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Education as a means of enabling former offenders to live meaningful and productive lives: an Autoethnography

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Intellectual Property and Publication Statements

I Colin Francis O'Connor confirm that the work submitted is my own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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I was first introduced to Dr Joan Walton in 2013. On reaching the midway stage of the Ed.D qualification at my previous place of doctoral study, I found myself stagnated, despairingly rooted in the rigidity of conventional academia; uninspired, I was firmly lodged in a period of academic paralysis. During a talk conducted by Dr Walton and Professor Jack Whitehead, I attentively listened as they passionately conveyed how, through living one's values, research inquiry and individual pedagogy can be freed from the grip of traditional ways of knowing; this was the beginning of my journey.

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III

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Abstract

This study reports the findings of a three-year investigation, which documented the learning experiences of former offenders. My research is informed by a concern about different perceptions of what counts as appropriate provision for Education, Training and Employment (ETE hereafter) offender initiatives that show a tendency to treat ex-offenders in an unhelpful and unproductive manner. Drawing on my own experiences as a former offender, and in later years as a practitioner, mentor and teacher working in numerous provisions since 2004, I contend that the current system of ETE initiatives are, in the main, failing to address the complex and non-conventional learning requirements of those who struggle to adapt to traditional modes of learning. My inspiration for this thesis was grounded in the belief that for some offenders, including those with substance misuse problems, education can help support and foster a more contented and fulfilled way of living.

My aim was to explore with the men other ways of teaching, learning and service user engagement. I describe how my complicated life history became a valuable pedagogical resource, which enabled me to work in ways that were shown to enrich the life chances and perspectives of other former offenders. My research explores the educational benefits of working in a more caring, compassionate and trusting manner, freed from traditional time restraints. During the previous fourteen years, the people with whom I have worked have highlighted my capacity to connect through authentic communication, as perhaps the most fundamentally compelling aspect of my pedagogy. Rogers (1961) theorised that when positive regards between persons is unconditional, the human condition is more likely to flourish, as is client growth and development through the quality of relationships. However, the magnitude of this change, if any, cannot be predicted; personal growth and achievement are unique to the person.

Table of Contents

VIII

Chapter 1
Introduction

This chapter will begin by highlighting the degree to which offenders are disadvantaged in the labour market. The problem statement of this thesis will examine some of the personal and wider social implications, which negatively affect offenders when seeking employment and other forms of progression. I detail the purpose of the study, followed by my research contention and motivation underpinning this inquiry. Leading on from this, I outline my research design and context, and defend my decision to use autoethnography as my main methodology. The chapter continues with a discussion of the scope and limitations of the investigation, including the research time frames, the socioeconomic background of the men, the choice of research sampling employed, and the number of research volunteer stories used. I will then explain the framework and context of each chapter. Finally, the potential significance and importance of the study will be detailed.

1.1 Problem Statement

In an ideal world, when released from prison, a morally just society would strive to create equality of access, without stigma, into prosperous, productive and meaningful pathways. However, what statistics inform us is that once convicted, former offenders face diminished opportunities, which can jeopardise their development as full social citizens; they become stripped of social value, respect and equality (Gonzalez, 2012). For these men and women, the reality of being excluded is a concern for the majority, as opposed to the minority. For example, as detailed by Newburn (2006), high levels of unemployment, accompanied by impoverished living conditions, make up the background socioeconomic context of the majority of individuals tried and convicted by the criminal justice system. Furthermore, Gonzalez (2012) estimates that following incarceration, 50% of this already disadvantaged population will return to prison within three years of being released. Prison has a poor record for reducing reoffending: 'nearly half of adults (48%) are reconvicted within one year of release. For those serving sentences of less than 12 months, this increases to 63.8%' (Ministry of Justice, 2018: 7). As explained by the Prison Reform Trust (2004: 6), 'improvements in the interventions provided in prison need to be matched with improvements in the community';

they further cite how prisoners with a history of substance misuse are at severe risk of reoffending.

According to White and Cunneen (2006), progressing into productive pathways such as employment has many individual benefits including improved self-esteem and confidence. However, according to Lam and Harcourt (2003), following incarceration, hopes of becoming socially engaged and accepted beyond their immediate community context diminish; their status, social standing and the stigma which often defines them, ensures there are limited opportunities available, when compared to the non-offending population. Adopting a social role, having a purpose, belonging, and feeling part of wider society would allow former offenders the opportunity to 'contribute to the larger economic structure of society, thereby offering individuals a sense of connection to their broader social world' (Blustein, 2008: 298). Regardless of past errors and ways of living, Brown, Spencer and Deakin (2007: 33) urge society to display a greater understanding and compassion. They assert that ex-offenders should be permitted.

> The opportunity to be full members of society, with the rights and responsibilities that this entails. For some, this will mean the restoration of a former state. For others, it will mean the receipt of services, the acquisition of skills, and the establishment of rank, rights and responsibilities previously denied.

In 2003, the government introduced ETE programmes for young adults who were not participating in any form of education, training or employment (Samele, Keil and Thomas, 2009). As documented by Hayden, Williamson and Webber (2007), although the focus was on re-engaging isolated and marginalised youth, the New Labour government in 1997 believed there were numerous personal and broader social benefits of educating the offender population while incarcerated. Moreover, following the introduction of the first employment focused pathfinder project in 2001, ETE programmes have now become viewed by different governments as a key driver in attempts to tackle and reduce rates of initial and repeat offending amongst isolated youth and adult male and female offenders. The study by Narey (2004: 18), titled, 'The impact of corrections on re-offending: a review of ''what works'', indicated that equipping offenders with the necessary skills and qualifications to gain

employment would reduce reoffending rates. The evidence from the study maintained that 'factors such as employment and stable accommodation have a role in ensuring that gains achieved in prison are maintained after release and in reducing the likelihood of re-offending'.

In the House of Commons publication titled, 'Reducing Reoffending: The what works Debate' (2012), which while acknowledging the need to develop, enhance and improve ETE prison initiatives as the 'right thing to do', also appreciates the process is lacking in direction, is static and in many cases unproductive (Grimwood and Berman, 2012; see also the Working Ventures UK Project, 2006, and the report published by the Ministry of Justice, 2013, which stresses the need for change, Wright, 2013). The report found that 'not all staff were supportive of prisoners' education and some were dismissive'. Through inadequate training, limited resources and time, prison ETE staff 'were working under considerable pressures' (Grimwood and Berman, 2012: 47).

These reports appear to be encouraging alternative ETE strategies to reduce reoffending. In a later report, Chief Inspector of Prisons Nick Harwick (2010-11: 29), stated that 'the quality of staff-prisoner relationships is a bellwether for decent treatment across the board. Unfortunately, these prisons were in the minority'. According to Wright (2013: 27) research indicates that when working with offenders 'many gaps exist in our evidence base. Some of these gaps are more critical than others'. In his summary of the current offender training and initiatives, he was critical of these programmes and literatures for consistently ignoring the offender's voice or their understanding of what they need from ETE provisions.

1.2 My research contention underpinning the study

This research contends that the current offender ETE provisions and service model, founded on a pragmatic and financially driven rationale, are largely ineffective and working in opposition to the wellbeing of the client. The government has recently acknowledged this in the research by the Ministry of Justice (2014) titled 'Transforming Rehabilitation: a summary of evidence on reducing reoffending', in which it is stated that there persists a lack of understanding concerning what works best. Generally, the thoughts, feelings and perceptions of the service user continue to have minimal importance in offender education (Wright, 2013). Moreover, if certification and employment were no longer the main criteria to evaluate

the success or failure of offender ETE engagement, there would currently be little else to ascertain the client's short and long-term accomplishments while attending these provisions.

Gaining employment has over the previous two decades been prioritised in the frameworks of the different government-funded offender initiatives (Lewis, 2003; Wright, 2013). From their first day of enrolment, the client is not aware they have a specific period to achieve accreditation, and the expectations and pressures exerted on the individual can be excessive. From personal experience, and as endorsed by the research volunteers, the pressure to draw down funding through accreditation is influencing the manner of relationships between service professional and client. The obligation to conform instantly to the financial working of the provision can objectify relationships and any subsequent interactions. Thus, when enrolling onto these learning programmes, ways of working and teaching are tailored to meet the demands of accreditation and finance, creative and non-conventional pedagogies are stifled, and learning must meet strict criteria.

Throughout previous employment, these divisive and contentious structures and practices have been quoted by service users as being oppressive and defining of their learning experiences. The practitioner, when confronted with the ongoing demands to achieve accreditation, seldom comprehends that many former offenders will never be able to contribute to society through regular employment; years of isolation and employment prejudice make the transition into work problematic. Therefore, the ethos and operating principles of offender ETE services require a fundamental re-evaluation. As a starting point, I consider it important that we re-assess the business paradigms of accreditation. Although some do aspire for certification and eventual employment, the system is in my view, profiting at the expense of the service client. How I work with former offenders is in many ways different from my former colleagues; former service managers described my practices of working as being non-conventional and hugely successful.

Seeking alternative ways of educating and working with former offenders, while considering what we deem to be a successful outcome, is I believe, prioritising the needs of the service user. As noted in the research by Edgar, Aresti and Cornish (2012: 72), offenders should be

central in the 'decisions which affect them personally'; unfortunately, 'time and time again, prisoners say that what matters is being made to feel valued. You don't achieve that through ticking a box'. Therefore, a successful progression for a service user should include criteria which values less prescriptive and measurable outcomes. These should include, but not be confined to, criteria such as remaining abstinent, rehabilitated, and the positive transition into some form of client-tailored pathway, creative work, deed or act, which provide the service user with a sense of productivity and meaning.

1.3 Purpose of the study

As a researcher and educator with extensive working history in the public and private sector offender services, I will examine, using an autoethnographic methodology, the types of teaching and mentoring the research volunteers consider to be appropriate and of significance in a learning context. I intend to theorise and develop my existing work to develop ETE approaches that are grounded in a relational epistemology (Thayer-Bacon, 2009) where offenders' life experiences are valued. This research supports the role of alternative educational strategies in the quest to improve the life chances of former offenders. Irrespective of the burdening constraints and barriers affecting ETE services, this study will seek to ensure there is equality of relationships between service professional and client.

The research will attempt to advocate other ways of working, which the men will document as helping them to feel respected, cared for, and valued in an educational context. In this research, I have applied the literature and theory of key theoretical and philosophical writers. In particular, I integrate the writings of Carl Rogers, Martin Buber and Victor Frankl, amongst many others, to give an explanatory account of how I relationally work with others. For three years, and using an autoethnographic methodology, I describe in depth, with the help of theory and literature, the empathetic educational relationships developed with some of the men with whom I worked. By the end of the study, the aim will be to have evidenced and theorised other non-conventional teaching strategies, which my research volunteers will have documented as being instrumental in how they learn and proceed into some form of productive and meaningful progression.

In this thesis, productive means the extent to which the men perceive themselves to be contributing, external of their immediate social context, in a way which provides them with a sense of accomplishment, fulfilment, and hope for a better future. Frankl (2004 [1959), believed that, when engaging in creative work, deed or act, we discover meaning and contentment; this theory will be applied when considering the types of ETE progressions for the men in this research. During the inquiry, progression involves the process of moving gradually into some form of ETE pathway; including creative work, deed or act, which they feel provides them with a sense of purpose and productivity. As stated by Frankl (2004 [1959]), being productive and contented through employment, deed or task amounts to much more than any associated financial reward or incentive received. He also believed when undertaking and completing an act through toil and sweat, the mind and body of the subject is aroused, stimulated and engaged. Thus, it is the 'acquisition of economic and social power' (Blustein, 2008: 297), alongside the technical and mental processes of manual and intellectual toil that encourage, empower and provide personal pleasure; productive, industrious and meaningful engagement can foster numerous significant and life-enhancing rewards. Meaningful for the men involves moving into some form of progression in which they harbour a passion and personal interest.

Through biographical accounts, my research volunteers recall the personal, social and economic barriers that adversely shape the life chances of former offenders, and make it difficult for them to live meaningful and productive lives. This study presents an opportunity to broaden our knowledge, and contribute to existing theory and literatures, by way of the longitudinal first-person narrative. This will mean departing from the existing dominant form of objective and statistically presented research that does not recognise the life experience of the offender. I aim to create new knowledge about the strategies and kinds of relationships, which support the men into some form of productive and meaningful work, deed or task. I will not assess the student's learning and development against prescriptive and accreditation measures. For example, the research volunteers will not be expected to achieve formal qualifications or sit exam based assessments or exams. Through the care and guidance they will individually and collectively receive, my hope is that they will find constructive modes of living without having any motivation or desire to reoffend. This, I believe, will help them to perceive their lives as being more contented and productive. However, Bennett

(2019) highlights that irrespective of the research intentions, for some former offenders, education and employment pertains minimal importance; unemployment, resistance towards conventional modes of living and even idleness, are considered acceptable within certain communities.

1.4 Research motivation

After experiencing imprisonment myself in 2002, followed by ten years working as a tutor and mentor for youth and adult offender services, in 2014 I set up Hope Education and Support Services. This Community Interest Company (CIC hereafter) was set up to deliver an alternative pre-employment/education programme for ex-offenders, drug and alcohol service users; this was welcoming of any others from the wider community. In February 2015, when starting the inquiry, I decided to accept the challenge, not as a Ph.D. student, it was somewhat more personal. When incarcerated, I became enchanted by education; this life-changing and productive period provided me with a sense of hope, optimism and belonging, and gave me the strength and inspiration never to offend again.

As a mature student, and as somebody who never felt they belonged or had a place in conventional teaching structures, I was fortunate enough to meet, and be encouraged by the actions of one practitioner. Howard, my psychology teacher, treated me with such care and benevolence, something I had not previously experienced in education. Because of this connection, and through the empathetic nature of the relations which developed, I viewed learning from a different perspective, and this gave me the confidence to excel in academia. Towards the latter stages of my access to higher education, something inside began to change, a belief and optimism never felt before began to manifest, my life was never to be the same. Through these encounters, the magnitude of these life-affirming moments was to ignite something most unexpected, and from this moment forth, I was to begin a new life.

As highlighted, for over a decade, I had worked in different private sector roles as a teacher/tutor working with disadvantaged and hard to reach clients. How I worked with former offenders had on many occasions brought me into conflict with previous organisations and former colleagues. Often, I would find myself at odds with the ethos of ETE offender services. For example, it was generally expected that once the individual had achieved some form of accreditation, they could then be discarded from the programme and sent back into

their local community. I felt that the time allocated to service users was insufficient for meaningful change. As somebody who passionately cares, this contested what I believed former offenders required when attending ETE provisions and services. Some of these people had not engaged with any form of learning for years, even decades. Due to the disparity in life experiences, I believed former colleagues were, in the main, unaware of the negative impact these methods, attitudes and practices of education were having on some of the service users.

Following my departure from Crime Reduction Project (CRP hereafter), I could no longer ignore the gnawing dissatisfaction I felt, and I knew I needed to act on what I regarded were morally unjust systems and methods of working with former offenders. Therefore, the actual starting point began with myself; I was thus the nucleus of the inquiry, and everything else would stem and resonate from my own experiences. Educating my research volunteers in a manner which values and regards them as my human equal, my pedagogy arises from the personal conviction that irrespective of their past, everybody should be given the opportunity to be taught in a learning environment, which promotes care, understanding and compassion. I believe education can make the difference between further offending and living a more productive and meaningful existence. According to Lietaer (2016), positive relationships are founded on qualities such as authenticity, genuineness and acceptance. Never forgetting my own past, I carried into this inquiry a pledge to remain true to myself. Therefore, in my work with former offenders, it was imperative that I compassionately and sensitively approached how I engaged with the men; initially, service users have a tendency to objectify relationships with service professionals.

My research questions are:

- What are the personal, social and economic barriers which affect the life chances of former offenders, with a history of substance abuse, and make it difficult for them to live meaningful and productive lives?

- Establishing an alternative learning culture, how can I create, evaluate and refine strategies to contribute to improving the life chances of former offenders, with a

history of substance abuse, helping them into some form of productive and meaningful progression, and support others in doing the same?

1.5 Research design

This research has used autoethnography as the primary methodology. A more recent strand of qualitative research inquiry, it is now adopted in various mainstream disciplines, such as nursing (Girst, 2013). As commented by LeRous (2017), autoethnographies are often mixed genres, at times appearing chaotic and anomalous; they do remain an extremely debated and contested methodology. According to Jolliffe and Farrington (2007) traditional research methods and methodologies are inadequate when analysing social events and phenomena, which are multifarious, complicated and difficult to quantify and theorise. Furthermore, as observed by Mizzi (2010), when researching those defined as 'other', it is important not to negate the multifaceted depth of life experience in the pursuit of new knowledge; qualitative researchers 'have been trained to privilege this voice, to ''free'' the authentic voice from whatever restrains it from coming into being, from relating the truth about the self' (Jackson and Mazzei, 2015: 306).

Kimberley, Nicholls and Will (2009) suggest that due to the inadequate methods and methodologies used to research offenders, data is often reinterpreted and rewritten by academics and scholars; narrative and discourse loses its authentic and insightful essence. Therefore, from a research perspective, offender literature and theory remain a source of theoretical intrigue and research contention (Jewkes, 2011). During my own literature review, I found there was a scarcity of research and literature that has generated rich relational narrative explanations and evidence-based knowledge concerning what strategies, approaches or working practices best support offenders in an educational capacity; the importance of the relationship between the researcher and participant also appear to be under-researched. As emphasised by Grimwood and Berman (2012: 47), offender ETE programmes have so far proved inadequate in their understanding of 'what works' with regards to educating offenders. Overall, findings suggest that positive dialogical relationships formed between service professional and client, would be one way of working more effectively (Grimwood and Berman, 2012; Wright, 2013).

In 2014, whilst still a doctoral student at Hope University in Liverpool, I decided to write my autobiography. Reflecting on my earliest memories of childhood, and through extensive reading, I started locating and theoretically explaining my own experiences of offending within the wider social and political context in which my offending behaviour took place. Leading on from this, I then, with the help of my clients, and working in an educational capacity, helped them also to appreciate the extent to which similar personal, social and economic barriers have affected their lives. To coincide with this, I started a reflective diary on my practice, scrutinising each aspect and facet of how I worked and interacted with my clients.

Using my story, and two in-depth client stories of my work/relationships with other men, collated over a three to four year period, this research will investigate ways of working with former offenders in a learning context. An additional four research volunteers agreed to contribute to the inquiry; the data will be used alongside the two main research narratives. Using a technique of 'systematic sociological introspection' (Ellis, 1991: 32), modes of interpretive data can be collated. Accordingly, such material from 'self and others are useful for understanding the lived experience of others' (Ellis, 1991: 26); the reader is invited to enter into the experiences with the people in the stories. She further argues that 'introspection can generate interpretive materials from self and others useful for understanding the lived experience of emotions' (Ellis, 1991: 23). By examining the extensive written and verbal narrative from the research volunteers, this study offers an insight into the complex world of my clients, who, by tradition, are silenced in academic texts and literature (Donmoyer, 2012).

Through this same narrative, I was also able to isolate, for further analysis, the structural and organisational barriers, which influenced how I worked, and which in turn, negatively affected the service user. The research aims to ensure the voice of the research volunteer is listened to and respected; this should be a fundamental entitlement for any research participant or cohort (Stickle, 2013). As recommended in the research by Braggins and Talbot (2003), titled 'Time to Learn: Prisoners' Views on Prison Education', giving a voice to offenders on their ideas about how to develop education, is essential for productive offender engagement.

Not all of the men in this research had attended primary or secondary schooling. Therefore, I knew that by asking all those who partook to contribute through written narratives, this would have for some, resulted in them not being able to participate in the study. Due to this, I felt the best means of ensuring the equal contribution of each research volunteer was to use oral narrative as my primary research data. This way, the research volunteers could articulate in their own words, the extent, if any, I was influencing their lives through the unfolding educational process. As told by Attard, (2012: 169), the dialogue will present my research volunteers with the opportunity to give 'meaning to their lives through the stories they tell'. However, when possible, I did encourage my clients to contribute using written narrative. Although this was not a generalised expectation, some of the men did begin narrating their life stories and learning experiences. For example, Mark, one of the two in-depth stories narrated, took it upon himself to start writing his autobiography; some of the material was later used to inform the final thesis.

1.6 Scope and limitations

This research took place in Bradford, West Yorkshire. During the early stages of the exploration, I was still employed as a teacher and mentor for CRP. However, following my resignation from CRP, the education was, for the most part, conducted at the Offender Rehabilitation Project (ORP hereafter). The project was funded by myself, and I was responsible for supplying teaching materials such as flip chart paper, markers, pens, writing paper and any other additional resources. All the research volunteers in the study were male, and they were between 18 and 65 years of age. Moreover, all of the men have been raised and continue to live in the working-class community of Bradford in West Yorkshire, with English being the primary language. Apart from one of the men, all the research volunteers have only ever been employed in manual and physical employment. According to Jenkins (2018), many families in Bradford experience adverse socioeconomic living conditions. He also indicated that one-third of adults living in Bradford are out of work, it has the country's youngest population, the highest levels of child poverty, and 40% of the city's wards are in the poorest 20% in Britain.

Over a three to four year period, we met once or twice a week. Besides this, there were also weekly one-to-one mentoring sessions with individual group members. Additionally, for two years, twice a month, we arranged group outings; the location of the excursions was discussed and agreed upon by the group. Due to the informal structure of the inquiry, research volunteers, agreed, when convenient, to take part in Dictaphone conversations. Data was gathered without pre-planned questions or schedules. In this study, purposive sampling was the primary sampling method used. In addition, snowball sampling was also used for the recruitment of other volunteers; these individuals were not part of my primary thesis cohort. By allowing relationships to evolve naturally with the volunteers, they were encouraged to express themselves honestly and openly. The research focused on personally significant experiences, and pivotal moments in life, including those in learning and education, which often have little value or go unnoticed in offender research and study. According to Donmoyer (2012), the aim of qualitative investigation should be to capture the complexity, depth and richness of the men's lives, without the intention of diluting its gritty and authentic essence. Therefore, this study will not be including any quantitative data or statistics. As suggested by Overcash (2003), by supporting my volunteers to take ownership of how they contributed to this research, they became the owner and author of their story, and thus assumed the role of the narrator.

Although the two in-depth stories provide the majority of research data, a large volume of the narrative was also taken from the group Dictaphone conversations to counter challenge, compare with, and reinforce my research findings. The duration of taped conversations varied, the time allocated to each research volunteer or cohort discussion was dependent on the client[s], they decided the start and finishing time of each taped interview. Moreover, the men were free to stop the discussions at any time; they were aware that their involvement was optional, there was no forced participation, and they were free to leave at any time; this included withdrawing from the research project.

The research volunteers provide an insight into what life is like when residing in a desolate existence, without the resources or opportunity to live happily or productively. They describe in detail the personal, social and economic barriers, which affect the life chances of former offenders. They portray a life of meaninglessness, and when awaking each day, they depicted

their reality as being nullified and depressing. Because of fragmented community and family structures, the men recall how they became marginalised from mainstream values at an early age; through extensive narrative, they recollect their feelings of alienation and discontent (Sutherland, 2011). My clients talk truthfully and candidly about their gradual movement away from the crimes, attitudes and outlooks that defined to a large extent, their teenage years and early adulthood. Desperate to discover some meaning in life, and with little hope or reassurance their circumstances would ever improve, they spoke about how this directed them towards and initiated their involvement in undesired social behaviours such as gang involvement and violence. The two men whose experiences I report in-depth, talk passionately about lifelong addictions and communicate comprehensively in chapters four, six and seven, their viewpoints on subculture participation.

