"You can't leave your life to chance." Transitioning from offending in emerging adults.

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Abstract

There is currently limited very research about how emerging adult's transition out of crime. This study interviewed nine emerging adults who successfully transitioned out of crime by the age of 25. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and transcribed verbatim. The data was analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. Participants described their experience of transition as a build-up of distress combined with reasons to stop, shifts in perceptions around offending and their identity, a challenging process that they felt fortunate to have accomplished, a noticeable improvement in their lives and ongoing temptation or thoughts about offending. The results suggested three main findings; that the process of desistance is similar in emerging adults and adult populations, that there could be a universal mechanism of change underlying all behaviour, and that control theories may better explain desistance behaviour than dominant models of behaviour change such as the transtheoretical model of change.

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He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata. What is the most important thing in this world? It is people, it is people, it is people.

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Introduction

Youth offending is problematic in New Zealand. On average there are between 14,000-15,000 offences committed each month in New Zealand. Youths between the ages of 16 and 25 are responsible for between 5,500 and 6,000 of these, and many are serious offences such as burglary, robbery and assault (Statistics New Zealand, n.d). The literature consistently shows that offending peaks in adolescence around the age of 17 before declining during the transition to early adulthood (Burfeind & Bartusch, 2011). According to Loeber and Le Blanc (1990), though the age/crime relationship is well known, desistance from crime does not occur as a function of age. There is not yet any other consensus about why offending reliably terminates with age (Kazemian, 2007).

Early studies such as Glueck and Glueck (1940) noticed that their sample of juvenile delinquents appeared to be aging out of crime. According to their statistics, by around the age of 29 years, 40% of their sample had ceased offending. This age/crime trend is noted throughout criminal statistics (Farrington, 1986). However, other authors have argued against the age/crime relationship. For example, Laub and Sampson (2001) argued that sociological factors were responsible for desistance from crime in an individual's early twenties. Their research concluded that employment, military service, and marriage could explain desistance from crime in young people. Later studies such as that of Maruna (2001), criticised these theories for not accounting for individual differences that could explain desistance such as levels of self-efficacy, identity, and the role of cognitions. The lack of consensus about how desistance occurs could be partly because it is a relatively new area of study, but it could also be because the mechanism of psychological change is not yet fully understood.

According to Carey, Carey, Mullan, Murray, and Spratt (2006) though psychological change is the basis of much of the work in psychology, it is not clearly defined in the literature. The aim of psychological therapies and rehabilitation programmes is assisting in achieving change for the client through psychological means (Dimcovic, 2001). However, though outcome studies can prove that change occurs, the process by which it occurs is still being debated. If this was better understood, the desistance process for young people may also be better understood. Rosen and Davison (2003) argued that until the underlying mechanism for change is known, therapists may continue to use treatments with unnecessary components. Rosen and Davison thus advocated for research into empirically supported principles of change.

Qualitative studies have begun to investigate what understanding the experience of change could contribute to knowledge on the mechanism of change. These studies suggest that there could be common processes in psychological change, such as wanting to change and/or gaining insight (Carey et al., 2007; Higginson & Mansell, 2008). To date, the experience from the perspective of an emerging adult desisting from offending has not been thoroughly investigated.

There are frameworks that claim to explain some, or all of the behaviour changes made by offenders. Examples of these models are Prochaska and DiClemente's (1982) transtheoretical model of change (TTM), Burrowes and Needs (2009) readiness to change framework, and the Ward, Day, Howells and Birgden (2004) multifactor offender readiness model. Though these models are useful frameworks for understanding some offending behaviours, there is debate about their ability to explain desistance (Mossière & Serin, 2014; Serin & Lloyd, 2009). Additionally, the experiences reported by participants in qualitative studies of change do not consistently overlap with the processes described by these behaviour change models (Gianakis & Carey, 2008). This suggests that these models do not accurately reflect the process or mechanism of change.

Self-regulation theories based on control theory claim to explain the psychological mechanism of change. Control theories suggest that a person utilises feedback, either from their environment or their own self reflections, in order to maintain a desired standard of behaviour. According to Carver and Scheier (1982) control theory is a useful way to analyse and conceptualise human behaviour change. Identity Control theory (Burke, 2006)) and Perceptual Control theory (Powers, 1973) are both control theories that could be used as a framework to understand youth desistance from crime.

According to Serin and Lloyd (2009) prior research has hinted at important elements that make up the transitional process of desistance but these elements have not yet been entirely described or explained. There is a need to better understand the process of desistance particularly in youth who make up the majority of offenders. Given that there is a known transitional period where desistance occurs, it follows that this is an opportunity to explore the change process. Arnett (2000) describes the ages between 18 and 25 as emerging adulthood. It is during this time that youth offenders, including serious offenders, make the transition away from offending behaviour. Studying the experience of these emerging adults

may shed some light on both the internal mechanism of change and also the process of desistance. In order to understand the process of desistance it must first be defined.

Defining Desistance

Understanding the process of desistance from crime has become a priority for researchers. Crime acquisition is well understood (Andrews & Bonta, 2010), but crime desistance is not (Serin & Lloyd, 2009). It follows that an understanding of the desistance process would assist the rehabilitation of offenders and those that work with offenders to better support their needs.

One of the difficulties in studying desistance is the difficulty in defining it (Laub & Sampson, 2001). Desistance can be defined as the termination of offending. However many authors agree that the definition of desistance is more of a process than an absolute termination point (Serin and Lloyd, 2009; Ward & Laws, 2010). To illustrate the variance in operational definitions, Kazemian (2007) lists 14 studies each with a different definition of desistance. The studies differed on whether they used formal convictions or self-reports of offending behaviour, the length of the follow up periods, and what was required in terms of the length of desistance. The result of this variation is difficulty in comparing results (Bushway, Piquero, Broidy, Cauffman & Mazerolle, 2001) and difficulty making generalisations (Uggen & Massoglia, 2010). According to Kazemian (2007) there continues to be no consensus on an operational definition of desistance. A definition needed to be selected for this study and a self-reported cessation of offending for at least one year was chosen. This definition was used by both Maruna (2001) and Warr (1998). In order to understand the process of desistance it is necessary to understand the evidence available within the literature. This includes developmental theories, followed by sociological and psychological theories of desistance.

Developmental theories of desistance.

Though definitions are varied, there is a well-established phenomenon occurring in desistance called the age-crime curve. This shows that adolescents are responsible for a large proportion of crime (Blumstein & Cohen, 1987; Kazemian, 2007; Moffitt, 1993; Oyserman & Markus, 1990). The data consistently shows that offences increase in frequency in accordance with age, peaking in adolescence before declining in early adulthood (Burfeind & Bartusch, 2011). Though the phenomenon's existence is not contested, the meaning of the phenomenon is (Lauritsen, 1998).

One of the early popular theories to explain the age-crime curve is that of maturation, or the idea that young people eventually grow out of crime. This argument originally came from the work of Glueck and Glueck (1940). Glueck and Glueck conducted a study on delinquent boys and found that their sample eventually desisted from offending over time and attributed this to maturation effects inherent in aging. Maruna (1999) summarises the inadequacies of using age as an explanation of desistance. He explains that to rely on maturational explanations denies the role of other social factors that could be at play and does not take into account the diversity of developmental pathways. Physical changes associated with maturation such as changes in testosterone levels do not mirror the age crime-curve, suggesting there is nothing inherent biologically that could explain the age-crime curve (Maruna, 1999). Shover (1996) found that although physical changes associated with aging interfered with some types of offences (e.g. physically climbing in windows to steal) these changes do not typically occur in the mid-twenties and so are unlikely to be an explanation for the effect seen in the age-crime curve.

The work of Glueck and Glueck (1940) was also criticised for not explaining desistance but confirming that desistance occurred with age. This fact could already be observed in the age-crime data. Glueck and Glueck's main argument was that desistance was the result of maturity, and maturity occurred when a person desisted. This argument was considered too circular in nature (Wooten, 1959) and ultimately their theory was mostly disregarded (Maruna, 1999; Rocque, 2015). Rocque suggests that the work of Glueck and Glueck was misunderstood, and could still have merit if the concept of maturation could be more fully understood from a holistic perspective including neurocognitive, psychological, civic, and sociological standpoints. Though Rocque is supportive of the idea to further investigate a theory of maturation, according to him this has not yet been a priority for criminologists.

Moffitt's (1993) seminal work also sought to explain the age crime curve. Moffitt theorised that anti-social behaviour is a relatively normal behaviour in adolescence and the effect seen in the age-crime curve can be explained by the idea that there are two main groups of adolescent offenders; the adolescent limited and the life-course persistent offender.

Moffitt's (1993) theory was that the life-course persistent offender is more likely to have neurological, social and behavioural issues as a child and because of this will be more likely to have difficulties in adulthood, which will lead them to be primarily responsible for crimes committed past the age of the mid-twenties. However for adolescent limited offenders, anti-

social behaviour was largely functional. Anti-social behaviour was learned from the life-course persistent offenders in places such as secondary school. She theorised that the function of the anti-social behaviour was to access the perceived benefits of being an adult such as independence and money. As the offenders aged, for the majority, offending behaviour would lose its functionality as they obtained jobs and moved out of home, and it would be replaced by more functional pro-social behaviour such as employment and marriage. It was theorised that this process would be easier because of an absence of early childhood problems. This was to explain the increase in offending in the mid to late teens as shown by the age-crime curve and the decline in offending seen in the mid-twenties.

Empirical evidence tends to agree with Moffitt's (1993) theory that anti-social behaviour is a normative experience for those in adolescence. In a study conducted by Junger-Tas (2012), self-reported delinquent behaviour was compared across 13 countries including New Zealand. This study found that in a one year period, two-thirds of youths aged between 14 and 21 occasionally committed an offence that was of a non-serious nature. Junger-Tas (2012) defines non-serious offences as those that are committed frequently (e.g. shoplifting and group fighting) versus serious offences defined as those committed less frequently (e.g. assault and drug dealing). The results of Junger-Tas' study are remarkably similar to an earlier study by Elliot, Ageton, Huizinga, Knowles and Canter (1983) who examined the self-reported rates of delinquency from 1976-1980. They found that the vast majority (approximately 67%) of youths had engaged in some kind of delinquent behaviour, but most of this was of a non-serious nature. This indicates that a degree of anti-social behaviour is normative in adolescence and that approximately two-thirds of adolescents commit some kind of crime of a non-serious nature.

However, when Moffitt's theory was empirically tested using the Dunedin Longitudinal population, Moffitt, Caspi, Harrington and Milne (2002) found that at age 26, a number of the participants identified as adolescent limited offenders were unexpectedly continuing to commit offences. Again at age 32, a study by Odgers et al. (2008) revealed some in this same group were still engaged in anti-social behaviour. Both of these studies suggest that the adolescent limited group could have been misidentified. This is because the method that was used to categorise the participants involved following them up at fixed age points (e.g. 11, 13, 15 and 18 years). This meant that relevant data that was not observed when the data was being collected could have resulted in the participants being misidentified.

Another argument is that although there is a correlation between age and crime, desisting from crime is not a function of age (Loeber & Leblanc, 1990). The age-crime curve is made up of aggregate data which may make it appear that there is a causational relationship between crime and age when the effect is merely correlational. Hirshchi and Gottfredson (1983) argue that the focus on age as a factor in explaining desistance is misleading and inaccurate. They argue that one of the underlying assumptions of developmental theories of desistance is that the age-crime curve demonstrates an age related phenomenon occurring in the process of desistance. This supposed fact is responsible for the emergence of longitudinal studies to examine desistance, though according to Hirschi and Gottfredson (1983) age-related correlates of offending, such as onset of first offence, do not reliably predict desistance from offending. The evidence suggests that though age has a relationship with desistance, it is not causing desistance and cannot be used as a reliable predictor of the phenomenon. This is likely because changes that occur as a person ages is made up of too many variables for age itself to be an explanation (Rutter, 1996). Laub and Sampson (2001) conclude that there is too much diversity within and between offenders that it is too difficult to reliably predict the progression of a youth's criminal career using age alone. These ideas have led to further investigation of other factors that could be involved in the desistance process that are also occurring as a person ages.

Sociological explanations of desistance.

There have also been suggestions that desistance is perhaps the result of sociological factors that are associated with development into adulthood (Burnett & Maruna, 2004). Sampson and Laub's (1990) argument was that regardless of a person's background such as genetics and upbringing, certain life circumstances such as family relationships, the community a person lives in, or place of employment are forms of informal social control and influence social and anti-social behaviour. In particular, these types of circumstances are thought to aid the desistance process. This theory is based on social control theory, the idea that anti-social behaviour is caused by a weak connection to a society. When this connection is strengthened, for example through informal social controls such as marriage or employment, anti-social behaviour will decrease. It is the quality of these social relationships that are key to the desistance process (Laub & Sampson, 2001).

Laub and Sampson (2001) conducted an extensive review of the literature on desistance and ultimately found a range of conflicting results regarding different types of informal social

controls. Having children, joining the military, vocational education and training, marriage and employment were found in some studies to be related to desistance, and not in others.

Marriage.

Sampson, Laub and Wimer (2006) explain that marriage can be a factor in desistance because of the meaning of the social bond of marriage, for example, the interdependence, support and inhibitory pressure of the spouse. It can also change routines, reducing socialisation with delinquent peers, and can impact on a person's identity by creating a pro-social identity within the marriage. However, Theobald and Farrington (2009) highlight that studying the effect of marriage on desistance is difficult because of selection effects. Selection effects refer to the difficulty in randomising participants for study, which prevents a study from being representative of a population. Because of the difficulty in separating selection effects from marriage effects, the effect of marriage on desistance is difficult to study.

Based on the theory of informal social control, Laub, Sampson and Nagin (1998) theorised that good quality relationships such as marriage will take time to build, and as they gradually build they would have an increasing effect on the process of desistance. Laub et al. (1998), and Sampson et al. (2006) used the longitudinal data from the original study of delinquency by Glueck and Glueck (1940). The studies found that a desistance effect took time to appear, however for those that entered into marriage early and had a good relationship, marriage led to an inhibitory effect on crime. Sampson et al. (2006) found a similar effect of marriage on desistance.

Farrington (1995) conducted a longitudinal study with 411 boys from South London. The participants in the study were followed up from the age of eight to the age of 32. The study found a decrease in offending for those that were identified as delinquent and who got married. In their sample, those that separated from their wives increased their offending compared to those who stayed married. The results of this study suggest that marriage appears to be a protective factor for delinquent boys.

Though there appears to be evidence that marriage has a relationship with desistance from crime, the mechanism that is responsible is not yet known (Sampson et al., 2006). Barry (2010) extensively interviewed a group of young people, the majority of which had stopped offending. She noted that contrary to previous studies, those that had stopped offending were not in stable relationships, suggesting that a committed relationship is not a requirement for

desistance to occur. In a review by Wright and Wright (1992), the authors found that there is no clear evidence that marriage has a desistance effect. One of the issues discussed is that a marriage event does not provide information about an individual's choice to maintain an offence free lifestyle, or the nature of the relationship with their spouse. Being married did not guarantee a non-violent and socially conforming individual.

Lyngstad and Skardhamer (2013) explained the inconsistencies in the findings on the relationship between crime and marriage. In their study they found that offending rates were decreasing prior to marriage, suggesting that desistance is not happening as a result of marriage but as a result of something else, such as changes in behaviour when courting a spouse. They reported that a focus on data taken before and after marriage created what they called a 'marriage effect'. This effect over-states the importance of a marriage event and minimises the self-selection effects that are present. This can make it appear as though the marriage event is responsible.

Employment.

