Identity as a sexual offender, but was approaching significance for the New me theme, suggesting potential importance for both groups. Walker et al. (2015), researching intimate partner violence, found the presence of shame in the desister group but not the persisters, and concluded that it was necessary for desistance. If maintenance factors for desistance do exist, then shame could be proposed as being potentially relevant, although further research is clearly necessary in this area. Again, referring back to the optimum levels suggestion, perhaps a little shame is necessary to prevent sexual re-offending. Generativity was also found to have a significant positive correlation with both themes, suggesting that it is important to both groups. Perhaps wanting to make up to others and give something back is also a driver or a maintenance factor for desistance in sexual offenders. Incorporating the results discussed here, the revised models for early desistance for sexual offending are presented below.

→

Survivor	Striver	Thriver

Survivor
- Identity as sexual offender
- Low hope and optimism $r=-.239$
- Socially isolated $r=-.170$
- Poor me $r= .335$
- Arrest as turning point $r= .360$
- Stigma $r=.314$
- Shame $r=.259$
- Damage to others $r=.475$

Striver

Moving towards 'thriver'

Thriver
- Cognitive transformation (New me)
- High levels of hope $r=.378$
- High Internal locus of control $r=.475$
- Socially connected (Circles) $r=.334$
- Lack of stigma - de-labelled/accepted (Circles)
- Treatment as turning point $r=-.522$
- Problem solver $r=.351$
- Management of sexual interests- cognitive $r=.328$

Role of Generativity and Shame present in both groups and acting as maintenance factors.

Figure 6.7.

Survivor to Thriver Scale

Survivor
Identifies as sexual offender

Re-offence ?

External
trigger-arrest

Maintenance factors
Shame
Generativity

Secondary
desistance?

Turning point

Striver

Internal trigger-
treatment

Thriver
Cognitive transformation
De-labelled (Circles)
Socially connected (Circles)
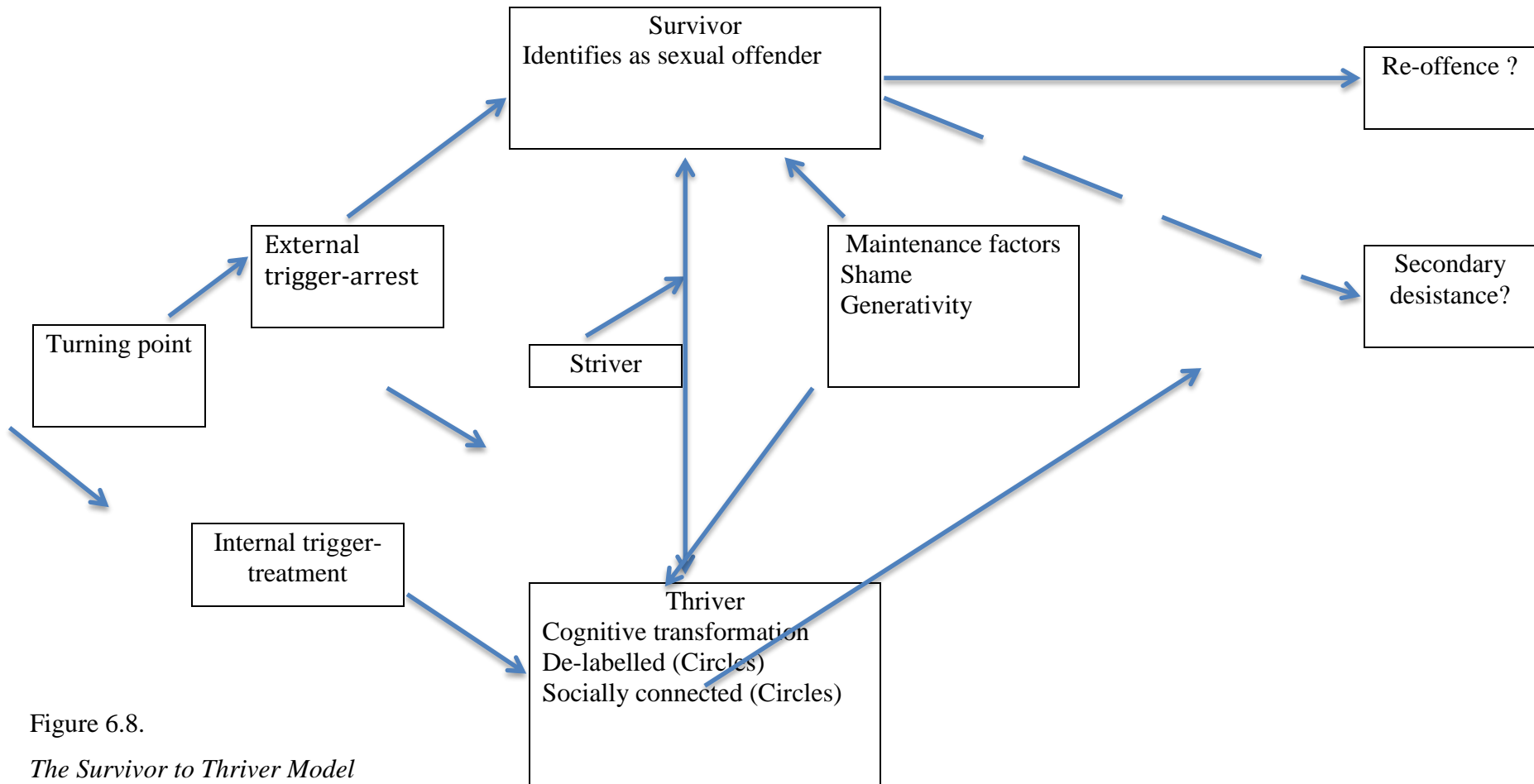
Figure 6.8.

The Survivor to Thriver Model

6.4.5. Limitations of study

Further validation of the cluster analysis is necessary. It would be preferential to run the analysis again on a different/larger population, which would help to explore the issue of the input of the LOC versus the SCS-R. Other methods would include testing with other non-related measures that have been collected for the groups to see if they still cluster in the same way. None were available for this study and the NVivo themes were unsuitable for analysis in this way. However, this study did undertake cluster analysis with two different techniques and found evidence for three clusters in each method (with significant overlap). Everitt et al. (2011) address the issue of predictive utility and ask researchers to consider if the clusters have face validity. The three clusters found in this research do have face validity; they are useful and meaningful, and show significant relationships with the New me theme and each other.

Whilst the correlational analyses are generally positive and supportive of the model, the results need to take into consideration Type one errors, given the number of comparisons undertaken. Similarly, it would be important to test the weight of the variables through implementing a regression analysis with a larger sample. There could also be a third variable operating, such as intelligence, which may explain the results, and further investigations could test the influence of the other variables.

In terms of the generalisability of the model, the sample was mostly White men who had offended against children. However, there were some men who had offended against adult women and internet offenders in the sample. Further work might expand the sample and test different types of sexual offenders.

6.4.6. Suggestions for future research

A key direction for further research is to test the premise that Thrivers go on to enter secondary desistance. Additionally, the model proposes that Survivors either go on to re-offend *or* 'strive' to become Thrivers, increasing the protective factors and undergoing transformation. Follow-up of all of these men in two, five, and or 10 years would be necessary to explore this hypothesis. It is predicted that the Survivor group would be the men most likely to re-offend.

Furthermore, the process/mechanism of change needs to be explored further. Do Survivors move on the continuum and become Thrivers? If so, how? Circles may well play a supportive role in this process in terms of offering social connectedness and de-labelling. The 'maintenance' factors need to be examined and tested further. Do they operate as obstacles or are they useful in the process of desistance? Optimum levels are suggested for shame, and possibly stigma and damage to others, which again needs to be explored further. The use of a larger, representative sample would be beneficial. However, the use of a mixed method, longitudinal design, such as employed in the current study, is recommended, as it has proved valuable here in understanding the process through a variety of methodologies and analyses.

6.5. Conclusions

This chapter brings together the results of the previous qualitative and quantitative studies to form a model for early desistance among sexual offenders. In addition, it presents a continuum, a hypothesis to be tested, regarding how sexual offenders may move through the early stages following conviction and either reach secondary desistance or revert to offending. Preliminary statistical testing using two methods of analysis reveals support for the model. Other strengths of the study include the gathering of data on the management of offence-related sexual interests during this early period, and the incorporation of these into the model. This key area in the assessment and treatment of sexual offenders has been neglected by previous studies/theories of sexual offender desistance. It is important to test the variables within the model further, and to follow up with longitudinal data in order to establish if they relate to longer-term desistance. However, this model adds invaluable information to the field of sexual offender desistance, and the implications for assessment and treatment will be discussed in the next chapter. It would be a breakthrough in sex offender treatment if practitioners could identify during the early stages who is more likely to do well and desist, in order that they can allocate resources, plan treatment accordingly, and potentially help those individuals to accelerate the process.

Chapter Seven Final Conclusions

A new model for the early stage of desistance in sexual offenders has been presented and the initial testing provides statistical support. Whilst further validation is necessary, meaningful and important implications for practice have been identified. This final chapter will discuss the implications of the proposed model regarding the assessment and treatment of the sexual offender population, making comment on the sub population who may deny their offending.