Every research volunteer who contributed to the investigation was a service user and former offenders. In addition, every volunteer had previously been engaged with drug and alcohol misuse programmes, and had been involved as a service client with other ETE provisions. This study did not confine itself to one specific research setting. Dictaphone conversations with the men took place in numerous other locations, such as in the fields and farm area where some of the manual work took place. The focus of these interviews varied, they were not pre-planned or pre-scripted. However, more generally, the aim of the research was to:

- Work with the men over a substantial period to isolate critical aspects of my approach to work and teaching, which were regarded by the clients as supporting them in a learning setting.

- Gain greater insight into their life histories, and understand in more depth the wider social and political factors, which they considered to have contributed to their offending status.

1.7 Thesis outline

Chapter 2 is a condensed summary of my autobiography. Recalling my experiences as a young boy raised in a traditional working class Manchester community, I reflect on the arduous and challenging nature of my childhood. Socialised in a single parent family, and through

numerous community and parental factors, I found myself being drawn into offending, not so much for any financial incentives, but because the friendship groups provided the only available means of care and support. I also explain the impact of being mistreated, ignored and unfairly judged by my teachers. Early on in secondary education, I discuss the long-term consequences of having my learning aspirations squashed; those in authority silenced my voice. Escaping from an abusive and fractious relationship with my mother, I left my home before finishing school. Underachieving in formal education, for the next twelve years, I recollect my downward spiral; extracts from my autobiography in chapter two explores this period. Following my release from prison, I reflect on my return to education, and narrate how one teacher was to change my life forever.

Chapter 3 examines the methodological context and considerations of the inquiry. It begins by detailing a concise theoretical overview of quantitative research methods and paradigms. Next, I discuss the advantages of qualitative approaches, and refer to some of the fundamental concepts and theories. Developing my argument, I explain why it was essential to articulate the uniqueness of each research volunteer's life history, in such a way as not to dilute or change the narrative's original emphasis or meaning. Through the richness and evocative nature of their stories, there emerge accounts of similar social and political struggles. As observed by Holmes and Sealock (2019: 94), 'stories act as webs that bind us together, tear us apart and help us to understand the significance of the strands of life'. Moving on to discuss the limitations of ethnography, I outline the importance of my role in the research; this taking me beyond the borders and perimeters of ethnographic inquiry. Towards the end of the chapter, I comprehensively defend my decision to use autoethnography.

Chapter 4 begins with a summary of my previous roles as a service professional. Following this, I examine the changing political rationale of ETE programmes, questioning to what extent the target driven rigidity of these provisions are disadvantaging the service professional and user. Then, I recollect the events which influenced my decision to leave my former employer CRP, and establish Hope Education and Support Services (CIC). Drawing on literature from Illich (1970 [2002]), Freire (1996) and Wright (2013), I argue that offender ETE programmes are functioning and prioritising profit, finance and efficient accreditation turnover, instead of

tending to the less visible and hidden subjective issues of the individual. Due to the regimented and the mechanistic functioning of offender ETE provisions, service users have now become a commodity (Illich, 1970 [2002]). It can thus be suggested that the ethos and values of these structures are now at odds and in contrast with the client's wellbeing; the quality, nature and depth of learning relationships between the professional and service client are adversely affected.

Chapter 5 is a theoretical, political and social analysis. Dating back to the 1980s, I discuss the complex, contradictory and ineffective policies, perspectives and ideologies which successive governments have sanctioned and implemented to tackle steadily rising crime rates. Leading on from this, I examine the success of more recent government ETE interventions and initiatives. Although the primary aim of these provisions was to tackle and reduce reoffending, I argue that their key objectives are primarily focused more towards securing government funding through the attainment of mass accreditation. The impact this has on the practitioner's ability to teach, the nature of relationships developed, and the disadvantages for the service client are thoroughly examined. The chapter explains the unjust and misrepresented social perceptions of offenders, and highlights the struggle they encounter when attempting to access employment opportunities. As noted by Brewer (2017), these inherent social prejudices often go unnoticed and unchallenged. From this, there follows a theoretical overview of subculture theory and a rationale for subculture participation. I reflect, drawing on my own experiences of offending, on the limitations and weaknesses of modern and postmodern literature.

Chapters 6 and 7 present two in-depth stories, which took place over a three to four year period. The people in this research contribute an extensive insight into their life histories, reasons for offending and substance misuse. They articulate in their own words their previous experiences of education, and recall the morally unjust and often counter-productive practices employed by other service professions and teachers. The chapter examines and theorises the unfolding nature of relationships between the research volunteers and myself; the influence this had on their learning is evaluated and theorised. For example, they speak of feeling respected in dialogue (Buber, 1947 [2014]), and valued in relationships (Rogers, 1961). Through the unfolding narrative, they report feeling more hopeful and optimistic

(Frankl (2004 [1959]); this was something they had not previously experienced through service user engagement.

Chapter 8 provides a comprehensive analysis and explanation of research findings. Looking back to our childhood, teenage years and early adulthood, we speak honestly and openly about the impact of paternal love, loss and rejection; the essential themes that connected the lives of the men have been isolated for discussion and analysis. Reliving their experiences of depression and inability to find happiness, the men recall their gradual decline; narrated are powerful and insightful accounts of subculture participation and substance misuse. The men talk about the kinds of strategies that best support them in an educational capacity. In particular, they speak of the learning and intrinsic value when being treated in a humane and dignified manner. Drawing on my research reflective diary, and supported by the men's narratives, I describe Mark and Craig's transition into a form of progression they perceived as meaningful and productive. Through these different stages of the client's journey, I describe and theorise how my own past informed and guided my working attitudes and actions throughout this investigation.

Chapter 9 concludes and examines the research, what does it reveal and what strategies and ways of working have been evidenced as being successful when educating former offenders. In general, how do we make education more inclusive and accessible to former offenders? What recommendations and proposals should further research focus?

1.8 Limitations

Every research volunteer who took part in the investigation were ex-offenders, some of whom had alcohol and drug problems; social class, level of education and gender were not seen as relevant in the selection of volunteers. During the research, clients were free to leave at any time, and they were under no obligation to attend or contribute. Without exception, all of my research volunteers had previously participated in other ETE provisions in West Yorkshire. Although the central aim of the research was to educate former offenders, most of the people who attended had a history of substance misuse. In general, my research volunteers had numerous issues, which made it difficult for them to find and secure employment. These included mental health and learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, and low levels of numeracy and literacy.

The aim of the inquiry is not to validate or prove a prior hypothesis statistically. Therefore, the findings will not be generalised to other social groupings (McGrath and Johnson, 2003). Instead, my research will provide the reader with a unique and authentic insight into the complex social phenomena under investigation. I will narrate, with a view to further understanding, the types of teaching, learning and modes of working that best support former offenders located in a specific learning community, participating in a distinct teaching context. Another possible limitation is the sample size; in total, the life histories and learning experiences of two research volunteers will be documented. Therefore, as explained by Kapoulas and Miljana (2012), a general methodological weakness of this thesis is claiming the reliability of research findings. As outlined by Kimberley, Nicholls and Will (2009), there is, with every form of qualitative research, some element of researcher bias in the manner the researcher approaches, undertakes and interprets the data. In response to this, in chapter three, I thoroughly make clear my rationale for employing an autoethnographic methodology.

Furthermore, throughout this study, I narrate and examine my feelings of fragility, bias and prejudice carefully. In agreement with Ellis and Bochner (2006), I believe this adds both believability and rigour to my research data and findings. Le Rous (2017: 196-200) writes of the challenges and the difficulties of claiming believability and rigour in the course of autoethnographic inquiry. In her analysis, she notes the importance of identifying the goal[s] of the research, and assessing and measuring these against 'the criteria to determine overall research trustworthiness and legitimacy'. Moreover, Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011: 282) believe that credibility and reliability should be assessed against questions which ask, 'could the narrator have had the experiences described, given available "factual evidence"? Does the narrator believe that this is actually what happened to her or him'?

Due to the complex background and lifestyles of the research volunteers, there are external research factors that may affect their involvement or contribution. For example, reoffending rates for men and women who are unemployed remain at significantly high levels (Stacey, 2014). Also, due to the difficulties of overcoming substance misuse, and its association with mental illness, my research volunteers could potentially relapse and remove themselves from the study at any time (Chorlton and Smith, 2016). Research by Roberts and Ossel (2017: 18) estimated that around 70% of individuals who access or are referred to the criminal justice

system have mental health issues; often, they are 'likely to overlap with other issues such as drug and alcohol misuse, homelessness adding complexity to cases'. According to the Office for National Statistics, 'nearly two-thirds of sentenced male prisoners (63 percent) and two-fifths of female sentenced prisoners (39 percent) admit to hazardous drinking' (Prison Reform Trust, 2004: 1). Furthermore, as highlighted in the research by Blome, Shields and Verdieck (2009), they found there was an increased risk of relapse for men and women who had criminal convictions, and had a diagnosis for a mental health issues; early teenage drinking and time spent in the care system were also noted as being important relapse indicators and triggers.

1.9 The significance of the Study

This research is significant because it advances on the statement by Owens (2008-09), Grimwood and Berman (2012) and Wright (2013) who agree that current ETE offender' provisions are failing. As such, for much of the research which does exist, the offenders overall contribution, thoughts, feelings and perspectives are, for the most part, absent from the process; their voices are given little importance in the frameworks and theory of offender education.

Before starting the inquiry, I attempted to source research and literature which bridge the gap between politicians, policy and the authentic life histories of offenders. Although there is an abundance of offender research examining the need to reduce reoffending, there is usually a lack of insight and substance; thought, feeling and offender perspective rarely feature extensively in these studies. Generally, I have found there to be a scarcity of research which details the narrative and voice of the individual or cohort in any great depth. For example, when reading the work of Thomas and Hebenton (2013), titled 'Dilemmas and consequences of prior criminal record: a criminological perspective from England and Wales' [see also, Brown's (2011); Wooditch et al. (2014); Barry (2013); Borrill (2013), and Ferguson et al. (2011)]; my general conclusions are that, throughout these writings and research, the reader is left searching and wanting for detailed offender narrative and insight. Therefore, what offenders require regarding educational, vocational and practitioner support when

attempting to improve their lives is still primarily left unanswered; little hope in improving the life chances of current and former offenders is evidenced.

The opportunity to describe the complexity of change is often missed, the cycle of how offenders transform over time, and its subsequent influence on recidivism rates is overlooked. Moreover, the relational impact and importance of broader social, educational and political variables are also negated. One reason for this is detailed by Wooditch, Tang and Taxman (2014) who noted that many features of the offender's life are too complex to address during the research process. Furthermore, inadequate methodologies, agendas, time restraints and focused research objectives, are just some of the many variables and biases that contribute to the shortage of current knowledge and understanding.

Jolliffe and Farrington (2007), when summarising the data from seven out of the eighteen studies, concluded that offenders who received mentoring support while incarcerated are less likely to reoffend; they cite there to be intrinsically rewarding benefits for both mentor and client. They also stated that successful mentoring programmes were those in which the mentors provided an increased amount of time interacting and forming relations with the client. However, the individual contributions of each mentor, educator and researcher are somewhat elusive; the data appears muddled, with many broad generalisations made. Leaving many questions unanswered, a greater and more in-depth research analysis, unburdened by financial and time restraints, would, I believe, have far-reaching social and political benefits. Overall, my conclusion is that what we have, is research which only tells half a tale, the wholeness of the relationship is not explored in the required depth; the intricate 'moments' and 'movements' (Rogers, 1961) of sensitive and complex offender research inquiry is negated through other research demands and agendas. In general, research strongly supports that relationships play a central role in the success of offender services and ETE programmes (Wright, 2013). Unfortunately, the dearth of first-person narrative, deconstructing and articulating essential characteristics of these interactions, continues to elude researchers and educators.

As demonstrated in the above article by Kavanagh and Borrill (2013), although we can appreciate the importance of care, compassion and time when working with former and

current offenders, we are rarely taken beyond the perimeters of the traditional threshold. Due to the research and methodological shortcomings, we are left to draw our own conclusions. One study, which did extensively include the client's life history and biography was Maggie Atkinson's (2011) research titled 'What's Your Story'- 'Young offenders' insights into tackling youth crime and its causes'. However, once again, I was left disappointed, it lacked heart and soul. In my opinion, researchers and educators fall short when attempting to engage with the process fully, the narrative does not capture the authentic voice of the offender. The research conducted by Rogowski (2014: 7), in the aftermath of the London, 2011 riots, raises awareness of the need to 'build relationships with young offenders', and others who commit crime. For him, this process requires the practitioner to be 'genuine, warm and empathetic'. More recently, Kirby (2016: 82) explored the volunteering opportunities for young adults with criminal records. Findings highlighted the advantages to achieving 'softer' milestones. Outcomes such as 'developing a routine, increasing self-esteem and learning new skills', were highly valued by participants. The building of positive relationships, 'promoting inclusivity', tailored opportunities and progressions catering to the wellbeing, needs and personal interests of the individual, and 'going at a pace of the young adult', were documented as supporting good practice. However, in the main, there continues to be a lack of research generating new knowledge based on detailed narrative explanations of offenders who attend alternative ETE provisions.

The original contribution to the knowledge generated from this study will depend on my ability to convey the richness and depth of insight required regarding the emerging educational relationships. Moreover, in contrast to the above data, literature and research, this study will deconstruct the nature and complexity of relationships in an educational capacity. Therefore, I will narrate detailed and authentic life histories, portraying what offenders genuinely need and want; their voice, thoughts and feeling will be prioritised. Thus, an exploration of effective strategies and ways of working will form the basis of this investigation. Rather than being left to draw inaccurate conclusions and inferences, the strength and meaningfulness of relationships will expand on what I consider inadequate and insufficient offender investigations. Moreover, with the freedom to leave the process at any time, the decision to participate over numerous years, will in itself associate credence to a way of working which has the potential to educate and inform other practitioners; I would

extend this to organisations, politicians and policymakers. Furthermore, by removing traditional power relations, and by commencing without any foresight of what will manifest, it will, in my opinion, offer a unique perspective, when compared to current research.

This study theorises key strategies and provides an in-depth understanding of how best to work in an educational capacity with former offenders. In achieving this, I have incorporated and applied throughout, influential theorists and literature as a means of building and articulating further on current research, literature and theory. Therefore, by the end of the inquiry, this study intends to make an original contribution to knowledge. It will demonstrate, theorise, examine and raise awareness of the following:

1. Through this extensive educational process, I will attempt to demonstrate how the individual life chances of the former offenders and drug and alcohol service users who partake in the study can be improved. Moreover, they with my support will begin to move towards a more contented mode of living, without feeling the need to reoffend. This is in spite of research and literature, which offers little hope that their life chances can be improved (Prison Reform Trust, 2014).

2. The broader social and political significance of this study. Due to the methodology to be used, research volunteers will explain in their own words, and from their perspective, the types of social happenings and wider structural factors, which they believe have influenced their path into offending, drug and alcohol abuse. As highlighted by Jewkes (2011), it is the lack of knowledge and understanding which continues to isolate, marginalise and treat offenders as second-class citizens. As indicated by the Prison Reform Trust (2014), if prisoner interventions are to work, there needs to be greater evidence-based research and data.

3. As highlighted in the research by the Prison Reform Trust (2004) and more recently by the Ministry of Justice (2014), the quality and lack of education, resulting in poor educational achievement, plays a crucial role in initial offending and later life criminality. Prisoners who take any form of learning activity following release do 'have a significantly lower

reoffending rate on release from prison (proven one year re-offending rate is 34% compared with 43% for prisoner non-learners)' (Ministry of Justice, 2017: 3). This research will evidence how adult ETE offender provisions can become more accessible to those who repeatedly and statistically fail in primary and secondary education. Moreover, to what extent can my findings be best used and applied more extensively to organisational and individual practices?

4. At this moment in time, we are no nearer breaking the cycle of offending. For example, in 2017, over 37,000 people entered prison to serve a sentence of less than a year, and 'latest figures show that nearly two-thirds will reoffend within a year of release' (Prison Reform Trust, 2018: 1). In agreement with Marak (2015: 1), one political advantage of this investigation is that 'research of such a personal nature might give us insight into problems often overlooked in culture'. To what extent can this study inform and assist government and politicians in helping to support former offenders? Is there scope and potential to bridge the void in worldviews that I believe exists between offending communities and senior political figures?

5. Last, but most importantly, how as a society can we be more caring, compassionate and tolerant towards the offender population; what can we learn from this inquiry? As detailed by Haslam (2006: 252), all too often, 'the denial of full humanness to others, and the cruelty and suffering that accompany it is an all–too familiar phenomenon'. Ikaheimo and Laitinen (2007) remind us that being human is something very special indeed, therefore, despite the differences, which exist within and amongst individuals, is there anything more important than the fact we are all human? Furthermore, independent of our less important similarities, 'we are both holders of some basic rights or other moral (or normative) statuses' (Ikaheimo and Laitinen, 2007: 8).

Chapter 2
Autobiography

Chapter two is a concise and condensed autobiography. Selected from a much more detailed and lengthy account, I have extracted what I consider to be pivotal moments and encounters in my life, which I can assert with relative surety, have been instrumental in my ontology, view of the world and current pedagogy. As will be evidenced in the course of this study, they have determined, shaped and become inseparable from how I work and teach. The structure of the chapter will be as follows:

My early childhood, including my time spent living in the care system; I recall the chaos and early challenges of feeling powerless and silenced. I recollect the trauma associated with relocating to a new home. My thoughts move to my first experiences of a brutal education system. I discuss the care and kindness of one teacher, who was the kind of practitioner and human being that I believe every child should have the pleasure to be taught by. Progressing into secondary school, the consequence of becoming disengaged from education, and my gradual introduction to deviant subculture settings is examined.

Moving into adulthood, I communicate and express my dissatisfaction with an unhappy and unfulfilled existence; I narrate my steady decline when confronted with alienation and social rejection. The period leading up to my eventual incarceration is explored. While incarcerated, I describe and recollect my reintroduction back into learning and education; I detail the subsequent life-changing significance of this experience.

Also explored are my lifelong challenges with depression. The attempts to mask and escape life, which I considered being oppressive, and the absence of happiness and contentment through an unfulfilled existence is discussed.

I will conclude the chapter by articulating the life-changing impact of one teacher. An apprehensive and affected student, the immense significance of this learning relationship is explored.

Raised in a single parent family household, my mother was unemployed and my father nonexistent for the majority of my early years. Located in a traditional working-class

community, the absence of a male role model and the general poverty were circumstances that affected nearly all families within the community. From being born, I was socialised in a culture that saw offending as the norm, although deviancy as a practice was neither encouraged nor condoned by parents and siblings. Moreover, I was also exposed to the perils of an unstable and volatile family and community context, where education was seen to be unimportant. When reflecting on my experiences as a young boy, learning was something that I dreaded, primarily due to the dysfunctional social surroundings in which I was socialised. Expectedly, there was a strong correlation between low socioeconomic conditions and educational underachievement for many families residing in this close-knit working class community; although some did prove the exception to this trend. At a young age, I would describe myself as somebody who had already begun to detach from primary support networks, including my family. As an eight-year-old boy, I can remember questioning the worth of my own life, contemplating whether having a life so unfulfilled was worth occupying; this process remained a mostly private affair.

Following the initial breakdown of my family structure, we were rehoused by the social services into a women's protection home. Situated in the Stockport area of Cheshire, I recall its dreary and depressing interior. Due to the inadequate and limited room space, rooms were closely positioned together; thus, we unavoidably became a snug family unit. Notwithstanding the cramped and overcrowded living arrangements, we rarely quarrelled; we recognised and appreciated the advantages of living in harmony. As best we could, we functioned collectively in daunting and disquieting surroundings. Notably, mothers were also very protecting of their children. They were sheltered at all costs; this reinforced the negative awareness and segregation which existed in these frightening environments. Regrettably, I believe that had they grasped the advantages of togetherness, which connected them in their everyday struggles, it is not inconceivable or beyond reason to assume that some may have embraced, through unavoidable and adverse relationships, their negative circumstances. Mostly, we accepted what we had, and never questioned too profoundly the immediate and long-term implications; we were thankful and appreciative for warmth and shelter. From my perspective, I never regarded myself as a victim nor did I ever feel I deserved better; although I was aware of my predicament.

When looking back, the fact we all stayed together throughout these bleak periods was of crucial importance. With regards to my twin sister and other siblings, I am not sure how they recollect and explain these tempestuous periods. To this day, they remain undiscussed. There are no contented memories or gratifying moments that emerge from my time spent living there. I was rendered powerless, and looking back now, the hand that I was dealt was extremely complex and ambiguous; how this is embraced or rejected is irrelevant, influences existed beyond the control of the subject.

When narrating my autobiography, I came to realise just how important empathic relational dialogue was for the residents of the home. Absorbed in the moment, mothers would recite their stories; this unique relational mode of communicative therapy helped foster care, warmth and understanding. In contrast to this, the voice or opinion of children was seldom taken into account, our thoughts and feelings largely dismissed and negated; we lived through our experiences in silence. These early traumatic memories remain repressed within me through their associated hurt and regret; the ongoing feelings of pain and grief continues to manifest through 'bodily and psychological disturbances' (Engel, 1977: 387).

When returning to the family home, nothing had changed, daily life resuming, everything was back to normal. Over the coming months, my mother's mental health had once again deteriorated. Following a professional assessment, it was decided that she needed specialist care and support; she was taken from the family home to receive the appropriate medical treatment. Immediately after this, we were examined by the doctor and sent to a children's home. Without time to think, we were separated and driven to our new temporary homes. Although the reasons for this were never discussed, I was visibly aware her behaviour had become more unpredictable and reckless.

On withdrawing from periods of immense uncertainty, I encountered and discovered the therapeutic benefits of silence and solitude. It became my coping strategy for managing adverse conditions; as an adult, I continue to find comfort and spiritual well-being in this ritual. From around five years of age, I developed a severe speech impediment, which I believe was correlated to the breakdown of my family structure; this continued through my teenage

years. When trying to assert and discover myself as a teenager, my inability to communicate ensured that my views, values and beliefs were never listened to or acknowledged.

The transitional period, stemming from being a young boy to a teenager, perceived as necessary for personal exploration, freedom and growth in individual identity, I can only describe as muddled and confusing (Stein, 2006). When leaving the home, the relationships fostered between myself and the other children ceased. Although we had bonded through the adversity of our surroundings, our paths were never to cross ever again. However, in the here and now, we had connected through vulnerability and the overshadowing uncertainty; we required a sense of belonging and attachment. Aware that we were different from other families, we understood that residing in such depressing places was anything but normal. For reasons I am still not sure, I can never recall yearning the love of my father, although with each passing day, other emotional and psychological challenges never failed to present themselves. As emphasised, dialogue amongst mothers typically revolved around the hardships of life, and in particular, their unyielding and negative perceptions of men; their ontology concerning the source of their plight was understandably distorted and clouded.

When reflecting back to this period, I was able to temporarily quell the impact of these unavoidable and uncertain fears through various coping strategies. For example, by placing these emotional and thought provoking situations into a box and temporarily putting the lid down, experiences were thus nullified; they were, however, to manifest and prove significant in adulthood. In these supported homes, tensions were often at boiling point; this complex and emotional setting meant that conflict and animosity struggled daily to find harmony with solidarity and togetherness. When disagreements did occur, verbal and physical altercations tended to be excessive, months of pent-up frustrations, resentment and anger would erupt, and petty incidents and situations were excessively scrutinised and analysed; scenarios were often distorted and taken out of context.

