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Lived Experiences of Reintegration: A Study of How Former Prisoners Experienced Reintegration in a Local Context.

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Lived Experiences of Reintegration: A study of how former prisoners experienced reintegration in a local context.

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Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of Doctor of Philosophy

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Notwithstanding prison populations generally being characterised by a high degree of marginalisation and socio-economic disadvantage — the concept of reintegration pertains to the notion that prisoners eventually return to the community to live crime-free and productive lives. That so many are outside the realm of mainstream society, it can be argued that to expect prisoners to "reintegrate" back into society poses somewhat of a conundrum — as most were never fully integrated into society to begin with. Using an interpretive phenomenological approach this thesis investigates the experience of reintegration in a small city (population = 119,230) from in-depth interviews with 54 former prisoners, aged 19-63 years old, who at the time of the research were living in Cork, Ireland. The predominant feature of the research group was one of extreme marginalisation that included a high level of homelessness and unemployment compounded by alcohol and/or drugs misuse and poor mental health. Few, if any studies have captured the detail of former prisoners embarking on the journey of reintegration against the backdrop of such alienation and social exclusion. While the thesis exposes obstacles to reintegration specifically within a local context it goes further by identifying the meaning inherent within the barriers and challenges former prisoners encounter as well as the significance they attach to the type of support that benefits them as they attempt to rebuild their lives. Key findings in the thesis include a range of psychosocial readjustment problems that emerge following the release from prison thereby providing a nuanced understanding of the process of reintegration as a psychological one. The thesis further provides detailed insights into the diversity of supports required by prisoners in preparation for reintegration and following their release from prison.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The dramatic changes that have occurred across the criminal justice landscape in recent decades can be attributed to the promulgation of zero-tolerance, tough on crime political agendas across Western jurisdictions causing the criminal justice net to widen, enmeshing more people in greater numbers to be imprisoned (Garland, 2001). Recent figures indicate that more than 10.35 million people are held in penal institutions worldwide including both remand prisoners and those serving custodial sentences (Walmsley, 2016). Consequently, the prison system has witnessed a dramatic upsurge in rates of committals causing critical overcrowding and the diminishment of detention to its raw function (Wacquant, 2008) with the subsequent task of releasing its charges back to the community to be reintegrated (Travis, 2000; Travis *et al.*, 2001; Travis, 2005). This, despite the fact, that in the majority of cases, such individuals were never properly integrated there to begin with (Farrall and Calverley, 2006; Wacquant, 2009).

The criminalisation of poverty via the punitive containment of the poor either in disadvantaged neighbourhoods or in prisons has been described as regressive and a repressive means of coping with advanced marginality as growing social inequality ensures the prison system continues to expand, achieving as it has the status of self-perpetuation (Wacquant, 2008; Parenti, 2000). This is because prison populations have not changed dramatically in their composition insofar as those who typically pass through the prison portal are those living on the margins of society (Wacquant, 2008; O'Mahony 1997; 1998, O'Donnell *et al.,* 2007).

The United Nations guiding principles for the administration of penal institutions stipulate that the justification of a sentence of imprisonment — being the protection of

society from crime, can only be achieved if the period of incarceration serves to assist offenders to live legitimate lives upon their return to society (United Nations, 1955). Penal-welfarism until the 1970s served to emphasise the critical importance of offender rehabilitation and the facilitation of successful reintegration into the community (Rogan, 2011; Paparozzi and Guy, 2014). The decline of rehabilitation that followed was marked by the more pessimistic rationales for punishment that included 'incapacitation' and 'just deserts'. At the dawn of the new millennium, "driven by mounting evidence that burgeoning jail and prison populations were increasingly a function of the recycling of the same offenders due to their failure to successfully readjust to the community" renewed attention has been focused on the transition from prison experience (Paparozzi and Guy, *ibid.* :7).

Reintegration is not an option but rather the consequence of imprisonment given that in most cases almost everyone imprisoned will one day be released (Travis and Visher, 2005). It is defined in both narrow and broad terms. Narrowly speaking, reintegration begins the day a prisoner is released from confinement. Broadly speaking, it is a longer-term process that commences as soon as a prisoner is taken into custody and includes "everything that is done to a convicted person . . . serving the cause of preparing the individual for success after release" (Maruna, Immarigeon and LeBel, 2004:5). Reintegration is a resource intensive endeavour intersecting as it does with issues of housing, family, health, education, employment and community wellbeing because prison populations typically constitute such a multitude of deficits in this regard.

When reintegration fails, social and economic costs are high. The collateral consequences of imprisonment include family poverty and community instability. From a fiscal perspective imprisonment is also an expensive sanction. The current annual cost of imprisoning an individual in Ireland is €68, 959 (Irish Prison Service Annual Report,

2014). It is therefore economically sensible to focus on reintegration as a means of avoiding re-committals. Furthermore, Owers (2011) argues that "[e]veryone who wants to live in a safer and more peaceful society has a stake in reintegrating ex-prisoners" (*ibid*. :22). She suggests a partnership approach between the multiple agencies involved in the processes of desistance and reintegration, that should include the prison service, prisoners themselves, voluntary agencies, families and the communities that former prisoners return to after release. McNeill (2006) describes desistance from offending as the change process involved in the rehabilitation of offenders. Understanding processes of desistance is thus critical to the understanding of how and why former offenders come to change their behaviours according to McNeill (2012) who indicates that "constructions of rehabilitation practice should be embedded in understandings of desistance" (*ibid*. :46).

Reintegration involves surmounting the challenges and obstacles former prisoners face given that the majority of them are from disadvantaged backgrounds, are at high risk of marginalisation in mainstream society, are repeat offenders or at risk of re-offending (NESF, 2002). The perilous nature of the early months following release can be determined by the current rate of recidivism in Ireland. Of the cohort of individuals released from prison in 2008, 51% committed and were convicted of a recorded offence within three years of their release from prison. Almost two-thirds (64.6%) of those offences were committed within the first six months of official release from custody (Irish Prison Service and Central Statistics Office, 2013). While no consistent definition of recidivism exists it can generally be defined as the reversion of an individual to criminal behaviour after he or she has been convicted of and imprisoned for a prior offence. Maltz ([1984] 2001) suggests that it results from a concatenation of failures:

> failure of the individual to live up to society's expectations – or failure of society to provide for the individual; a consequent failure of the individual to stay out of trouble; failure of the individual, as an offender, to escape arrest

and conviction; failure of the individual as an inmate of a correctional institution to take advantage of correctional programs – or failure of the institution to provide programs that rehabilitate; and additional failures by the individual in continuing in a criminal career after release (*ibid.* :1).

Successful reintegration generally necessitates some form of change on the part of the offender. It also requires structured supports and resources. The path of change however is seldom straightforward but rather cyclical in nature and relapse is part of that process (Procheska *et al.*, 1992). However, Hood (2015:5) argues that former prisoners are set-up for failure "simply by labelling their relapse as 'failure' rather than a stumbling block that may have consequences on the path towards a 'normalized' life".

While offender rehabilitation has been described by Ward and Maruna (2007) as "the single least-sexy topic within the broad umbrella of criminological research" (*ibid.* :2) offender 're-entry' and 'resettlement', alongside 'reintegration' have become the new 'buzzwords' used in somewhat of a rebranding exercise (Padfield and Maruna, 2006). Consequently a fresh corpus of scholarship has sought to unravel the complexity of the process of reintegration so as to understand the difference between repeat offenders and those who manage to turn their lives away from offending. Much of this research examines the process of desistance as an integral part of reintegration. While there is no agreement as to the length of time an individual has to be crime free in order to be termed 'a desister', scholars have suggested that desistance can be understood from a number of aspects. One of the earliest theories suggests that the process of desistance is age related given that most adolescents grow out of their offending behaviour (Goring, 1919). Growing out of crime has been described by Sampson and Laub (1992) as including biological changes, social transitions and different life experiences. Personal volition and choice have also been identified as important elements in the decision to cease offending (Shover, 1983; Cromwell *et al.*, 1991; Leibrich, 1993). That some individuals desist while others persist in offending well after adolescence has been

explained by Moffitt (1993) as the result of the latter group being more disadvantaged than the former group in their early years. This she explains renders them less likely to change for lack of formal and informal support as well as internal resources to assist them in their adult years. Social bonds have been determined as an important element in the process of desistance (Sampson and Laub, 1993). These include family, pro-social peer groups, employment, marriage and parenthood. Otherwise described as 'social capital', Farrall, (2002; 2004) and Farrall and Calverley (2006) highlight the significance of such as individuals attempt desistance. Many theorists accept that desistance also depends on a combination of individual, social and psychological factors. Bottoms *et al.*, (2004) consider the interaction of background factors, structure and agency as promoting or hindering desistance. Personality and social psychological theory is considered by Andrews and Bonta (2003) as a means of understanding why some offenders choose to continue to offend while others decide to desist. Furthermore, Maruna (2001) argues that desistance requires not just a permanent cessation of offending but also the development of a coherent pro-social identity. Maruna has stressed the value of such stating that "[w]hen reformed ex-offenders share their stories with others . . . they are leading the effort to transform public discourse regarding crime and criminality" (2001:167).

Although desistance and reintegration can be understood as part of the same process (Maruna *et al.*, 2004) less is known about how people experience the transition from prison to the community where they are expected to reintegrate (Garland and Wodahl, 2014). This thesis attempts to address that gap in knowledge. The thesis explores the reality of reintegration in a locus of convergence whereby poverty, disadvantage and marginality, further exacerbated by the experience of imprisonment combine, creating a maelstrom that is difficult to circumvent. Few if any studies have captured the details of

the lives of prisoners embarking on the journey of reintegration against a backdrop of such alienation and social exclusion.

Focus of the Thesis

The purpose of this study is to understand the complexity of the process of reintegration within a specific local context which is defined in this study as a small Irish city with a population of 119,230. From the perspectives of 54 individuals who at the time of interview were living in the city and surrounding area, the thesis intends to address the dearth of research that exists both nationally and internationally about how former prisoners experience the transition from imprisonment to life in the community. The thesis employs an exploratory design to identify the panoply of challenges and barriers that can be encountered throughout the process of reintegration as well as the type of help and support that those embarking on the process profess to be of benefit to them. The central research question the thesis focuses on asks — what are the challenges and barriers to reintegration that former prisoners encounter after their release from prison and what type of help and support are they in most need of as they embark on life in the community? The research objectives outlined in Chapter Four were achieved in this qualitative study, conducted within the phenomenological tradition.

Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis is set out in eight chapters. Following this first introductory chapter, Chapter Two examines the wider context in which the penal system operates in Ireland. This chapter presents a historical overview of imprisonment including how Irish legal and penal policy has evolved and developed. The current law, policy and practice relating to imprisonment and the release of prisoners provides the context against which the process of reintegration in Ireland can be assessed. Chapter Three reviews the literature

pertaining to the concept of reintegration, including the effects of imprisonment and theories of desistance, change and psychosocial adjustment. The research design and the methods employed to conduct the study are outlined in Chapter Four. This chapter includes the rationale for adopting a qualitative methodology and ethical issues that arose during the research. A profile of the research group is presented in Chapter Five. This chapter outlines details of the participants' personal circumstances at the time of interview including their housing status, exposure to imprisonment and the length of time they were on release from their most recent term of imprisonment. Chapter Six documents and discusses the findings that emerged from the experiences of 54 individuals attempting reintegration in a local context. This chapter is set out in three parts to reflect the life experiences of the research participants before imprisonment, during imprisonment and their lives after release. Part I sets the study in context by describing participants' backgrounds through vivid narratives and poignant accounts of their lives before prison. Part II describes how the participants experienced imprisonment in an overcrowded prison system that continues to operate at 32% above its capacity (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2015). This includes a discussion of how the prospect of successful reintegration is impacted by the collateral consequences of over-crowding including limited resources and opportunities to adequately prepare prisoners for release. Part III presents the findings and discussion of the participants' experiences of release and their efforts towards reintegration. Barriers and impediments to reintegration are outlined followed by an account of what former prisoners find helpful and supportive to them as they strive to live in the community after release. Chapter Seven draws together the main findings of the research and discusses their implications for criminological knowledge, social policy and service provision. Chapter Eight includes broader implications of the study and concludes the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

Reintegration in the Irish Context

Introduction

This chapter presents an account of the changes that have taken place in Ireland pertaining to crime, punishment and imprisonment so as to provide the backdrop against which the concept of reintegration in Ireland can then be assessed. A brief history of imprisonment in Ireland will be followed by an outline of various penal policy developments impacting both prisoners and former prisoners with regard to the process of reintegration.

A Historical Perspective of Imprisonment in Ireland

Rogan (2011) in her examination of imprisonment in Ireland found that in the early decades since the Independence of the State in 1922, the prison system as inherited from the British regime, had changed very little. A survey conducted by the Department of Justice in 1949 revealed that conditions for prisoners were satisfactory overall, insofar as they were free to associate with each other during periods of work, recreation and exercise. A somewhat rehabilitative ethos prevailed. Rogan notes that "[t]he official thinking was that imprisonment involved two main objects: 'the protection of society and the reclamation of the offender'. Reformatory efforts were stated to be centred on the work of the prison chaplains, voluntary workers and religious organisations" (*ibid.* : 77). Prison Visiting Committees were established under the Prisons (Visiting Committees) Act, 1925 with a view to assessing the conditions under which prisoners were detained, hearing their complaints and reporting any abuses within the system among other functions, such as conducting disciplinary hearings. The role of the

Visiting Committees was later replaced by the appointment of an Inspector for Prisons in 2002.

Garland (1985), having examined the emergence of penal-welfarism from the 1890s to the 1970s, proclaimed it "shaken to its roots" throughout the course of the following decades thus facilitating what he described as "a culture of control" (2002:3). O'Sullivan and O'Donnell (2014) describe penal-welfarism as "that particular fusion of legal regulation and therapeutic optimism oriented towards the rehabilitation of the offender, and the range of institutions in which this treatment was supposed to take place" (*ibid.* :1). In presenting their critical analysis of the control of deviance in Ireland, they argue that though prison numbers were small, with daily average numbers of prisoners between 500 and 700 up until the 1970s, a large infrastructure of social control existed outside the formal criminal justice system. This included large numbers of individuals held in "coercive confinement" (*ibid. :*x) in industrial and reformatory schools, Mother and Baby Homes, Magdalen Homes and district mental hospitals. From a historical point of view then, low rates of imprisonment masked higher rates of confinement than those gleaned merely from prison related statistics. Foucault (1977:298) conceptualised systems of surveillance, their technologies over modern societies and the practice of social control over a population in all areas of social lives as a "carceral archipelago" — that being the incarceration of individuals on a series of islands. Quinlan (2003) adopted the same term to describe the conglomerate of institutions charged with the containment of troubled individuals in Ireland.

While penal-welfarism dictates that the overarching aim be the reformation or treatment of the detained individual, O'Sullivan and O'Donnell (2014) have noted the inherently austere and punitive nature of such institutions apart from the prison, which appears to have been harsher than that of actual imprisonment at that time. They state:

> Not only were more people confined in the early decades of Irish statehood, they may have suffered more. In addition to a focus on discipline and labour the religious ethos of the day meant that the need to atone, or simply tow the line, weighed heavily. The experience was inherently stigmatising and while some form of reintegration (perhaps at a spiritual level) may have been possible, the removal from society, in many cases was total. To further reduce their life chances no route was charted back into the mainstream (*ibid.* :257).

It appears therefore that non-criminal inmates were just as likely as their prisoner counterparts to encounter the strains of reintegration. Furthermore, Irish society's capacity for denial surrounding the treatment and abuse of its most vulnerable citizens has been highlighted by Rogan (2011). In light of recent reportage she notes that those detained in industrial schools, reformatory schools, mental institutions and Magdalen Homes encountered nothing of the care, compassion and forgiveness espoused by such organisations.

Apart from the introduction of the new Prison Rules in 1947, Kilcommins *et al*. (2004) have suggested that the management of offenders had "effectively calcified" until the 1960s (*ibid.* :41). Rogan (2011:69) believes the introduction of the new rules to have been nothing more than a "cosmetic exercise" neither grounded in a particular philosophy of imprisonment nor providing clarity as to its objectives. Ostensibly it appears that the new rules merely consolidated the existing rules, dating back to the Prisons Act, 1826, concerned primarily with prison administration and the corporal and spiritual needs of those imprisoned (*ibid.*).

O'Sullivan and O'Donnell (2014) have noted an upward trajectory of imprisonment only becoming apparent from the 1970s onwards (O'Donnell, O'Sullivan and Healy, 2005). As the 1970s witnessed the height of the political conflict in Northern Ireland with widespread very serious crime, the criminal justice landscape altered dramatically. Tried without jury at The Special Criminal Court, those convicted there of offences under the Offences Against the State Act, 1939 were incarcerated and given the political

nature of their offences — special provision had to be made for them. Extra prison places became available through the re-commissioning of old buildings and the building of a new semi-open institution, The Training Unit, constructed in 1976. However, by the early 1980s there was still a severe shortfall of prison places for those being sentenced to detention and so in 1983, the Prison Rules 1947, were changed to allow a prison governor accommodate more than one inmate per cell. It was in this way that overcrowding received official sanction in the Irish context (Kilcommins *et al.*, 2004: 237). While daily average numbers of prisoners quadrupled between 1971 and 2009, there was also a marked decrease in other forms of confinement with the closure of reformatory schools, industrial schools and mental asylums.

The increased use of imprisonment, a result not of increasing crime rates but rather because of criminal justice policy shifts, Haney (2003) argues has negatively impacted not just on prison management and prisoner safety, but has also greatly limited access for prisoners to meaningful rehabilitative programmes. He notes that from the 1970s onwards, society has adopted a new rationale for imprisonment, moving from the belief that incarceration would somehow rehabilitate and facilitate offenders' successful reintegration to one which accepts imprisonment as either a means to inflict pain on wrongdoers ("just deserts"), to disable criminal activity ("incapacitation") or to segregate the offender from the rest of society ("containment") thus abandoning the goal of rehabilitation (*ibid.* :36). Such abandonment became evident in Ireland from the early 2000s as the Office of the Inspector of Prisons "made some of the most serious criticisms of the prison system ever committed to print" (Rogan, 2011:201). These included the effects of overcrowding causing tension and straining beyond capacity educational, training and health facilities against a backdrop of very poor material conditions.

Rogan (2012) has analysed Irish case law on prison conditions. Certain legal principles, stemming from *Mulligan v. Governor of Portlaoise Prison* [2010] provide *inter alia* that prisoners can assert their right to bodily integrity, their right to health, their right not to be exposed to inhuman or degrading treatment, their right to privacy subject to the limitations imposed by detention and the right to security and protection. Nevertheless, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture, in their concluding observations on the fourth periodic report on Ireland, (19 August, 2014) urged the State to "step up its effort to improve the living conditions and treatment of detainees and address overcrowding and the practice of "slopping out" (where in-cell sanitation is non-existent) as a matter of urgency in line with the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners" (*ibid.* :5).

Pursuant to Part 5 of the Prisons Act, 2007 the Office for the Inspector of Prisons was created with the overall function to carry out regular inspections of the State's prisons. The Inspector's remit includes *inter alia*, the reporting of any issues of concern to the governor of the prison concerned, the Director General of the Irish Prison Service or the Minister for Justice. Since the establishment of the office, the Inspector has published four reports assessing the standards within Irish prisons against international norms and human rights' standards with particular regard to Article 10 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Ratified by Ireland, Article 10 confers a legal obligation on the State to treat all persons deprived of their liberty with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person (Office for the Inspector of Prisons, 2009). The Inspector has found the degree of prison overcrowding as "acute" (*ibid.* :23) and as such that it leads to an air of tension within the prisons. Overcrowding stretches beyond capacity existing facilities which "in some cases are totally inadequate" causing stress for both prisoners and prison management (*ibid.* :30). He has also stated that the lack of in-cell sanitation in some Irish prisons leading to the practice

of 'slopping-out' amounts to "inhuman and degrading treatment" (*ibid.* :26) in accordance with the findings of the Committee for the Prevention of Torture (2011). The matter of prisoners with mental health issues was also raised by the Inspector who stated in his Interim Report, 2008 that "if prisoners have mental health problems they as prisoners of the State have an absolute right to treatment in an appropriate setting" (*ibid.* :6).

Prisons have been described as toxic environments whereby overcrowding, idleness and a shortage of mental health treatment resources lead to violence amongst prisoners and abuse by prison staff (Kupers, 2006; 2008). While the Prison Act, 2007 provides the procedures to be followed in cases of breach of discipline by a prisoner — there are no provisions in the Act affording prisoners a means of bringing a complaint to the attention of the Prison Governor. However, the Prison Rules 2007 do provide an internal complaints procedure (Rules 55-57). In accordance with the Rules, should a prisoner make a complaint, the Governor is obliged to notify the prisoner of the outcome of such complaint "as soon as is practicable thereafter" (Rule 55.2). The Prison Rules do not provide for any detailed procedure regarding an appeals process if a prisoner is dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint brought to the Governor. Rule 57 however allows a prisoner to request a meeting with an officer of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform to bring any requests to him or her, including an appeal against any decision made by the Governor. While very little is known about the nature of complaints lodged internally by Irish prisoners (Irish Prison Reform Trust, 2009) some insights can be gleaned from reports of the Inspector of Prisons. The Inspector, in reviewing cases lodged internally by prisoners between January 2008 and May 2009 highlighted that regarding "a significant number [of complaints] related to allegations of assault, bullying, intimidation or harassment by prison officers" (Inspector of Prisons on Mountjoy Prison, 2009: paragraph 7.5) the investigation of

many of the complaints did not appear to have been completed and in cases where prisoners had been released no further investigation took place.

The most recent Office of the Inspector of Prisons Annual Report 2013/2014 has also highlighted as a matter of concern a culture of abuse of power within the Irish penal system. This included incidences of bullying on the part of prison staff towards prisoners in the form of "intimidation, name calling, failing to act on requests . . . and taking actions to ensure the discomfiture of prisoners and other actions designed to denigrate the prisoners under their control" (*ibid.* :14).

Crime and Punishment: The Political and Economic Context

Garland (2002) cites the period between the 1960s and the 1990s a period of "generalised 'crime consciousness'" (*ibid.* :106). However, from an Irish perspective, Kilcommins *et al.* (2004) have stated that the most surprising aspect of crime and punishment in Ireland is the fact that for so long it went unnoticed, situated as it was on the periphery of Irish society. The primary concern of the body politic in Ireland in the 1980s was the issue of unemployment, recession and continuing emigration, something that had been a feature of Irish life for centuries. By 1986 the rate of emigration was as high as it had been in the 1950s (Walsh, 1989). Highlighting the grave implications of unemployment, Michael McDowell, an Irish Member of Parliament at the time said:

> To exclude one fifth of the workforce, and their dependents, from the economic life of the country is, in the short and long term, to exclude them from the political and cultural life of society. To accept such an exclusion is, in my view, to "establish" and institutionalise social injustice . . . We need a political dynamic that recognises deprivation of a role in the economy as just as tragic as deprivation of its resources. We need to substitute a dynamic concern about economic exclusion for the static view of social deprivation. We need remedies, not palliatives. (Keogh *et al*., 1989:30).

The link between high unemployment and increased crime was averred to alongside "urban decay, migration, and a decline in community stability" (Association of Garda

Sergeants and Inspectors: A Discussion Paper Containing Proposals for a Scheme of Community Policing, 1982:6). Kilcommins *et al.* (2004) reviewed a series of opinion polls compiled prior to general elections from 1981 until 2002 with a view to gauging public sentiment as to the priority attached to crime as an issue for a newly elected government. Under six headings, unemployment ranked highest and crime lowest in the years leading up to 1997 when in a dramatic turnaround, the crime issue rose to the top of the political agenda. There had been a spate of rural murders in 1986. That crime was no longer the preserve of inner city impoverishment was unsettling (McCullagh, 1996). Facilitated by newspaper reportage, a public fascination grew for Dublin city gangsters who appeared to be above the law. They were afforded pseudonyms such as "The General" "The Penguin" and "The Monk" amongst others, which tended to glamorise and sensationalise Dublin's illegal drug dealers. Two murders in June 1996, firstly that of Detective Garda Jerry McCabe and secondly, Veronica Guerin a newspaper journalist with a special interest in Dublin's drug dealers and their lifestyles, marked a critical moment for Irish criminal justice, described by Kilcommins *et al.* (2004) as "a textbook case of 'moral panic'" (*ibid.* :137), defined by Cohen (1980) as something which in some instances may pass or "at other times . . . [have] more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way society conceives itself" (*ibid.* :9). The so-called 'moral panic' did not so much pass, but rather gave rise to a sense of crisis that impacted significantly on the Irish criminal justice system. Fennell (1993) has noted that such a sense of crisis is often met with kneejerk reactions rather than considered responses by governments eager to be seen doing something without actually acknowledging the depth of crisis or fundamentally altering the kind of society we live in.

Already under strain, it was the prison system that bore the brunt of the government's action when the issue of crime and punishment became politicised for the first time in

Ireland. In December 1996, Article 40.4.6˚ of the Constitution of Ireland was amended, thus abolishing an accused's right to bail. While previously one could only be denied bail if there was reason to believe that one would not appear for trial or there was a danger of interference with witnesses, once the constitutional amendment came into force in 2000, it marked a new departure in the Irish criminal process. A person would be denied bail if it was reasonably considered that he or she would commit a further offence. Pre-emptive assertions now hold people in custody and those prisoners, held mainly in Cloverhill Prison, which opened as a remand centre in 2000, began to outnumber those serving actual custodial sentences. Specific problems attach to a remand prisoner with regard to the concept of reintegration. As the duration of detention is uncertain and the crime has not been proved against the accused prisoner, it affords little opportunity or motivation to address offending behaviour while in custody.

By the 1990s Ireland's economic climate had changed dramatically. In contrast to previous widespread unemployment and emigration — that which became known as the "Celtic Tiger" economy saw almost full employment and a shift from emigration to immigration. However, poverty, inequality and social exclusion also endured during this period (Layte *et al.*, 2001; Nolan, 2002). Moreover, the percentage of people at risk of poverty (those whose income is below 60% of median income) increased from 15.6% in 1995 to 16.5% in 2007 (Johnston, 2009). Pursuant to Section 8 of the Housing Act, 1988 all local authorities are obliged to account for the number of people who are either homeless or living in overcrowded or unsuitable accommodation, in their area every three years. Despite more than a decade of unprecedented wealth in the State, figures released in 2008 indicated that 56,259 people were in need of homes. This figure included 1,394 persons defined as homeless under Section 2 of the Act, 1,757 living in unfit accommodation, 4,805 living in overcrowded accommodation, 4,965 involuntarily sharing accommodation and 29,583 persons not reasonably able to meet the cost of

accommodation (Simon Community, 2013). Figures available for the homeless population in Cork in 2008 indicate that 369 households were in need of accommodation and 411 individuals were homeless.

Seymour and Costello (2005) in 'A Study of the Number, Profile and Progression Routes of Homeless Persons before the Court and in Custody', found that more than half of the prisoners they surveyed had been homeless at least once before committal and 25% were homeless on committal. Finding "a clear relationship . . . between homelessness, substance dependency and offending behaviour" (*ibid.* :96), they argue that:

> due to a lack of continuum of care (which facilitates and provides for the transition from custody to community living) and the difficulty of accessing services for prisoners, individuals are leaving prison to return directly to the same life and environment they had prior to imprisonment. As long as this lack of continuum of care and support continues, the needs of this group will continue to be unmet; they will remain homeless, dependent on substances and at high risk of re-offending (*ibid.* :98).

In the area of penal policy, the government, no longer fiscally constrained in terms of capital expenditure focused on more prison buildings as a means of alleviating prison overcrowding. A green-field site was purchased in County Dublin as the location for Thornton Hall, a prison complex with a capacity for 2,200 male and female prisoners that would replace Mountjoy Prison in Dublin city. Gross expenditure on the land purchase and development of the site was €44.9m in 2011 (Thornton Hall Project Review Group, 2011). Plans were also made to replace Cork Prison, which had been built in the 1880s with a modern prison complex with a capacity for 350 prisoners in Kilworth, County Cork. The expansion of the police force was also considered, whereas by contrast, the Probation and Welfare Service remained "the poor relation within the penal system" (Kilcommins *et al.*, 2004:260).

A new reality dawned in Ireland in the summer of 2008 that altered the course of progress embarked on with regard to penal and the broader criminal justice system. The country, which had enjoyed unprecedented rates of economic growth, very low unemployment, combined with budget surpluses for over a decade, plummeted into the depths of an economic recession. This involved a housing market crash, soaring unemployment and a full-scale banking crisis. The economy, which had delivered a growth rate of 6.3% per year from 1987-2007, slumped (Whelan, 2013). To facilitate economic recovery, the Irish government agreed to an adjustment programme with the European Union and the International Monetary Fund in 2010, employing austerity measures that included severe cutbacks in public spending and a complete halt to capital spending. Plans for the expansion and modernisation of the prison complex were shelved, public sector pay was cut and recruitment to police force was frozen.

The History of Irish Penal Reform

Rogan (2011) asserts that the work of The Inter-Departmental Committee on Juvenile Delinquency, the Probation System, the Institutional Treatment of Offenders and their After-Care which commenced in 1962, "represented a watershed in Irish prison policy" with "[m]any of its recommendations bearing the hallmarks of penal-welfarism and rehabilitationism" (*ibid.* :97). According to unreleased files analysed by Rogan (*ibid.*) the then Minister for Justice further remarked that the Committee's recommendations had "in their aim the social rehabilitation of the offender" (*ibid.*). This aim was to be advanced through the provision of an in-prison hostel at Mountjoy Prison in Dublin where prisoners on temporary release engaged in employment outside of the prison, would assume more responsibility for 'their own conduct and improvement' (unreleased files, JUS 93/182/1) in order to further their 'social rehabilitation' (unreleased files JUS

93/183/16). Other developments at the time included the reintroduction of educational facilities in the prison as well as medical facilities. However, Rogan argues that:

> While rehabilitation had become the declared aim of the system during the 1960s, it cannot be said with the same degree of conviction that rehabilitation was the outcome of that system. It is difficult to assess the true impact of the changes mooted at departmental level within the state's institutions. For a start, there was no empirical analysis conducted by which this could be measured. Of more theoretical significance, however, is an assessment of whether the rhetorical commitment to rehabilitation ever made it from the realm of policy statement to the prison cell (*ibid.* :117).

Another important attempt at penal reform in Ireland took place in the 1980s. The Whitaker Committee, appointed by government, was charged with examining the full gamut of the prison system including prison conditions and alternatives to imprisonment. The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Penal System, published in 1985 was not just forthright in its recommendations and conclusions, but challenged many of the underlying beliefs hitherto held about the role and effectiveness of imprisonment. The chairman of the committee, Dr. T.K. Whitaker (2007) described imprisonment as not just an expensive means of protecting the public but one that offered little in the way of any rehabilitative value. He noted prison overcrowding as the consequence of imprisoning too many people for minor or non-violent offences such as the non-payment of fines, suggesting meaningful community service as an alternative penalty for such offences. Capping the number of prison places he argued would enhance the prospects for the introduction of alternative sanctions and less expensive forms of legal redress and punishment. Responding to the government's request for a policy and process evaluation pertaining to the reintegration of prisoners, the National Economic and Social Forum published their recommendations in 2002. By acknowledging the equality and social exclusion issues that impact prisoners after their release, the forum argued for the adoption of enhanced release regimes and post-release support.

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The Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT), an independent charity established in 1994 have been advocating for prisoners' rights and penal reform for over two decades. Combining research activities and evidence-based strategies, they have highlighted deficits in the area of penal policy and argued for a deeper, more fundamental shift in thinking when envisaging changes within the penal domain. Endorsing that the principle of imprisonment as a last resort be central to criminal justice policy, they have also campaigned for an awareness of and compliance with human rights standards in the penal system as well as highlighting the benefits of prevention and early intervention pertaining to offending behaviour. The organisation was strenuously opposed to the government's response to prison overcrowding — that being the building of more prisons, arguing that such a plan, in light of national and international experience would have the effect of actually increasing prisoner numbers over time (IPRT, 2008. Position Paper 1: Thornton Hall).

After the planned prison expansion scheme was thwarted due to cuts in capital spending resulting from the economic collapse of 2008, attention was once again focused on other means of managing the crisis of overcrowding within the prison system. The Thornton Hall Project Review Group published a report in 2011 with their recommendations as to how to otherwise address the issue of overcrowding. They also endorsed the principle of imprisonment as the sanction of last resort and the reduction of the prison population to be the overall aim of prison policy. It was envisaged that this aim could be achieved through the application of alternatives to custody from two perspectives — front door and back door strategies (*ibid.* :60). Back door strategies include the government's power to commute or remit any sentence as provided for under Article 13.6 of the Constitution; Rule 59.1 of the Prison Rules (2007) which provides that a prisoner can earn up to 25% remission of their sentence; Temporary Release, pursuant to the Criminal Justice Act, 1960 as amended by the Criminal Justice

(Temporary Release of Prisoners) Act, 2003 and to compassionate leave from prison as provided for under section 39 of the Prisons Act, 2007. The review group also recommended that an incentivised scheme for earned temporary release should be introduced coupled with post-release community service under supervision with the aim of preparing prisoners for reintegration. The review group stated that "[i]mprisonment should be managed in a way that helps the reintegration of prisoners into free society (*ibid.* :10), and "that regimes and rehabilitation programmes are designed to help prisoners address those issues that led to imprisonment, while also preparing for their reintegration into society" (*ibid.* :50). Both the Sex-Offenders Act, 2001 and the Criminal Justice Act, 2006 provide for post-release supervision involving cooperation between the Probation Service and the offender for the purpose of his or her rehabilitation and the protection of the public. Concerns however have been raised in relation to the large numbers of prisoners released without supervision resulting from the use of temporary release under the 2003 Act as a safety valve to alleviate prison overcrowding (Martynowicz and Quigley, 2010).

With a view to having meaningful reforms in penal policy actually implemented, a Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality published their recommendations in 2013. Their recommendations included that the government adopt a decarceration strategy with a view to reducing the prison population by one-third over a ten-year period and that all sentences for under six months imprisonment be commuted and replaced by Community Service Orders, provided under the Criminal Justice (Community Service) Act, 1983. They also recommended that standard remission be increased from one-quarter to one-third and that an enhanced remission scheme of up to one-half should be made available on an incentivised basis for certain categories of prisoner, particularly those serving a prison sentence for the first time. Endorsing the recommendation of the Irish Penal Reform Trust (2012) which called for a single piece of legislation setting out

the basis for a structured release system, the Joint Committee (2013) advised that such legislation when implemented "could also provide a statutory framework for an expanded community return programme . . . [that] could also underpin the strategies currently used by groups working with offenders post-release, and with potential offenders" (*ibid.* :9).

Indications of the direction penal reform is likely to embark on in the future may be gleaned from the Strategic Review of Penal Policy (2014), which had been called for by the Minister of Justice in 2012. Stating the primary goal to be crime prevention and a reduction in reoffending, the review group argued that the best interests of society would be served through the rehabilitation of offenders. Recognising that "there has been a lack of coherent policy which has resulted in an inconsistent approach to addressing offending behaviour" (*ibid.* :7), they considered "the dual purposes of punishment and rehabilitation should be the primary considerations in the imposition and management of criminal sanctions" (*ibid.* :8). Embracing many of the suggestions from previous reports on the penal and criminal justice system in Ireland, the strategic review emphasises the need to rely more on non-custodial sanctions, stating that: "Imprisonment is costly and more significantly its effectiveness as a means of aiding desistance from crime has not been proven" (*ibid.* :23). They further argued that the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders must be accommodated, where possible and appropriate, by whatever criminal sanction is imposed. They state that "[a] system of unprepared and unassisted release of a prisoner into the community is inconsistent with the principles of rehabilitation and reintegration" (*ibid*. :80). While acknowledging the lack of support available to offenders when released back into the community pertaining to alcohol and drug misuse, lack of education and employment, family difficulties, mental health issues and lack of housing, the review group also raised concern about the

negative impact prison overcrowding was having on the provision of those programmes and services that are currently available within the prison estate (*ibid.*).

There is reason to believe that many of the recommendations outlined in the strategic review may materialise in the near future, given the recent statement of the Minister for Justice, (Written answers: Tuesday, 18 November, 2014. Department of Justice and Equality), when she stated that the Government had agreed in principle to proceed immediately with some of the report's key recommendations. Those which will have direct impact on the process of reintegration include, bringing forward legislative proposals to establish the Parole Board on an independent statutory basis (currently the Parole Board is operating on an interim basis with the final decision to grant parole left to the Minister for Justice) and preparing proposals on the potential for increased use of earned remission.

Policies and Procedures Promoting Reintegration

Open Prisons

Shelton Abbey with an operational capacity of 115 and Loughan House Open Centre, with an operational capacity of 140 are both open prisons for males, aged 18 and over. The Training Unit is a semi-open prison, for males, aged 18 and over providing a strong emphasis on work and training. There is currently no open prison available to female prisoners. While prison overcrowding is the predominant feature of the Irish prison system, it is interesting to note that daily average occupancy figures for 2013 show that the semi-open and open prisons are actually operating below their capacity. An increased use of open prison places has been recommended in the Strategic Review of Penal Policy (2014) with a view towards "providing a period of readjustment in a less controlled environment prior to release . . . [thus supporting] a prisoner in adjusting to new independence and responsibility" (*ibid.* :82). Furthermore, the review group has

stated its commitment to exploring options for an open-centre for low risk female offenders and in partnership with the Probation Service, to exploring "specific alternatives to custody . . . which would support the rehabilitation and reintegration of female offenders" (*ibid.* :72).

Release from Custody

Article 13.6 of the Constitution of Ireland provides that: "The right of pardon and the power to commute or remit punishment imposed by any court exercising criminal jurisdiction are hereby vested in the President, but such power of commutation or remission may also be conferred by law on other authorities". Under the Criminal Justice Act, 1951, section 23 (1) as amended by the Criminal Justice Act, 1990, section 9, the government has the power to commute or remit a sentence imposed by court subject to such conditions as it may think proper. The Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1997, provides for the delegation of such power to the Minister for Justice.

Remission

Under the Prison Rules, 2007, a prisoner not serving a life sentence or who is in prison as a debtor or in contempt of court is entitled to standard remission of one-quarter off their whole sentence on the proviso that the sentence has been longer than one month in duration and that they have committed no offence while in prison. While standard remission is a well-established part of the Irish Prison System, the Irish Penal Reform Trust (2012) argue, that by international comparison, the one-quarter rate is low. Enhanced remission of up to one third off the whole sentence is permitted for a prisoner who has shown further good conduct by "engagement in authorised structured activity to such an extent as to satisfy the Minister for Justice and Equality that they are less likely to offend and will be better able to reintegrate into society" (*ibid.* : Rule 59. 2). In

the absence of incentivising engagement with rehabilitative services in prison, the Irish Penal Reform Trust (2012) has expressed frustration with regard to the failure to activate the enhanced remission system.

Temporary Release

The granting of temporary release was heavily relied upon in the past as a short-term means of alleviating prison overcrowding. While in the 1980s it was resorted to less than 1,500 times per year, this figure rose to 3,500 times per year during the 1990s in what became known as 'the revolving door syndrome'. As prisoners were being released, without planning or supervision back into the community, the reintegrative purpose of temporary release was negated. Of the 4,099 prison population on 30 November, 2013, 745 were granted temporary release including 116 prisoners to the Community Return Programme (Irish Prison Service Annual Report, 2013).

Temporary release provides the mechanism whereby a prisoner's preparation for release and ability to reintegrate can be properly assessed. The Criminal Justice Act, 1960 as amended by the Criminal Justice (Temporary Release of Prisoners) Act, 2003 confers on the Minister for Justice the power to release a prisoner on a temporary basis subject to any conditions as may be specified. Persons serving sentences to the presumptive minimum or mandatory sentences for certain drugs and firearms offences as well as those convicted of capital murder will not be granted temporary release. A recommendation is made however in the Strategic Review of Penal Policy (2014) with regard to removing the prohibition of temporary release for those convicted of drugs and firearms offences.

Temporary Release on Compassionate Grounds

Pursuant to Section (1) of the Criminal Justice (Temporary Release of Prisoners) Act, 2003 temporary release may be granted to a prisoner on humanitarian grounds. In

considering the nature of the offence committed, the prisoner's family circumstances and attitude towards rehabilitation, a prison governor with the permission of the Minister for Justice may grant temporary release on compassionate grounds in the event of a death or serious illness. A prisoner may also be released temporarily to attend special family events such as christenings or communions or to deal with other family matters (IPRT 2012: Know Your Rights Your Rights as a Prisoner :25).

The Community Return Programme

The Community Return Programme, introduced on a pilot basis in October 2011 following the recommendations of the Thornton Hall Project Review Group (2011) and rolled out in 2012, is a novel and unique initiative combining unpaid work for the benefit of the community with early release and resettlement support. The initiative provides for earned temporary release for offenders who have served half of their prison sentence of between one and eight years imprisonment. Prisoners who have demonstrated good behaviour and used their imprisonment time productively, are initially assessed by the Prison Service before their suitability and motivation to complete a programme of community service is then ascertained by The Probation Service. Community Service — that is unpaid work for the benefit of the community, supervised by either the Probation Service Community Service Supervisors or other staff from a community based organisation. Failure to comply with the terms and conditions of the Community Return Programme results in suspension from the work site and a return to custody. In assessing suitability for the programme, the Probation Service considers a prisoner's behaviour while in prison, engagement with in-prison services as well as risk factors such as the nature of the offence and history of previous offending. They also consider the prisoner's accommodation status upon release, problems related to alcohol and/or drug misuse and medical conditions (Irish Prison Service/The Probation Service Research Report 5, 2014:11).

The Probation Service, acknowledging that "adjustment and resettlement immediately following release . . . [is] a critical period . . . [and] an important time in determining whether ex-prisoners can engage with their communities, establish a law-abiding lifestyle and make a positive contribution . . . [to] society, or relapse to anti-social behaviours or offending" believes that through structured and supervised early release, "the Community Return Programme aims to maximise opportunities to ensure that the adjustment to life in the community again and resettlement in a new and positive lifestyle and career is facilitated" (*ibid.* :12). In their evaluation of the outcome of the Community Return (Pilot) Programme to date, the Prison Service in conjunction with the Probation Service conducted a study on all of the 761 participants of the programme between October 2011 and April 2012. While approximately 11% (*n=*88) breached the conditions of the programme and were returned to custody, almost 89% had either successfully completed it or their participation was still on going. Notably, of those released within the first year of the programme (*n=*233), 91% had not been committed to prison on a new custodial sentence at the time the evaluation was being conducted in 2013 (*ibid.* :9).

Community Support Scheme

Since May, 2013 the Irish Prison Service in conjunction with the Probation Service has placed 137 short-term prisoners (serving sentences of less than 12 months) on temporary release back into the community on condition that they engage with specified post release services (Irish Prison Service Annual Report, 2013). The scheme, operating for now on a pilot basis is another initiative employed to reduce prison overcrowding and is specifically tasked with reducing the recidivism levels of prisoners serving between three and 12 months imprisonment. Support workers and prison-based staff engage with prisoners shortly after committal to prepare a sentence management plan in each case which includes identifying risk factors and making appropriate referrals.

Support in preparation for release is followed by support in the community where the prisoner's progress or regression will be monitored.

Parole

The Parole Board, established on an administrative basis in 2001, replaced the Sentence Review Group. The Board's function is to advise the Minister for Justice in relation to the administration of long-term prison sentences, excluding those being served for capital murder. Cases that come under its remit are those forwarded to them by the Minister through the Irish Prison Service. Prisoners serving fixed sentences of eight years or more, including life-sentences, are assessed by the Board for their eligibility for early release. The Board usually reviews individual cases half-way through the sentence or after seven years, whichever comes first. In advising the Minister as to the prisoner's progress, the Board takes account of, *inter alia*, the nature and gravity of the offence and any recommendations from the Court that imposed the sentence; the length of time served at the time of the review; previous convictions; any threat that my be posed to the safety and security of the public upon release; the level of engagement with therapeutic services within the prison and the likelihood of improved prospects for safely reintegrating back into the community. It is the Minister's prerogative to accept or reject, in whole or in part, any of the recommendations made by the Parole Board. During 2012, the Board's caseload consisted of 268 cases, which was a combination of new cases and cases at a subsequent review stage. Recommendations in relation to 91 of the cases were sent to the Minister for Justice. The Minister accepted in full the recommendations made for 57, accepted the Board's recommendations conditionally or in part, five of the cases and declined the recommendations in two cases. At the time of publishing the report, there had been no decision made in relation to 27 cases sent to the Minister (The Parole Board Annual Report, 2012).

Deficits in Policy Impacting on Reintegration

Expungement Legislation

Provisions are in place under Section 258 of the Children Act, 2001 providing for the expungement of certain offences committed by those less than 18 years of age, that is offences not deemed serious enough to be tried in the Central Criminal Court, such as murder or rape, and that at least three years have lapsed since the offence was committed. A further condition stipulates that the person must not have been charged or prosecuted for any other offence in that three-year period.

Kilcommins *et al.* (2004) considered that until recently, the lack of spent conviction laws for adults as demonstrating "the much slower rate of development in Ireland regarding the penal-welfare paradigm, as compared with other countries such as the UK and US where expungement laws were introduced in the 1960s and 1970s" (*ibid.* : 200). That the majority of those sentenced by Irish Courts receive fines, community-based sanctions or short-term prison sentences for non-violent offences and then suffer the far-reaching consequences of their criminal records is according to the Irish Penal Reform Trust "a consequence that is disproportionate" (Irish Penal Reform Trust Briefing: Spent Convictions, 2015:1). An offender with a criminal record faces restrictions and barriers in accessing employment, training, education, travel, and accessing car or home insurance.

The Irish Penal Reform Trust (2015) in welcoming the introduction of the Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions) Bill 2012, stated that it represented "a step in the right direction on supporting ex-offenders in their reintegration into society" (*ibid.* :1). However, the Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016 recently signed into law and enacted, provides only limited provision for former offenders to have their prior offences expunged. Firstly, the Act is limited in scope

insofar as it relates only to offences, excluding sexual offences, committed prior to a seven-year period. Secondly, the Act can only be invoked by an individual in respect of a single conviction received in the district or circuit court for which a sanction was received that was less than a 12 month custodial sentence or a two-year suspended sentence that was not subsequently revoked. Certain minor motoring offences or public order offences that attracted a 12 month custodial sentence or a two-year suspended sentence not subsequently revoked are not subject to limitation under the Act and may become spent after seven years. Although lauded as a historic step for Ireland which had hitherto no legislative basis for the expungement of prior convictions, (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2016) the Act affords less by way of provision in comparison to what is available to former offenders in the United Kingdom whereby a custodial sentence of not more than 30 months is eligible for expungement in Northern Ireland and one not more than 48 months is eligible in the jurisdictions of England and Wales. Furthermore, it has been argued that it is not the number of prior offences committed but rather the length of time since offending ceased that is indicative of reoffending (*ibid*.). Hence, a proportionate relationship between the nature of the sanction and the requisite timeframe before the legislation can be invoked has been advised (*ibid*.).

Homelessness

"Individuals entering the prison system homeless are likely to have had a significant history of involvement with the criminal justice system" (Seymour and Costello, 2005: 123). In their study, Seymour and Costello found that 47% of their cohort (*n=241*) had been under the supervision of the Probation Service prior to committal and only 7% had not been homeless in the five-year period before their most recent committal. Furthermore, two-thirds had been in prison more than twice in the five years prior to their current sentence. Homelessness as a barrier to reintegration was highlighted insofar as prisoners without a place to live on release were being "released to nothing"

(*ibid.* :124). Furthermore, as indicated previously, temporary release will only be granted to those who have stable accommodation available to them upon release.

Care After Prison, a peer led charity established in Dublin in 2011, was awarded a contract by the Probation Service to implement on a pilot basis, the Community Support Scheme. In their Annual Report, 2013 they stated that as part of the Community Support Scheme they confirm the service user's post-release address. However, "[f]inding suitable accommodation post-release remains a challenge . . . [and] for a variety of reasons shortly after release accommodation can break down, posing challenges to both the service user and the service provider" (*ibid.* :10).

In May, 2014 the Implementation Plan on the State's Response to Homelessness May 2014-2016 was published which includes a clear commitment on behalf of government "to ensure that discharge protocols/policies are in place and working effectively for people being released from prisons or on temporary release (*ibid.* :68). Given that the homeless crisis in Ireland has deteriorated further whereby 6,189 individuals are currently without a home (Doyle, 2016) it can be argued that the plight of former prisoners as it relates to accessing living accommodation, emergency or otherwise, is now far greater.

Mental Health and Drug-use Recovery

Strains on services relating to mental health care and drug use recovery have followed a similar path. For the estimated 20,000 heroin addicts in the nation, 40 beds in residential recovery programmes are currently available (Geoghegan, 2013). Mental health care provision is equally under-resourced especially as it relates to prisoners and former prisoners. The aim of the mental health service currently is to triage all referrals in prison within eight weeks to assess suitability for inclusion on the intervention waiting list that is typically eight to nine months long, depending on the particular prison. The

Psychology Service provides no follow up care upon release where waiting times for community based psychology services have extensive waiting lists and wait times (Mental Health Reform, 2015).

Chapter Summary

This chapter began by presenting a brief account of imprisonment in Ireland. Apart from those held otherwise in coercive confinement in earlier decades, Ireland witnessed a steep increase in its prison population from the 1970s, which has only recently begun to taper. The rapid increase in the prison population led to unsafe conditions for those held in custody within a prison infrastructure that was either not fit for purpose or operating beyond its capacity. Prison governance steered towards managing prisoner numbers rather than promoting the penal-welfarist ideal of the rehabilitation and reintegration of the offender. While the need for reform was apparent as far back as the 1960s, the State, in the absence of a clear philosophy and vision as to the purpose of imprisonment fastened its focus on expanding further, rather than reducing prison numbers. That a period of austerity has led to the current raft of criminal justice and penal reforms — pertaining to the capping of prison numbers and the introduction of reintegrative and rehabilitative principles such as structured temporary release, it can nevertheless be seen as opportune in terms of progress in this otherwise neglected area.

CHAPTER THREE

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter presents an integrated theoretical framework incorporating existing knowledge on various theories, which together amalgamate a multifaceted appreciation of the complexity of the reintegration process. Beginning with an outline of the existing literature on reintegration the chapter will then present the knowledge presently available as to the effects of imprisonment and the consequences of that for post-release success. That people are expected to change their life's course and lead crime-free lives following a past of criminality is something that will be then explored through the lens of desistance theory. That which is known about how people manage to change will be presented through an analysis of cognitive transformation theory. The challenges as experienced by those who attempt to change and remain crime-free and hence not become re-incarcerated can sometimes be described as psychosocial in nature. A discussion of the merits of different theoretical perspectives on the value of understanding the person as a psychosocial being will conclude the chapter.

Reintegration

Reintegration in the context of this study pertains to former prisoners' experiences following their period of incarceration. It is not a modern phenomenon considering that the prison system, which has been in operation for almost two centuries, has been continuously releasing most of its inmates back to the community. Therefore, because the vast majority of people who are imprisoned will one day be released means that in direct correlation to the dramatic rates of imprisonment in recent decades, more and

more people are returning to society to be 'reintegrated'. Farrington, Langan and Tonry (2004) have described the ever-increasing numbers of people being incarcerated as one of the major global changes of the past 25 years. That 95% of all inmates will eventually be released (Petersilia, 2005) creates one of the most profound challenges for society today as it is charged with facilitating the reintegration of so many prisoners (Petersilia, 2003; Maruna, 2011; Crow and Smykla, 2014).

Hence, interest in the concept of reintegration has grown too with a number of empirical studies emerging (Brooks, *et al.*, 2005; Culleton and Hogan, 2008; National Economic and Social Forum, 2002; La Vigne, Visher, and Castro, 2004; Visher, Kachnowski, *et al.*, 2004; Martynowicz and Quigley, 2010). The overarching goal of reintegration is, according to Travis (2000) "to have returned to our midst an individual who has discharged his legal obligation to society by serving his sentence *and* has demonstrated an ability to live by society's rules" (*ibid.* :2). Maruna, Immarigeon and LeBel (2004) further suggest that reintegration involves everything, from literacy training to electronic monitoring, that is intended to reduce recidivism after release from prison (*ibid.* :6).

Reintegration is one of those "re" words according to Farrall and Calverley (2006) among "resettled", "rehabilitated" and "reformed" which tend to connote that people are returned to their former state. Notwithstanding that recidivism levels run high, with about half of all community sanctions and prison sentences resulting in reconviction within two years, there are also those for whom their involvement within the criminal justice system is short-lived (*ibid.* :xi-xii). With regard to those who have succeeded at reintegration, Farrall and Calverley (2006), argue that "the 'reintegrated' probably were never fully 'integrated' in the first place and the 'reformed' often need to form themselves completely afresh. Often, it would appear, these people have had to create

themselves and their lives anew" (*ibid. :*xii). Evidence shows that the factors that hinder reintegration include *inter alia*, lack of education, poor employment prospects, drug and alcohol misuse, mental and physical health problems, lack of housing, and lack of familial and financial support (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). Furthermore, imprisonment itself can be both an extension and confirmation of one's long experienced marginalised status (*ibid. :*2002).

Consequently, "the characteristics of those sent to our prisons are monotonously similar and speak of a catalogue of disadvantage" (O'Donnell, 1997:146-147). Most are encumbered by a history of social exclusion, including high levels of family, educational and health disadvantage, with very poor prospects in the labour market (Irish Penal Reform Trust, Barnardos and Irish Association of Young People in Care, 2010). Seymour and Costello (2005) found that of the 241 prisoners, they interviewed, 54% had experienced homelessness at some period of their lives prior to their current imprisonment (*ibid. :*50). The most common problems anticipated by them following their release were employment (42%) and housing (40%). This was followed by problems relating to drugs (29%), alcohol (22%), education (18%), family difficulties (17%), problems with the community (17%) and mental health (13%) (*ibid. :*59). Similarly, Jacobson, Phillips and Edgar, (2010) in their study on reintegration found that employment and housing were the most critical factors for successful resettlement. These findings indicate that not only is the concept of reintegration a difficult process for a marginalised group, but it is rendered more difficult for those further marginalised by their personal circumstances.

Defining Reintegration

Anything not clearly defined is poorly understood. Reintegration has suffered such a plight as it is a term that has been used interchangeably with the terms 'reentry' and

'resettlement'. Dubbed at one time, as one of the new buzzwords in correctional reform (Austin, 2001), reintegration, otherwise known as reentry or resettlement, is a practice that has been said to be operating "in a theoretical vacuum, with no clear explanation for how the process is supposed to work" (Maruna, Immarigeon & LeBel, 2004: 8). Moore (2011) likens 'resettlement', without theoretical and conceptual exposition to "a road map with most of the required detail to give it substantive meaning missing" (*ibid.* :133).

The term reintegration has been defined generally in its narrowest sense as the means and support offered to prisoners upon their release from prison. A broader and more holistic definition of reintegration includes the complete process an offender will embark upon immediately following arrest. This includes that, rather than exposing the offender to the harmful and de-socialising effects of imprisonment, alternative sanctions or restorative justice measures ought to be considered, which may include referrals for addiction treatment, personal development or community service (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2006).

At this juncture it is worth noting the argument presented by Garland and Wodahl (2014) in relation to the view that for successful reentry (reintegration), the process should commence as soon as the prisoner enters the prison system. They argue that this proposition is both illogical and clearly contradictory:

> that a person can reenter one thing (i.e., free society) while at the same time entering something completely opposite (i.e. imprisonment, which isolates one from free society). Further, prisoners are consumed with prison life upon entry, as it becomes the totality of their direct experience. It is impossible then that an inmate can be psychologically, emotionally, and socially adjusting to life on the outside when they are in fact engaged in adjustment to prison (*ibid.* :406).

Alternatively, the experience of imprisonment can take the form of reintegrative confinement that incorporates a keen focus on the prison to community transition that

includes a period of aftercare characterised by surveillance and the provision of support services after release (Altschuler and Armstrong, 1999).

Garland and Wodahl (2014) draw attention to the fact that the absence of a clear understanding of the process of reintegration represents a serious threat to the sustainability of the reentry movement in the United States, insofar as a 'movement' requires a fully coherent identity as to its purpose. Such clarity is of particular importance, given that four times as many inmates were released in the US in 2010 (Guerino, Harrison and Sabol, 2011) than in 1980 (Lynch and Sabol, 2001). Such a level of strain on communities and criminal justice organisations makes success after imprisonment more difficult (Clear, 2007; Lynch and Sabol, 2001; Petersilia, 2000; Urban Institute, 2006).

That reintegration is a process — more than just the physical act of departing from the prison and arriving in the community, requires some scrutiny of what that process entails. The critical question, according to Garland and Wodahl (2014) to ask is: "Where does the 'process' of prisoner reentry *emerge* as an experience separate and distinct from that of regular incarceration and *conclude* as no longer part of the long-term criminal desistance process?" (*ibid.* :401). They argue that reintegration is a distinct concept from prisoner rehabilitation, requiring a separate definition and outcome measures of success beyond recidivism. Successful reintegration they suggest should be evaluated firstly with respect to the immediate timeframe post-release. This is because in the short-term, reintegration requires some level of readjustment — therefore, this initial part of the process "is about establishing one's footing, but not necessarily sustaining it" (*ibid.* :409).

Hence an analysis of readjustment becomes critical to the understanding of the process of reintegration. Such an analysis is not easy given the lack of research literature

specifically focused on the prison-to-community transitional experience (*ibid.*). Viewing the initial short-term aspect of reintegration then, as analogous to a period of acclimation to life outside of the prison — doing well at this stage will require that the individual is both psychologically and emotionally stable with some degree of self-sufficiency and an ability to live within the boundaries of regular society (*ibid.*). This part of the process, according to Garland and Wodahl (2014) can be described as "the social integration aspect of prisoner re-entry" (*ibid.* :409) and should not be measured in the long-term context. They suggest that such measurement would be more appropriate for examining "full-scale readjustment, not the prison to community transition" (*ibid.* : 409).

Extrapolating from the research conducted on transitional adjustment involving returned volunteers of the Peace Corps (Menninger, 1975), and pending specific research on the prison to community transition and the issue of readjustment post-release, Garland and Wodahl (2014) propose that with respect to a timeframe, the process of reintegration is encountered anywhere up to 10 months after release. Beyond that, they suggest, "offenders are likely to be working toward desisting from crime and avoiding antisocial temptations, not trying to readjust to free life itself" (*ibid.* :407). The period of readjustment will of course vary from individual to individual in relation to their personal circumstances on release, involving issues such as living accommodation, employment, family support and the support of friends as well as any formal support that may be necessary with regard to alcohol or drugs misuse or health matters.

Notwithstanding the widely held belief that insofar as possible, theory should guide the development of research and the implementation of practice, the prisoner reentry movement is largely devoid of theoretical guidance and this is problematic particularly for those attempting to succeed at life post-release. While theoretical models have been

developed pertaining to the negative aspects of reintegration including stigma, personal relationships and financial challenges, all resulting in the diminishment of social capital (Clear, Rose and Ryder, 2001; Rose and Clear, 2003) there remains a paucity of theoretical guidance for actually improving former prisoners' prospects of success in the free world.

Maruna, Immarigeon and LeBel (2004) threw down the gauntlet by declaring that, "academic criminologists most certainly cannot escape the blame for the apparent void in reintegration theory" (*ibid.* :8). With the exception of Petersilia (2003) and Farrall (2002), Maruna, Immarigeon and LeBel (2004) suggest that what is currently available is "descriptive and atheoretical evaluative research" (*ibid.* :8). It is however, they suggest, possible to develop theories for reintegration using existing research on desistance theory. They further suggest that desistance and reintegration together, should be understood to be part of the same process (*ibid.*).

Accepting the premise then, that the reintegration of prisoners is a process, not simply the event of decarceration requires an investigation of what that process entails. An investigation is also warranted so as to ascertain what causes former prisoners to fail in their transition through re-offending, and in doing so, to discover "what works" and "how it works" in reality for those who successfully reintegrate.

