

# **An Exploratory Study of How Youth Offenders Perceive their Experience of Education**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the  
School of Psychology, University of East London for the  
Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

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## Abstract

Educational problems have for many years been identified as an important component for young people brought before youth courts. One important effect of delinquent behaviour is the impact of social influences and educational settings are key places for adolescent peer relationships to develop.

A large body of research has focused on identifying reasons for this association (Elliot and Menard, 1996 , Lotz and Lee, 1999, Megens and Weerman, 2010), however there has been a need for rich information to be obtained in this area in order to ascertain reasons and provide further information with regard to the relationship; what comes first, association with delinquent peers or delinquent behaviour? This research fulfils the need to explore youth offenders' perceptions of their educational experience and in particular, to explore whether they refer to social factors when describing the influences upon their behaviour. Social Identity Theory (SIT), Tajfel and Turner, 1979 was drawn upon when discussing the results.

Seven youth offenders (aged 14 – 18) participated in the research and all of the participants were subject to court orders. The youth offenders were interviewed individually using semi-structured interviews. Data was analysed by using inductive Thematic Analysis and the main research question was explored by using a model of generative causation.

A distinction was found in terms of how far social factors impacted upon perceptions of education, as opposed to how far social factors impacted upon delinquent behaviour. All of the youth offenders perceived social factors as important when determining reasons for delinquent behaviour at school, males more so than females. However negative perceptions of education (in terms of academic success and relationships with teachers) already existed prior to joining delinquent peer groups and so these groups served to influence behaviour only. Support for Social Identity Theory (SIT), (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) was found as the youth offenders seemed to choose friendship groups based on peers who held similar views of education in terms of its importance, and in this sense, the peer group served to strengthen pre-existing perceptions, rather than create them. Friendship groups were also chosen in order to avoid engaging in challenging educational tasks. Situational factors for these observations were identified and some of these factors provided support for SIT, others, such as perception of unmet educational needs, did not.

Implications of these findings were discussed in terms of practice within schools and for Educational Psychologists.

**SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY**  
**PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE IN EDUCATIONAL AND CHILD**  
**PSYCHOLOGY**

**Declaration**

This work has not previously been accepted for any degree and it is not being concurrently submitted for any degree.

The research is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology.

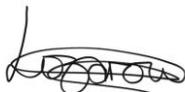
The thesis is the result of my own work and investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references in the text. A full reference list is included.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Louise Ozarow', written over a faint horizontal line.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### Chapter Overview

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Rate of Youth Offending and National Cost
- 1.3 Youth Offenders and Education
- 1.4 Youth Offenders and Future Prospects: The Issue of Unemployment
- 1.5 Youth Crime and the Local Authority
  - 1.5.1 Supporting Key Priorities: The Youth Justice Plan (2010)
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- 1.6 Why Now? Considering the Current Role of the EP Service
- 1.7 Reflexivity
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### **1.1. Introduction**

This research thesis focused on the perceptions held by youth offenders of their experiences in the education system. The evidence was considered in terms of the implications it has for professionals working in education, for both intervention (working with youth offenders) and prevention of crime.

In order to understand the rationale for this research, the introduction chapter will highlight three main areas for consideration:- Firstly, current government figures which demonstrate why youth crime has become a central focus of government research and initiative. Secondly, current schemes introduced to tackle the problem of youth crime. Finally, how and why youth crime and youth crime prevention are pertinent issues for the Educational Psychologist (EP).

### **1.2. Rate of Youth Offending and National Cost**

Crime amongst young people today is a major issue amongst the youth of today and has a significant impact on the safety of communities nationwide. Statistics from the Home

Office released in 2006 revealed that just over a fifth (22%) of young people aged between 10 and 25 reported that they had committed at least one of the 20 core offences in the previous 12 months (offences included, drug selling, assault and theft). Recent figures from the Home Office statistical release in June 2010, show that the number of young people in England aged between 10 and 17 who have received their first reprimand, warning or conviction currently stands at 31, 848 from April 2009 to Sept 2009. Although this indicated a decrease in comparison to figures recorded between the period April 2008 – September 2008 (40, 163), these statistics show that youth crime remains a key issue nationally and affects many communities, not only the victims, but the perpetrators and the general public.

Figures released in December 2005 indicated that every year, an estimated 70, 000 school-age children enter the youth justice system. At the time of writing, there are 85,173 individuals in prison, 1666 of these are aged between 15 and 17 (Ministry of Justice, September 2010). Government expenditure on public order and safety in England and Wales reached £24.8 billion in 2008/2009 and it is estimated that annual costs associated with youth crime and antisocial behaviour amounted to just over £4 billion. Moreover, just over 40% of youth offenders reoffend within a year. This figure is significantly higher (75%) for those completing custodial sentences and was deemed an “unacceptable” figure (Independent Commission, Executive Summary, 2010).

Thus, a reduction in youth crime would undoubtedly contribute to a reduction in government spending. This is particularly relevant in the current climate at a time of national economical instability in which reducing government expenditure and protecting the public services is a government priority.

This research focused on exploring the views and perspectives of youth offenders, and aimed to provide a better understanding of the perceptions that youth offenders have of their own experiences in education. By doing so, this thesis considered useful strategies and intervention programmes that can be used by professionals working in the field of education, to target youth offenders and those at risk of offending in the future. This would in turn, contribute to thinking about possible ways to reduce youth crime figures and national spending, and also aimed to help ensure that communities feel safer in the future.

### 1.3. Youth Offenders and Education

National statistics reflecting poor academic achievement and future prospects in terms of employment for young offenders also underpin the rationale of this research thesis.

Statistics point to a correlation between low educational attainment and criminal behaviour. The acute shortage of literacy skills amongst prisoners is predictably reflected in qualification levels, with a 2005 Department for Education and Skills (DFES) study revealing that 52% of male prisoners and 71% of female prisoners have no qualifications at all. A Prison Reform Trust report in 2008 which quoted figures from Hansard, House of Commons written answers, 9 January 2007), suggested that 48% of prisoners have a reading level at or below Level 1, while an even greater proportion (65%) possess a numeracy level at or below Level 1. Statistics from the International Centre for Prison Studies (2007) also indicated significant differences in GCSE results in England between youth offenders and that of the general young population (10% A-C grades, compared to 55% A-C grades respectively). Although these statistics demonstrate a relationship between educational attainment and criminal behaviour, the association remains unclear: Which comes first, low educational attainment or criminal behaviour?

Furthermore, there appears to be low engagement with education for those young people who are in prison. Only 439 of the 12,115 15 – 21 year olds who were issued with imprisonment sentences during the 2007/08 academic year, were enrolled on GCSE or A-level courses (less than 4%). Many of these were long-term inmates who would have had adequate time in which to complete the qualifications. (Times Educational Supplement (TES) Report, 2009, data obtained from written response to a question posed in parliament to V.Coaker, Minister of State, Schools and Learners).

This research focused on youth offenders' experiences specifically regarding education. A significant part of the research addressed the perceptions of youth offenders, focusing on what they said in relation to their own academic achievements, the possible factors that may have influenced this, and the ways in which these may have contributed to their criminal behaviour.

#### 1.4. Youth Offenders and Future Prospects: The Issue of Unemployment

Although the research focused on school age young people (some participants were in education and some were not), it is necessary to consider the prospects of youth offenders in terms of employment figures as this area appears to be a national issue for this vulnerable group. Analysis of these figures, supports the rationale of this research because it shows why the views of youth offenders are so important. Indeed, gathering such information and exploring risk factors helps to provide insight into methods of crime prevention and therefore increase employment opportunities for those who may have otherwise been unemployed.

There is a strong correlation between unemployment figures and crime. Nearly 33% of young offenders are unemployed at the time of arrest compared to 46% of those over 25 (Social Exclusion Unit, 2005). In terms of unemployment rates amongst young people generally, the Department for Education (2010) have released statistics regarding the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). These show that the number of 16-18 year-olds classed as NEET has slightly increased from 195,000 in the first quarter of 2010 to 198,000 at the end of June 2010. The statistics indicate that opportunities for 18 year olds to enter higher education, employment or training are either decreasing, or that alternatively, more young people (post 16 year olds) are simply deciding not to engage in education, employment or training.

A number of constraints such as competition for places and fewer jobs, are on the increase. In addition, research by Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR), and the Private Equity Foundation (PEF) appears to support this by highlighting fresh concerns about the risk of becoming NEET for those young people with both A-Levels and degree qualifications. New analysis suggests that one in ten young people with A-Levels, and one in ten graduates are NEET Department for Education (2010).

It is clear that, even with qualifications, some young people face a number of difficulties in gaining employment or engaging in further education or training. Therefore when considering youth offenders and the evidence discussed above which suggests that this group tend to leave school with either none or very few qualifications, the long term difficulties in employment prospects are very likely to be a key concern for this vulnerable group.

The research thesis considered youth offenders' perceptions of their experiences in education. Some of the discussions with the participants in this research centred on the areas addressed above: the reasons for low engagement with learning, the reasons for limited qualifications (GCSE and A-Level), and problems with employment. By exploring these areas, this research aimed to identify factors which may aid engagement with youth offenders from early on, and help to prevent these difficulties in the future.

### 1.5. Youth Crime and the Local Authority

This research study was conducted with youth offenders in a selected local authority in England. For the purposes of protecting the identities of the small sample of participants, the authority was not named but will be referred to as the 'local authority' throughout the thesis.

The researcher recognised that situating the research both locally and nationally was very important. It was therefore necessary to discuss why such research was relevant and timely when considering the key priorities of the local authority. The researcher considered the key priorities of the Youth Justice Service and the Educational Psychology Service in their plans for the year 2010 – 2011.

#### 1.5.1 Supporting Key Priorities: The Youth Justice Plan (2010)

This aims of this research supported the local authority's Youth Justice Strategic Plan (2010) which highlighted the importance of;

*Delivering the principal aim of reducing offending and reoffending,*

*Ensuring the effective delivery of justice services for children and young people,*

*Accountability and representation of youth justice issues within the local authority,*

*Ensuring that children and young people involved in the youth justice system have access to universal and specialist services delivered by partners and other key agencies for ensuring local authorities discharge their duties under the Children Act 1989, in particular those in Schedule 2, paragraph 7, to: discourage children and young people within their area from committing offences, take reasonable steps designed to reduce the need to bring criminal proceedings against children and young people in their area, and to avoid the need for children within their area to be placed in secure accommodation.*

The local authority's Youth Justice Strategic Plan (2010) compared the local authority's statistics to that of a 'family' of other local authorities with similar demographics. There were several trends found.

Firstly, there has been a reduction in the numbers of first time entrants to the youth justice system (aged 10 -17 years) between 2007 and 2009 (-23.1%) but the rates for the local authority were significantly higher than the 'family' rate. (Figures at the time of writing, show 1360 per 100, 000 of 10-17 year olds in the local authority entered into the youth justice system, compared to 1168 per 100,000 in 'family' authorities).

Although the rate of first- time entrants remains higher than the 'family' rate, progress is being made. The Youth Offending Service (YOS) has invested in preventative work including the Youth Inclusion and Support Panel (YISP) projects and Youth Offending team work in residential care settings. These investments are proving successful in the way that there is currently more co-ordinated working within locality teams.

This information shows that co-ordinated/joint working when providing support for youth offenders has proven to be a positive step at local level/for the local authority and supports this research because it provides a space for the EP to be involved in these multi-disciplinary teams.

The local authority's Youth Justice Strategic Plan (2010) also showed that rates of re-offending among young offenders appears to be slightly higher in the local authority compared to rates recorded from 'family' authorities. In 2009, the six month rate reoffending rate was 0.64 for the local authority compared to 0.56 in the 'family'. This evidence provided further support for the need for research with youth offenders to be carried out in the local authority in particular, in order to address the factors which may influence the decision to re-offend.

Youth offenders' engagement in education, training and employment figures from April – December 2009 remains lower in the local authority when compared to that of 'family' authorities (57% compared to 69.6% respectively). The Youth Offending Service Partners are concerned about this despite an improvement in figures in comparison to 2006/2007 (62.5%). Again, this suggested that there is a valuable need for research which explores potential reasons for youth offenders' disengagement with education (as well as disengagement with training and employment) in the local authority

### 1.5.2 Supporting Key Priorities: The Educational Psychology Service and Strategic Planning

The local authority's Educational Psychology Service Work and Directorate Plan 2010 (see Personal Reflexivity section, 1.7.2 for reasons for focusing on the work of the EP in particular), highlighted several areas of focus for the forthcoming year and also prioritises areas of work in line with this research. These include;

- 1. To develop action-intervention projects in school communities, enhance research skills of EPS and support the application of evidence-based interventions within schools.*
- 2. To develop Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) research projects that contribute to County Council development and evidence-based interventions within schools.*

Both of these key priorities support the rationale for this research thesis. Through careful questioning and data analysis, the research focused on ways to implement effective intervention (at a preventative level) within the context of education, through evidence-based research and practice data.

The EPS Plan 2010-2011 also draws attention to resolving youth crime in particular as one of the local authority's main objectives:

- 1. NI 17 Perceptions of anti-social behaviour*
- 2. NI 111 Reduce the number of first time entrants to the criminal justice system*
- 3. NI 19 Reduce the rate of proven re-offending by young offenders from the 2005 baseline of 0.89 offences per 100 offenders*
- 4. NI 43 Reduce the level of custodial sentencing for young people within the youth justice system to less than 5%*
- 5. NI 45 Increase the percentage of young offenders in suitable education, training and employment (Government target = 90%)*

In order to reach these goals, the plan underlines the need to increase the number of young offenders engaged in education, employment and training through increased focus on young people and their identification as potential NEETs on the Youth Offending Service (YOS) caseload and also focusing on individual action plans for

those young people who are more likely to become NEET. The researcher addressed this specifically by interviewing youth offenders and focused on their perceived behaviour in educational settings and reasons for this. The researcher considered the data collected in terms of early identification of those who may be at risk of youth offending and used this evidence to suggest possible early intervention techniques and approaches.

### 1.5.3. Supporting Assessment and Intervention for Youth Offenders

When youth offenders in the local authority enter into the YOS, a decision is made as to what programmes and/or strategies would be suitable for each individual in order to minimise chances of re-offending. The YOS in the local authority has for example purchased intervention resources such as ‘Positive Choices’ (1:1 offending behaviour programme) and ‘Teen Talk’ (Sociometrics Corporation, 1983), and continues to use anger management and other offence focussed resources. There is evidence of such resources being used in YOS records (Youth Justice Plan, the local authority 2010).

YOS officers are generally required to undertake an in-depth assessment of the needs of the youth offenders before decisions are made for intervention, whilst considering the experience of education as one factor which may have contributed to offending behaviour. Intervention plans are then individually designed and tailored to the needs of each youth offender.

A consideration of this process suggests that the EP would be well-placed to contribute towards the assessment task by providing psychological advice and support where necessary. The manager of the YOS stated in a conversation with the researcher (October 2010) that he felt that there is a need for the both services (YOS and EPS) to become more integrated because YOS workers require further explanation of reports and advice provided for many of the youth offenders whilst they were in education. The research thesis aimed to explore the link between education and youth offending thus, this research could help to provide officers in the YOS with crucial information which could be considered in their assessment (and intervention) processes in the future.

### 1.6. Why Now? Considering the Current Role of the EP Service

As mentioned, the rationale for the current research addresses several reasons as to why this research is both relevant and timely. The researcher considered national statistical

evidence which highlighted the importance of prioritising this vulnerable group and also focused on how the local authority aimed to address the problems identified above.

In addition to this, the rationale of this research is considered in view of the current changes to developments in the role of the EP in particular. At a time of uncertainty regarding the future of the EP role, it is important to consider key legislation and research which addresses the creative value of the EP role, as well as the emphasis on joint-working. This type of change supports one idea posed by the researcher: that EPs are well-placed to support professionals working in education with Youth offenders and those 'at risk' of offending and with other professionals working with offenders (e.g. Youth Offender Services). Findings from the research therefore contributed to discussions regarding the way EPs could support this type of creative work in future.

In order to consider the role of the EP and its development in more recent years, it is necessary to emphasise the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) report 'Current Role, Good Practice and Future Direction' (2000) which first emphasised that the EP role should be extended beyond the previously defined core function of the position (e.g. that useful work carried out by EPs in the report extended to work such as critical incident response, parent partnership and mediation). Following this, Every Child Matters (ECM) Agenda (2003) set out the guidelines for all professionals caring for children, suggesting that they pursue five main outcomes: staying healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and economic well being. In this way, EPs were required to build on the DFEE review in light of the role set out in the ECM agenda.

However, Farrell, Woods, Lewis, Squires, Rooney, and O'Connor (2006) found that although EPs added value by contributing to the promotion of the five ECM goals for children, they were too heavily involved with statutory assessment work, which prevented them from expanding their work. Crucially, the report emphasised that the role of the EP should also focus on: multi-agency work, individual assessment, consultancy, intervention and training, working with children with severe and complex needs as well as preventative working, contributing to the ECM outcomes in all aspects of their work and expanding work into the community.

Supporting Farrell et al's point regarding the importance of EPs working in multiagency teams, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), 2006 was created as a shared

assessment tool amongst professionals and also emphasised early identification of the needs of children and that professionals should offer a more holistic and co-ordinated provision for children.

The EP's role is complex and there has been increasing uncertainty regarding the role of the EP in terms of its function and status. This is owing to several factors, including the recent establishment of the Children's Services (Booker, 2005), where EPs are required to work in a more diverse way in establishments other than schools. It is also related to the development of multi agency teams in which psychology has been viewed as only one of a number of disciplines, thus there has been increasing pressure for EP's to expand and diversify their role (Cameron and Monsen, 2005).

Since the Academies Bill became an Act (July 2010), an increasing number of schools in England could become academies. Academies are funded in a different way to maintained schools. Academies have access to their share of central funding. This funding was previously spent by local authorities on the schools' behalf but the conversion to Academy would allow these particular schools to have more say in the management of budgets and spending. In terms of how this would affect the EP, as the Green Paper (2011) suggests, schools under this system will operate a 'buy-in' service from professionals working in education, which would result in an increasing need for EPs to expand their expertise and 'sell' aspects of their role to schools.

As regards working in schools with individuals or groups of children and young people who are either 'at risk' of becoming offenders or those who have already committed crimes, this research thesis aimed to contribute to previous research regarding intervention and prevention of crime by asking youth offenders about their own experiences of education. In doing so, the research helped to think about creative ways that professionals working in education could offer support to this vulnerable group. For EPs specifically, their role and expertise could be used to sell particular services to educational settings in light of the recommendations made in the Green Paper (2011).

Both key legislation and government research suggest that the future role of the EP should include enhancing preventative and joint working (e.g. uniting EPS and YOT work), working in the community (e.g. with youth offenders), and expanding the role to offer a more valued service (so that EP services can be 'brought in' by academies). This implies that in future, the role of the EP will involve expanding expertise and

psychological knowledge to a range of contexts and experiences. As mentioned, exploring the views of youth offenders may help to suggest ways in which EPs can work both preventatively and reactively with youth offenders and those ‘at risk’ of offending, and also ways that other professionals working in education can support them.

### 1.7. Reflexivity

The term ‘reflexivity’ refers to the notion that a person’s ideas and thoughts tend to be biased. In the context of the research thesis, these values and thoughts are represented in the work and so it is important for the researcher to be aware of the basis of her own thoughts and ideas from the outset, and make this explicit to the reader. Reflexivity helps the researcher to focus on how her own reaction to the research, make it possible to understand and offer insight into the context. There are two types of reflexivity: personal and epistemological (Willig, 2008).

#### 1.7.1. Epistemological Reflexivity

Epistemological reflexivity allows the researcher to reflect upon her own constructions of the world which have been made throughout the research. This type of reflexivity allows the researcher to think about how the research questions have been constructed and limited, how the design could have ‘constructed’ the data and findings and how the findings have subsequently been interpreted.

The researcher is aware that some of her thoughts and ideas fit closely with social constructivism. This approach suggests that meaning does not exist in its own right but is constructed by individuals as they interact with each other. Social constructivists in particular, focus on how the individual makes sense of the world around them. This approach is sometimes referred to as *interpretivism*, and this indicates a focus on how the world is interpreted by those within it (Robson, 2011).

The researcher has focused on looking at how the social context in particular has shaped the individual behaviour of the youth offenders in the research (see ‘Personal Reflexivity’ 1.7.2.) and so has mainly drawn on Social Identity Theory (SIT) in the discussion chapter. Despite this, the researcher has adopted a critical realist position, which can be situated between positivism and extreme relativism in explaining how far

the researcher can be solely objective or subjective when analysing data. The researcher aimed to be as objective as possible but, acknowledged that her own interpretation (in terms of discussing the findings and using SIT) may be somewhat subjective, particularly in light of her experiences to be discussed in the section below. Therefore, she has assumed a critical realist position because the researcher felt that it was important to acknowledge and not ignore other mechanisms that could impact upon outcomes found in the research. Critical realism acknowledges the ways individuals apply meaning to their experiences and in turn, the ways in which the broader social context impinges on these meanings while retaining focus on the material and other 'limits' of reality (Willig, 2008).

When applying this epistemological perspective to the research thesis, the researcher focused on how youth offenders applied perspective to their experiences (i.e. their delinquent behaviours and their experiences of education) whilst taking into account the broader social context (peer groups, the school as the context) and the impact that this has had on the answers given during interviews, bearing in mind the other 'limits' of reality such as possible subjectivism, and factors other than social influence that may have shaped perceptions of education and decisions to commit crimes.

Further explanation of the researcher's epistemological position and how it relates to the research design is provided in the methodology chapter.

### 1.7.2. Personal Reflexivity

Personal Reflexivity allows the researcher to reflect upon her own experiences, values, interests, beliefs, aims in life and social identities in order to demonstrate how this may have shaped the research. This type of reflexivity involves thinking about how the process of the research could have influenced the researcher personally and professionally (as a researcher). This is considered below, and in the 'discussion' chapter of this thesis.

The researcher's previous experience of working in the Probation Service (Waltham Forest) caused her to become increasingly aware of the high proportion of adult offenders receiving court recommendations (as part of their sentences) to undertake basic skills courses in Mathematics and Literacy. In addition to this, the researcher observed that many of these offenders were very reluctant to attend these courses and

rarely did. It led the researcher to question why these individuals appeared to be so reluctant and/or unmotivated to improve their Mathematics and Literacy skills. The researcher began to formulate her hypothesis that this reluctance to engage may have been due to possible negative experiences of education and learning as youths.

During this time, the researcher gained the opportunity to engage in an in-depth conversation with an acquaintance who had served a five year experience inside several prisons as a youth offender. He stated that the youth offenders who he had met, had also experienced complex social and academic experiences during their time in education. He also described how he had spent some of his time in prison teaching the more motivated offenders to read and write, and he described this experience as being extremely rewarding.

The researcher initially began to think about the application of the ‘learned helplessness’ theory (Seligman, 1990). Whilst working with adult offenders in the probation service, the researcher initially hypothesised that these adults had experienced negativity (socially, emotionally and/or academically) when in education, and this could explain their reluctance to engage in the basic Mathematics and Literacy skills courses. However, after speaking with her acquaintance, and whilst working as a primary school teacher, an Assistant Educational Psychologist (in Essex), and as a Trainee Educational Psychologist in the local authority, the researcher gained the opportunity to work with children and young people from the ages of 3 – 18 and formed alternative hypotheses for this observed reluctance and disengagement in education. As a result of these experiences, she became increasingly interested in how the peer group appeared to influence children and young people’s behaviour at school as well as their engagement with education. Moreover, she noticed that individual behaviour often appeared to be influenced by a ‘need for belonging’ and that this need appeared to be fulfilled through an identification with group dynamics. Therefore, the researcher decided to draw on SIT (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) as the main psychological theory when discussing implications of the findings.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### Chapter Overview

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Systematic Review
- 2.3 Education and Youth Offending: An Overview
- 2.4 Education, Disaffection and Youth Crime
- 2.5 Risk and Protective Factors
- 2.6 Education, Reputation and Peer Influence
- 2.7 Social Control or Social Learning
- 2.8 Questioning Social Norms and Delinquency
- 2.9 Summary of Research to Date and Gaps
  - 2.9.1 Research Focus
  - 2.9.2 Research Questions

### 2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted current crime figures from both local and national contexts. It is clear that youth crime and delinquency remain issues today, and that it is necessary for educational professionals to play a role in understanding the reasons for such problems.

This literature review focuses on providing information regarding how the journal articles were found during the 'systematic search.' The review will then highlight research with youth offenders, delinquent and/or 'at risk' school-aged children (see definition for 'delinquent and 'at risk' in appendix 1). This chapter will consider how researchers have explored attitudes and beliefs within this group, in terms of education and behaviour within the education system. This literature review will consider the methodology and the implications drawn from the research and how this vital information can be used to help form the basis of the research thesis. Finally, the review will include an introduction to Social Identity Theory (SIT) as this theory was drawn upon as a relevant theory in the discussion chapter.

## 2.2. Systematic Review

The researcher carried out a systematic and thorough search in order to locate relevant publications suitable for the research thesis. Information on the way in which the publications were found is detailed below for replication purposes. .

The following literature review includes a systematic search using Athens. Athens is an Access Management System developed by Eduserv that simplifies access to the electronic resources subscribed to by the researcher's institution or organisation. Athens permits access to various databases. For all of the searches described below, the following data bases were used: Psych info, Psych Articles and Education Research Complete.

The inclusion criteria considered:

1. Publications between 1990 and October 2010.
2. Publications that included quantitative and qualitative research collected from youth offenders with a focus on their experiences of education.
  - Youth offenders in the samples were school age of school-age (some were in education at the time the research was undertaken, whilst others were not).
  - Youth offenders who were considered 'at risk' of imprisonment.
3. The selected publications also included the views of young people who were not youth offenders but who were involved in delinquent behaviour at school. These studies included views/information deemed to be of relevance to the research thesis. Articles considered 'relevant' concentrated on research with delinquent young people, particularly on their experiences of education (e.g. views on friendship groups, behaviour at school, attitude towards academic achievement).
4. Initially, the search excluded any non UK based publications. However this eliminated several very relevant studies, therefore the inclusion criteria was altered in order to encompass both national and international studies.

The initial search conducted, using Athens to access the above-mentioned databases included the combination 'Group membership and behaviour and education'. The term 'group membership' was used because, as discussed in the introduction, the researcher aimed to focus on group dynamics and SIT, and the way in which this had shaped behaviour in school/education. This produced 132 results, which were rejected for the

following reasons; 11 studies considered behaviours of children ‘at risk’ but were mainly studies of pre-school children. 10 studies targeted interventions rather than views and experiences in education. 9 studies focused on the views of young people but considered factors outside school (e.g. parental factors), so were not relevant to the current study. 21 studies were non-UK based but also not relevant to the study (e.g. focussing on views of young people and substance abuse), 23 studies were clinical/health based studies. These considered the views of young people, however they included views regarding health issues and difficulties at school age. 22 studies were rejected because although they considered views of young people or adults in school, the views were not relevant to the current study, nor did they target (i.e. they did not include the views of youth offenders or young people who behaved in delinquent ways at school). The researcher considered the remaining 6 articles and decided not to include these in the literature review for the following reasons: 3 were studies which focused on children who were ‘at risk’ of delinquent behaviour but focused on teachers as ‘tests’ rather than the views of the children themselves, 2 were rejected because they focused on the views of teachers, 1 article was rejected because it compared 2 groups of children together and neither were relevant to the specified sample group (i.e. they were not youth offenders or children who behaved in delinquent ways).

The next Athens search included the terms ‘delinquency and school experience’. This produced 64 results. 61 were rejected for the following reasons: 19 studies were rejected because, although they were school-based studies, they did not include relevant information for the current research (i.e. they did not include the views of either youth offenders or those ‘at risk’ of offending). 16 studies were international studies which did not fit the inclusion criteria and so were rejected. 23 of these studies were rejected because some did not include views or behaviours related to the study. Those that did include views, focused on issues outside of school and education (e.g. substance abuse, family factors). 3 articles were rejected because they focused on the views of young people and the offences they had committed such as views regarding specific offenses and what happened. These views did not relate to education, group membership or school experience. 3 articles were accepted because they matched the inclusion criteria. These will be discussed later on in this review.

The third search in Athens using the databases suggested previously, included the words ‘youth offenders and school experience’. This produced only 2 results. 1 was rejected

because it was a short article on work-based programmes for all young people and did not include views or the experience of youth offenders/those at risk of offending. 1 article was a dissertation abstract and the researcher requested this from the University of Central Florida as it met the inclusion criteria.

A fourth search in Athens used the term 'youth offenders and education'. This produced 65 results. 26 international studies were not relevant to the current study. They did not include views or experiences of youth offenders or young people at risk of becoming youth offenders. 27 were rejected because although they included samples of youth offenders, these articles did not focus on relevant aspects of these pupils' school experience and did not collect data on their views deemed to be suitable for the research thesis (e.g. social experiences, attitude towards learning). 7 studies were rejected because they centred on programmes and interventions of offenders in prison, 5 studies were rejected because they focused on the health of young people. Thus, all 65 articles were rejected in this search.