One example of a dispute which went beyond the usual tit for tat bickering is when my mother became involved in a heated exchange of opinions with one of the other residents. Temporarily asked to leave the kitchen area, my mother was subsequently scalded with a jug of hot water; we never discussed this situation or had any indication of the reasons why it

happened. Throughout my childhood, I was unable to relate to a home life which was conventional, and void of mishap and misfortune, damage or disruption; it has since affected personal relationships throughout the course of my adult life. As a result of trial and mostly error, I have become more self-aware on how I approach and engage in relationships. Although trusting relationships in recent times have proved possible, they do continue to remain problematic and challenging in a wider social context.

On leaving the care setting, we eventually settled in the community of Levenshulme, Manchester. After a while, we acquired stability and structure, it actually felt like home. The street had a fantastic contrast of personalities and characters, and there was the feeling that neighbours genuinely cared; an endearing sense of solidarity bonded the entire street. As far back as I can remember, I viewed education as a brutal and uncaring institution, the knowledge imparted from teacher to pupil was delivered in a formal, objective and scripted manner, the rigid structure and environment promoting hierarchal fear, not warmth and wellbeing. The beatings which occurred for boys like us, the pleasure and curiosity they revelled in when watching us fear their brutality, was never designed to welcome or embrace young boys like me.

I would describe primary education as memorable for the relationships formed with two teachers, one negative and one positive. I was fortunate enough to have been taught by Miss Clemmons, who was a lovely, sincere and thoughtful teacher. Although my personal and family life had been turbulent, Miss Clemmons understood this and as best she could, made me feel valued in her class. She was also aware that I had a severe speech impediment, and recognised the pressure and anxiety this was causing me. I could feel her warmth and affection, not just for me, but also for all the other pupils under her guidance. Pertaining a special and unique teaching style, she had a lovely smile, and when she spoke, it was in a velvety soft tone; it contained passion and sincerity. Miss Clemmons was the type of teacher who, in my view, every child should have the pleasure of being taught by.

When reading the register out in the morning, she would encouragingly and patiently wait, regardless of however long it took me to pronounce her name. By allowing me this time, I was part of an inclusive learning environment; this also helped me to develop my self-esteem and

confidence. Smiling and waiting patiently, she refrained from ever making an issue of things; she would carry on taking the other names and return back to me at the end. At this time in my life, it was only one of a few occasions when I can recall interactions of warmth and compassion. There was never any need for Miss Clemmons to shout or even raise her voice; her gentle and calm teaching approach was the bedrock of her pedagogy. All the other pupils, I believe, warmed to her, they could feel her genuineness. Aware of my disrupted home life, she would often ask me to stay behind after class; together we would discuss non-learning related aspects. The dialogue was never uncomfortable, and how I felt always seemed to be of value to her; during this time in my life, this gave me a sense of belonging.

Completing primary education, my secondary school was located in Gorton, Manchester. Progressing into my second year, something happened, amidst all the chaos, I actually enjoyed learning, and unexpectedly began to accept its archaic traditions; I felt empowered and inspired to learn. Keen to progress, I hesitantly approached the head of my year and explained that the work being provided was not challenging enough. I recall stressing to him that in my opinion, I would be able to cope with more demanding learning. Part way through the conversation, it suddenly dawned on me that my teacher was just not interested in what I had to say, neither was he remotely concerned with what I thought or wanted from education. Disappointingly, he felt it unnecessary to either reassure or appropriately respond to my request for a more demanding and challenging learning experience; I was left feeling deeply embarrassed.

This placed me in an awkward position. Did I continue trying to progress and further myself, or accept that my remaining years in learning would be unproductive and academically unfulfilled? Looking back, I wanted to learn; it inspired and made me feel like I was somebody, as opposed to just another no-hoper. What I needed was somebody to show me support, guidance and encouragement. I yearned for just one person to invest a little time, to reassure me that amongst all the chaos, which seemed to define my life, they believed in me, and if required, would be there for me. I was lost, and believe had education been more embracing of this complex period, it would have provided me with the stability I sought; this was most definitely lacking in my home life. With limited confidence, I found it difficult to approach those in authority. Such rejection does continue to resonate in the most extraordinary ways,

and in the years and decades that have followed, this singular experience has influenced how I view education.

When your experiences confirm and clarify your oppressive value in education, and when your feelings and concerns are dismissed as being irrelevant, this failure becomes embodied; and it resonates in many complex ways. In order to balance and manage the impact of such rejection, I was desperate to attach myself to something tangible and positive in my immediate and wider social context. More than this, I longed for somebody to invest time, to believe in me, to relate and interact with my needs, to nurture and care about my uniqueness. When you either have actively sought to disrupt your learning and that of others, unmasking and baring oneself, relationally or subjectively to this long-established institution is daunting. Towards the latter stages of high school, I had become disengaged entirely from the education system, this also extended to my home environment.

My story is not too dissimilar to many other young disadvantaged children. I am convinced that had the education system entrusted some faith and support, I would have excelled during my remaining time at St Albans. I believe education does have the potential to compensate, to some extent, for an unhappy childhood and adult home life. However, this breakthrough was never accomplished. Due to this, I adhered to my deviant label, and displayed the expectations and behaviours that came naturally. Residing in a period of immense uncertainty, I was unable to comprehend where my life was going, and I could barely envisage what life had to offer in the future. Leading on from this period, my defiant attitudes and perception towards the Criminal Justice System, and other institutions of authority increased the probability of offending behaviour. As highlighted by Sherman (1993: 466), the brazen and bold-faced arrogance etched within these communities, 'extends far beyond the criminal sanction, the conduct of everyday discourse with alienated persons who react with indignation to any hint of social disapproval'.

The remaining two years of schooling was a period of preparation for what lay ahead. I had little optimism for the yet unknown adventures of life. I tended to avoid such deep reflection. In my opinion, the lack of boundaries and absence of a male role model aided delinquency for myself and many of my peers (Bradley, 2009). Although most of the families did live from hand to mouth, we were never encouraged to believe that a life of crime was a viable and

alternative option; we knew the value of hard honest graft. Without exception, my peers and I all underachieved academically, we had failed to embrace, value or excel in the education system. Despite this, the determination to contribute to wider society through hard work was embedded in community and family life; this was despite the lack of adult male role models. As a young boy, my dysfunctional childhood left me craving stability. Attachments to figures of care and authority had become fragmented, my time in the care system left me insecure and vulnerable; I now perceive this as being a potential catalyst for many of my adult lifestyle choices, which have been destructive and non-conventional. When you seek comfort, belonging and affirmation of who and what you are, required is the approval of the other. Hence, I found myself being drawn to other disengaged and disaffected boys. As I drifted away from education in my early teens, this also helped to shape and mould my social and personal sense of identity, agency and personhood. As claimed by Bartley (2017: 8), 'where there is no stable community of acceptance, identity may depend more on outward symbolic display'. Moreover, as highlighted, my isolation from the values of mainstream education acted as a 'breeding ground for discontented, embittered and alienated students to mix with likeminded peers' (Sutherland, 2011: 3). The shared awareness of alienation, isolation and perceived stigma consolidated our sense of cohesion and togetherness; also attained was a rewarding and reciprocated gratification, otherwise denied through legitimate social pathways (Brake, 1980; Goffman, 1963).

It was during this phase in my life that I became drawn to my local boxing club; local nightclub bouncer Lennie Ward facilitated this. As a family, the Wards were renowned for their sporting prestige. One of ten siblings, Lennie and his brothers were all involved in professional boxing; they demanded respect in the local and surrounding communities. Receiving care and time from an older male role model, and somebody whom others respected for their positive contributions to the broader community, was a hugely empowering experience for me; it demonstrated the immense satisfaction obtained from relational connectedness. After each training session, Lennie would spend time with me, listening and advising on various sporting and personal matters; for the first time in my life, somebody was ensuring and prioritising my interests and wellbeing.

Over the coming years, the boxing gym became my sanctuary, offering protection from the external world, a place I believed never truly understood me. Within these four walls, I experienced inner contentment, and I began to flourish. More importantly, it allowed me to step out of my everyday existence. I was no longer invisible, developed was the belief that maybe life did have something to offer. Lennie not only became an important role model within my life, as a man, he practiced positive values and beliefs, he made himself accessible, ground into his practice were principles such as care, time and acceptance; regardless of background, colour or creed, his living values defined his practice (Whitehead, 2004). As a teenager, I was already frequenting certain pubs and clubs in and around the Levenshulme region of Manchester, the different bouncers employed as security had generally been involved or had some association with the local boxing scene.

After leaving school, I was fortunate enough to be accepted onto a plumbing apprenticeship scheme for the council when leaving formal education in 1990. At the time, such opportunities were there to mop up those who were academically unsuccessful. I worked with this group of tradesmen for about three and a half years. Throughout this period, my reputation as a boxer continued to flourish; I also became more settled in my home life. The physicality of the sport became addictive; it was stimulating, and extremely intrinsically rewarding. For young men such as myself, it enabled me to display positive notions of masculinity and aggression, both of which hold prestige in working-class communities. As Jones (2013: 19-23) observes, when 'lacking real relationships', identity is more inclined to associate with notions of toughness and masculinity, thus, 'the only hope of love is through the admiration of others'. Growing up, my concern was always with the here and now, I was youthfully naïve to the lingering influence of prior experience, and I could never have predicted the long-term impact of childhood trauma. Such multifaceted epiphanies were to reawaken and manifest themselves in the various strands and stages of adulthood; they were to have a definitive and negative impact on my ability to form and maintain intimate and trusting adult relationships.

Towards the end of my plumbing apprenticeship, it dawned on me just how personally unfulfilled the prospect of life on the tools would be; I foresaw the monotonous and repetitive career which lay ahead. At the age of eighteen, I had begun working as a bouncer

in and around the Salford area of Greater Manchester. An inner-city council estate, it had a dire reputation for high levels of unemployment, crime and poverty. A close-knit community, its fearsome reputation came from its ability to enforce its own law and order. Predominantly a white working class community, strong traditional values bonded this neighbourhood. Casting my thoughts back, a reason for remaining in the security industry for more than two decades is the nature of relations that exist and unite doormen; it has a working bond which is simply unique. Despite this, I would describe my early twenties as being a period in which I viewed myself as a social failure. Harbouring internalised feelings of worthlessness, it was inconceivable of me to envisage a life of fulfilment and contentment. Furthermore, it became clear just how isolated, marginalised and disengaged I had become from mainstream society.

During the next thirteen years, I continued to dedicate myself to the sport of boxing. Discussions were held with various promotors regarding turning professional, they were keen that I did not waste my talent. For reasons I am still unsure, I resisted putting pen to paper. This remains one of the biggest regrets of my life, I should have listened to the wise words of this honourable and caring man; sometimes we do not realise what we have until it is gone. Besides a few close peers, by the time I reached my mid-twenties, I had lost all confidence and trust in organisations, institutions and figures of authority; I viewed them as disingenuous and untrustworthy. At that time, you could earn a decent wage working cash in hand, the service I provided on troublesome pubs and clubs placed me into a marketable bracket. To coincide with this, I started working periodically as a trackman on the railways, a loner amongst my colleagues; I could not share or relate to their enthusiasm for such gruelling labour. Over the next decade, I come to the realisation that something remained undiscovered and of immense significance in my life.

During the period prior to my eventual incarceration, my life was lacking meaning and a sense of direction. I was burdened by an overwhelming sense of personal and social failure. My underachievement in formal education, the lack of fulfilment in past and present employment, and the recent breakdown of my relationship with the mother of my children, created a combined sense of immense dissatisfaction. This evoked feelings of vulnerability and indescribable loneliness; such aloneness, accompanied with an enduring sense of powerlessness, moved body and mind into a conscious state of depletion and desperation; I

was trapped in the 'onslaught of a nightmare' (Berger and Luckmann, 1971: 119). As a means of coping, I began binge drinking and experimenting with various substances.

On occasions, I would awake with no recollection of the previous hours and days; I worried about the lack of self-control and awareness during such periods. Often, I would awake in the morning and struggle to deal with the life, rooted in a deep depression, all I wanted to do was stay in bed and close myself off from the outside world, 'helplessness marches hand in hand with hopelessness in many cases of depression' (Storr, 1998: 127). When depressed, the simplest aspects of life become complicated. As an illness, it is unpredictable and uncontrolled; taking various forms, it has a disturbing impact on the sanity of your life. Shorter (2013: 81, 80) says in melancholia 'we are dealing with one of the most terrible afflictions in medicine'; hence for some 'it may lead to despair, hopelessness, a complete lack of pleasure in one's life, and suicide'. The actions and word of others, their sympathy and love, often fail to comfort the sufferer. The following extract is from my autobiography. During this period of depression, only time will determine the end for each episode.

Today, unlike yesterday, has been a good day. Nothing dramatically has changed in my circumstances. However, I am more able to collect my thoughts coherently. Having awoken early this morning, my aim was to take control of the day from the very start. The previous four months have been a blur; like a robot, I have mechanically trudged through the essential commitments and chores in life. Often, when I reflect, alone and in silence on what has happened, there are always pieces of the jigsaw, which I am unable to make fit into the events of my life. Trying to make sense of meaningless situations and interactions, for this period, I am left battling my own hidden agenda. Still feeling its presence, I try in vain to restore some balance, I can never reason or find compromise with this state of being; I am taken, unwillingly to the depths. My psychological wellbeing finds itself in a cold place.

Rowe (1995: 79) portrays depression as 'a desperate defence which we can use to hold ourselves (our meaning structure) together when we feel ourselves falling apart and in danger of being annihilated'. She further suggested that depression, although an illness, can be reasoned with; the causes, triggers and meaning associated, are neither static nor fixed. As

written, by Rowe (1995: 87), the sufferer is the 'only one who can make the decisions, the one who can determine his destiny and happiness'. Through this period, and because of substance misuse, I had woken up in various hospitals, requiring medical attention for injuries and recovery. Although fully aware of the wider social context and impact, with the exception of a few people, this remained hidden from those I felt would judge and act negatively towards me. On occasions I would ensure anonymity by providing incorrect personal details, my intention was to avoid further scrutiny. As Stern (2009: 104) says:

> It takes two to be lonely. People can be alone, but loneliness is not the same as aloneness. To be lonely requires sense of rejection by, or a failure to be connected to, other people.

In the six months leading up to the court case, I was awaking on different beds, couches and at times floors. The lack of comfort and secure accommodation did not matter, years of surviving had desensitised me to such a lifestyle. Furthermore, all the things that had gained me recognition and respect were now the aspects of my existence, which neither made me happy nor content. For these reasons, I was unable to perceive a reality beyond my existing social context. I could not have imagined a life unburdened of community pressures and strains. As already noted, I was resistant and distrustful towards individuals and organisations who expected or required of me honesty of dialogue and thought; I was unable and unwilling to cross this border. With regards to my impending court case, I knew that my inability to place trust in my solicitor portrayed me as uncooperative and unrepentant; my probation worker had justification to perceive me as deserving of incarceration. I was incarcerated in February 2002 for 15 months. It is not my intention to glorify prison, nor is it my wish to suggest that it was an enjoyable experience. Nonetheless, without this life-changing experience, I dread to think what life would be like now. Mostly, offenders can be guaranteed that on their release, deviant peers and dysfunctional families units will have remained stagnant. For those unable and unwilling to create or embrace change, following their incarceration, they will be welcomed back with open arms into the fold.

Initially, I viewed the length of incarceration excessive considering the nature of the offence. I questioned the reasons for being given such a hefty punishment, was it the nature of the offence, or was it my attitude to those in authority and lack of admitted remorse? Reflecting

back, just prior to incarceration, every day was overpowered and consumed by chaos. In agreement with Smith and Sparkes (2007: 10) I believe the cycle of chaos helps to 'produce, sustain, and exacerbate social oppression'. On arriving at Strangways HMP, I was provided with bedding, blankets and information regarding my induction week; despite this, I was overwhelmed with a sense of freedom. Every man has an entitlement to face incarceration on his terms, some remain upbeat and defiant, and the anguish and fear of others can be heard in the still of the night. Lying in my bunk bed for the first night, I felt liberated, I welcomed the isolation, and this was to have an essential and prominent bearing on the remainder of my time incarcerated. After a short period in Strangways HMP, it was brought to the authority's attention that my older brother was employed there as a prison officer; I was swiftly relocated to Kirkham HMP in Preston. I knew from this experience a new chapter in my life was about to unfold. Nonetheless, what remains is the genuine care I still have for a few close friends. Leaving them behind, there resides to this day a real sadness and loss; a part of me will forever be emotionally and spiritually tied to the fabric of my past.

As an institution, I can only describe incarceration as a place of dehumanisation, we become the 'enemy of society as a whole', we are viewed as nothing less than a 'monster', 'rebel' and 'traitor to his country'; we even, in many instances, become feared (Foucault, 1977: 90). With much time to reflect, I began to jot down my daily events, this proved therapeutic and self-rewarding. I also started to narrate personal memoirs, expressing aspects of my life which held significance, the complexity, and richness of my past began to fill the pages. For hours, I sat at my wooden desk, reflecting on, and articulating my thoughts; there arose a personal desire to analyse and make sense of the ebb and flows of my existence, some of which interrelate and influence my current situation. There is something immensely satisfying about engaging and narrating meaningful narrative, estrangement from everyday normality can stimulate creativity and encourage thought and contemplation. Hours were lost absorbed in this deeply satisfying ritual, my mind revisiting many places, irrespective of my surroundings.

Inspired by this, I made the decision to enrol onto some basic educational programmes. With a growing love for education, I was overcome with a sense of fulfilment; I willingly became addicted to the pursuit of educational development. With the exception of a few close friends,

I accepted no mail, and refused all visits; I ceased total contact with family and peers. To keep focus and positive momentum, I attended any available education courses. For most inmates, it is a positive and proactive way to fill your time; it also entails numerous other advantages. This life-changing moment ignited my passion for learning, thus resisting the temptations to return to an environment, which I am now aware was detrimental to my offending. My time in prison provided me with the opportunity to begin an extended educational process, which has enabled me to find a fulfilling and productive way of living my own life without being drawn back into offending. These inspiring and life-defining moments ignited the passion for learning, and this continues to the present day.

Following my release I relocated to a different area to start a new life. After settling into my new home, at the age of twenty-eight, I enrolled at college. Still affected by previous learning experiences, I continuously scrutinised and questioned my academic ability; I doubted whether I would be able to complete my first year. Nonetheless, there was one teacher who gave me support and guidance during this period. Howard, the psychology teacher, would provide positive encouragement, different from anything else I had previously experienced in education. Spending time with me after each session, displaying a genuine interest in my progression and considerations, eventually became more meaningful and important than the achieved qualification. Without this, I believe I would not have completed the course, thus would not be writing these current reflections. Because of the care and guidance received from Howard, a personal desire to continue my educational journey began. More importantly, it reinforced the power of relationships within education, and if nothing else of any worth was ever learned, it dawned on me that one person does have the ability to connect with those most astray and isolated.

In May 2005, I made a choice to move to Greece for a four-month period. From this moment forth, I stopped all medication and therapy. This time spent alone, reflecting and contemplating, enabled me to find the resolve and strength to move forward. On my return, I decided to move back to Manchester and completed the remaining year of my first degree. Unsure of how I could make use of this qualification, I began volunteering with a local education provision, who worked primarily with young adults who were not in any form of

Education, Training and Employment. After six months, I was offered employment as a tutor in South Manchester, since when I have been in steady employment and continued to achieve academically. Following the completion of my first degree, I went on to accomplish a PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate in Education), a Master's Degree in the Criminal Justice System and a Master's Degree in Education. After achieving stage one, two years of an Ed.D (Educational Doctoral Degree) I decided to leave Hope University in Liverpool and commence with a PhD at York St John in February 2015.

In this chapter, I have provided a summary of my autobiography, which influences how I work and form relationships with former offenders in an educational capacity. During the previous fourteen years, my own experiences of adversity have been drawn on and applied to support the learning of other former offenders, some of whom have had substance misuse issues. In the next chapter, I will present the rationale and justification for using an autoethnographic methodology.

Chapter 3
Thesis methodology section

3.1 Chapter introduction

I begin by providing a critical overview of quantitative methods including the ontological assumptions which underpin them, and identify what I perceive to be their limitations. I then introduce qualitative research methods and methodologies, and discuss the role of the researcher in the formation of understanding and attaining non-conventional knowledge. In particular, I place emphasis on the inability of traditional research approaches to relate to complex individuals, cohorts and social phenomena; I challenge the usefulness of measurable and pragmatic research methods. I then introduce the reader to the process and theoretical advantages of narrative inquiry; highlighted is the capacity of this approach to further our knowledge, insight and understanding of individuals and minority cohorts who are by tradition, perceived as illusive and hard to reach.

The chapter introduces the reader to ethnography; I summarise the tradition and history of observing human behaviour, and the passive and objective researcher role. Debating the numerous limitations of this methodology, I introduce autoethnography, and the struggle of acceptance into mainstream academia and research. In doing so, I make clear the key philosophical, methodological and research paradigms separating autoethnography from ethnography. Examining the fundamental differences between analytical and evocative autoethnography, I place emphasis on the relevance and importance of the 'auto' in this study. To conclude the chapter, I state the research, social and political importance to coconstructing and creating knowledge with my research volunteers; I explore the types of demands, ambiguities and pressures exerted on the researcher during this investigatory process.

3.2 Move away from mechanistic, numerical theorising

Formal and mathematical procedures of analyses seek to achieve universal generalisation, they 'formulate facts and uncover patterns in research'; this continues to be a guiding principle adopted by quantitative researchers (Barabasch, 2018: 469). Known as the 'myth of the sensual origin of knowledge', observation was for long periods used as a method to inform

the scientific disciplines (Jovanovic, 2011). Through controlled and experimental techniques, objective data is numerically used to theorise cause and effect relationships (Hurt and McLaughlin, 2012). Positivism is hypothetico-deductive, the primary aim is to either prove or disprove a prior hypothesis. Through the appropriate quantitative methodology, relationships of inquiry will be statistically or mathematically validated or refuted (Hasan, 2016). The data collated, independent of the researcher, will provide structure and formulaic data to complex individual and social phenomenon; political powers implement change according to such findings (Jovanovic, 2011). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017: 51), Positivism, 'strives for objectivity, measurability, patterning, the construction of laws and rules of behaviour, and the ascription of causality'.

During the period between 1900 and 1950, the dominance of positivism was contested by qualitative methodologies (Collins, Leech, and Onwuegbuzie, 2010). Throughout the 1960s, the traditional methods of exploring and examining the human experience came under further scrutiny; society became more inquisitive and curious, new ways of attaining knowledge in a diverse and changing society was needed (Wincup, 2017). Moreover, this ideological and intellectual shift in research inquiry was further strengthened when psychology, traditionally underpinned by empiricist values, theorised that meaning and language was inseparable from specific scientific explanations (Jovanovic, 2011). Goussinsky et al. (2011) note how the endeavour of modernist scholars helped formalise the philosophical framework of emerging qualitative thought; this spanning from the post-war years to the early 1970s. With additional emphasis placed on observing participants in their natural settings, phenomena from the subject's point of view became of fundamental importance. Refuting the claim of generalizable, universal and absolute truths, researchers supported relativist worldviews; truth becomes subjective to the individual.

Throughout the 1980s, the social sciences entered a 'crisis of confidence', the ontological, epistemological and axiological limitations of presenting real-life experience were further critiqued; 'scholars were seeking a positive response to critiques of canonical ideas about what research is and how research should be done' (Ellis et al. 2011: 2). According to Jovanovic (2011) progressive movements in social diversity, integration and fragmentation required we re-evaluate traditional ways of thinking; existing epistemological paradigms of

attaining knowledge were unable to satisfy social demands. The increasing scepticism of positivist methodological research approaches warranted the claim that perhaps interpretive analysis could better articulate complex social events and happenings, thus generate more complete and in-depth understanding. Jovanovic (2011) perceives this approach as being more inclusive and sympathetic towards marginalised cohorts. Moreover, greater significance and consideration is also given to individuals and groups seen as either different or under researched:

> Both postmodernity and qualitative approaches share an anti-realist and antiessentialist position and a strong plea for a plurality of forms, perspectives, interpretations. They both see language as a powerful tool in constructing social and subjective realities (Jovanovic, 2011: 19).