While accounts of resettlement and reentry abound they are predominantly concerned both with what is done "to work with offenders" and "what works", in an attempt to evaluate and assess the outcomes of one procedure or practice over another. Initiatives and programmes concerned with such endeavours have, Maruna (2006) argues, taken ownership of reintegration and this is problematic. He says:

> There is something wonderful about the verb 're-integration'. The State can be said to be in the business of "rehabilitating" or "reforming" offenders. The State, however, cannot be said to be in the business of "re-integrating" individuals.

Professionals cannot re-integrate anyone no matter how much training they have. Ex-offenders can re-integrate themselves and communities can re-integrate ex-offenders (*ibid.* :24).

Reintegration, not being only a personal matter but also a societal one is further highlighted by Maruna (2009) who describes it as a "two-way street" involving not just the changes and adjustments a person makes upon being released from prison, but also includes how the community responds to that person (*ibid.* :60).

Maruna (2006), in suggesting that while resettlement is everything and nothing, and the only theory behind it is that it has to involve "stuff that works", (*ibid.* :26) argues that unlike 'resettlement' and 'reentry', reintegration constitutes something more than the physical return to society. Maruna (*ibid.*) suggests it involves the symbolic element of "moral inclusion", which includes forgiveness, acceptance, redemption and reconciliation. This is further emphasised by Johnson (2002:319) who says, "released prisoners find themselves 'in' but not 'of' the larger society" and that they "suffer from a presumption of moral contamination". Johnson perhaps offers the most inclusive definition of reintegration and what it ought to be, when he states that reintegration requires "a mutual effort at reconciliation, where offender and society work together to make amends — for hurtful crimes and hurtful punishments — and move forward" (*ibid.* :328).

Kirkwood and McNeill (2015) further present the concept of true offender reintegration being both a personal and social process as analogous to the integration of asylum seekers. They outline the broad similarities of these two marginalised groups as including the need to be legally recognised (as rehabilitated/refugee or citizen); the need for social capital (social connections); the need for human capital and resources (safety and stability) and moral inclusion (moral reform/ cultural competence). Reintegration often includes rehabilitation. Rehabilitation however has suffered somewhat of a crisis

in identity. The commonly held notion of rehabilitation reflects it as "vaguely preachy and evangelical", something that has become "synonymous with workbook-centred lectures delivered in grim, windowless prison basements: tiresome bureaucratic exercises that are as meaningless to participants as they are to staff administering them" (Ward and Maruna, 2007:2). From an academic perspective rehabilitation is according to McNeill (2012) struggling with two competing models — the Risk-Needs-Responsivity model and the Good Lives Model. The former facilitates change through the promotion of specific programmes that are associated with positive outcomes while the latter adopts a personalised approach to foster deeper engagement with individuals' motivation to change. However, McNeill (*ibid*.) also stresses that support alone is insufficient to assist the process of change if legal and practical barriers to reintegration are left unchallenged. McNeill offers an interdisciplinary perspective of rehabilitation that includes four forms — psychological, legal, moral and social. That is, psychological rehabilitation to promote self-change; legal rehabilitation to address the collateral consequences of a criminal conviction that include stigma and social exclusion; moral rehabilitation to provide offenders with opportunities to make reparation and regain moral standing within the community and finally, social rehabilitation which involves the acceptance and recognition of the individual's reformed status.

Reintegration in a Political Context

A synchronous relationship exists between policy on prisoner reintegration and whatever the prevailing philosophy may be as to the goal of state sanctioning. Shifts have occurred over time from "rehabilitation" which was seen to emerge between 1950-1960, predominantly in the United States and the United Kingdom, and retribution, or "just deserts" which assumed centre stage in the 1980s. The goal of rehabilitation was to provide transitional services aiding the prisoner's return to the community by

facilitating a phased process of what we now refer to as "reintegration". However, by the 1980s correctional reform accepted as its basis, "just deserts" and "incapacitation" for policy on sentencing.

This epistemological swing can be attributed to the divergence that emerged in theoretical criminology. Initially, a long pessimistic shadow was cast by the "nothing works" assertion, something that stemmed from a finding in relation to prisoner rehabilitation. Although attributed to Martinson (1974), the term lacks any theoretical or scientific value, if not quoted in context. Having reviewed more than two hundred rehabilitation programmes and correctional practices Martinson found that they had little or no impact on the successful rehabilitation of offenders. This was for myriad reasons concerning the service delivery of rehabilitation programmes that were seen to fail because of lack of resources. There also followed some negative and far reaching publicity raised about criminal activity which was found to be prevalent in a few half-way houses. The term therefore, taken out of context, tends to connote something akin to the notion that prisoners are beyond redemption. Though Martinson (1979) refuted the claim "nothing works", John Irwin's (1970) conclusion in The Felon — that offenders fail to succeed at reintegration because they are both overwhelmed and ill equipped to survive the internal and external hurdles associated with the process, had been embraced by retributionist theorists and those advocating a policy of zero-tolerance.

It might be argued that 'zero-tolerance' as a conceptual basis for crime control has had a cataclysmic effect on penal reform and provides the backdrop against which much criminal justice and penal policy is structured today. Though most closely associated with the vociferous William Bratton, a former New York City police commissioner, regarded by Parenti (1999) as "the godfather of innovative policing"(*ibid.* :70), it was

not alone his innovation as he was building upon the ideas posited earlier by the criminologists Wilson and Kelling (1982). In their "broken windows" thesis they saw disorder and crime as being "usually inextricably linked" (*ibid.* :30). Their general tenet was that if there were no corrections for minor offences then more serious offences would ensue. They saw police enforcement as a key issue in assuaging public fear of crime stating that: "Just as physicians now recognize the importance of fostering health rather than simply treating illness, so the police — and the rest of us — ought to realize the importance of maintaining, intact, communities without broken windows" (*ibid.* : 38).

The tone of such rhetoric was not lost on politicians who used it to best effect as a vote-catching trump card. The sheer girth and scale of its permeation through Western jurisdictions has caused a seismic shift in prison policy which now readily houses increasing numbers of offenders enmeshed in the criminal process for lesser offences under more draconian laws. Young (1999) explains how in late modernity there has been a movement from an inclusive to an exclusive society and that it is "concomitant with a change in tolerance from a society which abhors difference and attempts to reform difficulty to one which celebrates difference and attempts to exclude the difficult" (*ibid.* :387). Illustrating the point, he employs the suggestion of Robert Merton (1938) as laid out in *Social Structure and Anomie* and translates it as "the paradigm case for a discontented society . . . one which . . . voraciously devours people . . . then, steadfastly ejects them" (*ibid.* :394). Shover (2004) has employed a gastric analogy to explain current penal trends particularly in the United States. He states that, "parole bureaucracies today are returning their charges to prison in record numbers. There is no shortage of fodder. The imprisonment binge of the past three decades ensures that each year thousands of prisoners are disgorged from America's bloated prison systems (*ibid.* :xi).

Reintegration in Practice

Notwithstanding that the State can either help or hinder the process of reintegration (McNeill, 2006), reintegration itself is perhaps better understood to be the provenance only of the offender *together with* the community he or she returns to. However, Maruna (2006) argues that while on the one hand society spares no drama with regard to the spectacle and ritual of punishment, there is no corresponding ritualisation for the return to society. Insofar as tax revenue is expended on post-prison support which is necessary for those who require housing, drug and/or alcohol treatment placements, mental health services, education or employment training, the managerial and actuarial rhetoric used takes no account of the end user being one who has been temporarily banished from the community and returned from an acute state of shame and degradation (Maruna, 2006).

That the primary objective of the treatment of prisoners shall be their reformation and social rehabilitation stems from Article 10, 3 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Furthermore, Rule 58 of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners states that "[t]he purpose and justification of a sentence of imprisonment or a similar measure deprivative of liberty is ultimately to protect society against crime. This end can only be achieved if the period of imprisonment is used to ensure, so far as possible, that upon his return to society the offender is not only willing but *able* to lead a law-abiding and self-supporting life" (emphasis mine). The Article and Rule, taken together, clearly state that imprisonment without reintegration as its core purpose, serves no purpose at all.

The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, Vienna, in presenting the Custodial and Non-Custodial Measures: Social Reintegration Criminal Justice Assessment Toolkit (2006) argued that prisons are not well suited for the social reintegration of offenders

who might be isolated from society for long periods, in a closed environment where they will be susceptible to all the harmful and de-socialising effects of imprisonment. They stated that the adverse effects of prison must be minimised and support should be offered to prisoners to live law-abiding lives upon release. That governments do not typically place a high priority on assisting prisoners with post-release care, and that many countries lack an overall reintegration strategy, adopted by relevant authorities such as, Ministries of Justice, Health, Employment, Social Services, etc., has also been highlighted by the Office on Drugs and Crime (UN, 2006: 2). They suggest that in addition to developing an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of a state's approach to social reintegration, an assessor should be able to identify opportunities for reform and development.

The document attaches priority to a number of key strategies for member states to adopt pertaining to support for reintegration. They call for *inter alia*, the introduction of legislative reforms in the areas of criminal justice, labour, education and social welfare to widen the scope of support for offenders and ex-offenders to address their social reintegration needs. They also call for improved organisational design and management processes relating to the social reintegration of offenders amongst Ministries of Justice, Interior, Labour, Social Welfare, Health and police agencies with an adequate allocation of resources through sound budgeting and financial management. The importance of developing training curricula for prison staff, including social workers and psychologists, probation service staff and others involved in the social reintegration of offenders and ex-offenders is highlighted, including the development of constructive prisoner programmes and an improved prisoner regime. Another important strategy asked member states to employ the raising of public awareness as to the harmful effects of imprisonment, the social reintegration needs of offenders and ex-offenders as well as increasing community participation in social reintegration programmes and initiatives

(*ibid.* :3). Moreover, Rule 64 of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (SMR) states that: "The duty of society does not end with a prisoner's release. There should, therefore, be governmental or private agencies capable of lending the released prisoner efficient after-care directed towards the lessening of prejudice against him and towards his social rehabilitation" (13, May, 1977:10).

The authors of the toolkit further state that former prisoners are particularly vulnerable during the 6 to 12 month period following release, during which time they may attempt to re-establish family relationships, seek accommodation and employment and take responsibility for themselves while adjusting to life outside of prison. Acknowledging that such individuals will be under psychological and social pressure due to a range of reasons associated with their imprisonment and release, they suggest that probation services where they exist and or community groups or other organisations of civil society can provide support. Raising public awareness so as to lessen the extent to which former prisoners are stigmatised is also highlighted as a necessary part of the process (UN, 2006).

A Community Perspective of Reintegration

Increased community participation with regard to reintegration was also raised by the Quaker Council for European Affairs (2011) from the viewpoint that prisoners and former prisoners, irrespective of the acts committed by them that society either disapproves of, or even abhors, remain members of the wider community. From that perspective then, if society expects law-abiding behaviour as arising from mutual respect and consideration within the community, then how it reacts to dealing with crime, matters — insofar as excluding its perpetrators from the same community that desires their future respect and consideration is unlikely to work. Additionally, continuing to exclude them after their release from prison exacerbates the problem.

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"Proponents of an evermore punitive prison policy must confront this uncomfortable truth" (*ibid*: 11). Maruna and LeBel (2002) maintain that:

> If re-entry is to be a meaningful concept, presumably it implies more than physically re-entering society, but also includes some sort of 'relational reintegration' back in to the moral community. That is, the reintegrated person should be re-accepted as a full fledged member in and of the wider community (*ibid.* :167).

While 'community' is rarely a homogenous integrated entity but rather a heterogeneous one, be it through geographical, cultural, or demographical diversity, the communities that the vast majority of prisoners generally return to are those characterised by social and economic disadvantage which rarely attract business enterprise and fail to prosper (Clear, Rose and Ryder, 2001).

The effects of incarceration and reintegration on the local community were explored by Clear, Rose and Ryder (*ibid.*) from the perspectives of both non-offending residents and ex-offenders. While on the one hand respondents reported the positive effect that imprisonment has on communities, insofar as incarcerating offenders eliminated crime from the streets and made them feel safer, they devoted more time to the negative effects caused by imprisonment — such as financial strains, issues regarding identity, stigma and the maintenance of interpersonal relationships. Respondents who were ex-offenders themselves further emphasised the pressure they felt when reintegrating — from sources such as their families, neighbours, the criminal justice system and society in general (*ibid.* :340). Similar strains were cited by Shinkfield and Graffam (2009) in their study, which explored the quality of life conditions experienced by their respondents post-release. While the study did not directly measure the community-related aspect of imprisonment, the researchers believed that ex-prisoners' low-level of employment and continued alcohol and drug use would directly affect local community cohesion.

From an Irish perspective, evidence has shown a strong link between socio-economically deprived communities and higher rates of incarceration, particularly in urban settings (Bacik *et al.*, 1997; O'Donnell *et al.*, 2007). O'Donnell *et al.* (2007) found that in the most deprived areas of Ireland, almost 146 per 10,000 of the population were prisoners in comparison to 6.3 in the least deprived areas. The magnitude of this difference, according to O'Donnell *et al.*, (*ibid.*) "demonstrates unequivocally that it is the areas already marked by serious disadvantage that must bear the brunt of the social problems that accompany released prisoners (*ibid.* :4). Moore (2011) further argues that resettlement (reintegration) as a criminological concept will not develop theoretically or sociologically until it is viewed not as an end-state but rather as a complex and individuated journey and transition through social structures that are diverse and characterised by inequality of means and inequality of opportunity.

Reintegration from a Criminal Justice Perspective

Shifting focus from the defendant/victim criminal justice paradigm to a reintegration-centred paradigm, which acknowledges that defendants will eventually return to the community, will not just enhance the individuals' prospects for reintegration, but also preserve families and promote community safety. While the criminal justice system in general can be described as individual-focused, that is, dealing with the defendant in isolation from family and community, it converges with the community upon the prisoner's release (Pinard, 2007). Re-establishing relationships with family members, friends and the wider community, is the goal of reintegration and as such it can be described as community-centred.

> [T]he criminal justice system has yet to fully appreciate the magnitude of reentry, as it continues to relegate the reentry process to the very end of the criminal justice continuum. It perceives reentry as a step — the last step — along this continuum, rather than as a vital component that permeates the entire continuum (*ibid.* :104).

Positioning reintegration at the core of the criminal justice system does not purport to diminish the punishments and convictions attaching to offenders, but rather highlights their collateral consequences as they impede the process of reintegration. In fashioning a reintegration-centred model of criminal justice, Pinard (2007) emphasises that all the actors within the criminal justice system, including defence counsel, the judiciary, probation officers and social service providers, should focus their efforts on the defendant's eventual return to society. Judges and criminal lawyers, wielding particular influence over the individual at the beginning of the criminal justice process, together determine the course the defendant will travel and are therefore well positioned to assess the collateral consequences of punishment as against the severity of the charge from the outset. Proactively promoting a reintegration-centred model of criminal justice would have them consider the impact of their decisions and strategies on the defendant's potential successful reintegration.

The Reality of Reintegration

Capturing the nuances and lived reality and experiences of those who are themselves managing the process of reintegration is best done by way of a qualitative methodology but such studies are not nearly as pervasive (Garland, 2010). Garland (2002) in presenting a historiography of criminology's 'Lombrosian' and 'governmental project' illustrates how the general thrust of empirical research shifted from something that was initially more focused on the individual which aimed "to develop an etiological, explanatory science, based on the premise that criminals can somehow be scientifically differentiated from non-criminals" (*ibid.* :8) to "the long series of empirical inquiries, which, since the eighteenth century, have sought to enhance the efficient and equitable administration of justice by charting the patterns of crime and monitoring the practice of police and prisons" (*ibid.*). The absence of a corpus of empirical material on how people manage to navigate the complex process of reintegration and actually succeed in their

endeavours, it could be argued, will ensure that the pattern of crime and recidivism will continue to repeat itself. What remains to be discovered about prisoner re-entry includes, knowing exactly what indicates that an ex-prisoner has successfully reintegrated into society; knowing the timeframe within which a prisoner typically begins the mental transition from dealing primarily with prison life to preparing psychologically for life in the free world; knowing what programmes and services most effectively facilitate the prison to community transition and evaluating them against those prescribed in the broader rehabilitation literature (Garland and Hass, 2013).

Though inevitably there are cases whereby individuals successfully reintegrate and move on with their lives it has been noted that they are rarely thought about except as a comparison group for those who reoffend (Farrall and Calverley, 2006). Empirical qualitative studies that have focused on those attempting reintegration have most commonly been conducted among groups of individuals accessing some support or service during a period of supervision after their release from prison. Findings from such studies are broadly similar casting the process of reintegration as problematic and challenging.

Common themes that emerge in these studies relating to the challenges and barriers individuals encounter include ongoing problems related to drug use leading to further offending (Davis, Bahr and Ward, 2012), and problems related to discrimination resulting in limited employment opportunities (Soloman, Gouvis and Waul, 2001). A number of themes relating to what individuals find helpful throughout the process of reintegration include the positive benefits of family support that can include financial assistance, connections to employment opportunities as well as the impetus to avoid drug use and criminal activity (Nelson, Deess and Allen, 1999). The significance of a supportive peer network has also been highlighted in these studies as an important

source of support for those attempting to avoid criminal activity or further drug-use (Davis, Bahr and Ward, 2012). Individuals have also highlighted the particular advantage of having a peer network that includes those who have a shared common history stating that these individuals can serve as positive role models (Soloman, Gouvis and Waul, 2001). Motivation to avoid further offending has been identified as one of the key factors in explaining desistance and thus aiding reintegration (Shover, 1983; Moffitt, 1993; Farrall and Calverley, 2006). Acquiring the motivation to change has variously been described as arising from an awakening or resulting from the experience of hitting rock bottom (Soloman, Gouvis and Waul, 2001). Faith in a higher power has also been identified as contributing to inner change (*ibid.*).

Reintegration and Homelessness

Homelessness is a growing problem among those already facing other forms of social exclusion and social disadvantage (Hickey, 2002). For those who are released from prison, housing stability is one of the key ways to avoid re-entry into the criminal justice system (Wilder Research Centre, 2006). According to Altschuler and Armstrong (1999) the issue of homelessness among prisoners needs to be set within the context of a reintegration framework, meaning that planning for a prisoner's housing needs ought to begin at the early stage of imprisonment and continue with follow-up support upon release back into the community. Yet, many people do not have a home when they are released from prison. They often return to communities where persistent poverty and lack of jobs and affordable housing make finding a permanent home difficult (Travis, Solomon and Waul, 2001).

Carlen (1983) argues that homeless people are over-represented in the prison population firstly, because they have a higher reconviction rate than domiciled offenders and secondly, their lack of living accommodation may be instrumental in a court's decision

to have them remanded and sentenced to a term of imprisonment. Furthermore, a period of incarceration increases a person's chance of becoming homeless (Carlen, 1983; Piliavin *et al.*, 1993; Yanetta, Third and Anderson, 1999) with the time of release often potentially the "trigger that leads directly to the streets" (Greater London Authority Research, 2000:7). A perpetual cycle of imprisonment and homelessness is further exacerbated by the fact that homeless people are more likely to fall foul of the criminal law while living on the streets (Snow, Baker and Anderson, 1989). While crime has not been shown to be the inevitable consequence of homelessness, some clear links have been exposed (Ramsay, 1986). Common offences include drinking in public and engaging in criminal behaviour to survive on the streets (DiLisi, 2000). People sleeping rough are also perceived as a threat to community safety and they will be formally processed for offences that may otherwise be ignored.

Although little is known of the true scope of the problem of homelessness among people leaving prison facilities, figures from some jurisdictions suggest a troubling picture (Petersilia, 2003). For example at any given time, 30-50 per cent of all people under parole supervision in Los Angeles and San Francisco are homeless (Travis, Soloman and Waul, 2001). The general difficulty in ascertaining the number of homeless individuals embroiled in the criminal justice system arises from the adverse implications that accrue for a homeless offender disclosing his or her housing status, insofar as there can be an increased likelihood of being held on remand, and/or a reduced likelihood of being granted temporary release if in custody (Baldry, 2001).

While there is agreement in the literature that a link exists between homelessness, crime and imprisonment, evidence has shown that the relationship is not a linear one. Corr and Mayock (2012) found the relationship between homelessness, offending and imprisonment as cyclical and self-perpetuating identifying homelessness as the entry

point to the cycle. In their study of the profile of homeless offenders in Ireland, Seymour and Costello (2005) found that more than half of the prisoners surveyed had at least one period of homelessness prior to imprisonment and a quarter of those surveyed were homeless on committal. Also noteworthy was that the majority of those homeless on committal had also spent significant periods of time in prison — the majority (78%) having served up to two years imprisonment and 54% having spent fives years or more. The difficulty associated between reintegration and homelessness was recognised by Probation staff in the study who noted the lack of a bridging service between prison and the community. Prisoners highlighted their need for basic information and advice on housing and welfare entitlements as well as a point of contact within the prison to access information and assistance with regard to securing housing and support services prior to leaving prison and follow-up support in the community.

The importance of adequate housing for the released prisoner in terms of reintegration has been viewed in terms of providing a secure base from which other problems can be addressed, such as unemployment and addiction recovery (Greater London Authority Research Group, 2000). However, a criminal record has been found to be a barrier to both housing and employment (Wilder Research Centre, 2004). Hickey (2002) has outlined a number of critical structural inequalities that must be addressed if those leaving prison are to have any real hope of successfully reintegrating back into their communities. She highlights the inadequate supply of supported transitional housing for homeless prisoners; the inadequate supply of social and affordable housing; the inaccessibility of the private rental sector; the inadequate supply of drug and alcohol treatment programmes and the shortage of family support and mediation services to help prevent the breakdown of family and spousal relationships during and immediately after a period of imprisonment.

Before embarking on further exploration of the existing literature pertinent to what helps or hinders successful reintegration, the following section will outline what is known about how the prison experience itself impacts on post-release success or failure.

The Harmful Effects of Imprisonment: Prisonization

The concept of prisonization, that is institutionalisation within the prison setting, was defined by Donald Clemmer (1940) as "the taking on in greater or lesser degree of the folkways, mores, customs, and general culture of the penitentiary" (*ibid.* :270). Interest in prisonization, that is, the dynamics of social relationships within the prison setting, continued throughout the following decades but evolved into more specific studies, such as "the pains of imprisonment" as described by Sykes (1958) and "the importation model", developed by Irwin and Cressey (1962). Haney (2003) describes prisonization as "the incorporation of the norms of prison life into one's habits of thinking, feeling and acting" (*ibid.* :38). Prison culture, sometimes referred to as the "inmate code" describes behaviour that would be considered unacceptable in the free world, though it may be encouraged and rewarded within the prison setting (Dobbs and Waid, 2012). Given that the norms, customs and values of the prison environment are discordant with societal values, prisoners will adjust and assimilate to that climate, learning new norms, rules and expected patterns of behaviour.

The unique set of psychological adaptations that typically occur during one's imprisonment to varying degrees, have all been well documented (Clemmer 1958; Goffman 1961; Thomas and Peterson, 1977; Goldstein 1979; McCorkle and Korn 1954; Peat and Winfree 1992). These adaptations are best described as the normal adaptations individuals make in response to unnatural circumstances and as such are not viewed as pathological in nature. They may become dysfunctional however, when they are taken

to the extreme or when they become so internalised that they remain even when the surroundings have changed, *vis a vis* post-imprisonment.

Clemmer's (1940) analysis of prisonization has been criticised because it fails to explain the origins of the prison culture on which prisonization is based. Sykes (1958) hypothesised that the process of prisonization originated from the deprivations each prisoner suffered daily. He listed them as: the loss or deprivation of liberty; the loss or deprivation of goods and services; the loss or deprivation of heterosexual relationships; the loss or deprivation of autonomy and the loss or deprivation of security. This 'deprivation model' is sometimes referred to as 'the indigenous approach' (Dhami, Ayton and Loewenstein, 2007). Sykes's deprivation theory has also been critiqued by those who claim, that inmate culture, is not just derived from within the prison setting itself — the indigenous factor, but rather, it is a composite of individual prisoner characteristics and their life's experiences prior to incarceration. This view is referred to as "the importation model" and has been promulgated by Irwin and Cressey, (1962); Irwin, (1970); Wright, 1989); Finn, (1995); Dhami, Ayton and Loewenstein (2007).

Irwin and Cressey (1962) developed a typology of conflicting subcultures within the prison setting that prisoners gravitate towards because of a shared common identity — the 'thief', the 'convict' and the 'straight'. They suggested that thieves associate with each other within the prison setting, sharing a common value system, in the same way that they associate with each other in the outside world. They view their term of imprisonment as nothing more than a hiatus in their criminal careers. Convicts, described as those who have spent a significant amount of time imprisoned, while still bearing the characteristics they had before imprisonment (imported), ascribe to the prison code and perhaps are more impacted by the deprevations of imprisonment (indigenous factors). Straights on the other hand are described as once-off offenders

who fare better in the prison environment. They are seen to identify more with prison staff than with the other two subcultures and use their prison time productively.

A theoretical synthesis has been attempted by Camp, *et al*., (2003); Frottier, *et al*., (2001), Gillespie, (2003); Harer and Steffensmeier, (1996); Paterline and Peterson, (1999); and Thomas and Peterson, (1977), who have researched and tested the validity of the indigenous and importation approaches in single studies. Measures of the importation model, which include factors such as age, gender, race and marital status, were found to be better predictors of prison rule violations than measures of the indigenous model, which include prison security, sentence length and indeterminate sentence (Cao, Zhao and van Dine, 1997). In assessing the importance of both the indigenous and importation approaches taken together to explain prisoners' specific adjustment patterns in prison, Dhami, Ayton and Loewenstein, (2007) found that there were direct negative effects of the duration of time spent in prison for the current offence on measures of prisoners' participation in prison programmes, their thought processes (needing some control over their lives), their emotions (feelings of hopelessness) and their charges for violating prison rules. Conversely, the researchers found no direct effect of the quality of life before imprisonment on prisoners' thought processes, but they did find direct effects on measures of prisoners' participation in the regime and their emotions, in this instance, feelings of happiness. An interaction effect of the quality of life before imprisonment and the time spent in prison however was found as it pertained to prisoners' contact with others on the outside such as family and friends.

Adaptations to imprisonment may be viewed as either positive or negative in nature. Dhami, Ayton and Loewenstein, (2007) found in their study, that though the level of participation in prison programmes was generally low, the more time prisoners spent in

prison there was a greater likelihood that they would engage in such programmes. The researchers however argued that availing of prison programmes may have been variously as a result of it being part of a sentence plan, the result of personal motivation to improve or merely used as an opportunity to alleviate the problem of boredom.

They also found that those who entered prison with a higher degree of disadvantage tended to avail of the opportunity in prison to improve their skill sets as opposed to those who entered prison, having a better quality of life beforehand. They also differentiated between those who "use" their time in prison and those who "fill in" time as to their prison adjustment patterns. Such differentiation may have different effects on post-release success, such as those motivated to participate in prison programmes and training becoming disillusioned post-release if faced with unemployment.

Haney (2003) asserts that the psychological impact of incarceration and its implications for post-prison readjustment are substantial. He also believes that not everyone who suffers the acute pains of imprisonment will necessarily manifest diagnosable psychological disorders or other forms of personal pathology, or that criminal behaviour can or should be equated with mental illness. While acknowledging that not everyone who is imprisoned will be psychologically harmed by the experience, Haney (2003) nonetheless notes that very few people leave prison completely unchanged or unscathed by it. He argues that those who have been imprisoned in the best-run prisons can and do leave without any discernable or diagnosable psychological disorders resulting from their imprisonment (Haney, 1997). However, other researchers, though sceptical of the idea that "the pains of imprisonment" generally translate into psychological harm, do concede that imprisonment can produce negative, long-lasting change (Bonta and Gendreau, 1990).

For those who enter institutional or penitentiary settings at a young age, the effects of institutionalisation or prisonization may be more profound insofar as those who enter such settings before developing a mature identity themselves or having the ability to control many of their own life's choices will incorporate institutional structure and routine into their own identity during their formative years (Bartollas, Miller and Dinitz, 1976; Wright, 1991). The increased burden for such persons post-release stems from the fact that they have little internal structure to revert to or rely upon once institutional structures are removed.

Haney (2003) has identified seven aspects of prisonization most likely to impact on the process of reintegration. They are: dependency on institutional structure and contingencies; hyper-vigilance, interpersonal distrust and suspicion; emotional over-control, alienation and psychological distancing; social withdrawal and isolation; incorporation of exploitative norms of prison culture; diminished sense of self-worth and personal value; post-traumatic stress reactions to the pains of imprisonment. A brief account of each aspect as a challenge to transitioning to post-prison life is outlined below.

Adjusting to prison life necessitates relinquishing one's freedom and adhering to prison rules and regulations as well as operating within defined boundaries. Living under constant surveillance, the prisoner knows that deviating from what is permitted will result in punishment. Those who adapt to their loss of independence may gradually lose any self-initiative and become wholly dependent on institutional contingencies. Decision-making capacity may be impaired as well as the ability to make sound judgment. Internal controls may atrophy or fail to develop. Life post-imprisonment, in the absence of institutional control or monitoring can be problematic for those who find

that they have either lost the capacity to operate voluntarily or cease from engaging in that which is ultimately harmful or self-destructive (Haney, 2003).

The "convict veneer" describes how an inmate adapts his persona when faced with the hostility and threats prevalent in the prison environment. Surrounded by others who are poised to exploit weakness, McCorkle (1992) suggests that unless the prisoner can convincingly project an image that conveys the potential for violence, he or she is more likely to be dominated and controlled throughout the term of imprisonment. Keve described prison as: "a barely controlled jungle where the aggressive and the strong will exploit the weak, and the weak are dreadfully aware of it" (1974:54). Some prisoners cope by developing a 'prison mask' so as to exhibit a tough veneer. However, if the concealment of one's true feelings — by way of a protective measure, becomes ingrained, this can be especially difficult to reverse upon release (Jose-Kampfner 1990; Sapsford 1978). Some prisoners choose to become as inconspicuous and unobtrusive as possible to protect themselves from harm. Such self-imposed social-withdrawal however can result in isolation. Such isolation has been found to closely resemble clinical depression (Levenson, 1975).

Prison culture is characterised by a web of informal rules and norms that must be abided. Given the lack of meaningful programmes and positive activities within many prison settings, prisoners, lacking the opportunity to engage with pro-social others have little alternative but to embrace the prevailing culture even if it is harsh and exploitative. Haney (2003) suggests that the habits of thinking and acting, formed as a result of such enculturation may account for as much of the prisonization process as the adaptations to the prison's formal rules, and they may be difficult to relinquish upon release.

Imprisonment by its nature deprives one not just of physical liberty, but the ability to make mundane daily choices and decisions one normally takes for granted. Coupled

with the lack of privacy some prisoners endure where they are forced to share cells with other inmates, prisoners can feel infantilised as any activity they participate in is controlled and monitored, from the time they rise in the morning to lights out in the evening (De Viggiani, 2007). Such intense control serves as a daily reminder to their compromised social status and reinforces their stigmatisation as prisoners. This can result in a diminished sense of self-worth and the feeling that they deserve little more than the degradation and stigma, which they have been subjected to in prison, a feeling that will often prevail post-release.

Many prisoners share a common history of disadvantage and this has been well documented (Dutton and Hart, 1992; Haney, 1995; Huff-Corzine, Corzine and Moore, 1991; McCord, 1991; Sampson and Laub, 1993, O'Donnell *et al.*, 2007). Common features of such disadvantage include poverty, abusive and neglectful mistreatment and victimisation. Incarceration itself is a harsh and traumatic experience that can serve as a re-traumatisation, leading some prisoners to suffer post-traumatic stress reactions post-imprisonment. That a new diagnostic category, "complex" post-traumatic stress disorder (CPTSD) be used to describe the trauma-related syndrome that prisoners may suffer in the aftermath of incarceration has been suggested by Herman (1992). She explains that this disorder is the result of "prolonged, repeated trauma or the profound deformations of personality that occur in captivity" (*ibid*. :119).

The Impact of Prisonization on Reintegration

The psychological consequences of prisonization may not be immediately obvious once the prisoner is returned to freedom. For some, the period of transition may be non-problematic — if for instance one returns to a somewhat stable environment, supported by family, friends and a supportive community. Those released from prison without such stability and support are likely to face more difficult adjustment issues. Through

either social or economic disadvantage they may be forced to live on the margins of society, which can render them vulnerable to self-destructive behaviour and further reoffending. The negative after-effects of prisonization are also more acute for such individuals and especially acute for those who lack close personal contact with caring others who will notice that something is wrong. Typical after-effects of prisonization first manifest as a form of internal chaos, disorganisation, stress and fear. Having learned to mask anxiety and vulnerability within the prison setting for fear of exploitation, the same concealment can linger post-prison as the ex-prisoner covers these internal states (Haney, 2003). On that point, Haney cautions that, "the outward appearance of normality and adjustment may hide a range of common but serious problems that many ex-convicts encounter in the free-world" (*ibid.* :47). Such problems if they exist add to the burden of other adjustment issues such as re-establishing relationships, securing affordable housing and seeking employment. Furthermore, there may be the need to address addiction issues if they have not been adequately dealt with during the term of imprisonment.

An appreciation of the myriad effects of prisonization that may affect some more than others enables a better understanding of the complexity of the process of reintegration. Given the continuous growth in the rate of incarceration and the commensurate strains on prison resources, it could be argued that 'the pains of imprisonment' are now being felt more acutely than ever before (Haney, 2003).

Haney (2003) believes that very few prison programmes acknowledge the psychological effects of incarceration and as such are not designed to ameliorate their negative consequences or long-term effects. He stresses that clear recognition and legitimacy must be given to the proposition that those embarking on the process of reintegration face significant personal, social and structural challenges that many are unable to

overcome, entirely on their own. Furthermore, Farrall and Calverley (2006) state that: "the experience of imprisonment is far from being the Benthamite desire for reflection upon one's sins and the acquiring of a determination to cease offending. Prison . . . is *not* a sensible way of encouraging desistance" (*ibid.* :76). Because successful reintegration is understood *inter alia* to include the absence of offending, the following section will focus on desistance theory.

Desistance

Desistance theory, as a branch of criminological study seeks to understand why and how those formerly engaged in criminal activity change their behaviour and cease offending. As with theories of crime, one has to consider the constellation of factors both individual and social that interact with each other, sometimes at different stages throughout the life course that result in either the onset of criminal activity to begin with, or the desistance from such at some point or junctures in time.

Therefore, much criminological research has been conducted so as to formulate an understanding of why some people commit crime while others do not and why some of those who do, manage to terminate their offending patterns while others continue to recidivate (Glueck and Glueck, 1950; Sampson and Laub, 1993). Such research has been primarily concerned with identifying the criminogenic factors associated with criminality such as *inter alia*, socio-economic deprivation, early school leaving, criminal families, anti-social attitudes, anti-social peers, anti-social personality pattern, substance and alcohol abuse and low levels of involvement in anti-criminal leisure pursuits (Andrews and Dowden, 2007).

Farrington (2002) has defined 'risk factors' as "prior factors that increase the risk of occurrence of the onset, frequency, persistence, or duration of offending" (*ibid.* :664).

With regard to risk factors as they relate to youth offending he sees the major problem being that:

> most risk factors tend to coincide and tend to be interrelated. For example, adolescents living in physically deteriorated and socially disorganized neighbourhoods disproportionately tend also to come from families with poor parental supervision and erratic parental discipline, and tend to have impulsivity and low intelligence. The concentration and co-occurrence of these kind of adversities make it difficult to establish their independent, interactive, and sequential influences on offending and anti-social behaviour (*ibid.* :680).

Farrington (1998) also draws attention to 'protective factors' which operate conversely to 'risk factors' and can be seen as operating to reduce the likelihood of offending. He suggests that there are three definitions of that which constitutes a 'protective factor'. Firstly, it can simply be the opposite of a 'risk factor', i.e. 'high self-control' *versus* 'low self-control'. Secondly, it can be a 'stand-alone' factor meaning that it has no linear relationship with the offending behaviour. Thirdly, it may be 'interactional', or something that serves to mitigate the effects of other risk factors. Other theorists believe that it is the matter of place, situation or opportunity that an offender considers through rational deliberation before committing a crime, that which is called rational choice theory (Vold, Bernard and Snipes, 2002).

Smith (2007) argues that in comparison to theories of the onset of criminal behaviour, theories of desistance have been much neglected and underdeveloped in the history of criminology, but knowledge and debate has continued to evolve so as to better understand the phenomenon. However, McNeill (2012) cautions from the outset, that there is still little by way of agreement on the definition of desistance. Describing it as somewhat enigmatic, he describes it as the long-term abstinence from criminal activity for those whose offending had become a pattern of behaviour. Some classify desistance as a permanent cessation of offending over several years, while others view it as something more fluid or episodic, whereby it sometimes represents a lull in criminal activity. While Maruna (2009) views desistance as both a cause and consequence of

reintegration suggesting that the two processes occur simultaneously and that one reinforces the other, he too has concluded that "few phenomena in criminology are as widely acknowledged and poorly understood as desistance from crime" (1999:1).

Leibrich (1993) views desistance not in a dichotomous way — as in, offending either happening or not, but as something that emerges along a continuum. Her study focused on a random sample of 48 people drawn from a group of 312 sentenced to supervision who previously had moderately serious involvement in crime, and had been conviction-free for three years. Depending on the level to which they continued to offend, they were found to be "going straight" (stopped committing the supervision offence but perhaps committing less serious offences), "curved" (still committing the supervision offence but less frequently or in a less serious way), or "crooked" (still committing the supervision offence and/or committing more serious offences). Departing from the traditional view of crime reduction as one that views it as a reduction of the fraction of the population that commits crime, Liebrich argues that a more meaningful way to measure crime reduction might be to consider the rate or type of crime being committed. Such a view would accept that the process of desistance varies on a spectrum over time from a gradual decrease in the rate and type of crimes being committed to a complete cessation of criminal activity altogether.

Although the relationship between ageing and the abandonment of criminal behaviour is, according to Maruna (2001), perhaps one of the oldest and best-known findings in criminological literature, this "mysterious relationship" according to Moffitt "is at once the most robust and least understood empirical observation in the field of criminology" (1993:2). That which was described, as "maturational reform" was one of the earliest theories posited with regard to an explanation as to why people ceased offending (Goring, 1919) which was further supported by the findings of Glueck and Glueck

(1937) who argued that "[a]ging is the only factor which emerges as significant in the reformative process" (*ibid.* :105). The fact that the vast majority of youths will cease offending before they reach adulthood is well established in criminological research (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983; Blumstein and Cohen, 1987; Farrington, 1986). Nevertheless, there remains a core group of offenders whose offending will persist throughout the life course; a finding now established using longitudinal data (Piquero, *et al.*, 2010). While there is agreement as to age being one of the best predictors of desistance, further research has been called for so as to 'unpack' the meaning of age (Sampson and Laub, 1992).

In their qualitative study of former bank robbers, Cusson and Pinsonneault (1986) identified factors such as prison fatigue or becoming aware of the possibility of longer periods of incarceration, and an overall reassessment of personal desires. While making a decision to cease offending has been found by other researchers as an important factor to commence the process of desistance, on its own it may not be sufficient (Shover, 1983; Cromwell, Olson and Avary, 1991; Leibrich, 1993).

In 1985, Sampson and Laub using data previously collected by Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck in the 1930s, conducted a follow-up study so as to create a longitudinal theory of delinquency and crime. Findings from their study indicated that individuals' offending patterns evidence both continuity and change over the life course. With regard to the continuity aspect they found that involvement in anti-social behaviour extends throughout the life course insofar as childhood and adolescent anti-social behaviour are very strong predictors of juvenile delinquency which in turn is a strong predictor of crime, alcohol and drug abuse in adulthood. Sampson and Laub (1993), through their age graded theory of social control have highlighted that the negative consequences of problem behaviour constrain future opportunities for further healthy

development and contributes to the stability of anti-social behaviour over time. They aver that conventional bonds to society are attenuated through the cumulative continuity of disadvantage but also assert that even with a well-established career of criminality, that delinquency and criminal behaviour can be interrupted throughout the life course. They refer to such interruptions or cessation in offending, as "turning points". Marriage or a job being examples of such. Sampson and Laub (1995) also looked at patterns of change and found that while salient life events such as marriage or the acquisition of permanent employment and the commensurate development of social bonds can counteract early involvement in criminal activity, it is the investment in the relations between individuals and the relationship such as one has with one's spouse or employment that creates the social capital which is necessary to steer offenders towards a conventional and crime-free lifestyle. Extending the classic theories of social control they centrally positioned an individual's involvement and investment in informal social control mechanisms throughout the life course as the causal explanation of desistance.

Age-graded informal social control theory, unlike traditional social control theory, acknowledges the role of both state dependence (e.g. social control processes) and population heterogeneity (e.g. different levels of, or the presence or absence of self-control) in the continuity of anti-social behaviour. Advancing a mixed theory of social control which recognises that the relationship between past and present offending is only partially mediated by informal social control variables, Sampson and Laub (1993) explain that: "[t]he cumulative continuity of disadvantage is . . . not only a result of stable individual differences in criminal propensity, but a dynamic process whereby childhood anti-social behaviour and adolescent delinquency foster adult crime through the severance of adult social bonds" (*ibid.* :306).

Unlike Gottfredson and Hirsch (1990) who postulate that the continuation of anti-social behaviour is related to low self-control, Sampson and Laub (1993) emphasise the role of social processes, such as the attenuation of bonds to conventional society. They also implicitly present a gendered aspect to their theory as they have examined the gender differences in elements of social bonds. They found for instance, that girls' delinquency may be controlled indirectly through emotional bonds to the family, whereas by contrast, boys' delinquency may be controlled more directly through parental monitoring and supervision. Furthermore, attachments to delinquent peers may play an especially important role in the delinquent behaviour of boys.

Having conducted quantitative and qualitative analysis on data derived from a long-term follow-up of serious male and female adolescent offenders who were initially interviewed while incarcerated and subsequently re-interviewed thirteen years later when the average age of the respondents was 29 years, Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolf, (2002) were able to explore the unstructured life-histories elicited from the respondents during the follow-up study. The insights gleaned from the data provided the basis for the theoretical development of cognitive transformation which views the frequency of cognitive shifts being an integral part of the desistance process. While not entirely incompatible with the social control framework approach adopted by Sampson and Laub (1993) it does differ from that approach insofar as while social control theory views a spousal relationship for instance as providing a structural basis which can support change cognitive transformation theory emphasises the individual's own role in selecting elements in the environment to help them change. Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolf, (*ibid*.) refer to such environmental elements as "hooks for change", they being positive influences such as one's spouse, and they argue that such elements can "serve well as catalysts for lasting change when they energize rather fundamental shifts in identity and changes in the meaning and desirability of deviant/criminal behaviour

itself" (*ibid.* :992). As such, their theory contrasts with the basic assumption of control theory *vis a vis* that the propensity for criminality remains a constant throughout the life course whereas external and internal control varies widely either across individuals or across the period of time encompassed by an individual life course.

Correlates to desistance such as age, and employment must be studied alongside subjective changes in offenders' worldview according to Maruna (1999). Subjective interpretations of changes such as becoming a parent (Burnett, 1992), the re-evaluation of life choices following some negative experience of a criminal lifestyle (Cusson and Pinsonneault, 1986) or the feeling of shame for past behaviour (Leibrich, 1993), are not enough to fully account for the desistance process without also examining the role of the individual. Maruna (2001) used narrative theory to elucidate offenders' internal processes as they contemplate their criminal lives, so as to explore the psychology of desistance. Through *The Liverpool Desistance Study*, Maruna sought to "overcome some of the inherent vagueness of self-identity research . . . [by conducting] an empirical analysis of the phenomenological or sociocognitive aspects of desistance" (2001:38). He stressed that the study was not a retrospective account of those who had succeeded at desistance. Rather, he was able to witness the process of desistance as it was happening or not for the 55 men and 10 women he interviewed.

Maruna (2001) proffers three reasons why self-narratives are so resourceful. Firstly, he suggests that they can be used to guide and organise human behaviour patterns. Secondly, because self-narratives are dynamic they can be changed, as opposed to other factors that may drive human behaviour such as genetics, personal background and age, factors that cannot be "treated" or "corrected" by either social workers or the criminal justice system. Thirdly, because self-narratives are "explicitly contextual" they are "cultural artifacts" therefore, Maruna argues that "[o]ne of the best ways to understand a

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particular subculture or group at a particular point in time is to analyse the stories that members of that group are telling" (2001:39).

Using thematic content analysis, Maruna (2001) found that the self-narratives of those who were managing to desist from crime and those who persisted with offending differed in several ways. The former group which he called "desisters", developed a "redemptive script" in which they believed that their criminal histories were the result of external events beyond their control. Furthermore, this group managed to redeem themselves by engaging in generative pursuits whereby "a delinquent history . . . [is reworked] into a source of wisdom to be drawn from while acting as a drug counselor, youth worker, community volunteer, or mutual-help group participant" (*ibid*. :117). The latter group, which Maruna called "persisters", lived by a condemnation script, feeling that they were "doomed to deviance" and "powerless to change their behaviour because of drug dependency, poverty, a lack of education or skills, or societal prejudice" (2001:74).

In concurrence with Leibrich (1993), Maruna (2001) believes that there are different flavours of criminality and desistance, insofar as there are those who may be 'going curved' or 'going straight'. Furthermore, the maintenance of desistance may, according to Maruna (2001) be related to an internal change within individuals who need to develop a coherent and pro-social identity for themselves. The creation of a coherent and credible self-narrative serves to reconcile a criminal past with a new and reformed identity.

The Role of Agency and Motivation in Relation to Desistance

Scholars increasingly identify desistance as arising from a combination of agency, that being the determination to follow choice with action, and structural issues (Burnett, 2004; Maruna, 2001; McNeill, 2006; Maguire and Raynor, 2006; Sampson and Laub,

2005). Basing their study on the empirical data they collected for the *Sheffield Pathways Out Of Crime Study* (2002-2007), Bottoms *et al.*, (2004) sought to conceptualise the various factors, both individual and socially relevant, that might be involved in the process of desistance. However, the will to desist and the internalisation of responsibility to overcome the many obstacles that desisters face is both difficult to measure and predict (Maruna, 2001). Furthermore, it introduces a seemingly random component into life course turning points, making neat prediction inherently a difficult endeavour (Sampson and Laub, 2005:177).

Social factors most commonly associated with desistance in criminological literature have been described by Farrall (2002) as the acquisition of something, such as a job, life partner or family which is valued in such a way by the individual to such an extent that one re-evaluates one's life and one's sense of who they are. Background factors are described by Bottoms *et al.* (2004) as those that typically appear on the 'risk assessment' instruments routinely used by criminal justice agencies, such as age, gender, past behaviour and reconviction rates. Structure is described as a social arrangement, external to the individual, enabling or limiting action by the individual, such as employment. They describe agency as: "the more subjective dimension of the potential process of desistance (*ibid. :*374). Therefore, agency requires both self-awareness and self-understanding of one's actions and choices involving not just the initial moves towards desistance, but also the maintenance of desistance.

Interest in the subjective factors at play in the process of desistance has been heralded as somewhat innovative in developmental criminology (Bottoms and Shapland (2011:47). Thus far, literature on criminal careers "has paid little attention to the subjective aspects of maturation in terms of personal philosophy or one's perception of one's place in the world and the potential connection that such changes might have to changes in

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offending" (Kyvsgaard, 2003:241, cited in Bottoms and Shapland, *ibid.*). This sentiment has been echoed by Healy (2010) who believes that although the concept of 'agency' is frequently invoked in contemporary discourse on desistance, the actual role of the individual remains poorly defined and under-researched. She argues that: "It may not only be *what* offenders think but also *how* they think that has implications for whether they engage in offending behaviour" (*ibid.* :21). According to Healy, while such criminal cognitions may play an important role during the early stages of desistance, their long-term impact on behaviour is less certain (*ibid.*). However, Healy (2013) does offer an alternative view on the potential role of agency in the process of desistance by presenting an integrated framework of agency-centred theories as a means of understanding its content and structure. She suggests that Coté's (1997) psychologically oriented 'identity capital model' augmented by the concept of 'developmental individualisation' provides a more realistic appreciation of the dynamic nature of desistance. Coté's (1997) identity capital model includes viewing agentic individuals as possessing certain personality traits such as self-esteem, emotional stability, empathy, a sense of purpose and an internal locus of control. These traits in conjunction with other tangible resources (social capital) amount to 'identity capital'. The concept of developmental individualisation explains the transition from adulthood as including initially a default individualisation position whereby young people's identities are typically fluid and adaptive to different situational demands that are eventually followed by the incorporation of more adult traits that include reflecting on ones choices, engaging in intentional action, maintaining emotional stability and cultivating generative actions (Coté and Schwartz, 2002). However, because offenders and ex-offenders are commonly embroiled in very challenging environments Healy (*ibid.*) suggests that their transition into adulthood is likely to be prolonged and the acquisition of agency delayed. The importance of agency for those wanting to desist from crime

includes anticipating and overcoming actual or perceived obstacles as well as exploiting opportunities for personal growth (Coté, 1997). The combination of the will to succeed together with the means to achieve progress requires motivation (LeBel *et al.*, 2008).

Motivation is therefore another essential element for behavioural change and given that desistance by its very nature involves change, Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolf, (2002) suggest that readiness to change is a critical component to the desistance process. Strong motivation being crucial for recovery has also been highlighted by those researching in the field of addiction (Prochaska, DiClemente and Norcross, 1992). Healy (2010:175) notes that:

> the path to personal transformation is best described as a zigzag process, which is characterised by tenuous motivation, instability and uncertainty. Those who are not currently committing crime are always vulnerable to relapse, even when their behaviour has been stable for a long time.

Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolf, (2002) argue that four closely related cognitive transformations help to produce a reduction in offending. These include firstly, a shift in the actor's basic openness to change, secondly, the actor's exposure to a particular hook or set of hooks for change, such as marriage or employment, thirdly, changes in perception of self and fourthly, its relation to offending. The following section of this chapter will present a number of perspectives on change and what it entails.

Cognitive Change Theory

Because successful reintegration presupposes that those leaving prison will alter their lifestyles and assume new proactive roles in the community, individuals are expected to undergo some degree of change with regard to attitudes and behaviour that may have led to their imprisonment. While this most commonly includes alcohol and drug misuse, achieving change in that regard is typically characterised by repeated accounts of success followed by relapse. Prochaska and DiClemente (1982) sought to unravel the

process of change so as to understand why some people succeed at change while others do not, with or without support or interventions. Throughout the following decade and more, they developed a transtheoretical model offering an integrative perspective on the structure of intentional change. Five stages of change have been identified by Prochaska and DiClemente (1992), representing a temporal dimension that helps identify when particular shifts in attitudes and intentions and behaviours occur. These are, pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance.

Deemed as the most important finding to emerge from their self-change research is the integration between the processes and the stages of change (DiClemente *et al*., 1991; Norcross, Prochaska and DiClemente, 1991; Prochaska and DiClemente, 1983, 1984). How open, willing and ready for change an individual is depends on where on the temporal continuum of the stages of change that person is. For instance, Prochaska, DiClemente and Norcross (1992) found that those at the precontemplation stage of change processed less information about their problems, devoted less time and energy to re-evaluating themselves and experienced fewer emotional reactions to the negative aspects of their problems. Those however who were at the contemplation stage were receptive to consciousness–raising techniques and they were more likely to use bibliotherapy and other educational techniques (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1984). They were open to dramatic relief experiences that raise emotions and lead to a lowering of any negative affect of change. 'Environmental re-evaluation' was also apparent amongst those contemplating change as they considered themselves, their families and friends and the impact of their behaviour on them.

DiClemente *et al.* (1991) found that as individuals moved from precontemplation to contemplation and then towards preparation, that they employed cognitive, affective and evaluative processes of change. During the action phase they found individuals

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endorsing a higher level of self-liberation and willpower, insofar as people began to believe that they had the autonomy to change their lives in critical ways. During the action phase individuals also relied on the support and understanding of helpful relationships. Success at action was related to preparation for action as was success at maintenance, which was also related to adequate preparation.

Important implications for the transtheoretical model of change especially pertaining to those attempting reintegration and all its concomitant challenges include an assessment of the individual's readiness for change and the tailoring of interventions accordingly. In other words, efficient self-change depends on doing the right things, (processes) at the right time (Prochaska, DiClemente and Norcross, 1992). Apart from change in behaviours and habits, change also occurs internally as one moves from one role to another. One's self-concept as deviant or conforming citizen is according to Uggen, Manza and Behrens (2004) "the principal mechanism linking adult role transition and desistance' (*ibid.* :262). The following section will outline the role of stigma in relation to the process of reintegration.

Stigmatisation

Stigma poses as one of the most challenging barriers to reintegration given that its exclusionary nature runs counter to the idea that people can become full members of society free of their previous offending identities. Furthermore, psychological research has shown that people who belong to negatively appraised social groups are more likely to suffer low self-esteem and impaired identity development (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

In his seminal work, Goffman defined stigma as the process by which the reaction of others spoils normal identity, describing it as "an attribute that is deeply discrediting" (1963:3). He stated that stigmatisation is a process of global devaluation of an

individual who possesses a deviant attribute. The etymology of the word stigma is Greek in origin and refers to a type of marking or tattoo that was cut into the skin of criminals, slaves or traitors so as to make them easily identifiable as blemished or morally polluted persons to be avoided or shunned in public. Group survival theory postulates that concern for the group justified stigmatising people, isolating them and forcing them out of the group when they were perceived as unable to contribute to the group's wellbeing or when they were seen as a threat to the group's survival (Frey, 2003).

Jones *et al.* (1984) state that a person is stigmatised when a 'mark', that is a deviation from the norm, has been linked to dispositions that discredit the bearer of the mark. They explain that 'the mark of deviance' initiates an attributional process through which people interpret other aspects of a person in terms of 'the mark' and respond to stigmatised individuals on the basis of their stigma at the expense of their individuality. In acknowledging the difficulty of identifying a single defining feature of stigma, Crocker, Major and Steele (1998) suggest that stigmatised people are believed to possess some attribute or characteristic that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context. They believe that stigma arises from one's membership in a group that is negatively valued in a specific situation.

While varying definitions of stigmatisation share the common feature of an individual being negatively evaluated, Kurzban and Leary (2001) note that negative evaluations are an inevitable part of social life not necessarily leading to instances of stigmatisation. Suggesting that what transforms prejudicial and negative evaluations into stigmatisation revolves around exclusion and interpersonal disassociation, they state that "people are stigmatized not simply because they are evaluated negatively or possess a spoiled

identity, but rather because they possess characteristics viewed by society or a subgroup as constituting a basis for avoiding or excluding other people" (*ibid.* :188).

Kurzban and Leary (2001) explored the evolutionary origins of stigmatisation and found a set of distinct psychological distinctions designed by natural selection to solve specific problems associated with sociality. They suggest that human beings possess cognitive adaptations designed to cause them to avoid poor social exchange partners, join co-operative groups (for purposes of between-group competition and exploitation) and avoid contact with those who are differentially likely to carry communicable pathogens.

Overcoming the stigma attached to imprisonment is one of the key interconnected issues to successful reintegration (Travis, 2005). Studies that have highlighted the stigmatisation of former prisoners, otherwise known as 'the prison effect' have tended to focus on the impacts of formal disclosure of a criminal past, especially in relation to entry into the labour force (Weiman, 2007). Less is known about the subjective judgment of such individuals based on their appearance or the embodied experience of reintegration all of which is bound up with notions of stigma. However, some recent work has discussed a range of former prisoners' strategies for overcoming the challenges of stigma, including the nature of the new personal narrative that individuals develop to explain their new state of being (Harding, 2003; LeBel, 2012; Maruna, 2001).

Wahidin (2002) conceptualised the embodied experience of imprisonment as time 'inscribed' on the confined body, describing how the body is held in a carceral prism in which power relations have an immediate hold over those under the prison gaze. Adopting the Foucauldian analysis of the prison as a total institution, she demonstrated how time as a technique of discipline is used by prison to mark the body and how the corporality of time and its use in prison "transcends the dualisms between subject/object

and mind/body" (*ibid.* :180). Giddens (1981) argues that the corporal existence of the body is complex, occupying a position between the biological and the social, the collective and the individual, structure and agency.

Moran (2012) suggests that the experience of reintegration after release from prison is similarly embodied and corporal and that while the stigmatisation of ex-inmates has been identified as a challenge to their successful re-entry that the embodied experience of this process remains under-researched. In her study of female ex-prisoners in Russia, she found that it was the perceptions of the women themselves as to the tell-tale inscriptions of imprisonment that gave rise to the stigma they felt. This according to Moran "enables some insight into the corporality of incarceration and reintegration, and for some the re-inscription of the body" (*ibid.* :566).

Zaitzow (2011) found in her study of the reintegration of female prisoners that "what happens inside jails and prisons does not stay inside jails and prisons" (*ibid.* :229). In providing a grounded and nuanced overview of the particular challenges facing women on release from prison, including the stigma associated with their imprisonment she found that it translated into the embodied notion insofar as women reported that they believed they had a tattoo on their foreheads proclaiming them as "ex-con" (*ibid.* :242).

People strive to be accepted in social life, not ostracised. Because positive social contact is essential for psychological and physiological health, those who feel alienated or rejected become susceptible to a host of behavioural, emotional, and physical problems suggesting that human beings may possess a fundamental need to belong (Baumeister and Leary, 1995).

Stigma has been described otherwise by Elliot, *et al.*, (1982) as a form of deviance, suggesting that it leads others to judge individuals as illegitimate interactants who lack

the capacity to carry on an interaction, behave unpredictably or inconsistently, or are a threat to others or the interaction itself. That stigma generally conveys a sense of disgrace, is especially true of those who have been embroiled in the criminal justice system. Such a discrediting attribute reduces the bearer from "a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one" (Goffman, 1963:3). Link and Phelan (2001) say that stigmatisation happens when "elements of labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss and discrimination co-occur in a power situation that allows the components of stigma to unfold" (*ibid.*: 367). The variety of responses by targeted stigmatised individuals, the ways in which stigma is internalised and the lack of understanding of the factors that make people either resilient or vulnerable to the effects of stigma have been outlined by Major and O'Brien (2005). While Campbell and Deacon (2006) argue that even if not exposed to overt discrimination, some individuals may still internalise negative perceptions which hinder the likelihood of addressing a devalued status, Moran (2012) contends that even though stigmatised groups have been portrayed as passive victims, they do manage in some instances to identify effective coping strategies aimed at reducing the threat of stigma. This was evidenced in her study where formerly incarcerated women considered having reconstructive dental work to repair the dental health neglect they suffered in prison to be tantamount to overcoming such "a conspicuous stigma — a 'telltale' sign that they have been imprisoned which in their minds enables others to mark them out as different" (*ibid.*: 579). This articulates an important facet of the reintegration process that has yet to be further explored — that is, the way stigma is perceived by ex-prisoners as being visible to others in a way that causes disadvantage.

Policy shifts in the United States have sought to abolish the pejorative terms of "inmate", "prisoner", "ex-convict" and "offender" so as to remove the long lasting labels that attach to such terms. A new lexicon has emerged which includes the phrase,

"people who were formerly incarcerated". Travis (2005) says that by emphasising the word "people", it reminds the listener of a common humanity and that by using the word "formerly" as a modifier to "incarcerated" an appropriate temporal dimension is placed on the status that accompanies the fact of imprisonment.

Psychosocial Readjustment

A recent study on the reintegration of prisoners found that apart from the strains and obstacles to successful reintegration relating to familial relationships, accommodation, money and employment — psychosocial challenges were cited most frequently (Garland, Wodahl, and Mayfield, 2011). In that study, 43 males were interviewed three months after they had been released from prison, about their experiences of readjustment in the community. Obstacles and strains to reintegration were identified as they related to employment, money, identification and transportation, medical, housing, parole and sanctions, drugs and alcohol and psychosocial adjustment. The authors described 'psychosocial' pertaining to reintegration, as some interaction of psychological and social forces. In their research group 56% of the respondents cited psychosocial issues in the early days of release, 58% after one month and 40% after three months on release. Descriptions of psychosocial adjustment issues included a general uneasiness or disorientation living in the community, difficulties interacting with others, including family members and problems adjusting to new surroundings. Similar psychosocial adjustment difficulties have been noted in relation to young people's experiences of being released from custody. Having reanalysed thematically 54 transcripts that had been conducted with youths aged between 12 and 17 on broader issues related to the imprisonment of young people, Bateman and Hazel (2015) found their research participants experienced an unanticipated period of disorientation that included physical manifestations such as shaking, nausea and emotional breakdown.