The idea that employment assists the process of desistance is mainly a sociological one. According to Laub and Sampson (2001) offending behaviour can be modified by employment because it is a form of social control. Sampson and Laub (1990) hypothesised that according to social control theory, offenders who invest in employment, experience employment stability, feel committed to their jobs, and have ties to work will also be more strongly influenced by social control processes and this should lead to a reduction in criminal behaviour. Warr (1998) suggested that employment helps a person to desist because it can reduce the amount of time spent with delinquent peers and increase the frequency of contact with more conventional peers. Trasler (1979) also suggests that an adequate income from employment acts as a reinforcer that encourages pro-social behaviour and desistance from crime.

Contrary to these theories, there is evidence that employment may correlate with desistance but not cause desistance. The majority of participants in the Barry (2010) study who had desisted from offending were also unemployed, suggesting that employment is not necessary for desistance to occur. In fact, Moffitt (1993) argues that while employment can benefit some whose individual characteristics enable them to take advantage of employment opportunities, for others, their anti-social behaviour will lead them to select jobs that support

an offending lifestyle or their employment is terminated because of their anti-social behaviour.

Studies also indicate that when the effects of employment on desistance are examined, there is no relationship between desistance and employment for young people. A study by Uggen (2000) analysed the data from a project in the 1970s where delinquent boys were randomly assigned to either an employment or no-employment condition. It was found that employment opportunities assisted those over the ages of 27 to desist from offending but had no effect for those under the age of 27. This suggests that employment may not have any effect on adolescents or emerging adults in the process of desistance. Uggen (2000) proposes that it is personality factors such as good work habits that are responsible for any desistance effects of employment.

In another more recent study, Skardhamer and Savolainen (2014) examined the criminal trajectories of serious offenders from Norway who gained employment for at least six months. Their analysis showed that for the majority, employment was preceded by a period of desistance. Conversely, they found that offenders were unlikely to gain stable employment when they were actively offending. Overall they found no evidence of any desistance effect after an offender became employed for those under the age of 40. Given the research in this area, it is unlikely that employment factors alone can explain desistance in young people.

Military service.

According to Bouffard and Laub (2004) there are a number of ways that military service can promote desistance, for example, by preventing access to criminal peers, teaching skills such as responsibility and discipline that promote a pro-social lifestyle, and creating an environment that discourages offending. Maruna and Roy (2007) also discuss how military service can promote desistance through opportunities to change and embrace a new prosocial identity. According to Maruna and Roy, the military promoted contact with peers from other communities, which the anti-social men may not have otherwise met. After the Second World War military men were given resources, which they would not ordinarily have had access to, such as training and education opportunities. These opportunities provided platforms from which the men could consider taking on a new preferred identity (Maruna & Roy, 2007). Laub and Sampson (1993) did report that based on their qualitative research interviews, some participants did credit military service with their desistance process in ways mentioned above by Bouffard and Laub (2004).

Though the research on military service is not from a New Zealand perspective, Bouffard and Laub (2004) examined the data from four longitudinal studies and found that there was a possible beneficial effect of military service on desistance. However, few of these results were statistically significant. Bouffard and Laub (2004) also noted that they couldn't be sure how military service was promoting a desistance effect and that it could be something else, such as the vocational and training opportunities mentioned above that were responsible.

There is also research that found that, when compared to non-delinquents, delinquent boys were more likely to commit an offence while in the military and more likely to be dishonourably discharged (Sampson & Laub 1993, as cited in Bouffard & Laub 2004). According to Maruna and Roy (2007), the positive effects of military service are also only seen for personnel on the winning side of a war, with the losing side experiencing a number of negative psychological and social effects. Maruna and Roy (2007) suggest that it is not the social institution of the military responsible, but the provision of a platform to adopt a new pro-social identity which is the cause of any desistance patterns.

Again it is not clear that military service promotes a desistance effect. Though there appears to be a correlational effect occurring, there are a number of other explanations that could also contribute to the effect.

Psychological factors.

Much of the research on the sociological factors relating to desistance such as marriage, employment, or military service are not conclusive and suggest that there could be individual psychological factors that are responsible for the desistance process that occurs in young people. According to LeBel, Burnett, Maruna and Bushway (2008), it is acknowledged that both individual and environmental factors are responsible for desistance**.** The individual factors that could be responsible for the desistance process can be explored from a number of perspectives. There are a small number of studies on this element of the process of desistance such as Maruna's (2001) Liverpool desistance study and Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph's (2002) theory of cognitive transformation. There are also applicable studies from the fields of behaviour change research, control theory, and qualitative research on the experience of change.

Studies on the process of desistance.

Kazemian (2007) suggests a reason that the sociological factors are not clear is because there are a number of external (sociological) and internal (psychological) factors of desistance. These are difficult to separate because their interaction is complex and sometimes simultaneous. Following on from maturational and sociological theories, Maruna (1999) began to investigate the individual's role in desistance using qualitative methods. He considered more personal and individual factors that could explain the process of desistance. Maruna (2001) argued that historically criminology had focused on the longevity of the criminal career and not on the reformed individual reintegrated back into society. He analysed the self-narratives of current and desisted offenders. The reason that he focused on the narratives is based on research that suggests that personal narratives guide and organise behaviour, and unlike factors such as genetics, age and personal history, a narrative can be interacted with, which has practical therapeutic implications. His sample was matched on factors such as age, age at first offence, and type of offence, so that the differences identified could not be attributed to differences in his sample. He then examined their world view, self-perspective, cognitions and self-schemas. According to Maruna, unlike persisting offenders, each desister identified a "core true self" who is fundamentally good, a perception that they had control over their future, and aspired to give something back to society. Maruna also found evidence for what he called a "redemption script", which was a framework of meanings that desisters used to understand their own behaviour. Rather than a rejection of an old anti-social identity, desisters integrated their old identity as an offender with their new identity as a non-offender, and created a new meaning out of their previous experiences. For example, the offender identified that they had always been a good person but fell victim to drug use and crime in an attempt to survive in otherwise bleak circumstances. This kept them in the cycle of crime until a person who believed in them intervened and they were able to be the good person they had always been. The final step in the process was they sought to give back to the community that they took from.

Along with this, the desisting subjects in Maruna's (2001) study appeared to have developed a stronger sense of self-efficacy. While the persisting sample appeared to believe that success and failure were randomly allocated, the desisting sample believed that they were able to have influence over their future. They also did not consider themselves "real criminals" and compared their behaviour to individuals that committed worse crimes, which concurrently demonstrated their alliances to traditional moral values (for example, differentiating between

only ever stealing from cars and never committing the perceived worse crime of stealing from someone's home).

Maruna (2001) also describes a desistance rite of passage called a "redemption ritual", which is the process that the desisted individual went through. Meisenhelder (2004) describes the same concept as a 'certification process'. During this process, society recognises the individual publically as a reformed person, freeing them from their criminal identity. The components of the process included an unanticipated but earned recognition of the individual's reformed identity, in some kind of formal ceremony. In the examples given, the desisted individuals go to court expecting to be sent to prison, but someone from the community speaks on their behalf to say how much they've changed and the judge does not send them to prison. Maruna notes that these processes are common in the narratives of the desisted individuals.

Other qualitative studies add to what is known about the process of desistance. Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph (2002) conducted a study where they analysed quantitative and qualitative data from a sample of nearly 200 men and women, identified as spending time in an institution for delinquent adolescents when they were younger. From the narrative data, Giordano et al (2002) developed their theory of cognitive transformation, which emphasised cognitive shifts as being responsible for desistance.

The authors found four parts to the process of desistance. The first was a cognitive openness to change. This means that as a minimum, in order to desist from offending a person must be open to the idea of desisting. Giordano et al (2002) compared the narratives of those who were not open and who could not imagine living a pro-social lifestyle, with those who referred to their anti-social behaviour in the past tense as though they no longer intended to offend. Secondly, the individual needed to be engaged with an opportunity to change. Opportunities thought to play the most significant role (according to their data), were relationships with children and partners, rehabilitation, or religion. Thirdly, once the opportunity presented itself, the individual needed to undergo identity transformation. This is where the individual adopted a pro-social identity in contrast to an antisocial identity, for example, from drug addict to wife/mother/parent. The fourth stage to desistance is a cognitive change in the way anti-social behaviour is viewed. This is where behaviour that was previously viewed as exciting or useful (e.g. stealing or assault) is now viewed as unhelpful and destructive.

Theories of desistance such as Giordano et al. (2002) are criticised for their idea that there is an integral but unknown and unpredictable event occurring that plays a role in desistance. These are labelled "hooks for change", or as Laub and Sampson (2003) called them, "turning points". Rutter (1996) and Maruna (2001) theorise that it is not an event in and of itself that explains desistance. Their evidence for this is that the effects of events such as marriage and employment aren't universal, and affect everyone differently. Rutter (1996) suggests that the experience needs to be able to make a difference through the openness of the person to the change, at the time of the experience. A reasonable conclusion based on the literature is that it isn't a single event or opportunity that leads to desistance but likely something far more complex.

The Liverpool desistance study (Maruna, 2001) and Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph's (2002) theory of cognitive transformation seek to explain the process of desistance for an adult population. But the mechanism for this change is not adequately explained in these studies. Though it is largely accepted within the literature that a combination of external and internal factors are responsible for desistance, there is a lack of clarity about the role each plays and some practical issues with separating them for study. The conclusions drawn from non-forensic fields of study have so far encountered similar problems in understanding the complex mechanism that is human behaviour change. Though desistance from offending is a type of human behaviour change, a link between desistance and human behaviour change does not appear to be adequately identified in the literature. This may be because despite being a cornerstone of psychology, the concept of change is not well understood.

Defining Change

The concept of change is not clearly defined in the literature (Rosen & Davison, 2003; Carey, Carey, Mullan, Murray and Spratt, 2006). Through the results of outcome studies, it is known that people can and do change (Carey et al., 2006). Carey et al. reviewed the literature in order to understand how the concept of psychological change was defined. What they found was that change was often discussed without being defined or explained. Within the literature there is also no consensus about how the mechanism of change is occurring. There are a small number of studies that examine the experience of change.

      Qualitative studies on the experience of change.

The qualitative studies on the experience of change show an accumulation of similar themes. This suggests that there are common processes that could be occurring when a person makes any kind of change. Carey et al. (2007) conducted a study where they interviewed twenty-seven participants about their experiences of change during therapy. Interestingly, the participants were also not able to define change for themselves, though they all felt certain it had occurred. The participants described their process of change as a time of negativity, a sudden moment of change, followed by a time of positivity.

Higginson and Mansell (2008) interviewed six participants recruited from a university, who had experienced and overcome a significant problem, with or without therapeutic intervention. Higginson and Mansell found several themes emerged. When the participants were still experiencing the problem, they reported feelings of hopelessness and inability to visualise their future. They also experienced a sense that other people didn't understand them and were trying to control them. When undergoing the process of change, they reported that they went from avoiding the problem, to facing it. They experienced the change as both gradual and sudden. The third theme was around shifts in identity. Participants reported a new self that was improved and a previous self that was difficult to relate to. When they thought about their problem they were able to see it in a more rational way. They accepted the change and viewed their experiences positively.

Gianakis and Carey (2011) interviewed seven individuals recruited from universities, about their experience of change in terms of the resolution of a problem. Their study concluded that the process of change involved wanting change, in combination with a crisis in either identity and/or connection with others. This combination of factors had to create enough emotional pain to reach what the authors refer to as a threshold. Once the threshold was reached, insight or a realisation occurred which lead to a more gradual process of change, sometimes preceded by a new thinking process. A new thinking process was only typical for those that were able to resolve their problem. A new thinking process could be a new strategy the participants were using or a cost benefit analysis.

These qualitative studies have been conducted on non-offending samples and with a range of ages not specific to youth. The subjective experience of change describes what people may be experiencing as they change, but according to Higginson and Mansell (2008), the mechanism through which people make these changes is still not fully understood

The psychological mechanism of change for an offender population.

Rosen and Davison (2003) theorised that given many theoretically different treatments worked to support individuals to make change, there was likely to be an underlying mechanism responsible for all changes. They advocated for further investigation into finding this underlying mechanism of change and what they called empirically supported principles of change.

There are a number of possible models that could contain some or all of the principles of change that Rosen and Davison (2011) theorised existed. Some, which are from a criminal perspective, are limited in their ability to explain the desistance process for young people. Other models that may better explain the mechanism of change are not specifically for a criminal population.

Within the criminological literature there are limited frameworks that focus on the change process for offenders. The main framework used in work with an offender population is the stages of change model by Prochaska and DiClemente (1982). Their work looked at the process of change in and out of therapy. They identified different processes of change across theoretically diverse therapies, concluding that there were universal processes being targeted by different treatments. They also compared the processes of change for those who sought help from a therapist and those that changed on their own. This informed the TTM, a popular model and the dominant one used in the field of criminal psychology, originating in addictions research. Prochaska and DiClemente's (1982) work attempted to understand how people change. However by their own admission, they still don't understand why or how people change, only when (DiClemente & Prochaska, 1998).

One way in which this model clarified a component of change, is that it identified that a person could be at different levels of readiness to make a change. The TTM recognised that most therapies were designed for people who were in an action phase (Miller, 2013). Action phase is where individuals actively modify their own behaviour to resolve their problems (Prochaska, DiClemente and Norcross, 1992). A therapy called motivational interviewing was found to be an effective way of working with people who were either not ready to change, or had low levels of motivation to change (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Understanding what makes motivational interviewing so successful could help clarify the mechanism of change. Unfortunately, the mechanism that makes motivational interviewing successful is also poorly understood (Amrhein, 2004; Burke, Arkowitz & Menchola, 2003).

The TTM suggests that there are ten processes involved in change, and different processes are utilised more often depending on the stage of change a person is in (Prochaska, DiClemente & Norcross, 1992). Though these common processes were found, they do not explain how or why people change. This is not the only drawback of this particular model in explaining the mechanism of change. The transtheoretical model of change does not take into account many internal mechanisms thought to be involved in the desistance process such as personality, attributions and self-perception (Serin & Lloyd, 2009). It is also criticised for lack of conceptual clarity (Schwarzer, 2001; Casey, Day & Howells, 2005), not accurately describing change (Burrowes & Needs, 2009; Casey, Day & Howells, 2005), not making predictions or meaningfully assisting clinicians (Burrowes & Needs, 2009), and for being too simplistic and arbitrarily ascribing discrete stages to a complex change process (Casey, Day & Howells, 2005).

There is also an argument that this particular model, with its origins in addiction studies, is not the most suitable model to explain desistance in an offending population. Casey, Day and Howells (2005) conclude that by itself, the TTM does not explain desistance from offending. Some of the reasons for this are that the TTM was originally designed around high frequency behaviours such as smoking and drinking. It is not known if low frequency behaviour such as offending can be explained using the TTM. Additionally if the prison environment is taken into account, it further complicates use of the TTM for practitioners because of extrinsic motivational factors (e.g. wanting to make changes for the parole board instead of for the individual themselves).

Another criticism of this model is that it lacks a distinction between initiating behaviour and maintaining behaviour. Rothman, Baldwin, Hertel and Fuglestad (2011) suggest that given successful change is not always maintained, theories need to account for this difference. The transtheoretical model focuses on the choice to engage in a particular behaviour rather than cognitive processes involved in maintaining a desired behaviour. In their model, Rothman et al. (2011) include a habit phase where the behaviour is no longer weighed up in terms of costs and benefits, but automatically engaged in.