3.3 Determining the right methodology

Ascertaining the right and appropriate methodology has been a fundamental necessity. Through a series of cycles, I have developed my methodological outlook and knowledge; I have tussled with contrasting and complementary theoretical paradigms; validity, rigour and integrity are the principles I regard as essential when interpreting the complicated lives of those being researched. In general, Savela (2018: 41) states that 'quantitative approaches can illuminate important trends and patterns, something that qualitative approaches cannot'. Thus, they detail the numerical scale of offending, the types of crimes committed, and the socioeconomic and demographic background of the perpetrators of recorded crime. However, statistics by their very nature, objectify and numerically nullify the cohort in its entirety (Creswell, 2007).

Therefore, although quantitative methods are a valuable means of researching the social world, the numerical techniques employed, are not designed to capture, articulate, deconstruct, examine or theorise the complex and subjective life histories of the men being researched. For example, one research volunteer recalled extreme bouts of depression and suicidal tendencies. The delicate nature of this individualised worldview and perspective, would be impossible to capture with any degree of insight and understanding using numerical methods and methodologies. To illustrate this point, Bantjes and Leslie Swartz (2017: 516) in their research on suicidology, required the active participation of the subject, claiming that

'the "real experts"— suicidal people—are indeed the best people to inform us on how to prevent suicide'. Willig (2001) believes true meaning and subjective understanding can only be attained using a less scientific approach. Due to the complex nature of my inquiry, I feel more comfortable with Creswell (2007: 129) who states that 'in qualitative research, the intent is to explore the complex set of factors surrounding the central phenomenon and present the varied perspectives or meanings that participants hold'.

As the term 'Problematizing Methodological Simplicity in Qualitative Research' suggests, there is a concern that the complexity, depth and richness of social phenomenon are being simplified. Instead, we are producing mechanical and watered down descriptions of social phenomena (Donmoyer, 2012: 798). Expanding on the existing offender literature and theory, creating new and intuitively driven knowledge will contribute to an area of research, which continues to theorise from the perimeters (Ries, 2011). Moreover, conducting such a major piece of research is a daunting prospect. Therefore, 'the best way to learn research is to do research' (Wilson, 2006: 323). Adding to this, Pitard (2017: 109) suggests that 'listening to our internal dialogue relies upon that dialogue being spontaneous, springing from a stillness of mind which allows our past experience to guide our present'. In the words of Polit and Beck (2010: 1451):

> The goal of most qualitative studies is not to generalise but rather to provide a rich, contextualised understanding of some aspect of human experience through the intensive study of particular cases.

As a researcher, I want to promote understanding and provide clarity to the uniqueness of individual meaning, venturing into areas that are ambiguous in the pursuit of knowledge (Kapoulas and Miljana, 2012). Highly personalised accounts, the lives of the men I work with, can only be made sense of through a methodology which recognises complexity. Laverty (2003) believes reality cannot be confined to a particular time and space. The experiences that define it, the meaning which we associate to it, stem from the creativity of the individual mind. She also maintains that individual realities are not just something 'out there', they exist for the creator; constructed and derived from experience, situated and confined to a particular time and space. For the majority of qualitative research explorations, 'the goal is to

establish truth'; human agency and existence are theoretically and methodologically underpinning of the various approaches employed (Wincup, 2017: 8).

In my opinion, due to the individualistic underpinning content of my thesis inquiry, quantitative methodology would fail to add substance, validity or depth (Somekh and Lewin, 2005). As a social researcher, and interpretivist philosopher, my role is to 'challenge the reduction of human life to forms of instrumental control' (David, 2010: xxvii). Because of the professional respect I associate to different methodological stances, qualitative methods of inquiry are not necessarily better ways to view the world, they just complement the angle I wish to perceive it from. Therefore, my preference is simply a 'different way to see the world, with methods that illuminate, rather than obscure different aspects of human experience' (Wilson, 2006: 320). In light of this, 'to write individual experience is, at the same time, to write social experience' (Mykhalovskiy, 1996: 141).

3.4 Steps toward a postmodern qualitative approach

Due to the different epistemological, philosophical, methodological and ontological paradigms, qualitative research is inherently contradictory and distinct from quantitative research inquiry (Kimberley, Nicholls and Will, 2009). In response to the perceived inadequacies of quantitative methodologies, a qualitative inquiry is committed to exploring human action and behaviour; the primary purpose being to theorise subjective aspects of humanity without quantifying and numerically assessing thought, feeling and action (Hurt and McLaughlin, 2012). From a personal perspective, the freedom to develop my own distinctive style without restriction, grants me the flexibility to understand, as best I can, the inherent richness of my thesis. The aim is not to present a structured and analytical format; I strive for uniqueness, independence and relative truth. Furthermore:

> The meaning that subjects attribute to and derive from their personal experiences and the subjective involvement between researchers and their subjects, as well as the engagement with rather than detachment from what is sought to be known, are all emphasised in the interests of truth (RyanNicholls and Will, 2009: 51).

Therefore, rather than transcribing structured, formulaic and definitive verification of causal relationships, the interpretive processes of qualitative data requires that subjectivity and validity are dependent on the researcher and research context (Kimberley, Nicholls and Will, 2009). Moreover, the understanding attributed to a particular phenomenon is unlikely to remain static; the initial question, focus and direction will need negotiating and revising. Due to this, I now tentatively broach investigation and inquiry with caution; I aspire for the strands of data, which 'humanises the commonly found statistical representations of individuals' life circumstances and enables imagination and meaning-making among readers' (Barabasch, 2018: 473). McNiff (2006: 315) questions those who critique researchers of creative and nontraditional methodologies:

> To discriminate against a person because of physical differences is bad enough. To discriminate against them because of their intellectual capacity is, on Arendt's and my terms, one of the most egregious forms of personal violence, and to set up a regime whereby knowledge itself is used as a marker of symbolic power is one of the most flagrant violations of the concept of social justice.

In agreement with Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011), if we are to challenge the negative rhetoric and demonization of disadvantaged minorities, including former offenders, I find it implausible to remove emotions, subjectivity and uniqueness from the type of research in which I am so passionately engaged. Moreover, you only have to step back and take into account the multicultural influences, circumstances and traditions underpinning the postmodernist society we reside in. Whether we accept it or not, we are connected through the complex integration of race, gender, age, social class, sexuality, religion and education. As highlighted by Bourner and Simpson (2005) the challenge for universities is one of acceptance. How do we push forward innovative, creative and abstract methodologies? What more must be done to achieve recognition and equality?

Generally, 'criminologists tend to present their analysis in the form of inhuman data', why? 'So no one will care, keep it statistical, inhuman, no compassion' (Bosworth et al. 2005: 259). In the course of this inquiry, the dialogical relationships established with offenders has ensured they have a voice, a voice which is not one dimensional but reflective, analytical and ambiguous, developed and reinforced from a particular time and space within a particular

social and political context (Mizzi, 2010). Researchers are failing to comprehend that lived experiences and meaningful happenings are interconnected with values, beliefs, and on closer inspection, feelings, thinking and uniqueness (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011). As a consequence of this, we are not acknowledging that every offender has a hybrid of multiple identities, and individualised educational needs (Mizzi, 2010). With regards to education, offender services and organisations remain ignorant and unwilling to seek person-centred strategies and approaches.

According to Whitehead (2009: 4), 'I understand inclusionality as a relationally dynamic awareness of space and boundaries as connective, reflexive and co-creative'. Analysing the work of Bourdieu (2001), he questions how we can as researchers best theorise, articulate and interpret non-traditional pedagogies into theoretical understanding and criteria. Furthermore, taking into account my own morally just research values, what methods will best enable insight into a culture which still eludes the care and respect of researchers and academics. The inability to identify with the worldview of the offender is in my opinion central to why we are no nearer breaking the cycle of offending, and repeat offending. Data, published as fact by the various Government and independent bodies, is stoking the fire of stigma and prejudice. Dehumanising, categorising and objectifying entire social cohorts, only succeeds in papering over the cracks of essential social issues; this has rendered politicians, researchers and educators helpless and inadequate. Donmoyer (2012) argues that the structured vision and clarity, traditionally sought by politicians to justify, implement and defend key social movements, necessitates the stripping away of gritty real-life experience. Essentially, the ontologies of those who hold positions of authority are there to be challenged. By taking account of the wider social and political context, as opposed to simplifying the human existence into easy to understand formats, a new balance and equilibrium can be fostered between the political elites and silenced deviant.

In relation to the methodological stance of the conventional researcher, the instruments they use to quantify and measure social aspects of the world with the aim of constructing generalisable theory and pragmatism, which, although ideal for policymakers and educators, fails to deliver insight and understanding (Donmoyer, 2012). For example, as I engage with

the offender literatures of Thomas and Hebenton (2013), Brown (2012), Wooditch, Tang and Taxman (2014), Kavanagh and Borrill (2013), Barry (2013), and Ferguson, Hanreddy and Draxton (2011), amongst others, I realised that I was unable to locate any data that enriches my existing knowledge. When trawling through these papers, I require depth and subjectivity; this was absent and non-existent in the literatures. I was left feeling extremely frustrated by the statistical and numerical actualities, which sadly nullify the voice of this complex client group. Throughout these sources, they have merely stated the obvious. There is no evidence to substantiate what successfully supports ex-offenders to resist criminal temptations.

With regards to the above literatures, for those who did progress into employment and education, I want insight and understanding; what were the factors, either individually or collectively, which helped them to resist and reduce reoffending? Of personal concern is the absence of literature capturing the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of the participant. It is essential research find a way to touch the hearts of social and political elites, who have the attributes and power necessary to introduce innovative change. To reach out to intolerant and unsympathetic figures of authority, the complexity of the micro and macro influences embedded and underpinning deviant communities needs articulating with emotion and authenticity (Donmoyer, 2012). The evidence would lead me to suggest that due to methodological limitations and the inability to access and relate to offender clients, nothing beyond the existing factual theory and research is expected or attained.

It is intimated by Jolliffe and Farrington (2007) that interventions designed to challenge offender behaviour, perception and beliefs, must begin the research process by focusing on the individual, as opposed to the wider community and cultural facets. As with much of the literature and research conducted on ex-offenders, the reluctance to explore idiosyncratic characteristics of the cohort being studied, reinforces the objective, stigmatising and inaccurate rhetoric and theory. Due to this, damaging representations are often theorised, with viewpoints and assertions made, and unjust depictions of identity and personhood become generalised. Findings of the research by Salaheddin and Mason (2016: 287), found that labels such as 'dangerousness' become correlated to groups 'who have less power, and that stigma can exist at a number of levels in society'. The Penal Reform International supports this perspective, as does the SATIO Group of Companies 2013, in their research titled

'Crime and punishment: Public perception, judgment and opinion'. The findings stated that the 'public awareness about prisons, prisoners and former prisoners and respondents' attitudes towards prisoners were affected by the amount of information (including from the media) they received about prisons and prisoners' (Akulenko, Fablinova and Chernyanskaya, 2013: 86). To emphasise the scale of this prejudice, the report went on to highlight that in a working and personal capacity, most people surveyed preferred not to have any form of contact with former offenders.

3.5 Introduction to narrative inquiry

In 2013, during the early stages of this educational endeavour, I decided to write expressively and reflectively about my life. Unsure of a logical starting point to the investigation, I began to recall and narrate the microscopic details of childhood, education and wider social influences. To coincide with this, I also started to narrate my practice; I needed to figure out how this had come to be defined as it was. I am reminded by Mizzi (2010: 7) that 'the plural consciousness that embodies multivocality create[s] the background necessary for his own voice, outside of which his artistic prose nuances cannot be perceived, and without which they do not sound'. Apart from feeling personally rewarded and enlightened, on a purely academic level I believe:

> Writing has the power to put the writer in conversation with him/herself...While writing I start asking questions to myself and hence I try to find explanations and answers to my own questions and classroom practices. This is of extreme importance, especially when a teacher feels isolated. I feel that teachers need to speak about their efforts, frustrations, successes, etc, and when isolation is a reality, I think that writing helps us in sharing these things with ourselves. No...this is not madness. On the contrary, I think it is very helpful and healthy for us as education professionals (Ghaye and Ghaye, 1998: 19, cited in Attard, 2012: 164).

Marak (2015), writes that for those who feel hopelessly ostracised, we require methodologies which allow the necessary time to recall and make sense of storytelling narrative. Ellis and Bochner (2006: 441) stress the need to 'protect the integrity of the story and not close off conversation and engagement with it'. Narrative methods of data collection allow meaning and understanding to be correlated to the social world through language (Casey and Schaefer,

2016). In disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, history, literature and education, it is widely accepted that there is no clear definition of what counts as outstanding or poor narrative (Bullough and Pinnegar, 2001). Habermas (1976: 10) views language as being 'a kind of transformer; because psychic processes such as sensations, needs and feelings are fitted into structures of linguistic intersubjectivity'. In relation to my inquiry, the purpose of the written and oral narrative will be to contribute to existing theoretical, academic, social and political debates.

Attard (2012) points out those moments of microscopic detail, often forgotten or unnoticed, are captured authentically via narrative writing; it also allows the narrator the time and space to reflect. As emphasised by Clandinin, Cave and Berendonk (2017), there is no clear agreement with regards to what narrative means in narrative research; numerous methods can be called upon to narrate and depict life stories and autobiographies. Through this highly personalised method of researching, rigour and believability must be upheld; this is in spite of whether the narrative contrasts and contradicts the values and worldview of the reader or researcher. They provide the following definition of narrative inquiry:

> People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful (Clandinin, Cave and Berendonk, 2017: 90).

Overcash (2003) emphasises how narrative accounts permit participants the opportunity to recall events and interpret them from their perspective. Therefore, experiences, which continue to evoke sensations and feeling, can be captured; even those lasting a split second in time become a source of data. Because of this, something of greater significance arises, the subject becomes owner and author of their story, and they are permitted a freedom to recollect sensitive happenings, without feeling the need to conceal moments of immense significance. He also maintains that narrative can transport the mind back to previous multiple realities, thus reengaging us with pathways of emotion, thought and perception; reality should not be perceived as a single 'regime of truth'. Furthermore, to make sense of the here and now, deconstructing and reconnecting the different stages of life, as best we can, is at

the heart of personal autobiographical narrative. With this in mind, it seems appropriate to select a methodology, which gives meaning to the life histories of the men (Attard, 2012).

I believe as a researcher, the moral responsibility we are entrusted when interpreting participant accounts should never be compromised. In my own writing, self-revelation and vulnerability have combined to construct a story that is unique and free of traditional constraints. Ellis (2002: 404), welcomes stories that 'self-consciously invite me into the lives of activists, to feel what they feel, see what they see, and do what they do'. Through this unfolding process, I no longer fear the response of other academics. And for this reason, I am now more inclined to write about personal details I may previously have found difficult to speak about; they have become liberated, significant and valued in this academic process. Pearce (2010: 7) believes narrative 'cannot be separated from the context in which they were produced, nor can the emotions and feelings that resulted from them'. For individuals and communities who may feel silenced, oral narrative is particularly effective, individual and collective histories finally break free, commonality of similar life events often becomes known; we begin to see the connectedness of adverse biographies (Overcash, 2003). As a research tool, verbal and written narrative encourages the disclosure of sensitive detail; they become thinking, debating and reflective points. Embedded within the discourse of these rich reflective extracts lie the aspects of my pedagogy, which have enabled me to form relational bonds with offenders for over a decade. As pointed out by Kyratzis and Green (1997: 17):

> …narrative research entails a double narrative process, one that includes the narratives generated by those participating in the research, and one that represents the voice of the researcher as narrator of those narratives.

Recalling narrative is more than mere description, it requires reflection; extremely thought provoking, it is through this process that I attempt to make sense of memories spanning back decades; it provides, according to Overcash (2003: 182) 'a global view of the human experience'. When engaging in the practice of narrative inquiry, Haydon, Browne and van der Riet (2016: 128) contend that 'the individuals' narrative needs to be expressed, listened to with humility and research should capture the vulnerability of these narratives'. Through narrative procedures, the political and social processes, inseparable from the ontology of the

research volunteers, become the starting point of inquiry in this research; they are giving voice to their history, in their own words, and in the context that provides clarity and personal relevance (Clandinin, Cave and Berendonk, 2017). And, by giving them a past, it helps them walk towards a future created by themselves. To begin the process of social acceptance and inclusivity, Stewart (2006) regards authentic real-life narrative as being a source of education for those who perhaps stigmatise through a lack of understanding. Using the term 'Personal Experiences Methods', he describes how:

> The researchers' experience is intermingled with the narrative and material is selected as a constructive act dependent on the intentions of the researcher. Using personal experience methods involves the creation of a research setting in which text is generated, or a story is situated, within the context of a larger personal life story (Stewart, 2006: 9).

Therefore, now is the time for educators and policymakers to come together. Having reached a methodological crossroads, we must resign ourselves to the fact that offender life stories are too complex to understand through numerical and cognitive behavioural programmes. In my experience, offenders engage with these programmes through necessity. By appeasing those in authority, they are viewed as a way to secure early release. The task for researchers is to dissolve, where possible, this indifference; narrative and storytelling exploration has many potential benefits for the inquisitive mind. As well as adding something unique to existing research and theory, we can use this knowledge to educate and inform those who have the power to sanction and introduce wider social and political change (Williams, 2006). When conducting narrative research, the participant often holds the position of power, they have a freedom to decide on what is disclosed, they also determine the order in which it is recalled and the depth of emotional and psychological association (Overcash, 2003). Therefore, by relating meaning and understanding to the volunteers' recollections, past error of ways and deviant identities become a focus and source of scrutiny. Expanding on this:

> The relational properties of narrative inquiry provide both researcher and participant with a foundation to engage and to develop connections; hence, a broader understanding of the phenomena under investigation is established. Narrative inquiry is a well-suited methodology with its possibilities to gather rich data of personal experiences to explore what the recipient of care values (Haydon et al. 2016: 125).

By way of careful exploration, we can learn about who we are, unravelling the many distinct identities etched within the pages of the story; both researcher and subject can judge the value and significance of each thought, feeling and event. Moreover, we are supporting offenders to accurately recollect events from the context in which they occurred; by imparting empathy and care, the intention is to inform and enlighten others, through an authentic contextualisation. Due to this, I now perceive stories and narratives, not as singular unrelated epiphanies; rather they are a means of revealing multifarious accounts, subjectively tied to psychological and emotional embodied and embedded events. In the view of Homes and Sealock (2019: 98), storytelling is a 'pedagogical approach to foster interconnectedness between human content and the science of practice'. If we are to challenge traditional practices of relating to offenders, we must appreciate:

> That 'I' do not exist free of my historical, political and socio-economic heritage; 'I' am always in relation with others, past and present, and am always historically constituted and politically orientated (McNiff, 2012: 30).

3.6 Introduction to ethnography

For centuries ethnographic research was used to study cultures who intrigued, eluded or caused concern to dominant westernised worldviews; 'they were seen as legitimate and authoritative representations of the ''Other'' that they documented' (Grist, 2013: 7). Conducted by anthropologists during the latter nineteenth and early twentieth century, early scholars would live amongst different indigenous cultures. Contesting dominant epistemologies, traditional ethnographic study exploited methodological weaknesses of empiricist research. The authentic representation of those less understood has for centuries opposed deep-seated archaic assumptions, new ways of researching the social world presenting themselves (Denzin, 2006). A method of qualitative research, particular attention is centred on the behaviour of human subjects in their native community settings, which do not include the personal perspectives of the researcher; field methods and techniques, are developed accordingly.

Once immersed in the research setting, they observe the rich interactions and unique ways of living, all of which contribute to emerging themes and data. The role of the researcher is

primarily one of passive observer, emotionally detached from the focus of study, which helps ensure minimal bias when transcribing the data (Denzin, 2006). Prior to their arrival, the culture and community are already established, following their departure, their traditions and customs will continue; the duration of study can last for months, even years (Grist, 2013). Used and adapted within various research fields, this mode of inquiry has always contained within it a variety of different perspectives. According to Atkinson et al. (2002: 47), 'there is no agreement about what it means to claim ethnography'. It is expected that the data collated will be researcher interpreted, the participants are not part of the process. Therefore, as both researcher and subject have separately distinct roles, data and narrative will be made sense of, and transcribed by, the academic (Overcash, 2003).

Grist (2013) notes that throughout the first four decades of the twentieth century, research began to observe cultures and cohorts nearer to home. During the 1960s and 1970s, she recalls that few anthropologists explored the notion of 'self' when conducting an ethnographic inquiry; anthropological ethnographic interests moved away from remote native cultural studies following colonialism. She further comments on early research conducted by the Chicago School because they knowingly neglect the influence of the researcher in relation to the subject[s]. According to Holck (2018: 222), the role of the researcher is central in ethnographic inquiry; hence they affect proceedings through their 'sense of guilt, shame and pride – highly bodily sensations and emotions, often referred to as affect'. On the odd occasion 'confessional tales' or field notes did include some form of reflective extract, the absence of researcher contribution and significance prevented them from claiming autoethnographic status.

Clair (2011) points out that although researchers were physically and academically present, in the main, there was an unwillingness to relate and connect on a much deeper level, except for brief forms of analytical reflection. To add to this, Bosworth et al. (2005: 255), speak of the difficulties of relating to persons who have been 'shut out from the world for years'. Hayano (1979: 99) views these issues as being inherent methodological flaws, thus the problems of ethnography are 'compounded by the lack of researcher involvement and intimacy with his subjects'. He argued the further detached we have become from the

colonial era of ethnographic study, the more prominent the contribution of the researcher should be viewed. By recognising this, methodological and theoretical paradigms need amending accordingly. Depending on the context, nature and aims of each investigation, we must now acknowledge that in some circumstances, the position of the researcher changes from passive observer to somebody now affecting proceedings. Clair (2011: 117-118) suggests it may be more appropriate to 'think of ethnographic undertakings as less dichotomous and more dialectic and dialogic with respect to the study of other (ethnography) and the study of self (auto-ethnography) through cultural engagements'.

McNiff (2006) maintains that methodologies, which place emphasis on the 'I', find themselves struggling for recognition. Overly scrutinised, acceptance to a wider audience can be problematic, quantitative research minds seem unwilling to embrace the emerging knowledge being generated from non-traditional research methods; 'it is focused almost exclusively on hypothesis confirmation' (Hurt, 2012: 63). The struggle of entitlement and acquiescence amongst the elite academics and disciplines remains a primary barrier, with no clear solution. However, in the USA and UK, there has been a rapid and growing interest in creative writing (Nicholls, 2009). Nonetheless, in education, the overemphasis on monitoring, accountability and planning has, in my experience, made it difficult for the inclusivity of imagination and passion. Dismissing the rhetoric of value-free research inquiry, those who wish to test existing boundaries face stiff opposition in many disciplines. Trialling creative methodologies is producing imaginative and original groundbreaking theoretical insight and discourse. The further I find myself departing from socially unjust epistemologies, the more sceptical and questioning I become. I am increasingly disquieted about the powerfully crafted narrative, intent on swaying public perception, though unjust representation. For the type of research in which I am so passionately engaged, Dadds and Hart (2001) introduced the term 'methodological inventiveness'. They perceive there to be practitioner value for research, which has no deterministic set of criteria. In the view of Whithead (2008: 11):

> No methodology is, or should be, cast in stone, if we accept that professional intention should be informing research processes, not pre-set ideas about methods or techniques….