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Shedding light on the psychosocial aspect of reintegration offers an important development to the comprehension of the complexity of the process for those embarking on it. Given that the concept of reintegration also encompasses the concept of desistance as a necessary component to its successful accomplishment, a greater understanding of one serves to further enhance the understanding of the other. Traditional criminological frameworks fail to adequately elucidate what the change process involves according to Maruna (2001), who has attempted to unravel the psychosocial process of 'going straight'. Drawing from the narratives of those who manage to desist from offending as well as those who continue lives of criminality, Maruna argues that it is necessary to embrace both the objective and subjective contingencies employed.

Gadd and Farrall (2004) have hypothesised that "how and why [people] . . . change depends on their cathectic investments in, and attachments to, certain social configurations — relationships, institutions and social discourses — and on the corroborating experiences of recognition and empowerment . . . that result from each individual's positioning in these configurations" (*ibid*. :131). Whereas Maruna (2001) argues that 'content analysis' can reveal the contingencies employed for change, Gadd and Farrall (2004) support the views of Hollway and Jefferson (2000) who believe that to come upon the psychosocial interface, in-depth case analysis produces a more sophisticated result resplendent as it is with all the pauses, absences, contradictions and avoidances inherent in respondents' self narratives. This is especially pertinent to the quest in understanding the obstacles and barriers to successful reintegration as perceived by those encountering them. Large-scale studies that disaggregate data about individuals into variables so as to illustrate 'the typical case' are of limited value, according to Gadd and Farrall (*ibid.*), when one is attempting to understand a phenomenon such as reintegration that is at least partly contingent on one's biography.

Gadd and Jefferson (2007) lament the absence of the offender as an individual person in favour of the abstract notion of the offender that is more prevalent in contemporary criminological literature. Such rendering of an individual they argue, supplants "messily complex human subjects shot through with anxiety and self-doubt, conflictual feelings and unruly desires" with "depleted caricatures: individuals shorn of their social contexts, or who act — we are told — purely on the basis of reason or 'choice', interested only in the maximization of utility" (2007:1).

Farrall and Calverley (2006) in pointing out how society has altered its position with regard to the 'treatment' of homosexuality, call for a similar shift in thinking so as to re-examine prevailing notions about the reform of offenders. Intimating that "state-sponsored efforts at reform may not be as successful at encouraging and enabling naturally occurring personal changes to occur" (*ibid.* :197) they suggest that investments in informal social control such as non-custodial, non-programmatic interventions may be the most effective means at enabling desistance from crime. This is to "accept that the most effective motivations for desistance come from 'within' the individual and are fostered by social interaction with others in the community (*ibid.*: 197).

Chapter Summary

This chapter situated reintegration within an integrated theoretical framework illustrating that the concept of reintegration is something probably best understood as the sum of its parts. Its parts comprise of the presence of desistance and the absence of recidivism. Reintegration was first presented within the broader context of criminal justice policy and philosophy. That it is both a societal matter and a personal matter was then discussed. It is clear that if reintegration is the goal of the criminal justice system, the last step in the process — and this is clearly mandated for under United Nations

international instruments and guidelines that empirical analysis allows for a better understanding of how the process of reintegration is experienced. Some qualitative studies on the subject provided examples of the challenges and barriers experienced by those navigating the process. Those attempting reintegration all share one thing in common, that is, they have all spent some time in prison and have been released. Knowledge on the effects of imprisonment, 'prisonization' was analysed, especially with regard to its impact on the potential for post-release success. Successful reintegration requires desistance. Desistance theory has evolved over time and various perspectives on the course of desistance were presented. A necessary component of desistance is change, that is, sustained altered behaviour and attitude. Under the rubric of cognitive transformational theory, theory on the process of change was presented and discussed. That change is not always linear in fashion but can be a cyclical process is an important finding especially as it relates to those attempting reintegration, encumbered by addictions and other harmful behaviours. The challenges experienced by those who attempt to change and remain crime-free and hence not become re-incarcerated can sometimes be described as psychosocial in nature. Theoretical perspectives on the value of a subjective understanding of the offender as an individual psychosocial being at the centre of the reintegration process concluded the chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology that was employed to conduct the study. Commencing with the research objectives the chapter will also include the epistemological viewpoint that guided the study. The research methods used, including observation and semi-structured interviews will be described and justified. The chapter will then provide a detailed account of the data collection and data analysis phases of the study. Each section will provide information relating to the preparation for data collection, the data collection site, the research participants and the procedures involved in collecting and analysing the data. A variety of methodological issues relevant to the study will then be addressed. This includes: ethical issues such as informed consent and exceptions to confidentiality; issues regarding the validity and credibility of the data including the impact of the researcher's personal characteristics on the research; and finally, issues surrounding the strengths and limitations of the study.

Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to investigate the process of reintegration in the community from the perspectives of 54 former prisoners in a specific local context. The principal objectives are outlined as follows:

1. To identify the background characteristics of a specific group of former prisoners.

2. To locate prisoner reintegration within a specific local context.

3. To identify the nature of the reintegration experience from the perspectives of those embarking on it.

4. To identify the stresses and strains of reintegration from the perspectives of those involved.

5. To identify what this group of former prisoners find helpful and of benefit to them throughout the course of their reintegration.

6. To identify ways in which the reintegration process may be enhanced.

Rationale for Adopting a Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research primarily for two reasons. Firstly, it strives to understand outcomes that cannot be expressed numerically because the subject matter may not be amenable to measurements that can be statistically analysed. Secondly, it makes possible the investigation of subgroups of the population who are, by their very nature, not representative of the whole population, such as former prisoners, nor is the extent to which they exist known. For this reason different research and sampling methods are employed for qualitative as opposed to quantitative research. Qualitative research uses thick description to produce a rich narrative that enables detailed analysis. Unlike quantitative research, which expresses itself numerically to explain outcomes, solutions or products, qualitative research uses words or pictures to describe processes, meanings and articulates an understanding of the subject in question.

Quantitative research assumes that the objects of enquiry, from the characteristics of individuals to features of whole societies, can be defined and delineated unambiguously (Jupp, 1989). Located within the positivist paradigm, it views aspects of the social world as objective phenomena. The characteristics or features researched must be measurable and amenable to statistical analysis. The findings of the research are then expressed numerically. The aim of quantitative analysis is to achieve a result based on a representative sample of the population that can be translated across the whole population. To that end, it relies on strict scientific probability sampling methods. One

of the key strengths of quantitative analysis is generalisability, which has two aspects: sample generalisability and cross-population generalisability. The former exists when a conclusion based on a sample or subset of a larger population holds true for that population. The latter exists when findings about one group, population, or setting hold true for other groups, populations or settings (Bachman and Schutt, 2003).

To achieve the research objectives of this study, a qualitative research design was employed. In considering the desirability of the qualitative over the quantitative approach to a research problem, Morse (1991) suggests that it is more suitable in a situation like this one, where the concept is immature due to the lack of theory or previous research on the topic, or where a need exists to explore and describe the phenomena so as to develop new theory. A qualitative research design also makes research possible in situations not amenable to quantitative measurements. In exploring the process of reintegration from the perspectives of those embarking on that journey, the six paradigm assumptions of qualitative research listed by Merriam (1988), were central to the research design. These qualitative research assumptions are that the research is concerned with process; that it is concerned with meaning; that it provides descriptive accounts of the research site; that it produces inductive reasoning; that it involves fieldwork; and that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection.

Qualitative research is concerned primarily with process as opposed to outcomes or products. Because reintegration is defined as both an event and a process (Maruna, 2004) a qualitative analysis is best suited in the exploration of what that entails. Qualitative research is also concerned with meaning. That is how people make sense of their lives, their experiences and their structures of the world. A phenomenological qualitative methodology was identified as the best means to achieve the objectives of the research so as to discover from former prisoners' perspectives how they were

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attempting reintegration. Because one of the key strengths of phenomenology is that it enables voices to be heard and deep issues to surface, it was applied to this research given that it is concerned with the lived experiences of the people involved (Kvale, 1996; Smith and Osborn, 2008).

While the origins of phenomenology can be traced back to the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century philosophers Kant and Hagel, William Husserl (1859-1938) is regarded as its founding father (Polkinghorne, 1983; Cohen, 1987). The basis for phenomenology emerged from the scholarship of Brentano when he stressed the "intentional nature of consciousness" that being — the internal experience of being conscious of something (1874: 88-89). A student of Brentano, Husserl purported that minds and objects both occur within experience by viewing consciousness as a co-constituted dialogue between a person and the world (Valle, King and Halling, 1989).

Husserl treated reality as pure phenomena and the only absolute data from where to begin scientific inquiry indicating that anything outside immediate experience must be ignored. He regarded 'intentionality' as one's directed awareness or consciousness of an object or event through the experience of perception, thought, memory, imagination or emotion. Husserl's approach to phenomenology is descriptive whereby all suppositions and preconceived opinions are set aside or 'bracketed' and everyday conscious experiences are described (Dahlberg, Drew and Nystrom, 2008). That the researcher's own experiences related to the topic under study can ever be negated was contested by Heidegger (1962). He developed 'interpretive phenomenology' believing that personal awareness is intrinsic to phenomenological research. Asserting that our understanding of the everyday world is derived from our interpretation of it, Heidegger extended hermeneutics — moving beyond description and core concepts of experience to seek meanings that are embedded in everyday occurrences. He believed that because

hermeneutics presumed prior understanding, 'bracketing' was not warranted within the interpretive phenomenological approach. Furthermore, according to Hammersley (2000) phenomenologists, in contrast to positivists, cannot be detached from their own presuppositions and they should not pretend otherwise. Smith and Osborn (2008) describe interpretive phenomenological analysis as a dynamic process that includes an active role for the researcher endeavouring to get close to the participant's personal world. This they explain involves a two-stage interpretation process, or a 'double hermeneutic', where "participants are trying to make sense of their world [while] the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (*ibid.* :53).

Phenomenologists are therefore concerned with "understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved" (Welman and Kruger, 1999:189). Giorgi (2007) states that the aim of the phenomenological researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon under study remaining true to the facts and refraining from any pre-given framework.

> [Phenomena] have something to say to us — this is common knowledge among poets and painters. Therefore, poets and painters are born phenomenologists. Or rather, we are all born phenomenologists; the poets and painters amongst us, however, understand very well their task of sharing, by means of word and image, their insights with others — an artfulness that is also laboriously practised by the professional phenomenologist. (Van den Berg, 1997, translated by Van Manen, 1997:41 cited in Groenwald, 2004:5).

While Holloway (1997) and Hycner (1999) have both noted that phenomenologists are generally reluctant to prescribe methodological techniques, Hycner (*ibid.*) has further argued that the imposition of a method on a phenomenon would do a great injustice to its integrity. Nevertheless, given the array of qualitative paradigms that share many common components, general qualitative guidelines were adopted in the course of this research and will be outlined below. These were further informed by examples of

phenomenological methods as they were applied in other studies (Laverty, 2003; Groenwald, 2004; Smith and Osborn, 2008).

Epistemological Viewpoint

The epistemological position regarding this study is that data are contained within the perspectives of the research participants who were attempting reintegration and because of this I engaged with them in collecting the data. Informed by a post-positive epistemological position, a predominantly interpretive paradigm was adopted in the tradition of phenomenology. Because all individuals are inherently biased through their own life's experiences and world-views, one's individual perspective may only be approximated by another's (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). In comparison to the relativist position, post-positivism argues that the objectivity and validity of an individual's understanding of another person's perspective can be maximised if various forms of data are obtained from the individual in his or her natural setting (Guba, 1990). While semi-structured interviews were the primary source of data for this study, they were supplemented with a short questionnaire and observational data of the research setting recorded in a research journal.

Furthermore, as the nature of qualitative research sets the researcher as another data collection instrument it is reasonable to expect that the researcher's beliefs, gender, socioeconomic status and educational background will bear some impact on the research process — alongside participants' experiences that are also framed in socio-cultural contexts. Therefore, the concept of self as 'research instrument' reflects the likelihood that one's own subjectivity will in some ways influence the research process and how the research findings are reported. The researcher's voice that narrates the research findings — somewhat like a watermark — results from the use of the subjective self as the primary research instrument.

Eisner asserts that "qualitative research becomes believable because of its coherence, insight, and instrument utility" (1998:39). In other words, the cogency of the research process arises from the relationship between the researcher as the research instrument and the research participants. This relationship requires the researcher to position herself in the space where objectivism and subjectivism come together. Such positionality can be described as an attempt to be objective in light of one's own subjectivities. It is "determined by where someone stands in relation to 'the other'" (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Lee Ntseane, and Muhamad, 2001: 411).

The researcher in this study was mindful throughout the process of where she stood in relation to those who contributed to the research process. As a mature student who had returned to university to study law, she arrived at the point of conducting this research study having completed a Master's Degree in Criminal Justice where attendance at the criminal courts was mandatory in an effort to understand the dissonance between doctrinal criminal law and criminal law in practice. Witnessing the presence of the convicted in court for their sentencing hearings led the researcher to question what becomes of those who end up imprisoned? What next? How do they move beyond that experience? The writings of Tony Parker (Soothill, 1999) also served to whet the researcher's appetite for knowledge on the experiences both before and after imprisonment, of those who become embroiled in the criminal law.

The researcher like most of the research participants is also a native of Cork city. Yet, her experiences growing up in a well-off suburb of the city differed significantly from many of those who participated in the research who had endured poverty, disadvantage and adversity. She had no experience other than a secure and supportive family and had never known that incomplete schooling was an option. Her only experience of a police car ever parking in the cul-de-sac she lived in involved the police informing her

neighbour that their son had died tragically in a road accident. Solidarity with the research participants was achieved mainly from the researcher explaining from the outset that the research interviews would form the basis of a doctoral dissertation, which would in due course be disseminated into articles that would inform policy and practice in the area of prisoner reintegration.

Sampling Methods for Qualitative Research

In contrast to probability sampling methods that are suitable when it is known in advance that any element of the whole population will be selected for the sample, nonprobability sampling methods are used when the size of the population is not known in advance nor the likelihood of whom in the population will be selected. Nonprobability sampling methods are also a valid means of exploratory investigation on a new concept in an area not already researched where there may be an absence of previous theory or in endeavouring to research a hard to reach population as is also the case with a former prisoner population (Neuman, 2003). For the purposes of this research a combination of nonprobability sampling methods was utilised including sequential sampling and snowball sampling. Snowball sampling was employed as a means of attracting as many candidates as possible for participation given the limited geographical reach that constituted the local aspect of the study. Sequential sampling facilitated the gathering of enough data until no new information was forthcoming — otherwise referred to as the point of saturation. Data saturation is both rich in quality and thick in quantity (Dibley, 2011). "Thick data is a lot of data; rich data is layered, intricate, detailed, nuanced and more. One can have a lot of thick data that is not rich; conversely, one can have rich data but not a lot of it. The trick is . . . to have **both**" (Fusch and Ness, 2015:1409).

Research Design

An exploratory and descriptive research design using in-depth hermeneutics together with thick description was employed in this study in order to facilitate an empathetic understanding of human behaviour. An in-depth hermeneutical approach attempts to understand the behaviour of human persons in terms of their experience and inner motivation. Insofar as inner life is not composed of a series of starts and stops, but is rather woven together into a continuity that has structure, it means that any part must be understood in its relations and its intrinsic connections to other parts of the whole (Dilthey, 1926). Because humans are, according to Taylor (1985), self-interpreting animals, hermeneutics as a discipline "raises questions about the conditions of possibility for human understanding — not how we *should* interpret or understand something, but what interpretation and understanding are and how they should work" (Gallagher, 2004:162).

Adopting Max Weber's approach (1922), Geertz (1973) views people as being entangled in webs of meaning that are their own making. He suggests that thick description is a methodological imperative, taking into account the structure and nature of a culture's semiotic formations. He views such a culture, not as something abstract inhabiting people's minds but rather as something concrete and public, where people express themselves through the use of myriad of signs and symbols that have pre-ascribed cultural meaning. An illustration of this view was provided by Ryle (1971) when he considered how the wink of an eye can be variously understood to be anything from a voluntary to an involuntary movement of the eyelid, or done so as a means of imparting a particular message to someone. In other words — it can be seen as a blink or a wink.

The Research Site

The research for this study was conducted in Ireland's second largest city, Cork. At the time of writing the population was 119,230 (CSO, 2011). Cork is a small city with a proud heritage of diversity and commerce and is located at the mouth of the world's second largest natural harbour. The city's motto, '*Satio Bene Fide Carinis'* contained in the Cork City Coat of Arms translates as 'A safe harbour for ships'. The city is divided North and South by the River Lee. This geographical divide also reflects a division between the haves and have-nots whereby great wealth has lived cheek by jowl with poverty, poor education, lack of amenities and unemployment (Linehan, 2005). Urban regeneration in the mid-twentieth century involved the construction of new public housing estates predominantly in the Northside and to a lesser extent, the south-east. This was to provide improved living conditions for those residing in over-crowded tenements throughout the lanes of the inner-city. Large swaths of public housing with a dearth of recreational facilities, inadequate services or sources of employment generated acute problems over time, resulting in a concentration of social disadvantage in those neighbourhoods. The Southside by contrast, is home to the city's main public institutions, including University College Cork, Cork Institute of Technology, Cork University Hospital, and headquarters of a number of public sector enterprises. The Northside has benefitted far less from comparable public sector investment. Such absence of industry and commercial development has created an air of depression and despondency there with unemployment in the Northside running upwards to three times the city's average.

The slow demise of some of Cork's traditional employers began during the recessionary period of the 1970s and 1980s. Cork's economy suffered a catastrophic blow particularly in 1983 and 1984 with the closure of The Ford Motor Company, Dunlops

and the Verolme Dockyard. Ancillary and supporting industries and services suffered as a consequence resulting in widespread unemployment and levels of emigration not experienced in the city since the 1950s.

The effects of long-term unemployment, resulting in deprivation in terms of diet, housing quality, environment and education has solidified to the point that many Northsiders believe they have simply been left behind. Unemployment, poverty and the lack of a tradition of education amongst families and communities has resulted in stark inequalities across the city whereby in only eight of the city's seventy-four wards have more than 10% of their populations attained a third level qualification (Forde, 1996).

The Irish Government in 2001 launched a national community development programme entitled 'Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development' (RAPID). Of the twenty-five urban areas identified nationally, four of them were in Cork City. Areas identified in the Northside were: Knocknaheeny/Hollyhill/Churchfield; Blackpool/The Glen/Mayfield; Fairhill/Gurranabraher/Farranree. One area — Togher/Mahon was identified on the city's Southside. Each RAPID area was designated an Area Implementation Team and a Programme co-ordinator. The aim of RAPID was to develop new ways for statutory and voluntary agencies to work together to deliver more effective services at local level. Cork City Council, Cork City Partnership, Cork Local Drugs Task Force, the Vocational Educational Committee, FÁS (national employment training service), the Gardaí and local elected city councillors in combination with local communities focused on the improvement of the targeted areas with a view to increasing opportunities for those who lived there. Government funding was made available to be allocated towards various initiatives ranging from improvement of the physical environment to assistance with building projects aimed at providing physical resources within communities or grant assistance to local organisations aimed at

empowering local communities.

Furthermore, Cork City Council conducted an evaluation of social exclusion in Cork City, at a time when the Irish economy was buoyant and unemployment levels in Cork had substantially reduced. Despite the favourable economic conditions and subsequent economic benefits prevailing at the time, considerable spatial inequalities persisted and were especially present in the areas already identified under the RAPID programme. These areas suffered the highest rates of unemployment, above average proportions of unskilled workers and the greatest proportion of their populations leaving school in the junior cycle (Edwards and Linehan, 2002).

The timeframe for this study was one in which there was not a tradition of prison-related research in Ireland (indeed it remains in its infancy) and the groundwork necessary to secure access to the field in 2008 was thus substantial. Little was known about the characteristics of Irish prisoners apart from the pioneering work of Dr. Paul O'Mahony in the 1980s and 1990s who authored Mountjoy Prisoners: A Sociological and Criminological Profile in 1997.

For the purpose of identifying the communities to which prisoners return to after imprisonment the researcher conducted a census of the prison population in Cork Prison on 21 March, 2007. This prison is a medium security prison for males aged 18 years and over and serves the catchment area of Cork and surrounding counties. Ethical approval was granted for the purpose of analysing the prison population's home address database. On the day of the research census, the population of Cork Prison was 293. The prison has an operational capacity of 210. At the time of committal, addresses given by the prisoners indicated that 10 were of "no fixed abode"; three gave their address as the Simon Community, a venue that provides emergency sheltered accommodation for the homeless. A further eight provided addresses outside of Ireland. A total of 193 had Cork

addresses. 34 prisoners had Waterford addresses, 23 of them being from the city and 11 from the rural area. 19 prisoners were from County Kerry, of these, 13 were from Tralee, the largest town in the county, with the remaining being from the rural area. 15 prisoners had Dublin addresses, spanning 11 Dublin postal districts. Three prisoners had Limerick addresses, one from the city and two from the rural area. Two prisoners were from County Tipperary. One prisoner each had addresses in County Mayo, County Kilkenny, County Kildare and County Louth.

Of the 193 prisoners with Cork addresses, 54 were from the greater Cork area while 139 were city addresses, spanning 40 postal districts. 74.1% of this group originated from nine postal districts all identified as areas of disadvantage by the RAPID programme. These were, Knocknaheeny (22 prisoners); Mayfield (15 prisoners); Farranree (12 prisoners); Gurranabraher (12 prisoners); Churchfield (11 prisoners); Togher (9 prisoners); Fairhill (9 prisoners); Mahon (8 prisoners); The Glen (5 prisoners).

Gaining Access to the Research Site

Because former prisoners by their nature are a hard to reach population, given that in the majority of cases they are released without supervision and in many instances in need of some form of support (see Chapter Six: Part III), it was decided to explore the range of services that they might access in the community. Exploratory research by telephone was carried out with a view to establishing an overview of what exists in the Cork area with regard to prisoner reintegration. Using contacts available from the Probation Service and the Crime Prevention Directory (2002) an informal database of potential research venues was drawn up. Apart from one agency in Cork, hereafter referred to as *Forward Focus*, no other agency expressly stated as its primary objective — the reintegration of ex-prisoners. However, many of the agencies contacted reported having former prisoners participating in their programmes from time to time.

A formal letter (see Appendix A) outlining the nature and purpose of the research and a request to access clients of the service was drafted and dispatched to each agency or service identified for inclusion in the research (*n=47*). The range of agencies included the Probation Service, youth centres, addiction treatment and recovery centres, sheltered housing agencies, community training centres, supported residential units and step-down rehabilitation centres.

The letter was followed with a telephone call to establish if the agency typically or even occasionally had any former prisoners as clients. By way of a research site survey, the researcher with permission from the agency managers also visited the potential research sites and left some posters (see Appendix B) and flyers (see Appendix C) to be displayed and distributed, highlighting the fact that the research was being conducted and candidates were being sought for inclusion. The poster and flyer outlined a brief description of the purpose of the research, an invitation for voluntary participation and a dedicated mobile-phone number for the purpose of the research as a means of contact with the researcher. Of the 47 agencies or centres identified, 11 venues qualified for inclusion insofar as candidates there made contact with the researcher expressing interest in the research study. A brief description of each venue will be provided later in this chapter using pseudonyms as a means of preserving the anonymity of the research participants, given that Cork city is a small geographical area.

Gatekeepers

Seeking the approval of gatekeepers to gain access to the research site is both "ethically and politically astute" (Neuman, 2003:372). Where the researcher has to move from one site to another throughout the course of the research to recruit participants, gaining entry becomes a continuous problem (Creswell, 1994). Neuman (2003) writes that:

> Good field research requires a combination of skills. In addition to a strong sense of self, the best field researchers possess an incredible ability to listen and

absorb details, tremendous patience, sensitivity and empathy for others, superb social skills, a talent to think very quickly 'on one's feet' [and] the ability to see subtle interconnections among people/events (*ibid.* :398).

The success in gaining entry to the research sites for this study necessitated many of the aforementioned qualities. Having dispatched 47 letters outlining the purpose of the research, followed by telephone calls, a spread-sheet was created chronicling the history of contact and the nature of responses from possible gatekeepers. Responses were varied. In some instances there appeared to be no possibility for the recruitment of candidates while others responded positively. On the whole, recipients of the research letter were enthusiastic to help and offered other suggestions as to where candidates might be recruited from and helpfully offered contact names and details of others who might be in a position to help. Having a contact name and the referral from another agency principal proved valuable as it illustrated how thoroughly the researcher was negotiating the territory under investigation. Meetings with gatekeepers onsite also added value to the research as their perspectives on the challenges they were experiencing in delivering their services, as well as the challenges they understood their clients to be experiencing personally, were very insightful and recorded in the research journal.

While negotiation is necessary until trust and a stable relationship evolves between the researcher and the gatekeeper (Neuman, 2003), very careful negotiation is required when faced with a hostile reaction. There was one such occurrence in the course of this study whereby it was relayed to the researcher by a service provider that access would not be allowed to a particular site, one solely dedicated to the provision of services for ex-prisoners because the principal of that agency "simply doesn't like researchers". Nevertheless, on receipt of a written request for the opportunity to discuss the research study, the principal involved suggested a joint meeting with another member of the agency's board of directors whereby it would be decided on the basis of the researcher's

verbal presentation if access would be granted or not. Following the verbal presentation, permission was granted to display recruitment posters on the premises and the principal also included the research explanatory pamphlet with Christmas mail to more than 100 clients on the service's database. This effort resulted in 13 candidates volunteering for participation.

Recruiting Candidates

Both the displaying of posters and the distribution of research pamphlets proved a successful strategy in attracting candidates for the study. In most instances, interested individuals made contact by telephone with the researcher and a meeting time and interview venue was arranged. In all but two cases, those arrangements were fulfilled. In one instance, a candidate failed to show up for the interview, and in another instance, an interested candidate cancelled saying that he "had too much else going on" at the time. In other instances, the researcher was invited to an agency or facility because possible candidates had made a staff member aware that they either wanted to take part in the research or were thinking about taking part and wanted to meet the researcher face to face to discuss further what participation entailed. One such candidate, although expressing her interest in participation declined to be interviewed at a later date, describing a fear of "going over old ground and dragging up details from the past might be detrimental to her recovery, such was her mental state" (Notes from Fieldwork Journal, January 31, 2008). In the majority of cases interviews took place at the agency or support centre.

The Research Venues

A brief description of the eleven research venues where participants were interviewed is presented here so as to illustrate the character and features of the environment where former prisoners seek help and assistance in the community. The information here was written up from notes recorded in the research journal.

'The Lodge', centrally located in the city centre is primarily focused on the provision of care for those who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless. Apart from offering outreach work and support, liaising with educational and training providers, The Lodge also operates an emergency shelter, providing accommodation to those who would otherwise be classified as homeless. A daytime-only facility is also available to those who want food and hot drinks. People congregate outside the building's heavy metal locked door seeking permission to enter via intercom. Hostile and abusive interactions over the intercom were sometimes heard by the researcher when service users were being told that there would be no beds available that night. An incessant air of commotion permeates the bleak interior that is not too dissimilar to the prison setting whereby loud voices and the sounds of heavy doors banging shut reverberate throughout.

> The shelter and the day centre are two buildings joined by a corridor. All the staff have keys and fobs and without them it is hard to get around. Even getting to use the bathroom was a bit of an ordeal as I had to be buzzed in and out (Fieldwork Notes, April 17, 2008).

A number of people are normally congregated in the foyer outside the centre's administrative office vying for the attention of staff members for one reason or another against what appeared to be the constant background din of telephones ringing. 14 research participants were recruited at this venue.

'Forward Focus' is an agency dedicated to the provision of supports and services for former prisoners. The facility, while maintaining a discreet façade is centrally located in the city centre, close to all public transport. Case workers maintain regular contact with the Prison Service and they routinely visit prisons, where prisoners nearing their release date will either be released from prison in Cork or are likely to return to Cork, which is their catchment area, if they are being released from other prisons in the State. Typically they correspond with the prisoner, offering them the opportunity to engage with the

agency if they wish to avail of any support or help they might need with regard to their pending release. Further postal reminders are dispatched and follow-up visits are arranged with the prisoner. The agency also offers support to prisoners' families insofar as it acts as a drop-in centre for concerned family members who wish to discuss relevant issues. Participants who spoke of the help available to former prisoners in the community spoke very highly of the quality of service they experienced at this agency. A notable aspect of the premises was the comfortable, relaxed and hospitable atmosphere that prevailed there. 13 research participants, including one female were recruited at this venue.

'Shalom', located in the city's outskirts offers residential accommodation to men attempting sobriety and drug addiction recovery and provides support in this endeavour. The centre, owned and operated by an order of Christian nuns is overtly religious in terms of its interior and a daily routine that requires all residents to rise early and participate in a number of religious rituals throughout the day. The men abide by a 5.30pm curfew and respectful of the nuns' ethos, they adopt a policy of keeping their entertainment in the recreational and TV room to *locus*-appropriate content. In operating the centre, the nuns depend on the local community for charitable donations that include *ad hoc* deliveries of food and other items. The nuns' accommodation is separate from the men's but with a connecting doorway. The door is never locked and there is no security on the premises. An air of tranquillity permeates the whole place and the men cook and clean for themselves. Nine participants were recruited for the research at this venue.

'Glenview' is a step-down residential facility for men who have successfully completed a three-month residential drug rehabilitation course. It is located in the outskirts of the city and admits men who are drug-free, sober and highly motivated to live a life free of drugs and alcohol. That it is a supportive environment is evident through its semi-rural

peaceful location and warm comfortable interior. Five research participants were recruited at this venue.

'St. Paul's' offers a recovery programme to those aged 25 and over, who are recovering from alcohol and drug misuse. It is centrally located in an old part of the city, in a multi-purpose building that affords anonymity to those who participate in the programme there. The austere building owned by the city diocese is dark, old and cavernous although the room where the support group meet is warm and cosy and decorated with some arts and crafts that were made during imprisonment. Four research participants were recruited at this venue.

'Lakeway' was established in one of the city's suburbs to provide counselling and training for youths aged 16 and over likely to become embroiled in the criminal justice system. The centre provides programmes designed to address both anti-social attitudes and offending behaviour. Training opportunities are provided at the centre on an individual needs basis, varying from literacy support to manual job-related skills. A busy and productive atmosphere was always apparent in the bright and well organised centre where service users displayed their handiwork and cooked their own meals under supervision. Two research participants were recruited at this venue.

'Woodlands', a dark and dusty facility in the city centre provides 'job training' for those under its remit. The centre, operated jointly by two state agencies provides probationers with a structured daily, nine-to-five routine under the supervision of a single foreman. Two participants for the research were recruited at this venue. Notes from the Fieldwork Journal dated 16 June, 2008 reflect not just the appalling physical environment "soon to be closed down on Health and Safety grounds" according to the centre's foreman but the futility of the 'job training' that "is nothing more than a con-job" according to the two research participants. They revealed that they received no training and learned no

skills but attended the centre four days a week because to do otherwise would have caused them to breach the terms of their probation orders. The air of negativity and despondency was further recorded in the Fieldwork Journal in terms of a conversation between the researcher and the centre's foreman. This included some very disparaging comments: "they are nothing but a crowd of scumbags and Travellers and I hate Travellers. They're only good for one thing — material for when I'm writing me plays for the stage" (Notes from Fieldwork Journal, June 16, 2008).

'Youth Shack' is an agency located in a suburban neighbourhood, experiencing very high levels of disadvantage. A modern structure, it operates as a drop-in centre where care workers promote *inter alia*, alcohol and drug addiction recovery. The centre is both modern and bright consisting of well-equipped recreational rooms as well as rooms for private counselling and educational pursuits. Care workers at Youth Shack explained that they work "odd hours" accommodating the needs of the young people they work with. Users of the service are welcome, regardless of their state of readiness for change. The care workers also highlighted that they work with families in the locality, in identifying their needs and matching them with available services. The function of the centre appears to be the provision of a safe and hospitable environment where young people are welcomed "just as they are". The rationale for this approach was explained by the care workers there; being that when an individual reaches the stage where he or she may begin to consider change and explore options for change, that "the connection" with the centre is already established and it provides a basis or foundation from which to progress with the client (Fieldwork Notes, September 25, 2008). Two male participants were recruited at the centre.

'Belmont' is a purpose-built modern residential support facility close to the city centre, for young people aged 18-25 who were homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless. It offers affordable safe accommodation and training focused on empowering and

enabling young people to reach their full potential in life. One female research participant was recruited at this venue.

'Westside' is a residential centre for females who have successfully completed a residential drug rehabilitation course and who are continuing their recovery. One participant was recruited from this venue albeit that at the time of interview she had secured her own independent living accommodation and wished to be interviewed there, which negated the need for the researcher to visit this site.

'Hillcrest' is situated close to the city centre and is dedicated to the provision of lifelong learning skills and training for those unemployed. Apart from education, there are several employment experience opportunities available across a number of different sectors, on what was once a large school campus. The centre is multi-agency in its approach and accepts applications from other service providers such as drug rehabilitation agencies. One male research participant was recruited at this venue.

Research Methods

Commensurate with a post-positivist epistemological viewpoint, this study adopted a multi-method approach that included observation and semi-structured interviews that were preceded by a short questionnaire. The questionnaire was composed of a number of closed ended questions designed to capture basic demographic and some background information from the participants at the beginning of the semi-structured interview.

Observation

Believing that the core of social life is communicated through the mundane, trivial everyday minutia, good field researchers watch, pay attention and listen carefully while scrutinising the physical setting to capture its atmosphere (Neuman, 2003). Furthermore, the methodology of observation is appropriate "when the meanings people

use to define and interact with their environment are central issues" (Jorgenson, 2003:24). Throughout the course of the research fieldwork all observational data was recorded by hand and dated in an experiential journal. Verbal pictures were drawn of specific locations within the research site and other information deemed to be of use in contextualising the study was also recorded. Miles and Huberman (1984) have stressed that 'memoing' is an important source of data in qualitative research. Memoing in this study included reflective notes about feelings and impressions that arose during the course of the fieldwork. This research method, in combination with the other research methods such as questionnaires and semi-structured interviews helped to enhance the level of consistency and validity of the research (Adler and Adler, 1994). The observational data that was collected as part of the process of the research was used primarily as information for the researcher in writing up the findings.

Questionnaires

A brief questionnaire (see Appendix D) was executed immediately prior to the semi-structured interview as a means of collecting basic demographic data and criminal justice contact information. While questionnaires are normally employed in the collection of data for quantitative analysis, the use of such an instrument for this study was chosen as an organisational tool so as to provide a quick overall view of the range of research participants attracted as the fieldwork progressed and a quick cross-reference to the participants' interview transcripts.

The research questionnaire consisted of five sections: Demographic Data; Housing Status; Educational Qualifications; Employment History; Criminal Justice Contact. Demographic data included the participant's gender, age, nationality, marital status, parental status, history of residential care, and any history of family imprisonment. Housing status included the name of the community that the participant had lived in or

was living in at the time of interview and also the type of accommodation the participant inhabited. The section on educational qualifications included details of the participant's educational history and also any apprenticeships and/or employment training they had embarked upon. Employment history included any jobs held by the participant and their duration, and also any references to losing a job through imprisonment or any difficulties encountered because of a prior history of imprisonment. The final section on criminal justice contact consisted of ten questions, including the age at which initial criminal activity commenced; age when first convicted of a criminal offence and the type of sanction received; age at first imprisonment; the overall length of time spent in prison; the number (if any), of periods of remand; the number of prison sentences served; the duration of the longest prison term; incidences of any contact with support staff in prison such as probation officers, psychologists, social workers, prison chaplains or drug counsellors; periods of Temporary Release; the length of time on release from the most recent prison term. The information gleaned from this part of the questionnaire proved to be a valuable interview aid as it set up some expectation as to the range of data that might be forthcoming with regard to prison exposure and experiences of being on release.

Semi-Structured Interviews

In line with many previous criminological research studies, semi-structured interviews that on average lasted for one hour were chosen as the main research tool. They are deemed as the method best suited to the eliciting of information on the feelings and experiences of research subjects while allowing for the researcher to maintain focus on that which forms the basis for the research (Oppenheim, 1992). Steinar Kvale (1996) describes qualitative research interviews as attempts to understand the world from subjects' experiences. He says that if one wants to know how people understand their world one must talk to them. In this way one can unfold the meaning of people's

experiences and uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanation. Open format questioning provides the respondent with the opportunity to express in his or her own words opinions or thoughts on the subject under discussion. For an effective semi-structured interview Dillon *et al.* (1994) suggest that the interviewer must provide an atmosphere that encourages the respondent to speak freely yet keeping the conversation focused on the issues being researched; avoid closed ended questions; avoid appearing superior by using familiar words; put questions indirectly and informatively; remain detached and objective; probe until all relevant details, emotions and attitudes are revealed. This conforms to the perspective within qualitative research that a non-hierarchical relationship between the interviewer and interviewee facilitates more meaningful communication and the collection of knowledge (Oakley, 1981).

The interview schedule for this study was designed to capture the experience of the participant, particularly focusing on early offending, experiences of imprisonment and experiences after release. The schedule consisted of six sections: (1) Background to initial offending; (2) Imprisonment; (3) Reintegration; (4) Barriers to Reintegration; (5) Supports for Reintegration and (6) Community (see Appendix E).

The first section sought to elicit an overview of the participant's route to offending that included family and background circumstances and experiences in their local communities. The second section sought to capture an overview of the participant's exposure to imprisonment including experiences of maintaining ties in the community and plans and preparation for release. The third section of the interview sought to elicit an understanding of the participant's experience of release and life back in the community after imprisonment. The line of probe questioning in this section focused on where the participant went to live, the quality of relationships with family and friends and if those relationships had changed as a result of imprisonment. Participants were

also asked if there was someone particular in their life that they could rely on for support or help, such as a significant other, a family member, a friend or someone in a professional capacity. The fourth section of the interview schedule sought to understand any barriers to reintegration from the participant's perspective. This section included questions on the process of acquiring social welfare entitlements, finding housing accommodation, and any help or support the participant had with regard to addiction recovery.

In an attempt to develop knowledge on the availability and effectiveness of any support structures in the community for former prisoners, the fifth section of the interview included asking the participants to discuss anything that has helped them since they were released from prison, to identify any agencies offering help and support to former prisoners and to say how they heard about, or came into contact with such agencies. Participants were also asked about how they spent their spare time and to discuss any hobbies or interests they had. The final part of the interview was designed to form an understanding of the context of community from the perspective of the participant. Participants were asked to describe their community, and identify any particular positive features or negative features. They were asked to describe any community facilities they were aware of and if they had participated in any community activities themselves at any time. They were also asked if they felt there were any deficits in their communities and if they had any ideas themselves as to how their community could be improved. Finally, participants were asked how life was for them in their community after release from prison and if they felt that their history of imprisonment had impacted any way on their community relations, such as with neighbours or friends.

Data Collection

The researcher presented for each interview with a notebook and a small Sony recording

device. It was explained to each of the participants that by recording the interviews the researcher would be better able to concentrate on what they were saying as opposed to trying to capture the dialogue with handwritten notes. In all but one instance the participants elected to use the recording device, again with the assurance that no one would listen to the recordings apart from the researcher for the purpose of the study. The one female participant who declined the use of the tape-recorder did so because she didn't like the sound of her own voice. That particular participant's interview was recorded in note form and transcribed immediately afterwards while it was still fresh in the mind of the researcher. The vast majority of the interviews were transcribed by the researcher using a proprietary Sony software package. While a small proportion of interview audio files were initially outsourced to an agency for professional transcription services, the researcher was unhappy with the levels of inaccuracy that emerged upon proofreading the returned transcripts. Because it was central to the research objective to understand the process of reintegration from the participants' perspectives, and in the participants' own words, for the sake of consistency and insofar as possible, to capture each word, pause and otherwise of the interviews, the researcher chose to re-transcribe those audio files herself.

At this juncture it is worth noting that Corkonians have their own peculiar dialect. This is readily apparent in the verbatim quotations used in this thesis. The most notable feature of the dialect is the common usage of the word "like" which oftentimes begins and ends a sentence. It variously refers to "*for instance*" or "*that is the way things are*". Where other colloquialisms appear in participants' quotations they are explained in parentheses beside the text.

Data Analysis

A generic inductive approach was adopted throughout the process of analysis. This

approach allows for research findings to emerge from the frequent dominant and significant themes inherent in raw data without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies (Thomas, 2003). Inductive approaches allow for an understanding of meaning in complex data through data reduction which is achieved by developing a summary themes or categories from the raw data. Assumptions underlying the use of a general inductive approach include that the data analysis is determined by both the research objectives (deductive) and multiple readings and interpretations of the raw data (inductive) enabling findings to be derived from both the research objectives outlined by the researcher and directly from the analysis of the raw data.

The process of analysis of the data began initially with a portion of the transcripts being coded by hand to reveal the emergence of themes. Using different coloured pens, each segment of the transcript was then accorded a unit of meaning. Having repeated the exercise across a dozen of the transcripts common elements began to emerge and were noted. All the transcripts were then imported into NVivo, the proprietary programme designed to manage sources of data and assist with data analysis. Phase One of the analysis procedure in NVivo involved open-coding which was achieved by identifying all the elements in the transcripts. Phase Two involved axial coding where related elements were drawn together. Phase Three was concerned with refining categories, renaming themes and reorganising them under broader categories. These categories were further coded at Phase Four. Phase Five was a reflective process of re-evaluating the nature of the codes and reducing the data down to that which was pertinent to the research objectives. In Phase Six the codes were refined further so as to better synthesise the data. Summary statements were generated at the lower level themes so as to synthesise their content into more manageable documented summaries. Analytical memos were then generated to address five key issues: that the content of the codes and the summary statements informed this aspect of the analysis; that patterns were

highlighted where they were relevant; that the codes were situated on a storyboard so as to create a narrative; that background information was cross-referenced where necessary; and that literature relevant to the themes was identified.

Having studied the analytical memos, the transcripts were studied once again with a view to assessing from a holistic overview, where in the process of the journey of reintegration, different participants were. The value in approaching the transcripts in this way, raising thick description, has been described by Geertz (1973:320) thus:

> To generalize within cases is usually called, at least in medicine and depth psychology, clinical inference. Rather than beginning with a set of observations and attempting to subsume them under a governing law, such inference begins with a set of (presumptive) signifiers and attempts to place them within an intelligible frame. Measures are matched to theoretical predictions, but symptoms (even when they are measured) are scanned for theoretical peculiarities — that is, they are diagnosed. In the study of culture the signifiers are not symptoms or clusters of symptoms, but symbolic acts or clusters of symbolic acts, and the aim is not therapy but the analysis of social discourse. But the way in which the theory is used — to ferret out the unapparent import of things — is the same.

Interpreting the data contained in the transcripts is a complex process because it represents an attempt to capture and bring together two dynamic elements; firstly the semi-structured interview which by its very nature is somewhat fluid and largely unrestrained and secondly the articulation or absence thereof across the range of participants willing to share recollections back and forth across time. This results in no two interviews running parallel or being of the same weight or containing exactly the same degree of dialogue. While acknowledging that the ideal interview subject does not exist (Kvale, 1996), the propensity to wander off the interview topic or to flip back and forth over time when recounting various scenarios renders many transcripts burdensome to deconstruct and reconstruct again into a cohesive account. Furthermore, the interviewer herself as a research instrument also adds a further layer for inclusion to the interpretive process resulting not just in a wealth of raw data needing to be mined and

analysed but which also has to be sifted of non-relevant material and graded for its substance and relevance to the themes and sub-themes in the area under scrutiny.

Validity and Credibility of the Data

That, "in social science, validity is one of the criteria that traditionally serve as a benchmark for inquiry" has been posited by Schwandt (1997:168). Therefore, it is the researcher who bears the responsibility for the authenticity and voraciousness of the research data. Because the data that informed this research emerged exclusively from self-reported accounts, no absolute guarantee as to truthfulness or accuracy can be offered. Furthermore, concerns have been expressed about the use of self-report methods when accessing reliable information on criminality (Harrison and Hughes, 1997). Nevertheless, other research has shown that that self-reports can be both valid and reliable measures of actual behaviour (Huizinga and Elliott, 1986; Seymour and Costello, 2005).

A number of strategies were employed in the course of this study to minimise possible threats to validity. Firstly, because no inducements were offered to those who wished to participate in the research, it was felt that there was a genuine desire on the part of the participants to engage in the process. The promise of anonymity and confidentiality, alongside the assurance that the researcher was an independent entity without any affiliation to any part of the criminal justice system, social welfare agency or service provider was seen as a means of allowing the participant to talk openly and freely about their experiences. Because the participants who wished to take part in the research project, initially approached the researcher with a view to inclusion served to situate the decision-making locus solely with the participant thus addressing any power imbalance that may have been perceived.

Much of the data that emerged in the course of the semi-structured interviews was offered voluntarily on the part of the research participants and not as a result of prompt questions. This is especially evident where participants gave accounts of their criminal activity and detailed issues regarding either their drug habits or their struggle with alcohol misuse. Moreover, there were instances where some participants in the course of their interviews became visibly emotional, shedding tears or breathing heavily during pauses. When this happened, the participant was offered the opportunity to end the interview or to take a break, if they so wished. Given that the researcher also imposes on the data was something that was acknowledged and ameliorated insofar as possible through journaling immediately on returning home from every interview appointment.

As a further attempt to increase and strengthen the validity of the data a measure of triangulation was employed through contemporaneously annotating the research questionnaires that complemented and supported the semi-structured interviews. That the participants themselves partook in adding credibility to the data became evident on a number of occasions when they asked to re-visit the questionnaire so that something they had previously forgotten about could be included, such as a specific period of imprisonment or finding that the chronology of their history of imprisonment was incorrect. Furthermore, the fact that all but one interview were audiotaped ensured that the researcher could transcribe each participant's account verbatim, including pauses and non-verbal utterances.

Ethical Issues

Humanist ethicists advocate research for the benefit of humanity — especially marginalised people so that sociologists may meaningfully know and communicate about human lived experience (Mitchell, 1993). Research conducted with human participants attracts significant responsibilities and fiduciary duties. The overarching

principle of ethics in research is that no one is harmed by the research both during and after the process is completed. Ethical clearance for this research was sought and granted by the Ethics Committee at Dublin Institute of Technology, reference number: 10/05. The people targeted for this research were vulnerable subjects on a number of grounds, principally with regard to the stigma that attaches to imprisonment. Therefore, great care and due regard had to be exercised with regard to a participant's autonomy to decide in an informed and consensual way to participate in the study. Ethical considerations pertaining to this research centred on the requirements of voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality and the personal safety of the researcher. Each will be discussed both as ethical norms and the practical steps that were taken during the research process as to their adherence.

Voluntary Participation

Voluntary participation is a prerequisite in any research that disrupts a person's regular routine. When the research requires the respondent to reveal personal information, especially information that they may not wish to share with others such as friends or family members, the researcher is faced with a particular challenge. The intrusion cannot be justified in the same way as requests by lawyers or doctors for personal information, as their requests can be explained as necessitous to serving the personal interests of the respondent. Where there is an imbalance of power, as between a teacher and pupil, voluntary participation may be somewhat involuntary as the respondent is aware of the desirability of complying with a superior's request and negative consequences for not doing so. Similar power relations are inherent in the prison setting. Furthermore, participants are often motivated by an expectation of some reward if they elect to participate. Fieldwork research often includes gratuities being offered to respondents for their co-operation and these may in turn induce a participant to

volunteer for something he or she otherwise would not have volunteered for (Maxfield and Babbie, 1995:155).

The research sample for this study was recruited from voluntary participants. The purpose of the research was clearly explained in terms of offering the possibility of participation as an opportunity to express the participant's own views on the subject of reintegration. An ethical form of 'symbolic capital' as described by Bourdieu (1977) may be purchased by reminding the participant of the importance of the information he or she may wish to share, in this case on the dilemmas of the reintegration process so that others may gain a fuller understanding of the process and its complexities. The researcher emphasised that voluntary participation was central to the spirit of the research and that it was completely the prerogative of the person alone if they wanted to participate or not. The fact that the researcher was a college student without any affiliation to the criminal justice system, the probation service or any other service provider was also highlighted. Again, in keeping with the principle of voluntarism no incentives for participation were provided or offered.

Informed Consent

Special care has to be taken to ascertain a participant's capacity for understanding the issues at hand. By clearly explaining the purpose of the research and the issues which are being explored in the research objectives, the respondent may then be empowered to contribute in a meaningful way to that which the research is addressing. The onus is on the researcher to compose a consent form that is not excessively verbose (Applebaum, Lidz and Meisel, 1987). That is, one that is easily understood by the respondent while at the same time being comprehensive enough to cover the essential components of informed consent. Before the commencement of each interview for this study, the researcher read the consent form (see Appendix F) to the participant, stressing the aspect of voluntary participation and the assurance of confidentiality. Sitting beside the

participant, pointing to the text and reading the form aloud obviated the need to ascertain the participant's level of literacy and thus assured the researcher that the consent form was fully understood.

Confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality requires trust and a keen measure of responsibility on a researcher's behalf. Participants in this study were assured of both so that they could respond freely to research questions without inhibition. Exceptions to confidentiality were also outlined at the beginning of each interview whereby it was explained to participants that should they disclose an intention to self-harm or participate in a crime that such disclosure would be reported by the researcher to an appropriate person. A disclosure of intending to commit self-harm arose during one of the research interviews. In that instance the participant indicated that he had spoken to a counsellor about his suicidal thoughts immediately prior to the interview. The researcher explained that she had a duty to inform the service manager about this being disclosed and did so with the consent of the interviewee.

Participants in this study were also assured that the information collected would only be used for the purpose of the research and that any identifying features of the participant would be removed from its content. Letters of consent that were signed by participants were stored in a locked filing cabinet. Participants' names, including the names of their home-towns or neighbourhoods were substituted with pseudonyms or anonymised during the transcription of the interviews. Master copies of interview data were also kept under lock and key for the duration of the research.

Personal Safety

Personal safety arises as an important issue when embarking on the fieldwork aspect of research that brings a researcher into close and immediate contact with prisoners or

former prisoners, especially those who have been incarcerated for violent offences. Personal safety will be considered here initially from a gender/class/age-neutral perspective, before a more in-depth discussion of these factors *per se* in the following section.

A researcher working alone in a community setting is advised to be assiduous about keeping a close friend or family member informed about proposed interview schedules including meeting times, interview venue and expected return time from the research site. A mobile telephone provides an invaluable means of contact but a researcher exercising due regard for personal safety and security especially in a strange location should maintain the strictest protocols as to where an interview is to be held. As a matter of caution, the researcher in this study notified an adult family member of the time and place of each interview and the expected time of completion.

The Researcher: Issues of Gender, Age and Class

The role of the researcher is of particular significance in qualitative research. As a human entity the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection, the observer in the research site and the interpreter and analyser of the data gathered. As such, what the researcher as a person brings to the fieldwork bears some impact on the research process. Past experiences of the researcher that provide familiarity with the topic, the subjects of the research and the setting in which the research takes place, implicitly shapes the interpretation and final analysis of the work (Creswell, 1994). The researcher's personal contribution to the research can therefore be useful and positive (Locke, Silverman and Spirduso, 1987). The researcher in this study had previously completed a master's degree programme in criminal justice that included the study of criminology and penology thus gaining knowledge of, and familiarity with the topic for this study, alongside a clinical component. This clinical component included field trips

to prison complexes and other criminal justice institutions. The first hand experience of these institutions served to add value to the research process insofar as it lent itself to creating a rapport with the research participants in that they appeared to feel confident that the researcher understood what they were describing about places, she having let them know if she had been there herself in the past. For instance, when participants were describing the challenges adhering to "prison visits" at one particular prison-campus, the researcher had a clear visual memory of that very inadequate structure called 'the visitation box' and its internal arrangement. Also, the fact that the researcher herself was from Cork and was familiar with different areas of the city was advantageous to the interview process as a means of understanding what participants were describing with regard to aspects of the community. This included first-hand experiences of the stark disparities between the mostly middleclass neighbourhoods the researcher had grown up in and the less well-off areas of the city that frequently appeared in the local newspaper in relation to criminal activity and anti-social behaviour. Fieldtrip visits to these neighbourhoods for the purpose of the research further confirmed for the researcher that despite the prosperity the city had recently witnessed, disadvantaged neighbourhoods were as decrepit as ever. This was evidenced by: neglected looking housing; boarded up local shops and businesses; recreational areas that looked the worse for wear that were often vandalised; the lack of any visually stimulating focal points and a general sense of despondency.

Another advantage the researcher had was previous experience in the criminal justice setting with regard to trial and sentencing procedures. This allowed for meaningful and pertinent questions to be presented where appropriate as participants were giving their accounts of such experiences.

While it has been suggested that research subjects are always vulnerable, regardless of their gender (Stanley and Wise, 1983), feminist methodology provides guidelines for women engaged in intra-gender research. Reay (1996) argues that "[d]istancing . . . the researcher from the researched results in their inscription as 'other'" (*ibid*. :64-5). Aiming to produce non-hierarchical, non-manipulative research relationships to overcome the separation between the researcher and the researched, power differentials are reduced (Cotterill, 1992, Huggins and Glebbeek, 2003). Many feminists suggest that the only honest approach is for the researcher to make herself just as vulnerable (Huggins and Glebbeek, *ibid*. :364) and have established a range of research strategies designed to achieve a neutral base from which to construct an equitable relationship. Oakley (1981) attributed the success of her research on motherhood to the "relatively intimate and non-hierarchical relationships" she established with her respondents through informal exchanges in conversation (*ibid*. :47). She maintains that the goal of feminist research should be the "progression to friendship . . . [because] . . . the pretense [*sic*] of neutrality on the interviewer's part is counterproductive: participation demands alignment" (Oakley, 1981:46, cited by Huggins and Glebbeek, 2003:364). Care was taken before the commencement of all the interviews in this study to establish a rapport with the research participants as a means of creating a relaxed and friendly environment. The researcher engaged in informal conversation with participants on neutral topics such as features of the research facility and the mode of transportation taken to arrive there.

Cross-gender research raises different issues for female researchers who can encounter particular obstacles in male dominated environments. Gurney (1985) suggests that being female in a male dominated environment has both benefits and detriments. Yet, how cross-gender and interviewer/interviewee power negotiations complicate ethical and safety issues and affect females conducting research "have seldom been explicitly

elaborated for cross-gender research" (Huggins and Glebbeek, *ibid*. :365). Both academics argue that the greatest impediment to examining or overcoming gender dynamics in criminological research is that cross-gender dynamics is not explicitly considered in much published scholarship. They suggest that 'gendered stumbling-blocks' must be recognised by researchers and conscious strategies employed to overcome them.

Gender, age and class bear some impact on how one is viewed in the research setting (Liebling, 1999). Gender can be manipulated and flaunted to gain access and attain information which otherwise might not be so forthcoming. Age can be used to gain advantage and credibility amongst those who attribute wisdom, knowledge and experience with maturity. Class distinction, if one that is valued as socially desirable, may engender trustworthiness and promote responsiveness. Huggins, in reflecting on her experience of research considered the fact that she is female, of mature years and of a different cultural origin aided rather than impeded her attaining the information she sought. She felt she was seen as more 'forgiving' and 'nurturing' which afforded her interviewees the opportunity to express their emotions more deeply (some cried), than they might have if she had been a male interviewer. As an academic she felt she was seen as an objective inquirer and as she displayed some knowledge of the research setting she was accepted as a partial professional 'insider' (Huggins and Glebbeek, 2003:373). "Much like a bartender or beautician, [she] was in the role of a "friendly stranger" — a relatively unthreatening outsider to whom interviewees felt they could disclose their feelings, complaints, and deepest secrets" (*ibid*. :374). The researcher in this study concurs with Huggins (*ibid*.) who admits that while she cannot precisely state how gender, class, age and academic experience influenced the willingness of her interviewees to participate in the research, she feels "the combination of these factors mostly affected interview outcomes positively" (*ibid*. :374).

On interviewing, Liebling (1999) agrees with Wolcott's assertion that while interviewing generally is not that difficult, "interviewing in which people tell you how they really think about things you are interested in learning, or how they think about the things that are important to them, is a delicate art" (Wolcott, 1995:105). Liebling describes the observational process as anything but passive, as one sees, listens, takes notes, experiences periods of engagement, distraction, sadness, and fear. She feels that 'reserved participation' may better capture the essence of observation in this sense. She argues that emotions in themselves constitute data and require critical reflection, triangulation and faithful representation. Such data was captured by the researcher in this study who recorded notes at the end of each interview in the research journal.

Even for a seasoned researcher, Gurney (2003) suggests that one is never sure exactly what the correct decisions are, until after the fact. She advises females entering a research site firstly to be aware of how their appearances might affect their interactions with respondents. Secondly, she advises to know in advance the nature of the setting and the roles occupied by both males and females. She suggests that any impropriety should be dealt with initially in a diplomatic fashion with the offending party and if needed, advice should be sought from another party as to how to handle the situation. Finally, she suggests that possible situations can be pre-empted hypothetically so as to be better prepared if they were to occur in the field.

This research study involved many of the issues addressed above. Before the fieldwork commenced, the researcher in this study sought to understand the experiences of other female researchers recently involved in a similar field. Issues such as appropriate dress code arose in such discussions. As a means of presenting as neutral as possible it was decided to fall somewhere between casual and smart. That is, smart enough to present as a competent person doing a job in a professional way, yet casual enough so as not to

exude an aura of professionalism, such as perhaps one might present as a lawyer in court. No excessiveness was displayed with regard to accessories, such as jewellery or expensive handbags so as to ameliorate insofar as possible, any element of class-distinction. The issue of the researcher's age did not appear to present as an issue for consideration, perhaps because her age was probably in line with a lot of the service providers and care-workers encountered throughout the research. The research sites varied from those that were female-dominated to male dominated. The researcher's gender, did not appear to be an issue in gaining access to the research sites, but may have been advantageous to the actual research interview process. The fact that so many of the research participants talked freely and openly, that in some instances led to tearful, sad and emotional outpourings led the researcher to question if for instance a male participant would cry in front of a male interviewer?

Liebling (1999) argues that the criminological life and the personal life of the researcher are not separate. Furthermore, Gelsthorpe (1990) maintains that feminist researchers' objective is to "record the impact of the research on themselves" (*ibid*. :94). Exploring the research experience, the feelings and emotions it attracts enhances the research process as "[e]motions influence our research, and our research can affect us emotionally" (Campbell, 2001:15). Mindful of the lack of explicit information regarding how such dynamics affect the research process, ongoing reflection and introspection was recorded contemporaneously in a research journal. Such documentation included contextual notes and commentary of the interview(s) experience of the particular day and also, the effect such interviews had on the researcher herself. Given the nature of some of the topics that emerged in interviews such as experiences of trauma and violence and other shocking material, the researcher was often left feeling overwrought. Reflexive written accounts of such experiences

served as a means of compartmentalising them within the research process and a valuable means of de-briefing at the end of each fieldwork day.

Throughout the entire fieldwork experience there was just one instance of the sexualisation of the researcher. Because the interview was about to draw to a natural conclusion, the researcher thanked the male participant for his cooperation and left. The researcher in all other instances experienced nothing but polite and respectful exchanges and in some instances acts of kindness and consideration, such as being offered a cup of tea where such a facility was on hand.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

In assessing the overall value of this study and also as a means of informing future methodological practice and research, its strengths and limitations will now be presented. The study's main strength lies in its focus on the otherwise neglected area of the reality of the reintegration process. The adoption of a former prisoner-centred approach enabled an informed insight to be gained into this under-researched area of those at the coalface of the process. The use of a multi-method technique may be considered a further strength of the study, resulting in a rich data set and the minimisation of threats to validity that self-report data can potentially bring about.

Another significant strength relates to the inclusion of several community settings in the study including a post-release support centre, community support services and different types of hostels where participants were living at that time. This enabled the research to reflect not only the broad range of challenging situations different participants were experiencing throughout their reintegration but also provided an overview of the types of services and places of support most frequented by those on release from prison as well as the dearth of more suitable structured support.