For the fifth and final search, the researcher was aware that there were a number of journals that her university did not subscribe to, so she used Google Scholar to access these. The researcher carried out a search in Google Scholar of journals published between 1990 and October 2010. The search included the combination 'youth offenders and education' and 'perception UK' and included the term 'Social Identity Theory' anywhere in the text. The search produced 210 results. 45 international studies were rejected because they failed to meet the inclusion criteria regarding the sample population (for example, one French article focused on adult offenders, another focused on adult gangs in Nigeria). 60 studies were rejected because school and education were not a focus. Amongst these articles, was a study focusing on crime and terrorism and street gangs outside school. 29 of the studies were rejected because although they focused on SIT, they did not include information or a focus on youth offenders or education. One study focused on the social identity of young drivers, another focused on social identity and mobile phone usage. 13 studies from the Google Scholar search included the school environment as its focus but not youth offenders or children/young people at risk of becoming youth offenders, and so were rejected. 11 studies discussed youth offenders but school and education was not a focus. 47 studies were rejected as they included one word from the search (e.g. 'social' or 'education') and from consideration of the abstracts, the researcher decided that these did not meet the

inclusion criteria. Due to these reasons, 205 articles were rejected. 5 articles were accepted as they met the inclusion criteria above.

In addition to the above search undertaken on 26-27 October 2010, the researcher also searched using the above mentioned-terms on the 'Youth Justice Board' website and also the Home Office Website. These websites were used in order to gain further information regarding official statistics and research papers discussed in the introductory chapter.

The researcher also undertook a 'hand search' in the University of East London Library where a key article which met the inclusion criteria was found. Several other articles were also found by examining the references of key articles. These were included in the literature review for information purposes but were not critically analysed.

Approximately 45 articles were found by using this method. The researcher continued to search for studies until May 2011 in order to ensure that she was aware of any new publications or developments in the field of research.

The researcher located approximately 55 articles which were relevant to the research thesis and published within the last 20 years. 10 were critically analysed and the remainder included in the literature review below and used for information purposes. The table overleaf shows a list of these 10 articles and also which search was used to obtain each of these publications.

Table 1: Articles Accepted

Article reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Search number</li> <li>b) Database used</li> <li>c) Search terms (Journals between 1990 – 2010)</li> </ul>
Megens, K.,C.,I.,M and Weerman, F.,M (2010) Attitudes, delinquency and peers: The role of social norms in attitude-behaviour inconsistency <i>European Journal of Criminology</i> 7 (4) 299-316	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 2</li> <li>b) ‘Athens’ Psych info, Psych Articles’ and Education Research Complete.</li> <li>c) ‘Delinquency and school experience’</li> </ul>
Elliot, D., S, and Menard, S Delinquent Friends and Delinquent Behavior; <i>In: Delinquency and crime: Current theories.</i> Hawkins, J. David (Ed.); New York, NY, US: Cambridge University Press, 1996. pp. 28-67.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 2</li> <li>b) ‘Athens’ Psych info, Psych Articles’ and Education Research Complete.</li> <li>c) ‘Delinquency and school experience’</li> </ul>
Lotz, R., and Lee, L., (1999) Sociability, School Experience and Delinquency <i>Youth and Society</i> , 31 (2) pp. 199 - 223	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 2</li> <li>b) ‘Athens’ Psych info, Psych Articles’ and Education Research Complete.</li> <li>c) ‘Delinquency and school experience’</li> </ul>
Woodward, D., R The effects of school experience on juvenile delinquency: A case study completed (1999) Dissertation completed at the University of Central Florida	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 3</li> <li>b) ‘Athens’ Psych info, Psych Articles’ and Education Research Complete.</li> <li>c) ‘Youth offenders and school experience’</li> </ul>
Carroll, A and Green, S (2003) Reputation Enhancement and Involvement in Delinquency among High School Students <i>International Journal of Disability, Development and Education</i> 50 (3) pp. 253 – 273	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 5</li> <li>b) ‘Google Scholar’</li> <li>c) ‘Youth offenders and education and perception UK’ which included the terms ‘social identity theory’ anywhere in the text.</li> </ul>
Ball, C and Connolly, J (2000) Educationally Disaffected Young Offenders: Youth Court and Agency Responses to Truancy and School Exclusions <i>British Journal of Criminology</i> 40 pp. 594 – 616	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 5</li> <li>b) ‘Google Scholar’</li> <li>c) ‘Youth offenders and education and perception UK’ which included the terms ‘social identity theory’ anywhere in the text.</li> </ul>
Carr, M., B and Vandiver, T., A (2001) Risk and Protective Factors Among Youth Offenders <i>Adolescence</i> 36 (no. 143) pp.409 – 426	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 5</li> <li>b) ‘Google Scholar’</li> <li>c) ‘Youth offenders and education and perception UK’ which included the terms ‘social identity theory’ anywhere in the text.</li> </ul>
Zhang, D., Katsivannis, A., Barrett, D., E and Willson, V Truancy Offenders in the Juvenile Justice System (2007) <i>Remedial and Special Education</i> 28 (4) pp. 244 – 256	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 5</li> <li>b) ‘Google Scholar’</li> <li>c) ‘Youth offenders and education and perception UK’ which included the terms ‘social identity theory’ anywhere in the text.</li> </ul>
Abrams, L (2006) From Correction to Community: Youth Offenders’ Perceptions of the Challenges of Transition <i>Journal of Offender Rehabilitation</i> 44 (2/3) pp. 31-53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 5</li> <li>b) ‘Google Scholar’</li> <li>c) ‘Youth offenders and education and perception UK’ which included the terms ‘social identity theory’ anywhere in the text.</li> </ul>
Le Blanc, M., Vallieres, E., AND Mc Duff, P (1992) Adolescents’ School Experience and Self-reported Offending: An Empirical Elaboration of and Interactional and Developmental School Social Control Theory <i>International Journal of Adolescence and Youth</i> (3) pp. 197- 247	Hand Search

### 2.3. Education and Youth Offending: An Overview

Educational problems have for many years been identified as an important component for young people brought before youth courts (West and Farrington, 1973, 1977, Farrington, 1997). Recent research focusing on offenders who received custodial sentences found that their first positive experiences of school/education occurred in prison (Anders, 2007), which implies that previous experiences of education (when offenders were school-aged) were predominantly negative. Extensive research has uncovered several factors linked to educational experience that may encourage a child/young person to become 'at risk' of future delinquent behaviour and crime. Some of these factors - academic attainment, social factors and behaviour, will now be discussed in brief.

Academic underachievement has been found to be one of the factors which link difficulties with education and delinquency. For example, Stewart, (2008) carried out research for the Prison Reform Trust and found a strong correlation between low educational attainment and delinquency. 48% of prisoners are at or below the level expected of an 11 year old in reading, 65% in numeracy and 82% in writing. More than half of males and two thirds of female prisoners have no qualifications at all. Previous research also found that poor academic performance is related to child behaviour problems and to the prevalence, onset and seriousness of delinquency (Brewer et al, 1995, Maguin and Loeber, 1996). Hurry, Brazier, Snapes and Wilson, (2005) carried out research for the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy, and concluded that young people in custody and those who have committed offences but are out in the community are disaffected with education (particularly literacy and numeracy) and rated their experience of education as 'awful'. In addition, research has also found that protective factors against youth offending include 'good' educational achievement (Hodges and Wong, 1996).

Extensive research has also concluded that there is a strong relationship between behaviour difficulties at school/in-education, and delinquent behaviour. For example, disruptive behaviour and persistent truancy may contribute to continuing criminal careers (Graham 1988, Farrington, 1990), and persistent disruptive behaviour can lead to child delinquency, and potentially to serious and violent youth offending (Loeber and Farrington, 2001). Although it is well established that no single factor can cause child

delinquency (Loeber and Farrington, 1998b, Stouthamer-Loeber, Loeber, Wei, Farrington and Wikstrum, 2002), childhood antisocial behaviour (such as aggression) tends to be the best predictor of early onset delinquency for boys (Patterson, Crosby, and Vuchinich, 1992).

Research has also focused on social relationships within the context of education. Studies have concluded that delinquent peer relations could lead to youth offending (Elliott and Menard, 1996), and that peer rejection induces a rejected child to associate with delinquent peer groups and gangs (Patterson, Capaldi and Bank, 1991). One protective factor that has been found to affect levels of reoffending and adjustment is positive peer relations (Hoge, Andrews and Leschied, 1996).

As the research overview above demonstrates, there is a clear relationship between an individual's experience of education and delinquency. The factors determining this link include educational under-achievement, delinquent behaviour and sociability.

This literature review considered research evidence which focused on the different methodologies used to obtain information regarding young people who are youth offenders and/or engaged in delinquent behaviour both inside and outside of the education setting. As the review progressed, a discussion emerged which considered the potential relationship between social factors/peer-related variables and the experiences in education of youth offenders and young people 'at risk' of offending.

This area in particular informed the basis of this research thesis which drew upon SIT to discuss the perceptions of youth offenders in view of their experiences of education. The research thesis is an exploratory piece of research but also has a descriptive element because it seeks to explain experiences of education from the perspectives of youth offenders themselves, with a specific emphasis on possible social influences.

#### 2.4. Education, Disaffection and Youth Crime

Ball and Connolly (2000) carried out research which focused on school absenteeism and the responses of youth courts towards this. The fact that persistent truancy is a key contributing factor to criminal careers (Farrington, 1997), suggests that it is likely that

this group possess negative perceptions with regard to education and schooling. The authors carried out a mixed methods study which considered the provision and use of school based information in youth courts in order to examine incidence and impact of the youth courts and agency responses to school absenteeism. Quantitative information was collected from court registers, court files, pre-sentence and school reports, questionnaires from magistrates, supervising officers and through group discussions. Interviews were conducted with offenders and their supervising officers in order to obtain qualitative information. The sample was considerable: 522 school aged (10-15 years old) youth offenders were interviewed 6-9 months after sentences were served and these participants were located in urban areas of England and Wales. The limitations with this sample are that only youths living in urban areas were considered and their experiences may differ from those living in other parts of England and Wales. This has implications when generalising the findings. In relation to this, the authors stated that most of the youth offenders within the sample were not in education which has implications and limitations when reaching concluding statements in terms of the fact that it may have been useful to compare this group with youth offenders who were in education. In addition, participants were interviewed 6-9 months after sentencing and this may have also impacted upon responses because although there is often a value in hindsight, those interviewed (offenders and their supervising officers), may have forgotten key information within this period. From reading the research, it is also unclear as to whether interviews conducted were open ended or closed and details of these questions were not included.

In terms of the results, school based information showed that 85% of the defendants were reported to have experienced 'problems at school'. However, the authors do not elaborate on this and it is unclear precisely what these problems were. Furthermore, in terms of educational disaffection, participants were divided into three categories; 'disaffected' 'unmet needs' (SEN) and 'chaotic', and although the authors described and gave examples of participants placed into these categories, it is still unclear, in terms of overlap, how some participants could be placed in only one of these categories. The authors stated that '*boundaries between the categories are inevitably less clear in regard to some individuals than to others*' (p606). From reading the results and examples provided for each of these categories, it is clear that some rich information

was obtained. However, there was a need for more data collection on the reasons behind this 'disaffection', arguably an area for further research.

The authors stated above, however, provided an argument in support of multi agency working between youth justice agencies and school and education authorities with a view to helping young people entering the youth justice system who are disaffected with education. This article is therefore a supporting piece of research for the research thesis which also emphasised both of these links.

Le Blanc, Vallieres and McDuff's (1992) research focused on adolescents' school experience and self-reported offending. 825 French speaking adolescents between the ages of 12 and 16 (458 boys and 367 girls) took part in the research and completed self-administered questionnaires which were repeated two years later. This measured aspects such as self-control (assessed by a 'school stress' variable which focused on concentration at school and nervousness/stress experienced in class), school performance (average grades in Mathematics and French, and the number of school years behind the participant was), the individual's bond to school (measured by three variables: attachment to teacher, involvement in school-related activities and commitment to education), constraints (legitimacy of school rules and disciplinary reactions) and school misbehaviour and criminal activity.

This large-scale longitudinal research used multiple regression as its method of analysis and revealed some key findings: adolescents' level of criminal activity increased if school misbehaviours were frequent, school misbehaviour was amplified if there was a weak bond to school or if there was low academic performance or if the adolescent was male, an adolescents' bonding to school expanded if the adolescent was involved in school related activities or if they were attached to teachers, committed to education or if the adolescent believed in the legitimacy of school rules.

This research revealed interesting findings in terms of the impact of education on criminal behaviour. Despite this, the researcher was aware that there were certain limitations of the research including the fact that the sample was not carried out in the UK and so findings may have not been directly relevant to the participants in the research thesis. In addition, although there was a great amount of quantitative data

gathered, the research lacked richer regarding which factors had shaped both individuals' decisions to misbehave at school, and their weak attachment to teachers and to school in general. In addition, obtaining qualitative information about what factors may have had an impact upon commitment to education and adherence to school rules, may also give researchers an insight into the relationship between education and delinquent and/or law-breaking behaviour.

### 2.5. Risk and Protective Factors

Research with children and young people has also focused on risk and protective factors.

Risk factors are conditions associated with negative outcomes such as dropping out of school and delinquent or law-breaking behaviour. Risk factors could also include poor self-concept, and low self esteem (Brook, Whiteman, Balka and Cohen, 1997), poor parenting styles, relationships with peers who engage in risk behaviour and poor academic performance (Lerner and Galambos, 1998).

Some protective factors have been found to include children who are stress-resilient (Work, Cowen, Parker and Wyman, 1990) and that stress-resilient children have a stronger sense of self-worth and higher self-esteem than stress-affected children (Parker, Cowen, Work and Wyman, 1990). A youth's successful participation in activities and hobbies can also be considered protective (Jenkins and Smith, 1990). Taking this evidence into consideration, research with youth offenders has also focused on risk and protective factors and stressors that characterise this vulnerable group.

A study by Carr and Vandiver (2001) investigated the risk and protective factors with youth offenders. The research aimed to identify the stressors, risk factors and protective goals, and to determine whether these factors are associated with recidivism status. Following a mixed-methods design, quantitative questionnaires were completed by 76 youth offenders who had committed a range of crimes, in a large metropolitan area in the United States (although the exact location which is problematic when interpreting findings). The questionnaires asked participants to rate 23 items. A score of -1 indicated the absence of a factor and 0 indicated a missing factor. Open ended questions were also used to obtain data. This focused on family, school, role models and activities/hobbies.

When the researcher focused on the types of questions asked, she realised that rich information was not considered in the initial questionnaires. For example, participants were asked to report on their favourite classes, but not which subjects they found difficult. This could have been key in terms of risk factors (frustration with school due to inability to cope with the curriculum). However, during open ended questions, phrases were obtained such as 'I need help in math' (an example of 'difficulties at school' factor- see below), but these points were not explored further. Responses were grouped into different risk factors such as 'peer selection', and quotes were extracted from the responses such as, *'I am in a gang'. 'I don't have any friends'*.

Although this type of information is useful (especially in terms of addressing social identity factors and risk), qualitative information was not obtained. In particular, it would have been useful to know more about the impact of gang membership on an individual attitude/view of school/education, or how being socially 'rejected' may have played a part in emotional difficulties or indeed, any other factors which may have affected the choices and behaviour of these youth offenders. This would have given the authors a clearer idea of 'risk' factors and how these are formed in individual cases.

The study was nevertheless useful in providing evidence regarding protective factors amongst groups of youth offenders and was the first to do so. Factors such as personal, familial, social and academic factors were found to be 'protective' and discriminated between repeat and non-repeat offenders. Specifically, personal characteristics, familial conditions and peer selection were found to independently differentiate between the two groups. The authors also discussed the finding that non-repeat offenders had more positive attitudes towards police rules. The researcher questioned whether this attitude applied to rules at school/in education and how this may/may not have been influenced by the peer group. This is an area which has been neglected in research to date and will be considered in the research thesis.

Non-repeat offenders were also found to have a 'better academic performance' than repeat offenders. Findings such as these left the reader to question this evidence in terms of its richness. It would have been useful to obtain information as to what happened at

school/education for this to be the case. These questions were not explored within this piece of research.

A study by Zhang, Katsiyannis, Barrett and Wilson (2007) also focused on first time offences among youth offenders who truant from school and compared this to first time offenders who do not truant. The researchers questioned whether the two groups differed in their risk of re-offending. This was an international study, carried out in the United States and so it is difficult to apply the findings to other geographical areas. Altogether, 12,464 youths took part in this study, although it was biased towards male participants (8071 males, 4393 females). The average age was just over 14 years on first referral, and 15 years on second referral. Quantitative information was obtained through an agreement with the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (SCDJJ) through a co-operative agreement. Data included information on offence type, gender, criminal history, and special educational needs. This was used to examine how first time truants differed from children whose first referral was for an offence other than truancy. The authors also analysed data regarding the risk of second truancy and a second non-truancy offence. Through using quantitative data analysis such as chi-squared, the authors made several conclusions including:

1. Young people who have SEN possess a higher risk of offending again. This is an interesting finding and again, similar to Carr and Vandiver's (2001) research detailed above, quantitative information did not provide an in-depth insight into why this maybe the case. This is one limitation of the findings.
2. Youths referred to the youth justice system for truancy, represented a group of youth offenders distinct from youths referred for other violations. Youths referred for truancy were more likely to be European-American females, less likely to have had a history of drug abuse, and less likely to be involved in serious crimes later in life, although they had a higher number of lifetime referrals. This finding was interesting because truanting from education/school appeared to have had a significant impact on future involvement in crime, and this group had a higher number of lifetime referrals. This emphasised the possible importance of education and school attendance and how they can impact upon criminal behaviour. Again, such findings emphasised the need for qualitative information to be obtained from youth offenders.

## 2.6. Education, Reputation and Peer Influence

As described, reasons for why adolescents engage in delinquent and law-breaking behaviour has been explored by numerous researchers. However, more recently focus has shifted to the more sociological aspects of criminology. In particular, peer reputation appears to be of prime importance and research has shown that engaging in illegal activities is rewarding in terms of social status that it gives to adolescents amongst their peers (Carroll, Houghton, Hattie and Durkin, 1999, Emler and Reicher, 1995). Key to these investigations is the fact that most of the studies were carried out with male incarcerated youths, and the views of high school children's self reported delinquency and importance of social reputations needed to be more of a focus.

Emler's theory of reputation enhancement (1984) which emerged from research with male delinquents argued that reputations link to social identities and it is due to these identities that an individual's attributes and status are acknowledged and his needs met (Hopkins and Emler, 1990). Socially visible behaviour is important as it can threaten an individual's reputation.

Carroll, Green, Houghton and Wood (2003) identified this gap in the research and explored Emler's theory by focusing on whether students identified as having high involvement in delinquency desire a more non-conformist reputation than those with lower involvement. The research was based in the regions of Queensland and Western Australia, which the authors argued provided a representation of social and contextual features of Australia generally. Findings therefore may not be directly relevant to the participants in this research thesis. 965 students took part in this research based in 10 state schools. A quantitative design was undertaken in which participants completed a self-report scale to determine whether they fell into one of two categories: high or low involvement in delinquent behaviour. Unfortunately, 876 participants were then identified as 'low involvement' but only 83 were identified as 'high involvement' which meant that there was more information obtained from one group compared to the other. In addition, this questionnaire along with another (measuring importance of friendship groups and conformity) were administered in a classroom setting by the researcher. This was not an ideal location as participants may have not answered accurately due to the nature of the setting (influences of peers around them, fear of confidentiality of the

information). Participants who had difficulties with reading were administered these questionnaires in small groups, and the questions were read out to them. Again, this may have biased findings owing to the influence of the presence of a small group during participants' consideration of their responses. There was also inconsistency in how the results were obtained and this could have implications for the research.

There was a 70% response rate when written consent was requested in order for the research to be carried out. Whilst this is a high rate of response, it implies that the data may not have been truly representative because the remaining 30% of information was not obtained and there may have been specific information gathered from this missing sample which may have changed the nature of the evidence obtained.

Despite these limitations, the authors did discover some useful information regarding social factors and delinquency. Firstly, that females placed more value on friendships and group membership, admired law abiding behaviour and perceived themselves as more conforming than males. Males had a higher admiration for law-breaking activities, perceived themselves as more non-conforming (breaking rules etc) and were more likely to like to be perceived by others as tough leaders and popular in doing so. Males were also found to engage in slightly higher degree of delinquent behaviour compared to females. Those who had high involvement with delinquency, perceived themselves as non-conforming (e.g. breaking rules, bad reputation) and ideally wanted to be perceived in this manner. Central to this finding in terms of the research thesis was that this group informed peers of their behaviour but not adults, which is indicative of the importance of peer acceptance and reputation amongst delinquent peers. In addition, key gender differences were found and in terms of the research thesis, it would therefore be necessary to consider whether gender differences also occur when considering the impact of SIT on youth offenders' views of their experiences of education (see discussion chapter).

Again, quantitative information was obtained from this piece of research and although this is useful, it highlighted the research gap: that there is a need for qualitative/rich information to be obtained regarding the reasons behind these results.

Social factors have also been noted in research which centred on youth offenders' transition back in to the community. For example, Duggan (1993) found that successful former delinquents identified the importance of forming peer relations who were unassociated with crime, and these participants also avoided former delinquent friends and/or gangs.

Abrams (2006) used semi-structured interviews with ten participants in order to focus on the challenges of transition from 'correction to community'. The authors used a convenience sample of youths who enrolled on a transition programme in Minnesota, United States. The results could be used to inform hypotheses but owing to the small sample size, and the fact that it was a convenience sample, these could not be applied to larger populations. As regards methodology, four semi-structured interviews were conducted: the first during the pre-transition period, the second 1-2 weeks after release, the next 3 months post-release, and the final interview was carried out 4-6 months post-release. Each interview lasted between 30-90 minutes and was audio taped. Although basic areas were described by the authors (anticipated challenges, experienced challenges, and benefits/weaknesses of services participants received on transition), the structure of the interviews were unclear, and due to this, replication of this study would be difficult unless examples of questions were included in the methodology.

Moreover, the authors reported that some participants were more articulate than others, which could have also affected the results obtained. Most of the interviews were conducted on a one to one basis, and recorded. However, one interview was carried out over the telephone. This was not recorded, but notes were taken. During this interview, detailed information was not therefore gathered and instead, summary information was collected (via notes written during the telephone conversation). Interpretation for meaning would have been quick and this could have affected findings because data would have been less trustworthy. Consequently, findings/results could have been affected when themes/sub-themes were formed by the researchers.

In terms of the results, the author described how anticipated challenges, experienced challenges, crime temptation, coping strategies and social supports were broken down into sub-categories through codes on a software programme. However, when the results were recorded, these sub-categories were not noted and these were therefore unknown

to the reader. Furthermore, the main themes which emerged from the data were also not recorded clearly. Subheadings would have been useful when highlighting these themes from the thematic analysis used.

Although this study has limitations, due to its methodology, rich data was obtained through semi-structured interviews. This data was particularly useful in its close consideration of the challenges associated with transition. The research made an important claim that nearly all of the youths in the sample accurately predicted that confronting 'old friends and influences' would be the most difficult part of the transition. This again highlighted peer group/social influences as a vital component when considering youth offenders and delinquent behaviour.

### 2.7. Social Control or Social Learning

Research has concluded that the relationship between delinquent behaviour of an individual is positively related to actual or perceived delinquent behaviour of that individual's friends (Huizinga, Menard and Elliott, 1989, Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce and Radosevich, 1979, Jensen, 1972 and Krohn, 1974). Explanations have been proposed for this relationship which included the social learning explanation (discussed in detail below), that suggests that exposure to delinquent friends leads to delinquent behaviour (Akers, 1985) or the social control theory that posits that delinquent behaviour leads to the acquisition of delinquent friends (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1987). The question of correlation is raised here in terms of the relationship between delinquent behaviour and engagement with delinquent friends.

Elliot and Menard (1996) addressed this in their research and focused on the onset of delinquent behaviour and exposure to delinquent friends in an effort to determine which comes first, exposure or delinquency. This United States based study, included 1,725 participants in its sample, and aged 11-17. Research was gathered between 1976 and 1983. Delinquent behaviour was measured through a scale index of offending in which participants were categorised as 'non-offenders', 'minor offenders' or 'index offenders' depending on how much delinquent behaviour participants had been involved in. A self-report scale was administered in order to measure exposure to delinquent peer groups. This questionnaire asked participants to rate on a five point scale what proportion of

their friends had committed certain delinquent acts. Based on these responses, participants were then divided into five groups ranging from those with minimal exposure to delinquent peers, to those with high exposure. A belief component was also obtained from this data. Participants were exposed to nine items and asked how wrong it is (very wrong, wrong, a little bit wrong, or not wrong at all) to commit each of the nine illegal acts. This characteristic was of particular interest as it could be included when analysing the relationship between exposure to delinquent peers, individual beliefs, and delinquent behaviour.

This study closely depended on self-reports in its data collection. This can affect reliability and validity of data, meaning that data gathered may not be entirely accurate and may depend on factors such as participant expectancy, the participant being reluctant to reveal information portraying themselves or peers in a negative way. In addition, scaling techniques can be questioned due to variation in participant response in terms of perception of the scales and what they mean. For example, one participant may rate a factor as '4' when another may rate it as '3' but both may actually mean the same response. In this case, findings may have been more accurate if qualitative data had been gathered in addition to this information.

The researchers point out the difficulty of 'left censoring'. In this case, exposure to delinquent friends and delinquent behaviour was already present for a substantial number of respondents in 1976 (when data collection began). Because of this, one cannot determine when the onset of delinquent friendships may have started, thus, the length of exposure cannot be determined. This raised important questions regarding the impact of exposure in different cases. In addition, 'right censoring' refers to participants who were not exposed to delinquent peers or did not engage in delinquent behaviour during the period that the research was gathered, but who may have engaged in both subsequently. The authors pointed out that 'left censoring' may be significant within this set of data.

The researchers were able to draw several conclusions from their data: there was a pattern found in terms of an increase in delinquency as the individual moved into mid-adolescence, and a decrease in exposure to delinquent peers in late adolescence and early adulthood. Again, rich evidence would have been crucial in finding out why this was the case, as well as uncovering participant views of their reasons for reducing

exposure to delinquent peers and the factors which influenced this decision as they moved into adulthood.

It was also noted that exposure to delinquent peer group types had a stronger effect on illegal behaviour than illegal behaviour had on exposure to delinquent peers. As regards minor offences, exposure to delinquent peers was first in the causal sequence. It influenced but was not influenced by delinquent behaviour. These results supported social learning theorists in so much that exposure comes first as the majority of respondents initiated some exposure (to delinquent peers) prior to delinquency.

## 2.8. Questioning Social Norms and Delinquency

As discussed above, researchers consistently found that a friend's delinquency functions as a good predictor of individual delinquency although the nature of the mechanisms involved in this relationship remain unclear. Social control theory and social learning theory attempt to account for this phenomena.

Research has also focused on *socialisation* (Kandel, 1978), that is the acquisition of criminal attitudes. Norms and attitudes are incorporated into an individual's belief system and the individual behaves accordingly. Therefore, the more the individual is associated with delinquent peers, the more delinquent behaviour the individual engages in, especially during adolescence when peer influence is important. School and other educational establishments are key places where adolescents socialise, and research has suggested that some teenagers only attend because it is a way of being close to their friends (Hersch, 1998).

In line with these ideas, Lotz and Lee (1999) carried out research with 2,772 participants in Michigan, United States (most respondents were 18 and 19 year olds non-offenders) and focused on two hypotheses: active sociability gives rise to delinquent behaviour, especially in the form of pleasurable crimes, whilst negative experiences gives rise to delinquent behaviour in the forms of pleasurable crimes and substance use.

Participants were given questionnaires in order to measure sociability and school experience. Sociability was measured by several indicators: number of evenings going out for fun and recreation, frequency of riding around in a car or motorcycle just for fun,

frequency of getting together with friends informally, and frequency of attending parties. School experience was measured by three indicators: how much respondents like or dislike school, how fair or unfair they found the school rules, as well as the grades they normally achieved on report cards. Delinquency information was also recorded under different categories of crime and how often participants had committed them. Again, this type of questioning will not produce rich data and although participants could be categorised and links made from these, one can-not gain a clear idea of the experiences of these young people.

Pearson's correlation was used to analyse results. Findings concluded that: sociability was a good predictor of delinquency for African and white Americans, and that school experience emerged as a good predictor of white delinquency but not of black delinquency. The latter gave rise to the assertion that the experience of school somehow can predict delinquent behaviour, although it is not clear from this research exactly what it is about school which may impact upon this type of behaviour. The former finding provided further evidence for the importance of peer group/amount of association with peers, in determining delinquent behaviour. The authors also argued that sociability is related to an individual's search for fun and that students who felt alienated from the school experience engaged in the search for fun. Delinquent behaviour with peers at school was an example of this need to have fun and engage in enjoyable acts.

Interestingly, the authors proposed that although socialisation, group pressure and selection approaches argue that peers have a negative influence on an individual, this is only if such peers are delinquent (i.e. if delinquent norms and attitudes are shared amongst the group). Another argument, which the Lotz and Lee's research (1999) supported, is that association with peers *in general* is conducive to delinquency (Osgood, Wilson, Malley, Bachman and Johnston, 1996). This argument questions the idea of 'social norms' when individuals act in a delinquent way. It supported the argument that due to lack of structure, delinquent acts were considered 'rewarding' especially when in the presence of peers. The research also supported the argument that teenagers act in an opportunistic way when in larger groups and that this behaviour is not a result of social norms, but rather engagement is simply a result of seeking out 'fun' experiences.