Writing creatively, or from the heart, attempts to add something inimitable to existing ideas, concepts and theories. It is an extremely demanding, constitutive and heuristic process; it cannot or should not neglect emotive, reflective and ethical responsibility (Done et al. 2011). In line with the thinking of Linghede, Larsson and Redelius (2016: 90), through dialogue, narrative and literary stories, these creative approaches will 'embody knowledge' and 'reverberate with the reader not only as information, but also as emotions and desire'. Moreover, through such a reflective process, 'our thoughts are constantly re-shaped when converted into language and brought out in the presence of others' (Raelin, 2001: 21). Through the concept of linguistic constructivism, writing with no prior agenda or criteria unleashes narratives of powerful phenomena. The values I embrace and implement are nonhegemonic; they arise from, and are complemented by intuitive knowing and empathetic identification towards my client group. I am committed to ensuring that I 'go with him on the fearful journey into himself, into the buried fear, and hate, and love which he has never been able to let flow in him' (Rogers, 1961: 67). According to Rosemarie Anderson (2001: 2):

> Embodied writing brings the finely textured experience of the body to the art of writing. Relaying human experience from the inside out and entwining in words our senses with the senses of the world in which we live our lives.

The aspirations of this inquiry, adventurous as well as complex, require a methodology which 'illuminates, rather than obscures aspects of human experience' (Wilson, 2006: 320). Unfortunately, due to the restrictive nature of academic environments, researchers are educated to assume that the inclusion of feelings, emotions, anxieties and other intrinsic characteristics are not only wrong, but of little value to research proceedings (Jewkes, 2011). Using a form of evocative writing, my ability to open up and write from the heart has rendered me unable to remain on the perimeters. With caution and objectivity abandoned, I became of central importance in the crux of this research.

3.7 Introduction to autoethnography

For this inquiry, autoethnography has been used. This methodology enables me to locate my personal experiences of offending within the wider social and political context in which my offending behaviour took place, and help my clients to appreciate the extent to which similar

personal, social and economic barriers have impacted on their lives. The historical and traditional roots of autoethnography remain firmly grounded in ethnographic research. Since its introduction in the 1980s, it has been adopted in a number of mainstream disciplines; it remains a highly debated and contested methodology (Girst, 2013).

The term, first introduced by Raymond Firth during a seminar on structuralism, in 1965, has various meanings. The general consensus is the inclusivity of the researcher, and his/her association to the culture being researched (Marak, 2015). Using a non-traditional methodology encourages and engages 'one's total self and evokes a personal and passionate involvement and active participation in the [research] process' (Wall, 2006: 2). Arising from the paradigm borders of ethnographic inquiry, and developed through numerous blurred genres of writing, the heightened self-reflectivity of the researcher, and the increased focus on emotional engagement, is what distinguishes ethnography from autoethnography. Using narrative, the researcher can broaden out the inquiry focus, inviting the wider social, political and cultural context (Betina and Birgitte, 2012). From a personal perspective, I am challenged with accurately, ethically and clearly articulating my relationship and understanding of the social setting, cohort and individual subjects being studied and theorised (Atkinson, 2006).

As highlighted, the fundamental difference between ethnography and autoethnography is the inclusion of the narrator's subjectivity (Niemeijer and Visse, 2016). Even though the term 'autoethnography' is now a recognised qualitative research approach, no single academic definition is used to describe this methodology; researchers adapt the theoretical framework to suit their research needs (Grist, 2013). Autoethnography opens up a space of resistance between the individual (auto) and the collective (ethno) where the writing (graphy) of singularity cannot be foreclosed (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011). Rather than feeling the need to suppress the richness of researcher experience, it is liberated in numerous genres of writing; it becomes imperative to the process; through multiple layers of writing, personal experiences are being connected to the wider social and cultural context.

Having established the methodological and philosophical origins of autoethnography, I was tasked with deciding on the appropriate variation to complement my research requirements. My foremost priority was to determine which format would best theoretically express the distinctiveness of my pedagogy; to what extent has my past influenced the empathic

educational relationships developed. Leon Anderson (2006: 374), widely accredited with the development of analytic autoethnography, paradigmatically positions it within the 'analytic ethnographic paradigm'; minimal emphasis is given to evocative and emotional influences during the research process, and final written account (Grist, 2013). Anderson (1996) maintains the primary aim of analytical autoethnography is to enrich theoretical understanding; he endeavours to 'embed his approach in traditional symbolic interactionist assumptions' (Denzin, 2006: 421). He interprets his own variation as being entwined in its original ethnographic roots, pointing out the very 'close symbiosis between ethnographers and their subject matter' (Atkinson, 2006: 400). Anderson, Ellis and Bochner (2006: 438) specify three conditions when the term analytical autoethnography would be applied. It is when the researcher is:

> A full member of the research group or setting, visible as such a member in published texts, and committed to developing theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena.

In determining the relevance of analytic autoethnography to my inquiry, I concur with Ellis and Bochner (2006: 432) that my role would require me to be predominantly one of 'detached spectator' during the stages of data collection, analyses and transcribing. However, as emphasised, this thesis cannot be written without evocative, emotional and empathic relational narrative explanations; otherwise, I become 'cut off from the body and emotions', and thus, I am left with 'no personal story to engage me'. Ellis and Bochner (2006: 435) denote analytical autoethnography as resembling another genre form of realist ethnography; they accuse him of attempting to theorise and analyse via a 'disengaged master discourse'. Moving forward, they urge those valiant enough to strive towards a 'modernist project of realist ethnography' (Ellis and Bochner, 2006: 435). Ellis (2006: 434) condemningly views that:

> Analytical autoethnography may be an unconscious attempt by realists to appropriate autoethnography and turn it into mainstream ethnography, diffusing the power of autoethnography by watering it down and turning it into something it was not intended to be.

From my understanding of analytical autoethnography, it is assumed the researcher will limit their personal involvement, thus facilitating the clear extraction of objective analytical data.

Referred to as 'professional strangers' by Denzin (2006), autobiographical accounts and academic lives remain separate, void from the richness of data being thematically and structurally organised. To further rationalise and validate my choice of methodology, my view, similar to Sparks (2002) is that participant emotions, routinely omitted from the research process, do have epistemological significance, and thus should be used to inform our knowledge base. Ellis and Bochner (2006) state that as a mode of inquiry, autoethnography was designed to be boisterous, unruly and creative. We must resist amending and analytically trying to change the context of the inspired, challenging and emotive narrative collated, which often arises through this uncertain project. She further comments that in contrast to the research aims of Leon Anderson, they have:

> A different aim than the work of the analytical ethnographers. We think of ethnography as a journey; they think of it as a destination, caring and empathizing is for us what abstracting and controlling is for them (Ellis and Bochner, 2006: 432).

It is my intention to write imaginative, creative and expressive narrative; the limitations and boundaries of this thesis will be void of defined ways of articulating how we come to know what we do. Sarah Wall (2006: 1) believes that having a greater creative freedom, empowers and encourages the 'author to write in a highly personalised style'. The unique aspects of my pedagogy, informed through my own life experiences, will act as the source and motivation for this inquiry.

Wall states that the intent of autoethnography is to 'acknowledge the inextricable link between the personal and the cultural...' in other words, 'I am the world and the world is me' (Wall, 2006: 10). Of importance is the need to articulate the thinking and rationale behind the genres used, making clear how and why they complement my research aims. There is a concern for Ellis (2006) that other modes of autoethnography seem intent on objectifying and structuralising research themes and content. As a consequence, the body and soul of this unrestricted and vibrant methodology would be ineffective and unproductive. Only by trusting in the process, and throwing caution to the wind, are we able to rise above and beyond oppressive forms of research inquiry:

Autoethnography shows struggle, passion, embodied life, and the collaborative creation of sense-making in situations in which people have to cope with dire circumstances and loss of meaning. Autoethnography wants the reader to care, to feel, to empathise, and to do something, to act. It needs the researcher to be vulnerable and intimate. Intimacy is a way of being, a mode of caring, and it shouldn't be used as a vehicle to produce distanced theorising. What are we giving to people who are intimate, if our higher purpose is to use our joint experiences to produce theoretical abstractions published on the pages of scholarly journals (Ellis and Bochner, 2006: 434).

3.8 Moving beyond analytical to evocative: The relevance and importance of the 'auto'

Leading this revolutionary surge are theorists Ellis and Bochner (2006). In contrast to other qualitative or autoethnographic paradigms, their thinking is neither bound nor restricted by tradition. Knowledge contributing to the existing theoretical debate is neither guaranteed, probability and certainty have no place in evocative and emotional autoethnographic strands. During this thesis, an emphasis has been placed on the notion of relational concerns during the different stages of the writing process. Although time-consuming, the purity and honesty of self-revelation by the researcher and volunteers will generate validity and depth to the meaning and content of narrative; through introspection, this method relies on 'memory work, with the excavation of artefacts via the remembering of experiences of identity formation' (Carter, 2016: 1668). Drawing on embodied and embedded experiences, I will, as documented in the research by Cremin (2018: 2), attempt to engage with, and scrutinise the 'different versions of myself over time'; my hope is that they will 'stand in conversation with each other'.

In the two in-depth stories I will present, my role as a researcher will be fundamental; I will show how I influence the people with whom I work, they will in turn help me to understand the nature of my pedagogy. A more comprehensive social and political advantage is that research of such a 'personal nature might give us insight into problems often overlooked in culture' (Marak, 2015: 1). Taking into account my exploration and explanation of the different ways to research the social world, what are the decisive factors which cross my thesis over the borders of ethnography and into autoethnographic inquiry? With regards to this, much consideration has been given to the criteria I believe validates my choice of methodology.

Therefore, the following reasons justify and necessitate my decision to claim autoethnographic status.

- Firstly, do I feel my life experiences have relationally informed the research process?

- Secondly, to what extent do I consider I have influenced the behaviour and worldviews of individual research volunteers?

- Thirdly, if I were taken away from the research process, could my findings be replicated, thus, am I an integral part of the emerging themes?

- Fourthly, do I consider that my pedagogy and worldview have been compromised, challenged or affected throughout this inquiry?

- Finally, would the distinctive nature of this thesis be possible without the rich relational involvement of the researcher?

If I consider my role and influence to be more than an observer and analyst, then I become more than a traditional researcher, I become an integral cog within the process; emotionally engaged, I move from analytical to evocative researcher. Imperative and relevant to this inquiry, the creation of new knowledge is co-dependent on myself and the people with whom I work; the deep relational dialogue becomes the crux of this thesis. By placing emphasis on the 'auto', the experiences of the researcher together with the research volunteers are ensuring that authenticity takes precedence over structure and mechanistic research criteria. Attempting to be as objective as humanly possible, I find it implausible to imagine how expression, emotion, care and feelings could be denied their place throughout the unfolding narrative. Rather than watering down highly sensitive content, I believe boundaries are there to be pushed to new limits. Igniting fear into many traditionalists, who believe that teachers should hold a position of authority and dominance, they opt for safety and caution over challenge.

In a research context, Noe (2016: 94) perceives the authentic identity as being at 'the centre of the universe'. He also advocates that a 'narrative voice provides a personal perspective that all too often gets silenced by academic voices'. In light of this, 'I realize that I am more authentic when I acknowledge my own situatedness and draw awareness to the role I play in creating and shaping knowledge' (Sell-Smith and Lax, 2013: 14). In contrast to other

autoethnographic perspectives, only by giving myself completely have I been able to appreciate, as best I can, what I contribute to this relationship. Anything other than entering relationships wholeheartedly and genuinely would have left me treading waters out of my depth. Buber (1947 [2014]: 124) describes how giving oneself completely is necessary when we wish to find spiritual connectedness with the other; 'he must enter, completely and in reality, into the act of self-reflection, in order to become aware of human wholeness'.

I hope that through this experience, I will be taught just how much is demanded of the researcher. Emotionally challenging, I must assume that the things I may have wished had remained dormant, could potentially become a focus and source of scrutiny. There is a transpersonal relevance of an autoethnographic study, self-awareness and self-discovery helping to articulate the role of the researcher (Raab, 2013). Unless you are prepared for such unplanned disclosures, autoethnography should be avoided. As summarised by Ellis (1999: 671-672).

> It's certainly not something that most people can do well. Most social scientists don't write well enough to carry it off. Or they're not sufficiently introspective about their feelings or motives or the contradictions they experience. Ironically, many aren't observant enough of the world around them. The self-questioning autoethnography demands is extremely difficult. So is confronting things about yourself that are less flattering. Believe me honest autoethnography exploration generates a lot of fears and self-doubts – and emotional pain...Just when you think you can't stand the pain anymore, well that's when the real work has only begun. Then there's the vulnerability of revealing yourself, not being able to take back what you've written any control over how readers interpret it. It's hard not to feel your life is being critiqued as well as your work. It can be humiliating.

3.9 Ethics consideration

In undertaking my research, I have considered the ethical implications and have referred to the York St John website on research for guidance. The Ethical Consideration Form and Client Confidentiality Form explained in detail the procedures of my study. Following an Ethics Committee Review, the Review Board at York St John University passed the Ethical Consideration Form and Client Confidentiality Form on December 18th 2015.

In accordance with York St John's Research Ethics Policy (2015-2016: 3), the research was 'designed and conducted to high ethical standards and are appropriately reviewed'. Following individual and group conversations, which outlined in detail the nature and context of the research, all the men involved were asked to sign a consent form. Moreover, at regular stages of the research, the research volunteers were reminded of the aims of the investigation. Any questions raised by the service users were answered honestly and openly; this continued for the entirety of the research. For one research volunteer who had lower than national average levels of literacy skills, the specifics on the consent form were verbally explained and discussed on numerous occasions; this individual contributed verbally to the investigation for three years. As highlighted by Valera et al. (2014: 171) 'limited understanding of the informed consent process may contribute to increased coercion and exploitation'. Therefore, and in agreement with Munthe, Radovic and Anckarsater (2010: 40), we need to be 'careful about how the study is described and how this description is communicated (and by whom), and by using dialogue type counselling'.

As maintained by the BERA guidelines, permission was obtained from research volunteers in the collection of data. Research volunteers were informed of the right to withdrawal; they were free to leave the research process at any time. In the event of this, the volunteers were advised that any collected data would be destroyed. I am fully aware of the legal requirements with regards to the storage, obtaining and disclosure of personal data as set down by the Data Protection Act (1998). Throughout this process, research volunteers were supported and encouraged to contribute in a safe, friendly and relaxed environment. Therefore, in considering my approach and choice of the methodology used, I confirm that the study 'undertaken was worthwhile and that the techniques proposed are appropriate'. I am cognizant that, in the endeavour to advance on theory and knowledge, 'that goal does not, of itself, provide an entitlement to override the rights of others' (The British Sociological Statement of Ethical Practice, 2017: 4).

Due to the complex biographies of the research volunteers, periods of absence from the research process were anticipated. However, because they were volunteers in the investigation, they were free to leave or take time away from the inquiry; they could return at any time to resume their participation. If they wanted to withdraw from the inquiry, this

did not affect their right to continue their involvement in the education provided. As noted in the research by Munthe, Radovic and Anckarsater (2010), if participants opt to withdraw in the course of research proceedings, this should neither affect their involvement nor their entitlement to dignity and respect. Research volunteers were over the age of eighteen; they presented no reasons or concerns for their involvement and ongoing contribution to the inquiry. Therefore, in abiding by the guidelines set out by The British Psychological Society (BPS, 2014: 7), I have ensured to the best of my ability that I have considered the 'specific regulations on the handling of ethical issues in human research by researchers, with the aim of covering all eventualities'.

Paramount in this inquiry was the necessity to explore multifaceted biographical accounts with integrity and sensitivity. Hence, it was essential to ensure 'there was the utmost regard for participants, in particular, those considered to be vulnerable' (York St John Research Ethics Policy, 2015-2016: 3). Munthe, Radovic and Anckarsater (2010: 37) detail the need to prioritise the well-being of research subjects who are at risk from mental health issues; they stress that 'risks and harm to research subjects should be avoided at great length'. To minimise this risk, they stress research involving human subjects should be guided by several requirements: 'information, understanding and free decision'. They also consider 'patients should have the right to veto all research that poses direct risks to them'. Therefore, when researching individuals who are deemed vulnerable, there is an ethical obligation 'to ensure the independence of consent from persons with mental disorders, institutionalised persons, or persons who are both (Munthe, Radovic and Anckarsater, 2010: 44).

As highlighted, the men were able to choose convenient times and days to speak on the Dictaphone; this included various non-classroom locations, such as the fields in which the manual work took place. From a research perspective, I wanted the men to talk candidly about their learning experiences; I believed this would increase the probability of gathering authentic and believable narrative. During the different stages of the inquiry, the disclosure of meaningful past experiences was never taken for granted. Likewise, clients were neither coerced nor pressured to contribute, either by myself or their peers. For example, one research volunteer attending the group opted to maintain a silent presence, for weeks, leading to months; they were contented observing the interactions and dialogue of fellow

research volunteers. Further, in agreement with the BPS (2014: 4), the 'participants in psychological research should have confidence in the investigators. Good psychological research is only possible if there is mutual respect and trust between investigators and participants'.

In this investigation, the research volunteers were all male, and with one exception, were white. Therefore, the necessity to respect confidentiality and anonymity was consistently emphasised to the volunteers. The British Sociological Statement of Ethical Practice (2017: 4), states that researchers have 'responsibility both to safeguard the proper interests of those involved in or affected by their work'. Thus, the appropriate and correct ethical procedures and expectations, in accordance with the British Sociological Statement of Ethical Practice (2017) and the BPS (2014) have been adhered to. When conducting research of this nature, unforeseen dilemmas and issues can occur unexpectedly. Should this happen, my responsibility as a researcher and mentor is to deal with and rectify appropriately; any action taken was in agreement with ethical guidelines and protocols. My view, similar to Franeta (2019: 131), is that 'dignity as a specific condition of a human being in the world goes beyond the law'; hence, the duty we have as a researcher 'goes well beyond the legal and reaches toward the basic ideas, values, and purposes of human rights'. Aware of the uncertainty and ambiguity which often underpins autoethnographic inquiry, 'researchers should have respect for the autonomy and dignity of persons' (BPS, 2014: 8). This ethical standpoint, underpinned by morally just values, integrity and care, is founded on a genuine endeavour to protect the participants. Nodding's (2013: 195) believes that:

> When we behave ethically as ones-caring, we are not obeying moral
> principles - although, certainly, they may guide our thinking - but we are
> meeting the other in genuine encounters of caring and being cared for.

Throughout the research, volunteers were encouraged and supported to discuss the progress of the inquiry. During these debates, the men were emboldened to raise, consider, and analyse, as a collective cohort, any aspects that required altering, monitoring or resolving. I concur with Stake (2003: 154), who views the researcher as being a guest 'in the private space' of the participant. Moreover, he advocates our research activities should not 'outweigh injury

to a person exposed'; thus their 'manners should be good and their code of ethics strict'. I am aware of the ethical responsibilities I have to the research volunteers. I have taken every possible step to minimise any harm and risk, which could have affected research proceedings. The BPS (2014: 13) defines risk as 'the potential physical or psychological harm, discomfort or stress to human participants that a research project may generate'. My approach and actions throughout the research process were informed and abiding by the guidelines specified by the BERA guidelines (2011), British Sociological Statement of Ethical Practice (2017), BPS (2014), and the York St John University Research Ethics Policy.

In this chapter, I have examined, detailed and defended my decision to use autoethnography as my main research methodology. In the next chapter, I will discuss the reasons for leaving my previous employment position. Following this, I registered as the director of Hope Education and Support Services (CIC). Using client dictaphone narrative, I will narrate their learning experiences when attending this alternative educational provision.

3.10 Establishing trustworthiness, rigour and validity in qualitative research

Lincoln and Guba (1985) associate the trustworthiness of inquiry to the researcher's ability to defend against criticism and methodological weaknesses. By tradition, empirical, positivist, and quantitative methodologies frame their research within the paradigms of internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity. Conventional researchers contest non-traditional inquiries on the claim of what counts as 'truth'. Hence, qualitative approaches, including autoethnographic inquiry, encounters continued scepticism. To defend such accusations, the researcher establishes 'confidence in the truth' by drawing on other criteria; these include outlining the credibility, believability, and rigour of the investigation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 290).

Loh (2013: 9) asks, 'what if participants choose to lie? What then?' There is, in research involving taped conversations, always this possibility. Thus, misconstrued, misleading, fabricated, and embellished recollections from the participants present a real concern when undertaking qualitative inquiry. Nonetheless, using professional judgement, and drawing on a range of other theoretical contributions, researchers are challenged with defending the study's integrity and rigour. Furthermore, a two-way process, Tracy (2010: 841) expresses the

need for the investigator to be honest and transparent about their 'biases, goals, and foibles as well as about how these played a role in the methods, joys, and mistakes of the research'. As suggested by Polkinghorne (2007: 474), 'a statement or knowledge claim is not intrinsically valid; rather, its validity is a function of intersubjective judgment'. Loh (2013), interpreting Lincoln and Guba (1985) work, contends that criteria to establishing trustworthiness are ambiguous and open to interpretation; it is dependent on the nature and context of the particular investigation. He also says that trustworthiness criteria should act as a tool to convey understanding and quality to the wider research community.

When evaluating the research's verisimilitude, I will ask the following questions: do I believe the accounts narrated from the research volunteers? Do I believe that the events described have happened? When making this assessment, Polkinghorne (2007: 484) believes the reader should be able to 'retrace the steps in the argument to the text and to judge the plausibility of the offered interpretation'. According to Mishler (1990: 419), the concept of trustworthiness is ground in the researcher's interpretation of the reported observations, analyses and judgements. When reviewing the study's soundness, validation of inquiry denotes the appraisals we make through investigation's ongoing activities, and it is 'embedded within the general flow of scientific research rather than being treated as a separate and different type of assessment'. In the opinion of Polkinghorne (2007: 484):

> The basic idea of validation placed the judgment of the worthiness of a research knowledge claim in readers of the research. It is the readers who make the judgement about the plausibility of a knowledge claim based on the evidence and argument for the claim reported by the researcher.

Data was collected through two primary sources, informal Dictaphone conversations, and written narrative. The research subjects were also knowingly aware that previous data collected would be used at the discretion of the researcher; these conversations and narratives were initially gathered in 2013. They were aware that their involvement was optional; there was no compulsory or forced contribution. Dictaphone discussions could be paused or stopped at any time. Every four weeks, when appropriate, we sat down as a group and engaged in an honest conversation regarding their learning experiences. However, due to sickness and absences, the data collection did vary throughout the research; the direction and flow of the taught content were subsequently altered to accommodate the men's

changing requirements. As highlighted in chapter one, the length of taped conversations and the time allocated to each participant or cohort discussion was dependent on the client[s], they decided the start and finishing time of each taped interview. Furthermore, Mark's writing was handed over to me to read; there were no particular or expected timeframes or deadlines; this varied in accordance with how Mark was feeling. The format of the writing was handwritten and undertaken in his own time, usually in the evenings. Although Craig wrote during group sessions, he preferred to speak on the Dictaphone. More generally, throughout the research, I also collected written narrative completed by the men during workshop activities and sessions. Other data sources included feedback sheets regarding their learning experiences while attending the OPR.