In relation to the research sample, the inclusion of both females and males can be said to have strengthened the study insofar as the experiences of both genders of the process of reintegration were explored. However, from the small number of females who participated in the research, no notable differences in the experience of reintegration were identified to warrant any in-depth gender differential analysis. The diversity of the sample was further strengthened by the inclusion of a number of foreign nationals in the study, albeit that they were included only on the basis that they could converse well enough in English.

That a cross-sectional design was employed for the study, insofar as there were no bars to participation on the basis of how long a member had to have been on release from prison, allowed for the inclusion of different perspectives of the reintegration process along a temporal continuum. While a longitudinal design may have been of benefit in analysing possible differing perspectives over time, this deficiency was somewhat compensated for by the fact that participants were asked about different time periods of their experiences of reintegration. Also, while it was beyond the practicalities and scope of this study, it would have been interesting to document follow-up accounts of how participants were progressing on their journeys.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed insight into the research methodology adopted for this study. It highlighted the appropriateness of an exploratory and descriptive research design for the purpose of the study and the suitability of observation, and semi-structured interviews as the research instruments best suited to meeting the research aims. The chapter conveyed the pervasive and detailed nature of the data collection and data analysis process. The chapter also presented a number of methodological issues that arose during the research such as gaining access to the research site, negotiating

with gatekeepers and important ethical issues such as those of confidentiality and informed consent both of which were crucial to the integrity of the process. Finally, the chapter provided an analytical account of the research as a whole, drawing attention to its numerous strengths alongside some of its inevitable weaknesses. The findings that emerged from this overall methodological process are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

Profile of the Research Group

Introduction

Chapter Five provides a basic profile of the research group that participated in the study showing what their circumstances were at the time of interview. While the questionnaires administered by the researcher furnished demographic information on the 54 research participants, the major part of the data was drawn from the semi-structured interviews in which they engaged. This afforded an in-depth discovery of what they had experienced while they were growing up including their involvement with the criminal justice system, their experiences of imprisonment and their lives post-release. Although the findings presented here will show the extent of marginalisation apparent in the dataset, it should also be noted that those who participated in the research *may not* in fact represent the most marginalised of the former prisoner population as a whole, considering that at the time of interview, this group was either participating in, availing of, or in contact with some structured support service.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there is a paucity of knowledge in relation to the characteristics of Irish prisoners given the limited research that has so far been conducted in this area. Nevertheless, official statistics and the findings of some research reports will be presented here in an effort to contextualise the present study from the perspective of the Irish prison population as a whole.

Annual Reports published by the Irish Prison Service provide *inter alia*, statistics on the gender, age and sentence length of those in custody, as well as numbers of remand prisoners. The most recent report (Irish Prison Service, 2015) indicates that the daily

average number of prisoners in custody in 2015 was 3,722 including 3,591 male and 131 female prisoners. Of the 3150 prisoners under sentence, almost 40% were aged between 17 and 29 years of age; just over 33% were aged between 30 and 39 years and 28% were over 40 years of age.

The length of sentences being served in 2015 ranged from periods of less than three months to life imprisonment. Of the 3,150 sentences, 15 were for less than 3 months; 109 were for 3 to less than 6 months; 263 were for 6 to less than 12 months; 428 were for 1 to less than 2 years; 429 were for 2 to less than 3 years; 627 were for 3 to less than 5 years; 681 were for 5 to less than 10 years; 254 were for more than 10 years and 344 were for life.

Much of what is known about the characteristics of Irish prisoners emanates from Paul O'Mahony's seminal study of male prisoners in Mountjoy Prison (1997). The findings from that research found that of the 108 random sample of prisoners interviewed, 85% were from neighbourhoods in Dublin characterised by high levels of long-term unemployment and a prevalence of opiate drug use. Similar to the present study, members' ages ranged from 19 to 58 years. Fifty-eight per cent of the sample had been raised by both parents at least until they reached 16 years of age with the remainder having lost parents through separation, divorce or death. While only 39% of the sample had formed their own homes with their wives, girlfriends and children, 72% of the sample indicated that they had fathered a child. A little over 7% of the sample was classified as homeless. The sample group had very limited exposure to education with 80% of them reporting that they had left school before reaching 16. While 53% had some work training experience, 88% of the sample had been unemployed prior to their imprisonment. Exactly 50% of the sample had a first degree relative who had also been imprisoned, which was in the vast majority of cases a father or a brother. Just under

90% of the sample had been imprisoned previously with an average of 10.3 separate sentences of imprisonment. Alcohol and drug misuse was also characteristic of the sample with 19% reporting they had an alcohol problem and 86% of the group using cannabis, heroin, L.S.D., amphetamines, ecstasy and cocaine.

Further knowledge of the characteristics of Irish prisoners can be gleaned from a sample description in a recidivism study conducted by O'Donnell *et al*, (2008). That study presented some social and demographic attributes of those released from custody in Ireland during a four-year period, 2001-2004. The vast majority were male (93%) and unmarried (82%). While the average age of the sample was 30, 15% were less than 21 years old, 44% were aged between 21 and 29 years and 41% were 30 years and over. Fifty-four per cent of the sample had not sat any state examinations and more than half the sample (52%) were unemployed just prior to their most recent period of imprisonment.

An account of the characteristics of the present research study's participants at the time they were interviewed, including their gender and age profile, the communities from which the group originated as well as the communities to which the participants returned to from prison will now be presented. This will be followed by an account of their families of origin, parental status and their relationship status. It will also present the participants' circumstances at the time of interview, such as accommodation status, employment status and level of education. An account of their exposure to imprisonment and the length of time they were on release at the time of interview will then be presented (see Table 1). This will be followed by an outline of the group's self-reported level of alcohol and drug use.

Characteristics of the Research Group

The sample consisted of 48 males and six females broadly reflecting the gendered nature of imprisonment in Ireland where typically women make up approximately 3.5% of the overall prison population[1]. Participants ranged in age from 19-63 years old with a mean age of 32.8 years. Almost half of the sample (*n=25*) was aged between 19-29 years old; just over 33% (*n=18*) was aged between 30-39 years old; and a little over one-fifth (*n=11*) was aged between 40-63 years old.

Reflecting the broadly homogeneous nature of the population in Ireland, which at the time the interviews took place was more than 87% Irish (CSO, 2008), the participant group as a whole was homogenous with no racial disparity. Almost 80% (*n=43*), of the participants were native "Corkonians". The remainder were from the bordering counties of Limerick (*n=2*), Tipperary (*n=2*), and Waterford (*n=1*), while a small number came from further afield including Dublin (*n=2*), Northern Ireland (*n=1*), Scotland (*n=1*), Poland (*n=1*) and Lithuania (*n=1*). Both the Polish and the Lithuanian participants had sufficient competency in the English language for the purpose of the interview.

With the exception of one case, all of the participants were living in Cork city (*n=48*) or in villages or towns in County Cork (*n=5*) at the time of interview. For those who had migrated from rural areas to reside in Cork city, a majority related their decision to the availability of social support services that did not exist in rural Ireland. Previous studies have focused on the reintegration process in larger urban centres, (Maruna, 2004). Locating the current research in the tightly defined geographical location of Cork, attempts to shed light on the impact of the local or even parochial factors on the reintegration process that were conveyed in the narratives of the participants. Though Cork is the largest county in the Republic of Ireland with a total population of 481,295,

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[1] Irish Penal Reform Trust http://www.iprt.ie/women-offenders. [Accessed 7 November, 2012].

the city of Cork, Ireland's second largest city has a population of 119,418 which is less than one quarter that of Dublin city's population, the nation's capital.

As outlined in Chapter Two, four areas in Cork were identified by the Irish government in 2001 for their disadvantaged status. It is noteworthy that more than half of the participants (*n=28*) identified one of these areas as their community of origin. Of those, 15 returned to live in these areas when they were released from prison. Such findings reflect those of previous Irish research, which found that prisoners are at least three times more likely to come from the most, as opposed to the least deprived areas (O'Mahony, 1997; O'Donnell *et al.*, 2007). The challenges that the reintegration of former prisoners poses for the communities they return to includes the need for available services to deal with housing, including the provision of transitional or supported accommodation for those released without a place to live; training and employment; problematic alcohol and drug use as well as services directed to mental health issues. That disproportionately high numbers of former prisoners return to areas already identified for their disadvantage further increases the burden for such communities as they are forced to bear the brunt of the social problems accompanying released prisoners on their return home (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2007).

Almost 67% (*n=36*) of the participants said they were raised in two parent families. One fifth of the sample (*n=11*) said that they were raised in single parent homes with a further 13% (*n=7*) indicating that they were raised outside the family home, either with their grandparents (*n=4*) or in foster care (*n=3*). Regardless of family structure, the mother was the family figure mentioned most frequently as the primary source of support and nurture in the home as they were growing up and for some, this remained the case throughout their lives.

More than half the participants (*n*=30) indicated that they were parents. Of the males who indicated that they were parents (*n*=27), just three (11%) of them were living with their children at the time of interview. Almost 63% (*n*=17) said that they had no contact with their children while the remaining ten (7%) explained that they had occasional contact with them. One participant indicated that his child had been placed for adoption. Of the three females who were mothers, one of whom was also pregnant at the time of interview, they said their children were in foster care, with in one instance, the foster parents being the children's grandparents.

A clear lack of close interpersonal relationships with a significant other was apparent in the group as a whole. Just over 68% (*n*=37) of the entire group indicated that they were single, including two who were divorced and five who described their status as 'separated'. Only two participants were in a stable marital relationship. A further six participants indicated that they were co-habiting with their girlfriends and nine participants reported that they had an ongoing relationship with a significant other.

In total, almost 84% (*n*=31) of those who described themselves as single were homeless at the time of interview. This finding resonates with the findings of a recent survey conducted by the Central Statistics Office in 2011, which found that of the 3,351 homeless persons aged 15 and over on census night, two-thirds of them were single in comparison to 42% of the general population. Furthermore, in comparison to the general population composing of 6% separated or divorced persons, the homeless population in this study consisted of almost 17% asserting the same status.[2]

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[2] Homeless persons in Ireland. A Special Census Report. 6 September, 2012.
http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/documents/homelesspersonsinireland/Homeless%20persons%20in%20Ireland%20A%20special%20Census%20report.pdf

Housing Status

One of the most notable features of the participants' circumstances at the time of interview was that over 57% (*n=31*) of the entire group were homeless. The definition of 'homeless' used in this thesis is broader than the definition provided in the Housing Act, 1988[3] insofar as it includes those living temporarily with friends or family members because they had nowhere else to go when they were released from prison (*n=3*). Anderson (1997) notes that official definitions of homelessness often fail to consider individuals' own perceptions of whether they are homeless or not. While Carlen's (1996) study found participants equating homelessness with "rooflessness" (*ibid.* :104), the three participants in this study referred to above, identified themselves as homeless on the research questionnaire, albeit that they conveyed during their interviews that they had a temporary living arrangement in place.   The homeless figure here also includes those who, at the time of interview were in residential alcohol or drug rehabilitation centres (*n=14*), without any accommodation arrangements in place following the completion of their rehabilitative courses. Of those identified as homeless, almost one quarter (*n=13*), were sleeping rough and accessing "bed nights"[4] in a homeless shelter on an *ad hoc* basis. One participant was residing temporarily in Bed and Breakfast accommodation because due to the nature of his offending (arson), he was not permitted access to hostel accommodation.

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[3] Section 2 of The Housing Act, 1988 states that "A person shall be regarded by a housing authority as being homeless for the purposes of this Act if- (a) there is no accommodation available which, in the opinion of the authority, he, together with any other person who normally resides with him or who might reasonably be expected to reside with him, can reasonably occupy or remain in occupation of, or (b) he is living in a hospital, county home, night shelter or other such institution, and is so living because he has no accommodation of the kind referred to in *paragraph (a),* and he is, in the opinion of the authority, unable to provide accommodation from his own resources."

[4] Due to the strain on services for homeless people in Cork city at the time the interviews took place, the main homeless shelter there were operating a policy of providing "bed nights" to those in most need of respite from sleeping on the streets which typically amounted to no more than two or three consecutive nights.

Seven of the participants were living in private rental accommodation, a further four participants were renting from the city council and just one of the research participants was a homeowner. At the time of interview, a little over one fifth of the participants (*n=*11) were residing with their parents in the family home with the majority of them indicating during the interviews that this was an interim arrangement until they had secured their own independent living arrangements.

These findings demonstrate that the lack of housing presented as a primary feature for the majority of the group, potentially leading to a loss of both social and personal identity, self-worth and self-efficacy (Buckner, Bassuk and Zimba, 1993). Furthermore, prisoners have highlighted the difficulty of accessing employment when homeless (Seymour and Costello, 2005). How homelessness affects the prospect of reintegration, from the perspectives of this research group, will be discussed in Chapter Six: Part III.

At the time of interview, almost 80% (*n=*43) of the group were unemployed or explained that they were unable to work on disability grounds. One participant explained that his disability was physical in nature, while, others explained that they were in receipt of a disability allowance[5] under the social welfare scheme, because they were suffering from depression or other psychological and mental health issues. A small number disclosed that they sometimes undertook casual labour or odd jobs through the black economy to supplement their social welfare payments. Just three participants said they were in fulltime employment and in a further eight cases, participants were engaged in state sponsored employment training programmes, such as FÁS, or in fulltime education.

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[5] Under the scheme, payments are made to those who after a medical examination are found to be substantially restricted in undertaking work that would otherwise be suitable for a person of that age, experience and qualifications.

In line with other studies of offenders and the prison population, (O'Mahony, 1997; Healy, 2012) a history of early school leaving was a feature of the research sample. Almost 67% had left school at aged 16 or younger with just over 20% of the total sample leaving school at age 13 years or less. Many reported, like Denis, a 35 year old participant that they were "thrown out of school for messin' " or because they were considered "trouble makers". Some participants reported that they were unable to make the transition from primary to secondary school, finding the latter environment to be too complicated to navigate in comparison to having just one teacher and one classroom in the Primary school. Alex, a 19 year old participant explained his transition thus: "I was grand in primary school like 'cause all the teachers loved me 'cause I was grand but then when I went into secondary school with all these other older teachers, older women, narky cunts like, and they were nigglin' at me".

Just four participants had been awarded the Leaving Certificate (equivalent to A Level) and less than half the participant group had gained the qualification of Junior Certificate, Group Certificate, GCSE or, in one instance, an O-Level. In total, 17% (*n*=9) of the participants indicated that they attended school while in prison, and in two instances they received a third level qualification there.

Exposure to Imprisonment

Almost 65% (*n*=35) of the research group were imprisoned before they reached 18 years of age. Almost half of this group served prison terms in Saint Patrick's Institution, which previously served as a medium security place of detention for 16 and 17 year old males held on remand or for trial[6]. Others reported that they had served time in Fort Mitchel (Spike Island) that had accommodated young people between the ages of 16

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[6] The National Children Detention Facility was constructed in November 2014 as a place of detention for those not yet 18 years old. The facility has not yet opened and at the time of writing, children were still being held at St. Patrick's Institution and Wheatfield Place of Detention. http://www.iprt.ie/contents/2714 [Accessed 14, March, 2015].

and 24 until its closure in 2004. Because this institution was geographically located close to Cork City it was, according to some participants, less of a burden for those who otherwise would have been detained in Dublin by way of maintaining contact with their families and friends. The remainder of the group 33% (*n*=18) was aged between 18-29 years old when first imprisoned and one participant was 55 years old when he commenced his first prison sentence.

In an attempt to establish the overall extent of time participants spent in prison, every effort was made to chart a "timeline of periods of imprisonment". Participants took great care to recall their earliest experiences of incarceration and from there a timeline to their most recent term of imprisonment was drawn up during the interview process. Notes were annotated on the research questionnaires to document such recollections. While this is not purported to provide a fully comprehensive and accurate account of every participant's history of incarceration, cognisant of the limitations inherent in self-reporting and recall, it does help to provide some degree of representation as to their prison experiences over time which for some included periods of imprisonment in a number of different institutions in the Irish Prison system as well as a number of institutions abroad, mostly in the United Kingdom.

Each separate period of incarceration was added to the next where it applied, to give an overall account of 'prison time' either on remand or under sentence, accrued by each participant. The group's collective experience of imprisonment ranged from two months to twenty-three years with a mean of 66.53704 months and a standard deviation of 66.28.[7] Just over 20% (*n*=11) of the group had accumulated less than one year in imprisonment in total, and just over 46% (*n*=25) had accumulated between one year and five years of imprisonment. More than 33% (*n*=18) of the entire group served five years

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[7] Calculated in months, the Mean=66.53704; Standard Deviation=66.28916; Variance in Standard Deviation = 4394.25332; Population Standard Deviation=65.67251; Variance (Population Standard Deviation) = 4312.87826

or more in prison. Of this group, 18% (*n=10*) had accumulated between five and ten years imprisonment and 15% (*n=8*) had accumulated more than ten years imprisonment. The vast majority of participants had served repeated periods of incarceration under sentence. In total, 43% (*n=23*) of the sample had served five or more sentences, 40% (*n=22*) had served between two and four sentences and just 17% (*n=9*) had served just one custodial sentence.

Length of Time on Release

Participants were asked to indicate the date they were released from their most recent prison term so as to ascertain the length of time they were on release at the time of interview. Given that the primary focus of the study was the process of reintegration within a local context it was necessary to cast the net wide and recruit former prisoners to discuss their attempts at reintegration without specifying from within a particular timeframe. Therefore, there was wide disparity within the group with regard to the period of time they were on release and hence how far they had progressed with reintegration.

The vast majority of the group — 69% (*n=37*) had been on release for less than two years prior to the interviews taking place. Of the 37, five had been released for just one month, 16% (*n=11*) had been on release for between 2-5 months, 19% (*n=13*) had been on release for 6-12 months and just over 11% (*n=8*) had been on release for 12-23 months. The remainder of the group, just over 31% (*n=17*) had been on release for two years or more. During the course of one interview it emerged that a participant, though satisfying the overall research participant criteria was not an ideal candidate for the purpose of the research because it had been 32 years since he had been released from prison. Nevertheless a decision was made to retain him in the study for a number of reasons. Firstly, because he was homeless at the time of interview, the question arose as

to whether this was a consequence of his prior history of imprisonment. Secondly, the fact that he had not returned to prison in the intervening years presented as an opportunity to gain insights into what aided him towards reintegration including his experiences of the local community dimension.

The range of time spent on release, from just one month, to a year, or a number of years is advantageous to satisfying the research objectives insofar as the process of reintegration can be understood from the perspectives of the research subjects from their disparate vantage points. A list of participants, the total amount of time they spent in prison and the length of time they were on release at the time of interview, is provided in Table 1.

Alcohol and Drug Use

Participants were not directly asked about matters relating to alcohol or drugs but during the course of their interviews many reported their experiences and challenges with regard to these substances. Just over 72% (*n=39*) cited drug addiction (their own words) as a significant problem that had impacted negatively on their lives. At the time of interview more than one quarter of the total research sample (*n=14*) said they were still actively taking illegal drugs, while 22 participants indicated that they were now "clean" and no longer taking illegal substances. Three research participants stated at the time of interview that they were making attempts to access support services with a view to addiction recovery. At the time of interview, a little over 22% (*n=12*) of the research group were attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings on a daily basis which may indicate the severity of their alcohol misuse and the level of support they needed at that time.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a profile of the research participant group with a view to illustrating the group persona at the time of interview. Firstly, the gendered nature of imprisonment in Ireland was reflected among the participants as well as the homogenous nature of the general population. Secondly, the local aspect of the study is apparent given that the vast majority of the group originated in Cork City, and all but six of the research participants returned to the city after their release from prison. While it can be argued that the vast majority of prisoners and former prisoners having low-level educational attainment, high levels of unemployment and on-going drug and alcohol misuse are a marginalised group, the research participants in this study presented at the higher end of the scale of marginalisation given their predominantly homeless status. Despite the fact that crime is not an inevitable consequence of homelessness, the group had experienced a high level of exposure to imprisonment especially through repeat periods of incarceration. Participants' background characteristics pertaining to their lives before imprisonment will be presented in Chapter Six: Part I.

CHAPTER SIX

Empirical Findings and Analysis

Introduction

Chapter Six presents the empirical data, findings and discussion of this research study. The chapter is set out in three sections that include: Life Before Imprisonment; Experiences of Imprisonment and The Strains of Reintegration. While the vast majority of prisoners are generally a marginalised group, those who participated in this research presented at the higher end of marginalisation given the high level of homelessness reported by them at the time of interview (see Chapter Five). Part I of this chapter will reveal from participants' accounts, their backgrounds and early life experiences before they were imprisoned. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate the extent of disadvantage and adversity they had already encountered before becoming embroiled in the criminal justice system. Part II will outline participants' experiences of imprisonment that not only further exacerbated their marginalised status but also in the majority of cases offered little or no opportunity to prepare for release and reintegration. Part III will present the reality of life after imprisonment from the perspectives of the research participants. This includes accounts of the obstacles and barriers to reintegration followed by accounts of what participants found beneficial to them after their release from prison.

Part I: Life Before Imprisonment

Part I presents a contextual account of the participants' lives, describing their backgrounds, including their homes, their communities and the many personal challenges and traumas they encountered prior to imprisonment. Three substantive issues emerged in the data with regard to the early lives of the research participants that broadly reflect the findings of previous research on the prison population in Ireland and the characteristics of those who become embroiled in the criminal justice system (O'Mahony, 1997; O'Donnell *et al.*, 2007). Firstly, it was clear from participants' narratives that the majority of them had experienced poverty in their homes compounded by other stress involving alcoholism, domestic violence and familial involvement in the criminal justice system. Such a background of socio-economic deprivation has been recognised as a major factor in offending (O'Mahony, 1997; O'Donnell *et al.*, 2007). Participants' accounts of their communities of origin were described in terms of socio-cultural disadvantage, under-education and unemployment. O'Mahony (2001) argues that communities demonstrating such disadvantage can be seen to be criminogenic environments where offending is both tolerated and encouraged. Finally, participants' accounts of their early life offending were intertwined with accounts of alcohol and substance misuse before they reached the age of maturity. Research has established links between alcohol and drug misuse and offending (National Crime Council, 2002; Hayes and O'Reilly, 2007).

Poverty in the Home

Almost half (*n=25*) of the research participants originally came from communities already identified in government policy and analysis as disadvantaged (RAPID, 2001). In this section participants' accounts of their perspectives of the disadvantage they experienced growing up are presented. Participants' narratives revealed the poverty they

experienced in their homes. Peter, aged 35 described how he became aware of his family's poverty saying: "we hadn't enough money, or, do you know, we weren't like the other people on the road who had money I suppose". Similarly Brendan aged 48 described the awareness of being poor by saying:

> I remember looking at the next-door neighbours who would have a car. We didn't have a car you know. We used to have old hand-me-down clothes, you know, and we'd have "smiley shoes" — the toes would be cut out of them. Do you know what I mean? We didn't have anything like.

Conflict between parents leading to marital separation was also reported as contributing to poverty in the home. This was described by Evan, aged 25 as follows:

> It wasn't much of a head-start. My father just left like. He wouldn't give my mam no money or anything. He wouldn't support us . . . My brother even had to go to the priest when he was a young fella. My mother tried to get support off the priests. Do you know how embarrassing that is? And then for the priest to say no like, that he could do nothing for her. Do you know how embarrassing that is?

Alcoholism in the Home

Experiences of poverty also being compounded by alcoholism were indicated by just over 11% (*n=6*) of the group. This was outlined by Ben, aged 49 as follows: "we didn't have any money at home. We were poor. My father was a drunk". Brendan, aged 48 also explained poverty at home being related to alcoholism by saying: "my father used to drink quite a lot, and he was on disability, so money was never available". He described how he and his siblings coped with their father's alcoholism as:

> Survival. You had to. You'd have to read situations. And then, if it was seven o'clock in the evening and my dad was in under the influence of alcohol, right, you'd know like. You'd know to sneak out the back door or get out the window fast. You'd read the situation. You could tell by the tone of his voice and stuff.

Graham, aged 36 also described growing up in "an alcoholic home" saying: "My father was an alcoholic. My mother was an alcoholic. My two brothers are and my two sisters are". Over 31% (*n=17*) of the group also reported that family relationships were negatively impacted by alcoholism. Jacob, aged 26 said: "My dad was an alcoholic and

we just fell out". Similarly, Gerard, aged 39 said of his father: "I've no relationship with my dad. That broke down a long time ago". Evan, aged 25 described his father as "a bastard", saying: "he drank a lot . . . there's sometimes I wishes he was dead".

Domestic Violence

Participants' accounts of alcoholism in the home were often interwoven with accounts of experiences of domestic violence. Almost one-fifth of the group (*n=10*) said that as children, they had witnessed such incidences of domestic violence between their parents that often resulted in the police coming to their homes. Some reported that their first interaction with the police was initiated by such incidents as recounted by Brendan, aged 48 who said: "They'd be up arresting my father for being abusive or being mad in the house do you know. There'd be a lot of violence and stuff." Likewise, Peter, aged 35 explained his experience as follows:

> I grew up do you know I suppose with an alcoholic father. He was an alcoholic and violent and a lot of my childhood memories would be about guards coming to the door you know. Coming to the house for to stop my dad hitting my mam.

Melissa, aged 22 described the violence she experienced growing up saying: "She [mother] used to batter us, fucking everything like. Have partners in the gaff with us at home. And the things we've seen, a kid shouldn't see like". Evan, aged 25 also recalled childhood memories of his father's alcoholism coupled with domestic violence when he said: "He was drunk all the time and he used to be beating me mam and all that shit like. So when I was a young fella like, growing up as a kid I was watching all that stuff like". Furthermore, Vincent, aged 37 explained how some of his own involvement with the criminal justice system stemmed from the violence in his own home when he said: "one day I just got sick and tired of it, and threw him (father) down the stairs and he ended up in hospital with slipped discs".

Sexual Abuse

A small number of participants (*n=4*) reported a history of sexual abuse. Declan, aged 42 having been placed in an industrial school as a child said: "I think it was [industrial school] that hardened me to tell you the truth, because I was abused in [there]". Having engaged with a sexual abuse counsellor in later years, Declan was awarded financial recompense from the "Redress Board". He further stated: "I blew that on cocaine and drugs you know. It was gone within 11 months. That fast". Melissa, aged 22 recalled her experience of sexual abuse in the home as follows:

> Do you know like, my mother there like, like she was letting one of her boy-friends rape me and everything like. She didn't leave him do it, she wasn't watching him doing it or anything, but she knew like what was going on and everything.

Similarly, Graham, aged 36 said: "There were things that happened to me when I was a child that I can't come to terms with . . . there's a lot of childhood matters that I haven't dealt with. Em (long pause) mainly sexual abuse, stuff like that."

Family Trauma

Family break-up in early childhood, alongside less common family units, such as being raised by one's grandparents or an aunt, were common features of the family backgrounds for the research group. It also emerged from the data that over 20% (*n=11*) of participants had experienced the premature early adult deaths of one or more siblings or close friends. A common thread that ran through participants' accounts of their siblings' deaths was a profound sense of sadness and loss. Melissa, aged 22, when asked about the relationship as it now stood with her family at the time of interview said that the only two people in the family that she was ever close to — her brother and her sister, were now both dead. Her sister had been "found dead" just four weeks before the

time of interview. Some participants explained that they turned to drink or drugs in the wake of such tragedies.

Andy, aged 20 spoke of his drug habit accelerating after his brother had died. He said: "I went crazy for a few months like. It made me go way worse. I started usin' way more drugs. I went mad then for about two years after that like". Another notable feature was the profoundly tragic and sometimes violent circumstances of the deaths of loved ones experienced by the participants. Joe, aged 24 described the effect the death of his father had on him saying:

> My dad passed away in '96. Hung himself in front of me and that was another thing that had to do with me getting into trouble. I was 13 at the time and my younger sister was watching it as well. I kinda went off the rails then that time.

Alex, aged 19 reported the trauma he suffered as he witnessed one of his friends die as follows:

> We were always friends and it had some sort of an effect on me. I seen it happen. I was about from here to that wall away when I was lookin' at it like. I seen him roarin' from the stabbin'. I seen me brother nearly die in front of me as well like. Me older brother. Me idol like.

Peter, aged 35, also recalled the effect an unexpected death had on him, having lost his baby some years earlier to "cot death":

> When we lost the child I started turning back again to the drugs. I just couldn't get the answers really do you know. I just couldn't fuckin' understand really to be quite honest with you. My girlfriend was a good mother and she did all the things right and I couldn't understand why that happened do you know. Do you know, I started blaming myself. Thinkin' that's what I deserved you know.

Family History of Imprisonment

It has been noted that in some neighbourhoods children are more likely to know someone involved in the criminal justice system than to know someone who is employed in a profession such as law or medicine (Hagan and Dinovitzer, 1999). The

collateral damage children suffer due to a parent's imprisonment has been described in terms of emotional and behavioural problems, and the loss of human and social capital (*ibid*.) "Due to the spatial concentration of incarceration, certain neighbourhoods are impacted more than others by the removal and return of offenders. This means that children are affected not only by incarceration in their own homes but also by incarceration in the community-at-large" (Rose and Clear, 2002:183). It emerged from the data on the research questionnaire that almost 60% (*n=32*), of the participants in this study had family members who had previously served prison terms. These family members were exclusively male, including participants' fathers, brothers, uncles, cousins and in two cases, their own sons.

While the literature highlights that family support can play a pivotal role in the process of successful reintegration (Healy, 2012), by providing living accommodation, material support and encouragement with regard to addressing alcohol and drug misuse (see Part III) it became evident in this study that many of the participants' families had very limited economic resources available to them. This was compounded by further strains such as alcoholism, domestic violence and fractured family relationships.

Community of Origin

Participants were asked to describe the communities they grew up in so as to contextualise their own offending and early involvement with the criminal justice system. Almost half of the group (*n=26*) described their communities as dangerous with widespread offending and crime. Neighbours going to prison appeared to be a common experience among the group. Sam, aged 37 described this as follows by saying: "Half of my terrace has been in Cork Prison as well, so it's just a troublesome terrace like". Ger, aged 41 described his neighbourhood in a similar fashion saying: "'twas all like just goin' into jail and comin' out of jail". Likewise Donal, aged 38 said of his

neighbourhood: "There's nothing there like, just jail, crime, drugs, jail, crime, drink and drugs".

Describing the level of criminal offending in the area where he grew up, Alan, aged 40 said: "everybody was doing what everybody else was doing like. Cars was the main thing and that's all we all done, was took cars". Andy, aged 20 explained what he and his friends experienced when 'joyriding' was commonplace in his neighbourhood as follows:

> There was never nothin' good about the place. Only, years ago when the robbed cars used to be around. Inside in my terrace, they used to always come in to my terrace and wreck them inside in my terrace. Yeah, I used to be out the window and we used to be cheering them on, yeeeeee. And then after a while I started robbin' cars myself . . . Or else I used batter rocks at the car, at the guards, at the guards' car like, then they used to just call in the Paddy Wagon and we used to cause riots as well do you know what I mean, upset the whole place.

Ger, aged 41 believed that crime and offending in the neighbourhood was the consequence of a lack of facilities for young people there saying:

> First you'd see the lads out in the woods and out in the fields drinkin' out of kegs that had been stolen from the pub like. There was nothin' else there really, do you know. There was always the sports like, the hurlin' and the football like but there was nothin' else really. That's why the joyridin' went out of hand up there as well like, 'cause there was nothin' there.

Jimmy, aged 21 described where he lived as "rough". This was further described by Alex, aged 19 when he said:

> if you walked into my area now, it's very rough. It's bad like. Burnt-out cars all around the place. Boarded-up houses, burnt-out houses. Little fellas going around with raggy clothes, smokin' hash. I had to get out like. And whatever I end up doin' I ain't goin' back.

Other participants expressed the sense of danger they felt in their communities. Valerie aged 24 described it as follows:

> It's very bad. There's people climbing in your window at night time. And then you have them fightin' outside with swords, do you know what I mean and hammers. Then across the road you have shotguns fired from windows. That's not a nice place to bring up kids.

Having left the town he had been raised in, Don, aged 31 said: "It's a dangerous town. My brother was murdered there and I know who done it like. The man is on remand now in custody for the murder. No, I'll never go back there". Robert, aged 25 also spoke of the danger he felt in his community in the following terms:

> It's rough. They're not nice people up there. It's just rough like. They don't care. They don't have respect for anything, do you know what I mean? They're animals like and they don't care about, they don't care what they do like, do you know. It's hard to explain like. They just don't care if there were kids inside in a house, if there was anything, they don't care, they'd, they'd, they'd still come in an do whatever, do you get what I'm sayin' to you? Just a different breed of people do you know what I mean? You'd have to be up there and see yourself to understand. You couldn't let the kids outside the front with joy riders and robbed cars goin' round the place all night. Just wasn't safe like. Kids are brought up faster here. You can't leave them out the front, you can't, do you know.

Participants' accounts of offending in their neighbourhoods also included references to gangs. Conor, aged 34 said: "There's gangs hanging around like you know, and from my experience growing up, where there's gangs there's trouble, like you know". Alex, aged 19 gave an account of the seriousness of gang activity in the town where he grew up as follows:

> There's rough estates there, yeah. There's a gang kind of thing going on between [neighbourhood] and [neighbourhood]. Yeah, there's people after been shot dead up there like. They're callin' it "Mini" now. It's been called in the news "Mini-[city]" now sure. It's very rough like. [My town] is gone like [city] now. There's heroin. Heroin is all over the place do you know. They're shootin' each other like mad. The [neighbourhood] gang goes up into [another neighbourhood] to have a meetin'. About 20 of them meet in a field. They meet at one end of the field and they all run at each other with bats and hurleys and batter each other. Then as they grow up they're takin' drugs. Guns then starts getting' involved. Then older people. Now there's a big gangland thing. I was never involved in that luckily enough like, never got involved in it. It's like the Bronx man.

Participants also gave accounts of a culture of drink and drugs among young people in their neighbourhoods. This included references of "drinking on the streets with the boys" (Jenny, aged 22) and wandering into other neighbourhoods "getting mixed-up in the wrong crowds" (Luke, aged 27) to get alcohol and drugs. Participants also described how their communities deteriorated over time. Regarding the offending in his

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neighbourhood, Hugh, aged 29 said: "the Corporation have been involved and the Guards have been involved". Evan, aged 25 who also lives in that neighbourhood said: "thugs are still hanging around the streets, they're still drinkin' on corners, they're still robbin' cars and they're still shoplifting". While acknowledging that there is a community centre in his neighbourhood with facilities for young people, Matt aged 43 said: "you still have all the gangs hanging around, there's still a lot of them, so the community centre can't be all that good if they're still hanging around".

Explaining the effect that the influx of drugs has had on his neighbourhood, Hal, aged 22 said:

> The place is a shithole now. I tell you now. Though, 'twas grand growing up. You'd have the best of craic (fun), the whole lot. It's just lately the place is fucked from drugs, do you know what I mean? Well, all my age now and older is after kinda getting' into the heroin and what have you. Ah, it's tearin' people apart like, do you know what I mean. It's tearin' friends and families apart. A friend of mine now robbed three of my friends' gaff, one of which was my cousin's gaff, so like he's after been excommunicated there now from the rest of us, do you know. And of course he's gonna be killed when we see him. But it was grand growin' up though.

Early Onset Offending

More than 80% (*n=45*) of the participants reported that they were involved in criminal activity before they reached 18 years of age. Of those 45 participants, almost three quarters of them said that they were under 16 years old when their criminal activity commenced. This resonates with previous research on the offending histories of prisoners in Ireland. O'Mahony (1997) in his analysis of 108 prisoners in Mountjoy found that 31% had received their first conviction before the age of 14 and 64% before the age of 17. Another notable feature of participants' upbringing was that more than one quarter of the whole research group (*n=14*) said that they had spent a period of time in residential care as children. This data was gleaned from the research questionnaire where participants indicated if they had ever spent time in residential secure units such

as industrial schools or reformatory schools. Research has established higher rates of homelessness amongst individuals with a history of care than those in the general population as a whole (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993; Anderson and Tulloch, 2000). Furthermore, a link between leaving care, homelessness and crime has also been found (Kelleher, Kelleher and Corbett, 2000). The high rate of homelessness amongst the research group in this study at the time of interview (see Chapter Five) and a significant proportion of participants having a history of care, supports the literature in this regard.

Young people who come in contact with the criminal justice system are more likely to come from families that have been disrupted by separation or other change (Thornberry *et al.*, 1999) and from areas characterised by high levels of deprivation (O'Mahony, 2002). Theft, criminal damage, vehicle offences, public order and alcohol related offences are those most commonly recorded in relation to youth offending in Ireland (Report on the Youth Justice Review, 2005). The accounts of early involvement in criminal activity reported by the research participants below broadly reflect this.

Accounts of early offending included some participants reporting that they were less than ten years old when they committed their first offence. These offences were commonly referred to as "petty-crime" or "anti-social behaviour" that included: shoplifting; breaking windows; vandalism on cars; and theft from houses or neighbours' garden-sheds. A predominant view of early offending that emerged in the data was that it was not necessarily seen as crime but rather a source of "harmless fun" (Hugh, aged 29). It was further described as: "kids stuff — stealin' sweets, it wasn't actually law-breaking, well it was, but not serious stuff . . . It was innocent stuff" (Bart, aged 35).

'Falling in With the Wrong Crowd'

Negative peer influence is commonly found in conjunction with youth offending (IASD, 2005). This was evident in this study whereby many of the participants attributed their offending behaviour to "falling in with the wrong crowd" (Bart, aged 35). Participants described how they imitated what those older than them in their neighbourhoods were doing because they seemed to be having more fun — such as drinking, robbing people, breaking into houses and taking cars. Participants also described how they wanted to "fit in" with their peers. This was reflected by James, aged 35 when he said: "they were all doing it. Now I'm not blaming them or anything, but the peer pressure was like to fit in".

'Drink, drugs, partying, out gettin' arrested'

Drug and alcohol misuse have been identified as significant criminogenic factors in offending behaviour for both adults and young people (Newburn, 2007). Furthermore, while the prevalence of alcohol and drug misuse has been increasing amongst youth across Europe in general, a recent report found that Irish students reported drinking a third more on their latest drinking day than the European average (Hibell, 2012). Research has shown that individuals who begin their alcohol consumption before the age of 15 are four times more likely to develop an alcohol dependence at some stage in their lives compared to those who begin their alcohol consumption at age 20 or older (Grant and Dawson, 1998). Considering the high level of alcohol and drug use experienced by the participants in this study at the time of interview (see Chapter Five) it was not surprising that the vast majority of them gave accounts of drinking and taking drugs before they reached adulthood.

Over 83% (n=45) of the research participants reported that they began consuming alcohol — typically referred to as "gattin'" either as pre-teens or teenagers and over a

third (*n=18*) of the research group gave accounts of experimenting with substances that included: glue-sniffing; sniffing petrol; smoking marijuana; taking ecstasy; cocaine; LSD; heroin and smarties (prescription medication). Participants' narratives indicated that drinking and taking drugs was part of teen culture in their neighbourhoods that was facilitated by local drug dealers who hung around the street corners. The pressure to conform to this culture was descried by Hal, aged 22 as follows: "After turning 16, that was about the time to start. It was about getting into the scene like. Goin' to the pub and then the club where you can bring Es or coke or whatever you know". Weekend activity was commonly described as "the same thing over and over — drink, drugs, partying, out getting' arrested" (Becky, aged 27). While the majority of participants in this study indicated that they were early school leavers (see Chapter Five), some indicated that they were expelled from school as a result of their drinking and drug habits that included going to school "stoned" and "assaulting teachers".

A common theme that emerged in participants' narratives with regard to their early onset alcohol and drug habits was that they were inextricably linked to offending and criminal damage. While theft was commonly referred to as a means of acquiring money to buy alcohol and drugs participants also indicated that as their level of alcohol and drug use increased so too did their offending behaviour accelerate. This was outlined by Melissa, aged 22 as follows: "It was robbing — smash and grab. Robbin' cars, assaulting Guards . . . blowing in windows at 2 o'clock in the morning. Robbing phone shops. It was mental. It really was". Similarly, Brian, aged 27 said:

> I never did anything without drink or drugs in me, you know. I wouldn't do it at all you know, unless I was drinking or taking drugs and I needed money to get drink and drugs. That's the only reason I'd steal something you know, but it's not me, do you know what I mean. I know for a fact, it's not me to do all that.

Coming to the Attention of the Police

While alcohol is increasingly prevalent in the offending of young people (An Garda Síochána Annual Report, 2004), Kilkelly (2006) has noted that in comparison to adults, young people fall foul of the criminal law because both purchasing and consuming alcohol by those less than 18 years old is an offence. Furthermore, young people can often accumulate more than one charge from a single incident (McPhillips, 2005) — such as car crime, which would include offences ranging from criminal damage to driving without a driver's licence or insurance. Young males aged between 14 and 17 are three times more likely to be stopped and searched by a police officer than 18 year-olds, and those under 18 are more than twice as likely to be searched if they come from socio-economically disadvantaged areas (Ellison, 2001). Although there is only limited knowledge on young people's attitudes towards the Irish police, some conclusions have been drawn from a small number of studies. Research on the impact and effectiveness of the Garda Special Projects conducted by Bowden and Higgins (2000) revealed generally negative attitudes towards the police force by more than half of the project participants. Hamilton, Radford and Jarman, (2004) found young people's experiences of the police in Northern Ireland were predominantly negative. They cited disrespectfulness and/or impoliteness as the main criticisms. International standards encourage discretion to be used at different stages of the criminal process from diversion to prosecution, therefore how the police interact with young people matters — in that "discretion is moulded by things like the attitude and demeanour of young people in public spaces, their physical and social features and how they interact with the police directly" (Kilkelly, 2006:112). Furthermore, young people, particularly those from social housing backgrounds are also more likely to be over-policed (Ionann Management Consultants, 2004).

Early attitudinal problems with the police were apparent in participants' narratives in this study, particularly in relation to those who encountered the police for the first time in their own homes as a result of domestic violence. Peter, aged 35 outlined his feelings about the police as follows:

> I always had a hatred for the guards really, do you know. From a very young age, very young age . . . I always just hated the guards and I always thought it was me against them, do you know, that they had something against my family . . . They would be calling to my door every week telling my mam like that I would have to control myself like do you know, or that I did something, or that my attitude was bad towards them.

Accounts of early offending and repeated involvement with the police was common in participants' narratives. This was described by Alex, aged 19 when he said:

> I started young like when I was just six or seven. I was always throwin' stones and puttin' in windows. That was the main thing 'til I got older. Then, blowin' in peoples windows and slashin' car tyres, robbin' houses, robbin' peoples sheds, robbin' cars. When I was fifteen I started getting arrested by the guards. I think there was nine weekends in a row I got arrested. Friday, Saturday and Sunday. I was getting arrested three nights a week, every week for about two months.

A further common theme that emerged in participants' accounts of their early interaction with the police was the sense of fun and excitement they derived from playing "cat and mouse" in their attempts to evade being caught for drinking on the streets, shouting at police officers, breaking their curfews and generally "acting the maggot" (Oisín, aged 28). Participants recalled that these minor infractions typically resulted in their being brought back to their family homes. Despite the fact that there was a high percentage of previous familial involvement with the criminal justice system amongst participants in this study (see Chapter Five) those who did report their families' reactions to their own initial interactions with law enforcement described them mainly in adverse terms. This was outlined by Alan, aged 40 who said: "it didn't go down well at all, with them knocking on the door all the time". Similarly, Bart, aged 35 recalled his first experience of the police coming to his house as follows:

> I remember the law called to the house, the local Garda you know, in a small community. And me father was a well respected man, do you know in the community. 'Twas a slap on the wrist kind of thing. Frightened the life out of me. It was a bitter pill to swallow at the time, on my behalf, bringing the law to the door.

Describing his parents' attempt to warn him as to the possible consequences of his offending behaviour, Robert, aged 25 said: "My mam and dad freaked out like. They brought me on a tour of the Garda station, down to the cells to show me what would happen if I kept on goin' the way I was goin'". Despite parental guidance as to the consequences of offending and police discretion in terms of diversion from the formal criminal justice system it was evident in participants' narratives that community factors including negative peer influences and the culture of alcohol and drugs involved them in anti-social behaviour that lead to more serious offending.

Implications of Early Life Adversity for Reintegration

The overarching theme that emerged in the data in Part I of this chapter was that the research group in attempting reintegration were doing so against a backdrop of a conglomerate of challenges and problems they had already encountered in their lives from the beginning. The three issues identified in the data that characterised participants' early lives included difficult family circumstances, socio-cultural disadvantage and exposure to alcohol and drugs leading to early onset offending.

Chaotic experiences of childhood and/or family dysfunction were characteristics of the research group as a whole with many having experienced poverty in the home compounded by alcoholism and domestic violence and in some instances, sexual abuse. Research has shown that difficult family circumstances and low levels of education are common amongst persistent offenders (Carroll *et al.*, 2007). A family history of imprisonment was also common among the group. The collateral consequences of

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imprisonment are especially consequential for the children of imprisoned parents who are already at risk when growing up in communities already characterised by disadvantage (Hagan and Dinovitzer, 1999; Farrall and Sparks, 2006). While the potential role of stable family relationships and community ties has been acknowledged as critical to successful reintegration through the reduction of recidivism (Home Office, 2004, 2006; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; Visher and Travis, 2003) the extent and effectiveness of support for offenders will vary according to the means available to families or communities (Mills and Codd, 2008). Furthermore, the pivotal role of social capital has been identified in encouraging desistance (Farrall, 2004, McNeill, 2004, 2006; Hagan and McCarthy, 1997; Sampson and Laub, 1993, Halpern, 2005). It has been suggested that the essence of social capital includes a social network, sharing a cluster of shared norms, values and expectations with sanctions in place to maintain such norms (Halpern, 2005, cited in Mills and Codd, 2008). Such were the experiences of poverty and disadvantage reported by the participants in this study situated within communities of exclusion and marginality that there was little evidence of adequate social capital available to them as they were growing up or that they could draw upon after their release from prison.

The data also revealed that the research group was exposed to a culture of alcohol and drugs in their local communities from an early age that not only impacted on their schooling but also ensnared them in the criminal justice net. That so many of the participants gave animated accounts of their early interactions with the police indicates that from a young age participants had a poor sense of the legitimacy of the criminal justice system. Research on young people coming before the courts in Ireland has indicated that in the majority of cases they come from local authority housing estates characterised by high unemployment; low levels of education; parental alcohol or drug misuse; and familial involvement in criminality (McLoughlin, Maunsell and O'Connell,

1999). The same research revealed that half the young people were engaged in substance abuse including alcohol with one-third of them involved in drug misuse. The majority of this group were described as having a serious problem with heroin. These findings were reinforced by a further study that found young people in trouble with the law are predominantly male (90%); originate from specific and recurring disadvantaged communities; do not live in two parent homes and have no engagement with mainstream education (Carroll, *et al.*, 2007). Furthermore, an analysis of young people in detention has found significantly high levels of mental and emotional disorders (Hayes and O'Reilly, 2007). Reports from that study found 37% of young people meeting diagnostic criteria for internalising disorders; 67% meeting the criteria for Conduct Disorder manifesting in the inability to perceive and manage emotions and 66% meeting the diagnostic criteria for a substance abuse related disorder. These findings are especially pertinent in light of the present study where a high level of mental health difficulties was found amongst the research participants (see Part III).

Part I: Summary

Part I of this chapter has presented participants' accounts of their early life experiences against a background of adversity and social exclusion before they became further marginalised for their involvement in the criminal justice system. Early life disadvantage was described in terms of poverty in the home that was often exacerbated by experiences of parental alcoholism and separation. A significant level of early childhood trauma was evident in the data that was demonstrated through accounts of witnessing domestic violence and the tragic premature deaths of loved ones. Socio-cultural disadvantage was depicted by participants in terms of living in communities where crime and anti-social behaviour was commonplace. The influence of negative peer pressure to fit in with such a culture was also apparent in participants' narratives

that included underage alcohol consumption and drug taking which led to an escalation in offending and more serious involvement with the criminal justice system. Moreover, because so many of the participants were found to be already outside the realm of mainstream society before they were imprisoned raises the question as to the aptness of the concept of reintegration given that few ever had any meaningful level of integration in their formative years. Against a backdrop of social exclusion and marginality compounded by low levels of education, excessive alcohol or illegal drug use and depleted reserves of social capital, Part II of this chapter will present an account of participants' experiences of imprisonment.

Part II: Experiences of Imprisonment

Introduction

Because the deprivation of liberty is such a profound interference in the lives of prisoners and their families, the principle that imprisonment be used as the sanction of last resort is widely promulgated (United Nations, 2006; Thornton Hall Project Review Group, 2011). Furthermore, prison sentences can prove counter-productive as a crime reduction and public safety measure (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002) because factors associated with offending including: lack of education; lack of employment; mental and physical health problems; lack of housing; drug and alcohol misuse and financial strains are further exacerbated by periods of imprisonment (*ibid.*).

Part II will portray the experience of imprisonment from the perspectives of the research participants in this study. It will begin by presenting accounts of how they adapted to the prison environment, including accounts of how participants maintained contact throughout their imprisonment with their families and friends. This will be followed by participants' accounts of the type of help or support that was available to them during their sentences including support and preparation for release. Reintegration presupposes that detention is organised in a manner that facilitates a return to normal living and working conditions (Parliamentary Assembly, 2006). The predominant theme that emerged in participants' narratives regarding their experience of imprisonment was the lack of any rehabilitative or reintegrative value they derived from their prison sentences. Rather, their accounts revealed that life in prison resembled more the chaos and adversity they had previously experienced on the outside.

Adaptation to the Prison Environment

How a prisoner adapts to imprisonment can have significant implications for life post-release (Dhami, Ayton and Loewenstein, 2007). Failure to abide by prison rules can be predictive of recidivism (Gendreau, Little and Goggin, 1996). Conversely, engagement with prison programmes and the maintenance of family ties are associated with reductions in recidivism (Gerber and Fritsch, 1995; Hairston, 1991). Adjusting to imprisonment is not only influenced by the prison environment itself — indigenously (Sykes, 1958; Goffman, 1961) because the composite of one's personal characteristics and experiences prior to imprisonment also bear influence on the adaptation process, otherwise known as the importation model (Irwin and Cressey, 1962; Irwin, 1970). The importation model is of particular relevance in this study by reason of the level of disadvantage and marginalisation encountered by most of the participants prior to their imprisonment.

'It's always the same people'

The majority of participants reported a sense of familiarity with the process of imprisonment and the prison environment. Martha, aged 34 described prison as: "a second home — it was all I knew". Given the high rate of re-imprisonment among the research group (see Chapter Five) this was not surprising because for many it was part of a recurring pattern in their lives. Nick, aged 47 described this by saying: "they expect to see you back. Like the same faces rotate in the prison all the time". Prison was also described by participants in relation to its local dimension:

> They're there like sayin' it's rehabilitation and all of that. Sure it doesn't rehabilitate you. Every time, like every time I go up to that jail it's the same heads in there every time I go in there. You might see one or two new fellas in there like, but it's always the same people I see in there especially in Cork 'cause it's a small enough jail like you know. It's not a big jail like, and it's always the same people every time you go in there and I'm goin' in there since I was 20 and I'll be 29 in a few months time, so that's nearly nine years ago now

and there's still the same lads. And I'd be thinkin' to myself, do they ever leave? (Craig, aged 28).

Prison was further described as an adjunct to the communities participants had left on the outside with many reporting that they tended to encounter members of their own social circles soon after committal. Some participants, such as Oisín, aged 28 explained that this provided a source of relief insofar as it alleviated the fear of hostility, saying:

> It was very frightening, me first time in there. I was kind of green as the grass as they say like you know. But I got on grand in there because I knew fellows in there that were a lot older than me, do you know, through their brothers and this and that like and then there was no problem.

Other participants described the sense of inclusion amongst the prison population as a dire confirmation of their entrenched status as repeat offenders. Alfie, aged 37 articulated this sentiment when he said:

> The first day I went in there the last time, as I was walking down the corridor, and usually when you go to jail, you're kind of, you're full of fear, you know, 'cause sure you don't know who's goin' to be in there at all, but I was thinkin' what's the story like? It's just there was no fear there. And as I was walking down the landing like, everyone I saw fucking knew me like. They were all shoutin' down, "come up here, come up here to this landing" you know and all this kind of thing. As if I had just left them last week like. And it just frightened me like. I just said, oh my God, this is going to be my life, like you know. In and out, in and out. And something clicked inside of me and I said, fuck this.

Given the prevalence of imprisonment in their own communities some participants highlighted the advantage of having contacts in prison, or meeting friends there to help them settle in. Mick, aged 20 explained this saying: "I knew a fair few of the boys up there so I wasn't too afraid goin' in, freaked out, paranoid or anything. And a week there, you get used to it like". Alfie, aged 37 described it as follows: "you see every time you go into the prison like, you meet the same people there. They're all repeat offenders, so you get on with them. They're good company like". A further advantage of having friends in prison was outlined by Vincent, aged 37:

> I had a couple of friends in prison and when they got out, they used to send people up to see me and that. People would bring me up bits of hash or whatever. Send me newspapers, drop me in a few quid to get meself something

in the shop. And I made new friends in there. They were the same as me, went
through the same boat as me.

Experiences of normality and a sense of belonging within the prison environment were
also reported by participants. Sam, aged 37 explained this when he said: "sure all the
fellas that I hung around with at the time were in there so it was grand like". Hal, aged
22 described it as follows:

> I knew them all — so it was grand. One of the screws up there even said to me,
> she goes "how long are you in?" and I says, "I'm in since Sunday there" and she
> goes "I feel like you're here about two years". She says "you have my head
> wrecked". You know, because I was just after, I was just like a duck to water. I
> just took to it. I know now that's a bad sign, but I just knew everyone up there
> and there was no fear. I wasn't beefin' with anyone, or anything, do you know
> what I mean?

Prison Violence

Research has shown that prisons are violent and traumatising places (Wolff *et al.*, 2007;
Wright, 1991). This was also found to be the case in this study through many accounts
from participants of the violence and fear of violence they encountered during their
imprisonment both amongst prisoners and prison staff. Because of the inescapable
nature of the prison environment, violence and in particular victimisation, may be more
psychologically damaging. Even in the absence of actual and constant violence, the
threat or possibility of violence remains, potentially leading to hypervigilance amongst
prisoners with the concomitant effect of creating anxiety disorders and posttraumatic
stress disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Research has also shown that
individuals reporting high levels of both witnessing violence and victimisation report
high levels of depression, aggression, posttraumatic stress and interpersonal problems in
comparison with individuals reporting low levels of violence exposure (Haden and
Scarpa, 2008; Scarpa, 2001, 2003; Scarpa *et al.*, 2002). Boxer, Middlemass and
Delorenzo, (2009) having examined the effect of exposure to violent crime during
imprisonment on longer term psychological adjustment in violent and non-violent

offenders released to an urban community found experiences of violent crime during imprisonment to be significantly related to post-release adjustment causing anti-social behaviour, aggressiveness and emotional distress including depression and anxiety. Furthermore, because aggressive and violent acts are commonplace in prison and often used as a means of survival (Wright, 1991) prisons provide an environment where anti-social behaviour is both taught and learned creating even greater potential for anti-social behaviour after release (Boxer, *et al.*, *ibid*.).

It emerged from the data in this study that a little over 37% (*n=20*) of the research group were themselves perpetrators of violence both inside the prison and prior to their imprisonment. Alex, aged 19 described this when he said: "I grew up around violence like, so how would you expect me not to be violent like? It's not going to happen . . . I've always been violent like. I've been violent since the age of 14 or 15 like, and aggressive and all that". Just over 22% (*n=12*) indicated that they had also been victims of violence both in prison and prior to their imprisonment. Half of this group had also engaged in violence towards others that resulted in bodily harm. There were no discernable features in accounts of experiences of violence across male and female participants' narratives.

It was evident in the data that imprisonment within a local district can have certain disadvantages. Participants who gave accounts of unresolved issues in the community especially as it related to drug debts described the prison environment as particularly problematic for them as it related to encountering old friends or contacts. This was explained by Peter, aged 35 in the following terms:

> you could be fightin' with a person there goin' back four years ago from the city, but he mightn't have seen you for the four years until you get into prison, you know what I mean . . . In Cork Prison, I was stuck you see. I was fightin' two wars up there like. I was up in prison like, *and* I owed certain drug dealers money as well. So I was put on the protection wing (23 hour lock-up).

Given that more than half the research participants had been imprisoned before they reached 18 years of age meant that in the majority of cases they were detained in youth facilities in Dublin. Participants described their experiences of detention there in profoundly negative terms explaining that they were fearful of being bullied by other detainees who viewed them as outsiders. This was described by Hugh, aged 29 when he said: "all the Dublin fellas shouting and roaring at you didn't make it any easier". Other participants reported that they often engaged in violence as a strategy for transfer from those detention centres to another prison. Joe, aged 24 explained this saying:

> That was rough there . . . See, they didn't like the country fellas and so we were always tryin' to get transferred out of it . . . we got together one of the days and we just caught a hold of three fellas and gave it to them like just to, so that they'd get us out of there. They never took us out of it though. They just kept us away from them then.

Similarly, Martha aged 34 explained that she was moved from one prison to another "about every three months" because of her fighting. Participants described how the culture of violence within the prison setting impacted on them. Gerard, aged 39 described it as follows:

> Absolutely frightening the first couple of days were, you know. I was scared. And I'm a very tough bloke you know, mentally and physically, but I found it very frightening . . . Violence on a daily basis like you know. And I was never a violent person, but I used to see it on a daily basis, violence made up from different things — cutting people up and all that. And this was all new to me like. And it's frightening. Scary.

Participants commonly gave accounts of the stress they endured during their prison sentences against the backdrop of such violence. Peter, aged 35 reflected the experiences of others when he said:

> It's hard enough doin' prison time up there. It's hard enough the oul' prison time. But there's so much violence going on up there. If prison time was the only thing involved to worry about up there it wouldn't be so fuckin' bad, but it's like there's so many people up there strung out of their heads . . . It's unreal like. I seen so many violences up there like and nothin' is ever done about it . . . You see, every single thing is done on the sly like. Like a person could come over here askin' me for a fag and talkin' away grand, playin' cards, whatever . . . and then he'll come out with a blade in his hand and cut the face off you . . . I seen it happen on numerous occasions. And do you know, if you see that

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violence everyday like, you're going to think to yourself, oh, am I goin' to be the one next? And if you're not thinkin' that way, you're goin' to have to flippin' believe you're goin' to be the next! You've to watch out for yourself do you know, because you have to watch everything you're doin' up there and it is frightening. It is a frightening place to be to be quiet honest with you.

Participants who reported their own propensity for violence often indicated that they resorted to such behaviour as a means of retaliation for crimes perpetrated against them. This was described by James, aged 35:

There's a dangerous side to me too. There is you know. I'm aware of that . . . I'm like, what do they say, like a cornered rat, do you know what I mean? If someone puts the fear into me I can react in a very negative way and a very dangerous way. You know, sneaky and devious way. Come up behind them with a hammer, which I've done. I feel the fear from within myself of what I'm capable of doing. See that? (pointing to a scar) That's a syringe to the face . . . I caught your man who did it in jail . . . I thought the nastiness was out of me . . . scalding hot water — and you know I poured a whole load of sugar into the kettle as well and I threw that over him. But the fear, eh, the consequences of a further five, six or seven years' imprisonment did not deter me. It didn't. Even after me spending a third of my life in jail.

Other participants who became embroiled in drug dealing and violence in the prison described a sense of ambivalence about the prospect of release. This was explained by Ben, aged 49 when he said:

Eventually, I became a debt collector for the drug dealers (in prison). I was all the time living very, very, very dangerously. I'd been stabbed and I stabbed people and all that kind of thing came into it. And you know, I was sleeping with a knife under my pillow for a long time . . . I could've very easily ended up in a body-bag . . . At first, I thought, eera, so what, so what if I die like, if I get killed. What kind of a life have I anyway? . . . There didn't seem much point in putting up a defence you know. So what? I also had a fight — a very serious fight with another lifer and I got 11 years for it . . . another 11 years for that as well as a life sentence. So I really didn't think I'd be getting out of prison and like, if I did, it would be in the very distant future, you know what I mean and I thought, what the hell if I die like?