Despite the number of criticisms of the transtheoretical model, there is a lack of alternatives available. Burrowes and Needs' (2009) readiness to change framework and the Ward, Day, Howells and Birgden (2004) multifactor readiness model act as competing frameworks but are also quite different. The readiness to change framework (Burrowes & Needs, 2009) is

relatively new and has not yet been extensively evaluated in the literature (Mossiere & Serin, 2014). According to this model, change is the result of an interaction between the individual, their environment, and a catalyst. An individual factor might be their coping strategies or personality. Environmental factors could be their location (e.g. in prison), and a catalyst is what provides momentum for change (e.g. a rehabilitation programme). Each of these factors exists in a socio-cultural context which includes economic and political influences. According to Burrowes and Needs (2009), various barriers and the strength of these barriers impact on each of these factors, which can promote or hinder change for the individual. This model is not an explanation for how change occurs, rather a framework to describe factors contributing to being ready to change.

The multifactor offender readiness model (MORM) (Ward, Day, Howells & Birgden, 2004) also purports to explain offender readiness. This model was designed within the context of treatment and rehabilitation, and therefore does not take into account change that occurs without intervention. Because MORM is a model of offender readiness, the focus is on being ready to change as opposed to the process of change itself. However it is assumed that once the offender is ready, part of the change process will be engaging in therapy in order to learn new skills or new ways of thinking.

Another issue raised by Carey et al. (2007) is that the data from qualitative studies that have explored people's experience of change, does not match these particular frameworks. This may suggest that these models do not accurately reflect the change process that is experienced by the individual, and therefore it is questionable whether they explain the process or mechanism of change.

Control Theory Perspectives of Self-regulation.

Control theory perspectives claim to explain the mechanistic process of human behaviour change, and also support the qualitative studies in terms of the experience of the change process. Control theory originated from the field of cybernetics and informs diverse fields such as engineering, economics, medicine and psychology (Carver & Scheier, 1982). According to control theory, the purpose of the system is to maintain a desired standard called the reference value. The reference value is maintained by a negative feedback loop. A negative feedback loop is the term used for a system that is designed to minimise any discrepancies between the feedback received from the environment and the reference value being maintained. The difference between the feedback and the reference value is called

"discrepancy" or "error". The aim of the system is to ensure that the discrepancy or error level is zero. The system does this by adjusting its output to reduce any discrepancy sensed in the environment (Higginson, Mansell & Wood, 2011). There are two theories discussed here that use a control theory perspective: Perceptual Control Theory (Powers, 1973) and Identity Control Theory (Burke, 2006), which might be useful as a framework for understanding how young people desist from offending.

According to Powers (1973), the purpose of the system in Perceptual Control Theory (PCT) is for a person to control their perceptions of their environment. In PCT the reference value being maintained is a person's goals. The discrepancy or error level is based on a person's perception of whether they are meeting their goal. A person will use feedback in the form of self-reflections, or feedback received from the environment to monitor whether they are meeting their current goals. Psychological and behavioural adjustments are the output of the system that ensures goals continue to be met. Carver and Scheier (1982) illustrate this concept by suggesting a person's goal might be to be a responsible person. The behaviour that would be the output of this goal might be to return something loaned to them. A person will then use sensory input to determine whether they have reached their goal.

A person's goals are organised in a hierarchy with the highest level goals responsible for the output of the lower level goals. Carver and Scheier (1982) explain that the highest level goals are abstract and able to be applied to a variety of situations. Mid-level goals are responsible for the planning of the behaviour to meet the abstract goals, and the lower levels are responsible for behaviour and interaction with the environment. Using the earlier example, if a person is a student and has borrowed a textbook from another student, the highest level goal might be to be a responsible person. This goal will initiate planning sequences from the mid-level goals in order to return the textbook. That could include planning to drive over to drop off the textbook and getting petrol if necessary. The lower level goals are responsible for acting out the necessary behaviour of the planned sequences. This could include sensations related to driving such as gripping the steering wheel, seeing the road and the pressure applied to the accelerator.

Conflict can occur between the goals/levels of the system; for example, a person may want to maintain a good relationship with their partner, and also spend a lot of time at work in order to meet a career goal. Reorganisation resolves the conflict that occurs. Reorganisation is the adjustment of goals and therefore behaviour by bringing awareness to the conflict until it is

resolved. Discomfort will continue to occur until a level within the hierarchy is able to instruct an appropriate response from the level below it that resolves the conflict. Reorganisation can occur in a number of different ways such as adjusting priorities (e.g. spending less time at work to maintain a relationship with a partner), or finding another way to achieve the goal (e.g. working from home to spend more time with a partner). According to PCT, reorganisation is what is responsible for psychological and behavioural change.

Carver and Scheier (1990) extend Power's (1973) idea by using PCT to explain where emotions come from and how they influence human behaviour. Carver and Scheier (1990) theorise that there are two control systems operating. The first one described above is responsible for human behaviour, however the second is a control system operating alongside the above system that the authors refer to as having a meta-monitoring function. While PCT is a system that is governing behaviour, the meta-monitoring system is governing the rate at which the system is reaching its goals. According to this theory, not only is progress towards the goal important in ensuring error levels stay at zero, but the experience of reaching these goals is also important. If a person experiences progress at an expected rate, discrepancy will remain at zero, however if a person experiences progress at an unsatisfactory rate, they will have feelings of doubt and negativity about the goal. This can result in disengagement from the goal. Conversely, if a person experiences progress at a higher than expected rate, they will have feelings of confidence and hope, and persist with their goal. This could explain some of the individual differences seen in young offenders who make the decision to desist from offending, where some succeed and some fail. It is possible that those who succeed do so because they experience their progress towards desistance at a satisfactory rate. Additionally this model demonstrates the importance of the subjective experience of the change process for any individual, as different standards and goals will interact differently.

Identity Control Theory (ICT) by Burke (2006) is a control system with a focus on identity and social structures. According to this theory, an individual's identity is also formed by societal expectations about what it means to have various identities. There are three types of identity: role identities which are known roles within society (e.g. father, worker, and friend), social identities which refer to membership of a group (e.g. New Zealander, Christian) and person identities which are unique individual qualities (e.g. responsible, honest).

ICT uses the same control system to manage the different identities. The identities are arranged in a hierarchy and each identity has its own control system. Feedback from self-

reflection and the environment maintain the standard of the identity. A person will act in a way that is consistent with their identity, and as a result will receive feedback that confirms their identity. However when there is a discrepancy between an identity and the feedback received from the environment, a person will experience this discrepancy as distressing and be motivated to alter their behaviour to reduce the discrepancy (Burke, 2006). If for some reason a person cannot alter their own behaviour, it is the identity that will change. A person may not be able to make changes to their behaviour if they lack the power or status needed to do so. The identities themselves are also part of a hierarchy of other identities, and the lower order identities will change if directed by higher level identities. Burke (2006) suggests that identity change is a slow process. This theory could help to explain how young people shift between offending and non-offending identities, and how this results in subsequent behaviour change such as desistance from offending.

PCT appears to explain the process of change across contexts in a process oriented manner and could therefore explain the process of desistance in emerging adults. There are however a number of limitations of PCT that make it difficult to evaluate and research. The model itself is complex and has a mathematical component which restricts its accessibility to researchers trained in other domains. Additionally, it cannot explain the relative contribution of each of the factors involved in change, such as individual, relationship, identity, or environmental factors (Higginson, Mansell & Wood, 2011).

Importantly, although feedback from a person's environment can serve to create discrepancy for an individual, meta-analytic studies on feedback given about task performance show significant but small effect sizes. Feedback has also has shown to negatively impact behavioural change (Nowack, 2009). According to Smither, London and Reilly (2005), feedback is most likely to result in behaviour change if the feedback indicates that change is essential, the receiver has a positive feedback orientation, sees a need to change, reacts positively to the feedback, believes they can change, sets appropriate goals to manage their behaviour, and takes action that will lead to behaviour change. Their research concluded that only certain types of personalities respond favourably to feedback. Again this part of personality may explain how some young offenders are able to utilise feedback in order to make change while others do not.

Summary

The literature reviewed has included both qualitative and quantitative studies to explore why young people appear to desist from crime as they approach their mid-twenties. While correlational effects were found for various significant transitions that occur in the early twenties, such as employment and marriage, they have not been found to be reliably causative. Qualitative studies on desistance have shown themes and patterns of behaviour for desisting samples. However, the samples in these studies have not been restricted to young people, and also do not explain the psychological mechanism that could be responsible for desisting behaviour in youth.

A psychological mechanism responsible for change has not been agreed on within the literature. There are a small number of studies that investigate the experience of change from the perspective of the changer, but this has not been explored from the perspective of desisting young people. Indeed, Donald, Rickman and Carey (2014) argue that the process of change could well be different for young people than for adults.

The models currently used to explain behaviour change for offenders, such as Prochaska and DiClemente (1982), do not match the qualitative data from studies on the experience of change. Control theories such as ICT and PCT could possibly be used as a framework to understand the mechanism of change, however more investigation into the experience of change from the perspective of a desisting youth is an important avenue of study.

Given the current literature available about desistance from crime in emerging adults it is clear that more information is needed about the elements involved in the transitional process out of crime. Therefore, this research asks what the experience of desistance is like for emerging adults.

Method

Increasing the information gained from existing qualitative and quantitative studies requires an organised research strategy to identify each of the parts of the desistance process (Mulvey et al, 2004). A review of the literature on the process of youth desistance revealed a lack of information about the experience of desistance from the perspective of a young person. Qualitative methodologies are most suited to explore a phenomenon such as change, which is a complex phenomenon that occurs over an unpredictable timeframe (Higginson & Mansell, 2008). Kazemian (2007) further confirms that qualitative methodologies can complement quantitative methodologies in our understanding of the process underlying youth desistance, particularly the subjective components of human experiences, for example, motivation, goals, thoughts and feelings.

Qualitative approaches are appropriate to explore and understand phenomena that are concerned with understanding processes (Smith, 1996). The exploration of the subjective experience of change is best investigated using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA is best suited for the current research question as it is not the description of the experience itself that is of interest, but how the description can be made sense of and interpreted in light of the available research (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006).

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)

There are a number of qualitative methodologies that have differing ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions around what exists, what can be studied, and how we can study them. Shinebourne (2011) explains that ontologically, IPA is concerned with experiences and language. This is based on the assumption that sociocultural and historical processes are essential to understanding our experiences, and that these experiences can only be expressed through language. Shinebourne (2011) compares the ontology of IPA as sitting between experiential (descriptive) and discursive (language based) approaches.

IPA also assumes that there is an inseparable connection between the researcher and the researched and, that reality exists; but it is only understood when it is encountered by human consciousness (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). As such, nothing can really be understood in a manner considered objective, because everything is experienced through human consciousness. It follows then, that reality and experience can be subjectively different from

person to person. This is considered more of a relativist position in that there are an infinite number of interpretations of the world, with each of these standing as equally valid from an individual's perspective.

Epistemologically the position of IPA is that it can tell us about the experience of the participant and how they make sense of this experience. IPA is less concerned with what the participant says and more concerned with interpreting this data to make it more meaningful (Harper, 2011). It is therefore assumed that IPA is a methodology that can capture the knowledge concerning a participant's experience of the process of desistance.

IPA is research method informed by phenomenology and hermeneutics. According to Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) phenomenology is an approach to how we understand the study of human experience. Though there are different philosophies of phenomenology, the most relevant phenomenological concepts for IPA are that physical experiences are understood through our perceptions, which are personal and private to an individual. Also, as a society we are connected to each other's experiences because we share the physical world with one another. IPA assumes that a researcher cannot objectively and directly access the phenomenon to be explored because the researcher does not have access to a person's perceptions, only their description of them (Willig, 2008). Though this method seeks to describe the experience of a person (Larkin & Thompson, 2012), it also assumes that both the researcher and the participants have had experiences that will influence how they both perceive the world and therefore, the phenomenon under investigation. As such IPA acts as an interpretation of a person's experience (Willig, 2008). According to Larkin et al. (2006) the interpretation of the person's experience is constructed by the participant and the researcher. This concept is called hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics is a theory of interpretation. It assumes that the participants can only be understood in context (Smith et al. 2009). Larkin et al. (2006) explain further that a person cannot choose to remove the contextual elements of the world to examine something in isolation. Therefore, we must understand that we are a part of a meaningful world and can only understand it from our involvement with it. Hence the role of the researcher is important in the process of interpreting the experience of the participant.

      The double hermeneutic.

IPA analysis requires interpretation, and hermeneutics assumes that both the researcher and the researched exist in context and are necessary components to create meaning. The researcher therefore has a dual role in that the researcher is drawing on their own experiences to make sense of the world, but also attempting to make sense of the experience of the participant, who is also drawing on their experiences in order to make sense of the world (Smith et al, 2009). This is referred to as the double hermeneutic. The researcher is required to understand the perspective of the participant through empathy but also through questioning. In order to get close to the experience of the participant it is also understood that ultimately the researcher will be interpreting this from the data, their relationship with the participant and the existing literature.

Criteria for participant selection

For this study it is important to distinguish between young people who committed relatively normal anti-social behaviours, and those who would be predicted to continue offending into adulthood because of their history. Moffitt (1993) theorised that a degree of anti-social behaviour is relatively normal in adolescents. However, according to Junger-Tas (2012), there is a difference in the frequency and severity of different types of offences. This study is interested in young people who would typically be predicted, based on the frequency or severity of their offending, to continue offending into adulthood, but who do not. This would be any emerging adults who commit offences of a serious nature. Junger-Tas (2012) defines serious offences as those that are committed less frequently such as theft, burglary, theft of, or from cars, robbery, assault, drug dealing and extortion. For the purpose of this study the inclusion criteria were to have committed a serious offence (although a formal conviction was not a necessity).

There are many different definitions of desistance used in the literature (Kazemian, 2007) Desistance can be viewed as a process that can include cessation, relapses, and/or a reduction in frequency, severity and intensity of offending (Ward & Laws, 2010). Kazemian (2007) found multiple operational definitions of desistance including differing lengths of time since the last offence, self-reports and official records. In the context of an IPA study, reliance on self-report is appropriate because IPA privileges the subjective experience of the participant. According to Kazemian (2007) there are two studies on desistance that use participants self report, Maruna (2001) and Warr (1998). Both require desistance to have been at least one year and this was used as criteria for this study.

The definition of young people varied in the literature from 10 years old (Kiriakidis, 2007) all the way through to 25 (Arnett, 2000). For the purposes of this study Arnett's definition of young people is utilised, which is 18-25 years old. Part of this was a practical decision to interview those that would not require parental consent to participate.   However according to Arnett there is a separate developmental stage he called "emerging adulthood". There are a number of characteristics that he found defined this developmental stage. Demographically before the age of 18, the characteristics of this group are relatively homogenous (e.g. living at home and going to school) however after the age of 18 it is difficult to predict residential status, education and employment for this group. It is also a period where emerging adults subjectively feel that they are not quite adults but also not adolescents. Further, it is a time of identity exploration for relationships, employment and world views. This developmental period also coincides with a known transitional period where desistance occurs. The age-crime data indicates that the process of desistance often occurs prior to the age of 25 and is therefore an opportune time to study the desistance process. The study would exclude those who had committed non-serious or minor offences only, such as shoplifting, vandalism, group fights, hacking, or carrying a weapon. This was because these offences are considered normal in adolescent and emerging adult populations.

Emerging adults with sex offences, an active alcohol and drug problem, intoxicated at the time of the interview and whose mental illness was predominantly responsible for their offending were also excluded.

Participants

In qualitative research there is no set number of participants required to guarantee the validity of the findings. However there are guidelines to follow. Part of the decision is based on how many participants the researcher could reasonably be expected to manage. Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) found that themes from interviews could be gathered from between 6-12 interviews. Romney, Weller and Elderbatch (1986) argued that as little as four participants can provide informant accuracy about a topic. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) suggest that between three and six participants is reasonable for a Masters level project. For these reasons participant recruitment was set at between 9-12 participants. Efforts to seek participants resulted in nine being interviewed within the research timeframe.