The research participants, all former offenders, were routinely assessed to ensure they remained willing and understanding of their involvement and use of data collected. Due to this inquiry's informal structure, research volunteers would agree on a convenient day and time to discuss their learning experiences. Data was gathered without pre-planned questions or schedules; I did not require any questioning formats to engage the client in conversation. However, I did occasionally have some reflective points from previous sessions or phases of the research, which I would sometimes raise with participants. Moreover, the times and dates of individual and group Dictaphone conversations varied. I did not want to place unnecessary pressure or expectations on the men, I wanted them to feel valued. Although the men were asked to share their experiences, there were occasions when I decided it was not in their best interest to speak on the Dictaphone. Also, due to the low levels of literacy skills among the offending population, there was no expectation that the men would contribute to the research through written narrative (Prison Reform Trust, 2014). The obligation to uphold confidentiality and anonymity was consistently highlighted to the research volunteers. The men were spoken to and assured that the use of pseudonyms would be used in any form of the written narratives.

By allowing the appropriate time and providing the necessary care, the men were immersed into a vibrant and trusting learning community (Lave, 1996); having their voices heard support claims of truthfulness and authenticity of dialogue. Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 4)

emphasise the importance of the 'mutual construction of the research relationship in which both practitioners and researchers feel cared for and have a voice with which to tell their stories'. This learned understanding of the different languages, voices, touches of humour, and silences of each group member, helped support open and honest interactions and communication. In Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 4) view, the men in this investigation were provided a platform 'to tell his or her story so that it too gains the authority and validity that the research story has long had'. Further, this knowledge will be utilised when differentiating and filtering through the content and subsequent significance of emerging themes and discourse; I will take what I consider to be the most credible, truthful and authentic depictions of past biographies and learning while attending the ORP. Although, over long periods of inquiry 'research participants may espouse very different values in interviews than the values they enact in contextual interactions', both sets of data should be deemed as 'being equally ''true'' when assessing the validity and believability of the recorded narrative (Tracy, 2010: 843). When analysing and transcribing the conversations with Mark and Craig, there should remain a consistency to their stories. Shenton (2004: 680) urges the researcher to draw on intuition and sense of knowingness; hence, does the narrative and findings 'ring true'?

At different points in the inquiry, the research volunteers were spoken to and asked to amend and clarify any contradictions of events and happenings they felt were misrepresentative of their learning and lives; Mark and Craig were routinely consulted and spoken to privately. Replacing the conventional criterion of reliability with dependability, the naturalist investigator will take 'into account both factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design induced change' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 299). In my work with Mark, Craig, Benny, Terry and Martin, unexpected changes in their circumstances, including the possibility of relapse, were ongoing research concerns. However, by working with the men over an extended period and by permitting them the freedom to return to the group in the event of absences, this was one means to accommodate this. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 302) highlight the need for the researcher to work with participants over a prolonged period to 'detect and take account of distortions that might otherwise creep into the data'. Throughout the time spent educating, supporting and getting to know the men, I am confident I will be able to spot 'distortions based on his or her own a priori values and constructions'. Highlighting several

factors and steps which support the claim of believability, truthfulness and verstehen, Lincoln and Guba (1985: 324) maintain:

> First, the auditor is concerned with the appropriateness of inquiry decisions and methodological shifts: Are these identified, explicated, and supported? Inquirer bias is again reviewed to determine the extent to which the inquirer resisted early closure (early closure suggests too much dependence on the inquirer's own a priori constructs), the extent to which all data have been accounted for and all reasonable areas explored, the extent to which decisions about the conduct of the inquiry may have been overly influenced by practical matters such as arbitrary sponsor deadlines or client interests, and the extent to which the inquirer endeavored to find negative as well as positive data.

We are asked by Mishler (1990: 420) to consider criteria such as trustworthiness and validation as 'particular ways of warranting validity claims rather than as universal, abstract guarantors of truth'. The written data obtained will be cross-referenced against the data collected from individual and group Dictaphone conversations; I will look for inconsistencies and contradictions in their accounts. When assessing the validity of the data, Shenton (2004: 66) asks the researcher to draw on the different data sources to confirm that the 'individual viewpoints and experiences can be verified against others, and ultimately, a rich picture of the attitudes, needs and behaviour of those under scrutiny may be constructed based on the contributions of a range of people'. A key learning principle was the trust and honesty developed between the research volunteers. Due to this, I contend that any attempts to embellish and fabricate events knowingly would have been challenged at different stages of the inquiry. The men, who had previously attended the same services at different phases of their recovery, were familiar with the same key workers. Thus, the names, dates, and details communicated between the men should remain consistent throughout; this will reinforce the criteria of trustworthiness, believability and verisimilitude of the men's accounts.

An excellent point is made by Tracy (2010: 837), who suggests that 'each criteria of quality can be approached via a variety of paths and crafts, the combination of which depends on the specific researcher, context, theoretical affiliation, and project'. Throughout the study, the dialogue between myself and the research volunteers was vibrant, effortless, and without restriction, collating thick credible data was a key requirement of this investigation. By allowing the men the necessary time to explore their lives, Polkinghorne (2007: 481) believes

the men 'bring more of their experienced meaning into awareness than appears in an initial reflection'. He also says that developing trusting relationships helped blur the boundaries that commonly exist between researcher and participant; the words conveyed and the tone and depth of discourse captured pertains greater authenticity and credibility. Additionally, being attentive to the men's needs helped 'bring to the fore more of the intricate multiplicity of an experienced meaning' (Polkinghorne, 2007: 481).

According to Morrow (2005: 252), when gauging the rigour of qualitative research inquiry 'credibility is said to correspond to internal validity in quantitative approaches, transferability to external validity or generalizability, dependability to reliability, and confirmability to objectivity'. Further, she says these corresponding standards of rigour should not be used to achieve the same goals as in traditional research inquiry. In her analyses of credibility, the nature and duration of researcher and participant relationship, the focused and persistent monitoring and observation by the researcher, and critical reflection, help meet the standards associated with claiming trustworthiness. Although data cannot be generalisable in the conventional sense, Morrow (2005: 252) emphasises that 'transferability' is achieved when the researcher contributes a personal insight. In the opinion of Tracy (2010: 845), 'transferability is achieved when readers feel as though the story of the research overlaps with their own situations and they intuitively transfer the research to their own actions'. According to Morrow (2005: 252), other supporting criteria include information regarding the research context, methodology, background of participants, and details informing the quality of relationships between the researcher and research volunteers. She describes dependability as the tracking, logging and management of the incoming data; through the research activities, the 'influences on the data collection and analyses; emerging themes, categories, or models; and analytic memos' need detailing. To warrant the claim of 'confirmability', she says the researcher needs to write an authentic and truthful account of the research proceedings. Thus, the integrity of the investigation lies in the data and 'analytic processes, and findings in such a way that the reader is able to confirm the adequacy of the findings'.

Working side by side with the men to plant vegetables and repair derelict sections of the farm, I monitored and logged other aspects, dimensions and attitudes of the research volunteers. The unintended comments, humour, off the cuff responses, things that pleased, displeased and so forth, are additional and invaluable sources of data; thus aiding the credibility,

authenticity, and rigour of the research findings. This insight, routinely overlooked and neglected in conventional studies, acted as a research tool and guide when broaching sensitive and difficult conversations with Craig and Mark; it helped inform how best to navigate the direction, content and flow of dialogue. Tracy (2010: 84), considering the claim of rigour, asks whether, on face value, the research is perceived as being reasonable and justified. To achieve rigour she proposes the following criteria:

- Are there enough data to support significant claims?
- Did the researcher spend enough time to gather interesting and significant data?
- Is the context or sample appropriate given the goals of the study?
- Did the researcher use appropriate procedures in terms of field note style, interviewing practices, and analysis procedures?

In agreement with Tracy (2010: 842), 'accessing tacit knowledge takes significant time in the field. The longer researchers are present and closely watching, the more likely they are to notice a culture's values'. The extensive time dedicated to gathering, understanding, and interpreting the data is regarded by Mishler (1990: 426) as not a 'weakness but rather a hallmark of interpretive research in which the key problem is understanding how individuals interpret events and experiences'. By allowing the men the necessary time to grow and transform, the research aim was to obtain the types of micro-interactions that often go unnoticed when employing other research methodologies. Moreover, by working in a caring and trusting manner, the men were encouraged to 'talk of their experiences without fear of losing credibility' (Shenton, 2004: 66). As highlighted, in agreement with the participants, the analysed data was returned at various stages to read; it is important that the findings are articulated, expressed and represented authentically. According to Loh (2013: 6), member checking accords research volunteers the opportunity to confirm, amend, or dispute researcher findings; often, the meaning conveyed may need reformatting and clarifying. On the other hand, he says some participants choose to 'create a more positive self-image when they refute or disagree with my interpretations'. To support the claim of trustworthiness, he deems it a moral and ethical right to 'allow the participants to have a look at their data and the interpretations derived from it, and offer their views regarding them'. Ensuring the men

were involved during this process is perceived by Lincoln and Guba (1985: 314) as 'the most crucial technique for establishing credibility'.

Mishler (1990: 420), questions whether 'truth' can ever be claimed by the researcher; 'social worlds are endlessly being remade as norms and practices change'. He also says that trustworthiness, as opposed to truth, moves research inquiry away from 'its traditional location in a presumably objective, nonreactive, and neutral reality, and moves it to the social world – a world constructed in and through our discourse and actions, through praxis'. Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 4) speak of the multiple levels of reality that are embedded in narrative and storytelling text; a 'person is, at once, engaged in living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories'. Acknowledging the difficulty of obtaining authentic narrative, they consider the task is made easier when 'people are both living their stories in an ongoing experiential text and telling their stories in words as they reflect upon life and explain themselves to others'. Due to the trusting relationships established with the research volunteers, I am confident that their responses, feedback, and feelings regarding the narrative are genuine; the men knew of my intentions to portray them sincerely and truthfully. To establish the data's confirmability, Lincoln and Guba (1985: 314) say that the findings must be 'grounded in the data' and interpreted in an appropriate and carefully considered manner. Furthermore, as advised by Tracy (2010: 842), I will interrogate my own 'predilections or opinions' during the writing up of this thesis.

As advocated by Lincoln and Guba (1985: 314), the research subjects were permitted the opportunity to 'correct errors of fact and challenge what are perceived to be wrong interpretations'; the men were left with sections of writing that varied in depth and volume to read over at their leisure. Viewed as being good practice by Mishler (1990: 426), he says that 'instead of assuming a past reality as a criteria, a potential warranty for the validity of my interpretation is whether it makes sense to the respondent'. These research processes are described by Tracy (2010: 844) as 'member reflections. . . which allow for sharing and dialoguing with participants about the study's findings, and providing opportunities for questions, critique, feedback, affirmation, and even collaboration'. In the view of Shenton (2004: 67), this also provided the men the opportunity to question any assumptions 'made by the investigator whose closeness to the project frequently inhibits his or her ability to view it with real detachment'. As documented, by asking for 'clarification and delving ever more

deeply into the meanings of participants, taking the stance of naïve inquirer', I hope, I have captured, as accurately as possible, the complex lives of the men (Morrow, 2005: 255). This is further elaborated on by Shenton (2004: 68), who considers the research benefits of encouraging the men to:

> Read any transcripts of dialogues in which they have participated. Here the emphasis should be on whether the informants consider that their words match what they actually intended, since, if a tape recorder has been used, the articulations themselves should at least be accurately captured.

When deciding on the validity of the study, Polkinghorne (2007) says the researcher must make the assessment appropriate to what he considers acceptable in his analyses to the specific community or culture being researched. In his view, the notion of validity correlates to believability. Speaking about acceptable and unacceptable evidence, he emphasises the need for non-traditional research communities to adopt different criteria for validity; the researcher, dependent on the type of methodology used, is required to justify the reasons and rationale in accordance with the aims of the investigation. In the opinion of Mishler (1990: 418), 'no general abstract rules can be provided for assessing overall levels of validity in particular studies or domains of inquiry'; such assessments are 'a matter of judgement and interpretation'. In Mark and Craig's stories, my claims of authenticity and believability will be supported by rich descriptive narrative. As stated, where possible, I will attempt to communicate their biographies using their language. The need to privilege the voices of the research volunteers with carefully interrelated theory and researcher insight will be developed in the later chapters; required is a balance between 'the investigator's interpretations and supporting quotations from participants' (Morrow, 2005: 256). As advised by Polkinghorne (2007: 476), using rich narrative to tell the histories of the men will help to validate the research. He further says that 'the claim is valid if the evidence and argument presented convinces me that the claim is justified'. Moreover, he also places the responsibility of presenting and articulating the persuasive writing firmly with the researcher. Hence:

> If the claim is that a person's story describes the anguish that the person has experienced about a personal rejection, then I also look to the supporting evidence and argument given by the researcher (Polkinghorne, 2007: 476).

When determining the authenticity and plausibility of the stories presented, Polkinghorne (2007: 477) asks the reader to make 'judgements on whether or not the evidence and argument convinces them at the level of plausibility, credibleness, or trustworthiness of the claim'. As maintained by Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 4), the criteria used to defend the use of narrative inquiry should not be squeezed by the researcher into the 'language created for other forms of research'. They further believe that 'each inquirer must search for, and defend, the criteria that best apply to his or her work'. Thus, in this research, the claim for rigour will be aligned with the 'pragmatic considerations' of autoethnographic inquiry (Mishler, 1990: 419). In agreement with Polkinghorne (2007: 478), when crafting complex writings, 'the researcher can describe ways in which his or her background experiences produced understandings through interaction with the text'; I will draw on my own experiences as a former offender, and my knowledge of the men to make these judgements; this is common when using autoethnography. Storied texts, which describe the personal meaning people attribute to events and happenings, are viewed by Polkinghorne (2017: 479) as 'the best evidence available to researchers about the realm of people's experience'. I will articulate in detail the emotive and evocative aspects of the participant's lives that I consider is most appropriate to conveying truth and plausibility. Polkinghorne (2007: 479) believes:

> Storied evidence is gathered not to determine if events actually happened but about the meaning experienced by people whether or not the events are accurately described. . . Storied texts serve as evidence for personal meaning, not for the factual occurrence of the events reported in the stories.

Polkinghorne (2007: 481) considers that participants are more 'open to sharing their experienced meanings if they trust that the interviewer is open to accept their felt meanings without judgment'. During my time with the men, they were never placed under any undue pressure to contribute; they knew their participation was voluntary. As detailed, the research volunteers were permitted the necessary time to read the transcribed individual and group conversations. To help the research volunteers fully appreciate and comprehend the depth, context, and meaning of the data, they were provided their stories in written form; alterations were made to the writings if requested by the men. By revisiting the stories told, myself and the men were able to 'restory earlier experiences as we reflect on later experiences so the stories and their meanings shift and change over time' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990: 9). What

should remain consistent throughout the research are the key biographical moments believed by the men to have attributed to crime, substance misuse and unfulfilled lives. Thus, when transcribing the data, I require repeated consistency; earlier recollections ought to correlate to the same stories told at a later date. I will, as suggested by Morrow (2005: 256), ensure there is:

> Repeated readings of transcripts, listening to tapes, and review of field notes and other data. These repeated forays into the data ultimately lead the investigator to a deep understanding of all that comprises the *data corpus* (body of data) and how its parts interrelate.

Chapter 4
Establishing a learning community for former offenders

4.1 Chapter introduction

I begin this chapter by detailing a comprehensive description of my working career. I provide the reader with a summary of previous employment roles and responsibilities since gaining work as a tutor/mentor working with marginalised service users.

Through a thoughtful examination, I recall my reasons for resigning from my previous place of employment. Drawing on these experiences, I explain and detail the unethical and immoral practices of offender ETE organisations, which, in my view, rendered my position untenable.

My quest to challenge morally unjust educational values, and my rationale and conviction for establishing Hope Education and Support Services are discussed. Detaching from conventional teaching and modes of learning, I illustrate my fears, concerns and trepidations concerning this new venture.

Using the two story narratives, this chapter will articulate the research volunteers' experiences of this alternative learning community. The clients discuss their initial and ongoing feelings and thoughts of being educated in a non-traditional and informal teaching context and setting; they speak about the advantages of applying person-centred teaching methods and pedagogies.

4.2 Overview of my working career

For ten years I was involved in teaching, supporting and progressing young people who were not in employment, education and training, and also worked as an education mentor for the Youth Offending Team (YOT hereafter). In September 2010, when employed as a NEET tutor in south Manchester, the government introduced a series of funding changes to the adult/post 16 private sector. Almost immediately, the knock-on effect of these changes could be seen to be detrimental to the young person. In the lead up to the formal introduction of these changes, and during numerous meetings, we were spoken to by senior management regarding the importance of assessing client suitability; hence, emphasis was now on their capacity to achieve accreditation with a view to draw down funding. Moving forward, learning

private sector education provisions were now to be funded based on client achievements, as opposed to how often they attended, as had been the situation previously.

This political intervention had profoundly negative consequences for those young adults who were unable to generate profit, and many were subsequently refused access onto NEET programmes. This also impacted on many of my former colleagues who had dedicated years to this challenging strand of learning; they harboured a personal passion for changing the lives of otherwise excluded young adults. On witnessing the after-effects of such unjust politically motivated changes, many felt unable to work within a system which was further contributing to the alienation of this already socially disadvantaged generation. Over the coming months, I watched as numerous concerned professionals left this sector of education. For those who stayed, gone was the time spent tending to the personal and social needs of those most vulnerable. Senior management pressures resulted in students being rushed through qualifications; income was now of obvious importance, and the quality and depth of client growth, through lifelong learning, was now secondary.

In 2012, after eight-years service, I resigned from my post as NEET Tutor. In the main, I believed that lifelong learning was now being conducted in a business framework and arena, which was further alienating the individual (Griffith and Varbelow, 2012). I then agreed to the position of education and employment mentor for the YOT in Manchester city centre. As an outcome of the practices I introduced, many of the young adults successfully advanced into further education, training and employment. The progression figures indicated that for the duration of my employment there, 100% of the client group with whom I had worked advanced into a positive and meaningful social pathway. Due to this success, I noticed myself being continuously questioned and scrutinised, my practice and pedagogy were subsequently a cause of concern for other colleagues who were unable to achieve similar results. As a consequence of such a restricting environment, I decided to pursue other employment possibilities.

In April 2013, I began working as an education link worker/mentor for CRP. CRP is a nationwide education provider who enrols and educates people with complex biographies.

All of the clients who registered onto the programme were either ex-offenders, drug and/or alcohol service users. The Bradford project was established in 2008 using an investment of £100,000 from the Hadley Trust (Crisp, Reeve and Parr, 2009). On commencing employment, I was advised by a senior manager to read previous research conducted on the project by CRESR (Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, 2009). The research was titled 'Evaluation of Bradford CRP Education, Training and Employment Services'.

The study involved a three core method of collating and analysing the data:

- An in-depth interview with six service users
- Telephone interviews with five local agencies that refer service users to, or have a knowledge of the CRP
- Analyses through monitoring the client data

The aim of the research was to:

- Identify the experiences and outcomes for service users
- Assess the 'success factors' where the peer mentoring programme contributes to positive change
- Gauge the value of the service from the perspective of local agencies in the substance misuse field
- Assess the extent to which there is a need for a specialist ETE project in Bradford for people with a history of substance misuse (Crisp, Reeve and Parr, 2009: 9)

There were two flexible pathways used by CRP to progress and develop clients into employment. These were to:

- Provide standard information, advice and guidance (IAG) service for individuals who were ready for work and looking to move directly into some form of ETE. This service helped users locate work, update CVs, and prepared them for interviews. Staff would also refer the clients to other education and training providers if required.

- An accredited Peer Mentoring Programme. To develop the client's skills to find employment, the programme was divided into four key stages. These were the service user's progression group, peer mentoring roles, work placements and voluntary work experience.

While enrolled, clients were provided with the opportunity to complete a Level 2 Diploma in Work Skills. Although still involved in the educational aspect of the programme, my primary role was to mentor and advance clients into suitable education and employment. Within reason, I was allowed to develop this role, entrusted to make decisions, and bring innovative ideas to the table. Initially, I was never questioned with regards to the reasons and rationale central to my working practice or the strategies I introduced. Although I was conscious I had to peddle my practice within a structured and bureaucratic educational framework, I thrived and excelled in my new role. The positive impact I made prompted a request from the management team, enquiring whether there was any scope for me to travel to other locations and mentor their existing staff; this would have involved the sharing of the methods of good practice which had proved so successful.

4.3 The period leading to the resignation

I would now like to explain the key moments responsible for my decision to resign from my last paid employment role at CRP. Having just completed a one-to-one mentoring session, I was sitting at my desk updating case notes onto the CRP database. At this point, a senior member of staff requested that I look at my current caseload and update the system with those clients with whom I was no longer working. Since my appointment, this was the first time I had been instructed to remove clients from the system; this task had previously been the sole responsibility of the senior management. Used to secure and apply for new funding, the statistical data outlining the positive progressions of service users must be accurate and correct. While systematically clicking through and updating the system, I began reading the notes from one particular male, somebody I had worked with for over twelve months. I explained that he was one of the very few I had lost contact with; I suspected he had relapsed.

When enquiring as to the most appropriate tab on the CRP system, I was informed that ''I am not allowed to put a client down as not progressing''. After a few minutes reflecting and

digesting on this instruction, and wanting to ensure clarity, I asked them to further elaborate on what had just been communicated. The senior manager then went on to explain that for six years as a manager they had been reluctant to sign a client off the programme as a non-success. Therefore, during this period, there had been a skewering of data; thus, a consistently inaccurate flow of statistical information had been sent to funders and commissioners. Another colleague, and personal friend of this individual for many years prompted me to conform, insisting that ''it is just the way it has always been done''. In hindsight, I now understand why I was never previously instructed to remove a client from the system. Towards the end of my employment at CRP I also began to notice some other inputting issues.

During August 2014, I resigned from my post at CRP. Without a doubt, there was a culture of unethical practices, which had been unchallenged for many years. Over the next four months, the organisation conducted a detailed investigation with the evidence collated. Although one of the senior managers urged me to relocate to another training centre, I declined this offer. As the investigation drew to a close, I received the following letter on 23rd December 2014.

I am writing further to the formal grievance that you have raised prior to leaving the organisation in August 2014.

We take all grievances very seriously and have therefore taken time to undertake a full and thorough investigation. I can now advise that the investigations carried out following your meeting on 30th July and subsequent telephone conversations have now been concluded.

The finding of that investigation was that your grievance was upheld and appropriate processes have subsequently and duly been followed.

Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in providing you with this outcome.

When initially leaving this secure employment role, I did endure unending sleepless nights, analysing and questioning whether I had made the right decision. I was overwhelmed with a feeling that I had abandoned those with whom I had fostered meaningful relationships.

4.4 Introduction to the research volunteers

Mark's story: an in-depth narrative

I was introduced to Mark in April 2013. Mark was graduating for another service programme in Bradford; he had successfully completed a twelve weeks alcohol reduction programme. Still employed at CRP, my manager requested that I attend the graduation; it presented the opportunity to meet potential new clients. Speaking to the staff, they felt that everything had been done to support Mark; they spoke of numerous challenges they had faced. A key figure and role model to other service users, he would often be their voice; being abusive, inpatient and challenging were all the attributes that defined him; I was aware of the reputation which proceeded him.

Over many years, he had engaged locally and nationally with different services; once he became bored or his treatment had come to an end, he would move onto the next service provider. After introducing myself, I could smell the alcohol on his breath; it was evident he was intoxicated. Left feeling rather bemused, the graduation day was to celebrate being abstinent for twelve weeks. However, despite this, and in contrast to how he had been perceived, he was polite and exceptionally well mannered. I instantly warmed to him. I was intrigued; he had the audacity to turn up at his own service user graduation day intoxicated.