In terms of the research thesis, it was therefore necessary to explore;

1. Pre-existing views of education and engagement in delinquent behaviour (prior to joining delinquent peer groups)
2. Whether social 'norms' exist within the friendship groups selected (and if so, what these 'norms' are)

By carrying out this analysis, the researcher sought to ascertain whether SIT was supported (if delinquent 'group norms' exist within the friendship group), or whether delinquent behaviour at school was a result of a 'search for fun', unrelated to emphasis on attitudes/beliefs of group members towards education and learning. The researcher remains open to the idea that both theories could function alongside each other, that pre-existing views/attitudes towards education may exist prior to an individual joining delinquent friendship groups, and that friendship groups are joined because the individual not only shares/agrees with the group 'norms' but also wants to engage in a 'search for fun' in order to avoid negative experiences of education.

The question of social norms and delinquent peers was also researched in a recent study by Megens and Weerman (2010) whose study in the Netherlands posed two main research questions: To what extent are attitudes and behaviour with regard to delinquency inconsistent? What are the effects of peer related variables such as social norms, attachment and time spent with peers, on the translation of attitudes into behaviour? Theoretical background was considered and the authors pointed out that in recent years, researchers have turned their attention to SIT (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), which proposes that behaviour is influenced by social identities through the mediating role of group norms. Social norms are accepted and implied social rules which on the basis of self-categorisation, specify how group members behave (see below).

Importance is based on how strongly individuals identify with the group (Terry and Hogg, 1996). Megens and Weerman's (2010) study conceptualises social norms in accordance with Smith and Louis (2008) who focused on a combination of peer pressure and support for delinquency (attitudinal social norms) and peer participation in delinquent behaviour.

This longitudinal research involved a considerable sample size of 1,385, with the average age of participants between 13 and 15, across 11 secondary schools in the Netherlands. It is questionable whether results are relevant to the participants in the research thesis because most of the participants in the Netherlands study engaged in

what the authors described as a relatively low-level type of education (differing from the type of education in the UK). In addition, responses given were obtained in retrospect and although there is a value in hindsight, this could also have meant inaccuracies in information gathered owing to memory and other factors interfering with responses over a time-period.

Participants were given questionnaires in order for the researchers to gain information regarding delinquent behaviour. In a similar way to the studies described above, responses were given with regard to various offences and whether participants had committed them. From these answers, respondents were then categorised into 3 groups: no, mild, and serious delinquent behaviour. Attitudes towards delinquent behaviour were also measured and participants were asked to agree or disagree with statements concerning law breaking behaviours. This type of questioning is not always accurate because of participant awareness of expectations and knowing the 'correct' responses. Sometimes asking questions in this way encourages social desirability, and so results can-not always be considered accurate.

Norm congruency was also measured by combining scores for perception of peer pressure and support for delinquent behaviour. Scaling methods were incorporated through questionnaires when gathering information regarding attachment and time spent with peers. A concise explanation of each of these scales was provided by the authors. Examples were clearly provided and replication of this study would therefore be relatively straight forward.

The authors found that respondents exposed to normative information supportive of their initial attitude presented attitude-consistent behaviour significantly more often than respondents exposed to normative information incongruent with their attitude. Furthermore, stronger attachment to peers increased the positive effect of an attitude-congruent norm.

Central to the Netherlands paper is the finding which supported many other researchers taking a social-identity perspective. Normative support from one's peers strengthens the attitude-behaviour consistency and thus peers play a crucial role in the relationship between attitude and behaviour in the consideration of delinquency in mid-adolescence. There is a clear need for additional information in order to clarify and extend this

finding, and there is a research gap in terms of the need for qualitative information which may uncover rich information about attitude-behaviour consistency and how/why peers play such a crucial role in this. It would be useful to follow up this study with rich information which may explain how peers play a crucial role in behaviour and attitude towards education.

## 2.9. Summary of Research to Date and Gaps

Throughout this review, educational experiences have been considered with regard to youth offenders or those ‘at risk’ of offending, In particular, there was a focus on the effect of social factors on the experience of education and youth delinquency. There is a growing body of research in this particular area, and the limitations of these studies show that there is a need for further exploration into this relationship.

This literature review focused on the limitations of previous studies and these were suggested throughout the review. One important limitation of several of the studies focusing on youth delinquency and education is that the studies were international and therefore there is a gap in terms of gaining current rich information from youth offenders in the UK.

For these reasons, the researcher decided to use a qualitative design, so that she could gain a richer picture of school experience from a smaller sample of youth offenders. Research gaps which this thesis aimed to address by using a qualitative design include are listed below.

The researcher suggests that there is a lack of;

1. Rich information regarding the reasons for dissatisfaction with education generally and in particular, the reasons for the impact of friendship groups/peers on dissatisfaction with education (academic achievement, relationships with teachers, following school rules etc).
2. Rich information in line with Emler’s theory of Reputation Enhancement (1984) regarding the importance of social reputation/peer group in relation to behaviour and attitude towards education.
3. Rich information detailing how and when key attitudes towards education were formed (whether it was before or after joining delinquent peer groups).

4. Rich information about whether youth offenders value their experiences of education in terms of if/how it has impacted upon their lives and in particular, their law-breaking behaviour.

Gathering such information may also help to uncover the key question regarding the relationship between delinquent behaviour and engagement with delinquent peers (taking into account the importance of educational settings in terms of forming relationships with peers).

### 2.9.1. Research Focus

The main focus of this research thesis was an exploration of the perceptions held by youth offenders with regard to their experiences of education. It seems clear from the research above that considering the social context is vital when focusing on these experiences.

Therefore the researcher felt that Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) was one of the main theories relevant to the investigation. Considering the relevance of this theory to the findings, made the research a unique piece of exploratory work.

In SIT, a social identity is a person's knowledge that he or she belongs to a social category or group (Hogg and Abrams, 1988) and members of this group have a common social identification and view themselves as belonging to the same category. The basic argument of SIT is threefold;

1. People are motivated to maintain a positive self-concept.
2. The self-concept derives largely from group identification in addition to personal identification.
3. People establish positive social identities by comparing the in-group favourably against out-groups.

A key component to SIT is intergroup relations which considers how individuals come to see themselves and others within the group, and roles that they play within this group (dominant or passive members).

There has been over thirty years of SIT research which has amounted to substantial empirical evidence for the way in which psychologically salient group membership

produces effects based on the emergence or existence of shared cognitions. There was particular interest in SIT during the 1990's where it was applied and developed in a range of areas including: conformity, norms and group influence (Abrams and Hogg, 1990), large scale intergroup relations (Taylor and Moghaddam, 1994) and delinquency and adolescent reputations (Emler and Reicher, 1995).

In terms of the research thesis, several factors could account for delinquent behaviour which also fit with SIT. For example, some researchers believe that engagement in delinquent behaviour is a conscious choice based on individual values (Kennedy and Baron, 1993). Individuals chose to engage in crimes after considering personal values such as the need for peer approval or being well-respected by others (Seigal and Senna, 1991), or by gaining 'prestige' (Kennedy and Baron, 1993). This would involve an element of self-categorisation and by doing so individuals decide how far gaining peer approval, acceptance or prestige may override any moral decisions.

In addition, and related to these ideas, theories of belonging also coincide with SIT. Belonging involves the unique element of interpersonal relatedness and as Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, and Collier (1992) describe, belonging is,

*'The experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment'*

These two ideas which stem from SIT will be explored in terms of their focus on whether and/or how far youth offenders felt they 'belong' to their friendship groups and how far this need to belong, feel accepted, respected and valued may have determined delinquent behaviour at school. These ideas will also be focused on further in the discussion section.

### 2.9.2. Research Questions

It was therefore a main aim of this research thesis to consider the formation of youth offenders' views and attitudes towards education, and subsequent behaviour, as well as crucially, whether and/or how the participants' experience in this setting may have played a role in subsequent law-breaking behaviour.

To address this overall aim, the following questions were asked:

Main research question:

How do youth offenders perceive education and what factors influence their ideas regarding the value of education?

Four sub-questions;

1. Do youth offenders value education as a meaningful experience in terms of what it can possibly bring to their lives? How does group membership affect this opinion?
2. How do youth offenders value relationships with school staff? What is/was their experience of these relationships and how does group membership affect this?
3. How does group membership influence youth offenders' perception of academic achievement and engagement with learning?
4. In what way do youth offenders perceive group identity as a factor that may have played a role in how they behaved at school?

Exploration of these research questions are presented in the findings chapter and the implications of these are discussed in relation to implications for professionals working in education (school staff and EPs).

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### Chapter Overview

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Design
- 3.3 Analysis and Epistemological Position
- 3.4 Strengths and Limitations of the Design and Analysis Method
  - 3.4.1 Ensuring Trustworthiness in the Interpretation of Data
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- 3.5 Participants
- 3.6 Procedure for Data Collection and Time-Line
- 3.7 Environment during Data Collection
- 3.8. Ethics Procedure
  - 3.8.1 Informed Consent
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  - 3.8.3 Ensuring Confidentiality
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- 3.9 Context of Researcher

### **3.1. Introduction**

An exploration of research regarding youth offenders and their experiences of education, indicated a number of gaps in the scholarly research. Research to date has highlighted the fact that peer influence is particularly important when addressing adolescent behaviour. However, the researcher was unable to find research that considered Social Identity Theory as a method to inform thinking and explore this influence. The researcher therefore addressed this gap by considering SIT when discussing the findings and also explored how SIT may/may not relate to offending behaviour (See discussion chapter). In this way, the research is an exploratory investigation which provides both descriptive and exploratory data related to the main research question and four sub-questions set out in the previous chapter.

The following chapter sets out the research methods employed for data collection and analysis. It also addresses the epistemological stance which underpins the research and

presents the reasons for the researcher's preference. Ethical considerations for carrying out research with this vulnerable group were considered during the research, and are included in this chapter. Finally, this chapter summarises the role and context of the researcher with a specific emphasis on her previous experiences and epistemological stance.

### 3.2. Design

The research thesis used a qualitative design in order to explore the proposed research questions stated, and also to ensure a rich body of information and data was collected. A qualitative design was crucial for this part of the research in order to gain quality and texture of the experiences as well as to understand how this vulnerable group used their perception of events, in this case education, to describe their own experiences. This type of data can-not be preconceived by the researcher (Willig, 2008).

This design was adopted by the researcher in order to explore the perspectives of youth offenders in light of the overarching research questions. All of the participants were asked the same questions during the initial interview in order to gain insight into their education and to avoid bias in terms of initial questioning. The researcher used individual interviews to extrapolate this information.

The researcher initially considered the use of focus groups. However, she decided against this on the basis that the less articulate participants may have not share their views, whilst the more confident participants may have dominated the conversations. This would ultimately have meant that a range of views from the participants would not have been obtained. In addition, the researcher was aware that some of the questions asked would raise sensitive issues which the participants may not have wanted to share in a group situation. Confidentiality of information was much more likely in an individual interview situation and meant that participants may have felt more comfortable in sharing their relevant experiences, as well as reflecting upon these in a more honest way.

The participants were asked to take part in a second interview in order to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives. For this reason, semi-structured interviews were employed because they allowed for freedom in the sequencing of questions, their exact wording and the amount of time and attention given to different topics (Robson, 2011).

The researcher sought to gain information regarding individual perceptions, and semi-structured interviews were deemed suitable as they allow for this. Structured interviews would have permitted such flexibility of responses and this type of interviewing would have been more appropriate if the researcher had used a deductive approach in her analysis.

The interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone and these were transcribed by the researcher's assistant. The questions in the first interview were relatively broad, although more specific questions which related to the participants individual experiences were asked during a second interview. Convening a second interview with the participants, allowed the researcher time to consider the information obtained during the first interviews and help her to gain a deeper understanding of the specific areas of education discussed by the participants. The questions in the second interviews were therefore unique to the individual participant, and dependent on the responses provided during the initial interview. Five out of the seven participants took part in a second interview. Two of the participants did not complete a second interview because one participant was heavily pregnant and so was not able to attend this. The other female participant did not participate in a second interview because she ran away from her home at the time that the second interview was scheduled.

Exploration of all of the research questions were obtained from gaining qualitative data. A list of semi-structured questions which were asked in interview one was designed by the researcher (see appendix 7) and included broad, open-ended questions such as:

‘Describe your experience of school in terms of your academic attainment’.

‘Describe your experience of your peer group/friends at school’.

‘Describe your relationships with school staff ‘.

Examples of questions asked during interview two include the following:

‘You mentioned during your first interview that you ‘copied’ older peers. Could you explain what behaviour you copied and why you did this?’

‘You mentioned in your first interview that you ‘didn’t see the point’ in school while you were there. Why do you think you felt like this and do you see a point in school and education now?’

Using open ended questioning, the researcher was able to gain a clearer idea of the ways in which youth offenders perceived their experiences of education, and more importantly, focus on specific issues raised by the participants themselves. This may help to raise awareness of children/youths at risk of offending behaviour in the future, in other words it works at a preventative level.

### 3.3. Analysis and Epistemological Position

The researcher analysed these responses by using Thematic Analysis. The transcripts were suitable for this type of analysis due to the fact that the researcher sought to explore the answers to semi-structured, open-ended questions. Therefore themes could be identified from participants' responses. Although questions asked were framed using SIT (e.g. questions regarding peer influence and feelings towards teachers and academic success etc), the specific themes arising from the questions, was based on the data itself rather than being pre-conceived by the researcher (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The researcher was cautious when interpreting the data and ensuring trustworthiness of her interpretation was an important part of the analysis process (see below).

Transcripts were analysed in turn, and unlike Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and Grounded Theory, Thematic Analysis is not wedded to any pre-existing theoretical framework and can therefore be used within different theoretical frameworks.

The researcher had set out a theoretical framework to work within (SIT), and this was described by King (2004) as '*template analysis*' because the researcher had a set of predetermined themes based on SIT. However, the researcher was aware that such preconceptions could have resulted in a biased view of some aspects of the data and potentially caused her to ignore aspects of the data containing alternative important themes (Robson, 2011). Due to this reason, she coded using Inductive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), where codes and themes emerged purely from the researcher's interaction with the data (bottom-up approach).

The researcher made a significant decision related to the interpretation of data. Boyatzis (1998) distinguished between the level at which the themes were identified, either at a semantic/explicit level or at a latent/interpretative level. The researcher chose to identify themes based on latent thematic analysis because when the researcher began

to identify or examine underlying ideas, assumptions, conceptualisations and ideologies (in this case SIT and possible alternative theories), they were theorised in light of the way in which they shape or inform the semantic content of the data. For latent thematic analysis, interpretative work was involved, and this resulted in descriptive information and information from the participants themselves, which is already theorised (SIT and possible alternative theories and ideas).

This form of analysis also fitted with constructivist epistemology. When searching for evidence of SIT, the researcher adopted this epistemological position because broader structures, such as information regarding social influence, were theorised as underpinning what was articulated in the data. From a constructivist point of view, the participants' perspectives of their experiences of education, were socially produced, rather than existing intrinsically to begin with, and the researcher focused on the socio-cultural context and structural conditions that enabled the individual accounts, rather than focusing on individual psychologies and motivation.

However, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, although constructivism was the researcher's initial position, she chose to adopt a critical realist position in which overarching grand theories (in this case social psychological theories) could be replaced by more tentative explanations of why things happen in a certain way (Matthews, 2010). She was open to the understanding that although SIT may exist within the data and provide important meaning to the way youth offenders describe their experiences of education, the world consists of structures (the context) that can give rise to processes (mechanisms) which in turn, can lead to certain outcomes. In this sense, SIT may exist as one of the mechanisms that led to outcomes, such as negative ideas about education and subsequent delinquent behaviour. However, the researcher was open to the idea that there may be alternative mechanisms or aspects of the context which were not related to SIT, ensuring that her approach and findings were not pre-conceived. A search for mechanisms provided a cumulative understanding of complex social interventions (Pawson, 2006), and helped account for why things happen as they do with regard to how and why education affects delinquent behaviour, thus helping to improve theory in this particular area.

Thematic analysis was also a suitable methodology because unlike other methods, it is used to identify themes across the whole data set, not only from the individual

transcripts, in order to verify whether there were themes that were common to all, even though the participants may have had contrasting experiences. This is related to how thematic analysis differs from IPA. When using IPA, interpretation of data is based on individual case studies, and although the researcher was open to discussing important individual themes/sub-themes arising from individual participants (which thematic analysis also allows), she was mainly concerned with identifying themes across the whole data set.

The researcher recorded codes across the data set in the margins of the transcripts and then attempted to identify themes which also included sub themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). These codes were highlighted on the participants' transcripts (e.g. 'found work hard'). These were then clustered together to form key sub-themes (e.g. 'individual awareness and understanding of own academic needs'), and then clustered again further to form main themes. These provided exploratory and descriptive data which was both inductive and deductive in nature. A summary table was then provided showing codes, sub-themes and themes with reference to quotes. This provided evidence and support for cluster areas identified (see appendix 9).

In order to explore the main research question, the researcher included in the findings chapter a 'generative causation model' suggested by Robson (2011). Fitting with realist construction, this model illustrated that there are mechanisms involved when understanding outcomes. The researcher adapted this model to illustrate the complex interaction of variables found (including perception of education) leading to the outcomes (delinquent behaviour in education and in the 'real world') found in this research.

#### 3.4. Strengths and Limitations of the Design and Analysis Method

As a researcher, it is important to consider both the strengths and limitations of the design and analysis used for the research thesis. This allows us to fully understand why the methods adopted were suitable for the research, and also how to understand how far the results can be generalised based on the limitations, taking into account reliability, validity and the epistemological position of the researcher.

### 3.4.1. Ensuring Trustworthiness in the Interpretation of Data

The interview questions, which were created by the researcher (see appendix 7), were also reviewed by two other Trainee Educational Psychologists and a qualified Educational Psychologist.

The researcher presented these three other professionals with the research questions and described the methodology. The researcher then asked the professionals to focus on the interview questions and consider whether by asking the questions stated within it, she would be able to explore the research questions. She also asked these professionals to consider whether any of the questions were 'leading' in any way. The three professionals (questioned independently) all stated that they felt that the questions were appropriate for an initial interview and would provide a basis for exploration of the research questions.

When the transcriptions were available, the same three professionals were approached again and asked to read through the interviews. They were asked whether they felt that the questions asked in the second interviews were appropriate in terms of extending and exploring the data collected during the first interviews, and whether these were appropriate questions to ask, bearing in mind the main research question and sub-questions.

The three professionals all agreed independently that the questions were appropriate and that by asking the youth offenders these, the researcher would gain rich information regarding the participants' perception of their experiences in education.

Asking these professionals allowed for quality and appropriateness during the researcher's consideration of the main research question and increased the validity of the methodology.

The researcher also considered data interpretation by consulting with a research professional within the University of East London in order to gain advice and support on how to code and theme the data across the data set. Both advice and support from this research professional and the TEPs and EP stated previously, were taken into consideration when carrying out thematic analysis during this research.

In addition to ensuring trustworthiness during data analysis, it was also appropriate to ensure that trustworthiness of the data was considered during the data collection stage by asking the participants themselves whether information they were communicating was being interpreted accurately. The researcher felt that the interview would be an appropriate opportunity to verify this. She used questions throughout the interviews to check participant perspective such as, ‘I understand you feel... because... Is this correct?’ (Rogers, 1951). This reduced the chance of inaccurate interpretation by the researcher and strengthened the validity of the research.

### 3.4.2. Limitations

A key limitation of the research design, specifically in the use of interviews, is that expectancy effects could have occurred. Although the participants involved in the data collection were not given the research questions (as this could have influenced their responses), they were informed that the researcher was interested in their experiences of education and how it may or may not have led them into offending behaviour (see child/young person information letter appendix 4). Due to ethical considerations, it was necessary for the participants involved to be aware of the research title and the main area of investigation (appendix 4), and this could have led to expectancy effects depending on what the participants may have thought were appropriate and desirable answers.

Questions during the second interview in particular, could also have led to expectancy effects because these questions were tailored to the individual experience. To counteract this potential effect, some questions (such as ‘you mentioned in your first interview that... what was this like for you?’) were worded in a way that were open-ended and so participants would have had less of an idea of what they thought the researcher wanted to gain from their response, as opposed to questions such as ‘Do you feel that the group influenced the behaviour that you described, at school?’ Some questions such as this, were more direct, and although these were deemed appropriate with regard to gaining information about individual perception of the impact of peer influence, these may have also influenced the direction of responses given, due to demand characteristics. For example, participants may have thought that they should answer ‘yes’ if they felt that this is what was required of them, or ‘no’ if they did not want to show the researcher that the group had influenced them in any way (social desirability).

Throughout the interviews, the researcher was aware of possible participant effects and considered this as a methodological limitation.

The language used by the researcher is important when considering participant effects. Indeed, one disadvantage of using thematic analysis (as opposed to other qualitative methods such as discourse analysis) is that it does not allow the researcher to make claims about language use, or other more specific aspects of speech. In this case, the data set revealed themes across the data which were interpreted by the researcher when focusing on content of the transcripts, rather than specific non-verbal aspects of language such as the tone and pitch of the participants' speech.

In addition, another disadvantage of using thematic analysis as a method of analysing data, is that it could be considered subjective. The researcher's critical realist position attempted to account for this as it acknowledged that her preconceived ideas regarding social influences, may have resulted in a biased interpretation of the findings. The researcher therefore attempted to remain subjective when analysing the data.

### 3.5. Participants

The research was carried out with seven youth offenders: five males and two females who had recently received either referral orders or recreation orders for a range of offences including theft, affray and possession of drugs. Participants were aged between 14 and 18 years. Participants were chosen from this age range for the following reasons.

Firstly, participants of this age would have had a considerable amount of experience in education (school, pupil referral units or other settings) and therefore would have had sufficient time to reflect on their experiences.

Secondly, at this age, participants could also focus on their long term-plans, and in terms of their education, whether they had chosen or would choose to continue with this (post-16), or seek employment. If they chose the latter for example, it was interesting to discuss reasons for this and if or how delinquent behaviour may affect finding work.

Finally, participants at this age who have received referral or recreation orders were also particularly vulnerable. They were considered 'at risk' of receiving prison sentences, and the researcher was particularly interested in this group because of the impact that

this vulnerability may have had on the participants' perceptions of their educational experiences.

Initially, the researcher aimed to gain access to all seven participants by visiting youth offending teams across the local authority. A meeting was held with a senior manager of the youth offending team and the research aims, questions and methodology were described to him. He put the researcher in contact with a youth worker. Four youth offenders (whom the youth worker was supervising) were approached and asked if they would be interested in taking part in the research and would be given a voucher to spend as a token of thanks for their involvement in the research. They agreed and in reference to appendix 2 (which describes the background of the participants in more detail) these were participants 1, 2, 3 and 4 (three males aged and a female, aged between 17 and 18). The remaining three participants were accessed during a visit to the local authority's Pupil Referral Unit after the researcher held a meeting with the manager to discuss the research aims, questions and methodology. In reference to appendix 2, these were participants number 5, 6, and 7 (two males and a female aged between 14 and 15).

The table below summarises the participant number, age and gender of each of the participants.

Table 2: Participant Information

Participant number	Age in Years	Gender
1 (DN)	18	M
2 (CG)	18	M
3 (KN)	18	M
4 (KEF)	17	F
5 (KP)	14	M
6 (KL)	15	M
7 (EY)	14	F

Due to the nature of the selection of participants, the sample was not random as participants were carefully selected. As described, participants were required to fit particular criteria: youth offenders who were at risk of imprisonment (i.e. currently serving court orders), aged between 14 and 18 years and lived within the area of the local authority. The sample was a selective and purposeful sample of youth offenders who met the criteria and agreed to take part in the research. This has implications when generalising findings and was discussed in the discussion chapter.

### 3.6. Procedure for Data Collection and Time-Line

The following table shows the procedure that the researcher undertook when arranging and collecting data.

Table 3 Arranging and Collecting Data

Date	Action
February-March 2010	Meeting held between researcher and Education and Employment Co-ordinator, Youth Offending Service
May 2010	Ethical Approval received from Ethics Board at University of East London
July 2010	Parental consent gained from parent of participant 4. Participant consent obtained from participants 1, 2, 3 and 4.  First interviews held with participants 3 and 4
August 2010	First interviews held with participants 1 and 2  Second interviews held with participants 1, 2 and 3
October 2010	Meeting held between researcher and manager of PRU in un-named local authority
December 2010	Parental and participant consent gained from participants 5, 6 and 7.  First interviews held with participants 5, 6 and 7
January 2011	Second interview held with participant 5
February 2011	Second interview held with participant 6

### 3.7. Environment during Data Collection

Participants were interviewed in different conditions and settings, an aspect of the research which was not ideal. Initially, the researcher planned to interview all participants at the Youth Offending Service in the local authority. Unfortunately, the researcher was informed that there was rarely access to a suitable interview room at this service and at the Connexions premises (where most of the participants meet with their key workers). For this reason, participants 1 and 2 were interviewed at their residential home, participants 3 and 4 were interviewed at the Young People Centre in the local authority, participant 5 was interviewed at the PRU and interviews with participants 6 and 7 were held in their homes. The reason participants 6 and 7 were interviewed at their homes was because both of these participants did not attend the PRU regularly, and were reluctant to attend for the purpose of the interview.

Although differing conditions could be regarded a limitation of the research, the researcher was aware that most of the participants would have otherwise been extremely difficult to access, and data collection would have been more difficult if she was not flexible when considering the environment.

### 3.8. Ethics Procedure

Ethical approval for the research thesis was awarded in May 2010 by the University of East London Ethics Board. The following section will consider some of the main ethical considerations and procedures undertaken. These include; gaining informed consent, ensuring anonymity, ensuring confidentiality and informing participants of risk of harm.

#### 3.8.1. Informed Consent

For five of the seven participants, signed consent was gained from a parent/caregiver as the participants were under 18 (see appendix 6). An explanation stating the research aims and what would be expected from their child was provided. The researcher also obtained written consent from all seven of the participants. The consent form was read by the participants and their parents, and if they were unable to read it, the information was read to them by the researcher in order to ensure that both participants and parents/caregivers were clear of the research aims and procedures prior to signing the form.

### 3.8.2. Ensuring Anonymity

All participants were informed that their identities would be anonymous during the write up of the research thesis, and that the recordings would be stored in a lockable cabinet so that it could not be accessed by anyone but the researcher.

Any descriptions or personal details which the researcher felt may have identified any of the participants were not included in the final report.

### 3.8.3. Ensuring Confidentiality

The participants were informed that all information and opinions gained from the participants would remain strictly confidential and duly confined to the research thesis.

The transcripts of the interviews would be read by the researcher and up to three other professionals during the analysis stage. They would be transcribed by the researcher and the researcher's assistant

The participants were also informed that other records such as consent forms and hand written notes taken during interviews would be stored in a lockable cabinet in order to avoid disclosure. When participants gave their consent, they were informed of their right to confidentiality. Information would only be disseminated by the researcher if she was told something that she felt would endanger the young person or if she was informed of an un-known criminal act.

### 3.8.4. Risk of Harm

Information referring to protection from harm was included in the consent form. Some of the questions asked during the interview process touched upon sensitive issues and so participants were informed that they were not obliged to answer these if they felt uncomfortable in doing so. Participants were also advised by the researcher that they were free to withdraw from either of the interviews at any time should they wish to, without needing to give a reason.

The participants who took part in the research were vulnerable because they are youth offenders who had experienced difficulties in the past regarding various areas of their lives (e.g. socially and domestically). They were all individuals at potential at risk of

imprisonment, and for these reasons, the researcher was particularly sensitive to this when asking certain questions related to this (see example of transcript in appendix 8).

### 3.9. Context of Researcher

The researcher was aware that she introduced herself to participants as a Trainee Educational Psychologist and that the term 'psychologist' may have initially meant that participants felt slightly apprehensive about the research and its purpose. As explained above, the researcher clearly stated her area of interest and the purpose of the research. In addition, the researcher also revealed possible implications for findings (providing catalytic validity) and stated that the research would potentially be published.

The researcher was also aware of her own background and that although she was a final year Trainee Educational Psychologist, there were also limitations related to her own life experiences that may have influenced her thoughts and ideas towards answers offered by participants during interviews.

As stated, the researcher had experience in working with adult offenders and whilst doing so, she observed many negative attitudes towards education (in terms of academic achievement). Furthermore, when speaking in depth to an acquaintance who had some experience living in several prisons as a youth offender, the researcher gained evidence from him (which supports the statistical evidence discussed in the introductory chapter and the research evidence in the literature review) that suggested that there were likely to be many youth and adult offenders in prison who have negative perceptions of their educational experiences particularly in terms of academic success and/or social experiences.

The researcher was aware that these sources of information and experiences may have shaped her preconceived ideas. However, she formed an initial assumption that the experience of education itself (academic achievement and social experience) may impact upon an individual's identity in a way that could influence the individual's decision to engage in delinquent behaviour and criminal acts.

The researcher has also had experienced working as a primary school teacher in a mainstream school, an assistant in a special needs school, and as an Assistant and Trainee Educational Psychologist. Through working in these varied settings within a range of communities, and with many school-age pupils, the researcher had extensive

experience of observing the importance of social pressures, and had seen that these pressures have on many occasions, influenced the behaviour of young children and young adults in a way that could be regarded as 'socially undesirable'.

As a result of these experiences, the researcher formed a view which could be regarded as 'socially constructivist'. Meanwhile, she was also aware of the ways in which her experiences and epistemological position may also biased her thoughts and ideas throughout the data collection and analysis process. For this reason, the researcher sought to be more receptive to alternative ideas, therefore adopted a critical realist epistemological position. The researcher attempted to account for these possible biases resulting from her prior experiences, and this is described in detail in the above section entitled 'ensuring trustworthiness in the interpretation of data'.