The use of excessive force by prison staff has recently emerged as an issue of concern in the United States where it has been reported that "[w]hen inmates complain about mistreatment, deputies respond with punishment: strip searches, body cavity searches, destructive cell shake-downs, or confiscations of their belongings" (Liebowitz *et al*., 2011). The United Nations Committee Against Torture in its Concluding Observations

(2011) also noted with concern the lack of independent and effective investigations into allegations of the ill-treatment of prisoners by prison staff in Ireland. Prison violence impedes the process of reintegration insofar as research has shown that prisoners who have been threatened or physically assaulted have been found to have negative emotional reactions to such experiences including hostility and depression which increases their likelihood of violent criminal behaviour and substance use after release (Zweig *et al.*, 2015). While coercion has been found to significantly decrease the likelihood of psychological wellbeing post release, social support in the form of actual support or perceived support can ameliorate it (Johnson-Listwan *et al.*, 2010). There was a clear absence of any support in the form of procedural justice, actual or perceived from the perspectives of the research participants in this study. Peter, aged 35 explained this when he said: "it's hard to believe unless you're actually there to be quite honest 'cause it's the guards up there, or the screws up there that are startin' all the fuckin' trouble". Padraig, aged 39 described it in the following terms: "you get a lot of kickings and stuff. I often got loads of hidings in prison from the screws". Alan, aged 40 also gave an account of such violence as follows:

> Oh man, I got it rough. I'll tell you now, and I'll tell you straight, I never done that four year easy. There was times there I was inside in bed and sometimes sleepin' with me clothes on, because I was afraid to take them off just in case I'd get a batein' off the screws. That's genuine facts. That's straight out. Before I went in the last time I asked the judge to sign a form to make sure nothing happened to me up in the jail . . . but sure I still was assaulted. I was still bate up there, and I was after been shifted from one jail to the other and I got assaulted in the other jail as well. [Officers] coming in on top of me, full of drink, pushed me around inside in the cell . . . so I got shifted over that and then I got assaulted on the way when I got shifted.

Maintaining Ties to the Community

The importance of the maintenance of family ties for successful reintegration is well documented in the literature (Farrall and Calverley, 2006; Healy, 2012; Farrall, Hough, Maruna and Sparks, 2011; DiZerega, 2010). While research literature has commonly

focused on prisoners' partners and children (Mills and Codd, 2007) finding that families of formation can provide the motivational impetus to desist (Farrall, 2004), families of origin including the wider family have been found to maintain more contact with prisoners, providing emotional and practical support (Girshick, 1996; Murray, 2003). The intangible resources emanating from supportive families have been identified as an important component of post-release success (Nelson, Deess and Allen, 1999). Farrall (2004) has highlighted the role that families of origin maintains in the process of desistance in that in the majority of cases it is related to the activation of social capital. Farrall found families of origin to be better resourced having cultivated their stock of social capital over time and therefore more amenable to the provision of support in times of need (Farrall, 2002; Farrall, 2004). The stress of imprisonment placed on families is of critical concern considering that research has shown that 45% of prisoners lose contact with their families during confinement and 22% of married prisoners become separated or divorced before leaving prison (Heybourne, 2005). While family support is deemed important during imprisonment because it provides some balance to institutional life (Bedford Row Family Project, 2007), family support is of more critical importance in the period following release. Research has shown that those who maintain good family contact during their imprisonment are twice as likely to have housing and employment following release and are six times less likely to reoffend (Loucks, 2004).

Over 85% (*n*=46) of the participants in this study gave accounts of how family relationships were maintained while they were imprisoned. Over 52% (*n*=24) of this group reported that they kept contact with family members, either by way of visits, letters or telephone calls. Just over 17% (*n*=8) said they had no contact whatsoever with their families. Spouses and intimate partners are a significant source of material support and assistance for prisoners' reintegration (Bobbitt and Nelson, 2004; Roman and Travis, 2004). However, almost 46% (*n*=21) of the research group reported that their

relationships with spouses or partners ended either shortly before or during the course of their imprisonment. In the vast majority of cases (*n=16*) participants indicated that this was the result of problem drinking and drug taking. Vincent, aged 37 explained this when he said: "Me wife just broke down one morning, she goes, "look", she goes "I can't take no more of it". She said, "you're killin' yourself and I don't want to see you die". So that was it. We parted our ways". Brendan, aged 48 also reported how his drug habit impacted on his marriage as follows:

> I wasn't even aware that the marriage was going down at that particular time because I wouldn't be at home all week. Once I'd go out Thursday night I wouldn't get home 'til maybe Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday of the following week. I'd stay out partying, do you know what I mean? I'd be in a house trippin'.

Brian, aged 27 spoke with regret of the effect his drugs and alcohol habit on the relationship with his girlfriend, saying: "she'd had enough of me too, I'd say, you know. She's given me so many chances you know — and all that stuff — but just fuckin' em, look (long pause) I won't say anymore about it".

A small number (*n=4*) reported that their relationships ended while they were in prison. This was mostly attributed to their former partners embarking on new relationships. Eileen, aged 24 described this as follows:

> I went into prison and he did the dirt on me with a friend of mine . . . 'twas through heroin like . . . I ended up arguin' with him on the phone and he says [Name] we're better off to leave things off . . . I says, fair enough. He was basically tellin' me to fuck off, do you know.

The quality of family relationships that were maintained by participants varied from weak or deteriorated to strong and supportive. Vincent, aged 37 recalled the only family visit he had as follows: "Me father came up to see me one day and he says — don't come near the house, don't ring the house, don't write to the house, we don't want to know. You done the crime, do the time". Another participant indicated that despite his estrangement from his family they maintained contact with him during his

imprisonment as they found the boundaries of prison a safer context to have a relationship with him. James, aged 35 explained this saying:

> They get on with me better when I'm locked up you know what I mean? They don't want to know me when I'm out of jail because of the drink like. But yeah, they are alright with me when I'm locked up — no problems coming to see me. Because they know I'm in a safe place — basically away from them.

While some participants indicated that their family relationships broke down because their family members were not comfortable with the idea of visiting a prison, participants who maintained strong attachments with their families commonly referred to the fact that their families supported them despite their offending and its consequences. The comfort and security that was derived from that was reflected by Matt, aged 43 when he said: "I knew the family was there for me. The family supported me. Me wife and two daughters supported me all the time, and me mam as well". Such emotional support was vital especially in cases where participants were experiencing difficulties. Bart, aged 35 who had mental health issues in prison described this when he said:

> There was always that family unit there like, but I was like a broken branch in the family you know, hanging down and blowing in the wind. Mad — you know, that kind of way? But they were always there supporting me — I suppose with the hope someday that I'd get better . . . and they were coming down to see me like and that would have kept me alive as well I think — knowing that they were still there.

Participants in the majority of cases reported that despite the stresses and strains they and their families endured, visits from their families were nevertheless important to them as a means of emotional support. This was explained by Hugh, aged 29 in the following terms:

> They're very important you know. Besides breaking the monotony, you know what I mean — I don't know why, but it is very exciting to get a visit. You'd be out gettin' empty retches (dry heaving) and everything do you know. You wouldn't believe how important a bit of contact with someone outside like is. Do you know, it's like meeting someone new again really like. It's a strange feeling like you know. You just realise how important people are to you like, when you're in there.

That prison visits were also a source of consolation to participants' families was also explained by Ben, aged 49 when he said:

> They (visits) were important. They were contact with the outside and it was also important that my family could see me and see that I was alive and healthy. And you know, that was important to me — that they could. That they felt okay.

'They can be good and they can be bad'

In their narratives, some participants reported that maintaining contact with their families and friends during their imprisonment was something they found onerous and stressful sometimes resulting in the avoidance of visits or the maintenance of minimal contact. Peter, aged 35 explained this when he said:

> I used to take no visits off my family you know, just my sister . . . I wouldn't allow visits from my mam. My mam is blind do you know, and I didn't want her up in the prison so I didn't see my mam for two years. I seen her on Christmas, Christmas Eve alright for five minutes, but I didn't want to kind of take the visit.

Similarly, Jim, aged 21 who reported that although he enjoyed a very close relationship with his mother he refused to let her visit him while he was in prison. He said: "I didn't want to see her at all, 'cause that would have driven me worse like . . . It used to break me heart it used . . . I didn't even want to see me mother".

The emotional stress of visits was described by other participants as it related to parting. This was described by Evan, aged 25 when he said: " I wouldn't want them to come up because it would make it harder walking away. It's not good. So I really didn't like visits you know". Also inherent in the data was a sense of how participants' attitudes to visits varied and changed over time as Evan, aged 25 described:

> I use to start not likin' them after awhile. I dunno like. It's like you'd have no news in jail, 'cause jail you know, just the same thing happens in there. And then they'd be comin' up, "oh, any news?" and I'd be goin' "naw like". I'd start shoutin' then snappin' at them.

The burden of travelling to and from the prison was a concern reported by other participants. Denis, aged 35 in common with others indicated this when he said:

When I was up there like, no matter what — every week my mother and father were up to me like. And I was tellin' them don't come up like, it was too far . . . I didn't want them, because I knew they were coming up very far, you know what I mean? Still today like, I thank them for that, still today like.

Similarly, Timothy, aged 63 described the stress he experienced because of visits from afar by saying:

Ah sure, I'd to stop her (wife) and them from coming visiting. Because just too many visiting, do your head in you know. I mean like, they are going away then and — I was a bit of a worrier, that when they'd leave, I'd be worried until they got home.

Having a family member in prison can place a financial burden on families in terms of transport costs and the material support that is expected of them when they visit. Prisoners' families have reported that their own limited means are often stretched to such an extent that they run into debt endeavouring to provide for the prisoner who often times has high expectations of what families can and should provide for them during their imprisonment (Bedford Row Family Project, 2007). It was noteworthy therefore that participants in this study described the material support provided from their families as including money, clothing and tobacco. Duncan, aged 22 described the support he received from his mother saying: "every time I was up there, she always came up to the prisons to give me money and buy me track-suits for when I'd get out and this and that like". Likewise, Evan aged 25 spoke of such support, saying:

when I was in the Midlands (prison) she came to see me, when I was in Cork she came to see me, buy me clothes, send me money and all that. She always sent me money like without fail. And I'd talk to them on the phone everyday like, so it was cool.

The majority of participants reported their frustration and dissatisfaction with visiting arrangements in terms of visiting time limits and the physical environment of the prison visiting facilities that they believed compounded the stress of otherwise stressful situations. Ger, aged 41 articulated this as follows:

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You see like they come up to the jail but it's not like — say they'll bring 'em (children) up now for their Holy Communion — you'd still only get the same half-hour as what you'd get at normal time. So it's hard do you know. It's hard alright. It's hard on them, it's hard on herself and it's hard on me as well like. It would be hard on yourself goin' back to your cell. But it's hugely important like. Like they can be good and they can be bad. You could get a good visit and you could get a bad visit like. You enjoy it like. But a bad visit, like you could be arguin' with your girl, like do you know that kind of a way?

The inadequacy of the physical environment of the visiting facilities in the prison was highlighted by many of the participants. Some participants reported that the unsuitable visiting facilities in the prison was the reason they declined visits from their families. This was explained by Declan, aged 42 when he said:

They wanted to come and visit me but I didn't want them to because the visits in Clover Hill were all screened. The landing I was on was all screened and em, you can't talk to your family the same way, underneath the holes. You'd like to be able to touch them, do you know what I mean?"

This included a lack of space affording little in the way of privacy that made communication difficult. Eric, aged 29 described this as follows:

'Twas packed. 'Twas a big long kind of table in the middle and you're on one side. Then the other side, there's a glass kind of panel. 'Twas very hard to hear what some people were saying or anything 'cause everyone is shouting.

Likewise, Duncan, aged 22 described how the visiting facilities were not conducive for meaningful interaction with visitors when he said:

With the screen, you can't touch them (visitors), you can't do this, you can't do that. Talk to them for half an hour. And then they're lookin' around 'cause everyone else is shoutin' and roarin'. The way things were, you go out for a visit but it's a waste of time 'cause you can't hear nothin' they're sayin' 'cause there's people all next to you. People all on this side and they're all shoutin' and everything. You can't hear a word. You have to actually shout and like get them (visitors) to shout to listen to them. Em, so like, I ended up most of the time, when my visits came up I used to say, naw, I don't want to go out at all, I'll stay in my cell.

Research has shown that imprisoned fathers wish to maintain contact with their children with a view to strengthening their parenting skills (Hairston, 1989) and expect to live with their children after their release (Lanier, 1991). Children in particular suffer the collateral consequences of imprisonment that can include hostility or bullying at school;

psychological harm and behavioural problems (Boswell and Wedge, 2001). Participants in this study who were parents reported that both the separation from their children and attempting to maintain contact with them during imprisonment was often stressful. They described a profound sense of loss at being separated from their children and the challenges of negotiating contact through current and former partners. Hugh, aged 29 also explained that when he went to prison his youngest child was just a few weeks old. He described the effects of separation as follows: "she had kind of disconnected really from me . . . what I mean like, even when she visited me, if she was handed to me, she was kind of like strange, you know it's hard to explain".

Joe, aged 24 reported that while he sometimes saw his child it was on a limited basis because he did not feel it was a suitable environment for children. Similar feelings of chagrin were expressed by other participants such as Brian, aged 27 who explained that he had conflicting feelings about his young daughter coming to see him in prison saying: "I didn't want her to see me in a place like that. She's clever enough and she would have known like. Maybe she mightn't know now, but she will in years to come you know, and I didn't want her to see that". Conor, aged 34 spoke of a similar concern about his son as follows:

> My ex-partner, she used to come down to me every week with the child and then when the child started getting older like, I kind of, I said I don't really want him coming to the prison like, so I stopped visits with him then for about three months. And then I missed him so I started letting him down (to visit) again.

'When you're in there, you know who your friends are'

Peer networks can impact both positively and negatively on the process of reintegration (Healy, 2012; see also Part III). Scroggins and Bui (2014) argue that pro-social networks can be an important resource for those attempting reintegration if they can provide opportunities for direct assistance and the information necessary for accessing resources and assistance elsewhere. Cromwell, Olson and Avary, (1991) in their study

found that the disintegration of the peer group was related to subsequent desistance. While participants' narratives in this study revealed both pro-social and anti-social characteristics amongst their peer groups they nevertheless reported that maintaining contact with their friends during their imprisonment was important to them.

Almost 65% (*n*=35) of the research group described how their friendships on the outside were affected by their imprisonment. More than half of those reported that they kept such relationships ongoing, while the remainder said that they lost contact. Keeping contact with friends was facilitated primarily by visits and telephone calls and to a lesser extent, letters. Some participants reported that their friends were imprisoned in other prisons and therefore they could only maintain contact by post. Participants' friends were only permitted phone-calls and visits to the prison if they had not been at one time imprisoned themselves which meant for some participants they had few if any friends who were entitled to visit them. Participants identified a number of benefits pertaining to their friends' visits. These ranged from: getting news from the outside; seeing a friendly face and receiving social and emotional support. A small number described the more negative aspects of such visits including a means to access drugs. Some participants reported that their friendships waned as a result of becoming imprisoned saying that their friends no longer wanted to be associated with them. Duncan, aged 22 described this when he said: "I kinda realised then, when you're in there like, you know who your friends are". Other participants, such as Ben, aged 49 stated that as soon as they went to prison they consciously cut off contact with their friends. He said: "I didn't really want to keep contact with friends while I was in prison". Similarly, Donal, aged 38 said: "I fucked all them off. They're no friends at all". Timothy, aged 63 reported that he ceased contact with his friends just prior to his imprisonment saying: "I broke away from all my friends myself. Not them from me".

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Not unlike what participants recalled in terms of managing family relationships during imprisonment, they also gave accounts describing the stress they encountered as it related to maintaining contact with their friends in the community. This was articulated by Evan, aged 25 thus:

> Yes, I got letters do you know. But when it comes to jail like, I told the boys to do what they got to do like and get on with it. Because them writing to me like, it's, it's just too much thinkin' involved. I was tryin' to keep myself into the sentence I had to do in there and get it done, do you know. I had enough problems goin' on in there without trying to think about the outside.

Issues Encountered During Imprisonment

How prisoners cope with imprisonment can affect their adjustment post-release. Research has shown that imprisonment can impair prisoners' mental health especially if the stigma of imprisonment has been instilled in them (Schnittker and John, 2007). Furthermore, the acceptance of one's criminal identity fuels the fatalism that inhibits any motivation to change (Walters, 2003). Participants in this study gave accounts of how they coped with their imprisonment. This included accounts of coping with shame and guilt, something they also reported hindered their progress after release (see Part III). Participants' narratives also included accounts of how they coped with the stigma of offending and imprisonment that included distancing themselves from other prisoners. Maintaining distance from offending peers also emerged as one of the challenges of reintegration particularly in a local context (see Part III).

'The shame of it'

A diminished sense of self-worth and personal value has been described by Haney (2003) as one of the aspects of prisonization. This was apparent in the data whereby over a third of the research group (n=18) recalled feelings of guilt and shame during their imprisonment. Participants' accounts included the guilt and shame they felt about the consequences of their offending for their families including financial hardship and

not being able to offer them emotional support. This was highlighted by Matt, aged 43 when he said: "they were suffering as well while I was in financially, and not having me there, you know, emotionally. It was a big strain on them as well". Feelings of shame for the impact their imprisonment was having on their children was expressed by others, including Declan, aged 42 in the following terms:

> Why did I bring children into this world like, if I'm fucked up like this, do you know what I mean? I should be ashamed of my life like. Do you know, writing letters from prison to [place] and she's (daughter) writing back and sending me photographs.

The personal shame of imprisonment was described by Eileen, aged 24 when she said: "the shame of it like do you know what I mean. Do you know, 'cause I do be ashamed of my life when I'm in prison". Feelings of shame, according to Leibrich (1996) can be associated with desistance. Peter, aged 35 articulated in the following terms how the guilt and shame he experienced in prison inspired his attempt at reintegration.

> Do you know my prison sentence was spent to be quite honest with you, it was just guilt. Everyday I spent up there was guilt and not nice you know . . . I was still so ashamed and I didn't realise it at all until I actually got in there and I was thinking to myself — like my mam is 75 years of age. She went through a violent relationship with a scumbag of a fuckin' dad . . . she reared nine kids on her own and yet I was the only one — this was the thanks I gave her then by ending up in prison. She did not deserve it . . . she's just not that kind of woman. She deserved a lot better, so that was like my motivation to get my life back and it's my motivation today, you know.

'I kept to myself'

A number of participants (*n=7*) reported that during their imprisonment they preferred to be alone. Haney (2003) refers to this as psychological distancing. Sam, aged 37 described it when he said: "I'm the type of person that don't need people around me like . . . I don't like people around me, I don't miss people do you know". These participants typically referred to themselves as "loners" reporting that they stayed in the cells and avoided any social interaction in the prison. Shane, aged 35 described this as follows:

> It was my own doing. That's the way I went. I drifted off with my own isolations, you know. I just think that's the way I was generally. The way I was

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thinkin' inside, because I was always running and isolating myself. And going through all of what was going on inside me, just keeping it all to myself, not trusting anyone, do you know what I mean? But deep down, I don't have someone I see as a genuine friend — that I could go to and share, and who would share my concerns and my situation and my thoughts and feelings. I don't have that.

'A lot of dodgy people'

Prison presents numerous opportunities for association with criminally oriented people that can shape the thinking and identity of those unfamiliar with the environment. Exposure to imprisonment can have a particular bearing on those experiencing imprisonment for the first time. Research has shown that those surrounded by prison-wise peers demonstrate significant elevations in criminal thinking and identity after six months regardless of their previous interaction with a criminal reference group in the community (Walters, 2003). Because prisoners with strong criminal identifications manifest poorer post-release adjustment (Wormith, 1984) it was interesting to note in the data that many of the participants expressed feelings of discomfiture amongst fellow prisoners, describing them as "not normal decent people" (James, aged 35). Eric, aged 29 described it as follows: "I didn't like that at all, cause I was thrown in with a lot of dodgy people. Where I was there, I was sharin' with drug addicts and rapists and murderers and everything". Some participants also described the experience of imprisonment as something they found difficult to personally identify with. This was expressed by Alex, aged 19 when he said: "I'm too nice for that like. I'm not an evil person like and I know I'm not, do you know what I mean? I just got mixed up with the wrong crowd of guys like". Furthermore, other participants gave accounts of feeling morally incompatible to their fellow prisoners. Bobby, aged 46 described this when he said: "I didn't trust any of them. They were all muppets to me like. I can see through them in a different way like. I don't carry on like them. I am not one of them". Similarly, Robert, aged 35 said: "there's things that I'd do and there's things that I

wouldn't do. I might be a druggie or a criminal but I still know what's right and I know what's wrong, do you know what I mean?"

Concern that they might be identified as "sex-offenders" was also reported by a small number of participants. Vincent, aged 37 spoke of the unease he felt when he was transferred to another prison, because it was "the rapists and child-molesters' prison" saying: "and I'm not a thief or anything in me life like". Bart, aged 35 also feared he might be seen as a "child-molester". Having been attacked in the prison and taken to hospital "cuffed", which he found "very degrading, very soul destroying and morally shattering", he spoke of his interaction with the hospital staff there saying:

> They said I didn't look like a prisoner. Then I started thinking, do I look like a child-molester? You know prisoners are supposed to be kind of butch you know and everything. I said, oh fuck it — I don't want to go there. It was a kind of paranoia on my behalf. Do they think I'm one of the hairies? That's what they call sex-offenders like, they call them hairies.

'You have the drugs in the prison'

Almost 30% (*n*=16) of the research participants in this study gave accounts of continuing their drug use during their imprisonment. Participants reported that they were able to access alcohol and drugs in prison through their existing or new networks within and outside of the prison. While drug-use in prison was most commonly referred to as a means of alleviating boredom it was also referred to as a means of coping with imprisonment. This was explained by Bart, aged 35 when he said: "drugs — they're in the prison as well like. So the boys in protection there (on 23 hour lock-up), they had enough hash to keep them going all night and I smoked away, just to try and get myself through it like".

Other participants, such as Duncan, aged 22, reported that their drug use increased during their imprisonment saying: "I only started smokin' heroin when I was up in Cork Prison. You'd need it there like". Evan, aged 25 also explained this when he said:

"when I was in there, I turned to heroin, to smoke heroin, for comfort like and then I just lost the fuckin' head". While Sam, aged 37 said that he "only smoked a few joints" for most of his prison sentence, he described how his drug use increased as his release date was approaching saying: "I couldn't get enough drugs into me — panicking going out the gate, do you know?" Drug habits that formed in prison were also reported to have continued and escalated post-release.

Accessing Support During Imprisonment

Participants were asked to indicate on the research questionnaires if they had availed of any support services during their last period of imprisonment. Almost 63% (*n=34*) indicated that they had sought the support of the prison chaplain; just over 57% (*n=31*) engaged with the probation officer; almost 41% (*n=22*) said they had met with the prison psychologist and 37% (*n=20*) said they sought help from the social welfare there. While participants' accounts varied on the quality of their interactions with supportive services in the prison, a common theme that emerged in the data was that the level of service fell short in terms of accessibility. It was also apparent from their narratives that participants' expectations of specific needs being met were unfulfilled. This was also an issue that arose for participants when they reported the challenges and barriers they were facing in the community after release with many of them indicating that there is little point in seeking help and support because they perceived it not to be available when they needed it.

The Prison Chaplain

The vision of chaplaincy has been described as: "one that affirms the dignity of the person, and seeks to be a voice for those deprived of their freedom" (Irish Prison Chaplains, 2010:1). Participants who accessed help from the prison chaplaincy were unanimous in their appreciation for the support that they derived from such contact

indicating that it provided them with an important link to the outside world. This was evident through participants' accounts of using the privacy of the chaplain's office to make important telephone calls to their families or loved ones at critical times. Others reported that in the absence of any relationships or support in the community that the prison chaplain was often the person they relied upon to accompany them back to the community after their release from prison.

Nick, aged 47 referred to the prison chaplain as "excellent" saying: "he'll go out of his way to help a person". However, from what participants said, the level of support required by them could not be met by one person with responsibility for 250 prisoners. Matt, aged 43 explained this as follows when he said: "you just couldn't get to see him. You didn't know when he was coming in or how long he was going to be there for". The strain of trying to access support from the prison chaplain was explained by Nick, aged 47 as follows:

> You see, he's the prison chaplain for about 250 prisoners . . . you can only see him certain hours of the day and there's a big queue, everybody rushing to get into him. So, if you can get to see him, you're very mindful that there's another seven or eight people outside the door waiting to get in. So, if you spend more than five minutes inside with him everybody is shoutin' and roarin' outside the door because they are all trying to make a phone call or see the priest or whatever . . . so you don't start a conversation that's going to take up his time, even though he's the kind of man who would talk to you but you're mindful of other prisoners who are outside kind of waiting for you to get out so they can get in.

The types of support chaplains provided to the research participants included: making contact with their families when family relationships were breaking down and encouragement with regard to alcohol and addiction recovery. Participants also indicated that in the absence of any other support in their lives, the chaplain often provided them with basic assistance. Oleg, aged 28 described this when he said: "you can trust him you know. If he says he'll do something he'll do it". Oleg explained that

the chaplain bought him cigarettes, put some money in his account and bought him new shoes.

The Probation Officer

Part of the remit of the Probation Service is the provision of reports for sentencing review hearings on prisoners' progress that may lead to their early release from prison. However, apart from a few exceptions, participants did not perceive the Probation Service to be a source of support for them during imprisonment. This was expressed by Nick, aged 47 as follows: "I never felt I could discuss anything with the probation officers. Even to get them on the phone was a problem for them. Do you know, you're only a so-and-so to them, you're just put down on the list". Participants described their frustration with the bureaucracy of the service indicating that they were unable to satisfy the criteria for positive probation reports due to the limited availability of programmes and services in the prison as a result of overcrowding. Joe, aged 24 explained this when he said: " the reports weren't good enough when I was goin' back to court. So I says to the judge, I says there's not enough support to get reports — there's not enough support in the prison". Conor, aged 34 was one of the few participants who reported that his engagement with the Probation Service was positive when he explained that on two occasions he was released from prison to engage in an intensive probation scheme.

The Psychologist

It emerged in the data that a significant number of the research group reported that they suffered from mental health problems both prior to and after their release from prison (see Part III). Participants' accounts of their interaction with the prison psychologist were in the majority of cases positive. Nick, aged 47 said that he always found the psychologist "very helpful". Participants who reported that they were enduring

particular traumas during their imprisonment explained the value of the psychological

support they accessed. Shane, aged 35 outlined this when he said:

> I wasn't in the best frame of mind, do you know. How I felt inside. The experience took chunks out of me . . . I ended up in prison going through that separation and doing prison as well with the loss of my wife and kids. It was torment do you know . . . I didn't really cope that good like but I got through it . . . I spoke to the girl — the psychologist, because I was going through a depressing time as well . . . she was very helpful in listening. She used to kind of give me advice as well you know so I was glad of that. Just to get it out because it was killing me inside you know . . . I couldn't even really express myself over the depression I felt inside because I knew no one would be able to kind of understand what I was going through myself.

That there was a lack of adequate psychological counselling and support in the prison

was also highlighted by the research participants. Some participants were critical of how

the psychological service was administered and described a lack of privacy during

consultations that they believed diminished its value. Ben, aged 49 explained this as

follows:

> The psychologist there — I think he comes in about once a month or something. He calls up about forty or fifty people and he's sitting there inside in the office in the medical centre and all the screws are around him. They're all lined up outside the door. You come in, stand in front of him and he says "how are you feeling today?" And the officers are there. The officers are present. "How are you feeling today?" Like, what are you going to say to that? "Have you any problems? Is there anything you want to talk to me about? Anything you want to tell me? Next!" Exact same thing and then he gets forty or fifty euros a head for that and out the gate and gone. They don't give a monkeys.

The lack of privacy also emerged as an issue in the data for those who described their

attempts at addressing other personal problems such as alcoholism and drug use. This

was described by Gerard, aged 39 when he said: "if you go to an AA meeting inside in

prison, after that meeting everyone knows your fucking business. Like, that's the way it

is up there". Brendan, aged 48 also explained that he felt uncomfortable about attending

AA meetings in the prison when he said:

> I found going to meetings very hard because the first night the meeting was on, when they called for it, I stayed in the yard, back by the wall. I couldn't walk out because I thought everybody would think — this fucking fool, you know.

The Welfare Officer

Given the lack of resources available to participants after their release from prison (see Part III) the majority of them were dependent on state benefits including unemployment benefit and rent allowance. Participants however were unanimous in their dissatisfaction with the social welfare service delivery in the prison to help them prepare for release. Participants' perceived that welfare officers were not accessible and could not provide them with specific supports to help them apply for social welfare benefits and accommodation. Padraig, aged 39 described the frustration he experienced when engaging with a social welfare officer in the prison as follows:

> I was only talking to him in the prison for about a minute . . . I just went in. He threw his feet up on the desk. "What's the story and this and that". I said, "what do you mean, what's the story?" "Oh, I'm askin' the questions here", he said. I said, "Fuck you!" and I walked out, do you know. They read your file. They know your story, you know what I mean? I mean the welfare officers, they'd want to be put up against the wall and shot. They don't help anybody at all like.

Participants' accounts revealed that many left prison without basic financial assistance or information about accessing benefits. For those without family members that could provide them with support, they were rendered vulnerable to imminent homelessness without any basic needs being met or any means of meaningfully attempting reintegration.

Education and Training

While the level of participation in prison programmes can be low, Dhami, Ayton and Loewenstein, (2007) have reported that the longer one spends in prison, the more likely it is that they will engage in some educational or training activity. Less than half (*n=25*) of the research group reported that they ever availed of further education or a training programme during their imprisonment. Training courses attended by participants in this study included: "Safe Pass"; Forklift Driving; Brick-laying; Cooking; Tiling; Manual Skills; Woodwork; and Welding. Some participants attended classes in the prison

school with a view to sitting state examinations but only a small number of participants perceived education as an important strategy for their future. This included Padraig, aged 39 who had served seven separate terms of imprisonment. Padraig explained that during his last prison sentence he was introduced to the idea of doing "a computers course" by one of the prison staff. He described how that course impacted on his ideas about reintegration as follows:

> So, I kinda got something out of it and then I was sayin' sure if I can do this you know, I might as well knock everything else on the head and get up to the Training Unit and go drug-free and see what happens you know, and give it a try like, because it definitely wasn't working out the other way. But eh, I think if anyone tried to push me in that direction, I would have gone the other way, you know what I mean? I just decided I can do it, do you know. Get a bit of self-esteem back and then start doing things like. That's when I ended up going to college and stuff . . . I did the Open University thing. I had good marks all the way through it. I just learned from it anyway, you know what I mean? And as I said, you could be stuck working on a building site for ten years and then have nothing. At least this way, you might have something at the end of it, you know.

Martha, aged 34 also spoke of the opportunity she availed of for further education in light of her plans for reintegration saying: "I arranged to go to college. I wanted to do sports studies. I wanted to do a degree to help me spend time, not to go back to my old ways". Ben, aged 49 served the majority of his life sentence in an English prison. In relation to the latter part of his sentence he explained that: "it was then I started taking advantage of the facilities that I had learned about that existed and it was then that I started getting into education . . . I got plenty of help when I wanted it in England". Ben achieved a number of third level qualifications in prison.

While no causal relationship between employment and recidivism has been demonstrated in the literature (Wilson, Gallagher and MacKenzie, 2000) the majority of prisoners who have been asked about their plans for release state that getting a job is crucial to their ability to desist from crime (Baer *et al.,* 2006). Employment enables individuals to contribute income to their homes which can generate more personal support and improved relationships, enhanced self-esteem and improved mental health

(Graffam *et al*., 2004). However, people with criminal histories are often some of the most difficult to place in jobs (Holzer, Raphael and Stoll, 2003) given that they generally suffer severe educational deficits and may have depended on illegal incomes prior to imprisonment (Baer, *et al., ibid.)*. Given that the majority of the research group had very limited schooling or employment experience prior to their imprisonment their prospects for attaining employment after release were curtailed.

Preparation for Release

One of the basic principles of the 2006 European Prison Rules requires that a prisoner's reintegration be the primary goal of imprisonment. Rule 6 provides that "all detention be managed so as to facilitate the reintegration into free society of persons who have been deprived of their liberty". The objective of this rule includes the enabling of prisoners to return to and function normally in the community after release. Rule 102.1 further stipulates that: "the regime for sentenced prisoners shall be designed to enable them to lead a responsible and crime-free life". This emphasises the Prison Service's administrative function in the management of prison sentences utilising whatever means necessary to help and support prisoners towards their successful reintegration. Prisoners need to be physically and mentally healthy and given a fair chance to train or educate themselves during imprisonment if they are to have the best possible opportunity to reintegrate themselves after imprisonment (Thornton Hall Project Review Group, 2011). Furthermore, release procedures should be structured in a way that helps reintegration. Rule 7 of the 2007 Prison Rules state that: "Co-operation with outside social services and as far as possible the involvement of civil society in prison life shall be encouraged" with a view towards the continuity of services from prison to the community environment.

While more than half the research group (*n=34*) believed that support for reintegration should commence during the period of imprisonment and a small minority opined that prison was not a suitable place for some offenders to begin with, in the majority of cases, support for reintegration prior to release was something that participants reported as being been less than adequate.

Temporary Release and Day Release

The Criminal Justice (Temporary Release of Prisoners) Act, 2003 provides a sound legislative basis for the practical application of measures designed to aid a prisoner towards reintegration. The provision of 'temporary release' or 'day release' has the potential to help a prisoner achieve success post-release as it provides an opportunity to reconnect with ones family and rekindle relationships in the community that may lead to employment opportunities. The use of temporary release in Ireland has however attracted criticism in the past when rather than being employed for its primary function, that being to aid a prisoner's transition back to the community, it was regularly used by prison governors to alleviate prison over-crowding (Kilcommins *et al.*, 2004).

Almost half the research group (*n=26*) said that they were given temporary release on at least one occasion while they were imprisoned. However, given that the majority of participants reported limited resources in the community prior to their imprisonment (see Part I) many reported that they derived limited benefit if any through their applications for and granting of release periods under the Act. Apart from a small number of participants who recalled being released for a number of days to attend family funerals, most reported that they derived no benefit from temporary release for lack of accommodation and support in the community. Such a lack of a continuum of care and support places individuals at high risk of re-offending (Seymour and Costello, 2005; Jacobson, Phillips and Edgar, 2010).

Homelessness as a barrier to reintegration (see Part III) is further reiterated by the fact that only those who have accommodation arrangements in place in the community can avail of temporary release. This was explained by a number of participants including Jacob, aged 26 as follows:

> I could have been out two weeks earlier or something but they didn't have a place for me to go. I didn't want to be beggin', pesterin' my grandmother, because if I had gone down to my nan's I'd have had to stay there 'til my TR was finished and stuff and my nan's goin' into her nineties now so I think she has enough to deal with so I didn't want to be askin' for her address for TR do you know.

Don, aged 31, echoing the experiences of other participants described how the status of homelessness restricts the availability of temporary release saying: "they wouldn't give me TR because I was homeless". That the purpose of temporary release is negated by homelessness was highlighted by Gerard, aged 39 when he said: "I've seen it like — people getting TR and when they're out they have nowhere to go and they're back in two days later". From the perspective of homelessness, Robert, aged 25 explained how temporary release may be accessed when he said: "I got TR a couple of times but I used to give them a different address 'cause otherwise they won't give you the TR if you have no address to come out to". The impact of not having a place to live during a period of temporary release was explained by Eileen, aged 24 who said: "oh, I broke my TR loads of times like . . . for not living where I was supposed to be living".

Some participants reported that the conditions attached to temporary release can be problematic. Joe, aged 24 explained that he had to "sign in" at the local police station everyday *except* Thursdays where instead he signed in at the prison. He recalled an incident at the police station however that transpired thus: "so when I went up on the Friday [the Garda] said, "you missed your signin' yesterday and he took me in". Nick, aged 47 reported that accessing welfare payments while on temporary release was a

problem for him saying: "she (welfare staff member) checked the prison and next she said, you're only on temporary release so you won't be entitled to payment".

The value of temporary release for its potential for successful reintegration was reported by Padraig, aged 39. While recalling that during earlier prison sentences he was given temporary release but failed to abide by the conditions, Padraig explained that during his most recent prison sentence he believed that being granted both day release and temporary release with a support structure in place aided his adjustment back into the community. He outlined this in the following terms:

> It kind of works. I think it was alright. I used to go over there to (day-release centre) . . . and you kinda see the town and you're seeing the outside. You know that it's there (the centre) and you're not just picturing it . . . it's social and there's girls around the place and things and you know, you're just sittin' around chatting. Just normal behaviour. But eh, there's nothing like that in Cork (city) . . . You can get out for a burger . . . plus you're walking up the road every morning and walking back. You're out at half-seven and you're back at five o'clock. It gets you into the routine, the discipline as well of getting up and doing things.

Ben, aged 49 in the following terms described the experience of temporary release as spanning two worlds:

> Eventually, I was released on TR. I was out two days a week, then three days a week, then five days a week. Then I was getting weekends out with my family and eventually that came to full release, full TR (at the time of interview Ben was on release on license) . . . it was really nice you know, the beauty of it all (outside) and then I just got used to it. But it was difficult like, going back to the prison. It was as if I had to leave my freedom outside the gate. It was like, it was a bit like being Superman like, where you change from being one person to another, from being a free man to a prisoner. And in the morning from prisoner to free man and there was never any kind of a crossing or connection between the two. They were two separate things, totally different and it was very difficult going back in the evenings. Three years I was going back. But em, it was alright too you know. I mean, it was better than being inside all the time.

Because most of the research group had been imprisoned at a time when the Irish Prison Service was operating beyond its capacity (Kilcommins, *et al.*, 2004; Rogan, 2011), many of them experienced the 'revolving-door syndrome' (Kilcommins, *et al.*, *ibid.*). Spontaneous release, or receiving very little notice prior to their release was therefore a

common experience amongst participants apart from those who were serving sentences for drug offences — the terms of which meant that early release was not available to them. Being released without prior notice renders prisoners' prospects for successful reintegration vulnerable insofar as they have little opportunity to make plans and arrangements in the community. Participants' narratives pertaining to their experiences of temporary release in this manner were in the majority of cases negative. Many reported the manner with which they were told to 'pack up and get out because the jail is full' diminished their view of the credibility of criminal justice system.

'It's too much of a big jump'

The absence of planning for release was a common theme that arose in the data with the vast majority of participants reporting the lack of any formal help or support available to them as they approached their release dates. Bart, aged 35, reflected the experiences of others when he said:

> I was comin' to the end of my time and I was just called into the office one day and the chief said, "we're letting you out". So it was just like that. There was no preparation, you know. There was nothing. And that's the way I went through prison like. Just going into your own world there. There was no help or support. Just all this pressure of being thrown out of prison and going into prison.

Similarly, Alan, aged 40, described his own feelings and experience as follows:

> They (Prison Service) don't care like you know and that's why fellows then are re-offending because like they're getting no chance. They're getting nothing. They never done nothing for me. I'm telling you now, they do nothing and I'm telling you straight — they want to do nothing for you. By rights and by law, before I was left out they should have gradually leavin' me out do you know. But they didn't do that with me. Just left me there for the four-year and when the four-year was up then, that was it. Out the door, you know.

Participants varied in their views of when preparation for release should commence. For some they thought it should be six weeks in advance while others thought it should start at the point of entry and involve someone to talk to and to offer help as Shane, aged 35 describes:

Someone that they can talk to. Someone that gives their time for to listen to them, to find out where, what difficulties they're in, what circumstances, what way they can be helped in getting a place to live. They might need help and guidance with addictions, because a lot of people don't get that and they end up going back to square one again, going around in a circle and more of a lostness you know . . . People can't read behind the scenes of people's situations, where they are in their life experience you know.

Specifically, the type of support referred to by participants as being most essential to them included the need for help with regard to alcohol and drug misuse, psychological support, meaningful activities and practical preparations for release including arrangements for accommodation and follow-up support in the community. This was explained by Melissa, aged 22 when she said:

I think when you're comin' up to goin' out of prison that they should have set up somewhere for you to live, like they should help you. I'm not saying hold your hand or anything, like I just mean help you. And like, with counsellin' and that, because in prison your life stops. It just stops.

The absence of preparation and support for release was reported by a number of participants as something that negatively impacted on the potential for successful adjustment to the community. Gerard, aged 39 echoed the sentiments of other participants in this regard saying:

I think it's too much of a big jump. You come out of prison, straight back into reality. There's no preparation done before you come out. There's nothing done for you for when you come out, and I think that's wrong . . . You need to do real preparing do you know. Get on to programmes inside. Maybe get into a half-way house for the last two months of your sentence or even down to the open prison where you can come in and out you know and get back into the swing of things.

Accommodation Provision

Given the high rate of homelessness reported by the research participants at the time of interview, it was not surprising that arrangements for accommodation provision in the community was something they prioritised as essential in preparation for release. Shane, aged 35 expressed this saying: "the hardest thing is coming back out onto the streets, without anywhere to live." Participants' perspectives of being released from prison

without any accommodation in place included a sense of futility with a view towards reintegration that included a strong likelihood of being re-arrested as a consequence of homelessness. Participants commonly referred to the need for transitional accommodation after imprisonment described by some as a "stepping-stone". Their narratives also revealed the need for cooperation between the Prison Service and the Social Welfare Service in the provision of help and support with regard to accessing accommodation especially in relation to those with a long history of homelessness and imprisonment. Jacob, aged 26 reflected the sentiments of others in this regard when he said:

> Like if they've got problems with you re-offendin' and stuff, at least they could put you in a half-way house. Like if you're finishin' a sentence it might be a good stepping stone for when you're getting out you know, instead of putting you straight back out and expecting you to go away and find a flat and stuff.

Welfare Entitlements

Participants commonly reported that accessing welfare payments in the community was something they found problematic following their imprisonment (see Part III). Conor, aged 34 explained this as follows:

> One of most difficult issues of getting out like, is money issues. There should be some kind of system set up that when you're being released that your payment is sorted out for you before you get out so that when you do get out you can just get your cheques like, because otherwise that'd entice you to go back robbing like, do you know, that's why people go robbing in the first place because they have no money.

Many participants were of the opinion that some preparatory steps towards registration for benefits in advance of release could help ease the burden in this regard. These included a One-Stop-Shop and greater coordination between the Social Welfare Service and the Prison Service so that benefits could be paid at the time of release. This was expressed by Matt, aged 43 thus:

> If you had Social Welfare (personnel) inside (prison) that you'd be free to come straight out then and pass your case onto them so that you'd get paid straight away, rather than trying to run around. Because sometimes you come out with

nothing. You don't even have the bus fare, you know what I mean? To get the dole money, 'tis just running around, running around, running around, you know. It takes weeks to get it.

Psychological Preparation for Release

Reintegration presupposes that individuals are psychologically prepared for the process (Haney, 2003; Thornton Hall Project Review Group, 2011; Parsons, 2014). Participants were asked during their interviews to describe how they were feeling and what they were thinking about during their imprisonment with regard to their pending release — if they were making any immediate plans and if they were looking forward to leaving prison. In line with the findings of Farrall and Calverley (2006) participants in this study indicated that the prison environment is not conducive to making plans for the future as Alan, aged 40 describes:

> Well at the time, to be quite honest about it, like you wouldn't be thinking about outside. It's inside you want to be thinking about, not outside . . . what they were trying to do to me. That's what I was going through, through all my sentences. So like you wouldn't really be thinking about the outside, would you? You'd be looking after yourself on the inside".

'Worry about the unknown'

Participants' reported that thoughts about release during imprisonment caused them stress and anxiety. Concerns about what was facing them after release ranged from how they would occupy their time to more fundamental concerns about having housing or interim accommodation. Eileen, aged 24 described such anxiety in the following terms: "You thinks about everything, but you tries not to, do you know what I mean? Like because it just messes with your head big time. Like, bein' in there too long like, it does mess with your head, the thinkin'". Similarly, Andy, aged 20 explained this saying: "No. See I never think about comin' out. I used never. There's no point. Because then you'd be thinkin' too much and you're only wreckin' your own head". That facing the prospect of release was more stressful than facing imprisonment or serving a prison

sentence was also outlined by other participants. Timothy, aged 63 described this when

he said: "I'd say the jail wasn't bad. It wasn't as bad as the worry I had before it. And it

wasn't as bad as the worry I had about coming out . . . worry about the unknown".

The stress of the 'unknown' was described by participants in terms of worry about the

challenges facing them in the community and anxiety about interpersonal relationships.

This included participants' relationships with their partners, children and their families

of origin. Some described it as a process of getting to know family members again

especially children who may have been young at the time of committal.   This was

outlined by Hugh, aged 29 when he said:

> I suppose there's this natural inbuilt thing like, about getting out of jail. You
> don't know where you stand like. It's just not knowing. Coming up to my
> release I just started worrying about various things like. Do you know, stupid
> things. Like how is this person or that person going to react to me when I get
> out. And another stupid thing — getting to know my kids again. I was just kind
> of uneasy in myself and just unsure of myself, how I'd be seen, like you know.
> And I just started getting all jittery about it . . . I was full of uncertainty,
> paranoid out of my head".

Evan, aged 25, described similar stress as follows:

> I wasn't thinking about getting out. I was thinking about how I was fucking
> going to kill myself, but I didn't have the fucking bottle to do it. I just wanted to
> get home like. But I was nervous about getting home as well and starting again.
> It was like I was living a groundhog day, every day of my fucking life for the
> past twenty-five years.

For others the fear of release was related to the fact that they had no one to help them or

support them in the community as was reported by Eric, aged 29 when he said:

> I was dreading it. Just facing people. I just used to lie in my bed there all day (in
> prison) not even eating my meals most of the time . . . I was explaining to the
> chaplain there that I was dreading the buses and the trains. She told me she was
> off the day I was being released so she said she had no problem taking me back
> to Cork. I was wishing I could go home or at least rent a house locally, only they
> (family) didn't want me home. I was thinking where will I stay, what am I going
> to do? See, I never lived independent before.

Participants with a history of homelessness who reported that they had no living arrangements in place prior to their release explained the stress that they endured facing the prospect of life back on the streets. James, aged 35 articulated this saying:

> While I was lying in jail I was thinking what am I going to do when I get out? You know — I can't go back to Dublin, I'll be killed. Where am I going to go? Nowhere. It was like, oh my God, you know. Due to a shift in policy, the light at the end of the tunnel has been switched to fuck off. You know. And bump. *What shift in policy?* Well, that was me you know in the cell. It's a shift in policy. The light at the end of me tunnel has been switched off.

'Feeling hopeless'

While being absolutely terrified at the prospect of release commonly emerged in participants' narratives, this fear was further described as including the impact their history of imprisonment would have on the acquisition of employment. Matt, aged 43 outlined this when he said: "I was just worried about getting work and getting back into it". Bart, aged 34 reflected the views of others in this regard when he said:

> I didn't know what I was going out to. I had nothing. I didn't know what I was going out to, do you know. Like, people in the community — like I was the only guy from my area who'd ever been in prison like. Job prospects — like you know, with the past that I had and everything. No work, no employment. What am I going to do? Like I can go home, but sure I can't be at home like you know — no money, no nothing like, and you know, no car, no transport, no nothing. No support of any sort.

Participants, especially those who had served multiple terms of imprisonment, also expressed feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness about their future prospects. Nick, aged 47 who had been self-employed prior to his imprisonment expressed such feelings in the following terms:

> When you're doing the sentence that fear is always in your head. What's going to happen when I come out? I actually kind of thought that this is the end. The end of things for me you know. Like I just knew that I'd have to start something again when I'd get back out but I didn't know how I was going to go about anything. I was thinking — after ten years of being out and now I'm back inside jail again that there's no hope for me this time. I didn't see any future this time whatsoever in my life and I didn't think there was anything worth living for. I didn't. I was kind of after just losing hope for life really. I didn't kind of see a future, I didn't. I wasn't able to focus mind and try to say, okay, I'll get back to work when I get out of this sentence.

Similar feelings were evident in the data amongst those who gave accounts of their inability to confront their alcohol and drug habits. Sam, aged 37 expressed this this as follows: "there was panic coming out the last time because I was there saying — I'm going back into the same situation with the drinking and the drugs, do you know". Without any plans in place to address problem drinking Ger, aged 41 described how that impacts on release saying:

> Sure I used to be always there sayin' to meself when I finish me sentence now that I won't drink. But sure I knew that once I'd get the money into me hands from the prison that it would be just straight to the pub, you know.

Similarly, James, aged 35 said: "I'll be honest with you what I was looking forward to was the off-license. And after all that life experience and all the damage drink has done to me and a third of my life in jail, that's what I wanted again".

'The best of plans when I'm in there, but when I get out…'

Such was the high level of exposure to imprisonment amongst the research group (see Chapter Five) that low levels of self-efficacy and outcome expectancy (Bandura, 1986) were apparent in the data. While the majority of participants reported that prior to their release they had resolved never again to return to prison the data indicated that some were more prepared than others in terms of the challenges facing them and the changes they would need to adopt to avoid re-imprisonment. Some participants reported that they wished to change but had no definite plan in place to do so. This has been described by Prochaska and DiClemente (1992) as 'pre-contemplation'. Participants described that despite thoughts about 'going straight' and addressing their problems surrounding alcohol and drug use, these thoughts dissipated soon after release. Conor, aged 34 described this as follows:

> I always wanted to go straight like you know, all the times I was in prison. Like I swore I'd never go back, but then when you're out like, after a month or six weeks, you kind of forget that you were in prison and all the thoughts you had when you were inside about getting straight. When you're out after a couple of

weeks and you get back involved in drugs and stuff again, the worry of going back is gone.

Participants described their thoughts about release in the absence of a support structure in place to help them address their problems as unrealistic. Problems in the majority of cases included alcohol and drug use that led to further offending and imprisonment. Denis, aged 35 reflected the views of others in this regard when he said:

> You never do the things that you were thinking of. Sayin' like — I'm going to get out now and I'm not coming back here no more. And I'm going to get a job and all that. But the minute you get out you're going to have a drink and sure if there's a squad car around that night, you're probably going to end up inside it. And then you're saying when you're in like, what the fuck am I doing in here again looking at the walls?

Craig, aged 28 described it as follows:

> The first few times I was in there, I was sayin' I won't get in trouble again, but I was only out a few months and I was at it again. And then went in again and me sentences were startin' to get a small bit bigger then . . . Yeah, I do have the best of plans when I'm in there, but it's when I get out…

It also emerged in the data amongst those who reported a serious commitment to alter their life course after imprisonment that taking steps towards addiction recovery was something they deemed necessary. This has been described by Prochaska and DiClemente (1992) as the action stage of change. Oisín, aged 28 described the value of having support available to assist with problem addictions as follows:

> I knew that I didn't want to come back here, that I didn't want to be coming in and out of jail like. I didn't want to be part of the revolving door system there. I don't want to be coming back. I kind of woke up a bit you know, that I'll have to do something, do you know what I mean like. I tried to go off the drink before on me own like and eh, it was pointless. A losin' battle as they say like, but I just made me mind up like that eh, that I'm going to go into a treatment centre and see what they can do for me, do you know.

Research has shown that individuals who participate in drug recovery programmes in the community are likely to maintain their recovery during imprisonment (Brown, Evans and Payne, 2009). Participants in this study who had succeeded in their efforts at addiction recovery prior to their most recent term of imprisonment reported that they

faced release in more optimistic terms and were highly motivated not to return to prison

again. Hugh, aged 29 explained this in the following terms:

> Ah, between the jigs and the reels all me sentences started running into each other and all of that. But on my last occasion, when I went into prison like, I had stopped drinking and using drugs twelve months prior to that. I'd gone through treatment. Me life was actually going in a way better direction like. But my focus was, the last time that I went in was that I'll do the sentence now and I'll get out as quick as possible and just get on with my life. I was in a good place. I didn't fear getting out. I was looking forward to getting out.

Similarly, Brendan, aged 48 explained the benefit of having a support structure in place

to help with recovery as promoting reintegration saying:

> I knew going in what I wanted to do. I had been a year and thirteen days clean and I wanted to stay clean inside and come back out. So I did the meetings, and approached the Probation Service about coming out. And I knew all those X's on my cards would get me out and I was interested in staying out. I just felt I had my — I just knew going into prison what I wanted to do. Just get through it. But then, with the support structures, like, I knew all about recovery. I knew about meetings and I had that to go back to when I'd get out and I'd go straight back to it. I think because I had the knowledge before going into prison where I knew, I'd be coming back out that I could run to (addiction support centre). But I'd say if I didn't know that, I mean, I wouldn't know where to go. I think for me I was lucky because I had in place some pillars and I knew what support was available and I think I was hungry enough to grab it as well.

'The penny dropped'

Confidence that one can terminate self-destructive behaviour has been heralded as the

single most useful deterrent for its cessation (Lee, 1987). Walters (2002) argues that

while identity plays a vital role in criminal desistance, identity transformation enables

both the motivation to change and the maintenance of change. Participants in this study

who gave accounts of finding themselves committed to change towards the end of their

most recent prison terms did so in terms of seeing further possibilities for their lives as a

substitute for the lives they were living previously. Padraig, aged 39 expressed this as

follows:

> It was kind of different this time. I dunno, just kind of, the penny dropped. I was saying to myself — I've had enough of prison and I can do something with my life. It's not too late, do you know what I mean. Life in prison like, you know it's not going to last. It's only borrowed time like. It don't feel like borrowed

time now. It's just, I dunno, you're out, you're back in, you're out, you're back in, you're out, you're back in. You just expect the same like. You'd have mad notions alright when you're in there but then when you get out, it's all up in the air. Like you'd be sayin' I'm goin' to do this now and I won't be drinking, or I won't do this, I won't do that. But this is what I'm goin' to do now, (college course) and I'm sticking' to it like.

While change has been determined to be somewhat cyclical in nature a successful transition that requires preparation, action and maintenance (Prochaska, DiClemente and Norcross, 1992) is sometimes preceded by an epiphany (Denzin, 1987). The process and experience of change in light of such was described by Ben, aged 49, in his account as follows:

> I came out of my cell that evening and saw all the drugs on the table and I thought, oh my God, what's going on? How did I come from where I came from at the foot of the [name] Hills, to this? What's going on like? There were moments like that where I thought this has gone way out of hand altogether like. You know all those drugs inside of prison and the type of life I was living. But when I started to turn my life around, and I didn't start to turn my life around because it wasn't like that. I just wanted it to be different. And I was, well I remember being afraid of the prospect of change. I remember being actually afraid of the prospect of that and thinking like, what am I going to come out like? What am I going to be like? You see, when I came into the prison, I had said like, okay, okay, I'll do the fucking sentence and I'll get out and I'll get on with my life, I will. And that was my goal. Right, I'll do the sentence and I'll get out and get on with my life. But I mean, I had come to the conclusion in prison that meant it wasn't just the offence that I was sentenced for — that wasn't the reason I was in prison. The reason I was in prison was the way I lived my life . . . And then I was thinking, that if I do live and if I do the sentence and if I do get out, I can't be getting out with a view to living my life the way I lived it before I got in. Because if I do that, I'm going to end up back here, back in prison. It's like, what's the point? So like, there's going to have to be change . . . I realised that I was doing things like that (drinking and taking drugs) to get what I have now. I was doing things like that to be at ease with myself, searching for peace, and I have that now, so there's no need to do those things. You know, it was a complete change around. It's like, all the time I was wild and uncivilised and I was all the time chasing peace. I was also at the time chasing happiness, you know and I didn't find that out until I stopped chasing, and that is the truth.

Part II: Summary

Part II of this chapter has highlighted that the participants in this study experienced very little of rehabilitative or reintegrative value during their imprisonment. Moreover, the experience of imprisonment not only resembled the chaos, adversity and social

exclusion that they had previously experienced in their communities but it had the effect of further exacerbating their exclusion from the communities they had hoped to return to after their imprisonment. This was evidenced through participants' accounts of fear and anxiety about what was facing them post-release. Participants' perceived needs for successful living in the community were the same needs that had not been met either prior to, or during their imprisonment, particularly housing, employment and addiction recovery support. The lack of support in preparation for release, coupled with the perceived lack of a continuum of support in the community was described by the majority of the group as tantamount to the expectation that they would fail to reintegrate, therefore becoming repeat offenders. It was evident that with their release date pending, participants differed in their readiness for change. Some reported that despite pondering their release in terms of making changes and avoiding further offending and re-imprisonment they failed to recognise that they needed help and support in this regard. This was in contrast to other participants who had advanced their potential to change through actively engaging with support structures that would assist them in their reintegration. In the majority of cases this included help and support with regard to problem alcohol and drug misuse. Against the background of the experience of imprisonment that was characterised in profoundly negative terms, Part III will present the process of reintegration from the perspectives of the research participants.

Part III: The Strains of Reintegration

Introduction

Part III explains in detail how the research participants experienced reintegration including the barriers and impediments they encountered as well as that which they found to be supportive and beneficial to them throughout the process. It will begin by outlining their experiences of release from prison. This will be followed by an account of the stresses and strains they endured as they readjusted to life in the community. It was apparent from participants' accounts that they encountered four substantive barriers to reintegration preceded by the absence of any preparation for release. These were: psychological stress associated with readjustment to life outside of prison; the experience of stigmatisation associated with their past offending and imprisonment; the lack of adequate housing accommodation in the community leading to homelessness and in many cases ongoing problem drug and alcohol misuse. A further issue that emerged in the data as an impediment to the process of reintegration was that of re-offending after release.

Experiences of Release from Prison

Signifying as it does, the end of the formal judicial punishment, the day of release can be a welcome event for those who have made plans and preparations for their return to society, are looking forward to being reunited with their families and friends and are confident that they have a support structure in place to help them readjust to free life. Very few participants in this study described the day of their release from prison in positive terms. Rather accounts of the event were predominantly described in terms of confusion, uncertainty and abandonment. Some participants such as Peter, aged 35 described the day of release in terms of elation and relief when he said:

> It's bad goin' in there. It's the worst fuckin' nightmare you can get walkin' in them gates but it's the happiest nightmare you can get walkin' out, do you know. I walked in with nothin' and I came out a millionaire, that's the way I look at it. Even though I hadn't much money in my pocket comin' out, I know for a fact like, the morning I walked out of Cork Prison like, I know for a fact like, that if I won the Lotto today that I wouldn't get that high off it.

A more common experience was that any positive feelings about release quickly dissipated. Vincent, aged 37 captured the views of many others when he explained that such feelings can be short-lived as the uncertainty of life after prison dawns: "Oh, it feels great when you're walking out the gate, but then when that gate's slammed, you think to yourself, where am I going to go? What can I do and who can I go to?"

The research participants most commonly referred to being released from prison as a traumatic experience. This was true for those who were released with little or no notice, in the absence of any preparation or plans and especially true for those who had nothing by way of support for their transition back into the community. The early days of release have been described as crucial in terms of successful reintegration (Nelson, Deess and Allen, 1999; National Economic and Social Forum, 2002; Bedford Row Family Project, 2007; Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2010; Martynowicz and Quigley, 2010). However, many participants in this study gave accounts of spontaneous unplanned release that propelled them into a situation they were not prepared for as the prison ejected them by way of a safety valve for prison overcrowding. As mentioned in Chapter Two, this practice, known as the 'revolving door syndrome' means that prisoners serve only a fraction of the prison time imposed by the court and serve the remainder of their sentence in the community, usually without supervision (Kilcommins *et al.*, 2004). From the perspectives of some participants the practice of early and unplanned release compromised the legitimacy of the period of imprisonment. This was explained by Padraig, aged 39 who described the short time between being informed of his release and leaving the prison:

I mean, I was smokin' a joint on top of the bed the last time I got called to get out from prison like. I got told the night before . . . I was stunned getting out that time. I mean I was doing nothing down there like. I didn't even make an attempt, you know what I mean, and the next thing, you're getting out like. Then there'd be times you'd be doing everything right and you're not getting out. I was sayin' what kind of logic have these people like? I don't think there's any logic really, you know.

Andy, aged 20 was similarly taken aback about being informed of his early release:

They said "pack your kit to get out". I was sayin' "you're only windin' me up" and I started brushin' my teeth and cleanin' my cell, 'cause I thought they were only windin' me up. And then they said, "do you want to go or not?" and I says, "are you dead serious because I have five months left to do?" I thought I was goin' to do it to the day like 'cause I was messin' the whole time up there, do you know. I had a rake of P19s (disciplinary reports), a load of 'em for all, only all stupid things like, but a P19 is a P19 in their eyes, do you know.