7.1. Implications of The Survivor to Thriver Model

7.1.1. Implications for assessment and treatment

In summary, the cluster analyses showed that this sample of sexual offenders (in the early stage of desistance) may be divided into three groups, that represented low, medium and high scores on measures related to the proposed desistance factors of hope, social connectedness, and locus of control. These groups were labelled Survivors, Strivers and Thrivers, respectively. Key to being in the Survivor group was the continuation to identify as a sexual offender. The Identity as a sexual offender theme, which arose out of the qualitative data, correlated with low levels of these proposed desistance factors and also with a Poor me stance, Stigma, Shame, Damage to others and using Arrest as a turning point. Central to being in the Thriver group was having undertaken cognitive transformation (the New me theme). This theme was significantly positively correlated with high levels of hope, locus of control and social connectedness; also, using Treatment as a turning point, Cognitive management of sexual interest and Problem solving. Both groups showed positive correlations with Shame and Generativity. Each of these factors will be discussed in relation to the assessment and treatment of sexual offenders.

This research proposes that high levels of hope and optimism are important in this early stage of desistance and are necessary to help an offender to reach secondary desistance. It is recommended, therefore, that this factor should be a focus of treatment, both in prison and in the community. Treatment for sexual offenders has become more approach-focused and positive in recent years. The introduction of the GLM (Ward & Stewart, 2003) into treatment programmes, for example the Better Lives Booster programme in NOMS in the UK, encourages offenders to focus on the future and set goals for themselves with a view to achieving a fulfilling and offence-free life. Whilst the risk factors are not ignored, there has been an influence of positive psychology and this

research would support and encourage the retaining of such a movement in the treatment of this population. In addition, it is proposed that specific training on increasing hope and realistic optimism should be considered as part of the treatment. Training in increasing these positive capacities is undertaken widely in the fields of business and coaching in order to increase employee wellbeing and performance, and thereby reduce stress levels. The training of sexual offenders who are about to re-enter the community/end probation supervision could seek to borrow strategies from these fields, where the methods are well-established and researched (Youssef & Luthans, 2007).

Establishing social connectedness is difficult for sexual offenders. In this research, attending a Circle was of key importance for those who felt very isolated and lonely. Psychometric scores increased on a scale measuring social connectedness for the Circles group over time whilst they decreased for the comparison group. Whilst this was not significant, there was a small effect size. Qualitatively, the men reported that the key benefit of Circles was increased social capital. This discussion will return to Circles later in the chapter. The role of support networks is included in relapse prevention and booster programmes in NOMS. However, it was a sense of being connected that was important to the men, not necessarily the number of people they knew. Hence, this distinction could be drawn with them during treatment; it is about the quality of the relationships, and the feeling of being socially connected that is helpful psychologically. Learning about and applying to join the Circles project whilst still in prison would be especially important for these isolated and high-risk men (lower risk men do not typically meet the eligibility criteria). It is unlikely that funding will ever be available for all emotionally isolated sexual offenders to join Circles, but this research emphasises the importance of Circles' role in providing this protective factor.

The development of an internal locus of control is also deemed an important protective factor for desistance. Taking personal responsibility for offending is a significant focus in treatment programmes, but also in numerous interviews and contact with professionals in the criminal justice system who are assessing risk, including the Parole Board. Hence, this may explain such a high presence when measured psychometrically, including for those who had not undertaken treatment. Given the proposed relevance at this early stage, encouraging offenders to take responsibility for offending is recommended. With men in denial (as sexual offenders often are), an internal

locus of control could be encouraged through taking responsibility for their lives and future.

Similarly, teaching the use of effective problem-solving strategies is considered important for early desistance, and this is taught widely across NOMS through cognitive behavioural-treatment programmes, both during SOTP and non-offence-focused programmes, such as Enhanced Thinking Skills. Again, effective problem-solving is a strategy that can be (and is) taught to deniers and can be encouraged by all those that come into contact with sexual offenders.

Managing sexual interests through cognitive techniques was found to be significantly positively correlated with belonging to the Thriver group (New me theme), and there was a very small (non-significant) negative correlation with the Survivor group (Identity as sexual offender theme). This may be related to having good cognitive problem-solving abilities. Managing offence-related sexual interests is of key importance to this population and has been ignored in previous research. It was the daily, cognitive management, using self-talk and being aware and in control of their triggers, that was key, rather than any specific behavioural technique. This supports Seto's (2012) suggestion that pedophilia is an orientation and that treatment may be more effective if it focuses on managing sexual interests via self-regulation work (rather than attempting to modify orientation). This may have implications for the use of behavioural techniques, such as masturbatory reconditioning, which essentially try to modify sexual preferences. Although the men in this study did report that the behavioural/physical techniques were very effective, their daily strategies revolved around more general cognitive strategies such as self-talk. Long waiting lists for the programme for modifying sexual interests prevail in NOMS. It is an individualised programme, facilitated by specially trained forensic psychologists and therefore resource intensive. This research suggests that, if this programme is not available to all, then the teaching of daily, cognitive strategies may well be a good alternative. Such strategies could be maintained through discussion with Offender Mangers, Circles volunteers or anyone coming into contact with the offenders on a professional basis, without the constant need for input from a specialist psychologist.

Attending treatment itself was key to the model and this seemed to be the catalyst for cognitive transformation for many of the men. Importantly, it was the realisation of

the impact of their sexual offending on others, and the victim empathy sessions of the treatment that the men reported as acting as a trigger. Given that NOMS has recently removed the victim empathy sessions from treatment, it is recommended that this decision be revisited. Whilst a lack of victim empathy has not been shown to be related to an increased risk of recidivism using the current measures (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005), the debate revolves about the inability to measure it reliably (Mann & Barnett, 2013). This research proposes that the process of desistance takes the form of a continuum, and that one of the triggers to start moving along it is an understanding of the consequences of one's actions for others. This is a different process to reducing the risk factors and, as such, a return to teaching victim empathy in the earlier stages following conviction is required.

A unique concept that evolved from this research is that there may be maintenance factors for desistance that have previously been viewed as obstacles. Shame is proposed to be a maintenance factor; specifically, that an optimum level of shame could be useful for desistance. Psychologically, this could be linked with a learned realisation of the damage to others; i.e. victim empathy. This research does not suggest that sexual offenders should be shamed as part of their treatment, and indeed higher levels of Damage to others was significantly associated with the Survivor group, as was a Focus on loss and Poor me. Rather, a balance needs to be struck between teaching about damage to others and the feelings of shame that this may engender. Additionally, encouragement not to ruminate on this but to teach awareness and help offenders to see this as a necessary part of desistance might help them to move along the continuum and stay offence-free. Viewing a certain level of shame as helpful could encourage a positive reaction, such as a move towards generativity. Thus, shame acts as a deterrent but can be used to initiate behaviour that encourages making up to others and giving something back. Shame and guilt were also highlighted as the key reasons for a decreased sexual interest in children. If an optimal amount of shame can inhibit deviant sexual arousal, then arguably this area requires further attention. The key will be to establish what the optimal level might be.

Higher levels of Stigma were significantly associated with the Survivor group, and there was no relationship with the Thriver group. Living with the fear of being found out was the most prevalent theme across this (desisting) sample. In line with the Jahnke et al. (2015) study, it is accepted that high levels of perceived stigma are not useful. However,

stigma among the public towards men who have sexually offended is likely always to be present and research indicates that men with pedophilia are the most stigmatised group (Jahnke et al., 2013). It would be hard, if not impossible, to change public opinion. However, treatment could help offenders to understand the role of stigma in their lives. Viewing it as external factor, a consequence of their behaviour, and the fear of that may help them to avoid re-offending. They could be encouraged not to internalise the stigma and label themselves as sexual offenders, as this would probably result in a continuation of identifying as a sexual offender and may also contribute to the Poor me stance, which are arguably unhelpful in terms of desistance. Psychologically, an internal de-labelling, especially if supported by others, could contribute towards the maintenance of cognitive transformation and a New me identity. Acknowledging the stigma and using it in this way may well be beneficial for desistance.

Another factor to emerge as important to both groups was the theme of Generativity and giving something back. Maruna (2001) also noted the presence of this in his (non-sexual offender) desisters. It is proposed that a sense of generativity is a factor that helps men to move along the continuum and remain offence-free. Psychologically, setting positive, approach goals about how to give back may help to repair some of the damage that they have highlighted as being important to them. Additionally, it may help to build a positive identity; this is the type of person that they are now, one who helps and does not damage others, leading further to a sense of hope and optimism. The model suggests that a realisation of the consequences acts as a trigger, and putting this right through generativity acts as maintenance. In reality, offenders could be encouraged to undertake voluntary work or engage in activities that help others and the community. It may be impossible to make it up to the victims themselves, as some of the men in the sample wished to do, but often it was about giving back to the world in a general sense for what they had taken away. This type of activity would obviously require sanctioning by Offender Managers and Public Protection Officers and also be in line with SOPOs. Although volunteering opportunities might be rare, they might be more likely then obtaining paid work. Men who are engaging in Circles are encouraged to seek voluntary and purposeful activities and, on a practical level, Circles offers assistance with finding placements and opportunities, and encouraging offenders to engage in them.

It is noted that social control factors (the gaining of jobs and relationships) are not on the continuum or included in the proposed model. This was because they did not emerge as protective themes from the narratives. The men desired these factors but were mostly barred from them due to their convictions; however, desistance still seemed to be happening. Therefore, paid jobs and relationships in the early stages should not be considered essential for sexual offenders in terms of remaining offence-free. Indeed, a failure to gather these respectability factors was clinically observed to be related to a Poor me stance and continuing to identify as a sexual offender. Instead, it is proposed that treatment should teach offenders what is "good enough" (Bettelheim, 1987, p. 11) and important to protect them at this stage. Feeling socially connected (possibly through Circles), hopeful and positive, and giving something back through volunteering is proposed instead to be more realistic and achievable in the first year. Gaining paid work and relationships is not to be discouraged, and treatment should still teach the skills for gaining these factors (not least because their absence is associated with raised risk, Mann, et al., 2010). However, psychologically, setting sexual offenders up to expect such factors, and then being barred from them may be more damaging. A respectability package (Sampson & Laub, 2003) may come in time but is arguably very difficult to achieve by this population at this early stage.