## **Chapter Four: Findings**

### Chapter Overview

- 4.1 Introduction
  - 4.1.1 Data Analysis Procedure: Thematic Analysis
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- 4.2 Theme One: Formation of Group Norms
- 4.3 Theme Two: Importance of Feeling Accepted
- 4.4 Theme Three: Search for Fun with Like-Minded Peers
- 4.5 Theme Four: Awareness of Individual Identity
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- 4.7 Theme Six: Aspiration, Motivation and the Value of Hindsight
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- 4.9 Using Thematic Analysis to Explore the Research Questions
  - 4.9.1 Exploration of Research Question One
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  - 4.9.4 Exploration of Main Research Question

### **4.1. Introduction**

The following chapter will describe the data analysis procedures using thematic analysis. It will set out which themes and sub-themes were found using inductive analysis.

The findings will be discussed in relation to the research questions which are outlined in section 2.9.2. Exploration of the main research question will be presented using Robson’s (2011) ‘generative causation model.

#### **4.1.1 Data Analysis Procedure: Thematic Analysis**

The twelve transcripts (Five participants gave two interviews each; two participants had one interview each) were read by the researcher and comments relating to the research questions were highlighted. Notes detailing the researcher’s initial thoughts and ideas were made on the transcripts (see appendix 8 for an example).

The researcher transferred the notes into a table (see appendix 9), referencing the participant interview and line number which supported the specified points (these were the ‘codes’). The researcher then grouped the points from each of the different participants into ‘sub-themes’ e.g. ‘impact of change in group on individual behaviour’ (see below for details of sub-themes), and matched these themes to their supporting quotes. This enabled the researcher to group the sub themes into broader themes (see appendices 9 and 10) which not only addressed the research questions, but also provided additional information regarding on the educational experience of the youth offenders interviewed.

The researcher focused on the common sub-themes within the data set (across participants). Although commonality between transcripts was found regarding participants’ experience and views, there were also some important differences found too, particularly in terms of gender and age.

#### 4.1.2 Introduction to Themes and Sub-themes

As discussed in the methodology chapter, inductive thematic analysis was used to identify themes. The researcher searched for codes and themes arising from the data itself with no pre-determined ideas.

Seven main themes and 17 sub-themes were identified across the data set:

Main Theme One: Formation of Group Norms.

Sub-themes a) Change in behaviour due to membership of new friendship group.

b) Group disruption and rule-breaking behaviour.

c) Group negativity towards teachers/authority figures.

Main Theme Two: Importance of feeling accepted.

Sub-themes a) Feeling accepted by peer group unit.

b) Feeling accepted by teachers/authority figures.

Main Theme Three: Search for Fun with Like-Minded Peers.

*This theme provides evidence that individuals chose to engage with a particular group as a result of both an association with group norms and the need for 'fun' experiences.*

Sub-themes a) Feeling alienated from the learning experience: Boredom.

b) Perception of unmet educational needs.

c) Avoid embarrassment in front of peer group.

Main Theme Four: Awareness of Individual Identity.

Sub-themes a) Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons.

b) Individual awareness of teacher perception of group identity, and how this impacted upon individual identity.

c) Individual awareness and understanding of own academic needs.

Main Theme Five: Instability and Reduced Feeling of 'Belonging'.

Sub-themes a) Family factors and instability.

b) Educational factors and instability.

Main Theme Six: Aspiration, Motivation and the Value of Hindsight.

Sub-themes a) Low motivation to engage with education when part of the system.

b) Benefit of hindsight: Feeling regret towards delinquent behaviour.

Main Theme Seven: Difference between Impact of School and 'Real Life' Punishment.

Sub-themes a) Minimal impact of school punishment in changing beliefs or behaviour.

b) 'Real world' punishments matter.

#### 4.2. Theme One: Formation of Group Norms.

It appears from the findings below that the participants in this research, identified strongly with the group norms and the groups that they associated themselves with, and behaved accordingly.

#### 4.2.1. Change in Behaviour Due to Membership of New Friendship Group

It appears that at primary school, the behaviour of the participants was manageable. Interestingly, most of the participants did not seem to associate themselves directly with groups of peers, but rather individual pupils or the year group as a whole. The onset of disruptive and rule-breaking behaviour took place on association with delinquent peer groups.

Speaking about friendship groups in primary school, participants KP and EY made the following comments:

*KP: I didn't have a group really. I was more by myself at primary school....I was a nice little kid back then. I didn't get into trouble. (Interview 1 line 146 KP)*

*EY: I used to hang around with a girl called Claire. We was all good in primary school (laughs). In primary school, you was good. (Interview 1 line 199 EY)*

Most of the participants could not remember any significant behaviour problems in primary school and the following quotes provide evidence for the deterioration of behaviour which started when they made new friendships in secondary school.

*CG: I had a big group of friends, ones that wanted to do well in school. I followed them..I used to get on with my work and that up until Year 10... I found a new group of friends. (Interview 1 lines 89, 91, 95 CG)*

When asked what changed, CG replied:

*CG: I basically started getting into trouble and, you know, being abusive towards teachers. (Interview 1 lines 97-98 CG)*

During an interview with KL, when asked whether he got into trouble in primary school, he replied:

*KL: A little bit, just swearing or something like that*

Researcher: *Just a little bit of trouble but not too much?*

*KL: No (Interview 1 lines 128 – 132 KL)*

Asked about his friendship group in secondary school, he stated the following:

*KL: Just used to go around the school being naughty. (Interview 1 line 142 KL)*

It is argued that most of the participants underwent significant behavioural changes during secondary school which seemed to be directly associated with joining a new friendship group. The changes in behaviour impacted upon these participants in a negative way, marking the onset of rule breaking, misbehaviour and disruption in lessons.

#### 4.2.2. Group Disruption and Rule-Breaking Behaviour

For most of the youth offenders interviewed, there were group norms (in the groups that participants were associated with), which involved behaving in a disruptive way and breaking school rules.

As noted, prior to becoming a member of these groups in secondary school, these participants did not report extreme behavioural problems in their primary schools.

The following quotes provide evidence of such behaviour:

*CG: Sort of, you know, crowds of friends. I used to hang around with the ones that were idiots you know. I always used to mess about and that. (Interview 1 line 22 CG)*

When asked how individual group members performed academically, KP responded by describing the following group-norm:

*KP: They were like, the head kid in the group was the naughty kid in class really. Like they were like..erm...make the teacher angry and proper stress them out and all that. Like the whole group was a naughty kid sort of group. (Interview 1 lines 230-232 KP)*

He referred to the group as a 'naughty kid sort of group'. This shows that the group norm was to behave in a way which members of the group understood as 'naughty'. In this setting, it involved breaking rules and disrupting learning as described above.

When asked what kind of group KN associated with in secondary school, and whether it was the type of group that got into trouble, KN replied:

*KN: Yes. All the time, everyday... We fight coz every time someone got gobby, we used to hit one of them, then they tell a teacher and we used to get in trouble for that. There*

*was a shed behind the back garden. We used to sit there smoking green all the time.*

(Interview 1 line 84, 88-90 KN)

Interestingly, KN uses the term “we” when describing group behaviour. This shows that KN associated himself with the group and followed the group norm of behaving in a delinquent way at school and showing disregard for rules.

This research found that amongst all of the responses, there was a sense of disregard for rules and regulations in school. Rather than follow rules, the participants interviewed seemed to prefer behaving in accordance with the norm of their groups. Interestingly, the norm for all participants was to behave in a socially unacceptable way. The above findings show that the individual behaviour of the interviewees is an effect (as opposed to a cause) of group norms. This is because when participants associated themselves with the groups described above, their individual behaviour changed in line with the group norm. The reasons for this will be discussed in the ‘search for fun’ section.

#### 4.2.3. Group Negativity Towards Teachers

The feeling of negativity towards certain teachers at school was a common sub-theme of all of the youth offenders interviewed. This formed part of the group norm and, as with the previous two sub-themes, generated in-group activation. Group behaviour in lessons with these teachers coincided with the group norm.

When asked about the group’s attitude towards teachers, CG replied:

*CG: Erm, they didn’t care you know, they just shoved them out the way... I don’t know, like pieces of dirt really...always laughing at them and shouting abuse.* (Interview 1 lines 147, 149, 151 CG)

When asked if CG also behaved in this way, he responded affirmatively.

DN and KEF spoke also spoke about the whole group attitude towards teachers:

*DN: Some of them hit teachers so their attitude wasn’t too great either.* (Interview 1 line 139 DN)

*KEF: Yeah we used to slag the teachers off...all of them.* (Interview 1 line 202 KEF)

When asked whether the presence of the group influenced the feelings that KN had towards teachers, he agreed and when asked to explain this, stated the following:

*KN: I don't know...erm...I used to get annoyed with them, so...so did my mates. We used to gang up on them and take the piss out of them in lessons and that...and carried on like that. In the lessons, we just carried on doing it. They didn't do anything about it. There were too many of us. (Interview 2 lines 71, 71, 74, 75 KN)*

It is particularly interesting that KN described his attitude towards teachers as influenced by the group as it shows the powerful effects that this group norm had on KN's attitude, his subsequent behaviour towards teachers and ultimately, his learning. He describes the group behaviour in a way that indicated the group was a powerful unit which teachers could do nothing about due both to its size and unity of attitudes.

This demonstrates that KN viewed the group as a powerful force. Moreover, the emphasis on 'control' (i.e. controlling lessons in a way that was disruptive and interfered with learning) is likely to be an attractive feature which encouraged KN (and other participants) to join their chosen groups. This will be discussed in more detail when considering reasons for the behaviour described above (in the section entitled 'search for fun').

#### 4.3. Theme Two: Importance of Feeling Accepted

The youth offenders interviewed all stated that they felt it was important to feel accepted, respected and valued by both the peer group and significant authority figures. Participants categorised themselves and compared themselves with peer groups and significant authority figures provides.

##### 4.3.1. Feeling Accepted by the Peer Group Unit

There was a commonality amongst the males in the sample that feeling accepted as part of a friendship group and gaining the approval of group members (through behaving in ways in-line with group norms), was important and also crucial in enhancing in-group activation. In addition, males in the sample compared their groups with the out-group. Interestingly, this effect was not found for the females in the sample.

Participants KP and KN felt that being part of the group was beneficial to them because they felt protected from peers and teachers who were not in their group (i.e. the 'out

group’). The following quotes provide evidence for in-group activation when participants compare themselves to the ‘out-group’.

When asked what his group was like, KP replied:

*KP: ...they were more there if something got out of hand, like big groups were fighting, they would come in and help and that sort of stuff.* (Interview 1 line 188-189 KP)

KP’s comment shows that he felt that the group was there for him if he needed physical support in fights against members of the out-group.

Similarly, participant KN spoke about the kind of trouble that he and his group got into at school:

*KN: Well, we fight coz every time someone got gobby we used to hit one of them, then they tell a teacher and we used to get in trouble for that.* (Interview 1 line 88 KN)

*KN: There was about six of us, we used to go around the school. We used to linger round the school. They used to look at us and we used to just hit them.* (Interview 2 line 6-7 KN)

KN spoke about the group in a way which demonstrated group alliance and unity to which he felt strongly connected. Significantly, he used the word ‘we’ when speaking about the in-group and ‘they’” when describing the out-group.

The quotes above show evidence of members of in-groups engaging in fighting in order to protect members against out-groups. The in-groups seemed to be aware that fighting as a unit was inevitably more successful than individual attempts to fight or start fights with others. Fighting (as discussed above) formed an integral part of the group norm and individuals within the group joined in when required in order to protect the group. This behaviour appears to be part of this norm and enhances acceptance within the group and therefore a sense of ‘belonging’.

CG referred to the need to feel accepted by his friendship group particularly when speaking about his academic difficulties at school. When CG joined his group, his academic progress deteriorated. When asked how he felt about this, he stated the following:

CG: *At the time, I thought it was... I don't know, it made me look cool, yeah.* (Interview 1 line 139 CG)

CG placed emphasis on group approval and the desire to 'look cool' in front of his friends in spite of the repercussions for his academic performance.

The results demonstrated a gender difference in the sample. Both of the female participants interviewed (KEF and EY) did not speak about the importance of receiving approval from their groups.

They spoke about their behaviour at school in a way that appeared to be independent of group behaviour/norms.

When speaking about her academic performance at school and asked whether the group influenced her behaviour during lessons, EY replied:

EY: *Sometimes, it depends what mood I'm in. If I'm in my little mood, I'll just be annoying...If I haven't eaten or something, then I'll just be in a horrible mood..I'll argue with everyone at school.* (Interview 1 lines 290, 294, 298 EY)

Participant EY was therefore influenced by group behaviour only 'sometimes' and more often, her behaviour was as a result of her own individual reasons (such as hunger or fatigue). EY did not view herself as part of a group unit and when asked about whether she was a leader within the group, capable of influencing group decisions, she stated:

EY: *There isn't really a group really. We're all just friends, so no.* (Interview 1 line 311 EY)

This quote is revealing. Unlike the majority of the males who for different reasons, viewed the group as an important unit in which they required approval and acceptance within the group, EY did not consider herself part of the group/unit, although she perceived the people that she spent time with at school as her 'friends'.

The other female participant (KEF) also displayed a similar attitude towards school. She stated that she did not feel influenced by her group. When asked whether the leaders of her group tried to influence her she replied:

KEF: *They tried to...But didn't listen to them.* (Interview 1 lines 99, 101 KEF)

KEF also spoke about her dislike for working at school and when asked if her group were also like this at school, she responded negatively. (Interview 1 line 169 KEF).

The researcher then asked if she behaved in a delinquent way by herself at school. KEF replied:

KEF: Yeah. (Interview 1 line 173 KEF).

The responses given by both females (EY and KEF) showed that they did place importance on gaining acceptance or approval from their friendship groups. Moreover, the strong unity discussed by the males, did not seem to influence EY or KEF's behaviour and responses to learning at school. Instead, they spoke about their individual dislike for work and other factors (aside from the group) which influenced their disengagement and delinquent behaviour at school.

#### 4.3.2. Feeling Accepted by Teachers/Authority Figures

Although the two female participants did not discuss the importance of feeling accepted by the peer group, they agreed with the males in the sample that it was important to gain approval and feel accepted by certain teachers or an authority figure. The importance of adult approval impacted upon both attitude and behaviour towards learning at school.

After describing how she felt as though her teachers at school picked on her unfairly and that they 'twisted' her words, EY stated that she liked youth worker Anne, who she sees as a result of her referral order.

*EY: I have to meet Anne up once a week but I like seeing Anne anyway...just talk to her sometimes or go out for a drink or something.* (Interview 1 lines 469, 477 EY)

It appears that EY felt accepted and relaxed with Anne even though she is an authority figure. EY did not misbehave or treat Anne as she did her teachers (described earlier in the interview).

KEF spoke in detail about her first day at college. She gave reasons for her negativity towards teachers. It was clear that she felt disrespected by authority figures because she felt that they did not approve of her or identify with her. She described how she was asked to fill out paperwork and then when this was completed, was given a board game to play with her friend. KEF felt angry about this and, consequently used this event as a

reason to not go back to college because she felt patronised by the authority figures there. When asked how she felt in this setting, she replied:

KEF: *Child, like a little baby.* (Interview 1 line 266 KEF)

Participant KN described a particular lesson that he engaged in. When asked to speak about this particular lesson in more depth, KN spoke fondly of his teacher and emphasised his relaxed state of mind. His calm attitude and engagement in this lesson appeared to be a consequence of feeling that this particular teacher accepted and approved of him as an individual. He stated:

KN: *I don't know, you could have a laugh with him..I didn't mind that.* (Interview 1 line 152 KN)

On the other hand, when speaking about the other lessons, KN showed a lack of engagement and his reason for this was because of his feelings towards the teachers in these particular lessons. Unlike the teacher whom he described above, KN spoke about other teachers in a way which implied that he could not relax because he did not feel 'at ease' with them. Instead, he felt pressured and stressed and thus he did not work during these lessons (instead he engaged in a search for fun as described below).

KN: *I didn't do no work. Most of them were quite stressy...stressy teachers really...kept going on at you.* (Interview 1 lines 156, 158, 160 KN)

According to KN's explanation of the difference between the lessons in which he was prepared to work hard and those in which he was not, one major factor influencing this was whether he felt that he could relax with teachers (i.e. feel that he could 'joke' with them, that they identified with him and approved of him), rather than teachers who focused solely on the pupils completing work.

KP identified one key factor which he felt would discourage him from joining in with the delinquent behaviour of his friendship group in certain classes: whether he felt respected by the teacher in charge of the lesson (or not). Interestingly, according to KP, this feeling appeared to over-ride any group norms. When asked if his friendship group played a role in his change of behaviour, KP replied:

KP: *Not really sure because I just hang around with them and they mess around sometimes and I don't even, like, join in so I suppose, like it's to do with the teachers'*

*respect. If a teacher respects me, I'll have respect for them. But in N secondary school, like the teachers were all like, 'sit down do the work' and all that sort of stuff. They don't even say please or thank you after anything you do or say to them like that. So it's probably the teachers' attitude towards me that helps me in the school.* (Interview 2 lines 253 – 258 KP)

DN's reasoning for truanting from lessons in his secondary school was due to the feeling that the teachers in that particular school did not have time for him. DN felt that attention and/or acceptance/respect was needed before he could relax and feel ready to engage in these lessons. In this sense, he self-categorised himself as not identifying with teachers. In other words, he viewed teachers as the 'out-group'.

In comparison, when he described the Pupil Referral Unit's teachers, whom he felt respected and accepted by, he spoke about engaging more in these lessons in comparison to lessons in his secondary school.

*DN: I didn't go to lessons because I felt that I didn't get to know them (teachers), and they didn't get to know me...And then the PRU, they weren't teachers to us, they were more like friends.* (Interview 1 lines 126-127, 122-123 DN).

Another important factor within the sub-theme of feeling an association with certain teachers (i.e. identifying them as members of the in-group), and feeling accepted by authority figures, was participants need to feel that teachers understood their learning needs and made adjustments accordingly. For example, when speaking about his ADHD, CG stated that he particularly liked a certain teacher and worked hard in his lessons because this teacher recognised CG's need to keep active and practical during lessons. When asked why he liked certain teachers and what helped him during lessons, CG replied:

*CG: They knew my learning style and that.* (Interview 2 line 40 CG)

When probed further on this and asked if he felt he would have performed better academically at school if all lessons were like this, CG stated:

*CG: I think so, yeah. If it was more hands on, I would have done, yeah. Definitely.* (Interview 2 line 59 CG)

KP also discussed the need for certain teachers to understand his dyslexia. He expressed concerns that one of the reasons that he misbehaved in lessons in which he felt that teachers did not account for this, was because he was embarrassed to ask for help in class (as described below). Misbehaving in the presence of teachers that he felt did not identify with him or understand his needs seemed to be a strategy to avoid engaging in lessons. However, he also stated that if certain teachers had understood his dyslexia fully and made adjustments for this, he would have felt less likely to misbehave in lessons.

*KP: Maybe sort of help in lessons like during my old school like they had like a teacher would take out some kids who had like proper disabilities like dyslexia and stuff like that. But since I didn't have that, they couldn't put me in that group. I reckon that would have probably helped me because it's more sort of stable environment (Interview 2 lines 378 – 381 KP)*

Discussions of the factors which could have prevented participants from behaving in the way that they did at school demonstrates a need from participants to gain approval and acceptance from significant adults.

A further example of this was when CG spoke positively about the mentors who supported him in his residential home. Regarding his behaviour and where it might have led, the participant was asked what had helped him to reframe and reconsider it. He replied:

*CG: I dunno, the support and that they give me here. (Interview 2 lines 145-146 CG)*

He was asked to think about school in retrospect and consider whether having the opportunity to speak to mentors like those in his residential home would have helped him at school (considering his behavioural difficulties). CG replied:

*CG: ...do you know that would have made me feel a bit better inside, in school you know... I think I would have learnt a bit earlier. I wouldn't be here now, definitely not. (Interview 2 lines 168, 172 CG).*

Similarly, when discussing what could have prevented him feeling angry at school when being bullied, DN described the need to feel emotionally supported at school. He answered,

DN: *Just a one-to-one chat...Helping me to get it out.* (Interview 2 lines 76, 78 DN)

As discussed earlier, DN's choice of group was mainly due to the need to feel protected against peers who he felt were bullying him throughout his schooling. By asking DN these questions, helped him to reframe and think about what he could have done to help him through these difficult times, instead of making the choice to associate with a delinquent group. DN felt as if he could not speak to any adults at school. Through the process of self-categorisation, DN did not feel that he could identify himself with these adults. Ultimately, speaking about his feelings with them was therefore difficult for him.

Interestingly, DN was then asked if this type of support would have helped him with his misbehaviour at school. He replied,

DN: *More than likely.* (Interview 2 line 80 DN)

#### 4.4. Theme Three: Search for Fun with Like-Minded Peers

This theme considers whether individual behaviour is a result of identifying with social norms or whether this behaviour is simply an opportunistic way of seeking out 'fun' experiences in larger groups.

The findings suggest that these two themes could be linked, i.e. that there is a relationship between the formation of social norms and a search for fun. The findings demonstrate that individuals do not just engage in 'fun' behaviour because of opportunity (as described by the theory), but rather, individuals in the present research sample consciously became members of their chosen groups because they identified with the group norm of engaging in behaviour which they regarded as 'fun'. Reasons for wanting to engage in this group norm are described within the following sub-themes: 'alienation from the learning experience-boredom', 'perception of unmet educational needs' and 'avoiding embarrassment in front of the peer group'.

##### 4.4.1. Alienation from the Learning Experience- Boredom

One theme common to most of the participants interviewed was the sense of boredom that they felt at school and the fact that they did not feel part of the learning experience. Because of this, they sought out groups who possessed an 'attractive' social norm and

this was, engagement in ‘fun’ experiences. Participants identified and associated themselves with this group norm in order to relieve their boredom.

When asked why KN behaved in the way that he did in the group, he replied:

*KN: I'd had enough of school really... Work and the teachers..I just got fed up with it and didn't want to do nothing.* (Interview 1 lines 111, 120, 123 KN)

When asked why he engaged in behaviour in the group which he described as ‘naughty’, KN replied:

*KN: Just a bit bored or something yeah... Yeah just sitting in class for an hour... Yeah for an hour, just boring.* (Interview 1 lines 238, 246, 250 KN)

EY described disruptive behaviour such as fidgeting and turning around to talk to her peers. When asked when she engaged in this behaviour, she replied:

*EY: When I used to get bored.* (Interview 1 line 228 EY)

CG spoke about his behaviour generally in lessons:

*CG: What, in general lessons? I just felt bored, like I wanted to muck about more.* (Interview 1 line 177 CG)

The participants in the sample also identified reasons for their boredom, their choices to belong to certain groups, as well as avoiding work. The following two common sub-themes describe this, whilst both result in the need for engaging in ‘fun’. This need for ‘fun’ describes reasons for engaging in the social norms with their chosen friendship groups at school.

#### 4.4.2. Perception of Unmet Educational Needs

All of the participants described experiences at school when they felt that, for a number of reasons, they could not engage with learning in the particular settings in which they were. Instead, they chose to avoid completing work by associating themselves with groups engaging in the social norm of disruptive behaviour. This norm was acceptable within the group and delinquent behaviour was perceived as ‘fun’ by members of the group (or at least *more* ‘fun’ than engaging in lessons).

Several of the participants argued that the work that they were given at school was too difficult for them and that they did not understand the main teaching points during lessons. Because of this, they chose to avoid conforming to school rules and followed the social norms of their groups instead.

CG felt pressured by school and his mother to do well academically. When asked if he found the work hard, he replied:

*CG: They thought I could achieve more than I really could you know, so they kept pushing me and pushing me to get me to achieve it, and it just wasn't working. I got fed up..Most of it, yeah, put me in higher groups, and didn't work out for me. (Interview 2 lines 26, 27, 29 CG)*

When asked to describe his social group, CG stated:

*CG: It was full of excitement really. (Interview 1 line 129 CG)*

DN stated that he was excluded several times due to his behaviour in the group. When asked to expand upon this, he said:

*DN: Because I didn't know what I was doing in lessons. I would mess about and kick up a fuss and they got annoyed with it so, bye bye. (Interview 1 line 44 DN)*

*KP: And then the lessons I didn't really understand or enjoy I started messing around coz I was bored or something like that. (Interview 1 line 238, 239 KP).*

KP then stated that these were the same lessons in which members of his friendship group also misbehaved, providing evidence for a 'search for fun' achieved through identifying with the group norm in these lessons (Interview 1 line 243 KP).

In addition to the difficulty of the tasks, some participants described the classroom setting as a distraction owing to the number of peers within it, or other individual reasons such as ADHD, which prevented them from focusing on their work. Therefore, some of the participants admitted that they avoided work and engaged in more desirable behaviours in accordance with the social norms of their friendship group.

*EY: I didn't like being in big classes so I couldn't focus...I used to fidget and just used to turn around and talk to other people and stuff. (Interview 1 lines 206, 215 EY)*

Speaking about when his ADHD was diagnosed, CG said:

*CG: Actually it did play a big part. It did help me with practical things, but sitting still and writing, I just couldn't cope with it. (Interview 2 lines 70 – 71 CG)*

When questioned further about the teachers/lessons he felt did not take into account how ADHD affected his learning style and whether it played a part in his misbehaviour, CG stated:

*CG: Yes, definitely, that played a big part in it. (Interview 2 line 88 CG)*

In the quote below, KP directly linked the number of peers in the classroom with his inability to work in this environment, admitting that he was able to distract himself from completing academic tasks because his friends were in the class with him. He was therefore able to engage in the group norm of disruptive behaviour, described in the above sub-theme ('Group disruption and rule-breaking behaviour'), precisely because his friends were present and he could fit into this group norm as an excuse to avoid work.

*KP: All my mates were there, so I started messing around and I couldn't work in a classroom full of other kids too many distractions for me and all that. (Interview 1 lines 93, 94 KP)*

#### 4.4.3. Avoid Embarrassment in Front of Peers

Most of the youth offenders interviewed made an association between engaging in the group norms described in the 'Group disruption and rule-breaking behaviour' sub-theme of this chapter and avoiding feeling embarrassed in front of their peers. Behaving 'in-line' with the group norm could have been a way for group members to 'keep face', avoid feeling embarrassed, and therefore be accepted within the peer group, rather than become a target in school.

The following quotes provide evidence for this sub-theme and show that most of the youth offenders interviewed felt embarrassed to ask for help when they found their academic tasks difficult:

DN: *When I knew what I was doing I got on with it, but when I didn't, that's when I followed them (the group) because I didn't like asking for help.* (Interview 1 lines 104, 105 DN)

When speaking about his friend's academic ability, KL replied:

KL: *They all knew what they were doing.* (Interview 2 line 35 KL)

He was then asked if he ever asked his friends for help when he found work difficult.

KL replied:

KL: *No, I used to just be naughty.* (Interview 2 line 37 KL)

This is interesting because it shows KL's awareness that his friends could have probably helped him when he found work difficult. Despite this awareness, he avoided seeking this help and instead, chose to engage in behaviours in line with group norms in order to feel accepted within the group.

KP also showed that he was embarrassed about his academic ability:

KP: *But in my other school they (teachers) put you on one certain level, and if you can't do it, you have to have like a TA (Teaching Assistant) and I'm not the sort of person to ask for help either...coz like all my mates were in the class as well.* (Interview 1 lines 73, 74, 75, 79 KP)

When asked what he did instead, KP's reply shows the impact of the presence of his peers:

KP: *All my mates went there so I started messing around.* (Interview 1 line 93 KP)

CG spoke about why he decided to change friendship groups. He described how his peers 'picked on' him for doing well academically. He decided to change groups and adjust to a completely different group norm in order to avoid feeling embarrassed of his previous academic expectations. As a result, he felt socially accepted within his friendship group, identified with their group norm and was no longer picked on.

CG: *I used to respect and listen to them (teachers) all the time. Yeah teacher's pet...Yeah, that was another reason why I got fed up.* (Interview 1 lines 142, 144 CG)

#### 4.5. Theme Four: Awareness of Individual Identity

All of the participants spoke about their individual identities whilst the majority were aware of their roles within their respective friendship groups, discussing these in depth. The participants touched upon the reasons and influences for the formation of their own identities. The two sub-themes, 'Individual awareness of a need to feel part of a group for protective reasons' and 'Individual awareness of teacher perception of group identity, and how this impacts upon individual identity' demonstrate the reasons behind the formation of individual identities .

##### 4.5.1. Individual Awareness of a Need to Feel Part of a Group for Protective Reasons

Interestingly, all of the males interviewed considered themselves as having a role to play within the group (either 'follower' or 'leader') and discussed the reasons (either prior to joining the group or after joining the group) for behaving this way.

In discussion of the identification of roles within the group, male participants described how their individual identities, supported the group which operated as a 'protective mechanism' for its members. This need for protection of group members meant that the males could carry out their roles within the group accordingly.

Within this sub-theme, there was an important gender difference as the two females interviewed, did not associate their identities with the group dynamics.

Participant CG described himself as the 'follower' within the group. As mentioned in the 'avoid embarrassment in front of peers' sub-theme, CG referred to several negative events which were the result of him being perceived by peers as 'teacher's pet'. Therefore, CG chose to associate with a specific group because he 'looked up' to them and admired the way in which they behaved at school. The group functioned as a reassuring unit which protected him against being picked on or feeling unhappy and bored when doing well at school. For this reason (due to his experiences described above), he considered his role within the group as that of a 'follower'.