'Dumped outside the gate like a dustbin'

For almost 85% of the participants in this study, recollections of their day of release were grim. The dominant issue to emerge from their accounts was a profound sense of being abandoned by the Prison Service. This was reflected in their negative descriptions of the event that included being "thrown out the prison gate" (Alan, aged 40). James, aged 35, described it thus: "as far as the prison system was concerned, they were dumping me outside that gate like a dustbin, do you know what I mean? You're finished your time, go on, good luck to you, see you again son". Similarly, Tony, aged 30 said: "I'll be perfectly honest with you — I was caught and fucked out of prison after doin' nearly five and a half year, with nowhere to go, just fucked out the gate, nowhere to go, nothin' to do, just back out on the streets".

For those incarcerated in a prison not in their own city or county, participants said they were typically given train tickets or bus tickets to get home, with some reporting that they did not know where the train or bus station was as they were being released from a prison in a city not familiar to them. In some instances they were also issued with any money they had managed to save during their sentence, but most participants explained

that they were penniless leaving prison, having spent their daily moiety in the prison tuck shop or on cigarettes. Vincent, aged 37 echoed the experiences of others when he described his experience: "after nine years in prison, I walked out with 60p in my pocket, nowhere to go, nowhere to live, only a letter — me Temporary Release form, for the remaining month and a half of me sentence".

Because participants reported that they frequently found themselves completely unprepared for life in the community after their release, their prospects for successful reintegration were immediately jeopardised. The absence of adequate preparation prior to release meant that many lacked the opportunity to arrange social welfare payments or accommodation in advance. For those being released in the absence of family support or proper housing provision they were immediately vulnerable to homelessness, victimisation and further offending. (Homelessness as a barrier to reintegration will be discussed in detail further in this chapter).

Participants who had no living arrangements in place prioritized housing or at least transitional accommodation as their most urgent need. Practical support from the Social Welfare Service in terms of unemployment benefits or disability benefits and supplementary benefits were also cited as immediately necessary at the time of release. However, participants' narratives included accounts of the process of accessing such benefits as particularly onerous. Brendan, aged 48, captured the experiences of other participants in his account as follows:

> There's an awful lot of stuff going on when you come out and you're trying to cope . . . you're trying to readjust and then you're expected to runaround you know. For the Welfare you know, you have to prove everything and you might have no plastic card, and you have to get it. There's a lot of red-tape trying to get a place to live, getting all the forms out of the way, all that stuff you know what I mean. It's hard, hard work like . . . if you are coming out and looking for a place, you can't present clean do you know. I had to get a clothing allowance when I came out of prison . . . they gave me €50 . . . the clothes I had on me, there was still tags on them from the prison . . . I didn't know that there were services there. I used to be hungry you know. I didn't know anything. There was

no place I could go where people were the same, to kind of introduce me back into society because I was just being dropped in there like. And it's frightening that you have such a lot of running around to do. And you're confused and frustrated, trying to sort things out.

Imprisonment can have a profound negative social impact on the prisoner, the prisoner's family and the prisoner's community (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2009), the consequences of which may be permanent or long-lasting for the prisoner and those close to him or her (Liebling and Maruna, 2005). The effects of imprisonment can result in the severing of family ties and ties to the community which in turn, renders individuals vulnerable to a rapid return to re-offending when they leave (Coyle, 2005). The impact of unplanned or poorly planned release was compounded for many participants in this study who had limited family or social support available to them. The lack of family support or social support at the time of release was evidenced by virtue of only seven of the 54 participants recalling that they were collected from the prison by a friend, partner or family member. One participant availed of the offer of transport to a post-release support agency by the prison chaplain, while another was met at the prison gate by a caseworker from a post-release support agency. However, for the vast majority of participants, they reported that they left the prison alone relying on very limited resources.

Barriers and Impediments to Reintegration

Often, the challenges and difficulties encountered on a personal level during reintegration are the same challenges and difficulties that may have initially contributed to the offending and resulting incarceration (Martynowicz and Quigley, 2010). However, personal challenges and difficulties may be further amplified by the experience of incarceration (Haney, 2001; Haney, 2003; Bedford Row, 2007). Garland and Wodahl (2014) have argued that successful reintegration should be evaluated in

relation to the quality of the individual's short-term social integration following release. They suggest that the prison to community transition requires some level of adjustment, requiring a suitable level of psychological and emotional stability. The volume of data gleaned from participants' narratives in this study, on issues of psychosocial adjustment after imprisonment significantly outweighs other themes that emerged in the data. This resonates with the findings of other similar recent research that found psychosocial challenges were cited more frequently as obstacles and strains to reintegration (Garland, Wodahl and Mayfield, 2011). The psychological strains associated with reintegration that the participants in this study experienced span three aspects of stress that are sometimes interrelated. Personal internal stress or that which could be described as "psychological" in nature was described alongside accounts of problems interacting with others, including family members, which can be described as "social stress". Participants also highlighted the stress of "surviving on the outside" in a world that if not overtly hostile to their plight was at the very least not amenable to their needs.

Barrier One: Psychosocial Readjustment

The prison environment has been described as antithetical to the provision of supportive services, given that prison officers are not social workers and typically lack the experience or professional orientation to provide therapeutic services (Parsons, 2014). Furthermore, it has been stated that whatever benefit may accrue from imprisonment it always causes harm (Scottish Prison Commission, 2008). The psychological impact of incarceration can have substantial implications for post-prison adjustment. Negative effects of imprisonment may initially emerge in the form of internal chaos, disorganisation, stress and fear (Haney, 2003). Notwithstanding that many of the participants in this study gave accounts of contemplating their release in terms of worry and anxiety, these feelings were again replicated following their return to the community. Additionally, for the majority of them, such psychological stress was

further compounded by their life circumstances at the time of interview (see Chapter Five).

Mental health problems are significantly higher among Irish prisoners than the population as a whole (Kennedy, *et al.,* 2004). Furthermore, the experience of imprisonment can aggravate mental health problems, heighten vulnerability and increase the risk of self-harm and suicide (Ministry of Justice, 2009). The lack of adequate support for prisoners experiencing mental health difficulties and limited access to support upon their release impedes reintegration (Martynowicz and Quigley, 2010). Over 57% (*n*=31) of the research participants in this study made references to mental health problems in their narratives. The majority of this group spoke of suffering from depression for which they were taking medication and therefore were not in a position to take on employment. Others explained that they had been diagnosed with bi-polar or manic depression and in one instance, schizophrenia. While some participants referred to instances of self-harm or attempted suicide in the past, two indicated that they had also been suicidal in the very recent past at the time of interview. Kupers (2006) has argued that more attention needs to be paid to the traumas of a prisoner's life — those that occurred prior to incarceration and those that occur inside prison. Some participants in this study described themselves as "more psychiatrical than criminal" (Jenny, aged 22). That prison is an unsuitable environment for those suffering with mental health problems was explained by James, aged 35 as follows:

> Sometimes I think maybe I should have getting (been sent to) a psychiatric institution rather than prison. What was prison going to do for someone like me? Because I wasn't criminal or nothing . . . all my crimes are like, emotionally — they are emotional, my state of mind whatever, you know, emotional.

Stress is defined as a set of demands on individuals that tax or exceed their resources for managing them (Burke, 1991). Psychosocial stress is the result of a cognitive appraisal of what is at stake and what can be done about it. It happens when one looks at a

perceived threat, real or imagined, and discerns that it may require resources one does not have. Psychosocial stress can result from a threat to one's social status; social esteem; respect and/or acceptance within a particular group; a threat to one's self-worth; or a threat that is felt by one, over which they feel they have no control (*ibid.*). Regardless of the length of time they had been on release from prison, different psychosocial readjustment issues arose in participants' narratives in relation to their mind-set at the time of interview. On the one hand, those who had very limited, if any support in the community described stress in terms of 'survival'. Often within the context of alcohol and/or drug-misuse participants described the need for food and shelter as so all-encompassing that they could not consider at that time the possibility of availing of other interventions such as recovery programmes or training and employment schemes. On the other hand, participants who had more stability to their lives, either through being reunited with their families or their engagement with some structured support in the community appeared to be more sensitive to the psychosocial readjustment issues they were experiencing at the time of interview.

Coping with the practical realities and freedom of release was compounded by a number of psychological issues including anxiety and sleep problems. Participants' descriptions of the challenges of readjusting to life in the community combined further elements of psychological and psychosocial stress they experienced on a daily basis. It was evident that psychological and psychosocial stress was manifested in a number of ways. Some participants compared the stress of early readjustment in the community as being akin to arriving at an unknown destination where they found themselves relearning everyday living. Others described a phenomenon of a continuous sense of imprisonment that endured for some time after their release from prison. Participants also described their feelings of confusion and a lack of psychological wellbeing that they found difficult to come to terms with. This was manifested in others who felt that they were 'stuck in a

rut'. A number of participants described how they were lacking self-confidence, feeling self-conscious and insecure which was further restraining them from progressing with reintegration. Each aspect of the stress of post-release readjustment experienced by the participants will be outlined below, followed by an account of the implications of psychological and psychosocial stress on the process of reintegration.

'You might as well be getting off a spaceship'

All of the participants in this study reported that readjustment to life after imprisonment was something they struggled with. Many described it as even more challenging than having to adjust to the prison system itself. A common difficulty that arose in the data relating to readjustment was getting used to living in the outside world after imprisonment. Participants' experiences of the challenge of coping with autonomy post-release echo the findings of previous research (Haney, 2003). Doug, aged 33, described it as coming from a place where "you're told what to do and when to do it . . . where everything is arranged and organised for you". Difficulty with adjustment was also expressed in terms of having to learn to cope with commonplace tasks, such as cooking, eating and laundry, all of which had been provided for participants while they were in prison. This was explained by Matt, aged 43, thus:

> It's because when you're in there, everything is done for you. You're fed. You're told what time to go to bed. I mean, I know it sounds horrible, but you actually get into the routine of that and it's great do you know. Now I'd be sitting at home and it would be half past seven and I'd be getting up out of the chair to go to bed!

Others described their difficulty with trying to manage finances, saying that they were worried about paying rent and having enough money to buy food. Melissa, aged 22, described the readjustment to life after prison as follows: "the world is just going by when you're inside. Then you come out. Even walking up a hill is hard — money, everything. What's the word, eh, institutionalised they say I am". Eric, aged 29 described how time in prison does not keep pace with developments on the outside

when he said: "even going into a café now is hard. It was simple to ask for coffee. Now it's all these choices between latté, espresso or cappuccino. What's with all that?"

The stress of coping with early readjustment manifested for some in the form of sleeping difficulties. A number of other participants expressed the difficulties they encountered as they readjusted to living with their families once again. Hugh, aged 29 who returned home to his wife and children described the disorientation he experienced when he left prison saying: "when I came out, it was just that kind of everything seemed vacant to me, distant to me". Conor, aged 34, described the uncertainty surrounding relationships as follows:

> I didn't know what I was moving into when I was coming out. Like, I was away from her (partner) for three years, so I was a completely different person. Like you change in three years obviously like, so I was a different person coming out.

Padraig, aged 39, had been released from prison seven months prior to the time of interview. Having engaged in an addiction recovery programme in the prison he believed that such were the difficulties and frustrations of readjustment to life in the community that relapse was possible. The experiences of many of the participants, especially those who were struggling with alcohol and drug misuse are reflected in Padraig's account of readjusting to life on the outside as follows:

> You see that's what happens like. It's what happened to me when I got out. You need something to handle it like. You can't just walk back out here. It's not like walking out that door. It's like coming from a different planet. You might as well be getting off a spaceship like — that's the way I often said it like. Because like, before (in prison), well even with the tellys and stuff like, you're kinda seein' things changin', on the news and all that kind of stuff like. But before, all you were doin' was listening to the radio like and you're just taking your man on the radio's word for it, you know what I mean like and you're not seeing Sky News — you're not hearing nothing about anything you know what I mean. Well, the newspapers keep you in touch as well, but you turn in, 'cause you're in your cell and you're on your own time. You'd get shaky sometimes out here do you know, and say fuck this do you know what I mean. It's too hard you know. And that's the thing — tryin' to live normal is a lot fuckin' harder than being out robbing.

Taking Prison Home

Given the common history of disadvantage and adversity experienced by the majority of the prison population (O'Donnell, *et al.*, 2007) the experience of imprisonment can serve as a re-traumatisation leading some prisoners to suffer a type of post-traumatic stress disorder (Herman, 1992). This was apparent for a small number of participants in this study (*n=8*) who highlighted that even though they were on release, they continued to experience a sense of imprisonment. They articulated this phenomenon for both its psychological and physical features. Alan, a 40 year-old participant who was two years on release at the time of interview explained how he was finding it difficult to recover from what he experienced in prison. He spoke of the torment he felt knowing that other prisoners are being subjected to the same treatment he received when he was imprisoned. He said: "I seen things happen inside that jail girl, I'm telling you straight, I seen fellas getting battered. I got beatings myself. I seen fellas, a man getting battered, a bad battering, you know what I mean, and there's nothing ever done about it". Alan was manifestly distraught about what he had witnessed and experienced and explained that he had tried to raise the issue of "institutional violence" on public radio broadcasts in the recent past. Describing how these experiences were affecting his own reintegration he said:

> It torments me. Well, I'll be straight about it now, life after prison is the way I
> was treated inside and I'll never in my life, I'll never forgive them for what they
> done to me up in that jail.

A number of participants reported difficulties with readjustment to the physical environment outside of prison. Ben, aged 49 recalled being initially overwhelmed by outdoor light and the vastness of space so much so that he only felt comfortable out of doors when he was in a car. Other participants gave accounts of the anxiety they experienced if doors were left open with a number of them reporting that they felt more comfortable when they locked their bedroom doors at night, explaining that this is what

they had become accustomed to in prison. Denis, aged 35 described how he had to readjust and re-acclimate himself in his own home as follows:

> Like when you get out now, like your house is dounchy (tiny) like, dooney. You think like you're a giant in the house. It's over being in the jail like — everything is big in the jail like. There's no ceilings you see.

In describing how the prison environment can be imprinted on the psyche, Melissa, aged 22, stated that she now calls "every room a cell" and refers to people in authority as "screws". It was apparent in a number of narratives that the feeling of imprisonment was one that endured long after being released from prison and it was manifested through the adaptation of prison norms in their homes. Peter, aged 35 was just over two years on release from prison at the time of interview. He described how his experience of imprisonment continued to overshadow his daily life as follows:

> The only way I can describe it to be honest like, is that I'm still in prison today really only I'm on the outside, if you can understand me. Do you know, it's like I still got fucking prison in my head, locked in there, but I can't get rid of it. When I go back home tonight, at 6 o'clock it's back in my bedroom for the night like do you know and just watching my telly, do you know like. I have my bedroom done up like a cell to be honest with you, do you know, with my HiFi and my DVD. And since I got out of prison — that's the only thing, that's one downfall about it alright, do you know, I just find myself, I have no time for my friends anymore do you know. I have no time for the people around me to be honest. The friends that I used to hang around with before, they'd be ringing me up and sayin' why don't you call down to us like, and I'd be, I will, I will and I don't. I dunno, I'm really scared about that to be honest. I'm kind of worried about it like because sometimes I do be thinkin' to myself am I snappin' do you know . . . The only place I feel comfortable is when I'm in home, you know. Inside my room. I feel it's a safe environment you know. It's safe in there. Which I can't understand really because before I went into prison I was probably one of the most outgoin'-ist people you'd ever meet.

Similarly, Andy aged 20, gave an account of feeling unsocial. Having been five months on release at the time of interview, he said that during the first few weeks of his release that he stayed at home and although his friends would call to his house to ask him out, he always declined saying that he just wanted "to stay inside".

Some participants also noted that because Cork is such a small city, there was also the additional difficulty of physically distancing themselves from the prison environment

given the likelihood of crossing paths with either prison staff or other former prisoners in the community. This was highlighted by Ben, aged 49, as follows:

> I've met them all (prison staff) . . . I mean, you can't walk through Cork but you're going to bump into fellas you were in jail with. You know like, walking through Cork sometimes is like walking through a prison yard like. An exercise yard like. They're everywhere!

Confusion, Uncertainty and Feeling 'Out of Sync'

Common themes that emerged in the narratives of those who articulated the psychological aspect of the reintegration process included feelings of confusion, uncertainty and feeling out of sync. Some participants described a sense of 'being lost' or feeling off-kilter, not being quite sure why, but a strong feeling within them nonetheless. Other participants found it difficult to precisely identify the source of their stress apart from the fact that they were aware of it. Peter, aged 35 who was three years on release at the time of interview reflected the views of others in describing this saying:

> I know there's something there, if you understand me. I know there's something in the back of my head that's holding me back but I don't know what it is, if you can understand do you know. It's like I know there's something there, it's like I know I'm not feeling right, I know I'm not 100% in myself.

Participants gave accounts of feeling that they were living in suspended reality. While attempting to re-establish their lives on the outside, they explained that what they experienced did not feel real for them. They spoke of a desire to 'get back to reality' but viewed themselves as not in that place at the time of interview. The absence of support and preparation for release left many feeling at a loss for direction, as was articulated by Craig, aged 33 thus:

> I can't explain it. When I'm inside, I don't know how this is, but my brain goes totally different when I'm outside than when I'm inside. When I'm inside, I'm all this, dead serious about when I'm goin' to be out like — but when I'm out then, I do be thinkin' to myself, what am I going to do now like?

'Stuck in a rut'

The lack of preparation for transition to life in the community and planning for what they would do on release was also apparent in that over one-fifth (*n*=12) of the research group reported that they were feeling down and stuck in a rut. This was reflected in participants' accounts of having nothing to do and at a loss as to what they could do with their time. The potential pitfall of having no structure in place or anything to do after imprisonment includes the risk of re-offending as was outlined by Donal, aged 38 when he said:

> There's fuck all in Cork anyway. It's just that if you're in a rut, if you're a criminal, you come out, there's nothing to do. You're going back to square one. You've no way of getting a job, you've no money, you're gonna do everything in your power to get money. Bang! You're caught — back in. End of story.

Proactive efforts to avoid being 'stuck in a rut' were outlined by Nick, aged 47, who was two months on release from prison at the time of interview. He had served five previous custodial sentences, all related to drink driving charges. Because he had been self-employed in the past, he was endeavouring to rebuild his business once again and stressed the importance for him of having "something to do", even if he had "to make something to do". He explained how he leaves his apartment early every morning and returns late in the evening, spending his days in the library to read newspapers and at an addiction recovery support drop-in centre. Nick outlined the significance for his mental wellbeing of having something to do as follows:

> I'd be afraid not to have something to do every day because I'd feel I'm getting into a rut. I have to have something to do. Whether I just make something to do, but there has to be something. Do you know like, I have to get out of the flat early in the morning, it doesn't matter what it's for, whether I have to make something, I'm gone and I don't see the place until late evening . . . I've seen so many people that like get into a rut and their life becomes nothing . . . you lose the drive to live and like that's one thing that I need to hold on to like is, do you know, to keep that drive there.

While some participants adjusted to their circumstances by seeking opportunities to earn money, on a self-employment basis because they believed "there's nobody will employ

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a criminal" (Donal, aged 38) others such as Robert, aged 25 described the loss of hope and the futility of trying when he said: "there's no point in even tryin' because you're not goin' to get a job like with an address at the (homeless shelter) and a criminal record. Who's gonna take you on like?"

Lacking Confidence, Feeling Self-conscious and Insecure

Other aspects of psychosocial stress that emerged in the data pertaining to participants' post-release experiences included a lack of confidence, feelings of self-consciousness and feelings of insecurity in the community. Peter, aged 35, described that he feels "second best" in college because he does not pay college fees and though he believes everyone in his class is "nice" to him, he feels like "an outsider". Peter also stated that he felt self-conscious of "stupid things" he did when he was younger, pointing to the tattoos he had acquired while in prison. Feelings of self-consciousness were also described by Denis, aged 35, who said, "you feel everyone is looking at you when you get out". Lacking the confidence to organise things for himself was also an issue raised by Bart aged 35, who felt that having been in prison made communicating with people more difficult for him especially as it related having to talk to social welfare officers who were aware of his history. Alfie, aged 37, explained that even though he had received encouragement from a post-release support agency he still lacked confidence and was self-conscious about his history of imprisonment. He said: "[the agency staff] were always telling me, to go out like, and try. Try this, try that. But my self-esteem was so low then and I was sayin', no, no, no, sure they think I'm a scumbag, you know what I mean? All this kind of thing".

Some participants reported that the experience of being on release was so daunting for them that they had felt more secure in prison than living in the community. Feelings of insecurity in the community were described by a number of participants in terms of

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feeling "nervous" and "afraid" (Luke, aged 27). A small number of participants gave accounts of unresolved issues with members of the community and indicated that they moved to a different vicinity because they feared repercussions. Others described living with an ongoing threat of being attacked and as Shane, aged 35 described, a feeling that "there's danger lurking everywhere".

Implications of Psychosocial Readjustment Problems for Reintegration

The research findings here demonstrate that the punishment of imprisonment does not end with the completion of a prison sentence but in many cases is something that endures after release. It was apparent that the experience of transition from prison to life in the community caused distress, fear and apprehension for the majority of the research group. Additionally, the outside world after release from prison was described by a number of participants as having become alien to them. Participants reported in their accounts of life after imprisonment feelings that ranged from nervousness, to insecurity and in some instances, paranoia. Participants also indicated that they had not fully disengaged from the rituals of imprisonment by describing how they had structured their routines and living environments in such a way that they continued to live in the shadow of imprisonment. Imprisonment has been described as "a massive assault" on identity (Berger, 1963:100). A former prisoner's future identity is inherently unpredictable depending on "how he [or she], in interaction with others, defines this experience" (Schmid and Jones, 1991:153). The negative impact of imprisonment on identity post-release was evidenced through participants' accounts of feelings of self-consciousness, lacking in confidence and suffering low self-esteem.

These findings taken together reveal how psychologically unprepared participants were for transitioning back to life in the community. A key implication of the psychosocial readjustment problems identified in this study is that they highlight the need for support

for prisoners and former prisoners as being a combination of psychological and social support. From their perspectives, psychosocial readjustment problems were something they struggled to come to terms while facing other challenging aspects of their lives post-release. This is particularly significant in light of the participants' personal circumstances at the time of interview (see Chapter Five); their previous life experiences outlined earlier and other barriers to reintegration they endured that will be presented and discussed later in this chapter. Enduring the psychosocial readjustment aspects of reintegration were in the majority of cases compounded by the austere and dismal circumstances participants described themselves confronting at the time of interview that included very little in the way of social support in the community, including living accommodation. While many participants reported that they had lost contact with their families that in the majority of cases was due to their offending and imprisonment, others also reported that they had burned their bridges with regard to community support services and believed that they had exhausted the possibility of further accessing interventions such as emergency shelter or recovery programmes in the city. This highlights the disadvantage of attempting reintegration in a small locality, whereby participants reported that because they were recognised and known as "trouble makers" by service providers this sometimes resulted in them being "barred" and denied services or support.

The weight of data pertaining to psychological readjustment issues imparted by the participants warranted a further review of their narratives as a whole pertaining to such issues. It revealed that regardless of the length of time they had been on release from prison, all participants reported that they were struggling with the psychosocial aspect of reintegration. However, the level of psychosocial readjustment problems they were experiencing varied on a spectrum depending on their personal circumstances at the time of interview. Such were their basic and material needs at that time, in terms of food

and shelter, often compounded by alcohol and drug dependency, that one-sixth of the group reported more about the stress of daily survival than psychosocial strains and appeared to be somewhat ambivalent about the prospect of reintegration. This underscores the significance of basic material support at a minimum for those leaving the prison system who in the absence of such are ill-equipped to make plans or make decisions about their futures given that many can not see beyond their day-to-day existence.

The narratives of one-third of the participants indicated that although they were considering various options with regard to reintegration that included exploring the possibility of accessing support with regard to their needs at the time of interview, they reported that at that time they were not yet psychologically ready to take those steps. This highlights the importance of emotional support and encouragement for those leaving prison whom although aware of their personal challenges and vulnerabilities are lacking the capacity or confidence to take proactive steps to overcome them.

Narratives of the remaining half of the participant group included some evidence of their commitment towards achieving reintegration that in most cases involved either formal or informal support or both. However, these participants also reported that they were experiencing significantly more psychosocial readjustment problems. Mental and emotional stress emanating from psychosocial readjustment problems is a critical obstacle to be overcome in the process of reintegration for a number of reasons. Firstly, negative emotional states have been shown to increase recidivism (LeBel *et al*., 2008). Secondly, because offenders' life-stories are often imbued with a sense of fatalism about the future that includes accounts of shame, stigma and regret about missed opportunities (Healy, 2012) this can create feelings of hopelessness, that can impair attempts at working towards goals (Beck, 2005). Moreover, psychosocial stress

compounded by feelings of anger and depression can prevent offenders from identifying or exploiting positive opportunities thereby rendering them more likely to become ensnared in the perpetual cycle of crime and punishment (Caspi, *et al.*, 1994).

It was clear from the data that individuals have different needs and require different supports and interventions at different stages throughout their reintegration. As such, a 'one size fits all' approach towards reintegration will likely be inefficacious. That accounts of psychosocial stress varied amongst participants depending on their mind-set at the time of interview regardless of how recently or how long they had been released from prison implies the need for timely and tailored interventions and ongoing support for prisoners and former prisoners. This was evident through participants' accounts that varied from being at a point in time where they felt likely to succeed at reintegration that included accessing support and deriving benefit from it to those who had yet to arrive at a stage in their lives where they believed they were ready or able to change. Such accounts in this regard often conveyed a sense of hopelessness and bewilderment surrounding the range of problems and needs that individuals described they were experiencing at the time of interview that often included the problem of homelessness compounded by alcohol and drug misuse. Furthermore, participants who gave accounts of attempting alcohol and drug misuse recovery also indicated that that in itself was a source of psychological stress whereby they were experiencing the day to day reality of life that included challenges with regard to finance and seeking employment without the anaesthetising effect of alcohol or drugs.

A further key implication of psychosocial readjustment problems for the process of reintegration that emerged in the data included the psychological difficulty that can attach to seeking help. Many participants reported this as a particularly arduous impediment that sometimes inhibited them from accessing the support and services they

needed after their release from prison. Such reports were most commonly in relation to accessing social welfare benefits, and in particular supplementary benefits that included clothing allowances and in some instances top-up payments at Christmastime in order for them to provide for their children. Participants described experiences of engaging with such services in profoundly negative terms. While highlighting the fact that having to ask for help at any time can be embarrassing, participants described the humiliation they often endured at the hands of service providers who made them feel morally unentitled to the help and support they were seeking.

A notable aspect of prison to community psychosocial readjustment problems is that they have yet to be identified in the literature as well as policy and practice regarding offender reintegration as an integral part of the process. Therefore, psychosocial readjustment problems have yet to be considered within the remit of post-release interventions. While transitional psychology literature specifies that major life changes are frequently accompanied by significant inner stress and strain, impeding a person's adaptability to new situations (Garland and Wodahl, 2014) a serious knowledge gap exists explaining how such stress and strain impacts on the ability to adapt to the social environment after imprisonment. One study that did identify psychosocial readjustment issues being most frequently cited as impediments to reintegration could not determine the time period when specific types of psychosocial issues are more salient given the retrospective nature of the study (Garland, Wodahl and Mayfield, 2011). Nevertheless, participants in that study reported hypervigilance and shock with adjustment with life in the community having been immersed in prison culture. The impact of psychosocial problems on offenders' families has been linked to the diminishment of social capital (Rose and Clear, 2003), which can impair successful reintegration. No analysis however has been conducted on how they impact the released prisoner at an individual level. This is a significant oversight in reintegration literature that has focused primarily on

the frameworks employed to assist preparation for release and outcomes of post-release programmes (Taxman *et al.,* 2002; Young, Taxman and Byrne, 2002).

The implications of psychosocial readjustment problems for the families of those returning from prison are also an important consideration given the importance and significance of family support described by the research participants. Some participants reported that despite the fact that their familial or intimate partner relationships endured they nonetheless experienced particular strains as they readjusted to living back at home again. While very few participants returned to spouses or partners, those who did, reported having to readjust to new relationship dynamics. This included accounts of spouses or partners who in some cases had taken a leading role in the relationship that included taking charge of households and finances. It also included accounts of feeling "monitored" whereby a few participants reported that they had yet to regain the trust of their spouses or partners. Apart from the material support that families can offer, the importance of positive family relationships for former prisoners' prospects for successful reintegration has also been identified as enhancing resilience to overcome stress and adversity (Markson*,* Souza and Lanskey, 2015).

Participants who at the time of interview were experiencing problems with drug misuse and living in the family home reported that they were particularly concerned about the stress this was having on their families especially where other family members had died as a consequence of drugs. While only one participant reported that his mother was availing of formal support regarding his heroin use, others reported that although their families continued to support them despite their ongoing drug use a high level of tension in the home prevailed. While the role that families can play in the process of reintegration will be discussed further in this chapter, here it can be argued that families

are also in need of support with regard to the psychosocial readjustment problems they experience after their family members return home after prison.

Barrier Two: The Stigma of Imprisonment

The stigma attached to imprisonment impacts negatively on the potential for successful reintegration (Travis, 2005). While participation in the labour force can be inhibited with the disclosure of a criminal past (Weiman, 2007), such a past has more profound personal ramifications when it purports to define an individual at the expense of their individuality (Jones *et al.*, 1984). This is especially problematic for those who are attempting reintegration because they are encumbered by a history of offending *and* imprisonment (Crocker, Major and Steele, 1998). Almost 80% (*n=43*) of the research participants spoke of the issue of stigmatisation as it related to the stress of life post-imprisonment. It was evident in participants' narratives that stigma was something they had personally identified with as a result of their backgrounds of offending and history of imprisonment. How participants described the experience of stigma will be presented below. It also emerged in the data that the stigma of imprisonment hindered participants' efforts in seeking and maintaining employment as well as attaining suitable living accommodation. This was especially problematic for the fact that most of the participants returned to their local communities after imprisonment and believed they had very limited chances of regaining trust given their prior identities. Participants' accounts of their experiences in this regard, will follow.

The Experience of Stigma in the Local Community

Both the internal and external elements of stigma (Erikson, 1962; Becker, 1973) were described by many of the participants as significantly challenging for them. Problems related to the stigma of imprisonment were revealed in the data from a number of aspects that included how participants believed they were perceived by others and the

effects that stigma had on their own personal identities. Some participants explained how stigma impacted on their self-worth and reinforced a sense of exclusion. Padraig, aged 39 outlined this as follows when he recalled his experience of being on day release while participating in a pre-release prison programme:

> They have special hours in [the community sports complex] like when it would be just all prisoners in there, you know what I mean. And when there's no one else in there you're saying, sure what the fuck! What does that make you feel like? Not safe to be mixing in society like?

How the stigma of imprisonment effects one's relationships in the community was described by a number of other participants. Nick, aged 47, in the following account reflected the experiences of other participants by saying:

> You can see it in people — neighbours, old friends. You see it in the way that they'd kind of look at you or have a conversation with you. You know, *oh he's after been in prison a few times.* Even though they wouldn't say those exact words, the stigma is there. Even old associates that I dealt with work-wise — you can see it in a conversation you'd have with them. Like they'd kind of look at you kind of differently after you've been in prison. You wouldn't be kind of on their standard anymore. You're after dropping . . . Because you're after been in prison you're looked down on as if you are bit of dirt. You are classed as the lowest form. Like — *why should we help you, you're a prisoner kind of thing.* You definitely sense it. Like even the Welfare system is geared to look down on you. Society looks down on a person because they were in prison.

That the experience of stigmatisation in a local context is especially onerous was also highlighted by participants. Martha, aged 34, explained this as follows: "When I walk through town I see the security guards watchin' me and talkin' into their walkie-talkies. Now I just ignore them because I know that that's the consequences due to addiction, drinking and prison". Similarly, Alfie, aged 37, described being stigmatised in a small local community when he said:

> They're very small-minded in the town like. I suppose it's the same everywhere but it was because of my name (reputation). I just know from my own experience that they just look down their nose at you. *How do you know that? How do they manifest that?* You'd see their dirty looks. Or, if you walk into a shop they're behind you…

Oisín, aged 28 who was two years on release at the time of interview spoke of how stigmatised he felt in his neighbourhood:

> Well — no one ever said anything to me like outright, but I knew meself that there was a few there like, kind of, you know, "how's it goin' like", but deep down you know that they won't look at you the same again.

Some participants described the stigma of offending and imprisonment as something that is particularly difficult to detach from in a local context despite making efforts to change. Alex, aged 19, who had been released from prison eight months prior to the time of interview was living in a residential addiction recovery step-down facility. Despite his fervent belief that he had left his past behind and was now "a really nice guy" he outlined his plan not to return to his local community because of his "bad reputation" there describing it as one that inhibited his chance of "even getting a girlfriend". Participants also reported the difficulty of accessing living accommodation in their own communities after release as a result of their stigma. Alfie, aged 37 outlined this as follows:

> Well, the first time and even the last time I came out of prison, like there was no one in the town would give me a flat like. There's hundreds of flats in the town and no one would give me an apartment, a flat or anything.

Padraig, aged 39, who had been released from prison seven months prior to the time of interview was attending third level college. Nevertheless, he explained how being known to the police for his past offending and history of imprisonment caused him to lose his living accommodation twice since his release from prison. He reported that on one occasion the police visited his landlord and threatened to report him for tax evasion unless Padraig was evicted.

A further aspect of the stigma of imprisonment pertaining to the local context was evidenced in the data whereby a number of participants described the embarrassment of having their offending and sentencing to imprisonment reported in the local newspaper. Some participants noted that this had the collateral effect of also stigmatising their families. They described such reporting in terms of it indelibly imprinting their ignominious pasts in the minds of their neighbours and friends. However, that the

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stigma of imprisonment can also fade with time and altered behaviour was explained by

Denis, aged 35, who was six years on release as follows:

> They all knew that I was in like. Sure I was on the paper, you know what I mean. I was in the (local newspaper) . . . but some of them knows today like that I'm trying to cop on like and they respect that.

It was apparent for many participants that the stigma of imprisonment was compounded

by experiences of earlier stigma. Research has demonstrated that stigma is a function of

social exclusion (Kurzban and Leary, 2001). Given that the majority of participants in

this study came from disadvantaged neighbourhoods (see Part I) and had begun

offending from an early age, many had already internalised their stigma. This was

evident in the accounts of those who described themselves being referred to as

"scumbags". The personal effect of such a stigma was articulated by Becky, aged 27, as

follows:

> We were known as scumbags like. Around Cork like, people have known us as the scumbags . . . It used to bother me before — I used to go into depression over the whole lot . . . I am ashamed of it like. I'm ashamed I was in prison and things like that. But I can't change the way I was like.

Other participants' descriptions of the stigma of imprisonment included the permanency

of it in the sense that it was an inerasable feature of their identities. Vincent, aged 37

captured many of the participants' perspectives on the stigma of imprisonment when he

said:

> when you're in there, you're classed as a scumbag, and when you're left out, you're classed as an even worse scumbag. Once you go in that gate, and that gate is closed behind you, your name is on record for the rest of your life and there's nothing you can do about it. In a way, you walk around with a thing on your back that says: "I'm an ex-prisoner".

A truism of social psychology has been noted by Maruna, Immarigeon and LeBel,

(2004:272) — "that it is far easier to establish oneself as deviant, than it is to establish

one's credentials as a reformed person". One of the most serious implications of stigma

on the process of reintegration is that of social exclusion and lack of respect from

mainstream society. Braithwaite (1989) has argued that such exclusion results in

stigmatised people being more readily accepted and welcomed by subculture groups with the consequent risks of further offending. Stigma therefore tends to perpetuate itself because one of the consequences of a deviant (or scumbag) self-conception includes living up to that identity and maintaining behaviour consistent with its image (Lemert, 1951; 2000). Maruna (2011) has also argued that for reintegration to be a meaningful term it needs to include not just the physical return to society but also some form of moral inclusion. Overcoming stigma is therefore not just the provenance of the individual but also of society. It requires the acceptance of conventional society of the individual attempting to detach from their antisocial identity as well as an acceptance of that individual of conventional society.

The value of society's role in overcoming the stigma of imprisonment was also demonstrated in the data whereby it emerged that when offered opportunities to change, people have the potential to shed their prior identities and rescript their personal narratives. This was evident in the accounts of participants who were better placed than their counterparts at the time of interview insofar as they had stable accommodation and were in the process of improving their prospects through educational pursuits or employment training. Peter, aged 35, encapsulated this in the following account:

> Even though I dealt in drugs and everything like, I would still say I was reared in the proper manner do you know. I was reared to respect people as well like. I never robbed. I never went out and mugged old women or anything like that you know . . . I'm not a scumbag like do you know . . . But it's hard you know. Today it's hard. I go to college today and I still get laughed at. I know that just 'cause I was in prison like, doesn't mean I'm a fucking scumbag like. You know, I know I'm not a scumbag. But it's just provin' that to myself as well, do you know. Like I got a Christmas Report there off the college and I got an unbelievable Christmas Report off them like.

Coping with the stigma of imprisonment while in college was also something that Padraig, aged 39 outlined as follows:

> There's one or two in the class know I was in prison like. They know my story. That's the way you do the counselling thing like. You give your story at the start of the year. Just give it like. Nothing to hide and nothing to be ashamed of either

do you know what I mean. 'Cause the way I look at it, I wouldn't be who I am if I didn't go through what I did, you know what I mean like? . . . There's a lot worse than me and they were never in prison you know.

Overcoming stigma and refashioning a new pro-social identity have been identified as critical to the process of desistance, which is an integral part of the process of reintegration (Shover, 1996; Maruna, 2001; Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolf, 2002). Society's role in assisting offenders to reform themselves has been described by Makkai and Braithwaite (1993) as one that should include praise for individual efforts at change; encouragement and nurturing for those facing difficulties not to cease trying to change and promoting a belief in one's personal capacity for success. Maruna (2001) further identified the value those attempting desistance place on the recognition and verification of their efforts by people they themselves respect.

Stigma as it Effects Employment Opportunities

During the research interviews participants were not asked specifically about their attempts at accessing employment post-release. As was outlined in Chapter Five, almost 80% (*n=*43) of the research group stated that they were unemployed at the time of interview. Given that the majority of the group lacked living accommodation or were participating in addiction rehabilitation programmes and others had mental health disabilities it was apparent that they were not at the time of interview in a position to apply for work. Some participants however indicated that they engaged in casual labour in the underground economy when it was available to them. The issue of the stigma of imprisonment as it relates to employment opportunities emerged in the data when participants spoke of past experiences or for some, ongoing attempts at accessing employment.

How the stigma of imprisonment can impact on employment opportunities was outlined by Vincent, aged 37 in the following terms:

You'd get application forms, and you fill them in, and most application forms, like when people are being truthful and all, you fill in that you've been in prison, because most of them do a criminal background check on you, or whatever it is, or police check, a police background check, or whatever, so you've no choice but to tell them. A couple of them says "yea, we'll phone you back" and "keep you on file" and others just strike you out because of your background. But one time I got nine months work — painting and decorating all blocks of flats. But even the guard there on the gate, he'd look at you twice going in, and then when you were coming out, your bag would be put down, and he'd be searching through your bag. I used to carry a big tool bag, with all me brushes and rollers, and all, and that would get searched more on going in even than coming out. *And that was just you?* Yeah. *Why only you?* Because of me prison record.

Experiences of the impact of stigma on attempts at job-hunting were described by Duncan, aged 22, as follows:

With most jobs, when you tell them that you were in prison, they just give you funny looks and they say yeah, if a job comes up we'll let you know and then they just move on. You know they don't want you at all because they think you are a troublemaker like.

The local dimension to participants' lives was also indicated by some as further compounding the stigma of imprisonment in their endeavors to seek and maintain employment. This was explained by Hugh, aged 29, who had been released from prison four years prior to the time of interview. Hugh outlined the circumstances surrounding his dismissal from a job he had with a security firm and the difficulty he would have in securing employment in the future as a result of his imprisonment. He explained that when he turned up for work one evening at a designated hotel, the manager there who recognised him personally and knew of his history of imprisonment asked him to leave. Furthermore, the manager asked the security firm to never send anyone to the hotel who had a prison record. Hugh said: "I just felt that I'd been badly stigmatised because of me background . . . people never forget you know".

While gaining employment has been found to be a correlate of desistance (Farrall, 2002), Farrall and Calverley (2006) note that the precise causal link between engaging in legitimate employment and desistance from crime has yet to be established (*ibid.*: 4). Research has shown on the one hand that a higher proportion of crimes were committed

by unemployed as opposed to employed youths (Farrington, *et al.*, 1986), and on the other hand that fulltime employment neither precludes the opportunities to offend nor the rate of actual offending (Ditton, 1977; Horney, Osgood and Haen Marshall, 1995). However, the significance of employment and how it can transform a life was outlined by Evan, aged 25, when he described his efforts at job-hunting and what legitimate employment would mean for him:

> All my life I've dealt drugs, to a certain time when I stopped . . . I didn't have the money, and I didn't have a job to provide you know, so I had to go and sell some, to make some money. So I did that, because I had to do it, not that I wanted to . . . Now I need help . . . because it's too hard for me to get a job. I started in FÁS and it's just not working. It just doesn't work. People just don't want to give people second chances. It's easier for me to be a criminal, than it is to be straight. I need a job. I need somebody to give me a second chance like you know. At FÁS, I've sent CVs through, emails, done it the right way instead of like on the phone — they say you could phone or email, so I would email just to show them that I'm serious. But that's up to them. I can't force them to give me a job . . . I want a job then that I could do overtime in, and then you'd have somewhere to go, a great holiday, and knowin' that I paid for that with money that I worked hard for. That's what I want. The sense of relief, do you know, to know that I'm doing the things right. I know I'm doing well, but I just need somebody, somebody out there who'd want to give me a chance, and I'm willing to take it but that's up to them. *So, after sending in CVs, do you get responses, do you get replies?* No. *Have you ever had an interview?* Yea, interview right — previous convictions? Yea. We'll be in touch! So, there you go!

Given that at the time of interview, the Irish economy was falling into deep recession participants were aware of the very limited employment opportunities available to them. This they believed further exacerbated their marginal status in the workforce given that so many of them mentioned the fact that their offending reputations precluded them from having any competitive advantage in the job market.

Stigma is the punishment that ensues for the violation of social contracts or social norms (Boyd and Richerson, 1992). Furthermore, stigma endures. This is because there is a strong motivation to punish those who are perceived to have violated a social contract even in the absence of the expectation that the infraction is likely to continue (Bolton and Zwick, 1995). So inherently stigmatising is the experience of imprisonment

that its collateral consequences cause the diminishment of potential for reintegration by creating barriers and obstacles for those attempting to change their lives through employment which contributes to desistance (Laub and Sampson, 2003) and the acquisition of stable living accommodation, the absence of which renders individuals vulnerable to re-offending (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; National Economic and Social Forum, 2002; Martynowicz and Quigley, 2010). Homelessness as a barrier to reintegration will be presented below.

Barrier Three: Homelessness

Having a place to live after they were released from prison was a primary concern for the majority of the research group. As previously stated, more than 57% (*n=31*) of the participants stated that they were homeless at the time of interview. While studies of reintegration have cited employment and housing as critical factors for successful reintegration (Jacobson, Phillips and Edgar, 2010), homelessness has also been identified as hindering employment prospects and participation in civic society (Seymour and Costello, 2005). Furthermore, the absence of appropriate living accommodation is sometimes linked to re-offending (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002), because being released from prison to homelessness can present a perceived limited set of opportunities to change (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2010).

A number of participants reported that they had been homeless on a number of occasions prior to their imprisonment. This resonates with the findings of prior research on the routes of homeless persons embroiled in the criminal justice system (Seymour and Costello, 2005). Of the participants who identified themselves as homeless at the time of interview, 13 of them were 'sleeping rough' and accessing emergency shelter on an *ad hoc* basis. A further 14 participants were residing in either a step-down addiction recovery centre, or at an all-male hostel where they were attempting sobriety. One

participant was staying in Bed and Breakfast accommodation. Such was their rate of exposure to homelessness that almost 39% (*n*=12) of the participants who identified themselves as homeless indicated that they failed to get access to other hostels in the city because they had been "barred" in the past. The reasons for being barred ranged from their previous offences (e.g. arson) or what they described as their behaviour or attitude while staying in hostel accommodation previously. It was also apparent that those with a history of homelessness availed of prison as respite from 'sleeping rough' especially during the winter months.

Participants' accounts of homelessness included the scarcity of emergency shelter available to them. Others described the type of accommodation that would be suitable for their needs at time of interview. Participants also outlined their day-to-day experiences of living on the streets, the backdrop against which they were expected to achieve reintegration. It could be argued that for those mired in homelessness, attempting reintegration is a particularly onerous pursuit and that these individuals represent the most marginalised of an already marginalised group.

An overview of service delivery in the city for those seeking access to emergency accommodation was also gleaned from some of the service providers encountered during the fieldwork. One care-worker explained that many working in the field had prior experience of working in a number of the hostels in the city, through work placement from college. This she explained afforded them some insights as to the range of policies different hostels employ. She described one hostel in the city operating a very stringent admittance process, explaining that they only accepted "the perfect homeless person". This she described as an individual without alcohol or drug dependency or anti-social traits (Fieldwork Notes, 29 April). Another service provider

in explaining the cooperative nature of service provision for those experiencing homelessness highlighted the local dimension of service provision as follows:

> There's a really good network in Cork — all the agencies work together. This has even evolved into a computer links programme. This [showing me] is a Common Assessment Form. This is a comprehensive document filled out once and put up on the system. Anytime a person becomes involved with an agency the details are updated. It provides an account of a person's progression — including health; addiction; welfare; housing. A person employing an alias is soon picked up in Cork — again, because of the close cooperation between the agencies (Fieldwork Notes, 9 November, 2007).

Inadequate Provision of Transitional Accommodation

From the perspectives of the participants who were homeless on release, there was a lack of support that would enable them to access living accommodation or meet their basic needs such as the provision of food or clothing. Some participants indicated that they had migrated to the city to access services and believed that they had a better chance of survival there than in their hometowns. This was outlined by Jacob, aged 26 who had served two terms of imprisonment and was eight months on release at the time of interview. He had been homeless since he was thirteen years old after running away from his carer's home in the aftermath of his parent's separation. Jacob explained how he survived on the streets as follows:

> It's a lot easier to make money in the city. You can go tappin' (begging) in the city. Most of my family are from the country like and it would be very hard to survive out in the country, do you know. It's just easier to make money in the city. It's easier to keep yourself going in the city. There's a lot more people there. It's a lot busier. When you live in a small village everyone knows your business and if you're sleepin' rough it can be a bit embarrassin' and stuff, so it's just easier to get away from stuff like that in the city.

The lack of support in the absence of having a home to return to after prison was expressed by Donal, aged 31, as follows: "Well for a start — there's nothing there for any person that's leaving Cork Prison if they have no home. The day their release is up, where are they going to go?" Such was the strain on the emergency shelter unit in the

city that participants indicated they could only avail of one or two nights respite there.

Don, aged 31 explained this saying:

> In here now it's hard. There's a kind of policy like — well I mean when you're tired like — you can only get two nights in and then you'd have to stay out for two nights before you can get another two nights because there's so many people lookin' for beds.

Similarly, Tony, aged 30 who was one month on release at the time of interview described the provision of emergency shelter as being in a state of crisis in the following terms:

> Well, it's not too easy to get a bed in here like. I was often sleepin' out there six or seven nights girl. Outside the door there. They'd throw you out for anythin'. The reason they weren't dealin' with us is they're under-staffed here. I find it very hard to get a bed.

The absence of adequate emergency accommodation left participants who had nowhere to go with no choice but to sleep on the streets. Melissa, aged 22 outlined this as follows:

> No one cares where I'm going to live. Like when I was under 18, I was in the care of the Health Board so they had to put me into a B&B. Now, I'm on the streets. I was here (emergency shelter) the last two nights and I'm waiting to see if they'll give me another two nights now. I hope they do, 'cause other than that I've nowhere to go like. Nowhere. There was nights I was out on the streets ringing me mam — could I come up, and she says what do you want me to do about it — it's your own problem!

The inadequacy of accommodation meant that a number of participants succumbed to the routine of homeless living. Participants' narratives that described life on the streets demonstrated the harsh and dangerous circumstances they found themselves in. Valerie, aged 24, in her account below captured the elements of survival on the streets that reflected the experiences of other participants:

> I sleep outside the door there (of the emergency shelter). For three weeks I've been sleeping outside that door on my own with a girl, and nothing was ever done about it. I was left outside the door. But then I got a bed-night in here four days ago. Tonight now, again, I'll just sleep outside the door. On Wednesday then I'll just put my name down for another bed and just hope to get on it. *It must be awfully hard and dangerous for a girl, is it?* No, not really like. I can handle the streets like. I'm there long enough. It's not dangerous staying out. You're just thinking about getting warm. I don't do drugs and I prefers to stay

off the drink like. The soup round used to come around and they'd bring me over a can of coke and fags and stuff 'cause I usen't drink or anything. The soup run was good. *And who in the family do you have contact with?* Me sister. I talks to her like. Rather than put me up, we has chats. The last time me sister let me stay for the weekend she says, "(Name) I'm not your minder now. You're old enough to look after yourself". Which I understand. She wants her own house as well. She wants her own privacy. So do I like.

James, aged 35, described the experience of being released from prison to homelessness as exposing individuals to further harm and victimisation:

Yeah, that's it. Back into the homeless scene. And you know, I'm a fairly inadequate homeless tramp. Although I've spent a long time on the streets you know, I wouldn't even bother putting down cardboard underneath me half the time. I'm a real fool with drink. Just the whiskey and the vodka will make me feel warm and that's good enough for me. And I've been cut to bits too, you know.

Availing of emergency shelter on an *ad hoc* basis appeared clearly in-conducive to achieving reintegration. Emergency shelter was described as being a particularly unsuitable environment for those who were attempting sobriety or drug addiction recovery. Bobby, aged 46, who had been on release from prison for almost 14 years and homeless for most of that time described that he now felt uncomfortable in homeless hostels because they have changed over time with more people "usin' and abusin'" (drugs and alcohol). Graham, aged 36, further reiterated the culture of alcohol consumption and drug-use in the emergency shelter indicating that there had been a number of alcohol related and drug related deaths in the facility that year. Valerie, aged 24, described in similar terms the environment at the only all-female hostel in the city when she said: "there's people over there and all they're doin' is stickin' needles in their arms. I don't want to be around that".

'Your own space'

While a number of participants reported that living accommodation was a primary need for them at the time of release, they also indicated that they required living accommodation that was suited to their particular circumstances at the time of

interview. This included the need for accommodation that would accommodate couples together and would also provide a sense of independent living and a postal address for those trying to seek employment. Participants also indicated that they needed accommodation living arrangements to be flexible that would enable them to tend to their duties that in some cases included maintaining access arrangements with their children. Tony, aged 30 explained his need in the following terms: "What I need at the moment is shelter like. Like my girlfriend now is twenty-four (also in the emergency shelter). I'm thirty. Like I don't want to be here like anyone else, do you know what I mean?". Other participants highlighted the fact that living in emergency accommodation precluded opportunities for accessing employment or other services. This was outlined by Bobby, aged 46 who said: "When you're in them places your whole independence taken away from you, because you've no address". The importance of having access to accommodation that meets particular needs and circumstances also included flexible arrangements that enabled participants to attempt recovery while at the same time maintaining contact with their children. Gerard, aged 39 explained that he chose to attempt sobriety at an all-male hostel in preference to a residential treatment centre because the flexible hours there allowed him to maintain access with his children, saying:

> I used to turn my nose up at (Hostel Name), and I knew nothing about it. Then, I did a small bit of background about who they were and everything else, and how they operate, so I came up last Sunday week. And to explain it to you this way, I couldn't do in-house treatment at this stage like, or residential treatment, because I would lose access, I'd have to declare to her (wife) that I was in in-house treatment like, but this way she doesn't have to know about it . . . I've got access now tomorrow, and she's not going to know the difference. I'm going to be late coming back here, but I've it cleared with them (hostel operators) like you know, that I won't be back here 'til about six.

The significance of stable and secure living accommodation as a base for achieving addiction recovery and making plans for the future was explained by a number of participants. Some participants indicated that because of the temptations to relapse

during recovery they needed to live in an environment apart from other drug users. Other participants, such as Shane, aged 35 described the need for a safe and quiet environment that would afford the opportunity to reassess current situations and challenges and enable more sensible choices to be made about the future. Shane who was separated from his wife who had custody of their four children identified secure living accommodation as fundamental to recovery and reintegration as follows:

> The hardest thing is coming back out onto the streets without anywhere to live. I suppose the most important thing is a place to live. Do you know, your own space instead of going back to hostels — you're just back stuck in the same. You end up just getting side-tracked again. Getting into the wrong influences, going into places where you don't even really want to be, but you just end up there because you feel so vulnerable and you just, I suppose you get distracted and just turn the wrong way like. I think the roof over your head is the most important thing where you can make proper and responsible decisions, because if you haven't got that you're just vulnerable to getting side-tracked, down different wrong ways do you know. Like if I'm going to try and get a bit real about myself, what's the way ahead in my life? Eh, I need somewhere secure. Somewhere where I can live for a start. Once I have that space, and move forward in my head, I can start thinking straight and concentrate on it, because then I'll have my own solitude and space.

While some participants reported that they had secured private living accommodation after their release from prison a number of them also reported that they lost their rental accommodation because of anti-social behaviour. This included accounts of their own anti-social behaviour as well as the anti-social behaviour of friends they were attempting to disassociate from. The difficulty experienced by those seeking accommodation included their personal appearance; having to save for rental deposits and the limited availability of rental accommodation available to them as a result of their limited financial status. Conor, aged 34, explained this in the following terms:

> It's difficult enough yeah. Very difficult. I'm actually looking for a place actually at the moment and I'm finding it very difficult you know. Especially when you turn up with a load of tattoos on yourself, do you know. What I mean is like, some landlords don't take that too kindly.

While 'rent allowance' was available to those who were either on job seekers' allowance or disability benefit, many of the participants gave accounts of encountering

difficulty in acquiring adequate or decent accommodation reporting that landlords are typically reluctant to accept 'rent allowance' tenants. It appeared therefore that the participants in this study were in somewhat of a double bind, given that they were both recipients of 'rent allowance' and they endured the stigma of imprisonment.

'Causing more trouble to get locked up'

By virtue of their circumstances at the time of interview many participants described being worse off living in the community than they were while they were in prison. Some reported that they were able to access better care and support during their imprisonment that included food and shelter. Other participants indicated that because of the absence of support for release, the transition from prison to homelessness was perceived by them as even harsher than transitioning into the prison environment — one that provides food and shelter. Jacob, aged 26, explained this in the following terms:

> People don't understand like when you live on the streets or under warrants or stuff, you get used to not eating as much as you usually would you know and then when you're in prison for a few months your appetite goes through the roof because you can get your three square meals a day so like when you come back out to the streets and stuff you miss, that. I missed my food anyway when I came back out onto the streets.

A number of participants indicated that their circumstances post release caused them to reoffend so as to return back to the prison setting. Other participants reported they perceived no other choice but to reoffend because they had no money or living accommodation.

While successful reintegration necessitates desistance (Maruna, 2004), offending has been shown to be a potential consequence of homelessness (Ramsey, 1986; Snow, Baker and Anderson, 1989; DiLisi, 2000). It was not surprising that the participants in this study who were homeless at the time of interview gave accounts of offending behaviour as a means of surviving on the streets. In line with previous studies (Seymour and Costelloe, 2005), participants in this research had experienced homelessness both

before and after their imprisonment. The relationship between offending and homelessness was described by Becky, aged 27 as follows:

> Well, when you get out of prison and you're homeless straight away, like what that means like — like when I got out of prison and I'd nowhere to go and I'd no family support or anything like that, I was causing more trouble to get locked up. Even just to go into a cell. That way, you'd be warm like and you'd have food and things like that . . . Hanging around, you'll just end up back doing crime again. You get so fed up of being, you know, you're just going around in circles. I was the first person in that hostel when I was fifteen and I'm twenty-seven today like and I'm back in there and it's hard like. I spent my life in there like. I was just thinking the other day that prison was better like. It's the same sort of thing. It's being institutionalised. Like the only difference is that you can go to the shop and come back.

Crime as a means of survival in the absence of support was outlined by Oleg, aged 28 as follows:

> I stopped doing crime. I don't want that anymore. Like, if they tell me now I must leave this place here, I will go straight away to make some crime — because no money, no place, no accommodation, no nothing. You know, so what can I do? I will not sit on the bridge like some gypsy and say, give me money. Fuck that!

Given the extent of homelessness and history of imprisonment amongst the research group that was further compounded by their alcohol and drug misuse, many of the participants felt caught in a perpetual cycle of imprisonment and release. James, aged 35, outlined below how alcoholism compounded by homelessness and becoming ensnared in the criminal justice system as a result of that serves only to further impede the prospect of reintegration.

> And of course, you're getting picked up by the rookies (police officers in training) left, right and centre. Remand. Remand. Remand. Remanded you know. I always get a long remand because I'm of no fixed abode. The rookies will pick on you if they know you are an alcoholic. Because you see, they've got to get however many arrests — an arrest quota for the desk sergeant do you know, to impress him or whatever — these raw recruits from Templemore (Police Academy). So where are they going to get these? The handiest way to just fill them in is by picking up the homeless wino. Because he will be intoxicated in a public place. He will be — you could classify him as a danger to himself and to others. And that is a feckin' charge sheet. *Intoxicated in a public place*. "A danger to yourself and others". So, you're guilty you know, and that's basically it. I've got about 47 of them, for being drunk in a public place. They used to call it 'drunk and disorderly'. They don't call it that anymore. The rookies don't know you and to them I am just an unacceptable individual to have

on the streets. Three days in a row they arrested me! Even the judge in Dublin got sick of it. He said it to the rookie in the dock, that he was arresting me too much, non-stop more or less every time he came across me. And em, when I was in the holding cell he handed me a couple of fresh charges — *intoxicated in a public place* and the judge actually turned around and said it to him in court. He says, "Guard, do you think I'm running a hostel for the homeless or something like that? Or a Bed and Breakfast for the homeless?" — you know prison like. Because the prisons are overcrowded you know what I mean. All these bullshit charges and all my previous. The judge was wide to it, what the copper was, and he more or less put the copper down in the box. You see, coming off the street, I'd gone guilty. I said, "please Your Honour, lock me up". I said, "I can't handle it anymore. I can't take it anymore". And he felt sorry for me, you know. He felt sorry for me I think because he remanded me in custody. He was going to do that anyway. I knew it, so I said I'd get my 'little say' in beforehand. Because I was in bits from the streets you know. And em — well he remanded me for the two weeks and when I came back after the two weeks the judge kind of had a heart-to-heart with me there in the court and all. You know, a nice ould judge now to be honest. Ah like he was saying, "ah Mr. (Name), you look a lot better now since the last time I seen you and all". And ah…he wished me, you know he released me from the court . . . I had been up in front of him a few times and he's always very lenient with me do you know. He actually gave me a few bob out of the poor box, yeah because he seen I was dying, shaking for a drink and he says, "have you any money Mr. (Name)" and he says, "what are you going to do if I release you here from this court today?" I told him, I said, "I'm going to go begging your honour. This is because I haven't got a drink and I'm dying for a drink". He released me from the court and took €20 out of the poor box so I could get a cure for myself. Do you know because I told him the truth, you know what I mean? Instead of lying to him . . . And he just goes, "go on. Dismissed". If I don't, if I don't stop the drinkin' I'm going to spend the rest of my life 'in' you know. I've spent a third of my life in jail now. Do you know, from about 20 to 30. And if I can't stop drinking I'm going to grow old in jail. And you see the thing about jail, the thing about jail is you don't mature, you go backwards. Your psychology goes backwards instead of forwards, from the vicious unnatural (sigh) pathetic environment you're livin' in.