Finally, in the context of assessment and treatment, it is recommended that Offender Managers and other statutory and non-statutory agencies should be aware that positively influencing these factors could increase the protective factors for desistance. The sharing of the model with sexual offenders during their assessment and treatment is also recommended. Collaborative working in assessing and treating the risks factors is the approach taken in NOMS. Arguably, it would be beneficial for the men to have a balanced awareness of the protective and risk factors for desistance. A focus during assessment and treatment could also be the psychological factors required to move along the continuum. This research is not advocating ignoring or focusing less on the risk factors, but rather a balancing of the two so that knowledge of the desistance factors occurs alongside working on the risk factors. The men in the current study were very interested in the question 'how and why have you stopped offending?' and preferred to focus on this rather than talk about their offending. While it is clearly necessary to talk about offending, their answers to this question may prove illuminating. Offenders may enter treatment at different stages, or still be in denial. It would be beneficial to identify

where they are on the continuum and what they need to work on in order to enter secondary desistance. As a start, all sexual offenders entering the early period of risk could be assessed for the presence of these factors using the validated measures in this study. The ultimate aim would be to develop a measure of desistance, and this will be returned to later in the chapter.

7.1.2. Implications for Circles

The model proposes that social connectedness is key and a protective factor for desistance. A lack of social connectedness has been linked with poor psychological adjustment (Lee et al., 2001), loneliness, anxiety, jealousy, anger, depression, and low self-esteem, and is argued to be a fundamental human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The most prevalent theme for the men in the study engaging in a Circle was the value of the human relationship it offered, specifically giving a sense of social connectedness and acceptance. Hence, Circles adds value to the desistance process in terms of providing this connectedness, which in turn promotes psychological adjustment. This study proposes that Circles does not necessarily trigger the desistance process, but is supportive of it and helps offenders to move along the continuum. The model also proposes that Circles is important as it helps with the de-labelling and de-stigmatisation process through acceptance. As discussed above, high levels of stigma are not thought to promote desistance and are associated with the Survivor group. Psychologically, the removal of labels and the sexual offender identity allows the progression towards cognitive transformation, and therefore a move towards the Thriver end of the continuum, and secondary desistance. In summary, these are the most important features of the influence of a Circle. This research provides the Circles project with further empirical support as well as making a contribution towards understanding how and why it works.

7.1.3. Implications for the debate on identity transformation

The debate on cognitive transformation in the general offender population stems from the work of Maruna (2001) and Giordano et al. (2002), who proposed that the creation of a non-offending identity is necessary for desistance. However, more recent studies have argued that cognitive transformation is less important than other factors such as maturation (Skardhamar & Savolainen, 2014) and agency (Liem & Richardson, 2014). Bachman et al. (2015) used a sample of drug offenders ($n=304$) in the US and found that a sub-group of desisters (20%) had not created a new identity but had stopped offending.

These theories were tested with sexual offenders by Harris (2014), who found that, in a group of sexual offenders (*n*=21) in the US, the majority attributed their desistance to cognitive transformation (*n*=18). This was viewed as having been achieved through treatment programmes. Her second study in 2015 (*n*=45) found that a group of sexual offenders living in the community were desisting without forming a new identity.

This research (*n*= 56) found that around 40% of the sample described having created a new identity, and approximately 20% still identified as a sexual offender. Around 40% of the sample did not describe or discuss their identity. Hence, for the (desisting) men who discussed it, twice as many described cognitive transformation as those still identifying as sexual offenders. Cognitive transformation primarily occurred through treatment. This research proposes that cognitive transformation is central to being a 'Thriver'; that is, an individual with a set of other protective factors, such as hope and optimism, social connectedness and an ability to manage one's sexual interests through cognitive strategies. The model postulates that Thrivers are more likely to enter secondary desistance and live fulfilling lives. The model also proposes that there is a sub-group of men who do not undergo identity transformation but continue to identify as sexual offenders. They are 'Survivors', and belonging to this sub-sample is associated with lower levels of protective factors and the presence of other factors that are thought to impact negatively on psychological adjustment and desistance. It is predicted that this group is the most likely to re-offend. However, as has been noted previously, the base rate of sexual re-offending is low, and not all Survivors will re-offend. Instead, this group is proposed to be able to move along the continuum towards becoming a Thriver, or move towards secondary desistance but via a different process. This group is more likely to avoid re-offending out of fear (external factors of arrest and prison), and lead less fulfilling lives. They describe themselves as merely surviving and existing on a daily basis.

This research extends what is known about cognitive transformation in sexual offenders by exploring the underlying psychological processes involved. It provides a model which postulates how and why some men seem to create new identities while others do not, and how this relates to their entering of secondary desistance.

7.2. Future Research

One method for further testing the model, continuing to develop the theory and also improving assessment and treatment would be to build a measure. This would use, as a basis, the variables that have been established as being statistically significantly related to being either a Thriver or a Survivor through the cluster and correlational analyses. Ultimately, these variables need to be tested further in terms of their relationship to desistance, but such a measure could inform professionals about where an individual is in the process, and which protective factors for desistance need to be supported and addressed with a view to accelerating the process. It could also help to focus resources effectively, both for general SOTP treatment and Circles.

It is proposed that the measure (The Survivor to Thriver Assessment) should be based on a scoring system similar to the Structured Assessment of Risk and Need (SARN, Thornton, 2002), currently used throughout NOMS. The SARN is used to identify which of the risk factors (empirically related to sexual recidivism) are relevant for each individual, and to plan treatment. As with the SARN, the process of completion of the Survivor to Thriver Assessment would be in collaboration with the individual, in conjunction with a file review and input from relevant professionals. Eleven items have emerged as significant in this research. Subject to further research, the aim would also be to include relevant psychometrics scores as evidence (e.g., high scores on the HS, SHS, SCS-R and LOC). Further research is required to establish what a 'high' or 'low' score is in comparison to a group of norms. The proposed measure can be seen below in *Figure 7.1*. Some of the item names in this assessment have been changed to make the tool more user-friendly for offenders. The titles used in this research are provided in brackets.

Scoring guide

2- Present. The item applies to the individual in most key respects and is consistent with the description and essence of the item.

1- Partially present. The item is partially present but not enough to score as a 2. Present in some elements of the description but not all. Inconsistent evidence.

0- Absent. The item does not match the individual. The factor is missing or absent from the case.

Item number	Item name	Item description	Score 0,1,2
1	Identity change	The individual has been able to separate his previous sexual offending behaviour from his self-identity. He has reinvented himself and created a new identity. He may talk about 'Old me' and 'New me' and sees himself as a different person to when he was offending. Absent - the individual sees himself as a sexual offender. Self-identity and sexual offending behaviour are one. Describes himself as a sexual offender, pedophile or similar.	
2	Social connectedness	The individual has social capital - support from friends, family or both and feels *connected* to them. He has a place in the community and someone to turn to. Look for evidence outside professional agencies. Absent - the individual is socially isolated and lonely. Support from professional agencies only.	

Figure 7.1.

The Survivor to Thriver Assessment for sexual offenders

3	Positive outlook on life (Hope and optimism)	The individual is hopeful, optimistic and positive. He shows gratitude. He can see a future for himself. He is motivated and determined not to offend.	
		Absent - displays a poor me/victim stance. Has a sense of hopelessness. The individual is living day to day and does not see a future. Would rather be 'in prison or dead'.	
4	Control over life (Locus of Control)	The individual shows a strong sense of control over his life. Takes personal responsibility for his offending and his future. Sets goals and sees the future as lying within his control. Makes his own pro-social choices and acts independently.	
		Absent - no sense of taking responsibility for his past, present or future. Blames others or external events. Does not set goals or make his own decisions.	
5	Problem solver	The individual shows an ability to problem solve. He is resourceful and a strategic thinker. He is planning for the future. Shows resilience.	
		Absent - no evidence of effective problem-solving.	
6	Internal turning points	The individual describes making a decision to stop offending based on realising the effect for himself and others, wanting a positive future or engaging in treatment. He has weighed up the decision carefully.	
		Absent - no turning points described, or describes environmental/external triggers such as being arrested or prison.	

Figure 7.1.

The Survivor to Thriver Assessment for sexual offenders

7	Adaptive response to the damage caused to others, and loss	The individual understands and has an awareness of the hurt and damage caused by his offending. He uses this as a motivator not to reoffend. He is aware of the loss in his life caused by offending, but is able to move forward. Absent - the individual is overly focused on the damage caused to himself and others. He cannot move forward. His sense of loss of his previous life is overwhelming, and he may describe this as a bereavement.	
8	Adaptive response to stigma	The individual is coping with the stigma of his conviction. In spite of the challenges it presents, he is 'making good' in life. He sees stigma as an inevitable consequence of his past sexual offending and a motivator to stay offence-free. Absent - the individual has internalised the stigma of his sexual offending. He sees the stigma caused by his offending as preventing him from leading a fulfilling life. He is consumed by stigma and how others perceive him. Living in daily fear. He sees no future due to his sexual conviction.	
9	Adaptive response to shame	The individual may be ashamed of his sexual offending but uses this shame as a motivator not to reoffend. He does not allow shame to prevent him from moving forward in life. Absent - the individual is consumed by shame. He lives daily with the shame of his sexual offending. His focus is on shame and associated feelings.	