*CG: Well, I looked up to them and thought it was the way to be, so I started messing about myself and left a bad reputation. (Interview 1 lines 121-122 CG)*

Participant DN also discussed his role as 'follower' within group to which he belonged. Like participant CG, DN described feeling weak due to an inability to protect himself

from peers who he felt had ‘bullied’ him (before he joined the group). This need for protection formed a key part of his identity within the group and he therefore chose a friendship group that would stand up for him against the bullies. DN considered himself to be part of the group and behaved in a similar way to them because he perceived his own identity as ‘weak’. In this way, the group operated as a protective mechanism for DN to gain support from his peers against those who were ‘bullying’ him.

Researcher: *Were there certain people in that group that were leaders?*

DN: *Yes*

Researcher: *And you followed those?*

DN: *Yes because he happened to be my best mate* (Interview 1 lines 87-90 DN)

DN: *Yes, they (the group) were there for me. My best mate, the leader of our group, he's the fighter of our group. He got excluded quite a lot...Helping me, helping himself out. He was only a little lad, but he could defend himself. I didn't, so he done it for me.* (Interview 1 lines 161-162, 165-166 DN)

On the other hand, KP and KN identified their roles within the group as being the ‘leaders’ or ‘fighters’ within their groups. KP particularly considered that his role was to protect the group and thus, he behaved accordingly.

When speaking about members ‘outside’ of his group, KP stated the following,

KP: *Erm...it was more like they would start on other parts of the group like the smaller people.*

Researcher: *Uh huh, and then you two, what happened?*

KP: *Yeah, and then like me and (pupil E) moved in and started to like hit people for hitting our people.* (Interview 1 lines 202-207 KP)

KP described his friends within the group as ‘our people’, showing a strong association with the in-group, protecting them against members of the out-group when necessary.

Similarly, KN identified himself as the group’s ‘leader’ and viewed the group as a strong, supportive unit, capable of protecting him if he were ever to get into trouble at

school due to his behaviour (as part of the group). In this sense, being part of the group allowed KN (as well as KP) to assume less responsibility for his behaviour at school.

KN: *Well because I was known at that school so it was like, they hang around with me coz they thought 'oh, he knows the school, he knows his way round' so they used to stick with me. If I got in trouble, they backed me up every time. There was about 15 of us in that school though.* (Interview 2 lines 27-29 KN)

Interestingly, the two females interviewed did not perceive their groups as protective mechanisms (as the males had). Opposing this notion, they both described examples of their own behaviour as the result of their own individual 'identities' and that they were responsible for their own behaviour, aside from the behaviour of the group.

When asked how teachers would describe her, for example, EY replied the following:

EY: *The bitch.*

Researcher: *Really? Anything else?*

EY: *I don't know*

Researcher: *Why do you think they describe you like that? Do you think they think you don't work hard or rude or?*

EY: *I don't know, coz I am*

Researcher: *You think you are one?*

EY: *Only, well it depends, I'm fine some days but then some days I'll go in the worst moods ever.* (Interview 1 lines 351-365 EY)

EY associated her behaviour at school with her own moods which depended on whether she was tired and/or hungry or whether she felt that others were particularly 'stressing her out'. This suggests that EY viewed her behaviour as independent as that of her group. In other words, her behaviour was a result of her own choices and free from group norms/roles. She did not perceive the group to be a protective mechanism.

Similarly, the other female interviewed (KEF) also discussed her own identity in a way that implied that she did not need group protection/reassurance. As mentioned in the 'feeling accepted by the peer group unit' sub-theme, KEF emphasised that she had a

strong individual identity and did not follow group members or associate herself with any specific role within the group. She felt that her behaviour at school and refusal to complete work was a result of the choices which she had made, and that she would face the consequences regardless of whether the group protected her. KEF described how she felt picked on by teachers and only worked hard in lessons in which she felt she needed to, those related to her ambition of working with physically disabled people in the future. When speaking about the one particular subject that she worked hard in, KEF stated the following:

*KEF: Don't know, just liked it coz health and social care, I absolutely loved because I knew that was what I want to be when I was older, work with kids and that, so I knew I had to get that course over and done with. (Interview 1 lines 132 – 134 KEF)*

Unlike the males interviewed in this sample, the two females seemed to take responsibility for their own behaviour and did not attribute a sense of blame to the friendship groups to which they belonged.

#### 4.5.2. Individual Awareness of Teacher Perception of Group Identity, and How This Impacted upon Individual Identity.

Through questioning the participants about group behaviour in lessons, it became clear that disruption and misbehaviour were sometimes due to the youth offenders' perception of teachers' feelings towards the group as a whole. Identification with group norms was prevalent (due to the reasons and processes described above), and individuals within their groups felt that teachers held a negative view of them due to their association with their delinquent friendship groups. In this sense, the individuals were acting in accordance with perceived 'identities' (labels).

The researcher used effective questioning techniques in order to understand how individuals felt that they were perceived by their teachers. They were asked how they thought their teachers would describe them in three words. When asked this, CG made the following comments,

*CG: Er...Mrs M, she describes me as erratic – is that a word? Er yeah erratic, disturbing, and annoying.*

*Researcher: Do you think that's how you were in her lessons?*

CG: *Mmm (nods)* (Interview 1 lines 207-208 CG)

When asked the same question, participant KP replied,

KP: *Erm destructive, not hard working and a sort of bad sort of kid really.* (Interview 1 line 346 KP)

When discussing what he described as ‘naughty’ behaviour at school, KL stated that he felt teachers picked on him because they knew he was ‘naughty’ (based on his association with a group much older than himself his involvement in delinquent behaviours at school). When speaking about teachers’ attitudes towards members of the ‘out-group’ who worked hard, he commented that teachers were ‘nice’ to them. KL was asked whether he felt ‘picked on’ by teachers. He replied:

KL: *They had reason to because I was naughty.* (Interview 2 line 47 KL)

As discussed above, EY felt that teachers perceived her in a negative way (she said that they would describe her as ‘the bitch’). This could have impacted upon her behaviour as she felt labelled by her teachers, and so behaved in a way which she considered to be in line with these perceived views.

Similarly, participant KEF felt that teachers had pre-judged and unfairly labelled her based on her older sister’s behaviour at school. Thus, there could have been a relationship between her perception of what teachers thought of her, and her behaviour at school independent of her friendship group. In other words, her strong refusal to complete her work may have been precisely because she felt teachers possessed negative expectations of her. When asked what sort of comments her group made about the teachers and what the group thought about particular teachers, KEF replied the following:

KEF: *Dicks, no because they do in some ways pick on certain people. My sister’s naughty and when I started they was always funny with me.* (Interview 1 205 – 206 KEF)

#### 4.5.3. Awareness and Understanding of Own Academic Needs

As already mentioned in each of the three sub-themes entitled ‘Feeling accepted by peer group unit’, ‘Feeling accepted by teachers/authority figures’ and ‘perception of unmet

educational needs', all of the participants interviewed, implied that they felt that their individual learning needs had impacted upon their behaviour at school in some way. The researcher highlighted this as a sub-theme within the main theme of 'Individual Identity' because the participants spoke about this without being prompted to do so.

Two of the participants (CG and KEF) stated that they had ADHD (which has implications on concentration during lessons), and participant KL also felt that he needed to stay active in lessons in order to keep focused (see above sections for evidence of this).

Related to difficulties with concentration, participant EY identified a need for a reduction in auditory/visual stimuli in her working environment. When speaking about the schools which made her feel unhappy, EY stated the following:

*EY: Just that there was too many people there, and that I don't like big schools...They made me feel distracted and everything, so it's always like talk into me and like...(Interview 1 lines 431, 435 EY)*

Participants DN, KP, KN and KEF all identified academic difficulties at school and their responses indicated a low academic confidence/self-esteem. This formed part of their identity in addition to their group identities.

Discussing her academic ability, KEF stated that she felt she was:

*KEF: Rubbish... at everything apart from Health and Social Care. (Interview 1 lines 187, 189 KEF)*

When asked about which school he was happiest in, KP made the following statement:

*KP: I'm more happy here. It's more easier. At N secondary school, they couldn't teach to my ability or my levels but here they can. (Interview 1 lines 54-55 KP)*

The participants interviewed were all able to identify aspects of their identities (perception of low academic ability, need for practical activities and low-level stimulation), which were likely to have shaped their negative perceptions of education. These negative perceptions were pre-cursors to friendship group choice and subsequent behavioural difficulties at school (see sub-themes under 'search for fun with like-minded peers' for further explanation of this).

#### 4.6. Theme Five: Instability and Reduced Feeling of ‘Belonging’

A common aspect of all of the youth offenders’ experience was instability. Participants identified instability in two key areas: family background/ living arrangements and schooling.

Although this theme emerged from the data itself, it is hypothesised that these participants experienced a lack of ‘belonging’ in their families and/or educational settings which would have had implications on their emotional well-being at school. This may have contributed to the need to ‘belong’ to feel associated with a friendship group and/or authority figures (as described in the ‘importance of feeling accepted’ theme).

##### 4.6.1. Family Factors and Instability

Participants CG and EY both described the impact of difficult family situations on their emotions, feelings and behaviour at school. When the researcher questioned CG on his change in behaviour at secondary school, he identified several factors underlying this change:

*CG: I got involved in a new group of friends and I was discovered with ADHD and that was also the year that my new dad adopted me so I had a lot going on in my life at the time and you know so er.. I dunno so I guess it all affected me in a way. (Interview 2 lines 5-7 CG)*

It seems that CG’s change in behaviour was due to a combination of factors including making ‘new friends’ (identifying with his new friends and carrying out group norms within the group as described above). He also identified factors such as his adoption and change in family situation which would have also had considerable impact upon his feelings/emotions and thus affected his behaviour in a negative way.

Similarly, EY described the onset of her delinquent behaviour in secondary school, stating that this was due to family problems, notably unstable relationships in this area.

*EY: It was only a period over a year when I wasn’t speaking to my dad really and that was it. (Interview 1 line 176 EY)*

Just as CG described instability in terms of family relationships and the impact that this had on his emotions at school, EY reported a similar situation. In light of this, the onset of their change in emotional state was not associated with joining delinquent peer groups. The impact of peer influence on behaviour increased as a result of these youth offenders' unstable home life and backgrounds.

#### 4.6.2. Educational Factors and Instability

All of the youth offenders interviewed described irregular attendance in their educational settings. This was either due to family relocations, or exclusions (because of behavioural difficulties) or both of these. The researcher recognised that three out of seven of the participants were attending PRUs at the time of interview and in spite of this bias, this sub-theme was considered of crucial importance because it demonstrated that the youth offenders selected had a reduced sense of 'belonging' in their educational establishments due to their low attendance and change of setting.

When asked how many schools he had attended, KN gave the following response:

KN: *Well, I was at four schools...Got kicked out of three, but stayed in one.* (Interview 1 lines 7 and 9 KN)

When asked why he got moved to the PRU from his secondary school, KN stated that he was '*kicked out*'. (Interview 1 line 50 KN)

On the subject of his living arrangements while at school, DN explained:

DN: *My mum didn't want to see me so she chucked me out. My dad chucked me out and now I'm here (in the residential home). Stuck in a mess.* (Interview 1 lines 191-192 DN)

Earlier in the interview, DN described how he had moved from one area of the local authority to another, and also how he had been excluded from both of his schools before starting at the PRU. It is hypothesised that this participant may have felt particularly unstable, not only because of instabilities in his family/home situation, but also because he moved a number of times to various educational establishments.

#### 4.7. Theme Six: Aspiration, Motivation and the Value of Hindsight

Among the youth offenders selected, this study found a key difference in long and short-term thinking in terms of the potential impact and importance of education. Indeed, when inductive TA was used, there was a discernable difference based on the participants' ages. Five (17 and 18 year olds) of the seven participants' discussions regarding the benefit of hindsight, showed that they regretted their past delinquent behaviour, while the two participants still in the education system (aged 14) could not identify any benefits of education and thus could be described as relatively 'short sighted' in their thinking

##### 4.7.1. Low Motivation to Engage with Education when Part of the System

The two younger participants (aged 14) did not have the benefit of hindsight because they were both still in education and had not yet obtained any qualifications at the time of interview. Significantly, the impact of delinquent behaviour/work avoidance did not appear to matter to participants whilst they were in education. This is likely to be because they did not realise the effect such behaviour could have on their aspirations later in life.

When asked about whether he had to sit GCSE examinations imminently, KL (aged 14 years) expressed no interest in school or qualifications.

*KL: I don't know, haven't been for ages. (Interview 1 line 465 KL)*

Similarly, when describing about her journey to school every day, EY focused on how difficult the journey was, using this as a reason for her lack of attendance in her current educational setting. Her response suggests that she was not considering the long-term future or implications:

*EY: Bus took too long to get in, takes three hours to get there and back on the bus each day. And after, it wasn't worth it so I just didn't bother. (Interview 1 lines 82-83 EY)*

There was also a difference in participants' understanding of how to achieve their aspirations. The two 14 year old participants had long term aspirations (career goals), but showed limited awareness of how to achieve these goals..

For example, KL stated that he hoped to become a mechanic, but when asked if he needed any qualifications in order to pursue this, he replied:

*KL: I don't know* (Interview 1 line 477 KL)

On the other hand, DN (aged 18) was aware of both his ambition, and how this could be achieved, even though he displayed low motivation to do so. When speaking about his ambition, DN stated the following,

*DN: Get a driving license, get a van and start my own company... I'm lazy, I need a big kick up the arse, so I can do it.* (Interview 1 lines 239 and 251 DN)

#### 4.7.2. Benefit of Hindsight: Regretting Delinquent Behaviour

One clear commonality of interest amongst the data is that, at the time of interviewing, (in contrast to the two younger participants still in education), the five older participants (aged 17 and 18 and not in education) appeared to regret their past delinquent behaviour at school because they later realised that this had affected their qualifications and career prospects. It was only with the benefit of hindsight that these participants had reached this conclusion, due to being in a position in which they required qualifications to gain employment after leaving school or college.

When describing her school experience, KEF made the following comment:

*KEF: Horrible. I regret it now anyway, at the time, I didn't really care, but now looking back at it, it wasn't worth it not doing it...I got no GCSEs.* (Interview 1 lines 159-160 KEF)

KEF stated that, at the time, she did not care about her behaviour at school and so her thinking was very short-sighted. It was only when she left school and got pregnant that she realised that her behaviour had affected her qualifications, and therefore her career plan. This was especially significant for KEF as she was eight months pregnant at the time of the interview so would have been concerned about being able to provide for her child in the future.

Similarly, KN gave the following answers:

Researcher: *Did you see a point in doing work at school when you were there?*

KN: *Not really.*

Researcher: *Do you see a point now?*

KN: *I do now, later in life. I wish I'd done stuff now.*

Researcher: *Why is that?*

KN: *Because it's hard to find a job.* (Interview 2 lines 47 – 52 KN)

#### 4.8. Theme Seven: Difference between Impact of School and Real Life Punishments

There was a distinct difference found between the impact of punishment (for definition see appendix 1) issued for delinquent behaviour at school compared to punishment issued for delinquent behaviour in the 'real world'. Unless punishments impacted upon aspects of participants' lives that really mattered to them at the time, there was minimal change in the participants' beliefs and/or behaviour.

##### 4.8.1. Minimal Impact of School Punishments in Changing Beliefs or Behaviour

As discussed above, the youth offenders in this research were very 'short-sighted' in their thinking and appeared to be unable (or unwilling) to see past their immediate futures. Similarly, discussions with participants regarding the punishments that they received at school suggested that they had given limited thought as to 'why' these had been given to them and what impact their behaviour at school (either alone or in groups) could have on their futures:

Researcher: *Did the punishments at school matter to you, the punishments you used to receive?*

KP: *No, like they gave up giving me detentions and just got me excluded and that was it.*

Researcher: *Did they matter to you?*

KP: *No.*

Researcher: *So you didn't mind getting excluded?*

KP: *I just see it as getting more sleep really.* (Interview 2 lines 330-339)

In KP's case, the punishments did not matter to him because they had a 'rewarding' effect. KP knew that if he misbehaved at school, it would mean that he did not have to attend anymore and this motivated him to misbehave more. He could not see past the immediate consequences at the time of receiving exclusions.

Similarly, KL offered responses which also reflected KP's thoughts. When asked what punishments he received at school, he replied:

*KL: Detentions, get excluded for a couple of days, get a red card. You put the red card up and they used to let you go out of lessons and stuff like that*

Researcher: *Did those punishments matter to you?*

*KL: No*

Researcher: *Why was this?*

*KL: Don't know. They just didn't bother me really. (Interview 2 lines 102-107)*

The following extract was taken from CG's second interview and is interesting because it shows his disregard for rules and regulations being generalised to the 'real world':

*CG: Because I misbehaved at school and I got used to it, you know I got used to having no consequences and that, and all I got was detentions. I thought that punishments was really nothing and then I come out of school and coz I was so used to it, I started misbehaving out of school and you know, and got a bit violent towards other people and that. (Interview 2 lines 111-115)*

#### 4.8.2. 'Real World' Punishments Matter

In contrast to the above finding, (that punishments seemed to have little impact on the beliefs and behaviour of the youth offenders and even operated as a reward for delinquent behaviour at school in some cases) punishments received in the 'real world' certainly mattered and had repercussions for the individuals interviewed. This was because the punishments that were issued in the 'real world' were perceived as 'harsher' because they impacted directly upon the aspects of participants' lives which really mattered to them.

When asked whether the punishments he received for delinquent behaviour in the real world had an impact on him, KP made the following comment:

*KP: The recreation order hasn't really done much, but the tag has. The tag's like, in a weird way it has shown me not to get in to trouble otherwise I'll stay on tag and have to come in earlier and earlier and then I was thinking I can't really handle that, so I may as well start to buckle down now and..yeah. (Interview 2 lines 370 – 373 KP)*

KP went on to explain that the 'tag' impacted upon his decision to commit future crimes because having to be at home earlier meant that he could not see his girlfriend as much.

When speaking about whether she would commit crimes again, EY made the following comment:

*EY: Yeah, I can't do it I get too paranoid, think that I can't .*

Researcher: *What is it that makes you paranoid? Is it getting trouble with the law more?*

*EY: Yeah, I just can't be bothered to have another referral, not worth it. (Interview 1 lines 462-466 EY)*

EY's comments are suggestive of the referral order's negative impact. Her comment, (that she 'can't be bothered' to receive another one), indicated that the order had been an inconvenience. Having to meet her case-worker weekly meant that her free time was significantly encroached upon. This is another example of how real-world punishments affect the participants' thinking, particularly when considering whether to reoffend and engage in delinquent behaviour again.

Interestingly, when questioned about real-world punishments and whether they mattered, CG gave the following response:

*CG: The punishments started getting harder as I kept going back to court that was the thing, now I'm on conditional discharge for erm...breaking a window in my room and that but erm...next thing I could face prison so I have got to wake up and smell the roses. (Interview 2 lines 139-142 CG)*

The reality of receiving a punishment in the future which could have had significant impact on his life (i.e. prison) had shocked CG into assessing his behaviour and caused him to think twice about committing future offences.

When asked about where his behaviour might have led and what his schools could have done differently in order to help him feel more supported, KN mentioned his brother who had experienced prison life.

*KN: About that...he's been in prison and kept telling me it's not very nice in there, you don't want to go there.*

*Researcher: And do you feel that if you carry on doing this, you'll end up like that?*

*KN: Yes (Interview 2 lines 95 – 100 KN)*

KN's comments emphasised the role his brother had played in helping him realise the potential repercussions of his behaviour. He also indicated that his educational establishments could have made him more aware of these repercussions.

#### 4.9. Using Thematic Analysis to Explore the Research Questions

The themes/sub-themes were identified from the data set, which were then considered in relation to the research questions in order to help understand and make sense of the rich information gained during the investigation.

The researcher will explore the four sub-questions using the themes and sub-themes which emerged from the data set.

##### 4.9.1. Exploration of Research Question One:

*Do youth offenders value education as a meaningful experience in terms of what it can possibly bring to their lives? How does group membership affect this opinion?*

There is an important finding highlighted by Theme Six, ('Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight'), which shows that the selected youth offenders did not view education as a meaningful experience which could add something to their lives, during the period in which they were in education (pre-GCSE level). At the time, it seemed that the group members were following group norms and group members behaved in a

cohesive, delinquent way. By strengthening pre-existing negative views of education, the group had significant impact on individual opinions regarding academic achievement.

However, when the researcher focused on the youth offenders who had left school and were in positions of seeking employment, the researcher found that in retrospect, the youth offenders regretted their school behaviour because they realised that this behaviour had meant that some of them had few qualifications and/or criminal records. They also recognised that this has considerable impact on important life opportunities, such as their eligibility to apply for jobs. As indicated by the data within sub-theme 4.7.2 entitled 'Benefit of hindsight: Feeling regret towards delinquent behaviour', in retrospect, the group members appeared to assume more responsibility for their in-group behaviour.

It is also interesting that when participants were younger (e.g. 14-16 years), even if they had a long term plan (e.g. to become a mechanic), they were not aware of how to reach this goal and thus it is unsurprising that they did not value the academic side of the educational experience. However, the three older participants (DN, CG and KN), who had had experience in seeking unemployment, and also being rejected because of their criminal records, were significantly more aware of how they would achieve career and general life goals. They realised that if they had been more focused on their future plans, they would have been less likely to have engaged in delinquent behaviour at school.

In addition, Theme seven 'Difference between impact of school and real life punishment' also supports the hypothesis that (whilst in education), participants did not value consider it meaningful. As described, all participants made a clear distinction between the impact of punishment at school and the impact of punishment in the real world. Part of the learning experience in education, involves understanding rules and regulations and respecting boundaries. It is clear that the type of punishments received at school did not impact upon participants' lives in a way that mattered to them at the time. Therefore, the punishments shape their future in-group behaviour. On the contrary, irrelevance of the punishments to their lives had the opposite effect: punishments sometimes served as 'reinforcers' as described in sub-theme 4.8.1. 'Minimal impact of school punishment in changing beliefs or behaviour.' This meant

that participants continued to behave in delinquent ways at school, and behaviour became increasingly more extreme.

Participants had not learnt the implications of rule-breaking behaviour at school and thus did not leave school with an awareness of how to behave in socially acceptable ways in the real world. Punishments at school should have served as meaningful experiences in order to help individuals prepare for the consequences of such behaviour in the real world. Unfortunately this was not the case and it was only when the participants in the sample became ‘youth offenders’ and received punishments that really mattered to them (e.g. the ‘tag’ or the threat of prison), that they realised the impact of their behaviour and the implications for their lives.

#### 4.9.2. Exploration of Research Question Two:

*How do youth offenders value relationships with school staff? What is/was their experience of these relationships and how does group membership affect this?*

The data within sub-theme 4.2.3 ‘Group negativity towards teachers’ showed that participants’ attitudes towards teachers formed an integral part of the group norm and were important in determining whether an individual was accepted into the friendship group. Most participants generally did not value their relationships with school staff and this sub-theme suggests that feeling accepted as part of the group ‘unit’ (as opposed to forming positive relationships with teachers and authority figures) was a more ‘attractive’ option for the participants interviewed.

Displaying disrespectful behaviour in class towards certain teachers also formed part of the ‘search for fun’ in group situations. In this way, all members of the group had the same norms/attitudes towards particular teachers and the group seemed to inhibit individuals’ desire or ability to develop positive relationship with these teachers.

One key factor appeared to weaken the relationship between the group norm of a negative attitude/behaviour towards teachers and individual behaviour in lessons. This was indicated by sub-theme 4.3.2 ‘Feeling accepted by teachers/authority figure’. Based on the interviews conducted, the researcher argues that it is important to establish which factors make an individual feel ‘respected’ in an educational setting. These will, in some cases, determine an individual’s engagement in specific teachers’ lessons. For

some participants, the key factor was the perception that teachers/authority understood their learning needs (e.g. for CG it was desirable that teachers understood his ADHD, and for KL it was necessary that teachers understood and were sensitive towards his dyslexia). Other interviewees felt that teachers and authority figures could introduce an element of friendship to the pupil-teacher relationship and that teachers should try to strike a balance between encouraging pupils to work hard and helping them to feel relaxed as well as taking the time to understand individual pupils. It was important for some of the participants to feel that they could confide in teachers and crucial that these authority figures had the interpersonal skills necessary to respond to pupils sensitively and demonstrate an showing understanding of their emotional needs (e.g. as described by participants KEF, and DN in the sub-theme 4.3.2. 'Feeling accepted by teachers/authority figures').

#### 4.9.3. Exploration of Research Questions Three and Four:

*How does group membership influence youth offenders' perception of academic achievement and engagement with learning?*

*In what way do youth offenders perceive group identity as a factor that may have played a role in how they behaved at school?*

For the purpose of the discussion, the researcher has chosen to address research questions Three and Four together. This is because after interviewing the seven participants, it was clear that reasons given for the behaviour displayed by these youth offenders, included 'disengagement with learning' and in some cases, extreme disregard for academic achievement. For several reasons, carrying out their role within the group in line with group norms impacted upon behaviour and appeared to be more important than engaging in the learning experience.

Central to exploring these research questions is the findings suggested in sub theme 4.2.1: that individual behaviour (and attitudes towards learning) changed in line with an individual's membership of a new friendship group. Sub-theme 4.2.2 shows that the participants in their friendship groups identified a group norm based on 'group disruption and rule breaking behaviour.' Group members behaved in socially

unacceptable ways and in some cases, displayed extreme disengagement in the learning experience, in line with the group norm/identity.

The main theme 'Search for fun with like minded peers' is interesting because participant behaviour displayed within their group, appears to be a consequence of individual desire to engage in 'fun' experiences at school. As this theme describes, it seems that friendship groups were chosen almost deliberately in order to meet individual specific needs based on group negative perceptions towards academic achievement. Engaging in 'fun' experiences in the chosen friendship groups functioned as a mechanism for individuals to avoid negative experiences described in the following sub-themes 4.4.1, 'Alienated from the learning experience: Boredom', 4.4.2, 'Perception of unmet educational needs' and 4.4.3, 'Avoid embarrassment in front of peer group'.

Thus, the sub-themes within the main theme 'Search for fun with like-minded peers' show that although the participants had already formed negative views about education based on their previous experiences, (feeling bored and disengaged), they could identify with the norms of the groups that they chose and group membership, in turn, reinforced their existing views. In addition, the behaviour that the participants engaged in within their groups (as described in sub-theme 4.2.2. 'Group disruption and rule-breaking behaviour'), was strongly influenced by the group members; this behaviour was also a mechanism to avoid facing negative learning experiences at school.

The main theme 'Awareness of individual identity' describes the reasons for the formation and strengthening of individual identities and provides further evidence for the fact that the participants chose their groups because the groups served a function in line with aspects of their existing identities. For example, findings in sub-theme 4.5.1, demonstrate a need for membership of delinquent friendship groups due to the 'protective' features which these types of groups may offer the individual. Whether the youth offender was a follower or leader in the group affected how the individual behaved at school (with the exception of the two females interviewed). The findings described in sub-theme 4.5.2 highlighted the importance of teachers' perceptions of individuals within the group. Participants felt that teachers labelled them in accordance with group norms. In these cases, the group allowed the individual to reject responsibility for his/her behaviour because (as a member of the group) this was now a

‘group responsibility’. The ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’ theory fits with this conclusion as it suggests that individuals feel obliged to behave and to be perceived in a certain way within the group.

#### 4.9.4. Exploration of Main Research Question:

*How do youth offenders perceive education and what factors influence their ideas regarding the value of education?*

The main research question can be explored by using Robson’s (2011) ‘generative causation model, which dictates that the outcome of an action follows from mechanisms acting in particular contexts. In this sense, the model supports realist construction which takes into account a variety of factors which may lead to an outcome; A does not cause B, but there is a complex interaction of variables which effect whether the outcome will take place.

In the case of the research thesis, there are four main mechanisms which are represented by the blue boxes. The blue box entitled ‘perception of education’ refers to education in terms of social, emotional and academic experiences of education. The ‘outcome’ in this model is the youth offenders’ delinquent behaviour at school and subsequent offending behaviour.

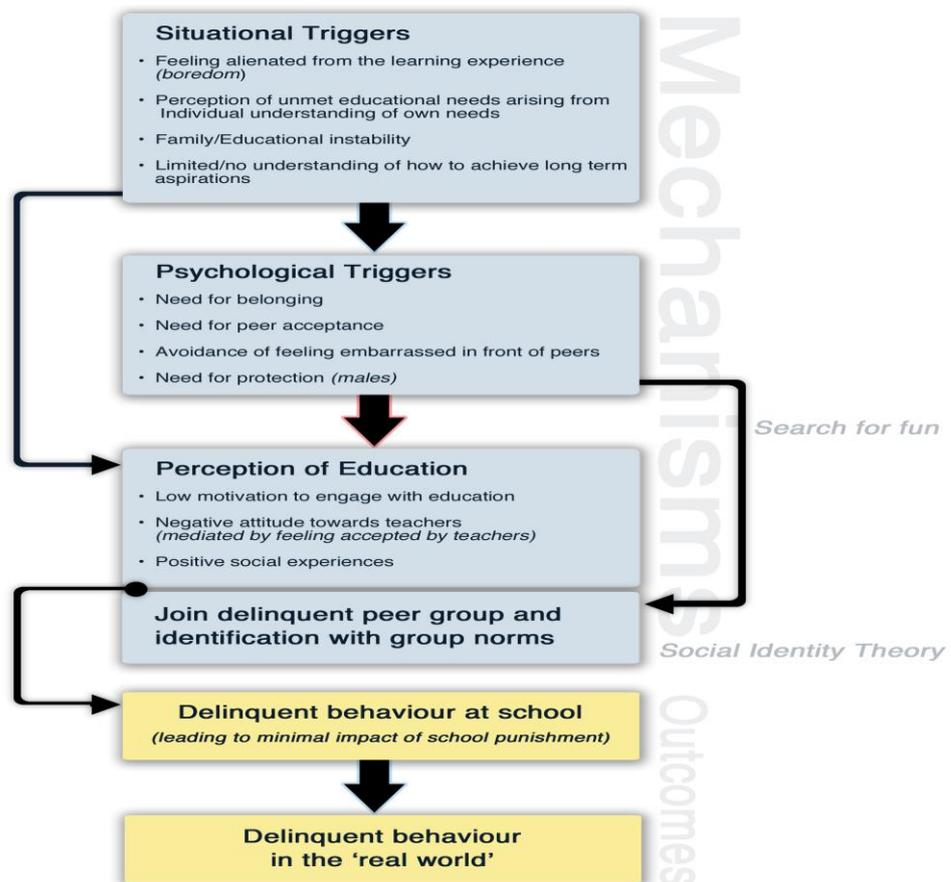


Fig. 1 Model illustrating the interplay between sub-themes/themes. The boxes highlight the factors that affect perceptions of education, and subsequent delinquent behaviour at school and in the real world.