In order to protect the identities and demographic information of the participants their information has been aggregated (see Table 1). The nine participants were between 21 and 25

years old. Seven participants were born in New Zealand, one participant was born in Asia and one participant was born in South America. Of the New Zealand participants, two identified as Māori, one participant identified as a Pākehā with Pasifika heritage and four identified as Pākehā. Seven participants identified as male and two identified as female. At the time of the interview seven participants were employed, one was a student and one was unemployed. Eight of the participants reported having formal convictions, however of the eight, one had only minor formal convictions. Seven had a variety of formal convictions and one had no formal convictions. Though not the focus of the study, some of the participants provided information regarding their perception of their upbringing. Three reported a violent and unstable upbringing, three reported coming from loving stable homes and three did not share information about their upbringing. The participants are identified by the order that they were interviewed in.

Participant recruitment

Poster advertisements (Appendix A) were displayed, with permission, across Auckland in supermarkets, gyms, cafes, libraries, doctors' offices, community noticeboards, and a number of educational institutions such as Unitec and the Manukau Institute of technology. From these posters, four participants were recruited for the study.

A number of organisations were contacted to advertise the project via their networks. These included YMCA, churches, alcohol and drug support services, violence prevention programmes, apprenticeship providers, education providers, and youth workers. One participant was recruited using this method.

Two participants were recruited using snowballing methods. Snow balling is where an existing participant, or a potential participant, advertises the project on the researcher's behalf.

Social-media advertisements were placed in a number of groups on Facebook. The researcher joined a number of social media groups that traded goods, or were noticeboards for a particular community. One participant was recruited using this method.

A number of potential participants were contacted if they had publicised that they committed crimes but since reformed. A number of these stories were advertised on news programmes such as 'Seven Sharp' or on social media. Potential participants were sent information

(Appendix B) about the project and invited to get in touch if they were interested in participating. One participant was recruited using this method.

Data collection procedure

Through advertising participants were able to contact the researcher by phone, Facebook or email. Participants were provided with information about the project in either written or verbal form depending on the way in which they made contact with the researcher. This included the screening questionnaire and the information sheet (Appendix C and B)

 The screening questionnaire explained the inclusion and exclusion criteria as well as potential risks to the participants. The information sheet outlined the details of the study. If the potential participant was eligible, and wished to participate; a time, date and location for the interview was organised.

Participants were asked to identify any relevant cultural needs prior to the interview. Some interviews involved the sharing of pepeha (a way of introducing yourself in Māori for the purpose of making connections to one another) and karakia (a form of Māori prayer that provides spiritual safety for the duration of the interview). At the start of the interview, the interviewer read the screening questionnaire and the information sheet aloud to the participant. All participants provided written consent to take part in the interview, and for the information to be used in the current research. A semi-structured interview was then conducted. At the conclusion of the interview, participants received a $20 gift voucher as an acknowledgement for participating.

> **Semi-structured interview.**

A semi-structured interview was conducted with the participants. Most interviews lasted 1-1.5 hours (For the interview schedule see appendix D). Smith and Osborn (2008) recommend an exploratory and curious process of interviewing that is sensitive to the mood and responses of the participant. The interviewer takes a neutral and facilitative role (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). The interview style was semi-structured to allow for possible questions but also the flexibility to ask, or not ask a question depending on the participant. All of the participants were forthcoming with information and appeared keen to share their experiences. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim and sent to participants for their final approval.

> **Social media as a form of photo elicitation technique.**

All the participants appeared to find recalling and explaining their psychological process of change difficult and this is where the use of social media was intended for use. It was anticipated that the participants recruited for this study may have difficulty articulating or remembering their experience of change. The methodology therefore involved the use of social media as a form of photo elicitation technique. Social media has been widely available since 2006. This means all participants would likely have had social media accounts in their teens during the time that they offended and desisted. According to Gibson, Miller, Smith, Bell and Crothers (2013) the use of social media sites is pervasive with 95% of New Zealanders under thirty belonging to at least one. The use of social media as a form of memory aid and elicitation technique was not commonly seen in the literature examined by the researcher. However literature suggested that this could be an effective method for eliciting information from emerging adults. Hazel (1995) advised that when working with emerging adults, an effective way of assisting attention and concentration was to present photos. In the current age of social net-working and the internet there is a wealth of accessible images both pictorial and text based. These have the potential be used to generate discussion about topics such as desistance from offending. Richardson and Hessey (2009) explain how SNS (Social Networking Sites) act as a diary and a way of expressing identity. SNS was therefore assumed to be able to serve as the basis for the participants to explain their process of change, using the images available historically on their social media accounts.

Participants were all invited to login to social media accounts during the interview and scroll back to the time in their life when they made the change. The intention was for participants to view pictures and text in their social media account as a way of eliciting their experience of transition. However, participants were not able to access this information from their social media accounts as expected. Only one participant used social media throughout their offending and desistance. However the participant actively managed the content of their social media accounts to ensure it was acceptable to his family and potential employers. All the other participants closed down their social media accounts prior to making the transition out of crime. They appeared to see this as an important step in making changes, usually related to breaking off contact with anti-social peers. For some, when they went back to using social media after they had transitioned away from offending, most had started new social media accounts that only documented the period after they had already made changes, "Yeah, that must have been when I started using Facebook aye. I don't think I have ever put negative

stuff on there because my mind starting changing you know?" (Participant 1, line 236). For those with old accounts, they no longer remembered their passwords and were not able to use these during the interview.

> I can't access it [Bebo account] because I don't know my thing [password] you know? But all the stuff that was previous is all over my Bebo you know? All the gang photos and all the crime and all of that. (Participant 1, line 244)

For others, their social media accounts did not contain the transitional period required for the interview. "Oh yeah 2014 is the most recent I guess. 2014 is when I stopped. I didn't really use it." (Participant 2, line 202.)

Ethical considerations

Participant disclosure of imminent risk of harm to self or others during the interviews was the primary ethical concern in the current research. In order to mitigate this risk, participants were informed of the limits of confidentiality that existed in the interview. Participants were informed that if they indicated that were at risk of harm to themselves or others, information from the interview may need to be passed on to the police so that they could take action to ensure the safety of the community. This information was outlined clearly in both the screening questionnaire and the information sheet. The screening questionnaire was read to each participant twice, once at the first point of contact, and again at the interview. The information sheet also contained a section about the risks to the participant. This was provided directly to the participant if they had provided details of their email or Facebook account. The information sheet was also publically available on the research Facebook page.

A second consideration was the psychological discomfort that could arise when participants discussed their past. Information about who they could contact should they experience any distress as a result of the interview was provided to each of the participants through the information sheet.

The third consideration was the safety of the researcher. Though unlikely, there were some concerns that a participant with a history of anti-social or violent behaviour may become hostile or aggressive during the interview. Interviews took place in public venues and a person other than the researcher was also informed of the interview time and location in case there were any issues.

The Massey University Human Ethics Committee, Northern approved this Application 16/26 in June 2016.

Data Analysis

The transcripts of the interviews are used for the data in IPA. IPA is a repetitive and cyclical process of reviewing these transcripts until all the relevant patterns and themes have been identified. IPA is interested in the shared experiences had by the participants, which can reveal possible truths about the phenomena being investigated (Gianakis & Carey, 2011).

The first part of the data analysis is what Larkin and Thompson (2012) call free-coding (Appendix E). This is where the researcher works through the transcript writing down initial thoughts and ideas. The term free coding denotes the researcher's ability to write without restriction. The reflexive nature of this part of the process allows biases to be revealed and acknowledged as well initial impressions which may be valuable later. Free coding was completed using the qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti.

Once this process was complete a more systematic approach was taken with the data. This is called coding, with codes being interpretations of the data. Codes can include what is significant to the participants and any significant meanings that are revealed. The narrative and language used can provide the evidence of this. The researcher is also able to use their own theoretical knowledge of psychology to understand the meanings being made by the participants (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). ATLAS.ti enabled the researcher to group themes together and look at patterns across all of the participant transcripts. Themes emerged and these were then compared again to the individual transcripts. This was an iterative process until all the themes and patterns had emerged.

Once the themes and patterns in the data emerged, they were placed in a table to illustrate relationships and concepts (see Table 1).

Results

The results were the product of repetitive and cyclical reviews of each of the transcripts. Due to the size of the project and the nature of the research question it was not possible to give a voice to each individual participant and so the most representative quotes were chosen to represent the patterns and themes found in the data.

The major themes were awareness for the need to change, transitioning identity, and a continuing struggle.

Awareness of the Need to Change

Participants reported experiencing a growing awareness of the need to change. This was experienced as a build-up of distress often combined with reasons to stop offending. Additionally participants reported a shift in their perception of their criminal behaviour from thinking it was normal to experiencing crime as no longer advantageous. The participants also described how they found that change was necessary.

A build-up of distress and reasons to stop.

Participants described different causes for their distress but the experience of distress appeared to be the same for all of the participants. Each of the participants specifically talked about feeling distressed as part of their experience of transitioning out of offending. This distress was related to two main concerns; a fear that they would not be able to endure the conditions related to a prison sentence, and that their offending was affecting people that they cared about. This distress was embedded in their explanations for why they stopped offending. In this way it was connected to, but also separate from, their reasons for stopping offending. It was not just a single experience or a single explanation that was described as a reason to stop offending, it was experienced as a combination of distress and reasons to stop offending that led to an awareness of the need to make changes in their lives.

Seven of the participants described distressing cognitions about the threat of receiving a prison sentence. The seven participants described fears around their ability to endure and tolerate the realities of prison such as loss of autonomy, restriction of freedom and movement, and being the victim of violence.

Participants were fearful that they would lose control of their autonomy once they entered the Justice system. The participants were concerned that a person who was unknown and possibly unsympathetic would make decisions for them while they were in the prison.

> The main thing that's going to bother me is being locked up in a little bloody room all the time, and if I run out of toilet paper I have to call over a guard and say "Can I please have some toilet paper." You know? I can't go to my own cupboard and get toilet paper to take a shit, which is human nature. I have to rely on someone. I can't cook my own bloody food. I eat when they want me to eat. If they don't want me to have toilet paper then I don't have toilet paper. (Participant five, line 234)

Participants also experienced the threat of prison as dangerous and scary. Participants described their concerns about other prisoners who could be powerful, unreasonable, unpredictable and violent. This led to fears for their personal safety.

> …all of those guys that I was in prison with when I was 21 – you know they were trying to extort me – they said I had to pay $10,000 otherwise they were going to stab me and all this kind of jazz and I had been stabbed like three months before … So anyway, after I told [them] I am going to go 100 percent legit, I am not coming back to prison any more, I got caught again and I was heading back down there and, you know, that is when I thought "Oh my god, I have just lied to these guys. I am going to see them again and it is going to be way worse". (Participant four, line 196,204)

Participants were anxious about their ability to cope with the restrictions in prison. "…Prison, no girls in there, no alcohol in there, no good weed in there, or anything. No enjoyment." (Participant eight, line 51).

For those that had spent time in prison, their fears were described as more salient, "Oh it was just horrible. I was in foot-cuffs and hand-cuffs and they were too tight, and in an orange jumpsuit – it was just like a really tragic picture. I didn't want that for my life." (Participant 2, line 1009).

The participants appeared to have a perception that not only was prison a likely outcome for them, but it was an imminent outcome. This is likely to have contributed to their feelings of distress and fears around incarceration. Participants appeared to believe that if they were to be arrested the most likely outcome for them would be a prison sentence. Fear that prison was a likely outcome appeared to be based on their cognitions and not a comprehensive

knowledge of the law. "Like once you have been to jail they will probably send you to jail every time you go to court." (Participant two, line 55). They also had a perception that facing the consequences of their offending was imminent. "The consequences… they felt more close like I was just about to walk over the line and be convicted of that crime and have that consequence come true…" (Participant three, line 128). This sense that prison was likely and imminent was experienced as distressing, and added a feeling of pressure to make changes.

Participant one had not been arrested in the past five years, and participant seven had never been arrested. This may have been why the justice system and prison were not described as distressing for them during their interviews.

Eight of the participants also reported feelings of distress about letting their loved ones down. The participants describe feeling guilty about behaving in a way that is inconsistent with the expectations of some key people in their lives.

> While I was in prison my girlfriend was like, "No more, no more, you need to sort your life out," and then I was like, "Yeah, yeah I am going to sort it out. I'm not going to do any drugs or alcohol, and I am not going to do anything," and she was like, "Thank you, thank you. I will stick by you."… but, like, the day before I went to treatment I was going to rehab and I was broke by then, I had no money, and so I had done something bad and she knew about it as well, and, like, we spent our last night together and I just felt so guilty but she was kind of all good about it. But I felt so guilty, and I was so guilty that I wanted to use again. I just wanted to use drugs. (Participant four, line 276,404)

One participant did not report feeling concerned about the effect her offending had on key people in her life. There was an absence of negative feelings associated with the exposure of her offending to her parents who she describes only as "surprised" (Participant two, line 63) by her offending. Participant two reported having only transient friendships so it is possible that she did not feel connected to key people in her life and, therefore, was unaffected by how they felt about her offending.

> Several times in my life I have just completely changed my life, and left all my friends but continued doing the same thing - just like moved to [town] and made new friends. So I guess I am good at getting away from things. (Participant two, line 329)

Seven of the participants said that they hid their offending from some important people in their lives. When they were caught for their offending they were distressed by the merging of their offending life with other legitimate parts of their lives. Participant nine describes her distress when she is arrested in front of her whole family and the police explain what she has done.

> …I didn't tell many people. Even the day that the police came to my house on my birthday there were family members around … so they went to my house and they said I bottled a girl in the head, so my parents were freaking out, and we had a family member that was translating to my parents so they heard, and my Mum said they were just disgusted… My Dad and my Mum came to New Zealand with not speaking a single word of English…my parents risked, like, left everything behind, so that me and my brother could have a good future and I am here, like, disappointing them. (Participant nine, line 143, 95)

As well as experiencing distress, the participants also explained their various reasons to stop offending. The participants described a variety of reasons to stop offending. Six of the participants described how they reach a threshold of tolerance for their offending and its consequences, often using the phrase "I'd had enough" (Participant two, line 169), or "I'm just sick of it" (Participant five, line 208). Participants questioned how much more of their offending lifestyle they could tolerate.

> Then as life got on, the more I seen things that I've actually seen in my life, the more I thought do I really actually want to go through this? Have I seen enough? Have I done enough? Do I want to die yet? All of that kind of stuff. (Participant six, line 109)

Becoming intolerant of the lifestyle was thematic in the participant accounts.

> I just got sick of it. I got sick of being locked up all the time and sick of being dragged through probation. I don't mind being told what to do but, I mean, I don't like it when I get told I have to go to court somewhere. I had to take time off work. If you don't turn up it kind of gets you in trouble. It's like so basically you're telling me if I don't go somewhere at this particular time that you say you can potentially throw me in jail? They were like yeah. I was like why? That sucks. (Participant five, line 230)

Participants described experiencing their reasons to stop as a combination of events and cognitions.

> I done a [rehabilitation programme] that sparked some new thoughts in my brain
> through the time when I was starting to stop, stop my offending, I got a girlfriend and
> that made me start to think ahead, you know? Like, I don't want to, and all of a
> sudden started thinking about myself as a role model because I have two younger
> sisters, so yeah. These three things, the rehabilitation programme, having a girlfriend,
> and my younger sisters played a part in my reasons to stop offending. (Participant
> three, line 75)

Participant two describes a combination of reasons for stopping, which includes feelings of
distress.