One of eight children, his mother died when he was a young boy. Raised in the working-class community of Bradford, his early education was extremely negative; Mark describes the physical abuse, which characterised his experiences of formal education. Throughout his childhood, he spent extensive periods in the care system. Over numerous years, he suffered horrific abuse; those in authority silenced these heinous actions. A repeat offender, more than a decade of his life, had been spent incarcerated. Trapped in a cycle of offending and substance misuse for over three decades, he has attended several rehabilitation centres across the country. A father of ten children, relationships with his children were fragmented. Except for his youngest child, he has infrequent contact with his kids.

Craig's story: an in-depth narrative

The second in-depth narrative involved Craig. Approaching forty years old, he had lived in the

Bradford area of West Yorkshire since being born. One of ten children, his father died when he was two years old. Shortly after, his mother, left with the sole responsibility, agreed for Craig to be separated from his siblings; chapter seven recollects the lifelong adverse consequences this entailed. Raised by a friend of the family, the reasons for this have never been discussed or explained. As a young boy growing up, he drifted away from education and was drawn to like-minded peers, who similar to himself, experienced a freckles, rebellious and disengaged childhood. On reaching his teenage years, he began experimenting with various substances; this initial intrigue was to have a devastating impact for the next twenty five-years. Moving between different modes of manual labour, work became irregular and unsteady; a father to one child, this created family and financial issues. A heroin and crack cocaine user for nearly two decades, he financed his escalating habit through the proceeds of crime; he had become locked in an underclass subculture.

Craig was referred to CRP by another provision in the Bradford region. I immediately warmed to him; we engaged in an honest and open conversation in relation to his current struggles with substance abuse. A service user for many years, he communicated his frustration; conveyed were his feelings towards the lack of support and empathy running through the services. Drawing on my own past, I was intuitively able to relate to the words conveyed. A discontented and disgruntled figure, he spoke of wanting to work with somebody who genuinely cared. He described how previous service user relationships had ended in similar circumstances. I felt I could support Craig. I knew he was lost and needed direction; I embraced the opportunity to work with him.

In this research, four other research volunteers agreed to take part. Terry, Benny and Martin had initially enrolled at CRP. Chris joined the group shortly after setting up Hope Education and Support Services.

I was introduced to Terry in 2015. An alcoholic for innumerable years, he was in the later phases of his reduction programme. Living alone, and without children, his father had committed suicide when he was a teenager. For the first six months, Terry was cautious, reserved and distant. Often, dialogue centred on his experiences when attending other service user provisions. Negative and damming in his assessment, he voiced his discontent scathingly and scornfully. Maintaining a careful and guarded approach, I felt he was waiting

for me to slip up, to deceive him in some way; this would have reinforced the biases and negative stereotypes he held towards the services. I knew there would be no second chances if I were found to be untrustworthy, deceptive, or unreliable. An isolated man, he spoke of the triggers which his environment contained; he was conscious of how easy it would have been to relapse on any day, and at any given time.

I was introduced to Benny when working for CRP. A man in his early fifties, he was raised in an Irish traveller family. Describing the majority of his childhood and youth as being unconventional, many years were spent on the road. He recalled the sense of freedom which traveller life brought; the family, along with the horses and traditional wooden Irish caravans travelled around different parts of Britain, picking up manual employment along the way. Due to this, he never attended school; he had the same numeracy and literacy capacity of a young child. A sufferer of mental health for many years, his symptomologies were being masked through various GP administered medication. Although living independently, his sister provided additional support; she ensured finances were up to date and bills were being paid. Without this support, other Social Service care would have been required. A lifelong and repeat offender, he had stayed out of trouble for several years. An anxious and rather timid man, ill health had taken its toll. For various reasons, Benny had concerns returning to education.

I first met Martin after a few months into my employment with CRP; he had been referred from another offender and substance misuse provision. A few years previously, Martin had been the victim of a serious assault. Spending a considerable period in the hospital, he was fortunate to be alive. According to Martin, this incident had left him psychologically and emotionally affected. As a result of this, he never drove again or felt able to return to work. On the rare occasion, when he did leave his home, he would suffer panic attacks and bouts of vomiting. An extremely articulate man, he drank excessively in his house. In conversation, he expressed his sense of unhappiness and helplessness; this defined his then existence. Residing in a quiet and secluded area, Martin had, over numerous years, detached from the outside world; a lonely figure, he spoke of feeling trapped and imprisoned within his home. To support Martin, I collected him from his home and returned him following each session; this continued until he was able to make the journey by himself. A sincere and honest man,

he agreed to be on the board of directors for Hope Education and Support Services. An excellent role model, Martin harboured a passion for helping others.

Chris joined the group shortly after securing new premises at the Offender Rehabilitation Project. A practical man, who was comfortable working outdoors, his time was allocated to fixing and repairing sections of the farm that had fallen into disrepair; he also supported the staff in the growing and harvesting of different produce. A low-risk offender, and existing volunteer at the ORP, he had suffered from mental health complications for decades; both medication and therapy had been offered and accepted at various points in his treatment and recovery. Chris lived at home with both parents; they provided the necessary support for him to lead a stable and uncomplicated life. A shy and unconfident man, through general conversation, his desire to try new things and to change the direction of his life became evident. Similar to the other men, he held negative perceptions towards education. Recalling the details of the enduring abuse suffered at school; other pupils had relentlessly targeted him for bullying. When not volunteering at the ORP, he preferred the sanctuary of his home; I knew he was fragile, it was crucial I provided him with the necessary encouragement and support.

4.5 My quest to challenge morally unjust educational values

After a brief period, wallowing around and hesitating on what lay ahead, I decided to register as the director of a Community Interest Company. This alternative approach, informed by my own experiences as a professional, raised and tackled a fundamental concern as to what counts as appropriate ETE provisions for the offending community. Moreover, throughout the period of application, stemming from my initial inquiry to the formalised registration of the group, I dedicated many hours with different clients, identifying and considering exactly what they required a learning programme to entail. Dialogue centred on understanding what content of learning they perceived to be relevant, and what they needed from a practitioner; I wanted to represent the voice of the service user. Therefore, Martin (service user), with whom I had already been working, consented to become a member on the board of directors; he continued this role throughout this study.

To coincide with this, I spent this period visiting different organisations in Bradford, discussing with practitioners the procedure for signposting clients to this alternative educational provision. Once established as Hope Education and Support Services (CIC), the response was overwhelming, and throughout the next few months, there was regular contact with the various provisions, followed by a steady flow of clients. Moreover, the cohort of service users with whom I had formed relationships while employed at CRP, decided to register and attend this new service. I always believed that if I can lead a non-offending life, others who may also be struggling to envisage a future of hope, purpose and meaning, could benefit from my lived experiences. I wanted to ensure that all those involved in this project felt of equal value from the outset; an essential originality of this research lies in the fact that the offenders will contribute in the development and application of teaching and learning.

To secure regular premises, I contacted the manager of the Offender Rehabilitation Project. ORP is an alternative educational provision catering for young people who have been excluded from the education system; issues generally include behavioural, emotional and learning difficulties. The manager was aware of the benefits for marginalised individuals and cohorts, when engaged in activities that encourage and promote personal growth and wellbeing. Recognising the value of working with these men, he believed there should be a place in society for the vulnerable; he agreed to help out, hence allowed the group to access free training facilities. Working with the support of the ORP, situated in the heart of Bradford, West Yorkshire, we occupied a training room, and a space was made available to organise and deliver client training sessions. To coincide with this, we, in turn, agreed to help out their organisation; thus, we provided labour and other assistance on the farm. This comprised of erecting fences to keep animals such as horses, goats and sheep contained; other jobs involved repairing certain outdoor sections of the farm which had fallen into decline.

Moving to a new educational setting was a challenging experience. My main trepidation and concern were that my group, who had followed me to two different educational settings would lose confidence, not in my ability as a practitioner, but at the lack of secure accommodation. Understandably, I knew they required a learning hub which they could associate to and feel at home; this holds equal importance to any lesson plan or scheme of

work. Furthermore, they required care and empathy, enticing them with a welcoming and embracing aura, a space in which we can share and express the emotions; established was a 'therapeutic culture' (Swan, 2008: 386) to reminisce and express our experiences of life. As a cohort, we referred to this aspect of the education as 'offender sharing'.

It is commented upon by Marquardt and Waddill (2004) that a facilitator who places more emphasis on the cohort's learning experiences and development will encourage greater interaction and unity. Although it was important to engage in ETE concepts as a group, I was also accommodating of their individual needs during this process. To me, it makes sense that the ambiance echoes and reflects the innocence which we require for self-revelation, hence, after all, 'writing about your experiences is so tied to your life course that you have to be in a certain space to feel comfortable to write' (Carpenter, 2010: 9). Terry summarises the transitional period from CRP to securing new premises. He also offers his perspective and opinions on the learning culture:

Terry: Tuesday 8th September, 2015: I was sceptical about it (starting at CRP), I did not know what to expect with it, I did not have a clue. On that first day when I went in, I think there were about fifteen or twenty people all sat around in that big room, and I did not know what to expect. So I just went in and sat down. And then after that, I think there were a few sessions there, and then you finished with CRP, and then we went up to that place up at Allerton. And then we eventually got that room at the farm, and I have just been coming ever since.

I don't treat it as like education though. I don't know. Like when you pull papers (worksheets) out and stuff, I don't treat that as education really. I don't, I don't think of it like that, I don't know why.

Researcher: Tuesday 8 Sept, 2015: Why do you see it as different?

Terry: Tuesday 8th September, 2015: It is not being done like that. Yes we are in a classroom, but it is not being run like that. Like you say, for certain ones who are there, you say well if you don't want to do it, then fair enough. Like certain ones are struggling with their reading and

writing, and there relaxed, and their still in the room, and they are still coming so something must be going on all right because if they felt uncomfortable, they would not come would they? I know that it is education in a way, but it is not treated like education. It is like a different strain of education. It is like when we get the papers in front of us, there might be four or five paragraphs, you read through them and make sense out of them, and then you put your answers. But, I don't know, it is not like being at school or at college when you have got to sit down, and you have got to do this, and you have got to do that. I don't know, I think that is why people take more in if it is more of a relaxed atmosphere than one that is an official thing that you must do this, and you must do that.

Essential to creating a warm teaching environment was ensuring that my research volunteers were embraced before any actual teaching took place. Formal education tends to get straight down to business, with targets to hit, teachers are overly keen to engage the students formally. Also, practitioners incorrectly presume the transmission of knowledge and understanding is only possible through formal and rigid learning processes (Lave, 1996). However, through personal and professional experience, I knew that a high percentage of adult service-learners with emotional and psychological difficulties learn through other means and methods. These are often incompatible with the teaching and values of traditional education that progress students towards economic success, achievement and accreditation though modern westernised curriculum values and content. Due to this, I perceive warmth, consideration and affection as paramount in this transitional process. Chris, a man in his late forties, was referred to the group from another organisation. After working with him for the previous three years, they felt his progress had come to a halt; if anything, it was beginning to suffer. Chris communicates his initial recollections when starting this group.

Researcher: Monday 7th December 2015: How were you feeling coming into the group?

Chris: Monday 7th December, 2015: Well, I must admit I was a bit nervous when you first said come in we are doing a bit of education. I was thinking oh, is it going to be exams and I was getting a bit…But once I got there, I thought, oh no, it is not like that. I relaxed a bit. I don't know if you noticed but, at first, probably for half an hour or so, I did not say much did I? I

think I was just gauging what was happening, and then I did join in at the end, didn't I? With anything new, I will find out what is going on, and then I will settle down and start talking.

Mark, one of the more vocal volunteers, highlighted the feelings he still harboured towards his early learning experiences of formal education:

Mark: Wednesday 28th October, 2015: Education is supposed to be the best days of your life. I have heard a lot of people say to me that they wish they were back at school. They said that to me years ago, and I have turned around and said are you fucking mad? You wish you were back at fucking school? Are you on drugs? Because I hated school, but I really hated school. But what I am doing now is education, and I love doing this, and I could do this every day, I would do this every day, that (this) is education. But going to school when I was at school was nothing, it was a sentence, that's what it was.

This settling in period was also an opportunity for me to informally assess the level and extent of any personal and academic issues, which need consideration before we commenced learning. Individual members of the group were also encouraged to voice, discuss or raise anything they felt might be of relevance; again, preference or prejudice was given to none. I also took into account the importance of spending time with each member of the group, ensuring that they perceived themselves as valued. I have always assumed the viewpoint that regardless of academic ability, the voices, needs and aspirations of the students should be embraced and respected at all times, they are therefore my equal as individuals.

If I am honest, there was residing guilt in the aftermath of my departure from CRP. To help overcome this, it was imperative we reunited once more; the only tangible change was the location. Informed by Lave and Wenger (2009), the community of practice we had created felt so natural. It was neither forced nor dictated, a genuine care and togetherness was underpinning the times we spent together. Granted, I still needed to ensure that formalities such as planning and preparation of learning material were taken care of; this was, however, secondary to the joys which education can bring, when unburdened and free from the target

driven culture in which I have felt constrained for over a decade. This is communicated on further by Terry in the extracts below.

Researcher: Tuesday September 22nd, 2015: Do you feel it is important to have a social aspect to education?

Terry: Tuesday September 22nd, 2015: Yes because in our group, I know it is only a small group but the people who are there, are there because they want to be, not because they have been forced into it. When you are not being forced into it, you look at it differently. If you are forced into it (education) you think, fuck that. Especially when you are younger, you rebel against it, don't you? You play up to your teacher and stuff, and end up getting detentions and that sort of shit. But up there (at the farm) it is a more relaxed informal social gathering, rather than an intense education.

As practitioners, we have numerous pedagogical strengths and weaknesses, which are complemented by the methods and strategies we have tried and tested. All too often, and something I have seen over many years, are those professionals who are neglectful, and unaware of how significant their early interactions with clients are. For years, I have observed them rushing from appointment to appointment, with time management being their primary concern, the implications for the individual is often forgotten. Absent minded and burdened with heavy workloads, they negate and fail to embrace these early opportunities with both hands. This initial, and potentially most important dialogue is brushed aside; nothing of personal relevance is either raised or explored with the client in any great depth. Such moments can never be reversed, and the impact will remain detrimental to future relations. I have always valued these initial meetings. Terry, a volunteer in the group for many months, recalls his early perceptions of meeting me. Although contact dwindled at one stage, my attitude and approach ensured we were able to develop relationally at a later date. During the first Dictaphone conversation, I asked him if ''he feels comfortable with the group''. He replied:

Terry: Sunday 14th September, 2014: Yes I do. But I can put it like this, when I first met you, and then I did not hear anything for ages, and then you got in contact, and then I came back

> *up to that place up at Parkland Lane (former CRP premises). If you would have come across to me as being someone with a stiff upper lip, to me, you came across as if you had the right sort of attitude towards people. But if you would have come across like some schoolmaster, I would have thought fuck that, I am not going back there. You come across with the right attitude to me, you talk on our level, you are not looking down your nose.*

I believe that political, social and educational thinking must change if a higher percentage of this dehumanised population is to lead a non-offending life. As Jewkes (2011) observes, it is the dearth of knowledge and understanding which continues to isolate, marginalise and treat offenders as second class citizens. I believe education is the gateway for instilling hope and meaning, and for those willing, life can be viewed from a different perspective, thus encouraging former offenders to lead a non-offending life. Referring to the work of Erich Seligman Fromm (2014), isolation is detrimental to the individual. He believes this is more likely to occur in modern society due to the continuously changing nature and lack of stability inherent in postmodern cultures.

The men in this group, hardened by decades of stigma and unjust treatment, accepted that employers, educators and others, who hold the keys to legitimate avenues back into the heart of society, were unlikely to reach out with open arms. In general, they remain reluctant to forgive and erase the past wrongful ways of living and violation of social norms. Thus, this already marginalised section of society is by and large forever condemned. Nonetheless, and in agreement with Reason and Bradbury (2001: 10), when conducting research, I consider that the 'pedagogy of the oppressed' should be matched against the 'pedagogy of the privileged'. As a starting point, we are urged by Reason and Bradbury (1998: 6) to reassess and contemplate on what we consider to be 'intrinsically valuable in human life; in particular what sort of knowledge, if any, is intrinsically valuable'.

A significant aspect of my pedagogy during the previous thirteen years has been the nature and quality of the relationships I have formed with offenders. I have learnt that my relational approach and ethics, stemming from the values which I possess, prevail as being the greatest inspiration to the people with whom I work and educate. By providing offenders with a voice,

and learning about the wider community barriers responsible for diminished notions of self-confidence, I frame the content and structure of learning around specific and identifiable collective and individual sources of concern and contention. With this in mind, I reflectively and unambiguously foster relational paradigms of learning. Continuously open to change and negotiation, the flux of dialogue informs my understanding; the pauses, silences and flare-ups, all contribute to my evolving and endlessly transforming knowledge. Terry communicates the solidarity and equality of learning in this group.

Researcher: Tuesday 8th Sept, 2015: Do you feel that everybody who comes has a voice and is respected, and gets a chance to learn?

Terry: Tuesday 8th September, 2015: They should have. They should have a voice, everybody should have a voice. It is that some people find it easier to express themselves more than some other people do.

We all give each other a chance. It is like if we are doing a catch-up or how has your week been, we will all sit and we will listen, and then we will question afterward. And then it moves onto the next person. But if you are in a college, they have not got the time to spend on a one-to-one. And people get disillusioned with that.

I feel in no position to patronise, scrutinise or criticise the direction which others have chosen to walk. My role is quite simple. I offer myself to them over a substantial period, supporting and guiding the steps they take towards new adventures; I hope they will discover a more satisfying and fulfilled existence. It is important to note that although I use descriptions such as 'learning cohort' and 'community of practice' when depicting the group of men with whom I worked, not everybody felt a connection and association in the early stages. It is impossible to nurture a culture of learning by force or coercion, how they perceive others, needs to be respected; this inquiry demonstrates the value of time and acceptance. By investing and devoting time, I found the relationships which were nurtured, contained depth and

substance. Moreover, we begin to grow, branching out from a well-established, strong and prosperous foundation, something absent from their early educational endeavours.

As best I can, I feel duty-bound to make them feel appreciated, valued and respected, sacrificing their time and commitment is never taken for granted. As I became more understanding of their needs, I found myself extending their appointment times. Being rushed is a common occurrence in the life of a service user, clock watching is something most practitioners are unaware they are doing. Therefore, lengthening the time we spent together increased the probability of addressing and catering to their needs. This point is elaborated on by Terry when asked if he feels the traditional education system neglects the needs of the mature student. The point I believe he is conveying is that as we age, we require a different approach and type of engagement from those in authority.

Terry: Friday 17TH July, 2015: There is a hell of a difference between somebody of eighteen years old who has left school for college and sixth form. They have still got all that education mindset. And you get somebody fifty-year old who is going back into it (education), it is a hell of a difference. Attitudes are different, learning capabilities are different.

Even though strong attachments have been formed, unveiling and disclosing deep personal meaning, the expression of feelings and thoughts should never be expected; time will decide and determine the degree to which the volunteers feel comfortable in dialogue. Having said this, I found myself being endlessly taken aback, and without warning, relationships often matured from I-It to I-thou (Buber, 1958 [2000]). Developing this nature of relations with likeminded peers has many unpredicted benefits. As highlighted in the two in-depth stories, the intimate bonding and dialogue is for some, the only opportunity they have had to engage educationally with such meaning and passion. This is demonstrated in the following narratives.

Mark: Wednesday 15th April, 2015: To be honest this group is open and understanding. You have got to want to come to the group. There are some services that I have been to, and they

are just passing time, you are not getting anything from it, you feel deflated. Everyone engages, we all do a bit of education, we have a catch-up, and we do a bit of work.

Craig: Wednesday 15th April, 2015: You have to have fun with it instead of being all serious. You can either be too strict with it, or too slack with it (education), but when you find the middle bit, then the group is bang on.

Researcher: Wednesday 15th April, 2015: Craig you said something last week, and you said something on the lines of, that this group is a really close knit-group, it is a strong group?

Craig: Wednesday 15th April, 2015: Well sometimes it is that strong that we are hesitant to let other people in, we do not want to upset the apple cart, this is our little protection.

Later in the conversation: This is an unusual group, it is not what everyone else does, we have got something here what is different to everyone else, because we are open and it is confidential, whatever is said in here stays in here. We don't flip on each other (fall out) with each other because we have got respect for each other.

Later in the conversation: We all work together. When I am in other groups, some of them I have got no respect for. Not in a bad way, but I know what they are up to some of them, and they are talking shit.

Researcher: Wednesday 15th April, 2015: Can education in groups just be about people's life experiences?

Craig: Wednesday 15th April, 2015: I have learnt everything I know from life. I never went to school, I never did any coursework, I think that out of my whole life I did about two pages of writing. I think you (Researcher) have done well because you have opened me right up over these last few months, in a way that when you have had me doing my paperwork, but you have analysed what I have got in practical skills.

One of my first group members Martin recognises and appreciates the togetherness of the cohort. In the account below, he also acknowledges the depth and breadth of dialogue unifying and binding volunteers.

> *Martin: Friday August, 8th 2014: I don't know it is just such a more relaxed environment. I mean, I really liked college and I understand why college education has to have a structure, but to me, it can't be the only way. I mean, some people don't like that formal structure. I don't mind it personally, but I am liking the informal structure more than the formal. Because people are chipping in (verbally contributing), and you are hearing stuff that you would otherwise normally not hear. Like today when people were writing about things which have changed, we oddly came up with the same pattern. So you would not get that from college.*

Eager to delve beneath the surface, I always find it productive and informative to explore their individual stories. In every instance, I approach this aspect of interaction with as limited bias as is achievable. To create knowledge, educators and politicians would benefit immensely by examining the talent, individuality and uniqueness of this complex and diverse group (Thomson and Russell, 2009). Deemed irrelevant and overly time consuming to many of my former colleagues, investing quality time and treating all clients with dignity and respect, was the hook which often gained me access into their world; it is worth noting this also involved giving something of myself. I quickly discovered that forming positive and meaningful relationships is about give and take, without forcing, dictating or demanding conformity. Dialogue, according to Shor and Freire (1987: 98-99):

> Must be understood as something taking part in the very historical nature of human beings…Dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it. Something else: To the extent that we are communicative beings who communicate to each other as we become more able to transform our reality, we are able to know that we know, which is something more than just knowing….Knowing is a social event with a nevertheless an individual dimension. What is dialogue in this moment of communication, knowing and social transformation? Dialogue seals the relationship between the cognitive subjects, the subjects who know, and who try to know…

For years, I had sat back and observed former co-workers display pomposity and arrogance. In their minds, they believed that textbook formulas and theory, transcribed from largely inadequate methodologies, equipped them with the necessary strategies to penetrate the protective exterior of the men and women who live, breathe and die by the code of the street (Anderson, 1999). Lacking the appropriate life experiences and tact, they desperately sought situational control, their pedagogy relying on the power of dominant relationships. Ironically, the extent of this mistreatment and oppression is something which endlessly eludes many service professionals, they persevere with the same conceitedness, arrogantly believing they have a rite of passage to the offenders' inner world. Theorist Hannah Arendt (1998 [1958]) writes about power as being something never owned by any individual. She believes it is established and maintained through the resilience and common cause of the group or social movement. Moreover, she states that as a concept, power 'springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse' (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 2000). This is conveyed by Terry who speaks about the importance of understanding and mutuality in relationships.

Terry: Wednesday 13th May, 2015: Trust. You have to know that the person you are with is not a bullshiter. And they probably have to have a bit of experience of life themselves. It is no good reading it (about life) in a book. There is no point in somebody fifty-year-old going to somebody who is meant to be somebody to help you who is twenty-five years old, and has only read it (about life) for four years out of a book. What life experience have they got, they don't know how you are feeling, they don't know what has gone on. I mean, anybody that uses services are only there because of us.