Figure 7.1.

The Survivor to Thriver Assessment for sexual offenders

10	Generativity	The individual is keen to make up to others for the damage done, either through voluntary work, helping victims/other offenders, or showing significant others that he has changed. Wants to 'give something back'. Absent - the individual shows no desire to make up to others or pay back to society.	
11	Appropriate management of sexual interests	The individual is aware of his offence-related sexual interests and has a strategy for managing them. This strategy relies on internal factors; self-talk, being aware of the consequences and triggers and/or behavioural strategies. Absent - No evidence of cognitive or behavioural strategies to manage offence-related sexual interests. *NB. Not all men have offence-related sexual interests. This item should **only** be scored when an offence-related sexual interest has been identified as a treatment need on the SARN, or by an appropriately qualified professional.*	

Figure 7.1.

The Survivor to Thriver Assessment for sexual offenders

NB. Generativity and Shame may not distinguish the Thriver and Survivor groups but may help to determine the optimal levels. This would be established through the application and testing of the model.

7.2.1. Testing the measure

Building and testing the new measure (with follow-up data) would be the ultimate research goal, but this is beyond the realms of this thesis. The measure should be tested on

a large sample of sexual offenders to establish reliability. In addition to testing the variables, it is proposed that the measure should be taken at various points over time. This would enable the testing of the continuum, with the hypothesis being that individuals would move on the measure over time.

7.3. Final comment

Desistance is a little known area for sexual offenders and, as such, this research makes a substantial, and original contribution to knowledge. This longitudinal study has rigour and uses several different methodologies to gather data from a difficult-to-research population, prior to presenting and testing a new model. It presents clear variables to discuss and address with sexual offenders as they endeavour to remain offence-free. It also challenges the general positive psychology movement; that optimal levels of the factors viewed previously as obstacles to desistance may instead act as maintenance. The thesis adds practical value in terms of recommendations for treatment and presents a measure to be tested. This could be used with every newly-convicted sexual offender as part of a long-term research study to establish further desistance factors. Ultimately, it is considered that implementing this research could have a meaningful impact in terms of preventing men from committing further sexual offences, and helping them to live more fulfilling lives.

Appendices

Appendix A1. My Story (Circles)

Circle number…………………….

Date…………………

Review number…….

We would like to hear about how your life is going at the moment, how you are settling in to life in the community if you have been in prison, and how you are getting on in your Circle. Please write as much as you like about yourself in this exercise. There are no right or wrongs and please be as open and honest as you can. You do not need to worry about spelling or grammar.

Please write as much as you like about the following areas. If you would like to write anything else about yourself and your story then please feel free to do so. Please write in detail about how you think and feel. If you can, please spend around 20 minutes on this exercise.

- What is going on in your life at the moment? Include good things and bad things.
- What do you think and feel about yourself at the moment? How do you see yourself?
- What do you think and feel about the world and others around you at the moment? How do you see your offending?
- What do you think and feel about your place in the community (your local area, place you live) at the moment?
- What do you think and feel about your Circle at the moment?
- If you have been in prison, how are you finding settling back into the community?
- Please describe any turning points in your life that have made you think about stopping offending.

- Anything else you would like to write about to describe your life, how it has been in the past, how it is now, or what you would like from the future

- Optional Question. You do not have to answer this question, but it would really help us to understand how men who have previously committed sexual offences learn to live safely in the community. Your answer may help other men who want to learn to live offence-free lives.

- How often are you having unhealthy sexual thoughts (thoughts that may be related to sexual offending)? You do not have to give any other information other than how often these are happening. If you are not having any unhealthy sexual thoughts at the moment, would you mind saying when was the last time you had any.

- How are you managing your unhealthy sexual thoughts and sexual interests? What do you do to stop them, and what have you done in the past to stop them?

Thank you. This will help us find out more about Circles and how they work

Additional question at Time two:

How do you think you have changed since your last interview/narrative?

Appendix A2. My Story (probation)

<div align="center">My story</div>

Date…………………

Age…………………

We would like to hear about how your life is going at the moment and how you are settling in to life in the community if you have been in prison. Please write as much as you like about yourself in this exercise. There are no right or wrongs and please be as open and honest as you can. You do not need to worry about spelling or grammar.

Please write as much as you like about the following areas. If you would like to write anything else about yourself and your story then please feel free to do so. Please write in detail about how you think and feel. If you can, please spend around 20 minutes on this exercise.

- What is going on in your life at the moment? Include good things and bad things.
- What do you think and feel about yourself at the moment? How do you see yourself? How do you see your offending?
- What do you think and feel about the world and others around you at the moment?
- What do you think and feel about your place in the community (your local area, place you live) at the moment?
- What do you think and feel about being on Supervision at the moment?
- If you have been in prison, how are you finding settling back into the community?
- Please describe any turning points in your life that have made you think about stopping offending.
- Anything else you would like to write about to describe your life, how it has been in the past, how it is now, or what you would like from the future
- Optional Question. You do not have to answer this question, but it would really help us to understand how men who have previously committed sexual offences

learn to live safely in the community. Your answer may help other men who want to learn to live offence-free lives.

- How often are you having unhealthy sexual thoughts (thoughts that may be related to sexual offending)? You do not have to give any other information other than how often these are happening. If you are not having any unhealthy sexual thoughts at the moment, would you mind saying when was the last time you had any.
- How are you managing your unhealthy sexual thoughts and sexual interests? What do you do to stop them, and what have you done in the past to stop them?

Thank you for taking part in this research.

Additional question at Time two:

How do you think you have changed since your last interview/narrative?

Appendix B1. Instruction sheet for Circle Co-ordinators

Exploring the early desistance process in men who have committed sexual offences

Circles Co-ordinator Information

Research Aim

This research aims to explore the process of desistance in men who have committed sexual offences to try and understand how and why they stop offending.

Background Information and Method

Although we know a lot about the risk factors that are related to men starting to commit sexual offences, we know very little about the experience of desistance for sexual offenders, and why they stop offending. We also want to know how Circles helps with the process.

This research project aims to follow a group of sexual offenders who are undertaking Circles. Participants will be asked to provide a narrative, or story, about their time and experience in a Circle. Once the narratives have been gathered the text can then be analysed for underlying meaning. Investigation will be made into the use of language, and any possible change in language over the study period. Any changes within the individuals may give a rich and valuable insight into the experience and allow us to start to understand how and why men choose to stop offending, or not, and how the Circle helps. The results of this research may inform on how to promote desistance and would be of particular benefit to those managing offenders in the community.

We also want to look at the psychological factors that may influence an individual to desist from sexual offending. Researchers have identified handful of possible factors that may be associated with desistance for general offending (e.g., hope and feeling socially connected). We don't know if these apply to sexual offenders so would like to test for the presence of these factors using psychometrics.

Instructions

Your Core member has been identified as suitable to participate in the research. Please could you introduce the research, giving the following information.

"We know a lot about why men start to commit sexual offences but we know less about how and why they stop. This research aims to look at *how* men stop committing sexual offences when they are living in the community. We also want to know about the experience of being in a Circle".

There are 2 tasks that are part of the research;

1) Twice during the next 12 months you will also be asked to fill in a form called 'My Story'. Once at the beginning of the Circle, and once at the end. This asks you to write about how you are getting on with life, how you are feeling and how you are coping with living in the community. You can write as little or as much as you like, and there are no right or wrong answers. If you struggle with writing you will be able to record your story onto tape instead. We are asking people to write for 15-20 minutes.

2) At the beginning and end of the Circle we would like you to fill in four short questionnaires asking about how you see yourself, the future and the world. These will help us to find out how you are learning to stop offending. These should take no longer than 20 minutes"

If the Core member agrees to participate, please could you seek consent using the following form. This also gives further information about the research.

Any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact us;
Rebecca.milner@york.ac.uk

Rebecca Milner

Psychology Department

University of York

Heslington

York

YO10 5DD

Finally, thank you for helping to collect this very valuable data for this research project. We look forward to sharing the results with you as soon as possible.

Appendix B2: Instruction sheet for Offender Managers

Exploring the early desistance process in men who have committed sexual offences

Offender Manager Information

Research Aim

This research aims to explore the process of desistance in men who have committed sexual offences to try and understand how and why they stop offending.

Background Information and Method

Although we know a lot about the risk factors that are related to men starting to commit sexual offences, we know very little about the experience of desistance for sexual offenders, and why they stop offending.

This research project aims to follow a group of sexual offenders on Probation Supervision in the community for 12 months. Participants will be asked to provide a narrative, or story, about their time and experience on Supervision. Once the narratives have been gathered the text can then be analysed for underlying meaning. Investigation will be made into the use of language, and any possible change in language over the study period. Any changes within the individuals may give a rich and valuable insight into the experience and allow us to start to understand how and why men choose to stop offending, or not. The results of this research may inform on how to promote desistance and would be of particular benefit to those managing offenders in the community.

We also want to look at the psychological factors that may influence an individual to desist from sexual offending. Researchers have identified handful of possible factors that may be associated with desistance for general offending (e.g., hope and feeling socially connected). We don't know if these apply to sexual offenders so would like to test for the presence of these factors using psychometrics.

Instructions

Your service user has been identified as suitable to participate in the research. Please could you introduce the research, giving the following information.

"We know a lot about why men start to commit sexual offences but we know less about how and why they stop. This research aims to look at *how* men stop committing sexual offences when they are living in the community.

You will meet with a psychologist from the University of York at the Probation Office. There are 2 tasks that are part of the research;

1) Twice during the next 12 months you will complete a form called 'My Story' with the researcher. The researcher will ask you questions about how you are getting on with life, how you are feeling and how you are coping with living in the community. There are no right or wrong answers. The interview should take about 40 minutes.