> Like there were times along the way where I could have stopped like, I don't know,
> going to prison. I had already done 600 hours of community service, and, like,
> intensive supervision. Like a couple of days you have to go in and have an
> appointment, and that is like for stealing and possession, and I could have stopped
> earlier but it was the combination of an institution saying "It's time to stop" and also
> my own world sort of falling in on itself. (Participant two, line 165)

The participants appeared to experience a build-up of distress involving the implications of a
prison sentence and the effect their offending may have on important people in their lives.
These experiences led to feelings of fear, and guilt, which the participants reported as
distressing. Combining this distress with reasons to stop contributed to a shift in perception
about the benefits of offending.

A shift in perception.

Participants talked about how they had experienced their criminal behaviour as normal prior
to their transition, "Like I knew that things weren't going great but I was comfortable with it
– it was really normal." (Participant two, line 973). There was a sense that the consequences
for offending were not an imminent reality and, therefore, nothing to worry about, "I knew
about the consequences but I chose not to let them bother me." (Participant three, line 120).
Prior to their transition there was also a common perception that they would not get caught.

> When we were starting out I was like, it will only be to friends, and there was no way
> that we will get ratted out. No one will snitch on us. It is only marijuana, I mean, how
> bad can it be? (Participant seven, line 25)

Participants disregarded evidence of any offending related problems. This behaviour made it easier to continue to offend.

> I always knew about the consequences but the way I chose to think was don't put it in my mind and that way it won't manifest into my life. So, don't think about getting caught or you will, because you will get caught because you are thinking it in your head. It is somehow going to manifest in life so I would kind of block it out. (Participant three, line 116)

Six of the participants had already experienced the legal consequences of offending but these were perceived as easy to tolerate. They described previous consequences as effortless and easy. "Like, I kind of just breezed through it while I was young… Yeah they were easy. They were just a good time really." (Participant four, line 67, 75)

These perceptions and experiences contributed to a continuation of offending with no motivation to stop. However, during their transition away from offending, they began to experience a growing perception that committing crime was no longer worth the risks and consequences.

Participant seven describes how his offending initially had a number of benefits, including access to drugs and money.

> Me and my mate we decided, okay, in order to pay for this habit and make a bit of money we would buy from different places in large quantities and sell in small quantities. We made a good amount of money. (Participant seven, line 20)

Over time, participant seven was made a resident of New Zealand and neared the end of his education. Selling drugs was no longer experienced as financially beneficial.

> The money wasn't even worth it in the end. It was like a lifestyle you had to commit to more than money you were making. You didn't really get to spend it the way you wanted to. You kinda end up spending it on just more weed to sell. (Participant 7, line 31)

The easy access to marijuana was now experienced as a barrier to being drug-free, "Because as long as I was smoking I was selling, so, to pay for it," (Participant seven, line 170). Being drug free was important to participant seven because it represented employment opportunities

and the ability to stay in his preferred country. His perception shifted from focusing on the benefits of his offending, to fear that he will not get a job if he cannot pass a drug test, and then he will be deported from the country.

> I mean if I didn't have a job, or a sponsor, or like a stamp, a Visa on my passport. I don't want to go back, because I wouldn't go back to where I lived in [country]. I would have to go back to where my grandparents are from and where my parents are from, [country]. So there is nothing for me there, I can barely speak the language, so if I had to go there, I don't know what I would be doing... I was really scared. (Participant seven, line 116,118)

Participant six also described movement from being unconcerned about prison to a perception that going to prison would be problematic. Participant six had gang connections and had grown up in a culture where offending was normal.

> …beforehand I really didn't give a damn if I went to jail. I know so many people in jail, and I'd be safe in there, and all that kind of stuff. Just another place that I know people so I don't really care if I go there kind of thing. (Participant six, line 45,49)

But after his partner had a miscarriage his perception of prison shifted so that he viewed prison in a new way. Following the miscarriage prison now represented a place that would prevent him from being an active participant in his baby's life and a support to his partner. Prison was now a threat in a way that he had not considered before and conflicted with other values that he had.

> Being my first baby, I didn't want [partner] to have to raise baby by herself kind of thing…Because it's just not the way a family should be. Family should all be together. I've seen my sister go through having to raise her kids while he's inside. I've seen solo mothers that just can't handle it, all that kind of stuff. So how's that a family? Can't have a family unless you're all together. (Participant six, line 53, 55)

The participants reported shifting in their perception of their offending being normal, and the consequences of their offending being tolerable, to a perception that offending was now a barrier to other goals that they had. Participants weighed up the costs and benefits of their offending and concluded that change was necessary because their offending was no longer worth the risks.

Experiencing change as necessary.

The participants described their decision to stop offending as feeling straightforward and simple. "To get more money in other ways would take time to build up depending on which I go and I would just end up in jail, so yes, it was pretty simple." (Participant three, line 574)

There was also a sense that they did not feel like they had much choice in making the decision. "I just thought I had to do this because I am not going back to prison," (Participant four, line 1157). This seemed to be because the alternative of not stopping crime had become so unattractive that that the choice to stop offending felt certain and clear. "It was because the alternative of continuing crime was so unappealing." (Participant two, line 261)

A combination of the distress participants were experiencing, combined with rationalised reasons to stop offending, and a shift in their perception of their offending behaviour, led to the experience that change was a necessary and obvious choice.

Transitioning Identity

Participants described how they experienced shifts in how they saw themselves as they transitioned. They experienced this transition as a challenging battle that they consider themselves lucky to have achieved.

Experiencing shifts in how I see myself.

The participants contrasted their perception of how they saw themselves at the time of the interview to the time of their offending. Participants describe themselves as deviant and dishonest. "Hellraiser, demon, trouble," (Participant six, line 190) and "Fully dodgy," (Participant four, line 212).

The participants also describe themselves as having taken on taboo roles in society.

> I was a junkie, I was a prostitute, I had a really big storage container full of random shit that I had stolen and it was just a ridiculous position to be in, like, in that. I think, I don't think my life could have got worse. (Participant two, line 121)

These descriptions are later contrasted with current descriptions of themselves as well behaved and decent. "The way I see myself now is pretty much as I'm a goody good two shoes now compared to what I used to be like," (Participant six, line 188). Participants emphasised the legitimacy of their lives with conventional occupations and goals.

> Since leaving treatment, you know, I left two years ago and I was pushing barrows for $15.00 an hour and I have pretty much doubled my revenue, you know, in two years, and accumulating tools, got a van, you know, I am just going hard out. It is good and setting goals, so yeah. (Participant four, line 820)

Participants also describe how their different lives include an absence of problematic drug use and offending. "Just a completely different life…I don't do drugs, I don't want to do crime". (Participant two, line 23, 27).

This shift was not experienced as immediate but a more gradual process

> I hadn't just changed from bad to good like straight away…It was like a gradual thing. Like, it took time, and, like, good and bad people were coming out my life, and I was having to make decisions, and the more good people that came in the more less bad decisions that I was making, and that was where I was starting to change. That was where the change started happening. (Participants one, line 680,688)

Five of the participants described reducing the frequency and severity of their offenses. "Pretty much like stopping violence, stopping stealing. That was just step by step, like first of all I stopped stealing cars. Then, after that, I stopped burgling houses." (Participant six, line 232).

> I sort of started doing it less and it just stopped. Like, I knew that I didn't want to do it but I was still enjoying doing it sort of, or I still didn't want to break the habit so I just reduced, and reduced... (Participant two, line 833)

Participants explained how they assessed their particular offending related problem as only one element of their lifestyle. "I thought, 'Sweet, I will be clean now,' because you have to not use drugs or drink and I've always thought that was my only problem." (Participant four, line 264).

The perception that they could eliminate one part of their offending related lifestyle meant that they often stopped that particular behaviour, and discovered that they continued to have problems. This lead to the elimination of yet another offending related behaviour.

> I guess what I knew was that I can't use drugs and alcohol because I suck at it - I just turn into a loopy dude. I just – it is always just a bad story – so I can't commit crime while I am using, and I can't commit crime while I am not using because I will eventually want to use, so I kind of had that and I thought, 'Oh well, I might as well give this a go then [a legitimate lifestyle].' (Participant four, line 628)

These descriptions of reducing the frequency and severity of their offences were experienced as gradual shifts in their identity over time until it became apparent to them that they had stopped committing crime. "I just somehow realised after a little while it was like, holy shit, I haven't been in trouble for this long." (Participant five, line 10).

Seven of the participants felt like a different person than they used to be, "It was like a different person." (Participant eight, line 444). Five of the participants felt like a more authentic version of themselves. Participant seven describes how he did not feel like he could be his true self when he was offending because he had to manage a large number of offending and non-offending identities.

> I had to be a boyfriend at the same time and I had to be this decent, nice guy, and, umm. So yeah, I had to be this decent, nice guy, I had to be this thug guy, I had to be a son, and a brother because my brothers live here... I couldn't be my true self anywhere. (Participant seven, line 97,103)

Once he had ceased offending he was able to be more authentically himself. Here participant seven describes how he has always been professional at work, and now that he can be this more authentic identity in all areas of his life, he does not need to adopt a different identity when he returns home, or sees his friends.

> At work I was quite of, like, a different person, like I put on this – I guess kind of like I am now, but this is, I'm not that different out of work as well, but this is how I would act back then at work, but I was completely different at home with my mates back then. So at work I was just like quite professional, diplomatic, helpful, I wouldn't have anyone on my bad side really. (Participant seven, line 137,139)

Five of the participants reported feeling like they had changes in their cognitive processes. They describe this as change in mindset, "Made new friends, met new people, you know, just in that time changed my whole mindset altogether." (Participant three, line 390).

The experience of changing a mindset suggests that offending supportive cognitions are replaced by a different type of thinking that is no longer focused around offending. Participant eight describes how his attention shifts from offending goals to a new non-offending goal.

> Just that I realised that I was never going to have some of the stuff that I wanted if I carried on what I was doing. I wasn't going anywhere. Just sort of in the same loop,

and you look at nice cars, and you know you won't have one if you don't have proper

money. So, yeah, it sort of just starting changing my mindset …we need to do

something with our life, not just piss it away, you know? (Participant eight, line 347)

Participants experienced shifts in how they saw themselves. Because of the retrospective nature of the accounts this was described as a contrast between their current self and their past self. The participants descriptions of their reduction in type and frequency of offending suggested that their shift in identity was gradual. The participants also describe how they feel more authentic when they stopped offending and experienced a change in mindset.

Changing is a battle.

The participants describe their transition as challenging. The participants use words such as "battle" (Participant four, line 1169) and "hard" (Participant seven, line 50) to describe their experience of transition suggesting it was effortful and difficult.

Participant four describes how he fought his transition like a battle, "Like, I always talked about you know, I battle with crime. I think about crime all the time," (Participant four, line 1169). Participant four fought engaging with a treatment programme designed to stop him from using drugs and committing crime, "I was kind of fighting it," (Participant four, line 652). He also describes how he battles with the staff involved in his treatment "So I was kind of battling with them for that for about 60 days," (Participant four, line 668). He dedicates two months to passively resisting engaging with his court ordered treatment programme including sleeping during his group therapy sessions. "I just sat there and I was falling to sleep," (Participant four, line 1044). He uses the battle with the treatment programme as a way of avoiding having to transition away from offending. He describes his battle as a distraction from the having to face the purpose of the treatment programme.

Eight of the participants describe how they have to fund their new non-offending lifestyle legitimately. This involves gaining employment in low-wage, labour intensive jobs which they experienced as hard and unpleasant.

I hated it. I didn't like working there but the money – but the money drove me– you

know? Get a pay cheque at the end of the week. I don't like doing the job but I liked

that we ate there – we ate food. That was really good and we got money. I hated the

job. I hated it. (Participant three, line 570)

Participant two describes it as a painful experience. Suggesting it was physical and hard to tolerate.

> It was painful. I really did not want to get a job. I have had very few real jobs in my
> life, and when I have had them they have lasted a very short amount of time so, like, I
> knew it was the next sort of step - like you need money otherwise you will steal
> things. So I don't know – a cleaning job is not fun at all. (Participant two, line 256)

The participants had to adjust to their new reality of life without offending. "It is a lot of work for very little gain, whereas crime is like very little work for a lot of gain. It is just a weird thing to get used to I guess". (Participant two, line 269)

Living in two worlds.

Six of the participants describe the sensation of "living in two worlds" where they attempted to continue living their lives without changing anything but having the intention not to offend. Participant seven describes how he tried to socialise with his friends without using marijuana. He discovered it was challenging to enjoy himself, and he did not like how his friends reacted to his abstinence.

> It is almost like having a glass of water, when someone offers it to you, you just
> accept it. You won't say no. It is almost like weird. Especially if you are smoking
> that long and you say no. They will be like, 'What's wrong with you, are you alright?'
> It is almost like peer pressure, but it is just a norm, it almost becomes a norm for you,
> like an everyday thing. (Participant seven, line 85)

He also describes the experience of changing his behaviour as made him feel like an outsider to the group.

> People would say, "Do you wanna have a smoke?" That was the hard part really,
> because all my mates were still smoking, most of them, none of them had to do a drug
> test. I will just have to say no, and I was the only guy who was straight. Everyone
> was just on a buzz, I guess, and I just had to just be normal. (Participant seven, line
> 77)

The participants who attempted to live in two worlds without changing found that this was not achievable and that they would need to make a choice about which world they want to live in.

> I can't try and keep off, like stay out of trouble, get off the drug's and not commit crimes, and hang out with all these guys. Like, it is not going to work so it is either going to be one or the other. (Participant four, line 51)

Participants one and three appeared to avoid having to live in two worlds by leaving the city where they had offended and immediately adopting a pro-social lifestyle. The participants lacked the network of people required to continue their offending, and this was combined with cognitions that continued offending was undesirable. These two factors made it easier to commit to desistance.

> I stopped, I had some money saved up, okay. This time I had a girlfriend. We both ran away - ran over to Melbourne just like that, and then stayed there for three months, came back, and I went back over, and I came back, went back over, you know, all in a space of weeks, and months, and then by then that offence that I was doing to make a living, I had lost it because I couldn't.   I had lost the, kind of, what I had built up because I stopped doing it, and I was going back and forwards to Melbourne, and, yes, and then I was, "You know what? It is going to take a few months even just to start building it up again, and have a bit of an income, I don't want to do that so…" (Participant three, line 366)

Participant nine was prevented from having to live in two worlds because she was placed on community detention (a sentence where you are required to stay at home generally between the hours of 7pm and 7am). This meant that she was rejected by her anti-social peers when she was no longer able to see them, which she experienced as a difficult betrayal by her friends and she did not want to re-establish a connection with them.

> It was kind of mutual, so they were angry because I didn't go to that party a week after I was on probation, and then they sent me all these nasty texts, and then I just stopped seeing them and they stopped seeing me. They did try to contact me in the year but I was just like no because I was still going through all that stuff and I didn't want them there because they weren't there at the time. (Participant nine, line 183)

My transition is a fluke.

Five of the participant's accounts featured a strong theme that their transition had been predominantly the result of luck or good fortune.

> Yeah. I look back on it and I reckon I fluked it. I just hung in just enough time, like, on my whole journey I just fluked it I reckon… just looking back on it. It's a fluke I reckon, just so many close calls, and it all just panned out you know. (Participant four, line 1117,1121)

This was not to say that the participants believed that they were not responsible for their transition, "It is definitely not an accident but, yeah, it got made easier. I don't know. I don't know. I think everything happens for a reason. I was lucky, I think I was lucky." (Participant four, line 1125).

It was more of a reflection of their perception of how fortunate the participants felt that they had been able to transition, "I am lucky that I couldn't really handle that much, you know? Some people wait their whole lives waiting to get to rock bottom." (Participant two, line 178).