### *Perception of Education*

The figure above illustrates the finding that all of the youth offenders in the research sample felt that their social experiences when in education were positive (as participants felt that they had formed strong relationships and valued the friendships that they had made during this time).

The participants interviewed did not seem to value academic achievement (Indeed this is clear from their behaviour at school as well as their general attitude towards teachers and learning). Participants showed low motivation to engage in the academic experience, and generally speaking a negative attitude towards teachers.

When exploring the question of which factors influence this perception, a complex interaction of variables emerged from the data (some in line with SIT, see discussion, and others which were not). This is presented in the above figure and described in more

detail below, under the headings for mechanisms: ‘situational triggers’, ‘psychological triggers’ and ‘joining delinquent peer groups’.

### *Situational Triggers*

The term ‘situational triggers’ describe several variables which were present during the youth offenders’ time in education (before they committed crimes) and these included: school factors (e.g. individuals feeling alienated and bored in lessons and feeling that lessons did not meet learning needs), individual factors (awareness of own educational needs), factors that determine how stable the participants may feel at school and/or home (this factor in particular may impact upon the need to feel stable/accepted/protected within the group) due to theories associated with ‘belonging’ (see literature review), and finally, factors associated with ‘short- sighted’ thinking as regards to achieving long term aspirations (described in the theme entitled ‘aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight’).

The arrow which points to the perception of education at this early stage indicates that group influence, were not the *cause* of the perception of education shown in the diagram. Early negative perceptions of academic achievement and negative attitudes towards teachers existed prior to joining the groups described above and joining these delinquent friendship groups only strengthened these perceptions as opposed to causing them. This is described by the section above entitled ‘Exploration of Research Questions Three and Four’.

### *Psychological Triggers*

The second box (Psychological Triggers) highlights the fact that participants stated that they experienced the following feelings: need for peer acceptance (sub-theme 4.3.1), need to avoid embarrassment in front of peers (sub-theme 4.4.3), and the need to feel protected by a group (sub-theme 4.5.1). These feelings were a consequence of situational factors described in the first box in the diagram. Without these feelings (described in detail by the participants), the need to join delinquent peer groups and form group identities within these groups, probably would have been less likely. Therefore, the researcher argues that the psychological triggers experienced at school,

function as core mechanisms in determining friendship-group choice within the sample. As mentioned, groups were chosen because their norms matched individuals' pre-existing ideas.

### *Joining Delinquent Peer Groups*

The 'search for fun with like-minded peers' hypothesis describes why the participants chose certain groups (i.e. the need to engage in exciting experiences with peers in order to avoid working and to avoid the negative feelings described in the 'psychological triggers' box). In this sense, the reasons for individuals joining a specific peer group at school are twofold: 1) to avoid negative feelings associated with education and 2) to feel that existing ideas regarding education are acceptable and/or justified.

The 'Social Identity Theory' arrow will be described in more detail in the discussion section.

The arrow linking the mechanisms 'join delinquent peer groups' and 'perception of education' has been drawn in bold in order to demonstrate the strengthening of pre-existing views of education which participants undergo after joining delinquent peer groups.

### *Outcomes*

The model shows that there is a complex interaction of variables (mechanisms) which lead to the perception of education as described. However, the acquisition of negative perceptions of education alone did not cause delinquent behaviour at school. As detailed above, delinquent behaviour only occurred after individuals joined delinquent peer groups. Participants within the sample described how punishments received at school as a result of their delinquent behaviour (in groups) had limited impact on their lives and thus did not affect their behaviour at school. Instead, (as described by the theme entitled 'Difference between impact of school and 'real life' punishment') participants did not appear to have respect for rules, regulations and socially acceptable ways of behaving. This was one significant factor which led to delinquent behaviour in the 'real world', which undoubtedly led to the participants in the sample becoming youth offenders.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

### Chapter Overview

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Commentary of Findings in Relation to Theory and Research
  - 5.2.1 Youth Offenders and Dissatisfaction with Education: Reasons for Dissatisfaction and Formation of Attitudes and Beliefs
  - 5.2.2 The Question of Social Control or Social Learning
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- 5.3 Evaluation of the Research Thesis and Implications for Further Research
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- 5.5 Self Reflection
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### **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter will begin by discussing the findings in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and comment on how the findings support, differ from or add to current research and knowledge that exists regarding education and youth offenders.

This chapter will also evaluate the methodologies set out in Chapter Three and the methods of data collection and analysis employed. It will consider the strengths and limitations of the approaches adopted. In light of the findings and the limitations of the research, areas for further research will be discussed.

The next section will discuss the implications of the findings for professionals working in education specifically: School staff and Educational Psychologists.

Finally, the researcher will reflect upon the research and comment upon her own learning in terms of her research position.

## 5.2. Commentary of Findings in Relation to Theory and Research

Exploration of the research questions discussed in the previous chapter has provided direction regarding significant gaps in research into the relationship between education and youth offending. It is necessary to summarise this novel information and relate it to the previous theory and research discussed in the Literature Review (Chapter Two).

### 5.2.1. Youth Offenders and Dissatisfaction with Education: Reasons for Dissatisfaction and Formation of Attitudes and Beliefs

The findings have provided rich information suggesting possible reasons for initial dissatisfaction with education. These are highlighted within the ‘situational triggers’ part of the model (fig 1). This part of the model addresses situational factors which act as pre-cursors and can describe the reasons why the youth offenders included in the research thesis initially became dissatisfied with education prior to joining delinquent peer group and committing crimes. These include school factors (e.g. individuals feeling alienated and bored in lessons, or that lessons did not meet learning needs), individual factors (awareness of individual’s own educational needs), factors that determine how stable the participants may feel in terms of school and/or home experiences, and finally, factors associated with ‘short sighted’ thinking as regards achieving long term aspirations (as described by the findings in the theme entitled ‘aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight’).

Although these negative attitudes and beliefs were present prior to membership of deviant groups, participants’ behaviour at this time was manageable. Those behaviours described by the sub theme ‘disruption/rule-breaking behaviour’ generally occurred after joining delinquent friendship groups. This theme in particular provided direct support for SIT as the evidence within this sub-section shows that when joining their friendship groups, the individuals in the sample were ‘reflexive’ in that they classified, categorised and named themselves in different ways and also compared themselves to other social categories. In line with SIT, the process of ‘self-categorisation’ occurred (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher and Wetherall, 1987) and the participants compared their own attitudes and beliefs towards aspects of education (e.g. academic achievement, teachers, importance of peer-group) to that of the group. Participants explained that these attitudes and beliefs arose from the situational factors already described.

Supporting SIT further, the researcher argues that the male participants in particular categorised themselves according to relevant in-group or out-group shared 'representations'. By doing this, these participants appeared to have chosen their friendship groups deliberately in line with their pre-existing beliefs. According to SIT, these shared cognitions are a fundamental feature of the group which almost 'depersonalise' the individual (i.e. that the youth offenders did not see themselves as idiosyncratic individuals but as embodiments of the group itself). This was particularly evident from the findings from male participants and an example of this was shown when discussing the male youth offenders in the research who appeared to have been carrying out certain roles within their friendship groups (e.g. some of the males assigned themselves the role of 'protecting' the group) and so behaved accordingly.

Stets & Burke's 'self regulation' hypothesis (2000), which defines 'self regulation' as a key driver for SIT, is supported by the main theme 'formation of group norm' (which matches individual pre-existing beliefs). By associating with this 'norm' and behaving in line with this within the group (as described by the findings within this theme), 'in-group' identification was activated.

Further evidence for the relevance of SIT to the findings is represented through the sub themes 'need to feel accepted by peers' and 'need for protection'. Participants were likely to have chosen their friendship group in order to feel accepted by peers (see sub-theme). Part of being accepted by peers involves not only avoiding embarrassment at school (see sub-theme), but identifying and behaving in ways in accordance with in-group norms and behaviour.

In-group activation is also likely to have occurred for the males within the sample because of a need to protect or feel protected by members of the group.

This sub theme provided support for the theory of belonging (proposed by Maslow as part of an individual's basic human needs, 1962). This theory describes the experience of feeling valued or needed, and the perception of whether one feels that their own characteristics complement the environment or system (in terms of SIT, this involves an individual self-categorising and comparing him/herself with the in-group to see if they fit in with this or not).

The research findings support these ideas further as the life experiences of the youth offenders interviewed (such as those at home or school) appeared to have directly influenced the participants' sense of belonging (Hagerty, Williams and Hiroaki, 2002) and these deficits or perceived deficits in their sense of belonging had effects on their social and psychological functioning (Hagerty, Williams, Coyne and Early, 1996). In the case of the participants within the research, this contributed in explaining why the participants joined delinquent peer groups.

Therefore, in terms of participants feeling 'disengaged' with education, the need for belonging, associating with the group norm and identifying with the 'in-group' did not create disengagement, but rather it seems to have encouraged extreme behaviours described by the sub-theme 'disruption/rule-breaking behaviour'. Although disengagement with education existed prior to joining groups, the researcher argues that for the males within the sample, self-regulation hypothesis and association with the in-group changed behaviour rather than attitude and beliefs towards education.

### Gender Differences

The research was the first to highlight gender differences in attribution style when describing reasons for youth offenders' delinquent behaviour in schools within the UK. Importantly, the research highlighted the serendipitous finding, which pointed to the importance of the peer group particularly for the males within the sample.

The findings of Carroll, Green, Houghton and Wood's (2003) research revealed that females placed more value on friendships and group membership when compared to males. However, females in the research thesis did not report this. The sub theme 'group as protective mechanism' shows that the two females in the research thesis did not perceive their friendship group as a protective mechanism (as the males had). Instead they both commented on their own behaviour in light of factors aside from group influence and in this way, expressed more responsibility over their behaviour than the males had and attributed their behaviour to their own identities rather than the identity of the group.

Therefore, in light of the impact of association with friendship groups on dissatisfaction with education, it would appear that for the males within the research sample, friendship group was an extremely important factor in strengthening pre-existing beliefs and

attitudes towards education (as well as corresponding behaviour). Furthermore, the research thesis supports Emler's theory of Reputation Enhancement (1984) because, as several of the sub-themes show (e.g. sub theme 'impact upon behaviour due to change in group membership'), males in particular valued their reputation when in educational settings. The psychological triggers (see fig 1 in findings chapter) highlighted psychological reasons as to why reputation became so important for the males within this research.

However, for the two females within the sample, the impact of the group did not appear to have such a significant influence on their behaviour at school and Emler's theory (1984) was not supported amongst this group. Unlike the males in the sample, the females seemed to claim more responsibility over their own actions and did not attribute blame for their delinquent behaviour at school to the groups to which they belonged to. This shows that the process of 'self-categorisation' was less likely to have occurred with the two females in the sample; they perceived themselves as idiosyncratic individuals rather than embodiments of the group itself.

With reference to the model in fig 1, (see findings chapter), situational and psychological triggers still existed for these females, but reasoning for the outcome (i.e. joining delinquent peer groups) was more likely to have been due to other reasons associated with work-avoidance. This provides support for the 'search for fun' hypothesis (Lotz and Lee, 1999).

### 5.2.2. The Question of Social Control or Social Learning

The findings from the research thesis supported previous research in terms of providing evidence for the relationship between delinquent behaviour of an individual and actual or perceived delinquent behaviour of the individual's friends (Huizinga and Menard, 1989, Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce and Radosevich, 1979, Jensen, 1972 and Krohn, 1974).

In addition, findings from the small sample have provided insight into the proposed explanation for this relationship and whether social control or social learning can explain the relationship between delinquent behaviour and engagement with delinquent friends.

As described, belonging to a delinquent friendship group does not seem to change an individual's pre-existing beliefs regarding education. However, when focusing on behaviour at school, group membership certainly impacted upon this, especially with the male participants. Thus, support for Akers (1985) social learning theory and Elliot and Menard's work (1996) was found: that exposure to delinquent friends does lead to delinquent behaviour at school. As regards to this sample of youth offenders, findings revealed that this relationship occurs only if attitudes and beliefs are in line with group-norms (all of the participants agreed with several of the group norms towards different aspects of education such as 'relationships with teachers' and 'attitude towards school punishment'). It would be interesting to see if the opposite pattern occurs in resilient individuals (i.e. whether those exposed to delinquent peers who do not agree with the group norms also engage in delinquent behaviour in school).

When considering the social control theory which posits that delinquent behaviour leads to the acquisition of delinquent friends (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1987), the model in fig. 1, shows that when considering the youth offenders in this research sample, delinquent 'behaviour' does not lead to acquisition of delinquent friends. Pre-existing negative beliefs and perceptions led to acquisition of delinquent friends due to both psychological factors and the need to avoid academic achievement through a 'search for fun' and/or 'social identity theory'. Therefore, the researcher argues that fundamentally, it is an individual's thoughts/feelings and belief system that guides engagement with delinquent peers, and this then impacts upon delinquent behaviour. Delinquent behaviour (both inside and outside of school) is a result of this process, not a cause.

### 5.2.3. Social Norms and Delinquency

The findings of the research thesis support the idea that *socialisation* (Kandel, 1978), is an important factor that determines the acquisition of 'criminal behaviour'. The findings strengthen the belief that an increase in association with delinquent peers will increase the likelihood that norms and attitudes will be incorporated into one's belief system and so the individual will engage in delinquent behaviour. It could also be argued that this is especially true during adolescence, when peer influence is important.

The findings from this thesis also support Megens and Weerman's (2010) research which found that normative support from one's peers strengthens the attitude-behaviour

consistency and so, as stated, peers play a crucial role in the relationship between attitude and behaviour when considering delinquency in mid-adolescence. The findings from the research thesis highlighted this because, prior to joining delinquent peer groups, participants did not behave in delinquent ways, even though they possessed negative attitudes towards education (which were strengthened through normative support).

This research obtained rich information which clarified and extended Megen and Weerman's findings in terms of attitude-behaviour consistency and how/why peers play such a crucial role in this. This was explained by SIT and 'de-individualisation' (when engaging in in-group behaviour in line with social norms for males especially), and also by the need to engage in 'fun' experiences at school due to the psychological factors and some situational factors (e.g. feeling bored in lessons, unable to complete academic tasks) as described above.

One key finding which also extended previous research in the area of attitude-behaviour consistency and delinquency is that there was a group agreement regarding attitude towards punishments at school. Prior to engaging in delinquent friendship groups, for most of the youth offenders in the sample, individual behaviour at school was manageable. However, when joining delinquent groups where punishments at school (such as detentions and exclusions) were received consistently, punishments became almost worthless. This was because participants in the delinquent groups did not take these punishments seriously since they did not impact upon aspects of their lives which they considered important (see exploration of research question 1 in the findings chapter). More importantly, engagement in 'fun' experiences and the strong feeling of association with the group or 'in-group activation' (in line with self-regulation hypothesis) meant that these 'rewards' (received from 'in-group activation' and work avoidance) far outweighed the impact of punishments received at school.

In addition, by exploring research question two, which focused on the impact of an authority figure, this research also provided further insight into how the youth offenders in the sample responded to rules/regulations in school (which could be generalised to criminal behaviour outside of school) by following group norms. These findings provided further evidence for SIT, that is, individuals in the sample behaved in line with

the 'in-group' because behaving in this way was far more rewarding than following teacher's instructions in lessons.

It is hypothesised that outside of the educational environment (in the 'real world'), the same effect could be present: behaving in line with the in-group was a far more rewarding experience due to the excitement these individuals experienced when associating with their delinquent peers compared to following rules and regulations set by society as a whole.

It is interesting that this finding was mediated by participants' feeling that teachers/authority figures empathised with their individual needs and/or feeling that teachers/authority figures can behave like 'friends' in order to reduce the effect of in-group activation. This will be discussed in the implications section of this chapter.

Therefore when considering the experience of education and how it may lead to delinquent behaviour, one can point to a variety of factors;

1. Acquisition of (short term) negative attitudes towards education (situational factors)
2. Engagement with delinquent peers (due to psychological factors highlighted by the model) and experiences perceived as 'positive' with this friendship group.
3. Little understanding or care for the impact of punishment received at school.
4. Little understanding of the value of the experience of education in terms of how it may impact upon their lives in the future.

In this sense and supporting previous findings, schools and educational establishments are key places for the formation of attitudes, norms and behaviours which are likely to impact upon decisions to commit future crimes.

### 5.3. Evaluation of the Research Thesis and Implications for Further Research

In hindsight, there are many advantages of the way in which the research thesis was undertaken. There are also implications on the interpretation of findings, stemming from the way in which the research was conducted.

Advantages include, richness of data collected from the seven youth offenders which provided unique insight into the area of delinquency and its relationship to the experience of education. Previous studies had mainly focused on quantitative methods of data collection and there was a significant lack of such rich information.

Another advantage of the research was that views were gathered from youth offenders who are potentially a difficult population to access. Participants were surprisingly open in their responses and were able to speak freely about some difficult and sensitive aspects of their experiences. Using effective and well-established questioning techniques helped to obtain these valuable responses.

Useful insights have been made and areas for further research have been identified and outlined below.

#### 5.3.1. Critical Reflection: The Sample

The interviews with youth offenders were rewarding because they provided rich information in an area in which the researcher was particularly interested in. Despite this, there were some difficulties encountered in accessing this vulnerable group. For example, the length of time taken to arrange the interviews and the difficulties involved with this (see timeline in methodology chapter) was frustrating at times. Although the researcher was aware that there may have been some difficulties in accessing participants and finding suitable locations to interview them, she did not realise quite how problematic this would be until carrying out the research. Even with a well organised data collection system, it is important for the researcher's own learning and development that this does not necessarily mean that research will flow smoothly and naturally (Hodgson and Rollnick, 1995).

It is important to note the limitations of the experiences of the participants themselves within this research and implications for generalisability. Firstly, any findings reported are extremely useful in providing rich information pertaining to the specified research area. However, the seven participants interviewed were all youth offenders living within the local authority, so generalising findings to alternative areas would be problematic. Several of the participants also attended Pupil Referral Units in the local authority. It would be useful to collect further information from pupils who have remained in

schools throughout their education in order to see if there are any differences in views and outcome (in terms of delinquent behaviour/negative attitudes towards school). It would also be interesting to gain insight into the views of youth offenders being educated at home or in alternative education contexts to the ones in the research thesis, in order to see if these settings impacted upon the participants' reported experiences.

In addition, only seven participants were interviewed and it would be useful to gain the views of additional participants within the local authority in order to see if the themes identified also apply to other youth offenders who have lived in similar surroundings, as well as gaining views from youth offenders in other local authorities. By doing this, one would be able to gain a much clearer and more valid idea of the national picture, not just that of seven participants in one particular local authority.

The research suggested that there are differences in short and long-term thinking/attitudes regarding the importance of education. Evidence from the participants interviewed (four were aged 17 and 18 and not in education and three were aged 14 and 15 and still in education) highlighted a variation based on ages and it would be useful to explore this further. Further research could focus on this finding in particular and explore the differences in attitudes and beliefs between youth offenders (aged between 14 and 18) and young people of the same age who are not youth offenders.

Future research could include gaining data from offenders who receive custodial sentences and who experience education in prison. As discussed in the literature review chapter, positive experiences of school/education occurred for the first time in prison (Anders, 2007). In light of the findings from the research thesis, it would be useful to compare views of education from offenders not in prison and receiving education, to those offenders in prison receiving education in order to see whether there are any key differences in their experiences, and in particular explore the differences in the individual's disengagement and whether/how far peer influence contributes to this.

It seems that there were some important gender differences found within the data and one major limitation of this is that there were only two females interviewed compared to five males. Both females were also only interviewed once and they were both particularly difficult to access after this interview in order to gain further insight into their experiences. It would have been useful for the research to have included more

females within its sample and this should definitely be taken into account if the research was to be replicated.

### 5.3.2. Critical Reflection: The Design

The research findings have provided important and useful information across a range of ages (14 – 18 years) and in particular, provided information regarding differences in the views of youth offenders who are either currently in education, and those who have completed their education. Future research could involve examining various aspects of the design and comparing different groups of participants together in light of the findings.

Firstly, future research could focus on exploring the differences between youth offenders who are in education, and those who have completed their education in order to verify whether education is valued as an experience, (and whether it provides them or could have provided them with useful ‘tools’ to help them deal with the ‘real world’), as well as how education may impact upon their decisions to commit crimes. In addition, it would also be interesting to gain similar views from adult offenders so that the benefit of hindsight can be compared to both those who have just left education and those who are still in the system.

Situational triggers were identified as precursors to psychological triggers which impacted upon individuals becoming members of delinquent groups and behaving in delinquent ways at school and in the ‘real world’. Implications for further research could focus on resilience, targeting young people with similar experiences who have not chosen to engage with delinquent peers/ end up as future offenders. A focus on factors (within education) which may impact upon these decisions would be useful in comparing the two groups alongside one another (youth offenders and non-youth offenders), and would provide further information as to possible prevention methods.

The research focused on gaining perspectives from youth offenders regarding their experiences of education and one key finding was the significant impact of authority figures. Considering the findings in retrospect, the researcher would have liked to have carried out analysis with these authority figures in order to see whether there were any discrepancies in the views of the two groups. For example, several of the participants identified reasons for their dissatisfaction with education as associated with the feeling

that teachers failed to identify and account for their individual learning needs. In light of this finding, it would be useful to explore the views of teachers (i.e. the awareness of secondary school teachers when identifying and accounting for aspects of special educational needs).

#### 5.4. Implications for Practice

Although the findings provide insight into which factors impact upon the experience of education and delinquent behaviour, it is difficult to suggest implications for practice nationally because the findings are based on the views of only seven youth offenders in the local authority. However, the findings provide direction for further research and if similar findings were established based on the implications for further research, (in turn, increasing the validity of the research thesis), important recommendations for practice at a national level could then be proposed.

The following section will outline some of the most important implications of the discussions with the seven youth offenders bearing in mind the research limitations stated above. The researcher will consider the aspects of the discussions relevant for educational professionals (as opposed to professionals in general, associated with delinquent peers and parents/carers), providing insight in to how to support youth offenders. Some of the findings from these discussions also highlight areas which could be addressed in order to prevent negative attitudes towards education and help prevent delinquent behaviour. These will also be an important focus when discussing implications for practice.

##### 5.4.1. Implications for School Staff

The research suggests that schools/educational settings are key places where children and young people learn essential skills and develop ideas in areas which are likely to impact upon their lives (e.g. attitudes towards education, importance of friendship groups and following rules and regulations). Consequently, it is argued that adults working in such settings have a crucial role in developing and shaping these early experiences and contribute to reducing the likelihood of young people acquiring criminal attitudes.

In order to avoid negative experiences associated with completing school work, adolescents engaged with delinquent peers and found rewarding experiences in activities which were considered socially undesirable at school. Teachers therefore need to ensure, that they are fully aware and are responsive to of individual needs by ensuring appropriate differentiation (for task difficulty and other learning needs e.g. ADHD) and by offering time to speak to children/young people about their experiences of academic tasks. The latter emphasises the need for ‘assessment for learning’ in schools so that children are given the chance to have increasing responsibility for their own learning experiences and communicate this with adults. The researcher is not advocating that children and young people with learning needs become dependent on adult support. The researcher is supportive of authors such as Vincett, Cremin and Thomas (2005) who pointed to the dangers of ‘velcro syndrome’. This is when the relationship between the child and his/her Teaching Assistant becomes inseparable. The researcher is however marking the importance of pupil ‘voice’ and that they are given opportunities to communicate and express themselves in school/educational establishments so that adults can be more aware of their learning needs. Children behaving in delinquent ways may specifically require opportunities which help to ‘make their needs known’ because by doing so, could uncover reasons for their behavioural difficulties at school.

Another way in which school and educational establishments could account for the latter point is by identifying the pupils behaving in delinquent ways and/or pupils who have experienced unstable backgrounds (e.g. difficult family lives) and offer opportunities in school to speak to trained mentors. It would be useful to employ members of staff who possess particular skills in Person Centred Approaches (Rogers, 1951). This is a non-judgemental, empathetic approach which aims to help the individual to feel valued and creates an opportunity for him or her to discuss difficult experiences in a safe environment.

Associated with the hypothesis that the youth offenders interviewed engaged in delinquent ways to avoid completing school work, is the finding that many of the participants interviewed were embarrassed to ask for help. This again raises the importance of early identification of learning needs/small-group work and differentiation of tasks, but also points to the importance of peer discussion with mixed ability groups during lessons. This would help to develop confidence in speaking to

peers about academic tasks and sharing views/experiences so that those who are less confident in doing this are encouraged by someone their age (something which adolescents in particular value), and also ask peers task-related questions in a more informal way.

The key finding that the adolescents in the sample did not like to feel that education is forced upon them, and engage in lessons more when they are intrinsically motivated to do so, has implications for school staff. As discussed, 'assessment for learning' will help to increase intrinsic motivation (and at the same time, allow teachers to gain a clearer idea regarding aspects of SEN). However, according to the findings, intrinsic motivation would also be likely if the pupil feels that teachers/authority figures in education are trustworthy individuals who value and empathise with their needs. Balancing lessons so that they are both directive and allow opportunities for the building of pupil-teacher relationships would increase the likelihood of adolescents enjoying lessons and engaging in them because they would be motivated to do so (reducing the chances of engaging in delinquent behaviour as discussed).

The researcher values the development of methods which prevent delinquent behaviour rather than respond to it (e.g. through interventions suggested above). However, in situations in which schools are required to react to such behaviour, pupils may receive negative consequences for undesirable behaviour at school, which adults should check are actually working in the way intended. Teachers/authority figures should therefore issue punishments which they know are in line with the school behaviour policy, as well as in line with what individual pupils perceive as a negative experience (e.g. developing home-school links by sending letters home if pupils particularly value what their parents/carers think of them for example) to maximise their effects.

It is also important that delinquent pupils at school do not feel labelled so that teachers/authority figures address behavioural difficulties, the behaviour itself is described as 'unacceptable' rather than the individual him/her self. This will allow delinquent pupils to feel that authority figures believe that they can change their behaviour and that it is not a permanent feature of the individual. The findings show that the positive perceptions which individual pupils have of teachers has a powerful impact and can override peer influences and delinquent behaviour in the school setting.

## Age Differences

In terms of discussing the implications of the findings described in the theme entitled ‘aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight’, where children/young people in education did not value this experience and could not see how it may relate to their career chances in the future (but the older participants recognised this), the DfE Green Paper (2011) described ways in which the government aim to support the transition into adulthood for young people with/without SEN and disabilities. As section 4.44 of the paper states,

*“Young people with SEN or who are disabled may require different or additional personal, social and health education to help them make safe and healthy choices, form positive relationships and know where to go for further advice and support.”*

Chapter Four of the Green Paper (2011) describes the government aim for all young people to stay in education until they reach the age of 18 by 2015. This ultimately will result in the need to support young people in education until this age and help to provide them with as smooth transition as possible. As section 4.5 describes,

*“We want to enable professionals to: support young people to plan for their future, give young people access to a broad range of appropriate education and learning opportunities as well as employment opportunities and support”*

In order for this change to occur as smoothly as possible, and in line with the findings from the theme entitled ‘aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight’, schools also need to emphasise the need for key skills to be developed and ensure that pupils are informed clearly of how these relate to the real world. Supporting suggestions in section 4.7 of the Green Paper (2011), the researcher suggests that from early on (e.g. Year 7), pupils need to be made aware of possible career paths, particular skills that they possess, and what essential skills they will need in order to achieve life goals. Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons could be used to emphasise this.

In terms of the finding that youth offenders who are in education did not value it or see how it may help to develop skills needed for future careers, some pupils may therefore

require specialist advice and support at school from early on (such as ‘Connexions’ link workers or careers advisors trained to support young adolescents). The Green paper (2011) suggested that support and guidance from career advisors is in future aimed to extend beyond schools, and on to colleges. The paper also highlights the need for schools to link with employers so that more young people are given the opportunity for ‘tasters’ of certain career paths before they leave education. These ideas could impact upon youth offenders (who are in education) as it may help this vulnerable group to become clearer about their long term career goals and how to achieve these.