Implications of Homelessness for Reintegration

Homelessness presents as perhaps the most challenging of all the barriers to reintegration given that the absence of stable living arrangements appears as a serious impediment in the pursuit of achieving the change necessary to eliminate the risk of further imprisonment. Previous research has indicated that offenders, already a disadvantaged group are further socially excluded, attempting reintegration when they are homeless (Seymour and Costello, 2005). Individuals' experiences of homelessness have been found to be essentially criminogenic when survival on the streets means that

many will engage in criminal activity such as begging, shop-lifting and larceny resulting in imprisonment (Mayock, Corr and O'Sullivan, 2008). Substance dependency which also contributes to reoffending further exacerbates the complexity of the homeless subculture (Mayock and O'Sullivan, 2007). Links between homelessness and offending behaviour and between the release from prison to homelessness and further offending behaviour have been previously identified (Focus Ireland, 2009). Participants in this study highlighted the inadequate provision of accommodation made available to them on their release from prison. Because many of them had become ingrained in an unrelenting cycle of homelessness including offending behaviour they experienced a diminishment in opportunities for even temporary accommodation given that so many reported that they had been "barred" from a number of services. Emergency shelter, while offering respite from the streets was deemed unsatisfactory for participants attempting to disengage from drug culture and alcohol misuse. An overarching feature of the participant group in this study who were 'sleeping rough' was their ambivalence towards the prospect of re-imprisonment as they described it terms of an improvement on their living conditions at the time of interview insofar as it offered the potential for food and shelter. That homelessness has been found to escalate rates of recidivism with the consequent negative impact on prison resources attempting to rehabilitate offenders in partnership with limited service providers in the community suggests that the continuous recycling of homeless offenders through the prison system runs counter to the popular concept of reintegration that includes change and desistance. Rather it suggests that homeless offenders are reintegrated, recycled and returned once again, back to a deleterious situation from which it is difficult to escape (Snow and Anderson, 1987).

Barrier Four: Alcohol and Drugs Misuse

Problem drug and alcohol misuse emerged in the data as a significant impediment to reintegration. While participants were not asked directly during interviews about matters relating to alcohol or drugs, almost 54% (*n=39*) explained that they currently misused drugs or had done so in the past. Of that group, 14 participants stated that they were still active drug users; 22 participants said that they were "clean" and three were attempting to come off drugs on their own while they were residing in a 'dry' and drug-free hostel. Participants were at different stages of their recovery at the time of interview — five were participating in a residential addiction recovery step-down programme; four males were attending a daily addiction support group; and one participant was attending an addiction support centre for females. Furthermore, nine males were attempting sobriety at a hostel where their participation in Alcoholics Anonymous was compulsory and a further four males were attending a recovery support group on a daily basis to help them maintain their sobriety. For the majority of those who were experiencing problems with alcohol or drug misuse at the time of interview, this was another feature of their unstable and chaotic lives given that the majority of them were also homeless. Furthermore, the vast majority of the participants who reported that they were once again involved in the criminal justice system cited alcohol or drugs as the predominant issue related to their offending.

Stable, albeit temporary accommodation was described by participants as only available to them for the duration of a recovery programme which would end when treatment finished. Participants who were residing in the recovery step-down centre appeared more optimistic for their success at reintegration and were availing of the supports available to them which included counseling, skills-training and help in securing their own independent accommodation. The value of stable accommodation in a therapeutic environment provided an opportunity not just to recover from alcohol and drug misuse

but also the time and space to plan and make "responsible decisions" for a future of crime-free living. A more in-depth presentation of how alcohol and drug misuse impacts on the process of reintegration will follow.

Research has shown that 80% of the Irish prison population is struggling with alcohol or drug addiction or both (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2010). Brown, *et al.* (2009) assessed the treatment needs of prisoners, former prisoners and their families. They found that individuals who had commenced addiction treatment in the community were likely to continue such treatment during their imprisonment, but those who wished to commence their treatment during a term of imprisonment found very little or no support available to them in the prison setting (Brown, Evans and Payne, 2009). Due to a lack of sufficient treatment places in the community, long waiting lists mean that former prisoners who wish to continue their recovery programmes are often without support directly after release rendering them particularly vulnerable to relapse (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2010).

Participants' narratives in this study described their struggles with alcohol and drug use, the difficulty of accessing support and their efforts at recovery. The majority of them gave accounts of failed attempts and repeated relapses, analogous to the cyclical nature of change (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1992). Other participants intimated that such was the level of their alcohol and drug consumption that they felt powerless to overcome it. James, aged 35 explained this as follows: "To be honest with you, after all that life experience and all the damage drink has done to me and a third of my life in jail, that's all I wanted again — the drink. I wanted the drink". Likewise, Don, aged 31 said: "I can't get off it. I can't get off it like. I've tried it so many times". Alcohol and drug use as a barrier to reintegration was evidenced by participants' accounts of their

experiences coping with its debilitating effects and the attendant risk of reoffending.

Robert, aged 25, captured the perspectives of others when he described this as follows:

> *What do you think is the toughest challenge at the moment for you?*
> The drugs. Gettin' me to stay off, stay off the heroin, you know. 'Cause it's, like at the start you take it 'cause you get stoned off it. You get a buzz off it. But after a couple of years of it you just need it. And you wake up in the mornin' and you're sick. You feel all horrible. It's no fun for me. Like, I take drugs but I don't get stoned off them — I don't, if you can understand. I don't like it. Everyday having to come up with money to get, to get somethin' that ya need like. It's, it's not like hash. Hash is different than heroin. You don't need hash but you need the heroin, do you know.

The relationship between alcohol or drug use and offending was further explained by

Brian, aged 27, when he said:

> Like in the last seven years I never did anything without drink or drugs in me. I wouldn't do it at all unless I was drinking and taking drugs and I needed the money for drink and drugs. That's the only reason I'd steal something, you know, but it's not me. I know for a fact that it's not me to do that at all.

Addiction as a contributory factor to offending has been established in the literature

(The Probation Service, 2012; Mayock and O'Sullivan, 2007). The majority of

participants in this research reported that their initial involvement in the criminal justice

system was related to their alcohol and drug use (see Part I). James, aged 35 described

this as follows:

> I'm no hard man, or I'm no hardened criminal, but I'm an eejit on the drink. I really am. I'm more of a nuisance than a menace to society. I'm a nuisance to society and a menace to meself. I got about 50 odd previous convictions and not one of them is anything got to do with a materially motivated crime.

Inadequate Support for Alcohol and Drug Misuse Recovery

The lack of continuity of support for recovery post-release was highlighted by a number

of participants who had participated in recovery programmes in prison. Resuming old

habits after release was therefore a common theme that emerged in the data with many

of them reporting that in the absence of any constructive plans or supports in place they

fell back into drinking and drug habits on release. Craig, aged 28, in his account below

reflected the accounts of many of the participants who experienced attempts at recovery

and bouts of relapse:

> I stayed off the heavy drugs altogether inside there (prison) and then I was clean out when I was getting' out. Well besides the old drink. I just went straight back to drinkin' and blaguardin' again. When you get out sure you're just goin' to bump into your friends there now, go for a drink. But you're drinkin then for one, maybe two weeks. So it's just the same routine with me the whole time when I gets out (released) and I sticks to that then when I gets out. Yeah, but eh, it's hard to get out of the routine with drinking. I've a problem. I've a problem with it years I do. I drink everyday . . . You see, you don't know where you're gonna be going until you get out (released) and you're gonna drink 'cause you know, you don't know what you're gonna do like. You'll always find someone – – you're guaranteed to bump into someone that's drinking.

It appeared that while some participants were aware of the supports and services in the

community that could help them support their recovery they were frustrated by long

waiting lists for such services. Furthermore, they stressed the importance of timing with

regard to accessing services with many stating that when help was available to them,

they were not yet ready to commit to recovery whereas when they felt they would be

more inclined to succeed with an intervention, they found it difficult to access one. This

highlights the need for more responsive drug treatment facilities in the community. The

account of Robert, aged 25 below broadly reflects the experiences of other participants

who described their experience of attempting recovery as follows:

> If I could get on the methadone programme then I'd say I'd be able to get clean. People have offered me treatment centres and I just haven't wanted to do it. But now I actually do want to get off it and I want to do it and get myself sorted. I'm tryin' to get into (residential recovery centre) and get on the methadone programme but that's hard. *Who is helping you organise that?* I'm tryin' doin' it myself. Ringing up. (Staff at emergency shelter) made a few phone-calls for me. But, it's tryin' to get off it like . . . Like in prison they don't give you anything. You have to come off it yourself. *Is that very difficult?* Oh, with the heroin it is 'cause you'd be sick like. You be feelin' very sick like, about three or four weeks of sickness. You go mental inside like, you know what I mean. For (Residential Rehabilitation Centre) now I've been waitin' since before Christmas. I rang them up and they said me name is on the waitin' list and I'll be waitin' another two or three weeks, and that's just for an appointment! You see it's so busy like. There's so many people on the heroin now in Cork. It's big time here now you know, whereas a couple of years ago you couldn't even get it.

Engaging with addiction support agencies was also described by participants as something they were cautious about considering that it brought them under the scrutiny of the social services. This was especially problematic for the female participants who reported that they had lost their children to foster care as a result of presenting for help. Melissa, aged 22, who reported that she was addicted to heroin at the time of interview gave an account of her experience in this regard as follows:

> They don't help you . . . When I went to them for help they said you can tell us anything and the same day they put in a Court Order (for the children) . . . Now, when I had my youngest, I said if ever he gets took off me I'll kill myself. And when he did get took off me then like I was up in hospital for overdoses and slashing my wrists and all this.

In the absence of an adequacy of state-run treatment centres, it falls to the voluntary sector to provide support for those who wish to overcome their alcohol and drug use. Because of the local aspect of the research, the majority of the participants who gave accounts of attempting recovery, which often included periods of relapse, referred to doing so in the same local recovery centres. Many reported their frustration with the regime of such recovery centres that are generally governed under a religious ethos. This was explained by Doug, aged 33, as follows:

> You see the government in Ireland, have a great way of getting' around treatment centres . . . Like it's unbelievable. They expect you to be cured in an old style religious way, you know. Like, rosaries, masses, and work. Work, well they call it in the place — they call it 'serving'. You can't even argue with these people. Not argue, you can't put a point across to these people because the first thing they say is you know where the gate is, away you go if you don't like it. You know so, ah, it's a crazy place you know. And the food's all EEC. From the EEC food mountain. And eh, it's just muck you know . . . *So, how are you managing now? What support is available to you?* Nothin'. Nothin'. I was told by the sisters not to come back. And I said I wouldn't. No actually, I would, it wasn't antagonistic at all. I just didn't want to go back. Not that I didn't want to go back it was just they said (Name), this place is not suitable for you so we don't think you should be comin' back you know. Ah, I jus says fine that's what I did. Ah it's stupid.

Another problem that participants expressed with regard to voluntary sector support centres was the absence of policy or guidelines. Participants reported that they relied on other service users for information or knowledge about the length of time one would be

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typically permitted to stay or the reasons why one might be asked to leave. This was outlined by a number of participants (*n*=9) who were homeless at the time of interview and were staying at a hostel run by a religious order of nuns. While sobriety was a precondition to entry there was no other known policy at the hostel. Participants highlighted their uncertainty as to how long they would be permitted to stay there explaining that this further frustrated their ability to make plans. The overarching theme that emerged in these participants' narratives was the value of respite from alcohol consumption and life on the streets. Declan, aged 42, explained that when he arrived at the hostel that he was "in a situation and needed so much help". Bobby, aged 46, explained that he needed: "to stay away from drinking . . . and stay away from the company that drinks". It was evident in participants' narratives that a stable living arrangement was the basis from which to attempt recovery. Describing his time at the hostel, Vincent, aged 37, described the value of a secure and nurturing environment as follows:

> Near enough everybody in this house is going through the addiction system one way or the other. That's what everybody in the house would say. Some of them's been incarcerated. The ones that haven't been to jail, don't look down on the ones that have been to jail. And the ones that have been to jail don't look down on the ones that haven't been to jail. We're all just one family. We do our own thing. We stay in and play pool, do our washing, have a chat. But we're in there (pointing to the kitchen) at seven o'clock in the morning, talking about getting the newspapers — it's just something you'd do at home, if you had a home. But we don't have any. This is our home.

The difficulty of trying to achieve sobriety was explained by a number of participants who gave accounts of failed attempts in the past. Participants described their efforts to remain sober as all consuming, so much so that they were restricted in making plans for their future beyond their day-to-day existence. Tom, aged 25 in his description highlights the profound struggle to avoid drinking experienced by participants:

> I have nothing in my head worth talking about. All I have is fear and just getting mad sick like. Like, going straight to the pub and calling a pint. Because that's me. I would do that in just one act like, go in, call a pint and then that's it like. It's happened me a few times. When I think of it, when I just think of doing it,

the next thing I just stops and says "Jesus, I can't go back to what I was like, the sickness and everything, the disease". But that thinkin' mightn't work for me all the time either. The thought of drinking is there nearly the whole time like. I'd be thinkin' of drinkin' everyday like. It's the reason why I want to get away further as well like so that if I do break out drinkin' no one will know like. There's part of me wants to go drinkin' 50/50 like and I don't want to be disappointing people either, because if I do break out like, the further away I am the better because I can feel there's a small little plan, up here alright (pointing to his head), planning on going drinking again.

The debilitating effects of alcohol and drug use were expressed by a number of participants. They described these in terms of health problems, the loss of loved ones and lacking any interest in life. Declining health was also a feature of many of the participants who reported a long history of alcoholism, most of whom stated that they were suffering with liver disease.

Hal, aged 22, had been released from prison eight months prior to the time of interview. He describes the debilitating effects of heroin use:

I was grand when I was just drinkin' and takin' Es . . . With the heroin now though it's just different ball game altogether like. Like the dole I got today, I owed the lot of it. Like before we used go out on the weekends. You might get an oul' doll for yourself whatever. I don't even think about women anymore. Your sex drive is just gone from it do you know what I mean . . . You'd only be thinkin' about where you're gonna get your next fix or whatever. Now we're not injectin' or anythin' — we're only smokin' do you know. Drugs, just fuckin' — it have everyone caught like. I mean like we're destroyed. There's nowhere to go then at night for us. Like I know now we shouldn't be smokin' it but we goes places for smokes and then there'd be people ringin' the guards for us and we have to get out of there and do you know there's nowhere for us to go . . . I'd love to be off the gear and off whatever but at the same time then there's always somethin' what's holdin' me back do you know what I mean. But I'm just smokin' gear and . . . there's no craic (fun) anymore do you know what I mean.

The majority of participants who were struggling with their alcohol misuse indicated that they availed of the support from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) groups in the city at one time or another. While some indicated that they felt attendance at the meetings was counter-productive explaining that they had to listen to people talking about drink and drugs which they themselves believed increased their appetite for such, the fact that the

meetings are free and open to everyone regardless of how far they have advanced in their recovery was declared to be of beneficial by others.

Implications of Alcohol and Drugs Misuse for Reintegration

As is evidenced in the account above, alcohol and drug misuse poses a serious impediment to reintegration for a number of reasons. Firstly, financing an addiction is often resorted to through offending which resonates with the findings in previous studies that found robbing, begging and prostitution to be the most common source of income (Cox and Lawless, 1999). Secondly, the debilitating effects of addiction are so all-consuming that individuals appeared to struggle to think or make plans to improve their situations beyond their next drink or drug-fix. Finally, such is the nature of addiction that recovery is more often than not interrupted by relapse (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1992). Participants in this study who indicated that alcohol or drug use was a significant obstacle for them were homeless in the majority of cases. Addiction compounded by homelessness together compromises the prospect of reintegration given that offending is often lifestyle related as a means of survival on the streets (Cox and Lawless, 1999). Furthermore, substance abuse and repeat offending have been found to be inextricably linked (Zamble and Quinsey, 1997).

The inadequacy of available recovery services in the community was also highlighted by participants as impeding their chances at reintegration. This was demonstrated through accounts of long waiting lists to access services as well as a deficit in responsive care to meet their needs at the point when they felt ready to participate in recovery. This is a critical gap in service delivery whereby it has been determined that efficient self-change requires timely and tailored interventions based on the assessment of a client's readiness for change (Prochaska *et al.,* 1992).

Persisting with and Desisting from Crime

In the absence of evidence that imprisonment offers offenders time to reflect on their lives and consider the harm perpetrated by them against society, Farrall and Calverley (2006) argue that "prison serves only to increase the likelihood of further offending"(*ibid.*: 71). Neither recidivism nor desistance *per se* were the focus of this study. However, because it emerged in the data that just over a third (*n*=18) of the participants had further charges outstanding against them the opportunity arose to explore from their perspectives where they were on the continuum of change with regard to their offending behaviour and how their attempts at reintegration were impacted by their ongoing involvement with the criminal justice system. As noted by Farrall and Calverley (*ibid.*) there are also those for whom their involvement in the criminal justice system is short-lived. Participants' accounts of how they turned their lives around will also be presented.

The rate of recidivism in Ireland was previously deduced by collating the data relating to the numbers of re-committals to prison (O'Donnell, Baumer and Hughes, 2008). A more in-depth analysis of released prisoners has recently been facilitated by the Crime Statistics Section of the Central Statistics Office in conjunction with the Irish Prison Service, the Garda Síochána and the Courts Service Records (Irish Prison Service, 2013). This collaboration has revealed a clearer picture of ex-prisoners' offending behaviour because it also includes information on offences committed that did not result in a further term of imprisonment. Analysing the data of all prisoners who were released from prison in 2007 and using re-conviction data up to 2010, the overall recidivism rate of offenders within three years of leaving prison was calculated as 62.3%. Over 80% of the cohort reoffended within 12 months and two-thirds of the offences occurred within six months of release from prison. While the early stage of release has been identified as

crucial to reintegration (National Economic and Social Forum, 2002), this finding

further confirms that ex-prisoners are in greatest need of support within this timeframe

to offset the likelihood of reoffending. Vincent, aged 37 described this by saying:

> You come out. You've no money. You're probably starving with the hunger.
> What do you do? Do you break into a car, smash a window and take something
> out of it and try and sell it? If you don't do that, do you sit down on the street
> and beg for money — which I've never done 'cause I wouldn't have the courage
> to do it. There's no help whatsoever for prisoners leaving prison.

The immediacy with which offending can recommence was highlighted by Duncan,

aged 22, when he said:

> After I got out — after being locked up for a twelve months sentence, the first
> night out I went drinkin'. I stayed up all night and I went into Dunnes Stores the
> next morning and I robbed eh, €90 worth of drink out of there and I got caught
> for it and I got brought up to the Garda station and then they left me out. I got
> caught then tryin' to rob a handbag out of a car on the way home cause I was
> still drunk and still on tablets and then they brought me back up to the Garda
> station and kept me there over night and left me go then again. So I was up for
> that (charged).

Outstanding Charges

Such was the level of social exclusion and extent of marginalisation of the majority of

the research group in this study, evidenced by their extant needs at the time of interview

and the lack of support available to them post-release that a significant proportion of

them felt engagement with the process of reintegration was somewhat futile in light of a

distinct prospect of re-imprisonment in the near future. 18 participants (12 of whom

were homeless) explained that they had outstanding charges against them at the time of

interview.

Participants described their pending charges, and in some instances forthcoming trials

as clear impediments to reintegration stating that there was little point in attempting

recovery or accessing employment or education because the only certainty about their

futures at the time of interview was that they would be returning to prison. This hiatus

between release and re-imprisonment was described by Sam, aged 37, as "life being on

hold". Such was the level of chaos in some participants' lives at the time of interview that they expressed a sense of ambivalence towards future imprisonment or viewed it as an opportunity for respite from life on the streets.

The possibility of re-imprisonment was a daunting prospect for those who had at the time of interview desisted from crime and were attempting to rebuild their lives. These participants, such as Martha, aged 34, described the uncertainty about how their outstanding charges would be dealt with as particularly stressful:

> I just want to live the quiet life now and hopefully get a qualification. I'd like to do the four-year course to teach sport. I'm on work experience at present. Maybe they'll give me a job so that I can live an honest life and not be divin' and duckin' and lookin' over my shoulder the whole time. But I've still a few charges pendin'. . . Before I used to go to court no problem but now me legs do be rattlin'.

The distinct likelihood of re-imprisonment was a source of profound stress for others such that it overshadowed daily life and inhibited any attempts at reintegration. This was described by Sam, aged 37, when he said:

> Now I can do nothing . . . I don't know what's happening. It's just stagnating at the moment . . . I don't know how to handle it. In the next three weeks I can see myself exploding badly. People don't know what way my head is at the moment. I can't get it together. Like, if I go through the sentencing and come out, whatever sentence I get, my life is over. Am I going to come out and get a job? Where's my son going to be? You know, that's the stuff that's catching me. Am I going to get a place to stay? Will I end up sleeping rough in the streets for the rest of my life? I was thinking there that this is my last Christmas out. If I go in, will I be able to get through this sentence?

Participants mindful of the possibility of another prison sentence attempted to finalise aspects of their current reintegration such as the completion of a drug recovery programme as was outlined by Oisín, aged 28 as follows:

> I'm after getting in trouble there now twice since I'm out like. I'm after getting caught for it there and I'm up in the Circuit Court now in February. So, I don't know what's going to happen there like. I've no idea at all. I'm hoping to get it put back so that I can finish me treatment here, but I'll have to see what happens.

Other participants, such as Melissa, aged 22 expressed a sense of resignation about future custody:

> My brain is fried now like from the drugs. I have drug charges the length of my fucking arm like. And now, there's more charges coming up and I'm going to get years for 'em, and I'm just frightened like. It's all for robberies and jump-overs. Everything like. The charges I have, I'm not going to get away with them at all. I'd nearly be better off in there at this stage. Like there's days now when I'm thinkin' like would I be better off locked up or what like because I'm doin' nothing with my life. I'm not going to get away with the stuff I done. The only way I'd get away with a prison sentence now is if I go into treatment. *And would you go into treatment*? Yeah, I would yeah. Everyday I do be planning — even if I hadn't got an appointment or anything that I'd go up there (treatment centre) and sit down all day long and say I'm not moving 'till I see the doctor. That'll tell you how bad things are down here. When you're lookin' for help you can't get it do you know what I mean?

Participants who said they were misusing drugs at the time of interview also reported that the likelihood of further imprisonment was because they were not in a position to fulfill the obligations of community sanctions — either they could not afford to pay the fine or comply with the conditions attached to a community service order. This was explained by Hal, aged 22 as follows:

> I have a two months suspended sentence from eh, threatenin' and abusive and drunk and disorderly. But I got, I got Community Service out of that but I just stopped goin' to community service over all the drugs I was takin' like. I'm a heroin addict like, smokin' it. I stopped goin' and then my probation officer rang me and said you didn't go and I gave him cheek on the phone so I kind of fucked up my relationship with the probation officer. So I'm just waitin' on that now as well and what am I gonna get for the two bags (heroin)? Probably eight months or somethin'?

It was apparent in the data that ongoing alcohol or drug misuse is a significant barrier to reintegration. Firstly, individuals were found to have a higher risk of reoffending commensurate with the maintenance of their drugs habit. Secondly, it appeared that active alcohol or drug misuse posed as a barrier to the prospect of non-custodial sanctions which are deemed to be of greater reintegrative value.

Attempting Desistance

With regard to how desistance is defined, the most common thread shared amongst scholars is disagreement about the length of time an individual must be crime free in order to be classified as a desister (McNeill *et al.*, 2012). Maruna (2001) has proffered ontogenic, sociogenic and narrative theories of desistance, pertaining to maturation, life events including social relations and subjective changes in a person's self and self-identity, respectively. The distinction between primary desistance and secondary desistance has been described by Maruna and Farrall (2004) as the former involving a crime-free period, and the latter involving a prolonged crime-free period and a rewriting of the self-narrative so as to facilitate the new identity of a changed person. Motivation as a relevant factor to desistance was demonstrated by Burnett and Maruna (2004) insofar as they found that those who felt confident and able to achieve desistance were likely to do so, in comparison to those with a more fatalistic outlook. Furthermore, Farrall (2004) has concluded that motivation, social and personal circumstances are of greater significance in overcoming obstacles to reintegration than probation supervision. That desistance is rarely absolute, with many ex-offenders continuing to engage in anti-social behaviour, indicates that "[p]athways to desistance are rarely linear or straightforward but . . . tumultuous, dynamic and uncertain" (Healy, 2012:5).

Farrall (2002; 2006) emphasised the gradual nature of the desistance process and explored the motivations at play amongst a group of probationers. While it emerged in the initial study that the group presented as either confident, optimistic or pessimistic about their ability to overcome the obstacles they faced in order to achieve desistance, it emerged in the follow-up study that regardless of the nature of the obstacles involved, those who overcame them, desisted. Farrall's study also highlighted the significance of social and personal characteristics with regard to the cessation of offending (*ibid*., 2006). He found that in comparison to those who were living in deteriorating social

circumstances, those who were living in good social circumstances were better positioned to overcome their obstacles to desistance.

The existential aspect of desistance was explored initially by Maruna (2001). He sought to understand how the process of desistance evolves from an inner transformation as "ex-offenders . . . develop a coherent, prosocial identity for themselves" (*ibid.* :7). Farrall and Calverley (2006) presented the emotional aspects of desistance by exploring the 'internal world' of the desister (*ibid.*). They traced the emotional trajectories of desistance from early hopes to 'normalcy', whereby individuals identified themselves as non-offenders. These individuals viewed themselves as being very far removed from their previous status as offenders and noted how the emotions of trust, shame and guilt encouraged them to attain desistance (*ibid.* :124).

In this study, no pattern emerged pertaining to participants' age, level of exposure to imprisonment or length of time they were on release in relation to how far they had progressed in the process of reintegration. Nevertheless, it was apparent in the data that just over three-quarters of the group (*n=41*) recognised obstacles to desistance and gave accounts of how they were overcoming them. Obstacles to desistance included homelessness, lack of money, stigma, negative peer networks and alcohol and/or drug misuse. Over half of this group (*n=22*) stated that distancing themselves from the peer networks they associated with offending and substance misuse was the most important step towards success at reintegration. It was also apparent that this group in the majority of cases had some structure to their lives insofar as they had stable living accommodation and were availing of support in the community.

Moving Away From Offending Peers

Participants who spoke of disengaging from peer networks attributed it as an important first step to avoid the temptation to resume old habits associated with the risk of re-

offending. Vincent, aged 37, described continuous involvement with negative peer influences after release from prison as "jumping from the pan into the fire". Gerard, aged 39, explained the risk attached to a negative peer network as follows: "you lie down with dogs and you come up with fleas. I stopped hanging around with them". Joe, aged 24, who had been released from prison five months prior to the time of interview described his experience as follows:

> Well, some of them (friends) are still there but most of them are locked up and some of them are out but they're all heavy on the heroin now and all that. I wouldn't touch it. There were times now since I got out when I knew they were scorin' heroin and em, I seen em around in cars and I was tempted to go way and go for a spin but I was thinkin' then if I go for a spin now I'm goin' to end up smokin' there with them. So I just left them off. But, if I see 'em now, I'll have a fag at the door, we'll have a chat, but I wouldn't go way drinkin' with 'em you know. Em, I'm not into it no more. I suppose at some stage I could also get fed up and break out, couldn't I? If I don't look after myself like so that's why I'm tryin' now — to get a job, do somethin', 'cause this is the longest I'm out now and it's, well it's gettin' borin'.

Participants who gave accounts of breaking away from negative influences with a view to promoting their reintegration reported that it was not an easy process in a local context given that Cork is a small city and that it is difficult to avoid bumping into old peers. This was especially the case for participants who had returned to live in their own communities. Brad, aged 33, described this in the following terms:

> Stayin' away from old friends is hard. It's very hard when you have your mind set to stay away from them especially when you're goin' back into the environment where you're after comin out of. I try not to walk up the street but if I do bump into them, it's just hellos and goodbyes you know, because I know where I'm goin' now whereas before I would have been a different ballgame. I would have been on for it. Now it's just hello and goodbye and nice to meet you and whatever and they're all sayin' that I'm gone different and I'm weird and there's something wrong with me you know. That I'm cloned or something. Before it was up to them you see. They could dictate my life. Now they can't dictate it and they're confused. There's even one or two in my family that still can't understand how I'm goin' around and still out of prison you know.

Participants endeavouring to achieve addiction recovery stressed the importance of avoiding anti-social friends. Conor, aged 34, reflected the experiences reported by other participants when he said:

I just pulled away from the crowd that I was with like. Getting away from the old crowd, pulling away from the old crowd was the main part of my getting recovery like. At the start it was because I was trying to stay away from drugs and drink, therefore trying to stay away from the friends . . . They used to be calling me "a wuss", and saying "you're afraid of jail", you know, all these kind of things. But I just blanked them out and after awhile, they got the message like. Now, they don't call me anymore . . . The main thing I think is breaking away all ties. Break away from who you've been with yourself. Set yourself a goal like that you don't want to go back. I don't want to go back to prison like. Ever! It'd break my heart again like if ever I had to go back. I don't know how I'd handle it. If you're still living in the area and you see them most days, like what I did — I stayed at home. Went to my AA meetings, went to my NA meetings, came home, went to bed. I just wasn't around you know. You just wouldn't see me around like. I just avoided being seen for a couple of months and then when I seen them, it was just "hello", like.

Participants who were struggling with alcohol and drug use recovery also reported that it was difficult to avoid temptation in society in general given that adult social life often includes drinking and taking 'recreational drugs'. A number of participants said they avoided nightclubs for this reason.

Reaching the point of being ready for change was reported by some participants as including a period of reflection on the effects addiction had on their lives. This was explained by Brian, aged 27 as follows:

How did you get to that stage? Just the way my life was going, you know what I mean? I was always in trouble you know and I just stopped and I was thinking like, what the fuck? Do I want to be like this all of my life, you know, in and out of prisons and in and out of courts and drinking and probably eventually ending up homeless you know, because if I kept on going spending all my money on drink and drugs and having nothing. I had a great job, massive money you know and I fuckin' blew it all on drink and drugs every weekend. And then once I'd drink, I'd get in trouble and then the court follows. You know it's fuckin' just a vicious circle because I thought I could never see any way out of it. I don't want to go back to that life, that life of crime and all that shit. It's too dangerous like. The drugs and all. It's too dangerous bein' involved with all these people. I just stay away now from all the old friends and stuff, I stay away from the pubs. It's hard like and especially when you're young. It's tough like. It's very hard like. The AA and the NA is the only way.

Prochaska *et al.* (1992) have argued that efficient self-change requires doing the right thing at the right time. Coming to the realisation that alcohol and drug use recovery is necessary for successful reintegration was reported by a number of participants and they

stressed the importance of having accessible and adequate support to help them once they reached the decision to achieve recovery. This was explained by Shane, aged 35, as follows:

> I was just sick to death of the way that I was living like basically, do you know, just taking drugs and drinkin' and all the time like, non stop, do you know, and my head was in a mess . . . The last two years, to be honest, you know. But that wasn't enough to stop me. I was hospitalised then and I kind of woke up a bit . . . I said to meself, I'll have to do something do you know. I tried to go off the drink before on me own like, and eh, it was pointless, a losin' battle as they say like, but eh, I just made me mind up like that eh, I'm going to go into a treatment centre, and see what I can do for me do you know. And I went in to (treatment centre) there until Christmas . . . it was good, it was great like. I got a lot out of it but I knew that it wasn't enough for me, so they suggested that I come out here (step-down centre).

Motivational Factors of Desistance

Age coupled with time served in prison, was commonly reported by participants as bringing them to the point where they wanted to live a crime-free life. Participants' narratives revealed four main factors that motivated them towards change. These included the wisdom of age; the desire to be better role models as parents; the shame and remorse they experienced in relation to their offending and the desire to reconfigure their futures by using their life's experience for the benefit of others. In line with maturation theory (Sampson and Laub, 1993) some participants attributed their commitment to desistance to the belief that they were simply getting too old for a life of crime. Ger, aged 41, explained this as follows:

> When you're younger you'd be flyin' around as if you don't care because you're young. When you're older, you just get much wiser as well like. You're there (in prison) and it's not as easy as it was when you were a young fella. Well, I didn't care when I was a young fella. It was just in, out, in, out and it usen't bother me. But it would bother me now like. Do you know, it's a big difference now to twenty years ago like.

Similarly, Becky, aged 27, echoed other participants' accounts of outgrowing a chaotic past as follows:

I don't want to go back to the old life. I'm fed up of it, getting too old like. I'm changing. I don't know what changed in me, but I just don't want to go back to that.

Regret for time lost to offending and imprisonment was also a feature of the narratives of those who expressed a commitment to change. Denis, aged 35, described this as follows:

'tis when you get older you get more sense. When I look back now, all the time in jail, that's a waste. There's people in there that done a lot longer than me and they're still in there, do you know what I mean. It's a waste. That's not a life.

Participants who were parents indicated that a motivating factor for them pertaining to change was a desire to be better role models for their children. The types of things parental participants described in this regard were related to giving up alcohol and drug use and not exposing their children to criminal behaviour as well as being able to provide for their children financially. This was highlighted by Gerard, aged 39, who was attempting sobriety saying: "they (AA) say you have to do it for yourself — but honestly, you do it for the children". This point was further reiterated by Ger, aged 41:

I want to change like. I want to change for my kids. I want to change for myself as well like. I don't want to be a criminal all me life, do you know. My son is 15 and I wouldn't like him getting in to, and I hope he don't, get into trouble. I wouldn't like him mixed up in that or mixed up in trouble either like with the guards. I want to change. I'm sick of drink. I'm sick of being sick from drink and I'm sick of wastin' me life. I'm sick of prison and I'm sick of all the trouble that comes with drink.

'Wanting to be a better person' was also a common theme that emerged in participants' narratives who described their ideal futures in terms of being 'a family man' and being able to provide for one's family through legitimate means. Evan, aged 25, in his account below captured the perspectives of other participants as follows when he said:

If I do have kids in the future, I want to have a job, a steady job, so I can provide for them. I don't want to be on the fuckin' dole and selling drugs to provide for my kids, and then for them to grow up as criminals as well. I want to do things right. I've stopped all that shit.

Maruna has stated that "[e]ach of us seeks to stave off meaninglessness and void by finding some life pursuit worthy of our time" (2001:100). Generative goals also

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emerged in some participants' narratives as a means of making amends and benefitting others through shared experiences. Generativity has been defined as:

> The concern for and commitment to promoting the next generation, manifested through parenting, teaching, mentoring, and generating products and outcomes that aim to benefit youth and foster the development and well-being of individuals and social systems that will outlive the self. (McAdams and de St. Aubin, 1998, p. *xx*, cited in Maruna, 2001).

Some participants gave accounts of not just wanting to live legitimate lives but to validate their past lives by presenting themselves as living proof that successful reintegration is possible. These participants indicated that they wished to utilise their experience of the consequences of offending for the benefit of youth struggling with substance misuse. Declan, aged 42, explained his efforts in this regard when he said:

> I was doing everything I could helping people in detox (in prison). I always wanted to do something like that. I think I have already. I think I can help people. Sometimes people like me who have been down and out, we've a lot to offer in some ways like. It's the young fellas I'd like to help.

Brown (1991: 219) defined the concept of "wounded healer" as one who replaces a prior identity of deviance with one of benevolence that often results in ex-offenders becoming counselors or therapists. A small number of participants expressed the desire to become addiction counselors and were endeavouring to seek qualifications in that regard at the time of interview. Some believed that as ex-offenders they were better placed to guide at-risk youth. This was explained by Padriag, aged 39 as follows:

> I'd like to work in the community drug teams . . . to be kind of a prison-links worker, a link between the prisoner and the community kind of thing like. I'd like to work with 18 and upwards, young fellas, cause they know the score like. There's no use sitting down listening to guys in suits like. When you're talkin' to people that have been through that theirselves, you can kind of identify with them and start saying — yeah, this didn't work, but what about this and what about that like?

Similarly, Ben aged 49 believed that the experience of recovery from addiction and desistance could be shared for the benefit of others. He outlined this when he said:

> When I did become willing to change, change happened, and it happened right across the board. It happened to my whole thinking . . . and a lot of people have said that I have a lot of experience and that I should find a way of passing on

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this experience to people who are in similar situations to what I was in, because it would be helpful to them. That's fine, and I do that as much as I can. But I wanted to learn how to do that properly you know and how not to damage or how not to make a situation worse.

Other participants indicated that they wished to mentor at-risk youth such as Evan, aged 25 who said:

> When I see them now, I just try and advise them, to try and keep on the right side of the fucking law and try and keep them out of trouble you know. See, when I'm there, them young lads are not going to get into trouble because I could get into trouble. So I'd be a good influence on them like. We just plays snooker and chills like. Just keepin' them out of trouble so they won't have to go through want I went through, do you know what I mean . . . So I tell them, like it's good for them to hear the truth like. People comin' out of jail, sayin' ah, it was no problem. There's no point in sayin' that. You're only blinding yourself like. It's about being honest. Tell them what it was like. It was shit. What I do, I just look after them boys. Make sure they don't get in trouble.

The findings here demonstrate that if given opportunities and support, individuals have the potential for change and success at reintegration. The desire to 'give back' to ones family or society in general through generative pursuits has important implications for the process of reintegration from two aspects. At an individual level, Brown (1991) suggests that professionalising a deviant identity as a means of helping others can facilitate desistance by creating a positive and purposive role. At the community level, Maruna (2001:123) argues that it "can expedite the process of obtaining public acceptance". This is an important consideration given the lack of ritual or acknowledgment available to those who manage to turn their lives around (Maruna and LeBel, 2003). Evidence in this study suggests that those who wish to change, and want that change to be recognised were aggressively pursuing their reintegration.

Agency has been found to be one of the key elements in successful desistance (Burnett, 2004; Maruna, 2001; McNeill, 2006; Maguire and Raynor, 2006; Sampson and Laub, 2005). It has been described by Bottoms *et al.*, (2004) as the subjective dimension to the process of change and desistance that raises awareness of the consequences of action and choice. Significant turning points were reported by over 16% (*n*=9) of the

participants in this study as motivating them towards desistance. Turning points were described variously as "a wake-up call" (Ben, aged 49), when "the penny dropped" (Padraig, aged 39) or "when something clicked inside" (Valerie, aged 24). While some participants reported that they reached this point during their last term of imprisonment others explained how it was prompted by an event in the community. Valerie, aged 24, recalled such an event happening in court when she took heed of what the judge said: "the judge said I had two paths — take the right one and I'm grand, take the wrong one and I'm goin' down — locked up. So ever since that, I just didn't get in trouble". Other participants described how their alcohol and drug misuse and offending had accelerated to a point where they felt shame and remorse to such an extent that it fuelled their motivation for recovery and change. In outlining the circumstances and consequences of his offending, Alex, aged 19, explained this as follows:

> When the guards kicked in my door . . . I was ashamed like . . . That woman didn't deserve that like. If that ain't the sign sayin' you have a problem I don't know what is like. The way I see it, what do I have to do to prove to myself that I'm a drug addict and an alcoholic like? Do I have to go down and stab someone or murder someone like? I'm not goin' to let it go that far like by goin' back drinkin' and takin' drugs. That incident just turned my whole life around. That whole thing like.

Having outlined the circumstances that motivated change, participants went further to describe the transition from offending to desistance that included a change in self-identity. This was described by Alfie, aged 37, as follows:

> I can talk to anyone now and I can invite conversations you know. People are getting to know me now and that I'm not a bad fellow at all like. There still would be a lot of people that I've hurt, when I was drinking like. But I gets opportunities to talk to them like. And sometimes I gets opportunities to make amends without even them knowing it, do you know what I mean?

It was also evident in the data that participants with multiple needs at the time of interview faced complex challenges with a view to their reintegration. In the absence of planning and a support structure in place following release, participants reported that they were more vulnerable to re-offending. Offending was predominantly likely

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amongst those who reported that they had no living arrangements in place and were accessing emergency shelter. A link between ongoing alcohol and drug misuse, homelessness and offending was also apparent with some participants reporting that their offending was motivated by the need to feed their alcohol or drug habit. Participants indicated that in the absence of adequate addiction facilities they were frustrated by long waiting lists in the their efforts to access help and support for recovery. Nevertheless, it was also apparent in the data that despite their history of offending and imprisonment and, alcohol and drug misuse other participants managed to surmount their challenges. In line with the literature, some reported that they had reached a point in their lives when they felt they had outgrown their previous lifestyles. Others were motivated towards change through consideration of the impact their offending had on their families and in particular their children. What participants reported to be supportive and helpful to them in their quest for successful reintegration will follow.

Support for Reintegration

Although the post-custody period is fraught with problems and difficulties, as evidenced in this study, it can also be a time of opportunities to enable individuals embark on the path of reintegration, through problem alcohol and drug use recovery, employment, good family relations and desistance from crime (Nelson, Deess and Allen, 1999). Furthermore, the role of good social contexts has been identified as promoting desistance (Farrall, 2002; Farrall and Calverley, 2006) thus aiding and enabling successful reintegration. While the majority of participants in this study demonstrated a range of needs not being met at the time of interview including adequate housing and alcohol and drug misuse treatment (see Chapter Five), a number of participants gave accounts of receiving support with regard to their reintegration. Narratives revealed

both informal and formal support, emanating from good family relationships and/or community service providers.

The collateral consequences of imprisonment on prisoners' families have been described by Coulter (1991) as a web of punishment that extends beyond the prison with families of prisoners reporting that they suffer financial stress and the stigma that attaches to the family name when a member of the family has been imprisoned (Bedford Row Family Project, 2007). Yet, family support has been identified as one of the critical factors in identifying former offenders' pathways on release from prison (Visher and Travis, 2003). Furthermore, prisoners who maintain contact with their families during imprisonment have been found to have a significantly higher quality of life after release and are six times less likely to re-offend than those who are released in the absence of family contact (Hairston, 1991; Ditchfield, 1994).

The acquisition of social capital has been linked to desistance (McNeill, 2006; Barry, 2007). Families can be a source of social capital through the provision of practical support including financial assistance and accommodation (Mills and Codd, 2008). Farrall's exploration of the relationship between social capital and desistance amongst a cohort of probationers found a willingness on behalf of the probationers to comply with the wishes of their families as failure to exhibit a sincere effort to desist from offending risked the withdrawal of family support (2004:70).

'Family do mean more than anything'

The tenaciousness of family bonds became apparent in this study only for some participants who gave accounts of how their familial relationships endured through periods of offending and imprisonment. Participants who gave accounts of such relationships generally acknowledged that despite other relationships waning over time,

their families always stood by them. Conor, aged 34 reflected the views of others when he said:

> But as I got older like, I got more prison time and you know, people, nobody really wanted anything to do with me like, only my family. My family always stuck by me like. I'll always say that about them. Only for them, I'd say I'd be dead. I had a good upbringing like and I wouldn't blame any of my time in prison or anything on the family. It was all my own doing on drugs and stuff.

The strain of offending and imprisonment on family relationships was explained by some participants as causing a rift within the family circle while others reported that they experienced periods where all contact with their families broke down for a period of time. Participants' narratives contained expressions of gratitude for how their families coped with such strain, such as Bart aged 35:

> They didn't know what to do or how to cope with me like or how to treat the situation. Like they tried you know, they tried and did everything. They couldn't talk to me . . . I was thick you know, insufferable that way. But they were always there for me . . . They were always there supporting me like, as bad and all as it was like . . . The relationship was strained and they tried to kind of monitor me and then do what they had to do you know like and I think they just kind of let things go too with the hope that I'd improve . . . They're great like . . . And they have me now, kind of back on the same wavelength again like too. Like the past kind of seems to be, to be well gone now you know.

The importance of knowing that they could continue to rely on the support of their families was also a common theme that emerged, as articulated by Nick aged 47 thus:

> It (returning to prison) caused a big rift but it didn't end the relationship because they are a great family. Okay, they could understand the first time, a person makes a mistake, but they couldn't understand the second time and so forth. And the big gap then you know, before we actually did meet up again, not too far off a two- year gap before we were able to sit down and talk again. So it did cause a big rift within the family. They don't understand the prison system but they know I'm fighting to get my life right. And they're "there" do you know. I'm just thankful at the moment like that there is contact there because if there was no contact with the family then I don't think there'd be something worth living for because family do mean more than anything.

The Practical Support of Families

Participants who gave accounts of maintaining contact with their families during imprisonment stressed the importance of both the moral support and the material

support emanating from those relationships (see Part II). For those who had no alternative living arrangements in place prior to their release from prison, participants also explained how critical their families were at that juncture insofar as they were a source of interim accommodation, as described by Alan, aged 40, when he said: "I was able to talk to my family about where I was going to stay. Sure I had nowhere to go when I left". Alan explained that his sister subsequently "took him in". Family support was of particular importance to those who were unable to acquire hostel accommodation or emergency accommodation due to the nature of their offending. This was outlined by Eric, aged 29, who explained that while his parents had a barring order against him they nevertheless paid for his Bed and Breakfast accommodation. Because early release is only available to individuals who have living arrangements in place, family support in this regard is of critical importance. Ben, aged 49 explained this as follows:

> I was getting out three days a week and every second weekend as well, so that was fantastic. I was able to stay below with the family. I was able to go fishing and things like that. The relationship really blossomed. It was very good.

Participants who were attempting recovery from drug misuse after their imprisonment also highlighted that their families were a source of support and assistance in this regard. For some participants such support enabled them to continue their recovery at home without the necessity of staying at a residential recovery step-down facility. This was outlined by Denis, aged 35, when he reported that having been offered a place at a recovery centre he told the manager: "I've a solid home with me mother and father . . . they goes out of their way for me you know, my family and me brothers and sisters". Similarly, Luke aged 27, explained how his family was assisting in his drug use recovery when he said:

> My aunts now are very good to me. One of my aunts brought me down to (addiction recovery centre). If I asked her for money, she'd give it to me like. And she's given me a hand now to look for flats as well cause she don't want to

see me on the street, or in a bad gaff. Like she said I can go back and stay with them when I'm finished here (step-down centre).

Participants described the value of support with regard to their recovery at home, such as Duncan aged 22, who explained that his parents helped him to organise his medical appointments and medication. A small number of participants who reported that they were still "in active addiction" were also living in the family home. Their accounts of the support that they were receiving from their families also included an appreciation of the problem of addiction alongside the hope that one day, recovery was possible. This was explained by Hal, aged 22, when he said "They're very concerned, the two of them (parents) are. They want to see me doin' well and whatever — get treatment. They'd love to see it happen but do you know progress is a slow process".

A sense of solidarity and empathy among participants' families who shared common experiences was also evident in the data. This appeared to be of particular significance for those who were attempting sobriety, as outlined by Brian, aged 27 as follows:

> My family are very united you know, very close . . . I have two brothers that are recovered alcoholics, that have been down that road you know, down my road. They're 15 and 7 years off the drink. I'm the third one then — the youngest of them and they'd give me a place to live no bother…

The important role that families can contribute to the process of reintegration was evidenced in the data. This included both the practical and emotional support that participants reported was of benefit to them after their release from prison. Strong family relationships can ease the transition to crime-free living (Graham and Bowling, 1995). This implies that families who often suffer the collateral consequences of imprisonment through financial hardship or stigma in their communities are also in need of preparation and support for the reintegration of a family member (Martynowicz and Quigley, 2010).

Formal Support in the Community

Given the high degree of marginalisation experienced by the research group at the time of interview (see Chapter Five) the vast majority of the research participants were in need of formal support in the community to meet their basic day to day living needs following their release from prison. However, given that the research was conducted in a small local area, participants reported a very limited range of support services that they were aware of with others reporting that they had exhausted anything that was available very quickly.

A prison in-reach service was reported by almost one-quarter (*n*=13) of participants in this study as something they availed of during their most recent term of imprisonment. Accounts of the benefits they derived from the service included befriending and help with making plans for release that included accommodation arrangements, addiction recovery and help with accessing employment. Hugh, aged 29 described the service when he said:

> They came to see me before I came out and that was the first time ever I knew about this place. I was crying when I got out like and saw this place and that there was so much emphasis being put on, you know, people's release now — because all the time I was just thrown out. There was never any kind of support for me about getting out, or if there was, I wasn't aware of it. Now there's a base there for you. They'll help you do A, B and C. They arranged for me to do me Leaving Cert (senior cycle state examination) and sit for my exam.

Participants highlighted in particular the benefit of having visits from the in-reach service provider prior to their release from prison that allowed them the opportunity to express their concerns about their return to the community. They most commonly referred to how the service engaged with them as "befriending". This was described by Shane, aged 35, as follows:

> She came to me in the prison and I told her exactly what I was feeling, how I was faring, expressing the way I was and my situation when I'd get out. She helped me getting a place to stay — like the hostels and just giving me advice. But she was helping me in a way to just share my problems. What was going on with me, my concerns and my worries over what happened with my separation

and prison and how that happened. She was very helpful in trying to help me you know, so that was good. She got me to see a counselor there and I shared a lot in my heart about what's going on with me and she gave me good advice and guidance like. Then she asked me would I go into treatment about my drink problem. It took me two months to decide to go there but like, with a bit of pushing and encouragement I eventually went and I'm glad I made that step. *And where did that pushing and encouragement come from?* It came from them like, just befriending me and saying, just call in for a chat to us now, whenever you like and them saying, do you think it's wise to do this, kind of thing. So I had a few meetings with them and I expressed a lot of what was happening and what I was going through and they were kind of telling me where I was going wrong in a sense, in a guiding helpful way so I was glad of that. I had someone to go and talk to like.

Practical help that participants described being of benefit to them included help with accessing employment and education upon their release. This was described by Matt, aged 43, when he said:

Me only worry was getting work. But (in-reach worker) helped me get a job. She used to be calling up to me in prison saying, how are you getting on, is there anything that we can do to help you with and all? So she helped me get out, helped me apply for jobs and things like that . . . she put me in touch then with the Probation Service and that's how I got the job that I was doing up until this week.

The provision of transitional and supported accommodation was described by participants to be of particular benefit to them during their prison to community transition. The benefit of such accommodation was described by Jenny, aged 22, in the following terms:

This is very helpful here like. I was just thinkin' that earlier, that it was good like coming here, when you think of it I suppose, where I came from. They've all classes here and stuff. Like, people are friendly I suppose and you don't have to share with people in here either. We all have our own rooms.

Similarly, Ben, aged 49, described the significance of having supported accommodation available to him as he transitioned to the community by way of day release from prison as follows:

So, when I got that accommodation I was able to go there and make tea in the mornings and you know, it was nice to have my own place. It was nice to have a place of my own outside prison. I used to just sit there and think how lucky I am. And then I'd go to work (state-sponsored programme) and go back at

lunchtime and before I'd go back to the prison I'd go back again and make sure everything was alright before I went back up (prison).

'You can talk and share about stuff there'

Given that almost 80% (*n=43*) of the participants spoke of the issue of stigmatisation compounding the stress of life post-release, many of them emphasised the value of a supportive and inclusive environment in the community. Participants who were availing of the services available at the only agency in Cork solely dedicated to supporting ex-prisoners described the importance of having the centre as a place they could drop into on a daily basis alongside others sharing similar experiences. While the centre was designed with the primary purpose of providing support to ex-prisoners that included counseling, assistance with accessing accommodation and employment or training, it also provided service users with a place that they could relax, that included kitchen and shower facilities. Participants described the centre as a safe place where they felt welcome and comfortable in the company of others who did not judge them. Becky, aged 27, also outlined the importance of such a service that provided a sense of structure to daily living saying:

> I know that if I don't have support at the moment that I'll hit rock bottom like. See, I need a plan every day. I need something every day, if not, I'll go into depression and I don't know what I'll end up doing like. But I think this is a brilliant place. Because, if I'm ever sitting at home (female hostel) and I feel down about myself or anything, I can just come in here and have a chat straight away and have a cup of tea and all the other friends are in here, you know, people that actually went through the same.

Peer support was also a feature of participants' narratives as something they benefitted from through accessing a post-release agency. This was outlined by Padraig, aged 39, as follows:

> I calls in there every day. Have a cup of tea and chat with the people in there. It's alright. They are genuine people. Some of the people that actually teach in there have been in prison theirselves and turned it around. And all the other fellas are ex-prisoners as well like. Some of them are clean and some of them aren't clean and the way it works — you can talk to your man about it. *Who is*

"your man"? Like (Name), one of the facilitators . . . any help you want at all like . . . you'll have all the brochures for the colleges as well like — and they'll apply for you online and all that craic you know what I mean. It's handy like . . . You just walk in and make a cup of tea for yourself, sit down, and biscuits and go in and have your dinner if you want . . . I just call in there on my way back from college most days you know what I mean . . . There's fellas from the prison come down there as well like and go back. I used do it myself like. So it was grand. You're comin' down and sayin' what's the story, what are you up to, and this — are you still goin' to college do you know . . . And it seem to be working do you know what I mean.

Part III: Summary

Part III of this chapter has presented the nature of the reintegration experience encountered by 54 individuals on release in the community. That their lives represented a high level of marginalisation and social exclusion prior to their imprisonment (see Chapter Six: Part I) and they reported receiving little or no support or preparation for release during the course of imprisonment (see Chapter Six: Part II) meant that the prospect of reintegration facing them was contingent on surmounting a number of obstacles and barriers. Four substantive barriers to successful reintegration emerged in the data including: psychosocial readjustment; the stigma of imprisonment; homelessness and on-going alcohol and drug misuse. A further impediment to reintegration that emerged in the data was that many of the participants were again embroiled in the criminal justice system at the time of interview.

The day of release was commonly reported to be an unplanned event and represented for the majority of participants not the spontaneous return of their freedom but rather the beginning of a strained and difficult transition to life in the community. This was described by many of the participants as facing "the unknown". Regardless of the level of support available to them, participants gave accounts of suffering high levels of stress for prolonged periods as they psychologically readjusted to life after prison. This included feelings of alienation both at home and in the community; difficulty in

psychologically overcoming the experience of imprisonment which for some included the refashioning of their living environments and arrangements so as to replicate what they had become accustomed to in prison. The stigma associated with imprisonment was also reported by the participants as being problematic for them, especially as it related to the acquisition of housing or employment.

Those who experienced release from prison to homelessness faced a particularly onerous transition to the community especially against the backdrop of a lack of transitional accommodation or emergency shelter. The stress of homelessness was also in the majority of cases compounded by heavy alcohol consumption and or drug misuse that rendered many of them vulnerable to reoffending. One-third of the research group reported that they had attracted further criminal charges since they were released from prison. This appears to suggest that in the absence of help and support with regard to alcohol and drug misuse, stable living arrangements and structured daily activity either by way of employment, education or training that successful reintegration is less likely.

Despite adequate preparation for release coupled with the stress of psychosocial readjustment and the perceived lack of a continuum of support in the community the data revealed that the majority of the research group were attempting to cease offending. The majority of this group reported that severing ties with negative peer influences was an important first step in this regard. Participants highlighted the type of support that was beneficial to them as they endeavoured to restructure their lives that included the support emanating from family relationships and the type of support available to them from service providers in the community. It was apparent in the data that those attempting reintegration had different needs and thus required individualised support structures to aid their transition from what was in the majority of cases a repeat pattern of offending and imprisonment to a crime-free life. Collectively, the

implications of the findings in this chapter will be presented and discussed further in

Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Discussion

Introduction

This chapter discusses the study's key findings including the implications of the findings for criminological knowledge, theory, policy and service provision. These findings will be integrated and discussed thematically to demonstrate their contribution to the field of criminology, particularly in the area of prisoner reintegration.

The aim of the study was to address the gap in extant knowledge and literature on the nature of the process of prisoner reintegration within a local context. This was achieved by fulfilling the study's objectives that included identifying the challenges and barriers former prisoners encounter after their release from prison and ascertaining the significance of support available to them in the local community. The thesis demonstrated pathways into prison, through prison and out of prison and conveyed the process of reintegration as one commonly experienced against a background of disadvantage and adversity, exacerbated by the damaging effects of imprisonment and further compounded by a range of challenges and impediments both prior to and following release.

A locus for reintegration was contextualised by presenting the personal characteristics of the research participants at the time of interview followed by an overview of life in their local communities prior to their imprisonment. Experiences of imprisonment were then examined to assess how the concept of reintegration was located within discourse, policy and practice in the prison setting and the type of support available there for prisoners in preparation for their release. The main body of the thesis focused on life

after release from prison that included an in-depth investigation and analysis of the experience of returning to the community after a custodial sentence. Apart from exposing the challenges and barriers encountered by former prisoners, and highlighting the types of support in the community they perceived to be meaningful to them as they were attempting reintegration, the thesis went further — firstly, by identifying the meaning inherent within the challenges and barriers to reintegration and secondly, by providing detailed insights into the diversity of supports required for former prisoners after their release from prison.

The unique aspect of the thesis is that it portrays reintegration through an authentic lens that reveals the reality of the process from a deeply nuanced perspective. It offers a number of original contributions to criminological literature in this regard, in an area that despite previous advancement has thus far suffered a void with regard to knowledge of how psychologically and socially challenging the process is. Personally and socially disadvantaged individuals attempting to surmount the barriers of social exclusion within a local context, compounded by a history of imprisonment, are combating marginalisation at its extremity. The thesis demonstrated this from the perspectives of a group of former prisoners who were marginalised to the extreme.

This chapter is guided by the main finding that while reintegration is a complex and difficult process for the majority of former prisoners, it is particularly onerous for those who have little by way of material, social, psychological or emotional support to help them transition from prison back to life in the community. The study's substantive findings relate to life after imprisonment. They will be foregrounded here by a discussion of the relevance of background features and early life experiences that depict the challenging nature of reintegration as part of an ongoing continuum of social exclusion and marginalisation.

The Impact of Background Characteristics on the Potential for Reintegration

By analysing the data on the background characteristics of the research participants' lives alongside their personal circumstances at the time of interview, the first issue that emerged for consideration was the incongruous nature of the nomenclature "reintegration". While the primary purpose of the research was to identify the challenges and barriers to reintegration in the community *after* imprisonment, a compendium of disadvantage was gleaned from the data that revealed in the vast majority of cases very little evidence of prior community integration. Therefore, these former prisoners were not striving to become *re*integrated but were surmounting the challenges and barriers to achieving some initial level of integration in the community, despite inadequate personal resources and very limited social and economic support. Hence, reintegration can be a misleading term when viewed from the perspective that the vast majority of former prisoners "experience not re-entry but ongoing circulation between *the two poles of a continuum of forced confinement* formed by the prison and the dilapidated districts of the dualizing metropolis that are the latter's primary recruiting grounds" (*emphasis in original*, Wacquant, 2010: 611).

Pre-prison life was portrayed in chaotic terms (see Chapter Six: Part 1). Turbulent family circumstances were described in relation to poverty, and in many cases compounded by the collateral consequences of alcoholism in the home that often included domestic violence and the breakup of parental and marital relationships. Early life histories were further imbued with a sense of loss and tragedy arising from the premature deaths of loved ones by way of suicide, drugs misuse or murder. Life in the local community was framed by anti-social influences that included early onset alcohol and drug taking. Offending was routine and commonplace, often described as part of the ritual of growing up in neighbourhoods already familiar with the impact of

imprisonment and social exclusion. The data also conveyed a high rate of incomplete schooling, very little in terms of exposure to employment and no evidence of opportunities for civic engagement. These findings are of relevance insofar as evidence shows that being vulnerable entering prison exacerbates the negativity of the experience (Freeman and Seymour, 2010). Furthermore, early and repetitive involvement with the criminal justice system emerged in the data that culminated in a high level of exposure to imprisonment — almost 41% (*n=22*) of the research participants had served five or more terms of imprisonment at the time of interview.

These findings provide a deeper and nuanced understanding of the level of disadvantage and adversity suffered by prisoners prior to their imprisonment in neighbourhoods already overshadowed by the criminal justice system. The findings also demonstrate how challenging the process of reintegration is for those whose lives and experiences in the community prior to imprisonment represent a conglomerate of challenges and social deficits with little in the way of opportunity to break away from the negative impact of such personal and social disadvantage upon release. Because an overwhelming number of repeat offenders return to prison with the same impediments that continue to plague them after release (Thompson, 2004), how the concept of reintegration is addressed within the prison setting was explored to identify the type of support and assistance available to prisoners to address their needs in custody and prepare for their return to the community. The findings from this phase of the research analysis will now be discussed.