Continuing Struggle

As the participants began to make changes in their lives they began to see improvements in their lives, enjoy their new identities, and were reluctant to risk what they had achieved. However, they continued to feel tempted to commit crime.

Life is starting to improve

Having made a number of changes towards transitioning away from offending, the participants started to experience life as improved, or improving, "It is definitely different now, life is a lot different. It is good." (Participant eight, line 476). Participants noticed their connections with others started to feel different, "People just look at me different now. I feel like I kind of fit in," (Participant five, line 301).The participants experienced positive feelings related to their achievements. The participants also began to meet their loved ones' expectations, and this meant they no longer had to feel guilty.

> It feels good now when I see family members and they are all still happy that I am on the straight and narrow, and doing alright. It is a good feeling rather than a bad one so it's changed a lot. (Participant eight, line 476)

Participants described how they began to enjoy the difference in their lives. "Things started going well for me. I started working, I started doing my building apprenticeship. I was enjoying that," (Participant four, line 736).

As the participants began to enjoy engaging in new, or different, behaviours they found that they did not want to jeopardise what they had achieved. Here participant three describes how his life is going well and he does not want to risk his new and improved life by committing crime.

> I decided, I don't know, to live. Because, during that time, or shortly after, I went to Melbourne to live so what might have happened is that I went to Melbourne to live and I ended up staying there for, I can't remember now, a year or two years before I came back, but that kind of you know opened my mind up to different, a better life, kind of. I got a job, working, different lifestyle and I liked it so I didn't want to affect. (Participant three, line 180)

Feeling tempted to commit crime.

Five of the nine participants in this study described feelings of temptation to offend. The participants described it as habitual, as though it was an automatic thought process for them. Participant two describes how she feels resigned to always noticing the opportunity to offend, and feeling tempted even though she no longer offends.

> It is not like now that I don't do drugs I don't want to do crime. I still, especially like shoplifting little things, because it was such a habit. Like, even if I have the money to buy things it crosses my mind so it is like a weird thing. I suppose it will always be like that for me. (Participant two, line 27)

It was also described as an attraction "making money attracts me still" (Participant four, line 500). This suggests a feeling of being always feeling pulled towards committing crime. Usually, this was triggered by seeing something that they wanted, such as an item in a store, or alcohol sitting in a supermarket loading bay.

> Like seeing an open container of, you know, beer or something, it was still like – I could grab a box of that but I will just walk past, you know. It happens down at the [suburb] [supermarket] quite often, actually. Their containers of alcohol are unlocked – it is like a temptation left there for me. (Participant eight, line 143)

Others talked about wanting the benefits that came with committing crime, usually around money. "I feel like committing crime all the time…. Three years down the track I still feel like making money," (Participant four, line 492,496).

While four of these participants did not report intentions to commit further crime, one participant indicated he might be persuaded to sell marijuana "in the hard times," (Participant six, line 151). He appeared unaware of the discrepancy between his stated desire to avoid prison for the sake of his children and partner, and the risk he would take if he decided to sell marijuana. He seemed confident that there were ways of avoiding conviction through legal loopholes. Participant six had beliefs about marijuana that appeared to make it feel legal to him.

> To me, the way I see it, is why would it grow in the ground if you're not allowed to have it? ...And I will fight my case if I got busted for it and what not. I've got family down in [location] that, well, they've been through the system like that before. They've won the battle. (Participant six, line 151,159)

Though the participants reported ongoing feelings of temptation to commit crime, they were quick to follow this up with an assertion that they did not act on this.

> Definitely had times where I thought to re-offend. Maybe because, mainly around money, because if I didn't have any money, I would start to think of ways to re-offend for money. But, I would always catch myself there, and just think of different ways that aren't offending. (Participant three, line 855)

Of the other participants, participant one and participant seven never mentioned any feelings of temptation to offend. Participant one had ceased offending the longest (approximately five years). This length of time may have contributed to the absence of this experience for him. Of all of the participants, this participant appeared the most integrated into a pro-social community. He appeared to view himself as highly successful as a reformed person who had no need for the benefits of crime. "I am becoming that person that's driving around in these flash cars and living in dream houses," (Participant one, line 170). He also cited multiple intimate links to prominent New Zealand business people, status as a volunteer in the community, and recognition from multiple sources for his reformed self which he appeared to view as more valuable than any status he could gain through criminal activity.

> All the achievements that I have done like all these military courses, going to London, doing the haka outside Buckingham Palace, I received a letter from the Queen.

> Building apprenticeship on [location], living the dream, and living a healthy lifestyle
> those things alone are successful. (Participant one, line 344)

For this participant, he experienced his current situation as far preferable and maintainable than his old life. Participant seven had only desisted for one year however he saw his offending as secondary to his goals of finishing his education and getting a legitimate job. He did not experience his offending as positive or useful and therefore did not report feeling tempted to offend.

Participant nine and Participant five reported thoughts about offending but did not view this as a risk factor to further offending. They describe their offending related thoughts as noticeable and controllable. In this sense they do not feel tempted like the first five participants, but they do experience thoughts about offending.

> Well if some girl is annoying me I am just like, "Oh, that girl is being annoying, I am
> going to just, like, punch her in the face." I am not saying, like, I am literally going
> to. It is just like, you get that there is an annoying girl, and, like, I just need to leave
> her otherwise she is going to be more annoying, and I am either going to say
> something to hurt her or, so, I just leave. (Participant nine, line 247)

Summary

The participants in this study reported experiencing their transition away from offending as a difficult experience. This experience could be summarised as three different themes: awareness for the need to change, transitioning identity, and continuing struggle.

The participants' awareness of the need to change was characterised by a build-up of distress, including fear the experience of prison, and anxiety about not meeting the expectations of important people in their lives. The participants also experienced shifts in their perceptions around offending, from viewing it as normal and comfortable, to viewing it as risky, and a barrier to their other goals. The participants experienced their decision to change as an easy and necessary one.

Participants transitioning identity was typified as feeling as though they had changed who they were -that their identity is different to who they used to be. The participants describe this transition as challenging. The experience felt as though they lived in an offending world, and

a legitimate world for a period of time before they chose to live solely in a legitimate world. The participants felt fortunate to have completed their transition.

Participants continued to struggle with their transition because, even though their lives had vastly improved, they still thought about committing crime, or felt tempted to commit crime.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand what the experience of transitioning out of offending was like for emerging adults. This study found that the experiences of emerging adults could be clustered around three main themes; an awareness of the need to change, experiencing change as a transitioning identity, and a continuing struggle.

Developmental and Sociological theories

The results of the current study provided limited support for developmental and sociological explanations for desistance. Participants did not report experiencing a maturation process as suggested by Glueck and Glueck (1940). This alludes to the idea that desistance is the result of other factors also occurring with age such as individual psychological factors or sociological factors.

Participants did not report an experience consistent with an adolescent-limited typology proposed by Moffitt (1993). The participants reported various childhood upbringings such as, violent and disadvantaged, and loving and stable. This could suggest that early childhood experiences are not a predictor of whether an emerging adult will desist from offending as proposed by Moffitt. This is consistent with later findings such as Moffitt et al. (2002) and Odgers et al. (2008), who found that offenders identified as adolescent-limited did not consistently desist from offending during their transition to adulthood as expected.

Sociological explanations for desistance argue that desistance occurs as a result of good quality social relationships found in marriage, employment, or military service (Laub & Sampson, 2001). However, the results of the current study suggest that it was not intimate relationships, employment, or military service that was directly responsible for desistance but how the individual perceived these milestones was important in desistance. The results suggest that intimate relationships appeared to play a minor role in the desistance process but can also be unnecessary for desistance to occur. The majority of participants attempted to keep their intimate relationships separate from their offending. For some participants the effect of their offending behaviour on their intimate relationship was experienced as distressing, and this was described as part of their reasons to desist from crime accordingly playing a minor role in the desistance process. However, in other cases intimate partners who did not offend themselves were reported as being neither supportive nor unsupportive of offending. This suggests that a non-offending partner does not necessarily inhibit offending

behaviour in their spouse as theorised by Sampson, Laub and Wimer (2006). The findings of the current study are consistent with the findings of Barry (2010) who found that a committed relationship was not a requirement for desistance to occur. The intimate relationships of emerging adults will only have an effect on desistance if an individual experiences a merging of their offending behaviour with their intimate partner as distressing, or if the offender perceives that their intimate relationship is a reason to stop offending. Therefore, it is not a reliable conclusion that having a non-offending intimate partner will consistently lead to desistance.

The results of the study support the findings of Skardhamer and Savolainen (2014) who suggested that entry into employment was preceded by a period of desistance. Participants appeared to cognitively process the need for employment prior to obtaining it. Therefore, it was not employment that triggered desistance but the perception that employment would be a necessary requirement in order to desist. This is an important finding as it demonstrates that internal changes in an individual's perception of offending needs to occur before employment can be useful for desistance. Additionally, two of the participants had employment at the time of their offending, which demonstrates that employment is not necessarily incompatible with offending. This is an important finding as it suggests that placing emerging adult offenders into employment would be unlikely to result in a desistance effect as noted by Uggen (2000) unless the individual had undergone shifts in how they viewed offending and themselves.

Only one participant talked about their attempt to get into the NZ army. He initially completed the Limited Service Volunteer training programme (LSV). According to Work and Income New Zealand (n.d.), LSV is a six week training programme run by the New Zealand Defence Force on behalf of Work and Income. However, as a result of his criminal record he was unable to join the New Zealand Defence Force. Emerging adults who have been involved with offending are likely to be excluded from military service and it is therefore unlikely to play a role in desistance in New Zealand for emerging adults.

Qualitative Theories of Desistance

There were a number of similarities between this study and the studies conducted by Maruna (2001), and Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph (2002). The focus for the studies by Maruna, and Giordano et al. was on what changes took place and not necessarily how they were experienced. However, the patterns between all of the studies indicates that similar processes

could be occurring. The similarities suggest that the process of desistance could be similar between adults and emerging adults.

There were elements of the participants' descriptions from the current study that were consistent with the results of Maruna's (2001) study. Similar themes such as viewing themselves as fundamentally good, having a perception that they had control over their future, a strong sense of self-efficacy, an alliance to more traditional moral values, and integrating their offending identity as part of their current identity as a non-offender. There was inconsistent support for having a desire to give something back to society and of a "redemption ritual" described by Maruna (2001).

The participants in the current study describe returning to an authentic pro-social self as part of their transitional process. The majority of participants also appear to use cognitive strategies, such as comparing themselves to offenders whose crimes are perceived as worse, in an attempt to effectively distance themselves from other offenders. Maruna (2001) theorised that this was a way that offenders who desisted demonstrated their alliance to traditional moral values.

> I kinda felt like I was better than a lot of the people I bumped into, which almost was like I had an ego but I don't think it was that. I think it was more like I didn't relate to some of the stories that I would hear from them. I would just think, like, it was so dumb. Like, a lot of the violent stories I have heard, I would act like, "Yeah, real cool bro," but really I was just disapproving and I was really thinking, like, "I don't want to be around you right now. How can I get you away? How can I make you leave?" (Participant Seven, line 60)

The participants also justified their own offending and minimised the harm they caused, which meant that most of the participants did not feel guilty about their offending. This may appear in contrast to what is expected by a non-offending population who may expect that offenders feel shame and take ownership of their offending in order to desist (Maruna, 2001). The results of the current study suggest that this practice of offenders owning their offending and feeling bad about their behaviour is not necessary for desistance to occur in emerging adults. This would mean the rehabilitation programmes for youth would not require participants to take ownership, or feel shame about their offending in order to successfully complete treatment. Participants reduced feelings of guilt and justifications for offending may

also account for the fact that few mentioned a desire to give back to society as was thematic in Maruna's (2001) study.

There was little support for Maruna's (2001) finding that desisted individuals went through a redemption ritual, which could be because of the way the community treats young offenders compared to adults. For example, while the participants in Maruna's study were recognised for their "reform," the participants in the current study were more likely to be recognised for potential. Four participants described experiences where members of the public such as employers, or teachers recognise their potential and assist them in some way. Recognition of potential did not appear to feature in their process of desistance but it may explain why the emerging adults in the current study did not report a redemption ritual because society recognises potential in youth and reform in adults.

There were similarities between the patterns of behaviour observed in Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph's (2002) study and the experience of the participants in the current study. Participants in the current study did refer to their offending in the past tense, which Giordano et al. theorised demonstrated their intentions not to offend in the future. This could be a behavioural indicator of whether an emerging adult intended to continue offending or not.

The current study and Giordano et al. (2002) had a shared theme of identity transformation where participants experienced shifts in how they viewed themselves in contrast to a previous anti-social identity. The participants also experienced cognitive shifts in how their offending behaviour was viewed from useful and fun to unhelpful.

According to Giordano et al. for desistance to occur, there had to be exposure to an opportunity for change (e.g. religion, rehabilitation, children, and partners), and a realisation that this was an opportunity to desist from offending. The idea that an offender is exposed to an opportunity to desist suggests that this is an external opportunity provided by the offender's environment. However, in the current study participants described actively seeking opportunities to assist them with changes they were making in their lives. "I went and signed up for cads. I joined the church. I did try to go to one Narcotics Anonymous" (Participant five, line 368). Additionally, they engaged with and resisted opportunities for change. This suggests that the participants struggled with the costs and benefits of the opportunity rather than only viewing this as an opportunity to desist. This experience is not accounted for by the model of Giordano et al. The experience of actively seeking opportunities and struggling with

them can be explained by the theory of self-efficacy which is not part of Giordano et al.'s theory of cognitive transformation.

According to Bandura (1977) initiation of behaviour, effort expended, and how long an individual will persist with behaviour under adverse circumstances depends on the individual's level of self-efficacy. According to this theory, it is not the opportunity that assists behaviour change but the individual's perception of their own capability to successfully complete behaviour required for an outcome (Bandura, 1977). Giordano et al. (2002) describe their exposure to an opportunity for change as being an external characteristic rather than an internal characteristic such as self-efficacy. The results of this study support the view that desistance is the result of internal characteristics rather than just external opportunities. The participants in the current study actively sought experiences that would assist them to desist, and persisted with difficult experiences they found physically and mentally hard to tolerate. This suggests the participants had high levels of self-efficacy and could explain their determined and persistent attempts to make changes in their lives.

The results of the current study suggest that the engagement with opportunities to change was more intentional than what is described by Giordano et al. (2002). The participants describe being active in finding their own opportunities to desist and also struggling with these opportunities. Therefore, engagement with opportunities to desist such as religion or rehabilitation will depend on the individual offender and their beliefs about whether their participation in the opportunity will lead to predicted benefits, or avoidance of potential difficulties such as prison, regardless of whether they think this might lead to desistance or not.

The similarities between the current study and those by Maruna (2001), and Giordano et al. (2002) suggest that there could be a similar process that occurs between adults and emerging adults that is responsible for offending. Each of these studies proposes that desistance is primarily the result of cognitive shifts in the way they view themselves and their offending. This has therapeutic implications as it suggests that therapies that focus on cognitions would be more effective than rehabilitation focused solely on modifying the environments of young offenders.

Qualitative Experiences of Change

There were a number of overlaps between the experiences of the participants in the current study and the experiences of participants from other qualitative studies on change (Carey et al, 2007; Higginson & Mansell, 2008; Gianakis & Carey, 2011). Similarities included experiencing change as a time of negativity followed by a time of positivity (Carey et al, 2007), movement from avoiding a problem to facing it, and a new and improved self contrasted with a previous self that was sometimes difficult to relate to (Higginson & Mansell, 2008). The current study was most similar to the results from Gianakis and Carey (2011) where participants wanted to change, had a crisis in identity and/or connection with others, and emotional pain, followed by a new way of thinking.