In addition, The Green paper (2011) describes new ways for under-represented groups (e.g. youth offenders) to gain employment; The National Apprenticeship Service is funding 16 ‘Diversity in Apprenticeship’ pilots starting in 2011, forecast to involve up to 5,000 apprentices. New measures such as these could help some of those youth offenders who are NEET with employment opportunities and therefore help them out of the ‘vicious circle’ that the older youth offenders in the samples described.

Recent research carried out by White and Warfa (2011) supported the assertion above that there is a need for essential life skills to be emphasised at school in order to prevent behavioural difficulties and disengagement with school and increase intrinsic motivation to achieve. A socio-cultural-based ‘character-education’ programme which focused on developing children's rational and ethical decision-making, problem-solving, and conflict-resolution skills had a positive effect on pupil behaviour, classroom climate (e.g. relationship between pupils and teachers), and curriculum delivery and engagement. Following on from this research and the research thesis, it may be useful for schools to implement this type of programme and train staff accordingly, in order to prevent both behavioural difficulties and disengagement with education.

Another useful way of developing intrinsic motivation to engage in academic tasks at school and follow rules and regulations is by inviting ex-youth offenders to talk to pupils about how their behaviour at school impacted upon their lives. Talks could focus on the need to engage in tasks at school in order to help develop the skills required for the ‘real world’. In addition, ex-offenders could address the impact of real-world punishments and the impact of some of these (e.g. ‘tags’). Doing so, may help some

delinquent pupils to make links between their own behaviour and what it could lead to in the future.

#### 5.4.2. Implications for Educational Psychologists

The findings have offered insight into possible areas that Educational Psychologists can work both preventatively (in schools) and reactively (in schools/educational establishments and in Youth Offending Services). There is a specific need to establish links in the local authority between the Youth Offending Service and the EPS and both services are keen to do so. In light of this and the implications of the research, the following suggestions are made:

EPs could work in schools to deliver training on effective evidence-based approaches to managing behaviour difficulties. These should focus on methods to develop intrinsic motivation to engage at school by teaching life-skills and how these impact upon ‘real life’ experiences (such as ‘character-education’ programme), rather than approaches that emphasise a reactive approach to anti-social behaviour (i.e. school ‘punishments’).

EPs could also impact on schools by delivering training to school staff regarding the early identification of children/young people ‘at risk’ of offending, highlighting the situational factors described in the research thesis and subsequent behaviour as a result of the suggested emotional factors involved in this process.

In light of the research findings and many other pieces of research which emphasise the impact of sociability on delinquent behaviour, EPs are well-placed to communicate this message to schools when discussing individual and groups of pupils who engage in delinquent behaviour at school.

EPs should address sociability in discussion and use consultative approaches to focus on what is different prior to the onset of behavioural difficulties: Friendship groups may hold the key to this issue and it is important to address possible risk factors for pupils and possible reasons for engaging with delinquent peers when consulting with teachers. According to the research findings, central to reducing delinquent behaviour and engagement with delinquent peers, is the need to encourage a change in beliefs and attitudes towards education. Working with teachers in order to identify individual reasons for disengagement with education (i.e. situational triggers described in the

model) will help address ways to intervene at an early stage and work with the psychological and emotional factors involved in this process.

When working directly with 'at risk' pupils, it is important for EPs to carry out psychological assessments which focus on the following dimensions: motivation to engage with education, self-esteem/confidence towards individual academic performance, how difficult/easy pupils feel that individual needs are met in school, level of peer influence, level of ethical decision making. Outcome from these assessments could be used in discussion with school staff in order to identify and address key areas which may impact upon the behaviour that teachers find difficult to manage at school.

EPs are also well placed to work with professionals in youth offending teams and improve understanding of the impact that education is likely to have had on youth offenders and their decisions to commit crimes. Findings from the research show that even after participants have committed crimes and been given punishments such as 'tags', offenders who are still in education fail to realise the importance of education and the skills and knowledge that can be gained from this experience, until the impact of punishments really matter to them (e.g. when they have finished their education and need to find work). For this reason, EPs could work with YOS to help develop ways to encourage youth offenders still in education to see and understand this link (e.g. by incorporating some of the suggestions for school staff such as inviting ex-offenders to speak).

Furthermore, EPs working with the YOS could help develop and support interventions with youth offenders who are NEET and disengaged with education. Suitable support would include helping to develop ways to understand the reasons for disengagement (using the situational factors as a guide for questioning) and psychological factors associated with this.

Another aspect of EP involvement with the YOS could include a supportive/therapeutic role, such as the delivery of on-going support programmes to youth offenders either in education or NEET. The need for consistent advice and support for youth offenders by trained professionals would be appropriate. One example of how this would work would involve the EP collaborating with the YOS in order to help identify and deliver suitable evidence based models which help shape and change negative automatic

thoughts/cognitions such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapeutic approaches. EPs are well placed in their present roles of ‘Child/Community and Educational Psychologists’ to be able to meet this need, due to their unique understanding of psychological processes and the impact that education has on delinquency.

### 5.5. Self Reflection

The experience of carrying out this piece of research has impacted upon me in a way that I could not have foreseen. It made me realise that regardless of my experiences prior to meeting this vulnerable group, each individual added something new to my existing knowledge and helped me to reframe my pre-existing ideas.

Despite over eleven years of studying psychology and several years experience of working as an educational professional and witnessing delinquent behaviour and the impact of peer influence with children and adolescents, I found engaging in this research fascinating and learnt a significant amount from the youth offenders that I met.

Having the opportunity to speak directly with youth offenders about their experiences has helped me to gain real insight into some of the reasons why individuals may engage in law-breaking behaviour from such a young age and the way in which education can impact upon this. It has demonstrated to me how complex the situation can be, and that even though common themes were observed among the seven participants, each experience was unique in its own right, and each individual had their own stories to tell. Listening to these has made me more sensitive when speaking to vulnerable groups such as these.

I was particularly surprised at how willing some of the participants were to speak about these experiences which reflects how beneficial it is for these vulnerable individuals to have access to opportunities like these, to allow them to make sense of their experiences, express sensitive issues, and make their voices heard in a safe environment.

## 5.6. Concluding Remarks

The research thesis sought to explore the views of youth offenders in terms of the impact of education on delinquent behaviour and in particular how far social influences determine perceptions of education and behaviour.

The research thesis supported recent evidence showing that normative support from one's peers strengthens the attitude-behaviour consistency and that peers play a crucial role in the relationship between attitude and behaviour in delinquency in mid-adolescence. The research provided novel information, and in particular it found that although normative support for peer's strengthens the attitude behaviour consistency, peers seem to play more of a crucial role in terms of influencing behaviour rather than one's attitude. This was especially true for the males interviewed in the sample.

Novel information was also gained as regards the way in which situational factors impact upon psychological factors, and the research highlighted the importance of emotional/psychological factors in influencing one's decision to join delinquent peer groups. This has formed the basis for future research, which could focus on emotional and psychological pre-determinants to engaging in delinquent behaviour.

While the topic of education and delinquency will remain an area of interest for many years to come and research is quickly expanding in this area, research and national statistics continue to show that educational outcomes for this group of the population remain very low compared to young people who do not engage in law-breaking behaviour. This shows that much more needs to be done in terms of preventing young people from engaging in delinquent behaviour. Educational settings will remain key places for preventative work to be carried out with this complex vulnerable group.

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## **Appendix 1: Terminology**

**At Risk** – The present research refers to the term ‘at risk’ to identify youth offenders who are at risk of serving a prison (youth offender institution sentence). The research thesis defines these individuals as vulnerable and are identified by the following criteria;

Received a court order and have 1 or more of the following;

- A history of family disruption.
- Higher than average levels of loss, bereavement, abuse and violence experienced within a family setting.
- Family members or friends who have offended.
- Low educational attachment, attendance and attainment.
- Higher than average drug/alcohol abuse especially cannabis use.

**Delinquency/Delinquent behaviour** - Behaviour, especially of a young person, that is illegal and/or not acceptable to most people. For the purpose of this research thesis, this includes anti-social behaviour both in and outside of the educational setting and will include both law-breaking and severe behavior difficulties.

**EPS** – Educational Psychology Service. The current research uses this term in order to focus on The named local authority’s Educational Psychology Service.

**NEET** - In the UK this refers to young people who are aged between 16 -24 years who are not in education, employment or training.

**Punishments**- This term which is referred to mainly in the findings section specifies the consequences of delinquent behaviour. Although the researcher recognises that schools do not “punish” as such, this term is used throughout the text in order to refer to consequences for delinquent behaviour in school and in the ‘real world’.

**Referral Order** – is a sentence for young people who have pleaded guilty to a first offence for the first time in Court. It lasts between 3 and 12 months, depending on how serious the offence is. When a young person is given a Referral Orders they are required to attend a Panel who decide what should go in a contract and oversee the Order. The ‘Referral Order Youth Offender Panel’ is made up of two or three trained volunteers from the local community, a member of the Youth Offending Service (YOS), and sometimes the victim. A young person may receive a Referral Order for a second

offence in exceptional circumstances.(Joint Working Protocol- Locality Teams and Youth Offending Services, June, 2009)

**SIT** – Social Identity Theory

**Youth/Young/Juvenile Offender/Y.O** – In England & Wales the age of criminal responsibility is set at 10. Young offenders aged 10 to 17 (i.e. up to their eighteenth birthday) are classed as a juvenile offender. Between the ages of 18 and 21 (i.e. up to their twenty-first birthday) they are classed as young offenders. Offenders aged 21 and over are known as adult offenders.

For the purpose of this research, all of the participants within the research will be referred to as ‘youth offenders’.

## **Appendix 2: Additional Individual Participant Information**

### Participant 1 (DN)

Participant 1 was a white male aged 18 who received a referral order for 8 months. His offences were criminal damage, assault, harassment, breaking a restraining order. Participant 1 attended a primary school in the un-named local authority until year 6, then he attended a secondary school however truanted frequently, so he was moved to a pupil referral unit also in the un-named local authority. Participant 1 lived in a residential home and has been living there for two years prior to being asked to leave home at the age of 16 by his mother who according to participant 1, did not want him at home due to his behaviour at school and law-breaking behaviour. Participant 1 has an older brother aged 20 who has committed crimes in the past and was serving a referral order at the time of interview.

### Participant 2 (CG)

Participant 2 was also an 18 year old white male who received a 7 month referral order. At the time of interviewing participant 2 had just finished serving his sentence which was for two instances of physical assault. He was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) at the age of 9. Participant 2 attended a primary school in Norwich until half way through year 6 when his behaviour started becoming getting aggressive so his mother moved to an area north of the un-named local authority. Participant 2 then completed his final 6 weeks of year of primary school there. He then attended a secondary school in the un-named local authority up until the end of year 10, before being excluded for aggressive behaviour. He was allowed back into school to sit his GCSE examinations although he spent most of year 11 partaking in home study.

Participant 2's mother asked him to leave home when he received his order (7 months prior to the researcher meeting him), and at the time of writing this thesis, participant 2 lived in residential housing in the un-named local authority.

### Participant 3 (KN)

Participant 3 is an 18 year old white male who had been unemployed for two years at the time of interview. He was serving a 12 month referral order for the following offences; theft of a motor vehicle, handling stolen goods and possession of a knife.

Participant 3 has special educational needs (Literacy difficulties). He attended one primary school, however his father removed him from this school due to his behaviour difficulties. Participant 3 attended 3 different secondary schools and was excluded from all of these. The first, for drinking alcohol on school premises, the second for punching a teacher. After this, Participant 3 and his father moved to the un-named local authority and attended a secondary school there. He was excluded because he was found smoking cannabis on school premises. At the time of interview, participant 3 spends some time living at home with his mother in the un-named local authority, however spends most of his time living with his partner.

#### Participant 4 (KEF)

Participant 4 was a white British, 17 year old female who was not attending any educational establishment at the time of interview. She was unemployed and heavily pregnant. She received a referral order for approximately two and a half years for repeatedly finding herself in trouble with the law for offences such as theft from shops, theft of a motor vehicle and assault. Participant 4 attended one primary school and one secondary school. She stated that she was excluded several times from her secondary school because she refused to carry out her work, and was eventually excluded permanently approximately one year before the interview took place. At the time of interview, KRF lived at home with her mother and partner.

#### Participant 5 (KP)

Participant 5 was a 14 year old white male. At the time of interview, he was serving a recreation order and was on tag (for 3 months). His offences included: actual bodily harm (abh), affray and using offensive language. He attended a primary school in the un-named local authority until year 6. He then attended a secondary school also in the un-named local authority, however was excluded twice for physically attacking other pupils. He was moved to a Pupil Referral Unit in the un-named local authority. At the time of interview, participant 5 was attending the PRU and was living at home.

#### Participant 6 (KL)

Participant 6 was a 15 year old white male. He was serving a 6 month recreation order and at the time of interview, was on tag where he has to be home by 9pm every night for 6 months. His offences included possession of cannabis, driving without a license

and criminal damage. His educational experiences all took place in the un-named local authority where he attended a primary school up until year 6, and then attended a secondary school until year 9. During this academic year, he was excluded for physically attacking other pupils (more than once) and was moved to a Pupil Referral Unit in the un-named local authority which he attends inconsistently. At the time of interview, participant 6 was living at home with his father and brother.

#### Participant 7 (EY)

Participant 7 was a 14 year old white female. She received a 1 year, 9 month referral order for two occasions of shop lifting and being involved in a physical attack in a large group. She attended a primary school in the un-named local authority, before she and her family moved and so she changed schools to attend a second primary school in the un-named local authority. She attended a secondary school for one year before being excluded for physically attacking another pupil. She then attended a second secondary school where she was excluded. After this, she then attended the pupil referral unit however due to the distance, pupil 7 received home support for a short time before attending the Pupil Referral Unit again, where she was attending inconsistently at the time of interview.

### Appendix 3: Personal Information Questionnaire

#### Personal Information Questionnaire

1. Please indicate your gender by circling the appropriate response:

**Male**                      **Female**

2. Please state your **age** in Years \_\_\_\_\_

3. Please indicate your current status by circling the appropriate response:

**Student (attending school/educational establishment)**

**Student (not attending school/educational establishment)**

**Unemployed**

**Other (please state)**\_\_\_\_\_

4. Please circle your ethnicity

**White**

**Black**

**Indian**

**East Asian**

**Other**

5. What date (approximately) did you begin your referral order/court order?

---

6. What date is it due to end?

---

Thank you for completing this short questionnaire. Information provided will be treated with confidence and you will not be named in any of the written report.

## **Appendix 4: Child/Young Person Information Letter**

### **UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

Romford Road, Stratford, *London* E15 4LZ

#### **University Research Ethics Committee**

If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate please contact the Secretary of the University Research

Ethics Committee: Ms S Thorne, Administrative Officer for Research, Graduate School, University of East London, Romford Rd, Stratford, E15 4LZ, (telephone

0208 223 6274 e-mail [s.r.c.thorne@uel.ac.uk](mailto:s.r.c.thorne@uel.ac.uk))

#### **The Principal Investigator(s)**

Louise Ozarow

Address: \*\*\*\*\*

Tel: \*\*\*\*\* email: \*\*\*\*\*

I am an employee of \*\*\*\*\* Council and I am carrying out research as part of my role for the service. \*\*\*\*\* Council have agreed for the current research project to be carried out.

#### **Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this study.

#### **Project Title**

An Exploratory Study of How Youth Offenders Perceive their Experience of Education

#### **Project Description**

Main aim:

The following project is aimed at investigating into the present and past experiences that Youth Offenders have had at school. It is aimed to identify any themes/areas which may have contributed to offending behaviour and therefore seeks to focus on this as a way to understanding your own experiences and how you have made sense of these.

Your involvement:

You will be asked to participate in two interviews on separate occasions. These interviews will be recorded using a dictaphone in order to help the researcher consider your responses and use for data analysis. All of these interviews will be held at the location named below if possible. During the first session, you will be asked some questions about previous schooling and how you ended up serving a referral/court order. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> interview, you will be asked to talk about past experiences at school (e.g. friends, work, teachers etc) and be given the opportunity to discuss these in detail.

During these sessions, there will not be any hazards or risk to your personal safety, however, you may experience distress if/when you discuss any issues which may be difficult for yourself. You will be reminded that you can stop the interview at any point and withdraw from the interview should you require.

### **Confidentiality of the Data**

The data (i.e. notes made during interviews, transcripts and tape recordings) will be stored in lockable cabinet. Only the researcher will own the key. Once the interviews are completed, the data will remain in the cabinet until the research is published. Data will then be shredded and disposed of.

### **Location**

The discussions and interviews will be held at The Youth Offender Service, \*\*\*\*\*, in an interviewing room or in a more convenient place for you.

### **Remuneration**

n/a

### **Disclaimer**

You are not obliged to take part in this study, and are free to withdraw at any time during the tests. Should you choose to withdraw from the programme you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason.

## Appendix 5: Child/Young Person Consent Form

### UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

#### Consent to Participate in an Experimental Programme Involving the Use of Human Participants

I have read the information leaflet relating to the above programme of research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researchers involved in the study will have access to the data. It has been explained to me what will happen to the data once the experimental programme has been completed.

I hereby fully and freely consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me.

Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the programme at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant's name (BLOCK CAPITALS): .....

Participant's signature: .....

Investigator's name:

Louise Ozarow

Investigator's signature:



Date: .....

## **Appendix 6: Parent/Caregiver Information Letter and Consent Form**

I am an employee of \*\*\*\*\* Council and I am carrying out research as part of my role for the service. \*\*\*\*\* Council have agreed for the current research project to be carried out with youth offenders in the county.

### **Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to allow your child to participate in this study.

#### **Project Title**

An Exploratory Study of How Youth Offenders Perceive their Experience of Education

#### **Project Description**

Main aim:

The following project is aimed at investigating into the present and past experiences that Youth Offenders have had at school. It is aimed to identify any themes/areas which may have contributed to offending behaviour and therefore seeks to focus on this as a way to understanding your child's own experiences and how he/she has made sense of these.

Your child's involvement:

Your child will be asked to participate in two interviews on separate occasions. These interviews will be recorded using a dictaphone in order to help the researcher consider his/her responses and use for data analysis. All of these interviews will be held at the location named below or at a more convenient location for your child. During the first session, your child will be asked some questions about previous schooling and how he/she ended up serving a probationary sentence. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> interview, your child will be asked to talk about past experiences at school (e.g. friends, work, teachers etc) and be given the opportunity to discuss these in detail.

During these sessions, there will not be any hazards or risk to your child's personal safety, however, he/she may experience distress if/when he/she wishes to discuss any issues which may be difficult for him/her. Your child will be reminded that he/she can stop the interview at any point and withdraw from the interview should they require.

#### **Confidentiality of the Data**

The data (i.e. notes made during interviews, transcripts and tape recordings) will be stored in lockable cabinet. Only the researcher will own the key. Once the interviews are completed, the data will remain in the cabinet until the research is published. Data will then be shredded and disposed of.

**Location**

The discussions and interviews will be held at The Youth Offender Service, \*\*\*\*\* in an interviewing room.

**Remuneration**

n/a

**Disclaimer**

Your child is not obliged to take part in this study, and is free to withdraw at any time during the interviews. Should he/she choose to withdraw from the programme they may do so without disadvantage to your child and without any obligation to give a reason.

**\*Please note: Your child will remain anonymous throughout the analysis and write up of this research\***

Please could you tick 'yes' or 'no' as to whether you consent for your child to be involved in this research.

Name of child .....

Signature of Parent/Guardian .....

Yes I consent for my child to be a part of this research

No I do not wish for my child to be a part of this research

## **Appendix 7: Interview One Questions**

### Interview 1

- Researcher will introduce herself and give a brief overview to the research.  
Consent forms read and signed by participant.

### Interview 1 Questions

- 1) I understand that you are currently at ..... school. Could you briefly run through your education history i.e. where you attended school, whether you changed schools and when.
- 2) Could you speak about any periods of exclusion (permanent or temporary) and reasons for these?
- 3) How many schools have you attended altogether? Where were you happiest and why?
- 4) Is this the first time that you have been in trouble with the law? If yes, please could you describe in your own words why you are currently serving a probationary sentence? If no, could you describe previous arrests (what happened briefly) and why you are currently serving a probationary sentence?)
- 5) Could you talk about your friendship groups in each of the schools that you attended?  
Additional questions regarding group size/change in groups/schools asked depending on answers given.
- 6) Was there a group leader within this friendship group? What was he/she like?  
Could you use examples to describe what he/she was like?
- 7) When thinking about the individual group members, what was their behaviour like at school? What was your behaviour? Did the behaviour of the members of your group influence your behaviour at school/home? How? Give examples.
- 8) When thinking about the other members of your group, did they work hard at school? How did they perform academically? How did you perform academically? Did the performance/attitude of members of the group towards

academic achievement influence you and how hard you worked at school and your interest in lessons?

- 9) In terms of school staff (i.e. teachers/teaching assistants/midday-assistants etc), what was the relationship like between group members and school staff? What was your relationship like between you and school staff? Could you describe your current teacher in 3 words? What would they say about you in three words?
- 10) Do you feel that education and learning at school is important for the rest of your life? If so how? How do you think the rest of your group would respond to this question? Do you think their long term attitudes/beliefs affect your answer to this question?

## Appendix 8: Example of Coded Interview

Researcher: So my first question is, are you actually in school at the moment?

CG: No I'm not at the minute

Researcher: You're not at the minute. And could you run through your education history so how many schools have you been in and what happened from primary level up until now.

CG: Um I've been in several schools actually. Yeah I used to go to schools in \*\*\*\*. Basically... What sort of things do you want me to tell you about?

**Comment [L1]:** Change of schooling

Researcher: So primary school. Where did you start?

CG: I started at ... first school, I completed that. Then I went to middle school I got to the last year and sort of messed up a little bit. Yeah,

**Comment [L2]:** No behavior problems until end of primary school

Researcher: What year was that?

CG: That was year 6

Researcher: So you were ok in the first school, no behaviour problems, nothing. And then you got to middle school. What happened in that last year?

CG: Well, I sort of started getting aggressive and that towards other people. And erm, yeah basically I left a bad reputation for myself so mum wanted me to get away from that.

**Comment [L3]:** Aggression. Aware of reputation

Researcher: Where was that, \*\*\*\*\*?

CG: Yes, in a little village in the outskirts of \*\*\*\*\*.

Researcher: Ok, so your mum wanted you to get away. Going back to that. Was that, were you in a crowd or was that your own behaviour?

CG: In a crowd of friends?

Researcher: Yes, what was it like there?

CG: It was erm, sort of you know, crowds of friends. I used to hang around with the ones that were idiots you know I always used to mess about and that and er you know, a lot of behaviour was from myself as well. Basically I was discovered with ADHD at the age of 9. Yeah and erm...

**Comment [L4]:** Groups of friends he labeled as 'idiots'

**Comment [L5]:** Recognised his own learning needs ADHD

Researcher: How did you find that. Did you find it hard to deal with or..?

CG: At the time I didn't think nothing of it coz I didn't know what it was really

Researcher: yes

CG: Now I know what it is.. yeah

Researcher: At the time did that affect how you were or?

CG: Well I don't really see ADHD as the cause of problems, I don't really see it as being there but its yeah...

**Comment [L6]:** Recognises ADHD as part of identity but does not blame his behavior on this

Researcher: So your mum pulled you out of that school. And then where did you go then?

CG: I moved here

Researcher: You moved to \*\*\*\*\*?

CG: Yeah

Researcher: And then what school were you at in \*\*\*\*\*?

CG: Primary school

Researcher: Primary school, so year 6?

CG: Yeah

Researcher: So how were you in that school?

CG: I was only there for 6 weeks

Researcher: Oh ok, no trouble?

CG: No, not at all. I behaved. Then it come to high school and erm yeah..

**Comment [L7]:** Behaved well in primary school. Recognised change in behavior when in high school

Researcher: Where did you go?

CG: It was \*\*\*\*\* High school

Researcher: \*\*\*\*\*? Oh so you didn't go to \*\*\*\*\*?

CG: No, no

Researcher: Were you at \*\*\*\*\* the whole time?

CG: Till year 10/11. Year 10/11 was a bad step for me

**Comment [L8]:** Year 10/11 behaviour change

Researcher: Ok, we will go back to that in a minute. Erm, So basically were you excluded from there a lot?

CG: From \*\*\*\*\*?

Researcher: Yes

CG: Year 10/11 yes.

**Comment [L9]:** Many exclusions in secondary school

Researcher: Ok, so you've attended 2 primary school and 1 secondary school, that's right.

CG: 2 Primary schools... is middle school a.. ?

Researcher: Yes, up until year 6

CG: Yeah

Researcher: Ok, alright. Where were you happiest, what school?

CG: Say, middle school. Yeah

Researcher: Why do you think that is?

CG: Coz basically I had friends there, they weren't really friends at the time but you know, it was just a peaceful place.

**Comment [L10]:** Enjoyed primary school the best as described it as 'peaceful' No behavior problems

Researcher: A peaceful place. You liked your friends there?

CG: I did, I thought a lot of them

Researcher: And going back to why - you're seeing P\*\*\* aren't you?

CG: Yeah

Researcher: Going back to that, just wondered if this is the first time you've been in trouble with the law.

CG: No actually. It was about a year ago, year 10 when I first got in trouble. Yeah

**Comment [L11]:** Criminal behavior just after associating with delinquent peer group at school

Researcher: What was that offence?

CG: That was an assault. Yeah

**Comment [L12]:** Assault/aggression

Researcher: A physical assault

CG: Yeah

Researcher: So that was the first time you got in trouble. Is this your second time?

CG: I think it is actually. It is the second time.

Researcher: And what was this one?

CG: This was assault as well, yeah.

Researcher: Ok, so you've been in trouble twice. And this time you are serving a sentence, is it a youth order?

CG: I've actually finished that now.

Researcher: How long was that order for?

CG: 7 months.

Researcher: 7 months. And you've just finished now. So you are not seeing P\*\*\*\* anymore?

CG: No.. well, I..no not really

Researcher: So let's go back to. Let's not talk about the offence anymore. Let's talk about school. You know when you went to \*\*\*\*\*. What happened between year 7 – 10? What were your friendship groups like?

CG: I had a big group of friends, ones that wanted to do well in school. I followed them

**Comment [L13]:** Prior to behavior difficulties and change of group, friendship group 'did well' at school.

Researcher: Did you do quite well. How did you do academically?

CG: I was erm, I don't know. I done pretty well, I used to get on with my work and that until year 10.

Researcher: So before year 10 you were quite, you did ok?

CG: Yeah

Researcher: And then, what happened in year 10? What changed for you?

CG: I found a new group of friends.

**Comment [L14]:** Identified new group of friends as reason for his behavior change

Researcher: Right ok, and then what happened?

CG: I basically started getting into trouble and you know, being abusive towards teachers and you know stuff that happened in school.

**Comment [L15]:** Description of behaviour

Researcher: Could you explain a bit more about the group? There was obviously quite a big difference between the first group you were in and the second group that you were in. The second group, could you tell me a bit more about that group?

CG: Well a lot of them were into fighting and causing trouble all the time and I looked up to them. I thought that was the way to be.

**Comment [L16]:** Group Identity: Aggression. CG followed this behaviour

Researcher: Was there a leader in that group would you say?

CG: Yes

Researcher: One or two or..?

CG: Several actually

Researcher: Were you one of those or were you one of the others?

CG: The follower

**Comment [L17]:** Identified role as follower

Researcher: The follower. And what sort of things did they do?

CG: They used to take fire extinguishers out of classes and that and fight in the playground and all sorts of things.

**Comment [L18]:** Group norm: Rule breaking/delinquent behaviour

Researcher: Yes ok, erm. So your role was the follower in the group. Thinking about individual members of the group, what were they like in school? What were they like academically and what was their behaviour like individually?

CG: Never used to do well, always messing about in classes and yeah never did no work

**Comment [L19]:** Group norm: Disengage with academic work

Researcher: So they were different to the first group you were in? Ok, and did the behaviour of that group then influence your behaviour would you say?

CG: In a way it did yeah

**Comment [L20]:** Influenced by group behaviour

Researcher: Could you talk a bit more about that, or not?

CG: Well, I looked up to them and thought it was the way to be so I started messing about myself. And left a bad reputation.

**Comment [L21]:** Followed delinquent behavior of group

Researcher: Were they the 'cool' group?

CG: Sort of, yeah. But they got picked on by bigger groups

Researcher: What made you.. this may be a difficult question. What made you leave that first group and join that group?

CG: I just got bored to be honest, bored of doing well.

**Comment [L22]:** Bored of doing well (search for fun experiences?)

Researcher: Doing well, that's interesting. Ok well... Did you feel less bored then in that 2<sup>nd</sup> group then?

CG: Yeah, it was. It was full of excitement really.

**Comment [L23]:** New friendship group was more exciting

Researcher: Ok, do you still think that now?

CG: No

Researcher: Erm, so how did you perform academically when you were in that group?

CG: I started going downhill, started losing respect from teachers. My work was pretty much rubbish.

**Comment [L24]:** Perception that teachers lost respect from him

Researcher: How do you know that it was rubbish?

CG: Coz I used to get marks back all the time and answering back to teachers all the time and have detention.

**Comment [L25]:** Academic work suffered due to behavior in new group.

Researcher: How did that make you feel at the time? Did you care at the time or is it just now you look back... How did you feel at the time?

CG: At the time, I thought it was..I don't know, it made me look cool.. yeah

**Comment [L26]:** Reputation (in front of peers) important

Researcher: Ok, and what about you touched on a little bit about teachers. What was your attitude towards teachers before you were a member of that group?

CG: I was, I used to respect and listen to them all the time, yeah teachers pet.