The Impact of Imprisonment on Reintegration

Prison was portrayed as somewhat of an adjunct to the local community mirroring much of the chaos and challenges previously experienced such as violence and alcohol or drug misuse with little in the way of opportunity to break away from this cycle. The local

aspect of imprisonment was viewed dichotomously. While affinity with local friends or contacts helped to ease adjustment to prison life, hostile relationships and unresolved issues in the community were also imported into the prison. The experience of imprisonment was characterised by participants in profoundly stressful terms and largely devoid of rehabilitative value. Given the absence of adequate provision of services, support or meaningful rehabilitative structures within the prison, prisoners faced the prospect of reintegration, unprepared and ill equipped for the communities they returned to.

The overarching theme that emerged in the data was that the prison experience did not serve to prepare or accommodate prisoners' advancement towards reintegration. With few exceptions, there was limited evidence of any positive engagement with prison programmes or anything beneficial about the experience of imprisonment. While it was apparent in the data that some services were available to prisoners — such as counselling and alcohol or drug use recovery programmes, it was clear that those services were inadequately resourced and therefore piecemeal and difficult to access. Furthermore, there was reluctance by participants to be seen to access services or attempt to have needs met, whereby it emerged in the data that this could be perceived as "weakness". This was problematised further given the local aspect of the prison experience both in terms of peers and service providers that gave rise to a sense of distrust about imparting personal or sensitive information. The perception that asking for help or raising concerns indicates weakness is a significant finding insofar as it hinders the capacity to access help and support in the local community. This is especially relevant in light of the high level of support that former prisoners need following their release from prison (see Chapter Six: Part 3).

Conditions in Irish prisons have recently been described as "depicting a gravely inadequate and deteriorating system (Warner, 2014:3). Chronic overcrowding has been the predominant feature of the prison system for more that two decades. It remains an overarching problem and has a number of significant consequences for Irish prisoners and the communities that they return to. Overcrowding strains otherwise over-stretched in-prison services denying many prisoners the help and support they require to have their needs met. It lessens opportunities for training and meaningful activities throughout the course of imprisonment that results in idleness and boredom, both of which have been linked to the pervasiveness of drug use in prison (Lonergan, 2010). While the harmful effects of imprisonment presented in previous research were evident in this study, it also emerged in line with other research, that overcrowding exacerbated the detrimental aspects of these effects (Haney, 2003; Schmid and Jones, 1993).

Prison overcrowding amplifies the otherwise negative aspects of the prison experience insofar as it contributes to tension placing both prisoners and prison staff at risk (Prison Chaplains Report, 2010; Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2015). Previous research has found a relationship between pre-prison offending and in-prison involvement in criminality (Murphy, 2004). Prison violence has a number of significant consequences for the process of reintegration. Firstly, it can result in the imposition of harsher regimes that deprive prisoners the opportunity for positive engagement with prison programmes and recreational or social aspects of prison life (Warner, 2014). Secondly, actual violence or the perceived threat of violence is psychologically harmful for prisoners and renders the prison experience an endurance of survival. As evidenced in this study, such psychological harm can also endure and overshadow life after imprisonment (see Chapter Six: Part III). A perceived lack of procedural justice also emerged in the data with regard to participants' experiences of violence during imprisonment. This was something that was also linked in part to the local aspect of the prison environment.

Given that many of the participants had returned to prison on a number of occasions, previously acrimonious relationships with prison staff were a source of concern whereby participants reported that they were often targeted for unfair treatment. Furthermore, a perceived level of nepotism amongst prison staff presented as a barrier to bringing prisoners' grievances to light. This has significant implications for life post-release insofar as experiences of procedural justice impact on views about the legitimacy of authority (Tyler, 2006) and therefore compromise the potential for desistance.

Analysis of the data also revealed insufficient help or support for prisoners with regard to their transition to life in the community. This was evident primarily for the lack of any meaningful preparation for release and the practice of releasing prisoners with little or no notice — a practice that was commonly employed to alleviate the problem of prison overcrowding. While the early days of release have been described as critical to a former prisoner's chance of success at reintegration (NESF, 2002) unplanned and lack of preparation for release places prisoners' potential for reintegration in immediate jeopardy rendering them vulnerable to homelessness, further offending and re-imprisonment (see Chapter Six: Part III). The practice of premature and unplanned release together with inadequate services available to prisoners also appeared to compromise the legitimacy of the purpose of imprisonment insofar as it related to reintegration. Feelings of abandonment by the Prison Service were commonly alluded to by participants and were expressed in terms of being treated like the detritus of society — frequently referred through accounts of being dumped out of the prison like rubbish.

Literature on prisoner reintegration stresses the importance of informal social networks including family as providing more avenues for support after imprisonment than

professional interventions (Haines, 1990; Farrall and Calverley, 2006; Harding *et al.*, 2011). Hence, how ties to the community were maintained throughout imprisonment was assessed. Although provisions are in place in the prison setting for the maintenance of ties to the community it appeared in the data that while visits from family and friends were deemed to be important insofar as they provided material and emotional support they could also at times be a source of stress for prisoners. This was sometimes described in terms of shame — especially as it related to participants who did not want their children or their mothers to see them in the prison setting. Visits also had the potential to cause a level of distress for those who found parting from their loved ones difficult to bear. Deficiencies in the physical environment that facilitated visiting arrangements were also found to contribute to the stress of otherwise stressful situations mainly for the lack of privacy.

While the findings here reflect many of the concerns raised in previous reports on Irish prisons (Inspector of Prisons, 2010; 2011; Irish Prison Chaplains, 2010; CPT, 2011) they enhance the current knowledge further in this area by demonstrating the negative impact the regime has on the potential for successful reintegration. The inadequate provision of therapeutic or support services both during imprisonment and in preparation for release denies prisoners an exit route from ongoing circulation of imprisonment and release. In light of this study's findings pertaining to both the structural and psychological barriers to reintegration (see Chapter Six: Part III) a strong argument can be made for greater emphasis and priority being attached to pre-release planning to facilitate the transition from prison to free life in the community. Furthermore, in the context of the aforementioned findings that demonstrate families as a potential source of support post-release, the maintenance of family ties throughout the period of imprisonment is critically important.

Lived Experiences of Reintegration

Considering the study's primary aim was to understand how reintegration is experienced in a local context, the transition from imprisonment to life in the community was presented. The dominant theme that emerged in the data was that the punishment of imprisonment has far-reaching social, psychological, emotional and structural consequences that persevere long after a prison sentence is completed. This was evidenced in the data whereby former prisoners were struggling with the reality of life as they attempted to readapt and recondition themselves in the wake of imprisonment with very limited personal resources and the absence of adequate structural support in the community. While it is acknowledged that most individuals will encounter some level of difficulty attempting to rebuild their lives encumbered by a record of imprisonment, evidence from this study reveals the reality of reintegration from a particular perspective. It does so through the lens of extreme marginalisation given the extant needs of the research participants that were reported at the time of interview. This included more than 57% of the research group attempting to reintegrate without stable accommodation; 80% experiencing unemployment, and more than one quarter reporting that they were struggling with ongoing problems of alcohol and/or drug misuse. This study also offers a unique perspective on the challenges former prisoners face after release by revealing the impact of psychosocial readjustment problems on the potential for successful reintegration. The most compelling finding in the thesis was the pervasiveness of problematic psychosocial readjustment compounded by the stigma of imprisonment that constituted a significant personal barrier to reintegration. The transition from prison was thereby portrayed as one harrowed by an internal state of confusion, fear and uncertainty that highlighted the deficits in the community with regard to repatriating some of its members when they are at their most vulnerable.

Psychosocial Readjustment

Life in the community following the release from prison was one characterised by a constellation of needs that were both material and psychological in nature. Overshadowing the need for suitable living accommodation, employment and help or support for other challenges such as alcohol or drug misuse was a preponderance of psychosocial readjustment problems. Six aspects of psychological difficulty were identified in the data that included: difficulties disengaging from the rituals of imprisonment; a sense of detachment and alienation from community life; fear and insecurity; confusion and uncertainty; the loss of confidence and feelings of self-consciousness. Together, they contributed to create a state of inertia that was difficult to circumvent. Matters were further exacerbated by a lack of structural support in the community or perceived opportunities in the offing to move beyond the experience of imprisonment. The transition from prison to free-life in the community was therefore demonstrated as including a lacuna — explained in terms of being aware of needs and deficits but not being in a position to be receptive to interventions at that time. Analysis of the findings revealed that while each of the aspects of psychological difficulty negatively impacted on the process of reintegration, it was the cluster of psychological difficulties together that posed as a significant barrier to overcoming other challenges. Psychosocial readjustment was therefore demonstrated as greater than the sum of its parts. The impact of psychosocial readjustment as it relates to surmounting further challenges will be discussed below, followed by the deleterious consequences of the stigma of imprisonment that are more acutely adverse in a local context.

Re-acclimating to life in the community after imprisonment was commonly reported by participants as something they had to come to terms with in an environment that appeared alien to them — described variously as being in a state of animated suspension or not sensing the reality of freedom. For those who had living accommodation in place

following release, this divergence from reality was characterised in terms of how daily living was managed. It included the rearrangement of living quarters so that they resembled prison cells as well as the management of daily routines that involved retiring early to bed, and only feeling comfortable behind locked doors. The discomfiture of freedom was further described in terms of anxiety that included feelings of danger and insecurity when outdoors. Remaining indoors was reported as providing a sense of safety and security that insulated against perceived dangers in the community and the temptation to succumb to negative influences that might lead to further offending. Rather than de-shackling from them, it appeared that the habitual processes associated with the prison environment were more readily fostered as a means of regaining the sense of normality participants had become accustomed to.

That freedom was circumscribed by such self-imposed limitations demonstrated both the difficulty and the unexpected consequences of transitioning from imprisonment without adequate preparation for what the transition entails. Assuming autonomy once again in having to deal with day-to-day living was reported as being problematic for those who believed imprisonment had rendered them vulnerable to dependency whereby they found it difficult to manage money; organise daily routines and take care of themselves. Feeling self-conscious about their history of imprisonment, losing self-confidence and suffering low self-esteem also emerged as inhibiting factors for progress with reintegration. These factors together were reported as impairing participants' inclination to seek help even if they were aware that some help was available to them — insofar as they did not feel ready or in the right frame of mind to be able to engage with service providers at that time. Psychological difficulties compounded by the absence of a network of structural support served to trap participants in a subliminal state of being aware of their personal challenges but unable to seek the help they needed.

Life in the aftermath of imprisonment was therefore one framed by a constellation of unmet needs. These included living accommodation, employment, psychological support and/or opportunities for alcohol or drug misuse recovery. Participants reported that attempting to have needs met was an overwhelming prospect given that it involved a complex and interwoven set of contingencies. This was explained in terms of being unable to apply for employment in the absence of living accommodation; being unable to access living accommodation due to long waiting lists for social housing and further compounded by the inaccessibility of private rental accommodation due to the stigma of imprisonment (discussed below), unemployment, a lack of finance and character references. Attempts to access psychological support or drug recovery treatment were also frustrated due to long waiting lists. It was also highlighted that to qualify for a residential drug treatment place one had to present "clean". This was described by participants as particularly challenging in the absence of living accommodation that afforded no adequate opportunity for drug use withdrawal. As such, participants were caught in a necessitous web and found it difficult to see avenues of escape.

The Stigma of Imprisonment

Although the stigma of imprisonment is an overarching problem for the majority of former prisoners it was found in this study to be particularly problematic and difficult to overcome within a local context whereby participants were denied any degree of anonymity that might be possible to attain in a larger urban area. Stigmatic experiences were acutely perceptible within the local setting insofar as participants explained that as local individuals they were easily identifiable. The effect of having their crimes, sentencing hearings and home addresses reported in the local newspaper appeared particularly traumatic for participants and more so when reports included details of their drug habits. Participants believed that they had been portrayed as the lowest of the low and expressed mortification particularly when they were identified as "heroin addicts".

Participants highlighted the collateral stigmatising effect this had on their families, describing it as an additional burden that they had to bear. This thesis demonstrated the palpable effects of stigma on those attempting to achieve reintegration in a more confined local setting that served to amplify its pernicious and insidious nature thus creating another layer of psychological difficulty for those attempting to move beyond the experience of imprisonment. The consequences of the stigma of imprisonment that impeded participants' efforts at reintegration included low self-esteem and difficulties in accessing both employment and living accommodation. Together they created an exclusionary barrier that impeded participants' prospects for improving their personal circumstances after release. Moreover, the tenacious aspect of stigma was something that participants perceived as a serious impediment that impaired their chances of ever moving beyond their prior identities as offenders thus prolonging indefinitely a sense of hopelessness about their socially excluded status.

How stigma was manifested varied from the covert disassociating signals that participants perceived from their neighbours and friends to the more overt manifestations of stigma that were experienced. These included being treated with suspicion when they entered local shops and not feeling free as they walked the city streets under the gaze of private security guards or the local police. While such experiences of stigma negatively impacted on psychological wellbeing causing participants to feel embarrassed, isolated and demeaned, they also presented practical barriers to overcoming the challenges of homelessness and unemployment. The pernicious and insidious nature of stigma was particularly apparent in this regard. Examples included being refused private rental accommodation that would otherwise have been available or losing living accommodation when landlords became uneasy about police scrutiny of their tenants and properties. The insidious nature of stigma was also apparent through accounts of those who having secured employment after release

and lost their jobs when their prior histories and family connections had been made known to their employers. Given the limited employment opportunities within the local context, this had a grave impact on participants' confidence of ever breaking free from the cycle of unemployment.

The stigma of imprisonment also arose as an impediment as it related to accessing help and support from local service providers. Given the small geographical area where the study was conducted there were limited services and supports available to former prisoners. Service providers were part of a local network that shared resources and knowledge about their clients by way of an informal tracking system. Given the high rate of overexposure to imprisonment that resulted in a cumulative state of disadvantage, participants reported that they were well known to the local welfare system. Participants explained how the lack of anonymity deterred them from seeking further help as they believed they had quickly exhausted the limited options and support available to them. For those in need of emergency living accommodation this was particularly problematic insofar as participants reported that they were prohibited from accessing emergency accommodation in some homeless shelters based on their prior records there. Female participants were particularly disadvantaged in this regard insofar as a number of hostels in the city were only available to their male counterparts.

The tenacity of stigma also emerged in the data as curtailing the opportunity for full reintegration long after the experience of imprisonment has passed. This was apparent from the perspectives of those who had managed to make progress after release and were endeavouring to improve their lives through education and job training. This aspect of stigma was characterised in terms of shame and embarrassment about one's past; feeling second best and not feeling on par with fellow students or trainees. This finding is particularly relevant in highlighting the dissonance that arises between society

on the one hand that expects offenders and prisoners to reform yet on the other hand one that appears to offer little to no recognition of a reformed status (Maruna, 2001). That the law has only recently enacted legislation for the expungement of spent convictions that is of very limited value for the majority of former prisoners further highlights the insubstantial nature of the State's acceptance of a reformed offender.

Reintegration as a Psychological Journey

Together, the findings here offer a unique contribution to the field of criminology focusing on prisoner reintegration as little is known about how the transition from prison to the community is actually experienced (Garland and Wodahl, 2014). The dearth of knowledge in this area can perhaps be attributed to the fact that the vast majority of studies conducted on prisoner reintegration have been concerned with evaluating the outcomes of reintegration initiatives and programme delivery that are normally executed by way of quantitative analysis. Qualitative analysis on the other hand affords the opportunity for an in-depth exploration of the personal and subjective aspects of reintegration.

Notwithstanding that the personal and subjective aspects of reintegration are compounded by the absence of structural support in the community, this study has revealed a psychological and emotional dimension to the journey former prisoners undertake in their transition to free life. It shows that former prisoners are not only struggling to gain access to the support and services to forge pathways towards reintegration which will be discussed later in this chapter, but they are also in need of support to help them get to the point of accessing support. The implications of psychosocial readjustment problems for former prisoners are manifold and have been found in this study to include, the risk of relapse during alcohol or drug use recovery; regression to offending behaviour; family stress; mental health problems; problems with

engaging with support services and attaining employment. This study argues that psychosocial readjustment problems are systemic in nature firstly as the collateral consequence of a prison system that has not just failed to provide for prisoners' needs during their imprisonment but has also failed to prepare them adequately if at all, for release and life in the community. Secondly, psychosocial readjustment problems highlight the community's lack of reception for those attempting reintegration insofar as individuals fail to experience avenues of opportunity to make amends, attain forgiveness for their prior behaviour and the freedom to move on with their lives (McNeill, 2012; Maruna, 2001; Maruna, 2004). Furthermore, given that agency has been found to be essential to the process of desistance (Healy, 2013; Coté, 1997; Coté and Schwartz, 2002) it can be argued that psychosocial readjustment problems as described by former prisoners render them less agentic — given their negative impact on self-esteem, emotional stability, one's sense of purpose and internal locus of control.

Structural Barriers and Impediments to Reintegration

The analysis of the findings pertaining to life in the aftermath of imprisonment identified a number of further challenges faced by participants following their release back to the community. The thesis demonstrated that, compounded by psychological stress and the stigma of imprisonment, reintegration is severely compromised by the absence of services and structural support relevant to former prisoners' needs. The challenges identified in the study that impeded progress with reintegration, included difficulties accessing living accommodation; employment; social welfare benefits, and ongoing problems of alcohol and drugs misuse. The most compelling finding in the study underscored the importance and significance of living accommodation as a fundamental requirement for the prospect of reintegration insofar as it can provide stability and a basis from which former prisoners can begin to address other challenges.

That participants not only identified living accommodation as their most urgent and crucial need at the time of release but also expressed incredulity at the expectation of reintegration in the absence of a place to live commonly arose in the data. Yet, as previously noted, more than half the research group identified themselves as homeless at the time of interview with very limited prospects of exiting their homeless status such was the absence of adequate and available housing or transitional living accommodation. The majority of individuals without a place to live in this study found themselves dependent on the provision of emergency shelter. This was in the vast majority of cases considered to be an unsatisfactory situation insofar as the study revealed that being homeless in the city was exacerbated by the inaccessibility of emergency shelter such was the scale of the homeless population and the limited bed capacity that was available only on a night-by-night basis at the time the research was conducted. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, not having an address restricted the possibility of making applications for employment. Furthermore, homelessness was often compounded by other challenges that included ongoing alcohol and drugs misuse and mental health problems. Efforts to access help or interventions with regard to such challenges were at best facilitated by the use of a telephone in the emergency shelter.

Participants commonly relayed despondency with regard to the long waiting lists for assessment appointments and the uncertainty about if and when they might be considered suitable for residential accommodation or a residential recovery programme. In the meantime, they reported that they were trapped in a continuous cycle of disadvantage and marginalisation with no escape routes apparent or within reach. Homelessness rendered participants especially vulnerable to reoffending and re-imprisonment whereby offending was a means of foraging for survival on the streets and employed as a means of financing drug use. More than 30% (n=18) of the research group had outstanding charges pending at the time of interview, the vast majority

(*n*=12) of whom were also homeless at that time. Living with the prospect of imminent re-imprisonment meant that some participants were caught in a state of limbo whereby they believed there was little point in addressing their current problems given that they were soon to be imprisoned again. From the perspective of homelessness — being returned to prison was often viewed as an improvement to life on the streets.

Given that participants reported varying circumstances at the time of interview, they viewed the significance of living accommodation differently. Participants therefore stressed the need for flexible living arrangements to meet their specific needs at that time. While some urgently required accommodation in the form of shelter, others explained that having a place to live was necessary in order to provide some stability so that they could think through the process of regaining autonomy and rebuilding their lives. This included accommodation that would also afford them the opportunity to progress with and maintain recovery from alcohol and/or drug misuse or begin to seek out employment. In other instances it was accommodation that would afford them the opportunity to re-establish family relationships that included having a place for children to visit and stay overnight. In the absence of state provided assistance with regard to the provision of living accommodation, participants noted the significance of family support as critical in terms of offering interim accommodation and support; unfortunately, few had that option.

The data revealed little in the way of state organisation for the support and welfare of former prisoners. Homelessness, inadequate provision for substance abuse recovery and the shortfall of mental health care reveals the systemic weakness inherent in the state's response to the challenges of reintegration. This lack of service provision enmeshes individuals in a cyclical process of disadvantage, offending and re-imprisonment, with no exit routes from that cycle. Participants therefore relied on charities and voluntary

agencies to provide residual and *ad hoc* support mainly in the form of temporary accommodation and opportunities for alcohol or drug use recovery. The findings indicated that while such support was beneficial it was not entirely satisfactory in the overall process of reintegration given the level of uncertainty surrounding the duration of how long that support would last. A strong religious ethos prevailed in some support centres that posed an additional strain for some participants who feared being expelled for lack of compliance with daily religious rituals. However, other participants reported the faith and spiritual dimension as something that would help them achieve recovery and attain forgiveness for their previous digressions.

The findings in this study resonate with Gowan (2002) who found imprisonment reinforcing and exacerbating housing instability thus prolonging the experience of homelessness. The thesis further highlighted that such is the crippling effect of homelessness that it presents a significant barrier to reintegration that restricts opportunities to address other obstacles such as alcohol or drug misuse recovery and unemployment. Furthermore, homelessness provides no basis for true reintegration insofar as it offers no opportunity to change one's psychological identity from social outcast to member of the community.

The thesis exposes the gap between what former prisoners require in their quest for reintegration and the State's and community's response to those needs. The most novel aspect of the thesis reveals the transition from prison to the community from a psychological perspective. The psychological difficulties that were identified in this study were delved deeply to ascertain the implications of psychosocial readjustment problems for successful reintegration. Notwithstanding the structural deficits of support that former prisoners encounter with respect to living accommodation; employment; education/training opportunities; support with drug use or alcohol recovery and mental

health services — the thesis evinces a cluster of psychological and emotional difficulties that overshadow life in the wake of imprisonment, blurring vision and hindering the motivation to address those deficits. This makes a unique contribution to the literature on prisoner reintegration insofar as it extends knowledge to include the psychological and emotional aspects of the process. That these aspects were gleaned from the nuanced accounts of a group of former prisoners challenged by an array of disadvantage both prior to and following their release from prison within a specific local context broadens that knowledge further. The consequences of the stigma of offending and imprisonment were shown to be particularly acute within the confines of a local setting. Compounded by limited resources and supports available on a local basis, avenues of help or opportunities to overcome disadvantage were quickly exhausted. Psychosocial readjustment problems were therefore amplified within the local context given that former prisoners perceived very limited possibilities of overcoming their marginalised status. Social, moral and legal deficits in support of reintegration were also identified and presented in the thesis that demonstrated difficulties achieving social inclusion, the absence of opportunities for moral redemption and the legal barriers in place that hinder true reintegration. Analogous to what McNeill (2012) identified as four forms of rehabilitation — psychological, social, moral and legal, a need is apparent to address these deficits in a holistic fashion. The following section of this chapter is designed to offer a model of support from the perspectives of a very marginalised group who are the best exponents of what support should entail and how that support should be delivered in a way that makes a substantial effort towards reintegrating the previously non-integrated members of the community.

A Model of Support

Time Responsive

The timeliness of supportive interventions was especially critical for participants who had particular needs at the time of interview and were without any personal resources or family support. As was discussed previously, living accommodation was prioritised by participants as their most urgent need and fundamental requirement insofar as it would provide a basis from which to address other challenges — yet the majority of the research group were without living accommodation at the time of interview. Participants who identified drug misuse as something they needed help to overcome also expressed the significance of the timing of support given that when they were inclined to seek interventions they faced frustration with the long wait times for assessment appointments due to the inadequate provision of treatment recovery places in the community.

Flexible

Given the range of challenges that participants were exposed to at the time of interview, it emerged in the findings that former prisoners do not respond to a standardised approach to service delivery. As such, the issue of flexibility arose in the data whereby participants explained that they had individual needs that would be better accommodated in a more tailored and individualised way. As it related to living accommodation, some participants expressed the need to have their own independent living space, that would afford them the opportunity to work through their personal challenges which often surrounded recovery and/or a place where they could attempt to re-establish relationships with family members, most often children. Other participants believed at the time of interview that they were unable to live independently and described the additional benefits of living in a highly supportive environment that took

account of their mental health needs and provided them with training and educational opportunities. A number of participants sought a home-from- home environment where they benefited from camaraderie and group therapy that mainly applied to achieving sobriety. Those who had completed residential treatment programmes stressed the importance of a living environment that would support and maintain their recovery — something that was referred to as "a clean house". Participants who reported at the time of interview that they were struggling with drug misuse described the benefit of an environment where they were accepted as they were regardless of the extent of their drug use. Knowing that a facility was open to them on a day-to-day basis and that help was available to them to address their drug use at a time when they were ready to accept that help was described as the type of support they needed at that time. This involved no pressure to commit immediately to a programme of recovery but the assurance that help and assistance was available to them regardless of their state of readiness.

Respectful and Non-judgemental

That service provision and support should be based on the principle of respect and delivered in a non-judgmental fashion appeared as significantly important to succeeding with reintegration. An environment that was non-threatening and non-judgmental was highly significant for participants who described the benefit of being able to feel "normal" in an inclusive environment where service providers treated them with respect and other service users shared similar experiences and were facing common challenges to reintegration. As discussed previously, psychosocial readjustment problems were compounded by the stress encountered as a result of the stigma of imprisonment. This was described in terms of feeling belittled and unentitled to state welfare and benefits when they attempted to access such. It was further described in terms of feeling discriminated against because of a prison record when seeking living accommodation or employment. These experiences contributed to a sense of belief that seeking help was

not just difficult but also unlikely to yield results that would fulfil unmet needs. While it has been shown in the literature that individuals respond positively to people who treat them with respect (Tyler, 2006) participants' experiences of being treated with respect in the majority of cases, was rare.

Informal

How participants described the features of meaningful support facilitates a nuanced understanding of how support should be structured when responding to former prisoners' needs and personal circumstances. A general consensus emerged in the findings that support delivered on a more informal and holistic basis greatly enhanced the potential for reintegration. The significance of the informal aspect of support was described in terms of an unregimented and open-door policy whereby participants felt free to access service provision without prior arrangements or specific appointments. This was particularly significant for those who highlighted the importance of having a place that they could visit when they had nowhere else to go. The importance of the provision of such a place for former prisoners can be assessed against the findings regarding psychosocial readjustment and the issue of stigmatisation after imprisonment. That participants commonly reported feeling alienated in the community and suffering the consequences of the stigma of imprisonment and their prior offending histories that were especially acute in the confines of a local setting meant that having a place where they felt welcome provided a sense of refuge. Structured support, delivered on an informal basis was sometimes described as "befriending'. This afforded participants an opportunity to relax and be comfortable with someone whom they could discuss their fears and apprehensions with and discuss potential solutions. Participants also noted the significance of peer support that was available on an informal basis. This included the sharing of information about different treatment options or opportunities for training and employment. It also provided a sense of hope whereby participants explained that

when they saw other former prisoners doing well they were inclined to believe that they too had the potential to improve their current circumstances.

Holistic

The value of a holistic approach to support with reintegration emerged in the data. A holistic approach towards surmounting the challenges of reintegration was identified as particularly helpful. This involved the creation of a story-board whereby participants together with a case worker isolated challenges and identified different options that were available to them. Participants noted the effectiveness of this approach insofar as it helped them see a clear pathway ahead that they could take one step at a time. This appeared to help participants unravel the complexity of their situations of need that often included the need for treatment, psychological support, housing, further education or training and help with accessing employment. Participants also noted the benefit of having open-ended access to support to help them navigate further challenges that they experienced as they were progressing with their reintegration. This often involved just knowing that support, reassurance and encouragement was always just a phone-call away.

Participants reported the significance of encouragement to explore opportunities and encouragement that enabled them to take preliminary steps towards eventual employment. This included assistance with online job applications and in the absence of prior employment records — someone to act as a referee for them. It also included help and assistance with getting a driver's licence, a forklift licence or other accreditations that would enhance their employment prospects. Participants who had overcome problematic alcohol and drug misuse described the benefit of having access to alternative therapies, such as acupuncture that helped them relax. Having the sense that regardless of their day-to-day challenges and any pitfalls they encountered, that

understanding and support was available to them on a continuous basis underscored the significance of a holistic approach to reintegration.

The Significance of Family Support

Analysis of the data pertaining to the significance of family support for former prisoners revealed that it bridged the gap between what participants needed after their release from prison and what was available to them by way of assistance in the community. Two issues emerged in the data in this regard. The first issue involved the practical or material benefits of family support while the second issue highlighted the significance of emotional support and security. Together they reveal the important role of families in the process of reintegration and how they contribute to offset the deficit of formal support in the community.

On a practical level, families provided living accommodation or the means to assist financially with other living arrangements. As was discussed previously, this was of crucial importance to participants who otherwise would have been homeless after their release from prison. Being able to return to the family home also facilitated the granting of temporary release and/or day release, something that was reported by participants as aiding their adjustment to life in the community. This was of particular relevance to those who were completing long prison sentences and were able to adjust to free-life on a gradual basis. The significance of family support as it related to alcohol or drug use recovery also emerged in the data. A supportive family environment often enabled the process of recovery at home as an alternative to residential treatment. Support in this regard also involved assistance and the means to attend appointments with addiction counsellors and/or the management of medication.

The enduring nature of family bonds was highlighted in the data as particularly significant for participants' attempts at reintegration. This was often described in terms of participants' families standing by them, or always "being there". In light of the many challenges that participants faced with regard to psychosocial readjustment, it was commonly reported that having a supportive family provided a foundation whereby change was possible. This was often described in terms of understanding and encouragement that sometimes included other family members acting as role models. This pertained to recovery and/or sobriety or in other instances gaining employment and establishing independent lives. That family support was also seen to endure despite the vagrancies of the process of change or recovery that often includes relapse (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1992) was highly significant for participants whereby they believed that their families would continue to support them despite any set-backs. Supportive family relationships that had endured the consequences of offending and imprisonment also appeared to engender a sense of atonement insofar as participants reported their wishes to make amends for the harm they had caused their families. This was often expressed in terms of wanting to take care of aging parents, wanting to be better parents themselves and wanting to contribute to family well-being through employment.

Notwithstanding that desistance literature has recognised the significance of social capital that often emanates from families (Farrall, 2002; 2004; Farrall and Calverley, 2006), this thesis demonstrates the significance of family support in achieving reintegration. It can be argued that against the deficit of community support available to former prisoners, families fulfil an important function that accommodates the transition from prison, eases psychosocial readjustment, and supports or enables change.

Chapter Summary

The study's key findings discussed in this chapter have been woven together to present the challenges and barriers former prisoners face after their release from prison and what they meant for former prisoners and their efforts to resettle in the community during the post-imprisonment period. These challenges and barriers have been shown to be particularly profound within a specific local context. The discussion also presented a very detailed insight into prisoners' support needs and highlighted key principles identified by former prisoners to support their quest for reintegration. The following chapter — by way of conclusion, will highlight the significance of the thesis both as a means of understanding the lived experience of reintegration and its potential for theory building in this area of criminological inquiry.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine how former prisoners navigate the process of reintegration in the community specifically within a local context. The overarching question that guided the study sought to identify the meaning behind the challenges, the barriers and the supports required by former prisoners as part of the reintegration process. The research objectives included: identifying the background characteristics of a specific group of former prisoners and the communities from which they originated; ascertaining the nature of their experiences of reintegration; understanding the meaning underpinning the stresses and strains encountered throughout the process; determining features of support that benefit former prisoners in their quest for reintegration and finally to present ways in which the process of reintegration might be enhanced.

The research objectives were achieved through the adoption of a qualitative methodology employing an interpretive phenomenological approach. This approach proved to be an excellent strategy on two counts. Firstly, it provided an understanding of the social and psychological aspects of reintegration from the perspectives of those involved in the process (Welman and Kruger, 1999). Secondly, it allowed the researcher to describe as accurately as possible the different aspects of the process that came to light while remaining true to the facts and refraining from any pre-given framework as to what they may have been (Giorgi, 2007). The use of in-depth interviews resulted in a rich dataset that afforded the opportunity to excavate deep into intricate and nuanced layers of detail that facilitated thick description of the reality of the process of reintegration as it was experienced within local confines (Fusch and Ness, 2015).

The thesis primarily focussed on the challenges and barriers that former prisoners encounter as they attempt free life in the community. To contextualise the study, the research group's prior life histories and experiences of imprisonment were presented. The key findings that emerged from this part of the research revealed a group of former prisoners who were not just disadvantaged and marginalised following their release from prison, but who had experienced disadvantage and marginalisation from mainstream society throughout their lives. This was demonstrated through accounts of troubled family backgrounds that frequently included exposure to alcohol misuse; experiences of domestic violence and the tragic loss of loved ones in their early years. Early-life disadvantage was further characterised in terms of incomplete schooling and very few employment opportunities. A high level of drugs and/or alcohol misuse amongst participants was self-reported as contributing to anti-social behaviour and early involvement in the criminal justice system within communities that were experiencing high levels of offending and imprisonment.

The experience of imprisonment was one that mirrored the same disadvantage and chaos experienced in the community. This included ongoing problems with alcohol and drugs misuse and experiences of violence that were often related to unresolved conflicts in the local community. The key findings that emerged in relation to the experience of imprisonment was that it was one framed by a range of unmet needs. Participants reported very limited opportunities to access services and supports such was the strain on services the prison had on offer as a consequence of prison overcrowding. Furthermore, given the local aspect of the research it was often reported that accessing support within the confined setting of the prison was problematic for reasons relating to lack of trust, privacy and anonymity. Further compounding this was the perception that to be seen to be accessing help or support was perceived as displaying weakness. This had particular implications for those who might otherwise have accessed alcohol or

drug treatment services and those who wished to access psychological support. Participants reported very little in terms of opportunities to avail of rehabilitation programmes within the prison or preparation for release. Rather, release from prison was commonly experienced spontaneously or with very little notice that release from prison was imminent. This denied many participants the opportunity to make practical arrangements or any form of social and/or psychological preparation for their return to the community.

The most substantial part of the thesis portrayed the transition from prison to the community and life in the wake of imprisonment. This offers an important extension to knowledge on prisoner reintegration insofar as little is known about what the transition from prison to freedom entails. Furthermore, this phase of the research revealed a number of key findings that broadens that knowledge base further by revealing how the journey towards reintegration is experienced psychologically.

While the day of release was often characterised in terms of relief and elation, it was commonly reported that these feelings were short-lived once the reality of freedom in the absence of personal resources or social support set in. Because the vast majority of the research group indicated that relationships with their families had deteriorated over time, participants typically reported that they left the prison alone without anyone to meet them on the outside. Deficits in state organisation or support for released prisoners and the absence of personal support to rely upon meant that life in the immediate aftermath of imprisonment was commonly reported in terms of shock and despair — shock at being released back to the community without planning or preparation and despair through feelings of abandonment both by the prison and the community at large. This was reflected in the words of Doug, aged 33 as follows:

> Well, you come out with an attitude that says, ah, fuck the system, do you know that kind of way? The system's fucked me so fuck the system. Basically, you

feel that you've been let down by the system and it's blatantly obvious to me that the system's totally not fair. Everybody in that prison is workin' class, or lower class, whatever way you want to describe it. The way I see it is that society sucks and society is a load of shit and that's the kind of chip on your shoulder you come out with you know. And it kind of stays.

Furthermore, being released from prison was predominantly characterised as more stressful and worrisome than being sentenced to imprisonment. This was often described in terms of facing the unknown whereby the concept of free life in the community appeared alien and threatening.

Life following prison release was immediately fraught by myriad needs that included living accommodation, financial assistance, employment, alcohol and/or drug misuse treatment or mental health services. The absence of living accommodation in particular was highlighted as a critical barrier to reintegration. The importance attached to having some form of living accommodation was described in terms of it forming a basis from which pathways towards reintegration could be established. This often included having a postal address to make job applications; having a stable living environment from which to embark on alcohol or drug misuse recovery and having a place to live so as to be able to re-establish relationships with one's family. These findings emerged against the backdrop of more than 57% of the participants who reported being homeless at the time of interview.

The thesis revealed a number of psychological and emotional difficulties that overshadowed life after imprisonment. These were shown to significantly impair participants' ability to move beyond the experience of imprisonment and seek pathways towards reintegration. A notable aspect of these difficulties was that they endured long after the sentence of imprisonment was completed and as such prolonged the punishment of imprisonment. Coming to terms with life in the free world consisted of a number of psychological challenges that varied from difficulties de-shacking from

prison routines; fear and insecurity in the community; low self-esteem and lacking self-confidence. These difficulties were compounded by the stigma of imprisonment that was particularly acute in the local context whereby prior histories of offending were known by members of the community including potential landlords and employers.

Despite the many challenges and barriers to reintegration the thesis also demonstrated the significance that former prisoners attached to different forms of support available in the community. The overreaching theme that emerged in this phase of the research was that when former prisoners are in greatest need, they are at their lowest ebb and require a deeper level of understanding and sensitivity to their personal needs and predicaments. As mentioned previously, because the vast majority of participants in this study faced the prospect of reintegration alone and without any or very little in the way of personal resources, their needs were manifold. While some participants prioritised the need to access some form of living accommodation suitable to their requirements at that particular time, others indicated that first and foremost they needed drug and/or alcohol treatment services or mental health services before they could embark on anything else by way of improving their personal circumstances such as housing or employment. Participants therefore highlighted former prisoners' needs for particular help and support specific to their personal circumstances following their release from prison. Many participants reported that such was the multiplicity of challenges they needed addressed that they were simply overwhelmed by what they were facing. This was described in terms of feeling ensnared and caught in a state of inertia whereby it was difficult to see exit routes from their state of disadvantage and marginalisation. Analysis of the data demonstrated that due to their psychological state participants were unable to access or fully access services that were available in the community. As such, the implications from these findings suggest that tailored interventions targeted to

individual needs and taking account of individuals' psychological frame of mind are required in planning responses to prisoners' reintegration.

The support emanating from ongoing relationships with family members that was available only to a small minority of the research group was both practical and emotional in nature. The importance of family support was described as bridging the gap between former prisoners' requirements in terms of help and support with reintegration and what was available in the community to meet their needs at that time. The most significant aspect of family support was described in terms of endurance — that despite the vagaries of life it would always be there.

Notwithstanding that participants' support requirements were not homogenous, a range of features were described pertaining to the significance participants attached to different forms of support and services in the community. This offers an important insight into former prisoners' perceptions of the features of supports and services that meet their reintegrational needs. Highlighting the need for offender informed policy on reintegration so as to meaningfully respond to former prisoners' needs, a model of support was generated based on what participants said was important to them in terms of help and support following prison release. The model presented in Chapter Seven includes five elements that participants held to be most significant in their quest for successful reintegration. These indicate that support and interventions should be available when they are most needed; that support should be provided in a flexible way that takes account of individual and personal needs; that support should be delivered in a respectful and non-judgmental manner; that informal approaches are more accessible than formal approaches and finally that support should be holistic in nature, taking into account personal needs and challenges that change over time.

While scholarship on reintegration has been described as lacking theoretical and conceptual exposition (Maruna, Immarigeon & LeBel, 2004; Moore, 2011) it is envisaged that the findings from this study provide some microcosms of theory to build upon. The thesis provides knowledge of what psychosocial readjustment after imprisonment means and how it impacts on pathways towards reintegration. This is an important component of reintegration to consider given the evidence presented here of the individual, personal and psychological journey that former prisoners embarked upon as they sought avenues of escape from a repeat pattern of offending and imprisonment while striving to be included as productive members of community life. The thesis demonstrates the transition from prison to the community as one that is often unplanned and that it includes a period of acclimation to free life after the constraints and negative impact of the prison experience that was described by the majority of participants as distressful and difficult to overcome. Compounded by inadequate service provision in the community to meet former prisoners' needs, the thesis showed how participants in this study attempted to navigate pathways towards reintegration while encumbered by a range of psychosocial problems that overshadowed and compounded other challenges they were experiencing. These included feelings of alienation from the reality of free life; fear and insecurity in the community; a lack of confidence; feelings of self-consciousness and low self-esteem. Psychosocial readjustment problems were further exacerbated by the stigma of imprisonment that was both internalised and felt externally. The external aspect of stigma was perceived as being especially acute within the confines of a local setting where former prisoners were 'known' and perceived that their histories of crime and imprisonment inhibited opportunities for access to housing and employment.

Because successful reintegration includes desistance, the study's findings also contribute to knowledge on the process of change that offenders embark upon in their

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attempts at living crime-free lives by presenting evidence of the objective and subjective contingencies employed (Maruna, 2001). This includes knowledge of the offender as one "cross-pressured [by] social circumstances" (Gadd and Jefferson, 2007) and beset by inner turmoil as they attempt the journey towards reintegration. While disengaging from offending peer networks was highlighted by participants as a necessary step to achieving desistance it was also commonly reported to be difficult to do in a local context given that many participants continued to live in close proximity to those they wished to disengage from. For those who attributed their offending patterns to alcohol and/or drugs misuse this was especially onerous as they returned to communities where they felt the burden of temptation to drink or use drugs amongst their peers. How participants navigated the process of change to achieve desistance which often included the cessation of alcohol or drug misuse was described variously as including a period of reflection on the effects their offending and habits had on their lives and turning points such as reaching rock bottom. Additionally, the motivation to achieve desistance as described by participants involved four factors: the wisdom of age; the desire to be better role models as parents/older siblings/influential friends; shame and remorse for past digressions and the desire to reconfigure their futures based on prior experience for the benefit of others. Maruna (2001) has stressed the significance of the desire to 'give-back' in terms of its potential to expedite successful reintegration — especially if former prisoners professionalise their roles as mentors insofar as they will more readily achieve social acceptance.

Broader Implications of the Study

Although prison policy has sought to establish a re-engineering of the system giving further effect to the principles of normalisation, progression and reintegration (Donnellan, 2012) this study identifies the gap between policy rhetoric and reality.

Embedding a reintegration-focused regime to prepare and equip prisoners for their eventual return to the community could reduce that gap. Such a regime would incorporate timely and planned preparation for release and post-release strategies that address the psychological as well as the practical challenges faced by prisoners, as outlined in the model of support drawn from the findings of this thesis. It is suggested that a reintegration-focused regime is based on the principles of providing prisoner-informed support and interventions; flexible service delivery; respectful and non-judgmental; valuing informal as well as formal support and holistically taking into account personal needs and challenges that change over time.

The integration of a reintegration-focused regime requires a system of social and rehabilitation services and psychological supports oriented towards reintegration. Arguably, the development and integration of a reintegration-focused regime will be unduly compromised unless the overarching issue of prison overcrowding is addressed. This requires the criminal justice system to refocus the lens on alternatives to imprisonment. Given that so many of the negative aspects of the experience of imprisonment have been attributed to the problem of prison overcrowding, a reduction of the overall rate of imprisonment is warranted. This requires a parsimonious approach to the use of prison as a criminal sanction. Statistics show that prison is over-used in Ireland. While the rate of imprisonment, 80 per 100,000 of the population is low to average in comparison with other European countries (Walmsley, 2015), Ireland has a relatively high rate of frequency of prison use. Moreover, of the 13,987 committals to prison under sentence in 2015, 10,229 were for sentences of three months or less. Maguire (2008) in exploring judicial attitudes towards adopting a principle that imprisonment be the sanction of last resort found that while in the majority of cases Irish judges agreed with the principle, they did so with qualification. Findings from her study indicated that Irish judges were often swayed by the persistence of the offender

over the severity of the offence. This is an important finding when considered against the findings of this research that showed a repeat pattern of offending and imprisonment amongst the research participants.

Recent legislative provision and policy developments implemented with a view towards reducing prison overcrowding include the Fines Act, 2010; the Criminal Justice (Community Service Order) (Amendment) Act, 2011, and the Community Return Scheme. Despite these legislative provisions, prison committals comprising of 60% fine defaulters rose by 7% in 2015. While many of these cases result in very short-term prison sentences, varying from a number of hours to a number of days, they are nevertheless resource intensive for the Prison Service that vicariously impact the supports and services needed by longer term prisoners. The Community Return Scheme, under the joint remit of the Prison Service and Probation Service offers significant potential for reintegration as it provides for incentivised early release (see Chapter Three). Yet, it remains operational only on a pilot basis.

While living accommodation, financial assistance and employment opportunities emerged in the thesis as some of the needs that former prisoners are faced with after prison release, these were in the majority of cases foreshadowed by the need to access alcohol and/or drug treatment recovery programmes and/or mental health services. The dearth of supports in this regard was commonly reported in terms of long waiting lists and difficulties in accessing assessment appointments. In the current era where policy is focused on reducing public expenditure an economic argument can be made for investing in areas such as drug rehabilitation and mental health care where such investment has been shown to reduce healthcare expenditure, the cost of social welfare and criminal justice expenditure (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2012). It is suggested that such investment by way of the State's response to the challenges faced

by former prisoners would also reflect a clear commitment to supporting society's members when they are at their most vulnerable.

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APPENDICES

(*formatted to print on official college stationary*)

15, Address Street,
Address,
Cork.

Tel: 0000000   086 000000

e-mail: personal@eircom.net

To Whom it May Concern

Dear Person,

My name is Sylvia Brand. I am a PhD candidate in the Department of Social Sciences and Legal Studies at Dublin Institute of Technology. My research project is entitled **Reintegrating Ex-Prisoners: The Community Context.** My research supervisor is Dr. Mairéad Seymour, DIT and my advisory supervisor is Professor Ian O'Donnell, UCD.

The research objectives are as follows:

1. To explore the meaning of community from ex-prisoners' perspectives in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the context for reintegration.

2. To examine the impact of community factors on the successful reintegration of ex-prisoners.

3. To investigate the relationship between supports and/or barriers to reintegration in the community.

I am about to commence the fieldwork aspect of the research which will entail making contact with ex-prisoners in Cork, both male and female, not less than 18 years of age, so as to talk with them about their experiences of life back in their own communities having left prison. This will be conducted through the medium of semi-structured interviews.

It is in this regard that I am writing to you, in the hope that you will be able to offer me some assistance and guidance with regard to possible research participants. I have included my contact details should you wish to contact me. I am also happy to discuss the research with you in more depth at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Brand

Life on RELEASE in Cork

You are invited to participate in a research study which is being conducted in Cork.

The purpose of the research is to develop a greater understanding of the experiences of people who have been released from prison and what would help them to rebuild their lives.

If you are 18 years old or over, male or female, **YOUR VIEWS** on life after prison would be very much appreciated.

This is a way **YOUR VOICE** can be heard.

- **Participation in the research is Completely Voluntary**
- **Everything you say will be kept private and onfidential**
- **No Names are Necessary**

This is an independent study by a researcher at the Dublin Institute of Technology and is not connected in any way with the Prison Service, the Probation Service or any other state or voluntary organisation.

Participation involves an informal interview and short questionnaire in a place convenient to you. You will be invited to express in your own words your experiences of being released from prison.

If you would like to participate in this research please send a "call me" to Sylvia at :   086 4001002

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You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted in Cork.

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If you would like to participate in this research please contact Sylvia at 086 4001002

APPENDIX D: Interview Questionnaire

Questionnaire No.:	
Interview Venue:	
Date:	
Gender of Participant:	

1. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Q.1 What age are you? ....

Q.2 Nationality
Irish national	[ ] 1
Irish national (Traveller)	[ ] 2
Non-national (European)	[ ] 3
Non-national (Non-European)	[ ] 4
Other (Specify)	[ ] 5

Q.3 Marital Status: Are you
Single	[ ] 1
Married/Cohabiting	[ ] 2
Separated/divorced/widowed	[ ] 3

Q.4 Do you have children?　　　　　Yes [   ] No [   ]
(If no, move to Q.7)

Q.5 Number of Children: ....

Q.6 Are your children living with you?
　　　　　　　　　　　　Yes [   ] No [   ]

Q.7 Have you ever been in any of the following places for any period of time?
Residential Care	Yes [ ] 1 No [ ] 2
Foster Care	Yes [ ] 1 No [ ] 2
Psychiatric Care	Yes [ ] 1 No [ ] 2
Special Needs School	Yes [ ] 1 No [ ] 2
Residential Secure Unit	Yes [ ] 1 No [ ] 2
Hospital	Yes [ ] 1 No [ ] 2
Treatment Centre	Yes [ ] 1 No [ ] 2
Other	Yes [ ] 1 No [ ] 2

Q.8 Have any of your family members been in prison?
Tick all that apply

Father	[ ] 1
Mother	[ ] 2
Son	[ ] 3
Daughter	[ ] 4
Brother	[ ] 5
Sister	[ ] 6
Grandmother	[ ] 7
Grandfather	[ ] 8
Aunt	[ ] 9
Uncle	[ ] 10
Cousin Male	[ ] 11
Cousin Female	[ ] 12

2. HOUSING STATUS

Q.9 Where in Cork do you live?

Neighbourhood/District..

Do you	
Own your own home	[ ] 1
Rent from the Council	[ ] 2
Rent from a private landlord	[ ] 3
Live with your parents	[ ] 4
Stay temporarily with friends/family	[ ] 5
Stay in a homeless hostel	[ ] 6
If yes for how long?.............................	

Stay in a B&B	[ ] 7
Transitional/supported accommodation	[ ] 8
Sleep rough	[ ] 9
Other specify........................	[ ] 10

3. EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Q.10 At what age did you leave school? ....

Q.11 Do you have the Junior/Intermediate Certificate?
<div align="center">Yes [   ] 1 No [   ] 2</div>
(If no, move to Q.13)

Q.12 Where did you sit any of the following exams?

	School	Prison
Junior Certificate	[ ] 1	[ ] 2
Leaving Certificate	[ ] 1	[ ] 2
Third Level (specify)...................................		

Q.13 Did you ever start an apprenticeship?   Yes [   ] No [   ]

Did you complete it?   Yes [   ] No [   ]

Q.14 Did you complete any training programmes?
<div align="center">Yes [   ] No [   ]</div>
(If yes, specify programme and where it was conducted)

.... Community [   ] 1 Prison [   ] 2

.... Community [   ] 1 Prison [   ] 2

.... Community [   ] 1 Prison [   ] 2

.... Community [   ] 1 Prison [   ] 2

.... Community [   ] 1 Prison [   ] 2

.... Community [   ] 1 Prison [   ] 2

.... Community [   ] 1 Prison [   ] 2

4. EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Q.15 Have you ever been employed?   Yes [   ] No [   ]
(if no, move to Q.18)

Longest period of employment ....

Shortest period of employment ....

Q.16 Have you ever lost a job because you had to go to prison?
Yes [   ] No [   ]

Q.17 Have you ever lost a job because of your prison record?
Yes [   ] No [   ]

Q.18 Before going into prison were you:

Unemployed	[ ] 1
Employed full-time	[ ] 2
Employed part-time	[ ] 3
Training (apprenticeship/trainee)	[ ] 4
Full-time education	[ ] 5
Part-time education	[ ] 6

Q.19 Have you ever had difficulty getting a job because of your prison record?
Yes [   ] No [   ]

5. CRIMINAL JUSTICE CONTACT

Q.20 What age were you when you first got involved in criminal activity?
....

Q.21 What age were you when you were first convicted in court?

....

What type of sanction did you receive?

A Fine   **[ ]** 1
A Probation Bond   **[ ]** 2
Suspended Sentence   **[ ]** 3
Community Service Order   **[ ]** 4
A Custodial Sentence   **[ ]** 5

Q.22 How much time have you spent in prison (approximately)?

....

Q.23 What age were you when you first went to prison?

....

Q.24 Have you ever been on remand?   Yes **[ ]** 1 No **[ ]** 2

> **If yes, how many times?**...

Q.25 How many prison sentences have you served?

....

Q.26 What was your longest sentence?...

Q.27 Have you met any of the following persons in prison?

A Probation Officer   **[ ]** 1
A psychologist   **[ ]** 2
A social worker   **[ ]** 3
Prison Chaplin   **[ ]** 4

Q.28 Have you ever been out on Temporary Release?

                                     Yes **[ ]** 1 No **[ ]** 2

If yes, on how many occasions? ....

Q.29 How long have you been released from prison?

....

Interview No.:	
Interview Venue:	
Date:	
Gender of Participant:	

Background to initial offending

Can you tell me about the time when you first got involved with crime?
Where were you living at that time?
Who were you living with?
Were you in school, work or unemployed?
Was this around the same time that you started getting in trouble with the guards?
Can you tell me about any involvement you had with the guards and or the Probation Service at that time?

Imprisonment

Before you went into prison (the most recent time) where were you living?
Who were you living with?
How long were you in prison?
Were you on remand? If yes, for how long?
How long was your sentence for?
If applicable, how would you describe the difference between being on remand or sentenced?
What type of contact did you have with your family/friends? (Visits, phone calls, letters/cards)
Did you have any Temporary Release? If yes, how much temporary release and for what reason?
Did you ever ask for Temporary Release and were refused? If yes, for what reason did you want TR and why were you refused?
Were there courses or activities you did in prison that you found helpful in any way?
Were you looking forward to being released?
What things were you looking forward to?
Were there things you were not looking forward to?
Were there things you thought would be a problem? (*i.e. relationships, parents/partner, employment, educational difficulties, alcohol, drugs, mental health, accommodation, community*).
Did you have any plans for your release? Can you tell me what your plans were?
If no, had you thought about your release?
Did anyone offer you help to prepare for release, (i.e. helping you to organise a place to live, get clothes, organise transport, organise referrals for therapy or treatment, a training programme or a job?
Did you avail of this help, and if no, why not?
Who did you turn to for help and support while you were in prison? In what way did they help or support you?
How much notice did you have about your release date?
Were you released on the day you expected to be released?
Did you leave prison alone or did someone meet you outside?
What did you do that day?

Reintegration

Did things turn out as you thought they would after you were released?
Where did you go to live when you left the prison?
Did you have to change your living arrangements? If yes, why so?
Did you have difficulty getting a place to live? If yes, what were the difficulties? Who helped you to find a place to live and in what way did they help you?

Can you tell me how you got on with your family and or friends when you left prison? Had your relationship with them changed in any way? Did they help you and if yes, how?

How did being in prison affect your relationships with others, i.e. spouse, children, family, friends, when you were released?

Did any of those relationships suffer because you had been in prison?

Did you lose any relationships because you had been in prison?

Is there someone in particular in your life you rely upon, for help/advice/support? i.e. spouse, partner, girlfriend, boyfriend, mother, father, grandparent, aunt, uncle, friend, priest, professional?

Were your neighbours aware that you had been in prison? How did they react to you being released?

Barriers to Reintegration

Since you have been released have you encountered problems applying for social welfare or your entitlements?

Are you working? If yes, does your employer or your workmates know that you have been in prison? What are you working at and how is it going?

If no, would you like to have a job?

Are you looking for one?

Are you experiencing difficulties regarding employment because you have been in prison?

Are there agencies you visit with regard to finding a job? If yes, can you tell me about those?

To whom would you go to if you needed a reference for a job application?

What else have you been doing since you left prison?

What do you find is the most difficult thing about life after prison?

What do you think you need most at the moment to help you to get sorted? i.e. a job, treatment, family support, professional support, helpful friends?

Thinking back to the very first time you went to prison and your circumstances now, what do you think have been the main things that have changed in your life?

Supports for Reintegration

What would you identify as the main things that have helped you since your release?

Can you tell me about any agencies offering help and support to ex-prisoners?

How did you hear about them?

How have they helped you?

Can you tell me about any other agencies you have found beneficial to you?

How do you like to spend your spare time? Can you tell me about any hobbies you have?

Community

How long have you lived in X?

Have you ever lived elsewhere?

Is X a good place to live?

Do you take pride in the fact that you are from X?

What do you like most about X?

Is there anything you dislike about X?

Are you a member of any groups or clubs in X?

If yes, can you describe what you do and how much involvement you have there?

Have you participated in any community activities in X?

What facilities are in X?

What do you think should be there?

Is there vandalism and crime in X? Examples?

Have you experienced problems living in X because you have been in prison?

Do you feel safe living X?

Do you spend most of your time in X? If yes, can you tell me about how you spend a typical day there?

Are there other places you would prefer to spend time? Where? Why?

Are there places in X where you can go to for help when you need it such as your entitlements, your health, housing matters? Are there places outside of X where you can go to for help when you need it such as your entitlements, your health, housing matters?

Are there people in X who help and support ex-prisoners?

What types of services would you like to see in X or in Cork city for ex-prisoners?
Who do you spend most of your time with?
What are the most important relationships in your life?
How would you describe your relationship with your family?
How would you describe your relationship with your friends?
Do your friends and family live in X?
Can you tell me about any plans you have for the future?
What do you think might help you to achieve them?

APPENDIX F: Letter of Consent for Voluntary Participation

(*formatted and printed on official college stationary*)

Dear Participant,

I am completing a study to develop a greater understanding of the experiences of people who have been released from prison in Cork as part of a research programme at the School of Social Sciences and Legal Studies at Dublin Institute of Technology.

As a participant in this study you will be asked to answer a number of questions. These will concern your life before and after you went to prison and the area of Cork in which you live on release. The session will last for approximately one hour.

Your answers will be recorded on a short questionnaire and a digital voice recorder. Your name will not be recorded so your identity will be kept private and what you say will remain confidential. The recordings will be kept in a secure place until the study has been completed. At that point, all recordings will be destroyed.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You are free to discontinue the session at any time. You do not have to answer questions that you are uncomfortable about answering. If you wish to read a transcript of the interview, a copy of it can be made available to you.

I understand the information contained in this letter

Name:

Date:

I am willing/not willing to take part in this study

Name:

Date:

Table One

List of Participants

Name	Age	Number of Prison Terms	Total length of Time spent in Prison*	Length of Time on Release
Peter	35	1	3 yrs	2 yrs 4 months
Becky	27	3	9 months	3 months
Brad	33	6	7 yrs	11 months
Bart	35	2	2 yrs 4 months	3 yrs
James	35	5	17yrs 9 month	1 month
Declan	42	8	20 yrs	1 yr 2 months
Jimmy	21	3	10 months	9 months
Evan	25	5	4 yrs six months	1 yr 2 months
Alfie	37	6	3 yrs six months	3 yrs
Gerard	39	2	10 months	13 months
Bobby	46	4	12 months	14 yrs
Denis	35	7	4 yrs 2 months	6 yrs
Sam	37	3	3 yrs 4 months	1 yr 7 months
Hugh	29	8	7 yrs	4 yrs
Oisín	28	4	5 yrs	2 yrs
Shane	35	3	2 yrs	6 months
Tom	25	5	10 months	6 months
Brian	27	3	2 yrs 6 months	11 months
Vincent	37	3	13 yrs	10 yrs
Padraig	39	7	23 yrs	7 months
Donal	38	4	3 yrs	14 yrs
Oleg	28	10	6 yrs	10 weeks
Ben	49	1	19 yrs 6 months	5 months
Conor	34	4	9 yrs 8 months	2yrs 10 month
Nick	47	5	5 yrs 6 months	13 months
Jenny	22	3	10 months	2 yrs
Timothy	63	1	8 yrs	5 months
Matt	43	1	3 yrs 10 months	9 months

Alan	40	5	6 yrs 9 months	1 yr 11 months
Martha	34	6	10 yrs 9 months	2 yrs
Jacob	26	2	4 months	8 months
Melissa	22	3	4 yrs	4 months
Craig	28	7	5 yrs	1 month
Tony	30	4	11 yrs 4 months	1 month
Tommy	48	7	7 yrs	2 months
Eileen	24	7	3 yrs 7 months	6 weeks
Luke	23	4	1 yrs 2 months	1 month
Robert	25	7	4 yrs	1 yrs
Ronan	50	1	6 weeks	32 yrs
Doug	33	3	4 yrs 6 months	6 yrs
Don	31	4	1 yrs 3 months	2 yrs
Graham	36	3	3 months	10 weeks
Valerie	24	3	2 yrs 6 months	8 months
Brendan	48	2	14 months	7 yrs
Mick	20	3	3 yrs 9 months	2 months
Jim	21	1	5 months	3 yrs
Eric	29	1	4 yrs	2 months
Joe	24	6	7 yrs 6 months	5 months
Duncan	22	9	6 yrs	11 months
Hal	22	1	1 week	8 months
Andy	20	2	1 yrs 7 months	5 months
Luke	27	1	7 months	9 yrs
Ger	41	11	11 yrs	11 months
Alex	19	1	1 month	8 months

* The "total length of time spent in prison" refers to the length of time participants were imprisoned. Many gave accounts of their prison sentences being reduced either on appeal or on review, or being released from the prison complex prematurely to ease overcrowding.