The similarities between the studies is interesting as it suggests that, regardless of the type of change being attempted, perhaps the experience of change is a universal one. Rosen and Davison (2003) hypothesised that there could be a universal mechanism of change, and that understanding what the mechanism is avoids practicing unnecessary components of treatment on clients. The current study supports Rosen and Davison's assertion that it would be prudent to focus on researching universal principles of change that could be applied across therapeutic settings.

Mechanisms of Change and Control Theory Perspectives

Both the TTM and control theories can account for the experiences of transition in the emerging adults in this study. However, control theories account for the experience in a comprehensive way when compared to the TTM. The TTM explains change as a series of discrete changes that an individual can move through in a backwards and forwards progression. Control theories explain change as a series of psychological and behavioural adjustments that reduce a person's distress. The results of the current study support the view that the experience of change was not one of successful change followed by regression/relapse but continuous attempts to incrementally change behaviour, building on previous changes in behaviour. The regressive/relapse component of the TTM has been argued to be inconsistent with a genuine stage theory which says that an individual cannot transform backwards once there has been behavioural or psychological change (Bandura, 1997).

The TTM does not describe how or why people change. However, control theories suggest that people change in order to reduce the experience of distress they are affected by. This corresponds to the experiences described by the participants who experienced a build-up of

distress and reasons to stop offending which then led to shifts in cognitions and behaviour. According to PCT, individuals persist with a variety of strategies until their distress has reduced which parallels the experience of the participants in the current study who battled to make the necessary changes to desist. Therefore, control theories provide a more complete explanation for how and why people change in this study.

The TTM is currently the dominant model used in rehabilitation with offenders. However, the results of this study suggest that control theories are perhaps a more appropriate model to explain human behaviour change in offenders. Casey, Day and Howells (2005) have already suggested that the TTM may not be appropriate for offending populations because offending can be a low frequency behaviour and the TTM was designed around high frequency behaviour. On the other hand, control theory can account for both high and low frequency behaviours.

Additionally, according to Prochaska, Redding and Evers (2008) a reduction in problematic behaviour is not necessarily regarded as successful change by the TTM because the behaviour is not enough to reduce health risks. Therefore, the TTM may not regard a reduction of offending as successful change. In offending, however, any reduction in severity or frequency of offences does reduce both harm to the community, and risk of serious legal sanctions for the offender. Control theories do not debate whether reduction is sufficient for change and, as a result, it promotes a clearer explanation of change, i.e., whether an individual's distress was sufficiently reduced or not.

Control theories account for the experiences of the participants in the current study better than the TTM, which is the dominant model of change used to understand criminal behaviour. This study found support for control theories in that they are able to accurately describe and explain the experience emerging adults had when they transitioned away from offending. Carver and Scheier (1982) identified that control theory was a useful conceptual framework for understanding human behaviour, particularly in the areas of personality-social, clinical, and health psychology. It is possible that control theory is also useful in understanding desistance from offending, and is more meaningfully able to assist clinicians to conceptualise their clients. Given the criticisms of the TTM in explaining desistance from offending, it seems sensible to explore the use of control theories in understanding desistance from crime further.

Other Findings

Viewing the social media accounts of the current studies participants was primarily for elicitation purposes. However, an unexpected finding was that participants either ceased using social media while they transitioned away from offending, or they closed down their accounts and started new ones once they had transitioned out of offending. For most, this appeared to be because of shifts in their expressed identity. According to Richardson and Hessey (2009) social media is an expression of identity in young people, and this finding demonstrates how the participants in the current study ceased publically presenting an offending identity by closing down their social media accounts. By the time of the interview, all of the participants had desisted from offending for at least one year and had new social media accounts that reflected their current non-offending identities. This is interesting as it suggests that, for those that do make a successful transition away from offending, disengagement from social media could be behavioural evidence of this.

Two participants identified that faster court processing could have assisted their transition. Because of slow court processing times some of the participants had fully transitioned away from offending behaviour prior to facing charges in court. This meant that they faced sanctions, such as home detention, after they had already made their transition. If court processing times were faster for youth it could coincide better with their attempts to make changes. Sanctions affected these two participants' motivation adversely, and also brought them into contact with anti-social peers. Three participants said that they found a transitional period helpful, such as home detention, or time spent out of their city of residence. They reported that these transitional periods enabled them the time to process information which aided their transition out of offending.

Compared to Pākehā, the participants from collectivist cultures (Asia, South America, and Māori) appeared to have additional feelings of obligation to transition out of offending because of their family, or people. "Really, for myself, I didn't want to look at myself as a failure, look at myself as a disgrace to my family so that was my biggest fear." (Participant seven, line 143).

In this example the participant repeats several times that it is his biggest fear to let his parents down and the pressure he experiences to conform to traditional moral values. This type of response was typical of the participants from the collectivist cultures but not for those who identified as Pākehā. Participant one describes how he feels responsible to his people to abide

by traditional moral values "I feel responsible as a Māori to help my people see a different way and see a different life" (Participant one, line 500).

Apart from additional feelings of obligation felt by those from collectivist cultures, the experience of transition in emerging adults appeared to be similar across cultures. Again this hints at a universal change process such as that hypothesised by Rosen and Davison (2003).

A cultural consultant was utilised for this project who additionally noted that, for the Māori participants, desistance could be experienced as natural and supported because whakapapa and te taha wairua connections allow access to cultural identity and values regardless of a Māori person's perception of their 'Māoriness.' If a Māori person decides to adopt a pro-social identity, whakapapa connections promote this experience through connection to both the living and the dead.

Limitations

The data that was collected through the semi-structured interviews was influenced by the researcher's own biases. Though an attempt was made to be aware of the researcher's own judgements and experiences and how these might influence the interviews, it became apparent during data analysis that this could have been more carefully managed. For example, during the interviews the researcher focused on the participants explanations of how they desisted from offending rather than what the experience was like for them. It is possible that this impacted on the data that was gathered, and that fuller and richer descriptions could be gained from replication of this research.

Potential participants for the current study gave feedback that the wording of the information sheet and screening questionnaire caused them concern. Most participants were confused about the limits of confidentiality. On reflection, this could have been worded more clearly and simply (e.g., "Your information is private unless you say that you or someone else is in danger"). This information might be useful for future projects to take into consideration.

Each of the participants appeared articulate and insightful when explaining their process of desistance. There may be a connection between this ability to understand and communicate their internal processes that is also linked to their successful transition. This may mean that the sample in the current study is not representative of emerging adults who transition away from offending.

Future Directions

It would be useful to study how the participants' experiences can be used to understand the elements involved in the transition out of offending, and how this compares to adult samples who desist from offending. This information could contribute to the limited research on the causal mechanism of desistance from crime.

It would also be useful to explore the therapeutic implications of this research, particularly how control theories could be used to understand desistance in offenders, and how control theories might inform offender rehabilitation.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to understand the experience of emerging adults who transitioned out of offending. The descriptions provided by the participants about this process add to existing research on youth desistance from crime.

The current study found the participants' process of transition reflected that of adult samples from other literature on the process of desistance (e.g. Maruna, 2001 and Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph, 2002). Rosen and Davison (2003) hypothesised that there could be a universal process of change occurring for all types of human behaviour. The similarities between the current study and other studies that explored the experience of change and desistance provide additional evidence that there could be a universal process of change. This study also identified that control theories may be an appropriate framework to understand the process of desistance in emerging adults. Current theories such as the TTM cannot account fully for the process of desistance and control theories could provide a new avenue of study to assess the potential of this theory to understand offending behaviour.

The information gained from the participants in the current study adds to knowledge in the literature on youth desistance from crime, and provides avenues for further areas of study to better understand the phenomenon of youth desistance.

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Appendix A

MASSEY UNIVERSITY

Are you a young person who has stopped committing crime?

Consider being a part of this study.

Kia ora, I am interviewing young people about their experiences of giving up crime. I am interested in what that experience is like and how we might use your experiences to help other young people who may be in the process of, or thinking about giving up crime.

Who is eligible to participate in this confidential interview?

To participate you must:
- Be between 18 and 25 years old
- Be English speaking
- Have committed at least 1 of the following crimes (a formal conviction is not a requirement):
  - Theft (more serious than shoplifting a few things)
  - Burglary
  - Theft of a car, or theft from a car
  - Robbery
  - Assault (more serious than a group fight where people may have agreed to fight you)
  - Drug dealing
  - Extortion
- Have stopped committing crime for at least 1 year.
- Use and/or used social media

Your privacy is important. I will not ask for specific details of your offending. The information from the interview will be kept confidential and you will never be identifiable in the research. For a full explanation of the project, your rights, how you will remain anonymous, data management and possible risks please visit www.facebook.com/changeresearch or contact the research team.

The interview will take approximately 1-2 hours and you will receive a $20 Westfield voucher for your time.

If this sounds like you, please contact me for more information about what the study involves.

Thank you for considering this study

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Appendix B

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Changing identities: Transitioning from offending in emerging adults.

INFORMATION SHEET

The research project named above is being carried out by May-Lee Chong, a graduate student at Massey University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in Psychology.

What is this research about?
I am looking for 9-12 participants who have been regular social media users who would be willing to discuss their experiences of stopping crime. It is hoped that the results of this research may be able to help other young people who have been committing crime.

Eligibility for the study:
To be eligible you must
- Be between 18 and 25 years old
- Be English speaking
- Have committed at least 1 of the following crimes (a formal conviction is not a requirement):
  o Theft (more serious than shoplifting a few things)
  o Burglary
  o Theft of a car, or theft from a car
  o Robbery
  o Assault (more serious than a group fight where people may have agreed to fight you)
  o Drug dealing
  o Extortion
- Have stopped committing crime for at least 1 year.
- Use and/or used social media

What will participation involve?
Participation involves a one on one interview about your experiences in stopping offending. Interviews will take approximately 1-2 hours and will be done at a private location near your home. With your permission, the interview will be recorded so that I can remember what you have said and later this is turned into an anonymous written description of the interview. This means that I will type up what we talked about, and take out all the things that could identify you (e.g. locations and people you talk about). I will then show you the transcript and you can make changes to make it more anonymous or correct any wrong information. You may also withdraw the transcript if you no longer want to be a part of the study.
During the interview you will be asked to log in to your social media accounts. These will be used as a memory aid for the times being talked about. You do not have to show the researcher pictures or words from your social media accounts. However if you give permission, you can show the researcher pictures or words that you think are relevant. With your permission these will be recorded and later made anonymous so the pictures or words cannot be linked back to you. Any images or words recorded from your social media accounts will not be published in the research.
You will receive a $20 Westfield voucher for your time.

What will happen to the recording?
Once the written description is completed I will destroy the recordings. The anonymous transcripts will be kept securely for up to 5 years and then destroyed. Once I have finished the project, I will provide you with a summary of the findings.

What are the possible risks to you?
Even though I will not ask direct questions about your offending, there is a possibility that you may disclose information about offences that you have not been convicted of. The purpose of the research is to gather research about your experience of change only. Should you accidentally share information about minor offending (e.g. smoking cannabis, shoplifting and underage drinking) I would not be compelled to pass on this information. If however you shared information that indicates there is imminent risk to the safety or wellbeing of the community, I may be compelled to pass information obtained from this research to the police. This includes if you say you will hurt yourself or somebody else physically, sexually or psychologically or if you share information that indicates someone else is at risk of harm. If this happened during the interview, I would stop the interview and contact my supervisor to determine the best course of action. You may wish to seek legal advice regarding this.
You are not obliged to participate and therefore if you have concerns about this you may choose not to participate, or you may wish to discuss this further with friends, family members, or members of the research team. Choosing not to participate or to withdraw from the research will not disadvantage you in anyway provided you have not disclosed the information mentioned above.

Thinking about yourself and your past can sometimes bring about feelings of psychological discomfort or distress. If this happens during the interview you will be encouraged to seek support from a friend or family member. Lifeline is counselling service that offers free telephone counselling. They also provide affordable face to face counselling and can refer you to a service that could be appropriate for you. They can be contacted on 0800 543 354.

Your rights:
You are under no obligation to accept this invitation.   If you decide to participate, you have the right to:
  • Decline to answer any particular question
  • Withdraw from the study at any point up until 2 weeks after receiving a copy of the transcript
  • Ask any questions about the study at any time
  • Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used
  • Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
  • Ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact any member of the research team.

Project Contacts:
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This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application 16/26. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Andrew Chrystall, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone 09 414 0800 x43317 email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix C

Please note: There are 2 versions of the Screening Questionnaire, the first is to be read by the researcher, the second is a version that can be sent to the potential participant so they can check their own eligibility.

Screening Questionnaire – to be read

To be read at the start of the interview and to all potential participants who enquire about the study.

Kia ora, thanks for considering this study, your time is important to me, I need to ask a few questions to make sure you would be suitable for this study, would that be ok? (If 'yes' continue to question 1, if 'no' thanks them for their time and cease contact).

1. Are you between the ages of 18 and 25?

Yes/No

2. Without saying which one, have you committed at least one of the following serious offences, regardless of whether you have been formally convicted or not:

Theft (more than shoplifting a few things), burglary, theft of, or from cars, robbery, assault (not including a group fight where others may have agreed to fight you), drug dealing or extortion?

Yes/No

3. Apart from minor crime such as speeding, possession of cannabis or driving without a licence, in your opinion have you stopped committing crimes, and all serious crimes (Theft, burglary, theft of, or from cars, robbery, assault, drug dealing or extortion) for at least 1 year?

Yes/No

4. Have you been a user of social media?

Yes/No

5. Would you be prepared to login to your social media accounts during the interview?

Yes/No*

6. Would you give permission for the researcher to see information from your social media account that you think could be relevant to the study?

Yes/No

If they answered '**No**' to any of the questions above, thank them for their time and inform them they are not eligible for the study.

*If they answered 'no' to question 5 only, say "you may still be eligible to take part in the study. Logging into you social media account is to help you to remember what was happening for you in the past. Do you think you will need to use social media as a memory aid?" If they say 'no' continue to the next set of questions.

If they answered 'Yes' to all the questions above, please continue to the next set of questions.

7. Have you ever committed an offence of a sexual nature?

Yes/No

8. Do you have a current problem with alcohol and drugs, that is do you drink alcohol or use drugs in a way that impacts on any of these areas, legal, mental or physical health, employment or relationships?

Yes/No

9. Were the reasons for committing the serious offence(s) listed above because of a mental illness you had at the time?

Yes/No

If they answered yes to any of the last 3 questions, thank them for their time and inform them they are not eligible to participate.

If they answered No to the last 3 questions, they are eligible to participate.

To be asked at the time of the interview:

10. Are you currently under the influence of any drugs or alcohol?

Yes/No

If yes, terminate the interview. On discussion with the supervisor, this may be rescheduled for another time.

Read the following:

According to the screening questionnaire, you are eligible for this study. I would appreciate it if you would consider being a part of this study. There are some risks to you of being in this study and I want to explain these to you before we talk further.

Even though I will not ask direct questions about your offending, there is a possibility that you may disclose information about offences that you have not been convicted of. The purpose of the research is to gather research about your experience of change only. Should you accidentally share information about minor offending (e.g. smoking cannabis, shoplifting and underage drinking) I would not be compelled to pass on this information. If however you shared information that indicates there is imminent risk to the safety or wellbeing of the community, I may be compelled to pass information obtained from this research to the police. This includes if you say you will hurt yourself or somebody else physically, sexually or psychologically or if you share information that indicates someone else is at risk of harm. If this happened during the interview, I would stop the interview and contact my supervisor to determine the best course of action. You may wish to seek legal advice regarding this.