Researcher: Ok, and then what happened, did you get picked on for being teacher's pet?

CG: Yeah, that was another reason why I got fed up

**Comment [L27]:** Got 'fed up' with doing well

Researcher: Really, so you joined that other group. What happened then? What was that other group's attitude towards teachers do you think?

CG: Erm, they didn't care you know, they just shoved them out the way.

**Comment [L28]:** Group norm: disrespect teachers

Researcher: How did they treat teachers?

CG: Just, I don't know, like pieces of dirt really.

**Comment [L29]:** Group norm: disrespect teachers

Researcher: Did they speak back to them?

CG: Yeah all the time, always laughing at them and shouting abuse

Researcher: And were you the same?

CG: Yes

**Comment [L30]:** Followed group norm

Researcher: Ok, erm, who was your favourite teacher at school. Did you have a favourite teacher?

CG: It was Mr H, he was a school friend of mine – I saw him as a friend.

**Comment [L31]:** Liked teacher who he felt respected him

Researcher: What was it about him that you liked?

CG: One, he knew my mum and got on very well with her and generally he was just there to support me.

**Comment [L32]:** Felt 'supported' by this teacher

Researcher: Was he one of your actual class teachers or was he?

CG: Yes he was, he was P.E.

Researcher: What was your favourite subject at school?

CG: Erm, I'd say P.E. was actually my favourite one.

Researcher: Did you do well at P.E.?

CG: Yes I did, definitely.

**Comment [L33]:** Liked P.E (link to ADHD?)

Researcher: So P.E. lessons, did you work hard because the teacher knew your mum or was it something about him?

CG: I sort of respected him even though I was in the wrong group. He was great, the only teacher I spoke to.

**Comment [L34]:** Respected this teacher

Researcher: How did you behave in his lessons?

CG: I behaved I sat there and done my work, occasionally a bit of homework you know.

**Comment [L35]:** Did not follow group norm in this lesson because of respect for teacher

Researcher: What was it about the other teachers that were different to him?

CG: Erm, I duno, I'd say it was their teaching methods and that. Coz, he had a certain way of teaching and a lot of teachers couldn't do that.

**Comment [L36]:** This teacher understood CG's learning needs

Researcher: Do you feel that he understood the way that you needed to be taught?

CG: Er yes he did actually, he was very practical with everything he done.

**Comment [L37]:** Understood learning needs

Researcher: And you like practical. So were the other teachers, do you feel they were less practical in their lessons? Did it make you feel ... How did you feel in lessons then?

CG: What in general lessons? I just felt bored, like I wanted to muck about more.

**Comment [L38]:** Felt bored in lessons which meant delinquent behavior with friends

Researcher: And is that because you feel the lessons didn't suit your style of learning?

CG: Yes definitely.

**Comment [L39]:** Felt bored because lessons did not meet his learning needs

Researcher: Going back to the group that you were in (we are coming towards the end of the interview now), Erm, and linking back to the offence that you committed recently, the assault – Were the group anything to do with that or was that individual?

CG: I started you know doing all sorts of stuff and getting into fights with police and that with the group and it sort of I dunno, stuck with me, being bad.

**Comment [L40]:** Group delinquent behavior. Labeled himself as 'bad'

Researcher: Yeah, If you could go back to school now, would you want to and what.. I didn't ask about GCSE's, did you get any?

CG: I did, I done pretty well, believe it or not yeah.

Researcher: So you didn't get thrown out of school before GCSE's?

CG: Yeah I did

Researcher: You did, but they still let you back to do your GCSE's

CG: Yeah they did

Researcher: So did you do home study for a while?

CG: Yeah I did erm I did the rest of year 11.

Researcher: So you were there up until the middle of year 11. OK so you still got GCSE's that's a good thing isn't it, that you managed to get those, that's brilliant. And then with the assault, was 7 months ago – Was that 7 months ago? Was that before or after you left school?

CG: That was last July, it was after yeah

**Comment [L41]:** Assault was after associating with delinquent friendship group

Researcher: After you left school. And was that sort of in the group that you were in?

CG: Yes definitely

Researcher: Ok, Just one more question about teachers, that ICT teacher that you said you liked, how would you say he would describe you in three words. Would he...

CG: I don't know... that's a bit of a tough one

Researcher: What about the other teachers, think about one that you feel really didn't get on with, how would they describe you?

CG: Erm

Researcher: How do you think they would describe you?

CG: Aww. Er Mrs M\* she describe me as eratic – is that a word? Er yeah eratic, disturbing, and annoying

**Comment [L42]:** Felt teachers perceived him in a negative way

Researcher: Do you think that's how you were in her lessons?

CG: Mmm (nods)

Researcher: You know when you were, 1 more question. When the group members were behaving as they were in the lessons, did you then join in or did you start things?

CG: Yeah **actually I joined in**

**Comment [L43]:** Followed behavior of group

Researcher: You joined in, so did you ever start anything?

CG: Occasionally

Researcher: Occasionally, so it was mostly them starting and you joining in. Ok, about your future. Where do you see yourself in a year?

CG: **The army.**

**Comment [L44]:** Has ambition

Researcher: The army? Oh fantastic. Have you tried to apply for any jobs?

CG: **I tried for a couple, you know at the W\*\*\*\* and you know but no luck**

**Comment [L45]:** Applied for employment

Researcher: No luck, and do you feel.. What do you feel is affecting that?

CG: Erm, me really, being lazy

Researcher: So you want to get into the army in a years time. Do you have to be 18? I don't know?

CG: I think it's 17 and a half.

Researcher: So you are planning on applying to the army?

CG: Yes

Researcher: Is there a particular section of the army you want to be in or?

CG: **I want to be on the front line**

**Comment [L46]:** Career goal

Researcher: Fantastic, that's brave! Ok, good luck with that

CG: Thank you

### Appendix 9: Table of Codes, Sub-Themes and Themes

Participant 1 DN Extract	Code	Sub Theme	Theme
Interview 1 line 11, 14	Picking on someone in primary school in a group	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 41	Blames behaviour in peer group for exclusions	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 94	When friends with peers who behaved, he did too. Move groups, followed group norm	Change in behaviour due to membership of new friendship group	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 130, 135	Felt that group were picked on by teachers	Group negativity toward teachers/authority figures	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 139	Group norm = negative towards teachers	Group negativity toward teachers/authority figures	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 181	individual negativity towards teacher	Group negativity toward teachers/authority figures	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 44	Academic problems in lessons therefore mess around during lessons to distract from task	Perception of unmet educational needs	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 1 line 104-105	Didn't like asking for help. Followed group when didn't understand academic tasks	Avoid embarrassment in front of peers	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 1 line 98-99	Importance of gaining respect from peers. Role models	Feeling accepted by peer group unit	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 104-105, 211	Embarrassed to ask for help from adults in lessons (due to peers)	Feeling accepted by peer group unit	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 161	felt group Importance of feeling accepted /support when bullied	Feeling accepted by peer group unit	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 123	Wanted teachers as friends	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line	Wanted time and attention	Feeling accepted	Importance of

126, 127	from teachers so they would get to know him	by teachers/an authority figure	feeling accepted
Interview 2 line 14-16, 20, 24, 28	PRU teachers felt like friends, emotionally supportive	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 2 line 76 80	Needed to feel emotionally supported by teachers in school	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 257	Feels accepted by older brother therefore can talk to him	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 161, 165-166,	Joined group for protection from bullies	Feeling accepted by peer group unit	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 2 line 86	Joined group for protection from bullies	Feeling accepted by peer group unit	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 17,19, 86, 109, 113	Follower in group	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 2 line 3	Follower in group	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 90	Followed 'best mate'	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 143-144 line 203 – 204, 206	Felt weak, angry for being bullied in past	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 2 line 31	Felt weak, angry for being bullied in past	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 185	Feels a victim from peers and teacher (picked on)	Individual awareness of teacher perception of group identity, and how this impacts upon individual identity	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 2 line	Low self esteem Didn't see	Individual	Awareness of

54	point in telling anyone about bullies, wanted to control situation himself	awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	individual identity
Interview 1 line 40, 41	Exclusions from school	Educational factors and instability	Instability and reduced feeling of 'belonging'
Interview 1 line 191-192	Mum and dad threw him out of his home therefore in residential housing	Family Factors and Instability	Instability and reduced feeling of 'belonging'
Interview 2 line 37, 39, 41	Truanted from school because of bullies	Educational factors and instability	Instability and reduced feeling of 'belonging'
Interview 1 line 239	Aspiration to be a gardener	Benefit of hindsight: Feeling regret towards delinquent behaviour	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 1 line 251	Low motivation towards career goal	Low motivation to engage with education when part of the system	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 2 line 76, 78, 100	Retrospect – Realisation of need for emotional support at school and anger management	Minimal impact of school punishment in changing beliefs or behaviour	Difference between impact of school and 'real life' punishment

Participant 2 CG Extract	Code	Sub Theme	Theme
Interview 1 line 22	Norm = messing about	Change in behaviour due to membership of new friendship group	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 89	Norm = doing well at school, following group up until yr 10	Change in behaviour due to membership of new friendship group	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 95	New group	Change in behaviour due to membership of new friendship group	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 97	norm = getting into trouble	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 lines 102-103	looked up to group members/fighters/troublemakers	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 116	Group norm = messing about/not doing any work	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 121	following group norm, looked up to members	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 111	description of group behaviour	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 133	explanation of academic effects of following group norm	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 147 – 153	Disrespecting teachers (group norm)	Group negativity toward teachers/authority figures	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 2 line 11, 12	Following older peers, group norm being in trouble	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 127	got 'bored of doing well	Feeling alienated from the learning experience: Boredom	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 1 line 129	group = full of excitement	Feeling alienated from the learning experience:	Search for fun with like minded peers

		Boredom	
Interview 1 line 142	got bored of being 'teacher's pet' fed up	Avoid embarrassment in front of peers	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 1 line 177	bored, needed to 'mess about'	Feeling alienated from the learning experience: Boredom	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 2 line 29	found work hard	Feeling alienated from the learning experience: Boredom	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 2 line 70, 71, 74	ADHD need to move around/stay active in lessons	Perception of unmet educational needs	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 2 line 102, 103	need for structure, something to do after school in school to keep him out of trouble	Perception of unmet educational needs	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 1 line 139	Importance of looking cool in front of peers	Feeling accepted by peer group unit	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 142	bored of being 'teacher's pet' search for Importance of feeling accepted from peers	Feeling accepted by peer group unit	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 2 line 91, 92	Picked on for being mummy's boy therefore chose group to avoid this label	Feeling accepted by peer group unit	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 157	need to feel emotionally supported by teachers	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 172, 174, 178, 179	Need for teachers to understand learning style due to ADHD	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 2 line 40, 59, 88	Need for teachers to understand learning style due to ADHD	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 2 line 159, 160, 163	Importance of feeling that staff really care	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 2 line 172	Need for mentor type figure in school	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 14/15	Anger/aggression towards others	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 24/30	ADHD Feeling hyperactive	Individual awareness and understanding of	Awareness of individual identity

		own academic needs	
Interview 2 line 62	ADHD Feeling hyperactive	Individual awareness and understanding of own academic needs	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 62, 63	Search for 'peace' in educational setting	Individual awareness and understanding of own academic needs	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 109	Role formation in group (the 'follower')	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 116, line 213	Description of type of behaviour that CG followed in group.	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 121, 122	Explanation of why CG followed group 'looked up to group'	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 207, 208	Group norm, impact Awareness of individual identity therefore felt teacher's had a negative view of him (self fulfilling prophecy?)	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 183	Awareness of individual identity = being 'bad' formed from group norm	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 2 line 5	impact of new group of friends, meant change in behaviour	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 5	Change of schools	Educational factors and instability	Instability and reduced feeling of 'belonging'
Interview 1 line 49, 53	Exclusions	Educational factors and instability	Instability and reduced feeling of 'belonging'

Interview 2 line 6	Dad adopted CG	Family Factors and Instability	Instability and reduced feeling of 'belonging'
Interview 1 line 218	Long term goal = to be in the army, has long term aspirations	Low motivation to engage with education when part of the system	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 2 line 22, 23, 26, 27 Interview 2 line 47, 48	Felt pressured short term (felt could not achieve expectations from mother and school)	Low motivation to engage with education when part of the system	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 2 line 50, 54, 55	Realise can be independent and motivated without being pushed by others (retrospect)	Low motivation to engage with education when part of the system	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 2 line 145, 146	Needed confidence in own independence in retrospect	Low motivation to engage with education when part of the system	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 2 line 111 – 115	Punishments in school did not matter, therefore behaviour transferred out of school	Minimal impact of school punishment in changing beliefs or behaviour	Difference between impact of school and 'real life' punishment
Interview 2 line 120, 123	Punishments in school did not matter	Minimal impact of school punishment in changing beliefs or behaviour	Difference between impact of school and 'real life' punishment
Interview 2 line 132, 133	Exclusions ineffective (break away from school)	Minimal impact of school punishment in changing beliefs or behaviour	Difference between impact of school and 'real life' punishment
Interview 2 line 125, 127 139-142	Punishments in real world more impact	'Real world' punishments matter	Difference between impact of school and 'real life'

			punishment
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Participant 3 KN Extract	Code	Sub Theme	Theme
Interview 1 line 28	Group norm Non compliance of school rules	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 80, 84	big group, Group norm- getting in trouble	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 88-90	description of behaviours in group	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 104	Identifying with group	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 132, 135	Group following KN refusal to work	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 2 line 60, 62	Group following KN refusal to work	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 143, 144	Group misbehaved as a whole	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 198	Impact of group presence/pressure when teacher tells him off	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 214	Crime committed in group	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 2 line 37, 41 43	Group carried on behaving along with norm even when KN left school	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 2 line 69, 71, 72, 75	Group power against teachers	Group negativity toward teachers/authority figures	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 2 line 139	School is where group that committed crime first developed	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 111, 113, 120	Disengagement with school (line work and teachers) therefore behaved like this in group	Feeling alienated from the learning experience: Boredom	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 1 line 127	found work hard, therefore didn't do it so misbehaviour	Perception of unmet educational needs	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 1 line 216	Offense in group was 'fun'	Search for fun with like minded peers	Search for fun with like minded peers

Interview 1 line 88	Protective group	Feeling accepted by peer group unit	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 2 line 7	Group protect each other by fighting others who they felt threatened by	Feeling accepted by peer group unit	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 2 line 28-29	Felt group protected him	Feeling accepted by peer group unit	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 152	Could accept one teacher, worked in lesson because he felt respected by this teacher	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 190, 192, 194	Dislike teacher and felt he disrespected peers and him	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 31 Interview 2 line 19-20	Anger towards teacher/acting out role of leader/fighter	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 101	KS was leader in group,	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 108, 138	group followed him	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 2 line 11	Leader in every group he was in	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 2 line 33, 35	Felt he had a role to play (role as leader) and liked this	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 145	Identified with being the 'same' as the group (misbehaved)	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 177, 179, 181	Self esteem high/confidence in Art so worked hard	Individual awareness and understanding of own academic needs	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line	Group matter to him	Individual	Awareness of

220-221	(important when considering if he would go back to school)	awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	individual identity
Interview 2 line 54	Liked power he had over group	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 2 line 28-29	Felt group protected him	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 9	Exclusions	Educational factors and instability	Instability and reduced feeling of 'belonging'
Interview 1 line 158, 160	No understanding of importance of working hard at school (short term)-dislike authority telling him what to do	Low motivation to engage with education when part of the system	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 2 line 48	Didn't see point in school	Low motivation to engage with education when part of the system	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 1 line 216	Regret offending	Benefit of hindsight: Feeling regret towards delinquent behaviour	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 1 line 116, 168-169, 225, 79	Impact of behaviour effecting job prospects	Benefit of hindsight: Feeling regret towards delinquent behaviour	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 2 line 52	Impact of behaviour effecting job prospects	Benefit of hindsight: Feeling regret towards delinquent behaviour	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 1 line 236, 240	Impact of criminal record effects chances of getting job	'Real world' punishments matter	Difference between impact of school and 'real life' punishment
Interview 2 line	Impact of brother who	'Real world'	Difference

90, 95, 98, 110	experienced prison – Help him see reality of where his behaviour could lead him	punishments matter	between impact of school and ‘real life’ punishment
Interview 2 line 118-119, 121	one teacher in year 11 helped him to see link between real world and school punishments	Minimal impact of school punishment in changing beliefs or behaviour	Difference between impact of school and ‘real life’ punishment
interview 2 line 125	Impact a change in behaviour out of school	‘Real world’ punishments matter	Difference between impact of school and ‘real life’ punishment

Participant 4 KEF Extract	Code	Sub Theme	Theme
Interview 1 line 82, 84	group did not engage in misbehaviour in primary school.	Change in behaviour due to membership of new friendship group	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 89	Big group	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 202	Group agreement, dislike of all teachers	Group negativity toward teachers/authority figures	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 119-120, 122	Felt teachers picked on her and lost temper with them	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 151	Argued back with teachers	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 155	Strong dislike for teachers/authority	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 262 – 264, 266	Does not like to be made to feel disrespected, jumps at this without understanding reasons.	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 48	Violent crimes with friends	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 87	ADHD	Individual awareness and understanding of own academic needs	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 94, 95	No group identities	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 99, 101, 107	Independent, did not follow others in group	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons (evidence against)	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line	Group were not the same as	Individual	Awareness of

169, 171, 198	her, worked in lessons	awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons (evidence against)	individual identity
Interview 1 line 187, 189	Low self esteem/confidence towards own academic ability	Individual awareness and understanding of own academic needs	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 205-206	Felt teachers labelled her due to her sister	Individual awareness of teacher perception of group identity, and how this impacts upon individual identity	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 157, 212-213, 215, 218-221	Felt teachers hated her, picked on her	Individual awareness of teacher perception of group identity, and how this impacts upon individual identity	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 240	Felt teachers had a negative view of her ('gobby')	Individual awareness of teacher perception of group identity, and how this impacts upon individual identity	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 124	Truanted from lessons	Educational factors and instability	Instability and reduced feeling of 'belonging'
Interview 1 line 132-134, 136	Lesson that identified future with, worked in.	Low motivation to engage with education when part of the system	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 1 line 143, 145, 147	Would not work in lessons that she did not link directly with her future	Low motivation to engage with education when part of the system	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 1 line 159-160	Regrets behaviour at school because has no GCSE's	Benefit of hindsight: Feeling regret towards delinquent behaviour	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 1 line 250, 258	Has ambition (work with handicapped) but no plan how to achieve it	Benefit of hindsight: Feeling regret towards	Aspiration, motivation and the value of

		delinquent behaviour	hindsight
Interview 1 line 4, 9	Excluded several times	Minimal impact of school punishment in changing beliefs or behaviour	Difference between impact of school and 'real life' punishment

Participant 5 KP Extract	Code	Sub Theme	Theme
Interview 1 line 106, 115, 128	Offense/fight in group (group formed in school)	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 2 line 35, 39, 47	Offense/fight in group (group formed in school)	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 2 line 62	Negative relationship with victims formed in school	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 146, 150, 271-271	When not in group (in primary school), no pressure to behave in certain way	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 155, Interview 2 line 120	Identifies his group as main reason for engaging in aggressive behaviour	Change in behaviour due to membership of new friendship group	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 216-217	Group norm behaviour in class, throwing things, KW would join in too	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 232-233	group norm = to be 'naughty'	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 2 line 43, 47, Interview 2 line 124-125	group norm = to mess around, KW liked this and engaged in this behaviour too	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 361, 369, 373	When in presence of peers who work hard, he does too	Change in behaviour due to membership of new friendship group	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 2 line 177-178	Blames group for misbehaviour when asked	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 93, 94	distracting classroom environment/low academic ability therefore joined group and messed around when did not understand	Perception of unmet educational needs	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 1 line 238-239, 258-259, 422-425	Doesn't understand lessons, bored, so messed around	Feeling alienated from the learning experience: Boredom	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 2 line 157-158, line 306-307	Lessons which did not match his abilities- bored-messed around	Feeling alienated from the learning experience: Boredom	Search for fun with like minded peers

Interview 1 lines 74-75, 79	Presence of peers. Influence whether he asks for help or not	Avoid embarrassment in front of peers	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 1 line 74, 79, Interview 2 line 193-196	Won't ask for help due to presence of peers	Feeling accepted by peer group unit	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 189	Feels supported by group/protection	Feeling accepted by peer group unit	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 280-281, 320-322	Importance of acknowledging academic needs by teachers-worked hard in lessons when he felt this was the case	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 393	Feels more accepted by teachers in PRU Feels respected	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 2 line 253 – 258	Teacher attitude towards him (respect) is key to his attitude in class	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 2 line 380-381	If teacher accepted his difficulties, took him out of class to work on his academic difficulties, would misbehave less because would have felt he can do work and not Search for fun with like minded peers. No influence/embarrassment of peers	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 330, 332	Understanding academic ability, need to work with minimal distractions	Individual awareness and understanding of own academic needs	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 36-37, 41	Aggressive, angry	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 54, 72	Awareness of academic difficulty	Individual awareness and understanding of own academic needs	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 166 – 169	Awareness of individual identity = fighter (formed from group) His role was to fight.	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line	Role = leader (as followed	Individual	Awareness of

174, 184	main leader in group)	awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	individual identity
Interview 2 line 75	Role = leader (as followed main leader in group)	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 2 line 171	When he misbehaved, group followed	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 197, 206, 221	Role = fighter/to protect group/'rude kid'	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 346	Thinks teachers see him in negative way (role identification)	Individual awareness of teacher perception of group identity, and how this impacts upon individual identity	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 2 line 95	Got 'picked on in primary school but was not in group	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 2 line 130-131	Being bullied in primary school- angry in secondary school	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 2 line 228	Identifies himself as a 'messing about' person	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 5-6	Schooling	Educational factors and instability	Instability and reduced feeling of 'belonging'
Interview 1 line 16, 20	Exclusions	Educational factors and instability	Instability and reduced feeling of 'belonging'
Interview 1 line 293-294, 302	Deliberately misbehaved with group in lessons so he could get sent to isolation room to	Minimal impact of school punishment in	Difference between impact of school and

	do work more on his academic level.	changing beliefs or behaviour	‘real life’ punishment
Interview 2 line 228-230	Isolation room made him more ‘bored’; therefore messed around more	Minimal impact of school punishment in changing beliefs or behaviour	Difference between impact of school and ‘real life’ punishment
Interview 2 line 243, line 332, 336	Punishments at school no impact	Minimal impact of school punishment in changing beliefs or behaviour	Difference between impact of school and ‘real life’ punishment
Interview 2 line 339	Exclusions did not matter because it meant he could sleep	Minimal impact of school punishment in changing beliefs or behaviour	Difference between impact of school and ‘real life’ punishment
Interview 2 line 353	Aware of long term possible punishment	‘Real world’ punishments matter	Difference between impact of school and ‘real life’ punishment
Interview 2 line 362-364, line 370 – 373	Tag impacts on behaviour because takes away things that motivate him	‘Real world’ punishments matter	Difference between impact of school and ‘real life’ punishment

Participant 6 KL Extract	Code	Sub Theme	Theme
Interview 1 line 142	Identified group as 'naughty' in secondary school	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 128, 132	Did not get into much trouble at primary school	Change in behaviour due to membership of new friendship group	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 209-210, 218	Group norm to push the boundaries of particular teachers	Group negativity toward teachers/authority figures	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 320	group dislike of teachers, knew teachers didn't like group	Group negativity toward teachers/authority figures	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 355, 359, 363	Copied older peers' group norm	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 486	Offences committed with peers	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 2 line 78-79	Influence of peers to carry out offence	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 2 line 92	Group norm – didn't care about law-breaking behaviour	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 2 line 73, 75	Chose group to join due to group norm of 'being naughty'	Change in behaviour due to membership of new friendship group	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 238	Bored therefore was naughty in group	Feeling alienated from the learning experience: Boredom	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 1 line 250 Interview 2 line 12, 14, 23	Bored due to length of lessons, did not see point in it	Feeling alienated from the learning experience: Boredom	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 1 line 371 Interview 2 line 50-51, 53-54, 56-57	Copied older peers who were breaking rules.	Feeling alienated from the learning experience: Boredom	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 1 line 439, 443 Interview 2 line	Found work in secondary school hard so messed around	Perception of unmet educational needs	Search for fun with like minded peers

31, 33, 120-121			
Interview 1 line 455-457	When bored in lessons – wound up peers	Feeling alienated from the learning experience: Boredom	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 2 line 95-96	Bored when excluded so committed crime in group	Feeling alienated from the learning experience: Boredom	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 1 line 183 (interview 1 line 191 big group)	protection, group stuck together at break times	Feeling accepted by peer group unit	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 405-406	Importance of feeling accepted from authority figure, treats him with respect, talks to him	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 2 line 35, 37	Didn't ask for help when stuck as knew peers knew what they were doing/embarrassed	Feeling accepted by peer group unit	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 2 line 64, 68	Didn't ask for help when stuck as knew peers knew what they were doing/embarrassed	Feeling accepted by peer group unit	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 227	Identified himself as 'naughty'	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 271, 275, line 238	Group worked at school but line 238 KL did not do work (not SIT)	Individual awareness and understanding of own academic needs	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 289, 293	Had booster lessons, needed help with tasks at school	Individual awareness and understanding of own academic needs	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 320	Get sent out for slightest thing due to group label	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 329	Thinks teachers think he's 'naughty' self fulfilling prophecy	Individual awareness of teacher perception of group identity,	Awareness of individual identity

		and how this impacts upon individual identity	
Interview 1 line 371	copied older peers as identified with their behaviour	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 2 line 25	Liked to keep active during lessons	Individual awareness and understanding of own academic needs	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 2 line 47	Accepted he was 'naughty' so knew why teachers told him off	Individual awareness of teacher perception of group identity, and how this impacts upon individual identity	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 52-53	Excluded from school (fight)	Educational factors and instability	Instability and reduced feeling of 'belonging'
Interview 1 line 46	Does not like being in school for long (short term)	Low motivation to engage with education when part of the system	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 1 line 250	Did not see point in sitting in lessons	Low motivation to engage with education when part of the system	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 1 line 385	liked PRU due to easier lessons-lazy in school	Low motivation to engage with education when part of the system	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 1 line 465	No interest in education at present	Low motivation to engage with education when part of the system	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 1 line 473	Has ambition (mechanic), doesn't know what he needs to do to get there	Benefit of hindsight: Feeling regret towards delinquent behaviour	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 1 line 75	Breach community order, no impact of punishment, didn't effect his life massively.	'Real world' punishments matter	Difference between impact of school and 'real life'

			punishment
Interview 1 line 71	Tag impacts on KL has to be home by 9pm	'Real world' punishments matter	Difference between impact of school and 'real life' punishment
Interview 2 line 100, 105, 107	Punishments at school didn't matter	Minimal impact of school punishment in changing beliefs or behaviour	Difference between impact of school and 'real life' punishment
Interview 2 line 109	Impact of tag matters	'Real world' punishments matter	Difference between impact of school and 'real life' punishment

Participant 7 EY Extract	Code	Sub Theme	Theme
Interview 1 line 108	Caught up with wrong people so offended.	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 122, 134, 142	Loss of responsibility Offended with a friend	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 190	Big group in secondary school	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 199	Group was good in primary school	Change in behaviour due to membership of new friendship group	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 255-256, 265, 269	Group agreement dislike teachers therefore misbehave in lessons	Group negativity toward teachers/authority figures	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 273	Description of group behaviour in lessons where they dislike teacher	Group negativity toward teachers/authority figures	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 290	Sometimes group influenced how hard she worked in lesson	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 307	Her mood impacts group behaviour (follow her)	Group disruption and rule breaking behaviour	Formation of Group Norm
Interview 1 line 200, 205	Lots of peers so couldn't focus	Perception of unmet educational needs	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 1 lines 214, 239-240	Description of behaviours used to avoidance of work	Feeling alienated from the learning experience: Boredom	Search for fun with like minded peers
Interview 1 line 393 – 396, 400, 404	Feels teachers unfairly pick on her	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 477	Enjoys authority figure treating her as a friend	Feeling accepted by teachers/an authority figure	Importance of feeling accepted
Interview 1 line 290, 294, 298, 490	Blames bad mood on whether she has eaten/slept	Individual awareness and understanding of own academic needs	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line	Will misbehave in lesson if	Individual	Awareness of

335-336	she doesn't like lesson (not SIT)	awareness and understanding of own academic needs	individual identity
Interview 1 line 350, 359	Identifies herself negatively. Role = to misbehave (SFP?)	Individual awareness of the need to feel part of a group for protective reasons	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 425-426, 430, 434	Does not like big schools/lots of people – Feels distracted and can not focus	Individual awareness and understanding of own academic needs	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 line 486	Does not view school as impacting on how she is, she has always behaved as she does.	Individual awareness and understanding of own academic needs	Awareness of individual identity
Interview 1 lines 8 – 10	Attended several schools	Educational factors and instability	Instability and reduced feeling of 'belonging'
Interview 1 line 70	Excluded	Educational factors and instability	Instability and reduced feeling of 'belonging'
Interview 1 line 175	Impact of negative relationship with father	Family Factors and Instability	Instability and reduced feeling of 'belonging'
Interview 1 line 82-83	Didn't see point in PRU blame bus journey so did not attend	Low motivation to engage with education when part of the system	Aspiration, motivation and the value of hindsight
Interview 1 line 461, 465	Impact of referral order (discourages her from committing crime again)	'Real world' punishments matter	Difference between impact of school and 'real life' punishment

## Appendix 10: Thematic Maps