2) At the beginning and end of the 12 months we would like you to fill in four short questionnaires asking about how you see yourself, the future and the world. These will help us to find out how you are learning to stop offending. These should take no longer than 20 minutes"

If the service user agrees to participate, please could you seek consent using the following form. This also gives further information about the research. A researcher will then complete the narrative and psychometrics with the service user in the next few weeks, and again in 12 months time

Any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact us;
Rebecca.milner@york.ac.uk

Rebecca Milner

Psychology Department

University of York

Heslington

York

YO10 5DD

Finally, thank you for helping to collect this very valuable data for this research project. We look forward to sharing the results with you as soon as possible.

Appendix C1: Consent form (Circles)

<div align="center">Department of Psychology, University of York</div>

INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM FOR ADULT PARTICIPANTS

Researcher: Rebecca Milner
(Supervisor/s Dr Jo Clarke).

Brief Description of Study:

This research aims to look at how men stop committing sexual offences and how being part of a Circle helps with this. It aims to look at *how* a Circle works.

There are 2 tasks that are part of the research;

1) At the beginning and end of your Circle you will also be asked to fill in a form called 'My Story'. This asks you to write about how you are getting on with life, how you are feeling and how you are finding your Circle. You can write as little or as much as you like, and there are no right or wrong answers If you struggle with writing you will be able to record your story onto tape instead.

2) At the beginning and end of your Circle we would like you to fill in four short questionnaires asking about how you see yourself, the future and the world. These will help us to find out how the Circle is working.

During the My Story there is the opportunity to answer a question about your sexual thoughts. This is optional and you do not have to answer it. It asks about the frequency of your unhealthy sexual thoughts and how you manage them. You do not have to give any more information than this. Answering it will help us understand how men who have previously committed sexual offences learn to live offence-free lives in the community. It may also help other men learn how to live safely in the community.

You will be allocated a Circle number by your Co-ordinator. It is this number that you will be asked to write on any forms to do with this research. You will not be asked to provide your name. This will keep your information anonymous to the researcher.

Sharing of Information

The 'My Story' forms will be available to the Circle project should they wish to see them, and will be sent on to the researcher for analysis. The researcher would also like to have access to any data on reoffending or recall to prison. Of course it is sincerely hoped that this will not be the case, but if this does happen the researcher would like to still use your data in the research.

If you have an Offender Manager, the information from this research will not be routinely shared with them. If they do ask to see the data we would ask for your permission to share it.

As with all research, the data you provide will be kept confidential and anonymous. However if you do disclose any specific information with regard to harming yourself or others, or any details of undisclosed or further offending the researcher is bound by a Code of Ethics to report this to the relevant authorities.

Declaration of Consent

I have been informed about the aims and procedures involved in the research I am about to participate in.

I reserve the right to withdraw at any stage in the proceedings. If I do so I understand that any information that I have provided as part of the study will be destroyed and my identity removed unless I agree otherwise.

I agree to the sharing of information as outlined above.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

If you experience any problems as a result of the research which you would like to discuss, please contact the researcher- Rebecca.milner@york.ac.uk or Rebecca Milner, Psychology Department, University of York, Heslington, YO10 5DD

Appendix C2: Consent form (comparison group)

Department of Psychology, University of York

INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM FOR ADULT PARTICIPANTS

Researcher: Rebecca Milner
(Supervisor/s Dr Jo Clarke).

Brief Description of Study:

We know a lot about why men start to commit sexual offences but we know less about how and why they stop. This research aims to look at *how* men stop committing sexual offences when they are living in the community. The research will focus on how you are getting on with your life after offending, and not on the offending itself

You will meet with a Psychologist from the University of York at the Probation Office to be interviewed. There are 2 tasks that are part of the research;

1) An interview, which will look at how you are getting on with your life after your conviction, the good things and the bad things and how you see yourself at the moment. There are no right or wrong answers. This should last about 40 minutes.

2) At the beginning and end of the 12 months we would like you to fill a questionnaire asking about how you see yourself, the future and the world. These will help us to find out how you are learning to stop offending. These should take no longer than 20 minutes

During the interview there is the opportunity to answer a question about your sexual thoughts. This is optional and you do not have to answer it. It asks about the frequency of your unhealthy sexual thoughts and how you manage them. You do not have to give any more information than this. Answering it will help us understand how men who have

previously committed sexual offences learn to live offence-free lives in the community. It may also help other men learn how to live safely in the community.

You will be allocated a number by the researcher. It is this number that you will be asked to write on any forms to do with this research. You will not be asked to provide your name. This will keep your information anonymous.

Sharing of Information

The Interview notes and questionnaires will be collected by researcher for analysis. The researcher would also like to have access to any data on reoffending or recall to prison. Of course it is sincerely hoped that this will not be the case, but if this does happen the researcher would like to still use your data in the research.

The researcher would also like to have access to your Probation file in order to take details of your age, risk level and previous convictions.
The information from this research will not be routinely shared with your Offender Manager. If they do ask to see the data we would ask for your permission to share it.
As with all research, the data you provide will be kept confidential and anonymous. However if you do disclose any specific information with regard to harming yourself or others, or any details of undisclosed or further offending the researcher is bound by a Code of Ethics to report this to the relevant authorities.

Declaration of Consent

I have been informed about the aims and procedures involved in the research I am about to participate in.

I reserve the right to withdraw at any stage in the proceedings. If I do so I understand that any information that I have provided as part of the study will be destroyed and my identity removed unless I agree otherwise.

I agree to the sharing of information as outlined above.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

If you experience any problems as a result of the research which you would like to discuss, please contact the researcher- Rebecca.milner@york.ac.uk or Rebecca Milner, Psychology Department, University of York, Heslington, YO10 5DD

Appendix D. Letter to participants

Date

RE: Research project at the University of York

Dear

It is now about six months since our interview at the Probation Office where we talked about your life, and how you were getting on. I hope this letter finds you well, and that life is going well for you.

The second stage of the research is to meet again for another interview, in about another 6 months. It will be arranged through your Offender Manager. I hope that you will be willing to meet with me again and tell me your story. I look forward to finding out how you have been getting on.

Thank you again for your participation in the research.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Milner

Psychology Department
University of York
Heslington
York
YO10 5DD

Appendix E. Additional examples from the narratives

Table 8.1.

Desistance themes at Time one (deductive)

Title of code	Description of code	Example from narratives
Hope, optimism and positivity	Can see a future, hopeful, optimistic, positive. Has gratitude.	I feel I'm more sympathetic to others. I see myself as optimistic, doors are open to my options. (P16)
Purposeful activity	Has an activity or interest that gives purpose, structure to the day and adds value to his life.	This is paid work, yeah. It feels tiring to be working. Stressful. But I enjoy. I enjoy driving. I enjoy meeting people. I enjoy the challenge. And there's the feel good of getting home and feeling like I've done a days work. And something productive, you know. (P14)
Social capital	Has a place within a social group or network. Has support from family, friends or professionals. Feels like he belongs to the community.	I have to meet people, I have to talk to people. It's more motivating. (P27)

Table 8.1.

New me	New me/Old me. Has created a new identity. Sees himself as having changed or being a different person from when he offended.	I see someone new, well from the past but different. I keep seeing people who I think will say "oh, it's (name) the sex offender" but they're not. (P7)
Generativity and making up to others	Wants to give something back. Make up for what he has done by helping others.	I got to really hold back on my temper now and it's under control and I feel better in myself and I look forward to helping people so that they don't make mistakes I made, even though I'm not allowed to but, you know. It would be nice if I could help people. (P12)
Problem solver	Copes with problems well. Approaches problems with a strategy to solve them.	I just deal with problems straight away. You know what, I don't even know what I do. If it's a problem I can deal with meself I deal with it the best way I can and deal with it. It's a problem like my dog's got to go to the vet but I've got no transport to get to the vets, I'll pick her up and walk her. It's just one of them, it's just if I can do it myself, I just do it. If it's someone else what I need help with, I'll ask them and see what their opinion is, and all that lot and then I'll make the right decision. (P45)

Table 8.2.

Inductive themes at Time one

Title of code	Sub category	Description of code	Example from narratives
Stigma	Keeping conviction secret	Fear of being found out, living with a secret.	As a sex offender I have to remain on my guard twenty four hours a day and have probably become a little paranoid, ever able to totally let my guard down and always looking over my shoulder. Society is understandably horrified by my sort of offences and are, as a result, likely to view me, and those like me, with disgust. All of this means that I am likely to be a target for the rest of my life (P36)
	Stigma of being a sex offender	Experience of being labelled and stigmatised.	
	Negative impact on work	Conviction for sexual offences limits job prospects.	A burglar or bank robber is allowed to return to his or her life with little or not oversight from the various departments such as Probation, Social Services and the Police. Such is not the case for myself, and others in my position – Sex Offenders. (P38)

As you can see, jobs prospects aren't so good, just trying to get a job with my offence is extraordinarily difficult. (P42) |

Table 8.2.

Turning points	Effect on self and others	Victims, family, friends, partners, loss of home.	I wouldn't want to put me Mum through it that's the motivation for not offending again. She knows about it, I had to tell her. (P54)
	Treatment	Treatment programmes, victim empathy, risk factors, medication.	The most important effect on my thinking was when I completed the sex offender treatment programme. This programme had a profound effect on me as I understood the effect my actions had on others and what effects my actions would have in later life for my victim. It also made me understand my motivations for committing the offence in the first place. (P49)
	Arrest and prison	Shock of arrest, being found out, being in or dying in prison, recall.	No, being caught stopped me and that was because of the shock of being caught and because of the shock of what it did to certainly my wife on that particular morning. (P35)
	Positive future	Freedom, make/get a life, get kids back.	With that I mind I hope that I will find the happier, more stable and cohesive life that has so far eluded me, so that I will never inflict such a barbaric visitation on any other member of society. (P40)

Table 8.2.