You are not obliged to participate and therefore if you have concerns about this you may choose not to participate, or you may wish to discuss this further with friends, family members, or members of the research team. Choosing not to participate or to withdraw from the research will not disadvantage you in anyway provided you have not disclosed the information mentioned above.

Do you have any questions about this?

Are you happy to receive further information about this study OR Are you happy to move to the next phase of the interview.

Screening Questionnaire- electronic

Kia ora, thank you for your interest in participating in this study. Below is a questionnaire that will show if you are eligible to participate. Please read the questions carefully and circle the answer that best fits for you**.**

1. Are you between the ages of 18 and 25?

Yes/No

2. Without saying which one, have you committed at least one of the following serious offences, regardless of whether you have been formally convicted or not:

Theft (more than shoplifting a few things), burglary, theft of, or from cars, robbery, assault (not including a group fight where others may have agreed to fight you), drug dealing or extortion?

Yes/No

3. Apart from minor crime such as speeding, possession of cannabis or driving without a licence, in your opinion have you stopped committing crimes, and all serious crimes (Theft, burglary, theft of, or from cars, robbery, assault, drug dealing or extortion)?

Yes/No

4. Have you been a user of social media?

Yes/No

5. Would you be prepared to login to your social media accounts during the interview?

Yes/No*

6. Would you give permission for the researcher to see information from your social media account that you think could be relevant to the study?

Yes/No

If you answered 'No' to any of the questions above, thank- you for your interest, unfortunately you are not eligible to participate.

*If you answered 'no' to question 5 only, you may still be eligible to take part in the study. Logging into you social media account is to help you to remember what was happening for you in the past. If you don't think you need to use social media as a memory aid, you may still be able to participate in the study. Please continue to the next set of questions.

If you answered 'Yes' to all the questions above, please continue to the next set of questions.

7. Have you ever committed an offence of a sexual nature?

Yes/No

8. Do you have a current problem with alcohol and drugs, that is do you drink alcohol or use drugs in a way that impacts on any of these areas, legal, mental or physical health, employment or relationships?

Yes/No

9. Were the reasons for committing the serious offence(s) listed above because of a mental illness you had at the time?

Yes/No

If you answered 'Yes' to any of the last 3 questions, thank you for your time, unfortunately you are not eligible to participate.

If you answered 'No' to the last 3 questions, you are eligible to participate. Please read the following possible risks to you of agreeing to participate:

What are the possible risks to you?

Even though I will not ask direct questions about your offending, there is a possibility that you may disclose information about offences that you have not been convicted of. The purpose of the research is to gather research about your experience of change only. Should you accidentally share information about minor offending (e.g. smoking cannabis, shoplifting and underage drinking) I would not be compelled to pass on this information. If however you shared information that indicates there is imminent risk to the safety or wellbeing of the community, I may be compelled to pass information obtained from this research to the police. This includes if you say you will hurt yourself or somebody else physically, sexually or

psychologically or if you share information that indicates someone else is at risk of harm. If this happened during the interview, I would stop the interview and contact my supervisor to determine the best course of action. You may wish to seek legal advice regarding this.

You are not obliged to participate and therefore if you have concerns about this you may choose not to participate, or you may wish to discuss this further with friends, family members, or members of the research team. Choosing not to participate or to withdraw from the research will not disadvantage you in anyway provided you have not disclosed the information mentioned above.

If you feel comfortable having read about the possible risks of the study, please contact the researcher to arrange an interview.

Thank you for considering this study. We appreciate your time.

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Appendix D

Interview Schedule

Whanaungatanga/introductions, ask if they have a preference for how to start the interview, if no, begin by thanking them for their willingness to participate

-Read Screening Questionnaire

-Read information Sheet

-Housekeeping (location of bathroom, safety information for the building)

-Space for questions

-Get written consent

-Gather demographic information, age, gender, cultural background, use of social media (main social media used, how often do they use it, what is good about social media, what is not so good.

Login to social media account(s), explain that I only need to see things you think are relevant.

Ensure to cover the following points regarding before, during, and after the transition:

- Identity

- Self efficacy

- Barriers

- Cognitions and feelings about their own behaviour

- Skills learnt or trialled (including unsuccessful ones)

- Problem awareness

Possible questions:

What was the process of change like for you?

What do you remember thinking at the time?

What do you remember feeling?

Tell me about your process of change?

Why did you decide to make the change?

What changes did you make? How did you make those changes? What got you there?

What did you think of your behaviour?

How do you think the change occurred?

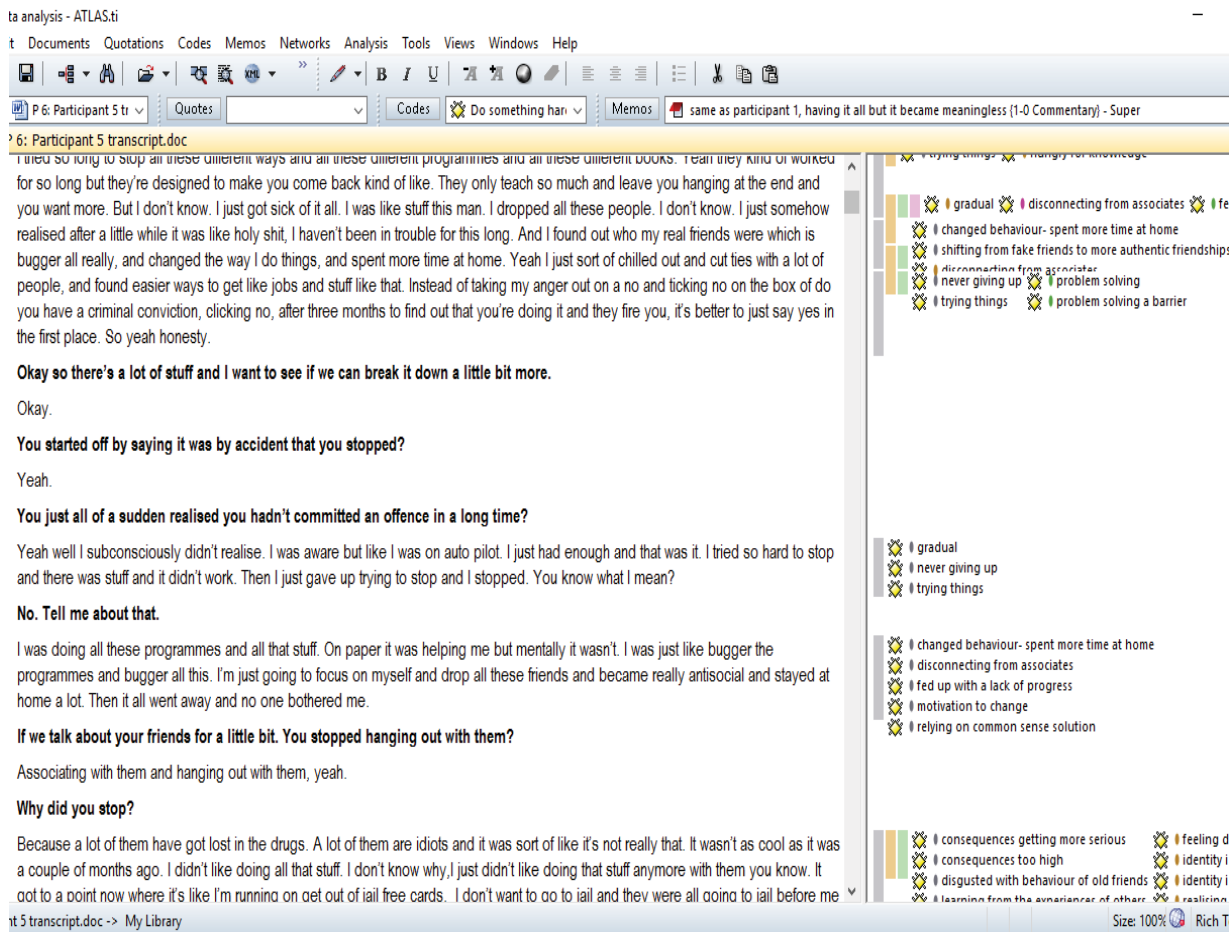What stopped you from making changes in the past?

What's not on social media? What did you un-tag yourself from, where weren't there camera's, what isn't uploaded to social media?
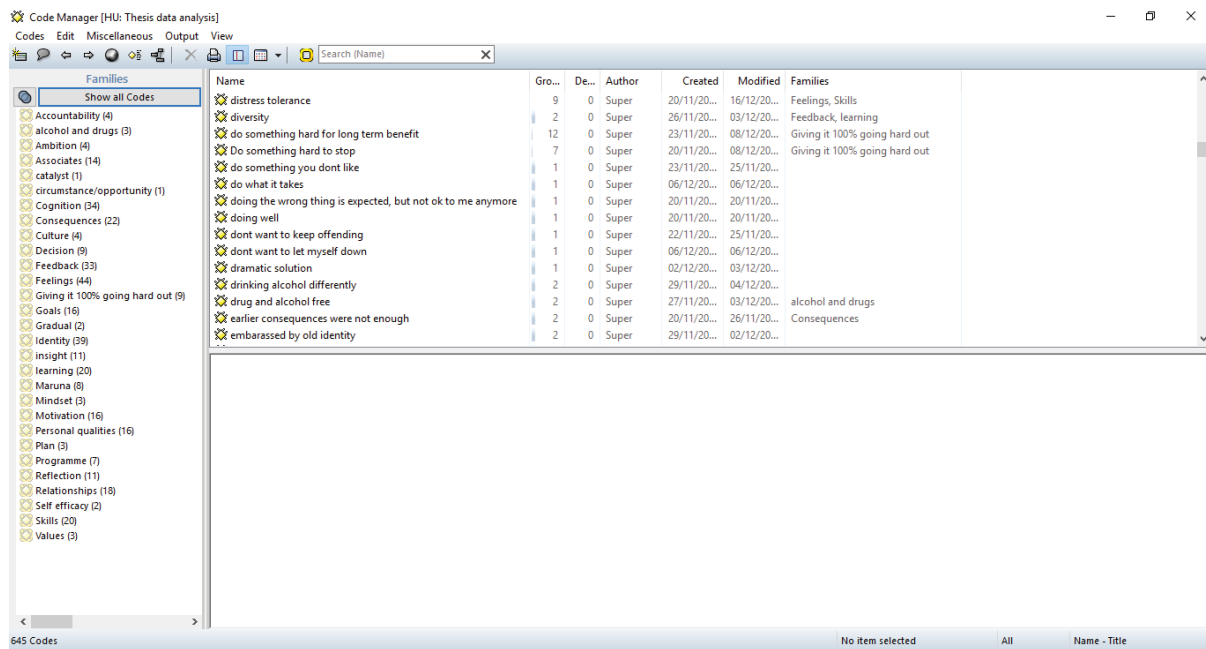
What would have helped?

Is there anything that I haven't asked you about, that you think is important for this study?

Appendix E

Free coding

Here the process of free coding can be seen. This is the transcript of Participant 6. In the main text box is the participant's transcribed interview. In the right hand box are the codes which were interpretations of the text.

The codes were then grouped with others codes of the same or similar meaning. On the left hand side there is the heading 'families' this is a group of codes that form a theme. In the right hand box is a list of all the codes of which there were 645 codes (note this is recorded in the bottom left hand corner.

Following this process each of the code families were printed out and compared again to the original transcripts to check that they represented the descriptions of the participants.

This process was repeated several times to check the validity of the results.

Emerging themes compared against each of the transcripts.

The transcripts were also interpreted and analysed individually and then compared against other transcripts to check for patterns and themes.

Here is an excerpt for the analysis of participant four's transcript. The theme of change as a battle is noted.

"Faced with prison or a drug treatment programme, P4 eagerly chooses the drug-treatment programme. Confronted with the realisation that he cannot commit crime or use drugs, P4 appears to have a battle with himself he talks about 'fighting it' and 'battling with them [drug-treatment staff]' and attempts to find a way to control what was happening. This is symbolised by an argument that he dedicates two months of his treatment to. The argument itself is minor and it seems even P4 recognises that it was just a 'distraction' from his

transitional process. He passively resist treatment by falling asleep in group therapy sessions He experienced this battle as 'draining' and finds that he can't keep "two people happy". This suggests that his behaviour is for others and not for himself. Even though his behaviour appears to operate out of self-interest, he experiences the disapproval of others as intolerable. This may be why he put his own family at arm's length, and attempted to reconnect with his family once he was done being a 'naughty boy'."

The idea of change as a battle was found in other transcripts to back up this theme:

The number represents the different participants. The comments are quotes and interpretations of the transcripts.

P4, fighting change, a battle.

P4 getting a job that was hard.

P3 getting a job that I hated.

P4 change starting getting easier "ah yeah this is alright."

P6 meth cessation – not experienced as distressing .

P6 beaten for leaving gang, not experienced as distressing.

P7 living in two worlds, while I quit marijuana and try to hang out with my friends that still smoke was a challenge.

P7 quitting marijuana was 'hard'.

P7 Stopping crime is easy, stopping smoking is hard.

P7 did my offending cost me my girlfriend? I don't know.

P7 it was hard….battling a lot of demons, so it was hard, but it's not hard when you look at why you are doing it; you need a reason to stop.

P2 getting a job was "painful".

P2 adapting to work for little gain, instead of a little work for great gain.

P2 I need to go forward or back, I can't stay still.

P2 I've stopped drugs, how am I still in this position?

P2 change is scary, but that makes it exciting and I like it when things are exciting.

P2 the only obstacles were my own decisions.

P2 shoplifting was hard to stop because it wasn't harmful.

P5 I flushed my phone down the toilet, I don't deserve this, if I keep it, it will be extremely bad so I will extremely dispose of it.

P5 trying to get a job with a criminal record, being thwarted by WINZ, knocking on doors to get a job, being rejected for jobs.

P5 trying not to care, but still caring about old associates.

P5 "I had to be cold-hearted" I had to change who I was and do something that wasn't natural.

P5 experienced like a 'shut door' slam. Shut people out. Sudden, dramatic.

P5 stopping was easy, but finding a reason to was hard.

P5 going to NA, going to CADS going to church, trying everything to change.

P8 Home D a turning point, a difficult time of reflection. Learning about who my real friends are, coping. "My new life".

P8 I don't want to be 40 and have nothing, I'm afraid to be the homeless guy dressed like shit.

P8 change experienced as easy.

P8 getting lectured by cops, but they are almost like friends or dads. Gentle.

P8 advice feels like a lecture

P1 stop battling the system and find a legitimate way through.

Appendix F

Changing identities: Transitioning from offending in emerging adults.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being image recorded.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: .... **Date:** ....

Full Name - printed ....

Appendix G

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Changing identities: Transitioning from offending in emerging adults.

TRANSCRIBER'S CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I   agree to transcribe the recordings provided to me.

I agree to keep confidential all the information provided to me.

I will not make any copies of the transcripts or keep any record of them, other than those required for the project.

Signature: .... **Date:** ....

Table 1

Demographic Information

Age range	21-25 years old
Length of time desisted	1-5 years
Gender	N.
Male	7
Female	2
Employment Status	N.
Student	1
Unemployed	1
Employed	7
Cultural Identification	N.
Māori	2
Pākehā	4
Asian	1
South American	1
Pākehā/ Pasifika	1

Table 2

Interview Themes

Theme	Subordinate Themes
Awareness of the need to change.	-Experiencing a build of distress and reasons to stop. -Experiencing shifts in perception from, offending is normal, to offending is no longer worth it. -Experiencing change as necessary.
Transitioning identity.	-Experiencing shifts in how I see myself. -Changing is a battle. -My transition feels like a fluke
Continuing struggle.	-Life is starting to improve -Feeling tempted to commit crime