Poor me and hopeless	Victim stance, stuck in self-pity, world and others against him.	I can't really think about good things at this moment in time. I think you already know this, but here goes. I hate myself so much you can't imagine. I feel disgusted with myself, I feel a failure as a father and as a son. I feel so much anger towards myself and others like (name) and my mother. I feel I don't deserve to be on this planet or this world. (P38)
Socially isolated and lonely	Lost, isolated and lonely, no place in the community.	I have very few hobbies or interests and very little social interaction. I find it difficult to make meaningful relations and I keep people at a distance because of my past conviction. I feel worthless and lonely a lot of the time. (P24)
Lack of purposeful activity	Living day to day. No structure, value or purpose to the day.	At the moment I feel bored, frustrated, wishing to do something more exciting. Want to use my brain. Tired of doing nothing, living on a short string, not basically having a life. (P37)
Damage to others	Has let people down - family, friends, victims. Remorseful and guilty. Damaged and destroyed lives.	I don't like the things that I have done in my past, nor do I like living the pain and suffering I have caused people. (P46)

Table 8.2.

Focus on loss	Has a sense of bereavement. Grieving for life lost, struggling to move on.	I still feel saddened that I have lost so much and feel grief for the past. (P8)
Shame	Ashamed, shameful and disgusted at self.	At first I couldn't own up to it. It's just, the shame of it. I knew I'd done it but I couldn't own up to it at all. It took me a long time in prison to really open up about it with you know the courses and everything else. And it took me about 7 year. (P54)
Identity as sex offender	Cannot separate self from past behaviour. Condemnation to life as a sexual offender, describes self as a paedophile or sex offender.	Why would she want to sit around a pervert like me? Because that's what I call myself, pervert, because that's what I am, what we are. (P35)
Religion and church	Gives a sense of belonging. Also a purposeful activity and a vehicle for change.	Then I started to go to Buddhism on a regular basis and I started to change. (P36)
Education	Impact/value of education/learning to improve life, skills, self-esteem and future.	The best thing I ever done was learning to read and write properly because it helped me so, so much. (P41)

Table 8.3.

Themes relating to managing offence-related sexual interest

Code	Subcategories	Description of code	Examples from narratives
Management	Cognitive - take control	Cognitive techniques. Control by thinking, battle between body and brain.	I have not had any unhealthy sexual thoughts since 2013. I have had thoughts but I can manage and control them now, the last time was last May when I had them. I use self-talk to help me manage and control it. (P27)
	Aware of triggers	Understands situations, emotions and thinking and manages and avoids.	There is a trigger with regards to the looks of a child, the appearance. I mean me victim's description was blonde, glasses with long hair and you know and that does frequently catch me eye but you know I try me best to distract meself from that. (P19)
	Physical distraction techniques	Avoidance, e.g., turn TV off, walk other way, keep busy.	Stopping them is not something I feel I have control over. Often they come from nowhere an are not premeditated and I try to distract myself from them, either by listening to music, reading a book, watching a film (P1)

Table 8.3.

	External support.	Treatment and help from others. Medication, smelling salts, group work, probation, Circles, family.	Put things into place to have common sense to not create a victim, seeking advice from family and friends and support from group and seeking help. (P27)
	Consequences	For self and others. Harm to victims.	At the moment I feel pretty good about meself. I mean me thoughts, with the respect of offending, you know, I definitely don't want to reoffend and I definitely don't want to go back to prison. (P37)
Living with it	Acceptance	Accepted sexual interest in children. It will always be there, part of me.	It doesn't bother me a great deal that I'm still having these thoughts. Like I said, it's probably something that I'll have stay with me for the rest of my life, but it's what I do with it. (P21)
	Struggle	Difficult to live with and accept. Monster inside me.	Living like this, sometimes it can be like depressing and all that, but I can't say that I'm suicidal or anything like that. Otherwise, I'm a good guy (P18).

Table 8.3.

	Orientation	Part of genetic makeup. Always had it	I realised I'm a pedophile. I've never had a relationship with an adult woman or man. I'm just interested in children – girls, I would say about 6, 7 years of age. Before puberty, yeah. Masturbating to thoughts of children has, more or less, been a part of my life, yeah. (P23)
Why decreased?	Emotional response	Guilt, shame, fear have decreased sexual desire/thinking.	And I was just totally appalled that you've allowed yourself to go down that route and behave in that way and it just, instantly, you know all desire to perpetuate it just ceased completely. Yes, just from being caught (P21)
	Unknown/spontaneous	Don't know why. Just happened.	I know it has changed but I don't know how. I don't know what brought it about, it just happened (P7)
	Physical reasons	Stress/prison/age.	Sexual thoughts- much less often, probably because of a different routine as well as my age (P12)

Table 8.3.

Wants to understand why	Interested in finding out why. Unsure why he is different.	I know why I offended but what I don't know why it stopped, again, was it in me from birth kind of thing and again it's that nature/nurture thing and why me, as opposed to my brother who was brought up exactly the same? (P14)

Table 8.4.

Themes relating to change over time

Code	Description of code	Example from narratives
Social connectedness	Increased social capital, improved quality of interaction with others.	I was offered a property from the council back in April and was delighted to move in later that month. I have become acquainted with the locals (P33)
Positivity	Hopeful and optimistic, happier and more positive.	I think I'm a lot more positive than I was probably last year. (P39)
Interpersonal skills	Increase in empathy, self-awareness, self-help skills, more open, better problem solving. Maturation.	No, I think I have changed that way. I think I'm more considerate towards people as well, more helpful towards people which I wasn't in the past. I was all self-centred, you know it was all me, me, me but now I'm not afraid to go and help somebody if they're having problems at work. (P36)
Confidence	Increase in self-worth/esteem. More confidence.	I suppose I think I have changed since my last interview, I'm definitely more confident, (P25)

Table 8.4.

Employability	Engaging in more purposeful activity, volunteering. Undertaken training to increase employability.	I feel like I've changed in the last year. I'm doing stuff on a Wednesday and Thursday I'm going out volunteering, going different places. (P19)
Identity change		Using an analogy, this person conducted an emotional operation where all my emotional and behavioural beliefs were taken from me, cleaned and placed back in the right order. (P3)

Table 8.5.

Themes relating to the impact of attending a Circle

Code	Subcategory	Description of code	Examples from narratives
Impact of human relationship	Social connectedness	Social capital, social crutch. Being listened to, someone to talk to.	They are there to help me and support me whichever way they can, which I'm looking forward to. It's another support group for me and it's people that I can talk to and they are there to help me, (P10)
	Acceptance	De-labelling, seen as human, given respect and trust.	And they even still, to this day, say that they forget sometimes what you've done. I think it's wonderful that they're seeing me as a normal guy and they forget. Acceptance! It's as simple as that. P6)
	Volunteering	People giving their free time, wanting to make a difference.	Why such decent people should give there free time to bother with reprobates such as me largely defeats me. (P25)
Internal factors		Hope, optimism, goal setting, self- confidence problem-solving	There are many more chapters to be written and I am optimistic for the future with the confidence that I have gained through Circles. (P18).

Table 8.5.

External factors	Accountability	Managing risk factors, stop offending	There were 2 children down the road and I helped them cross. Was I right to do that? I'm going to tell my Circle. Maybe I should not have done it. Was that a danger? (P15)
	Practical assistance	Job interviews, sickness benefits, paying the bills, housing.	If it wasn't for Circles, I wouldn't have gone to work, got sickness benefits. I wouldn't have had the words or understanding. (P5)
	Purposeful activity	Help to find something to do, library, museums, gardening. Attendance is purposeful activity.	In the sense of giving me something to do and participate in and be involved with it's helpful, yeah, it is a benefit 'cause there are times, apart from going to see me Mum, I don't go out so it gives me an escape. (P2)

Appendix F. Reasons for attrition

Table 8.6.

Reasons for attrition

Participant	Reason for attrition
Circles group	
1	Refused at Time two
2	Refused at Time two
3	Refused at Time two
4	Refused at Time two
5	Recall- Breach of SOPO. Engaged in online relationship with a women with children
6	Recall- Breach of SOPO. Engaged in a relationship with a women with children
7	Recall- Breach of SOPO. Found in possession a mobile phone with images of children
8	Recall- Breach of SOPO. Attempting to engage with boys online
Comparison group	
1	Recall- Breach of SOPO. Engaging in undisclosed relationship with a woman with teenage daughters
2	Refused at Time two after early release from probation supervision for 'good behaviour'

Appendix G. LIWC scoring template for forensic professionals

Exploring the early desistance process in men who have committed sexual offences using linguistic analysis of written and spoken narratives.

Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) is a computerized text analysis and word count program that is used to investigate the content and style of written or spoken narratives (Pennebaker, Francis & Booth, 2003). The technique can measure implicit, psychological differences in word use. In this study LIWC will be used for investigating psychological function and to measure psychological change in two groups of men previously convicted of sexual offences, and who have provided written or spoken narratives.

LIWC produces many output variables and we would like to focus our investigation on the variables that may be relevant to men who have committed sexual offences. The LIWC manual provides a few words as examples for each variable and these are given below. Where further research has taken place, additional detail is given.

Please could you score each variable on scale of 1 (low) -6 (high) on how **relevant you consider the variable to be to sexual offending.**

Category	Examples	Score 1 – 6
Linguistic Processes		
First person singular	I, me, mine High use of these words has been associated with depression, anxiety and suicidality, and show a high level of self pre-occupation	
Past tense	Went, ran, had. Narrative focuses on past	
Present tense	Will, gonna A focus on the present rather than the past indicates ability to distance from previous events	

Negations	No, not, never	
Numbers	Second, thousand	
Swear words	Damn, piss, fuck	
Psychological Processes		
Social processes	Mate, talk, they, child. How much the narrative refers to others	
Family	Daughter, husband, aunt	
Friends	Buddy, friend, neighbour	
Humans	Adult, baby, boy	
Affective processes	Happy, cried, abandon. Reflects how much the narrative refers to affect.	
Positive emotion	Love, nice, sweet. Fun, grateful, vigour, secure, comfort	
Negative emotion	Hurt, ugly, nasty, whine, dislike, tense, neglect, worry, argue	
Anxiety	Worried, fearful, nervous, unsure, upset, restless, pressure, confused	
Anger	Hate, kill, annoyed	
Sadness	Crying, grief, sad, loss	
Cognitive processes	Cause, know, ought, discover, recognise, wonder, think How much the writer intellectually processes and understands the issues in their writing	
Insight	Think, know, consider, accept, admit, analyse, examine, understand	
Causation	Because, effect, hence	
Discrepancy	Should, would, could	
Tentative	Maybe, perhaps, guess	
Certainty	Always, never	
Inhibition	Block, constrain, stop, control, forbid, hesitate, wait	
Inclusive	And, with, include	

Exclusive	But, without, exclude	
Perceptual processes	Observing, heard, feeling	
See	View, saw, seen	
Hear	Listen, hearing	
Feel	Feels, touch	
Biological processes	Eat, blood, pain	
Body	Cheek, hands, spit	
Health	Clinic, flu, pill	
Sexual	Horny, love, incest	
Ingestion	Dish, eat, pizza	
Relativity	Area, bend, exit, stop	
Motion	Arrive, car, go	
Space	Down, in, thin	
Time	End, until, season	
Personal Concerns		
Work	Job, majors, Xerox	
Achievement	Earn, hero, win	
Leisure	Cook, chat, movie	
Home	Apartment, kitchen, family	
Category		
Money	Audit, cash, owe	
Religion	Altar, church, mosque	
Death	Bury, coffin, kill	

July 2015

Appendix H. Psychometric measures

Goals Scale for the Present (State Hope Scale)

Directions: Read each item carefully. Using the scale shown below, please tick the box that best describes *how you think about yourself right now*. Please take a few moments to focus on yourself and what is going on in *your life at the moment*. Once you have this "here and now" set, go ahead and answer each question.

	Definitely false	Mostly false	Somewhat false	Slightly false	Slightly true	Somewhat true	Mostly true	Definitely true
If I should find myself in a jam, I could think of many ways to get out of it								
At the present time, I am energetically pursuing my goals								
There are lots of ways around any problem that I am facing now								
Right now, I see myself as being pretty successful								
I can think of many ways to reach my current goals								
At this time, I am meeting the goals that I have set for myself								

The Future Scale (Hope Scale)

Directions: Read each item carefully. Using the scale shown below please select the number that best describes YOU and put that number in the blank provided

	Definitely false	Mostly false	Somewhat false	Slightly false	Slightly true	Somewhat true	Mostly true	Definitely true
I can think of many ways to get out of a jam								
I energetically pursue my goals								
I feel tired most of the time								
There are lots of ways around any problem								
I am easily downed in an argument								
I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are important to me								
I worry about my health								
Even when others get discouraged I know I can find a way to solve the problem								
My past experiences have prepared me well for the future								
I've been pretty successful in life								
I usually find myself worrying about something								
I meet the goals that I have set for myself								

Experiences Scale (Locus of Control)

Please read the question carefully and tick the box that applies to you.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
I can anticipate difficulties and take action to avoid them					
A great deal of what happens to me is just a matter of chance					
Everyone knows that luck or chance determines the future					
I can control my problems only if I have outside support					
When I make plans I am almost certain I can make them work					
My problems will dominate all my life					
My mistakes and problems are my responsibility to deal with					
Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, luck has little or nothing to do with it					
My life is controlled by outside actions and events					
I believe people are victims of circumstances beyond their control					
To continually manage my problems I need professional help					

When I am under stress, the tightness in my muscles is due to things outside my control					
I believe a person can be master of his own fate					
It is impossible to control irregular fast breathing when I am having difficulties					
I understand why my problems vary so much from one occasion to another					
I am confident of being able to deal successfully with future problems					
In my case maintaining control over my problems is mainly due to luck					
I have often been blamed for events beyond my control					

Social Experiences Scale (Social Connectedness Scale- Revised)

Directions: Following are a number of statements that reflect various ways in which we view ourselves. Rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the following scale (1 = Strongly Disagree and 6 = Strongly Agree). There is no right or wrong answer. Do not spend too much time with any one statement and do not leave any unanswered.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel comfortable in the presence of strangers						
I am in tune with the world						
Even among my friends, there is no sense of brother/sisterhood						
I fit in well in new situations						
I feel close to people						
I feel disconnected from the world around me						
Even around people I know, I don't feel that I really belong						
I see people as friendly and approachable						
I feel like an outsider						
I feel understood by the people I know						
I feel distant from people						
I am able to relate to my peers						

I have little sense of togetherness with my peers					
I find myself actively involved in people's live					
I catch myself losing a sense of connectedness with society					
I am able to connect with other people					
I see myself as a loner					
I don't feel related to most people					
My friends feel like family					
I don't feel I participate with anyone or any group					

Additional Questions

1. Have you completed any treatment programmes to address your sexual offending (e.g., SOTP). Please list any undertaken.

2. Have you ever been offered a Circle? (omitted for men in a Circle)

3. Do you currently have a job? If yes what is it and how many hours do you work?

4. Are you married or in an intimate relationship with a man or woman? If yes, please rate how happy you are in your relationship.

Very   Very
happy   unhappy
0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10

5. Do you have any contact with your family? If yes, how many hours per week.

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Appendix I. 3D scatter plots from hierarchical cluster analysis

Figure 8.1.

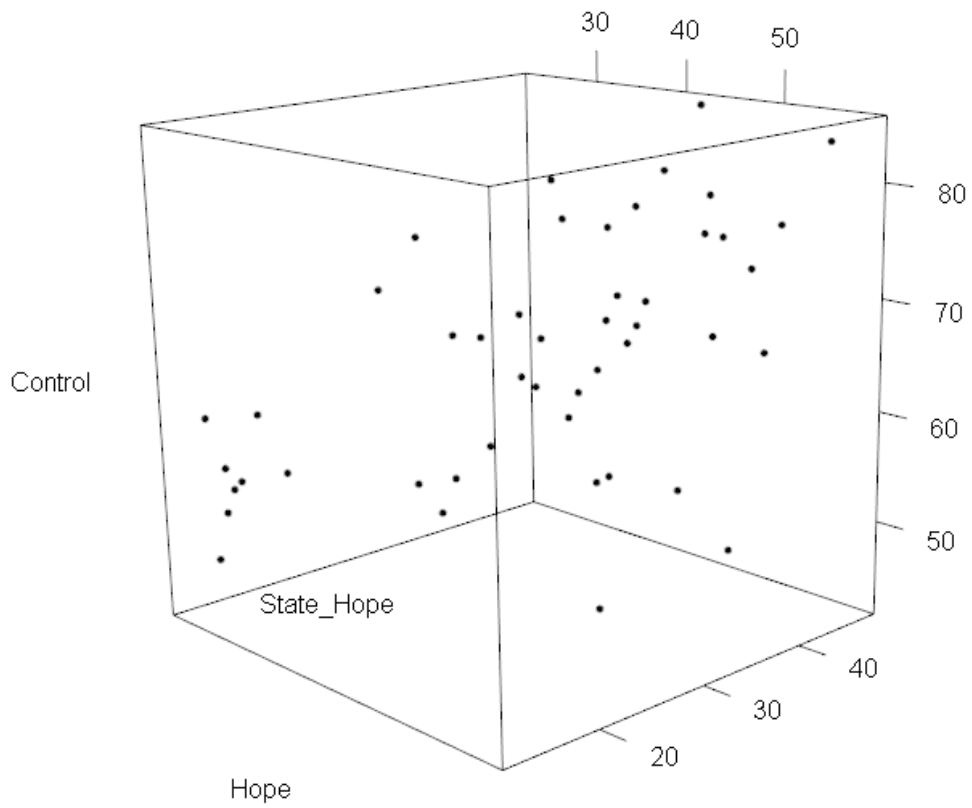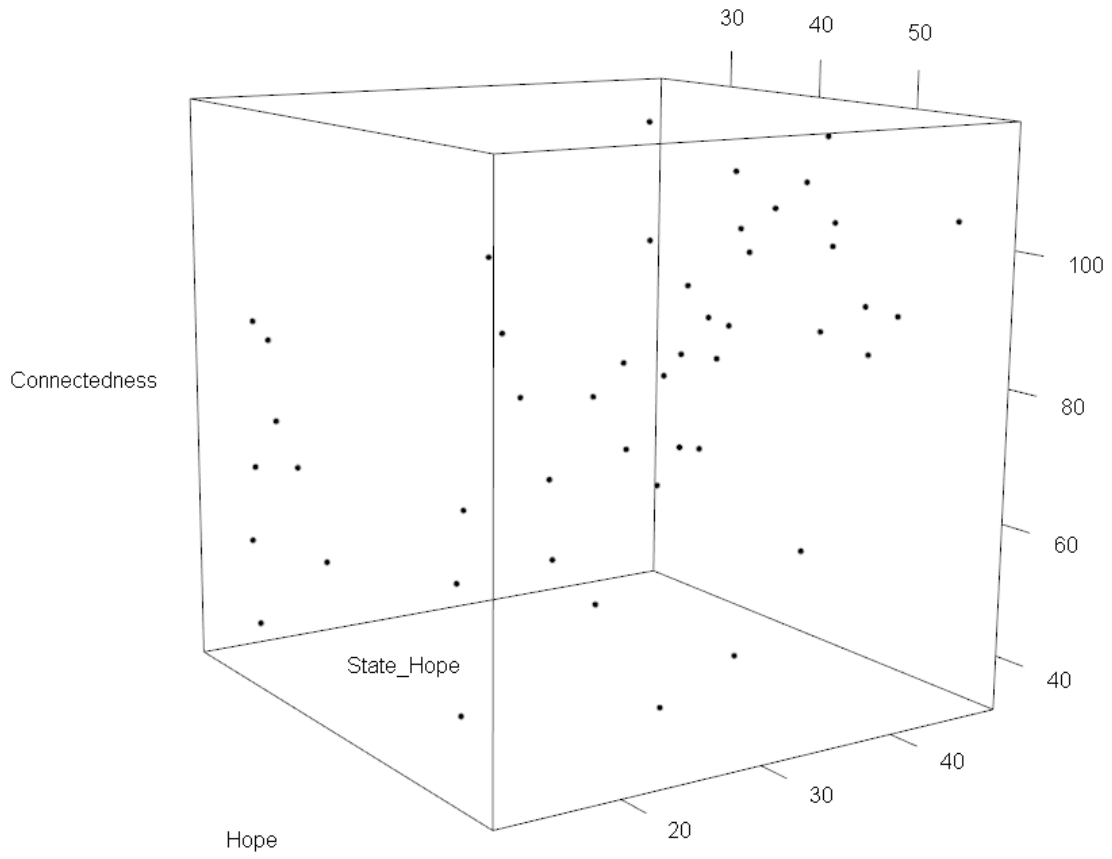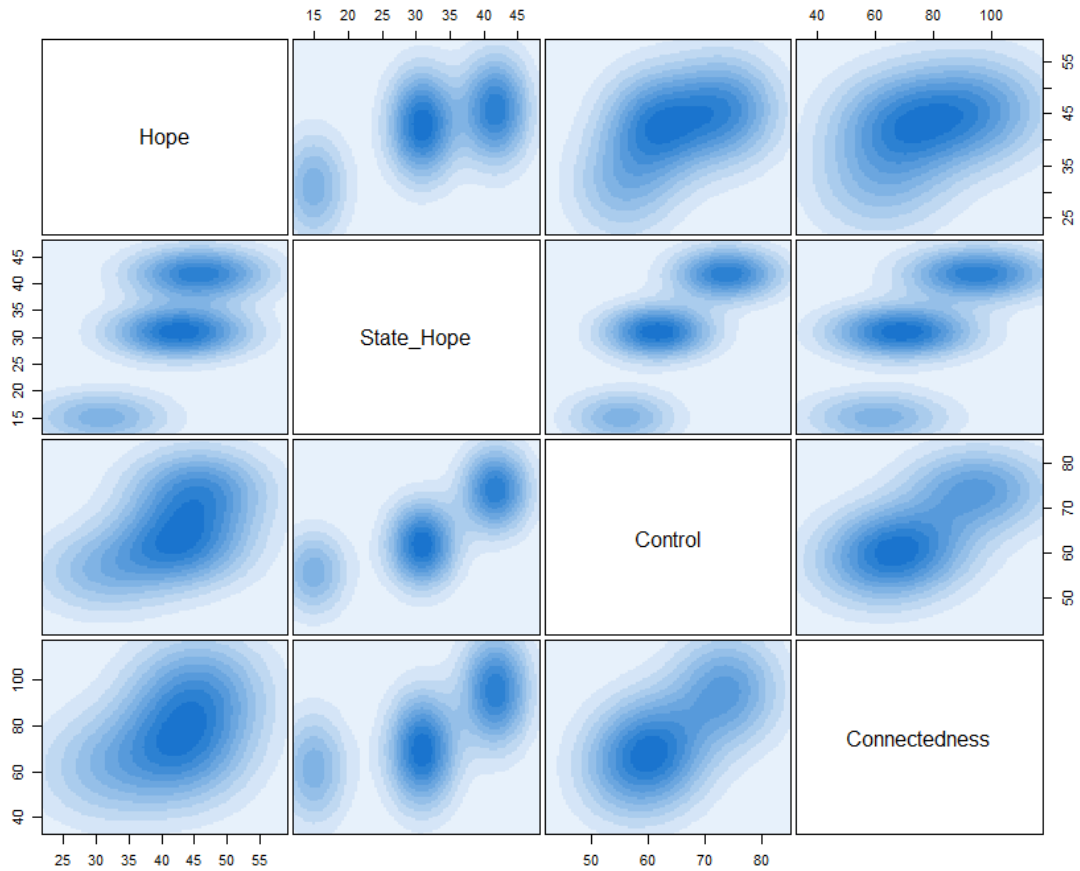3D scatter plot for HS, SHS and LOC scale

Figure 8.2.

3D scatter plot for HS, SHS and SCS-R scale

Appendix J. Model based clustering density plot

Figure 8.3

Appendix K. Key to size, orientation and shape of cluster models

The different types of model are categorized by the shape, volume and orientation of the clusters as follows:

"EII"	=	spherical, equal volume
"VII"	=	spherical, unequal volume
"EEI"	=	diagonal, equal volume and shape
"VEI"	=	diagonal, varying volume, equal shape
"EVI"	=	diagonal, equal volume, varying shape
"VVI"	=	diagonal, varying volume and shape
"EEE"	=	ellipsoidal, equal volume, shape, and orientation
"EVE"	=	ellipsoidal, equal volume and orientation
"VEE"	=	ellipsoidal, equal shape and orientation
"VVE"	=	ellipsoidal, equal orientation
"EEV"	=	ellipsoidal, equal volume and equal shape
"VEV"	=	ellipsoidal, equal shape
"EVV"	=	ellipsoidal, equal volume
"VVV"	=	ellipsoidal, varying volume, shape, and orientation

Appendix L. Cross tabulation for cluster methods

Figure 8.4.

Cross tabulation for Wards's D method and New me theme

cluster wards d * newme1binary Crosstabulation

| | | | newme1binary | | |
			.00	1.00	Total
cluster wards d	cluster1	Count	6	1	7
		% within cluster wards d	85.7%	14.3%	100.0%
		% within newme1binary	26.1%	4.8%	15.9%
		% of Total	13.6%	2.3%	15.9%
	Cluster 2	Count	4	11	15
		% within cluster wards d	26.7%	73.3%	100.0%
		% within newme1binary	17.4%	52.4%	34.1%
		% of Total	9.1%	25.0%	34.1%
	cluster 3	Count	13	9	22
		% within cluster wards d	59.1%	40.9%	100.0%
		% within newme1binary	56.5%	42.9%	50.0%
		% of Total	29.5%	20.5%	50.0%
Total		Count	23	21	44
		% within cluster wards d	52.3%	47.7%	100.0%
		% within newme1binary	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	52.3%	47.7%	100.0%

Figure 8.5.

Cross tabulation for model-based clustering method and New me theme

modelbased clustering * newme1binary Crosstabulation

| | | | newme1binary | | |
			.00	1.00	Total
model based clustering	1.00	Count	3	13	16
		% within modelbased clustering	18.8%	81.3%	100.0%
		% within newme1binary	13.0%	61.9%	36.4%
		% of Total	6.8%	29.5%	36.4%
	2.00	Count	14	5	19
		% within modelbased clustering	73.7%	26.3%	100.0%
		% within newme1binary	60.9%	23.8%	43.2%
		% of Total	31.8%	11.4%	43.2%
	3.00	Count	6	3	9
		% within modelbased clustering	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
		% within newme1binary	26.1%	14.3%	20.5%
		% of Total	13.6%	6.8%	20.5%
Total		Count	23	21	44
		% within modelbased clustering	52.3%	47.7%	100.0%
		% within newme1binary	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	52.3%	47.7%	100.0%

Figure 8.6.

Cross tabulation for two cluster methods

cluster wards d * modelbased clustering Crosstabulation

| | | | modelbased clustering | | | |
			1.00 thriver	2.00 striver	3.00 survivor	Total
cluster wards d	cluster1 survivor	Count	0	0	8	8
		% within cluster wards d	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% within modelbased clustering	0.0%	0.0%	80.0%	17.0%
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	17.0%	17.0%
	Cluster 2 thriver	Count	14	2	0	16
		% within cluster wards d	87.5%	12.5%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within modelbased clustering	82.4%	10.0%	0.0%	34.0%
		% of Total	29.8%	4.3%	0.0%	34.0%
	cluster 3 striver	Count	3	18	2	23
		% within cluster wards d	13.0%	78.3%	8.7%	100.0%
		% within modelbased clustering	17.6%	90.0%	20.0%	48.9%
		% of Total	6.4%	38.3%	4.3%	48.9%
Total		Count	17	20	10	47
		% within cluster wards d	36.2%	42.6%	21.3%	100.0%
		% within modelbased clustering	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	36.2%	42.6%	21.3%	100.0%

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