Researcher: Wednesday 13th May, 2015: So what is lacking in the services between profession and client?

Terry: Wednesday 13th May, 2015: Trust. Understanding a lot of the time.

Researcher: Wednesday 13th May, 2015: As in?

> *Terry: Wednesday 13th May, 2015: If you go into, just say for an example, to Bradford drug and alcohol team, and they have got an attitude, and all they know about what is going on for you is through books, they have no experience of how you are feeling or anything. They don't know what it is like to wake up at four in the morning with your hands shaking. They have got to understand more, and I don't think they do a lot of them (workers).*

Without question, dissimilarities of opinions, perceptions and ontologies will forever exist between client and service professional. Despite this, it is important to acknowledge that often, we are powerless to bridge the gap or/and agree on the diversities and contrasts in the worldviews we hold. Rather than accepting, through compromise, these irreversible human entitlements, to their detriment, it is utilised to maintain the culture of indifference inherent within the services. Deeply rooted and embedded, the men regarded this as being responsible for creating and sustaining the void which is evident, and which has proved problematic for decades. In light of this, the inability of some professionals to probe and scrutinise their ontology is the most debilitating barrier of all; they will never appreciate the uniqueness of those who stand before them. Most offenders are not demanding or high maintenance. In fact, with the appropriate tact, understanding, empathy and genuine respect, the nurturing of meaningful relationships is possible. However, the depth and authenticity can never be foreknown, it does pertain 'different meanings to different people' (Walker and Taylor, 2014: 2), it is relational and dependent on numerous other external and internal variables. For example, being forced to engage in a one-sided relationship, having to be compliant, silent and unnoticed are experiences many clients can associate with.

I never pitied the people I worked with. No matter what, I always looked beneath and beyond the person that confronted me. For me to achieve mutuality of relations, to encourage the honesty I required, it would have been foolhardy and naïve of me to enter into this process blinded by way of this initial observation. I believe every man and woman with whom I have worked, yearned the opportunity to move into a chapter of life that is fulfilling and rewarding. Maynard, Gilson and Mathieu (2012: 1235) believe empowerment can arise from achieving wider social significance, and, is described as being 'a cognitive state achieved when individuals perceive that they are empowered'. Over time, I am made aware of the opportunities which have either been denied, missed or slipped through their fingertips;

decade after decade of pain and regret is slowly drawn out to the surface. Without a doubt, authentic, congruent and empathic relations can water the seeds of potential and possibility. Group member Terry, through various conversations, refers again to the notion of trust. For many of these men, previous learning has been conducted in artificial environments. However, despite this, the example he gives describes how education, even when incarcerated, can relieve solitude and separateness.

Researcher: Wednesday 13th May, 2015: Did you lose trust in education?

Terry: Wednesday 13th May, 2015: I had no faith in school, no faith in it at all. It is going into the unknown again isn't it? Last time I sat in a classroom was 1989, and that was when I was in prison. And I only went there to get out of my bloody cell for the day. It was just getting out, something different. It was not a classroom as such, it was in the library.

When stepping into a new educational setting we aspire to be treated with integrity, we crave somebody to notice the characteristics which make us unique, and we want somebody of stature and authority to emphasise the individual qualities which others overlook. For this to happen, the relationship will need unstructured amounts of time to develop and grow. Bridging the gap between service client and educator has immense potential and incredible promise, this can only happen when both parties are brave enough to sacrifice something of themselves. I asked Terry to envisage a learning environment for ex-offenders, drug and alcohol service users, and one which he could relate to.

Terry: Friday 17TH July, 2015: (Laugh), well the tutors would be able to relate to the students better, which is talking their language, or in my language, so you understand more. There are ways of talking to people. Certain people, they will understand all these big long words. But talk to somebody normal, as you would in a normal conversation, then you are going to get that person's attention then aren't you, because you will know what they are on about. Where if you are using all these big long words, it goes over people's heads. You need to be on a more down to earth level of where the students are. You can have a class load of thirty students and every one of them is different, and everybody will learn at a different stage.

As a group, we challenged the rigid objectivity of the education system, we trialled and sought alternative strategies, we placed purpose and meaning over targets and outcomes. A collective entity brought together through unplanned circumstances, we evolved with mutual respect and understanding. From my experience, the crossing of emotional boundaries is something not encouraged nor advocated in a traditional educational environment. Jewkes (2011: 64) details the reluctance of researchers to 'publicly acknowledge either the autobiographical elements, or the emotional responses' to research involving offenders as 'puzzling'. The focus is often tailored towards the securing of funding through accreditation. My aim was to improve the life chances of the individuals with whom I worked. I believe that common ground has the potential to be found. Thus, this must be considered as the starting point of a sincere and meaningful connection (Mottern, 2012). From this, life-affirming opportunities can flourish, success and progression can take a different route, and the client finds themselves with openings they neither predicted nor planned. This is emphasised on the 29th April 2015, when Mark asks Craig to ''turn the clock back and reflect on the position they find themselves in now''.

Craig: Wednesday 29th April, 2015: I could go back ten months and I would not think I would be in this position. Ten months ago I would have been robbing lead of the roofs, and using drugs every day and grafting (robbing) all I fucking could, without even thinking where I am getting a bag (drugs) from tomorrow, let alone anything else.

Mark: Wednesday 29th April, 2015: So what has changed Craig?

Craig: Wednesday 29th April, 2015: Me, I have changed it, because I want it to. I want a happy life, I want to be happy. I want to enjoy life, I want to earn money from working with my head instead of with my hands. I have grafted (robbed) all my fucking life. I am getting to grips with this growing up stuff because reality is hard. Reality is hard for me because I am used to being drugged up, but I am also used to being drugged up to get through reality. All my teenage years, in my twenties and thirties I have been on gear (drugs). I have matured as a person.

Following a mental health breakdown, Chris has endured a lack of confidence and suffers from continuous bouts of self-deprecation. Nonetheless, I always felt there was a place for him in the group, the mixture of classroom learning and outdoor physical labour appealed to him. Over the coming months, I could see the benefits he was gaining from the attention and support he was receiving from myself and other group members. Being engaged in this caring environment helped Chris to improve self-worth and self-esteem, and for the first time in two decades, he was contemplating returning to paid employment. During a one-to-one appointment on the 13th May 2015, I asked if he was thus far ''enjoying his time at the educational provision?''

Chris: Wednesday 13th May, 2015: Yes I have enjoyed it, all the group seem alright, we all seem to get on alright don't we? And you are getting out with other people, we are talking and having a laugh, and we are working as well in an environment in where you are happy.

Researcher: Wednesday 13th May, 2015: What would you say to those who think that education has to be done in a formal fashion?

Chris: Wednesday 13th May, 2015: I don't know, I don't think it does because I think most people want qualifications for what job they are going for, don't they. I think pushing a lot of education on someone is not a good thing.

When asked to further elaborate on his views on traditional education:

Chris: Wednesday 13th May, 2015: For me, because I am not very good at qualifications and exams, I think it scares me a bit. You know like thinking am I going to fail all the time. But I don't think I would now actually if I did it now because my confidence is high at the moment. So I think whatever I do now, hopefully, I will be alright.

Researcher: Wednesday 13th May, 2015: Was you confident coming into the group?

> *Chris: Wednesday 13th May, 2015:   Well I don't know if you would agree with this, but I think for the first day I was a bit wary, because you do not know how you are going to be judged by other people do you go into a new group.*

Within the academic space we practiced, nothing of rank and status survived, it was left behind. Davies et al. (2013: 86) in their research found that 'dialogue appears to be key to the pedagogical relationship'. When entering the reception area of the training room, either myself or one of my mentors would have been ready to meet and greet; there was just no place for hierarchy. This warming and embracing of clients on arrival was something which helped reduce the trepidations of those most isolated; there was always somebody waiting, happy to see them. I tried when possible to remember one personal detail, appointment or interest they had, the opening dialogue was always warming and unique to them. Yalom (1980) views such fleeting periods as pivotal moments in the relationship between client and therapist. This caring pedagogy appeared to embrace the fears of the group, especially for those who had reengaged back into education at a later life stage. The following statement by Mark pays testimony to this, who appreciated the obvious advantages of a supportive learning culture:

> *Researcher: Wednesday 28th Oct, 2015: Can education be better for somebody to come into in later life?*
>
> *Mark: Wednesday 28th Oct, 2015: It is hard to come into education in later life.*
>
> *Later in the conversation: you need comforting and welcoming. How many times have you walked into a classroom and there has been rows and rows of tables, and it is official. It is not like this (current teaching environment). Because now, I think that in this group we all feed (encourage) of each other. I think school should be like that.*

Over time, and with the appropriate care, support and guidance, they took ownership of their journey in education. Although it is not possible to erase the wrongs of previous learning, hope for some, eventually prevailed. Thus, everybody started to believe in their ability to

contribute to wider society, irrespective of accreditation and criminal convictions. This educational venture, which began quite unexpectedly, was held together in its early stages by the underlying collective resolve. When sourcing new premises, at no time did I feel extensively burdened with pressure, I knew something special had begun to grow. On reflection, this was never about myself; without the support of the men, our learning would have been completed when I departed from CRP. Craig emphasised the advantages of bonding through similar life adventures.

Researcher: Wednesday 9th September, 2015: What are the strengths of the group?

Craig: Wednesday 9th September, 2015: We are supporting each other, and it is understanding. You feel comfortable in talking about your situation, nothing is held back, everyone sharing their problems, and the deepest problems what they have got, probably what they would not talk to other males about or other people about. And for males to feel comfortable with other and to talk about their problems, in truthfulness, it is good because you know that you are not alone in your problems, and plus you can help each other.

Over time, and through much trial and error, we have learned to accept the differences which exist, we understand our strengths as a collective learning cohort; although individuality and expression of opinion were always encouraged through dialogue. However, there remained a purpose and eventual goal unique to every group member. Terry highlights the benefits for the client of feeling accepted and valued:

Terry: Tuesday 22nd September, 2015: I have been coming nearly two years, from CRP. I would say, I come because I want to come and I feel like I am getting something out of it, in ways that I did not think I probably would. I have learnt about myself in some ways.

Since forming the group, most of the research volunteers have moved into various productive and meaningful progressions they previously perceived as either unattainable or far-reaching beyond their capabilities. Provided below are extracts from Terry and Chris, who describe how education when conducted collectively, can have immense benefits for diverse cohorts.

Attending voluntarily, what began as initial intrigue, or as a means of filling the void in time, unfolded into something entirely unexpected; both of these men now had high expectations and aspirations.

Terry: Wednesday 13ᵗʰ May, 2015: From March last year 2014, I have had a lot of distractions, my priorities have completely changed. The stuff that has happened I never thought that I would have been able to do.

I have took a step, and I don't know where that next step is going to lead to. And this step on Monday (college) could lead to all sorts. Because I mean I might be there, and then I might bump into someone with an idea, who might have an idea, and it could come to fruition. I know it sounds daft, but it is a possibility, anything is possible.

On another occasion, reflecting on his future, he noted that:

Terry: Tuesday 8ᵗʰ September, 2015: I never thought of doing anything like I have done. I never even thought about going to college to do a computer course. I mean, that did not work out, but, if I would not have given it a try, I would not have known that it was not going to work. I might have to go through maybe half a dozen, or twenty different things, until I find the thing that clicks, and sinks in, then I might have the potential to be able to do something about it.

We all need something to aim for, it is just finding that thing. Time will tell, but I never thought I would be doing anything like this (further education and contemplating employment).

Chris on Monday 7ᵗʰ December 2015, noted the influence of myself and the other group members.

Researcher: Monday 7ᵗʰ Dec, 2015: Chris, you are now back in college doing a Level one IT course. Do you feel that your growing confidence has helped you get back into education?

Chris: *Monday 7ᵗʰ Dec, 2015: It has helped. I mean, when I talk to people down there (college), my confidence was getting a lot better anyway with working at the farm, but I think with joining the group, it has got even better. I don't think I would have gone into college, the way I was, before joining the group.*

Later in the conversation: I mean I think that it has been you (Colin) that has been the one that has made me feel like this, you have helped me a lot actually, which I think is a good thing. You have helped me with the college course and everything. I don't think that I would join another group, no, unless the people were like the group is now. You have helped me a lot, and you have helped a lot of us in the group actually I think. By what Mark and everybody else was saying, is that if it was not for you, I don't think the group would be there actually.

What emerged from this exploratory account was the significance of relationships. There was strong evidence to support the learning and lifelong benefits of close ties within an educational environment. The men in this research developed something quite unexpected, a unity that was valued and perceived as instrumental in their collective learning environment. They were encouraged, without time restraints, to engage in a substantial learning period of self-discovery. The knowledge generated enabled them to adopt a self-examining and more self-aware understanding; they realised they were not alone in their social and personal circumstances. Taking ownership of their learning culture, rich interactions and dialogue raised personally relevant and important issues and feelings. This acted as a breeding ground for change. Inspired and hopeful, an air of conviction and expectation arose, they were prepared to take hold of the reins of their existence. However, to gain a greater understanding of my influence, I will provide a more thorough and in-depth analysis through two individual in-depth stories in chapters six and seven.

In this chapter, my decision to establish Hope Education and Support Services has been analysed and explored. As evidenced, the men embraced and flourished when participating in a non-traditional teaching and learning environment. In the next chapter, I scrutinise the impact and history of political and governmental policies, including the success of ETE offender programmes. Using relevant literary sources, the individual, social and political

rationale and motivations underlying subculture participation will be investigated; I will conclude by detailing recommendations for future subculture projects.

Chapter 5
Educational, political and sociological analyses and context of research

5.1 Chapter introduction

The opening section of this chapter presents a historical and political overview of offending, research and theory, which attempts to make sense of the moral panic and escalation in crime and deviance spanning the previous four decades. The politicised response, and the government's rationale for the implementation of greater punitive sanctions are examined; this also takes into account the public's general dissatisfaction with what they consider to be ineffective criminal justice measures. I detail and dissect the often contradictory and complex series of government strategies since 2001. What emerges is evidence to support the ineffective and consistent failings in the endeavour to reduce reoffending rates for prisoners. The focus then shifts to the introduction of prison privatisation, the pledge to reduce and to tackle crime, and the move towards rehabilitation and education; policies which advocate a tough stance on repeat offenders will also be discussed.

This chapter provides a summary and rationale for the introduction of ETE programmes in 2003. Following this, I present a personal critique and concise summary of recent government ETE initiatives to reduce offending, the inherent difficulties for offenders when searching for employment are further illustrated and discussed. A theoretical overview of subculture deviancy, and an examination of the relevance and significance of modernist and postmodernist subculture theory is reflected upon.

5.2 Summary of the historical and political overview of offending, research and theory

From the late 1960s, moving into the 1970s, as the prison population continued to rise, political and public perceptions were now adjoined in the belief that reformative and rehabilitative programmes were unsuccessful and inadequate in reducing increasing crime rates; there was 'considerable uncertainty about their effectiveness' (Matthews and Young, 2003: 244). When former Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was elected to

power in 1979, youth unemployment during the early 1980s rose to levels not witnessed in the previous ten years (MacDonald, 2011). Dennis and Erdos (1993) remark how during this period, as unemployment and offending continued to soar, the government voiced their concern regarding dysfunctional and socially detrimental subculture and family values; this targeted and damaging government rhetoric, further demonising the culprits responsible for crime.

Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1987: 3), spoke of the devastation created by crime, at the very least, she maintained how 'crime invades homes; it breaks hearts; it drags down neighbourhoods; and it spreads fear'. In the same speech, she further stated that 'civilised society doesn't just happen. It has to be sustained by standards widely accepted and upheld'. Brake and Hale (1992), accused the Conservative Government of attributing the majority of crime to inner city working class communities; through this damming rhetoric, crime was viewed as stemming from the rational choice of the individual. Moreover, these targeted and harmful political and media depictions and representations were further fuelled by the outbreak of inner-city riots in Liverpool and London (Stitt, 1995). With growing public concern, politicians began to look for alternative ways to reengage isolated and marginalised sections of the youth population back into mainstream society (Britton et al. 2002).

During this same period, there was also political trepidation regarding the high levels of school leavers who were officially finishing school and opting not to continue with further education. Moreover, this group were not participating in any other form of training, and were not in regular employment (Briton et al. 2002). Around this same period, American right-wing politician Charles Murray was commissioned to act in an advisory role for Britain; he was tasked with helping the government address the escalation in unemployment and crime (Murray, 2001). Following his visit, the term 'underclass' was incorporated into the political and media framework; such undesirable rhetoric continues to be associated to persons and groups who we view as having morally dysfunctional behaviours and values (Murray, 2001).

Through the successful slander and tainting of the subject, Narey (2004) believes this paved the way, without much opposition, for the introduction of more punitive penal sanctions. As a result of this, there is a decrease in rehabilitative and reformative agendas; funding was redirected from prison treatment strategies to crime prevention programmes. Around this

same period, and as emphasised in the Posen Inquiry (1995), the government set key objectives for the police, in their attempts to quell escalating crime. In this performance culture, 'local police forces were expected to define local priorities and set annual targets' (Matthews and Young, 2003: 161). Other government initiatives, such as home detention punishments in 1987, and the fine option scheme in 1998, were also introduced. Throughout the 1980s, government policies on penal sanctions demonstrated little concern or interest in the uniqueness and individuality of each and every offender; they instead, assume[d] that 'offending behaviour lies within the individual' (Hughes, McLaughlin and Muncie, 2002: 61). As highlighted, what was created was a criminal justice system, which pitched the seriousness of the offence against rigid criteria. The aim was to punish, without taking into account the influence of social, personal and political factors, this justifying greater retributive sanctions. Hollins' (2008: 102; 90) summarising this period, criticised the government. In his view, a greater transparency of research findings and rehabilitative intervention outcomes were urgently needed. Moreover, he further commented that any research undertaken, ought to be 'conducted with integrity and impartiality and the evidence judged on its merits'; and often 'when the evidence does not suit the policy, the pressures of policy outweigh the integrity of independent research'.

Despite the government's tough stance on crime, towards the latter part of the 1980s, various programmes and proposals were introduced, which fell under the umbrella of rehabilitation and reform. This was evidenced with the introduction of CBT (Cognitive Behaviour Programmes); other programmes such as the 'Thinking Skills' and 'Lateral Enhanced Thinking Skills' were officially introduced in 1992 and 1993 (Friendship et al. 2003). As prison numbers continued to escalate, other alternatives to incarceration were now being sought. To ease congestion, Community Service Orders were piloted, then introduced at the beginning of the 1990s. Narey (2004) viewed this as a simple and viable alternative to prison, those committing less serious crimes would be sanctioned to work in the local community. This intermediate penalty was viewed as a method in which the individual could repay their debt back to society. On a national scale, the National Offender Management Service were tasked with 'improving the enforcement and credibility of community punishments so that prison is not the first resort for less serious offences' (Narey, 2004: 28). Nonetheless, although they were successful

in keeping rising prison numbers down, in my view, they distorted and watered down the real scale of the problem.

The then British Home Secretary David Waddington further outlined the government's changing attitude to penal policy, believing the substantial costs of incarceration could not be justified; other, less costly deterrents were now being considered (Raynor and Robinson, 2009). Following the introduction of Automatic Conditional Release (ACR) in 1992, the prison population reflected the government's scepticism towards incarceration; it was estimated there were two and a half thousand empty prison cells in Britain (Narey, 2004). However, research by Tony and Lynch (1996: 99) raised concerns regarding the effectiveness of intermediate sanctions as a cost-effective prevention. In their research, they concluded that:

> Few such programmes have diverted large numbers of offenders from prison, saved public monies or prison beds, or reduced recidivism rates. These findings recur in evaluations of community service, intensive supervision, house arrest, day reporting centres, and boot camps. The principal problems have been high rates of revocation and subsequent incarceration (often 40-50%) and the assignment of less serious offenders than program developers contemplated.

As a researcher and educator, it is difficult to gauge precisely the logic responsible for such rapidly changing and inconsistent penal reforms. The continuous changes to both political rationale and rhetoric raise a greater fundamental issue; it demonstrates just how undereducated we are in the battle to bring balance and control to the offending community. This was never more evident than in 1993 when contrary to the rehabilitative strategies publically supported the previous year, there was again a swift amendment in political strategy. Michael Howard, former Home Secretary of the Conservative Party, in his famous 'Prison Works' speech, rekindled the government's faith in the process of incarceration, stating that removing dangerous and persistent offenders from the streets would provide greater protection for the general public (www.civitas.org.uk). The justification for this sudden change was attributed to the fact that crime had almost doubled from the period of 1989 to 1992; the public had, once again, voiced their uneasiness at an apparent failing and ineffective criminal justice system. This was highlighted in the (2011) report, titled: 'Breaking

the Cycle: The Government Response', presented to Parliament by the then Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice Kennett Clarke, who stressed the public's concern regarding unprecedented rises in crime; dissatisfaction was also directed towards the lenient approach that government and politicians appeared to be taking (Clarke, 2011). Intermediate sanctions, such as community service and fines, were no longer adjudged to be punitive enough to deter or reduce rising incarceration rates. The report went on to state that 'community sentences have not won public confidence as a punishment' and as such 'community sentences will not be pushed as a replacement for prison sentences' (Clarke, 2011: 4).

5.3 The growth of education and incarceration. A strategy to integrate, educate and reduce reoffending

There is clear evidence supporting government attempts to raise educational standards, thus addressing the gap in socioeconomic attainment (Narey, 2004). Nonetheless, although I perceive education as being the heartbeat of society, it has been instrumental and detrimental to the life chances of most offenders. Statistics by the Prison Reform Trust (2018) undoubtedly portray a dismal educational outcome. Furthermore, despite the importance of education, there persists a constant and consistent failing of minorities.

In 2001, the Home Office funded a Crime Reduction Programme, which led to the introduction of the first employment focused pathfinder project (Samele, Keil and Thomas, 2009). The aim of this scheme was to develop the offender's employability skills through generic and structured workshops. Following this, a second phase of the pathfinder's project was launched in 2004, in which the probation service linked up with the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). During the second phase of the project, more emphasis was placed on examining, exploring and addressing the external social issues which may have contributed to offending behaviour. The key areas examined were health, including mental health, drugs and alcohol, accommodation, finance, benefit and debt, education, training and employment, children and families, attitudes, thinking and behaviour (Samele, Keil and Thomas, 2009).

Other significant changes were introduced to the prison system. Plans to privatise were introduced, the Government investing heavily into restructuring and building new prisons. It was estimated that between 1994 and 1997, a total of £620.3 million was spent financing this

project in England and Wales (Genders, 2002). With more space to accommodate offenders, the prison population rose from 41,000 in February 1993 to 47, 338 in November 1993 (Genders, 2002). As highlighted by Genders (2002), evidence had pointed to the failure of softer intermediate sanctions. Thus, faith in the long-term effectiveness of community-based penalties had been abandoned. In a bid to reassure and gain back public support and confidence, punitive methods such as incarceration seemed the only option.

Following a change of government in 1997, the Labour manifesto proposed a new optimism with regards to tackling rising crime rates (www.paroleboard.gov.uk). Narey (2004) notes that from this period, we witness a government which recognises the importance of education within the penal system. He also felt that although incarceration successfully removed the offender from the public space in the shorter term, thus ensuring public safety, long-term options must be sought to curb the cycle of recidivism rates. Between 1997 and 1998, a total of £900 million was invested in the prison and probation service. By the end of the 1998 financial year, the prison population had amassed over fifty thousand recognised basic skills qualifications. Leniency was given to low-risk prisoners, who became eligible to be released early on a Home Detention Curfew (HDC), otherwise referred to as the tagging system. The primary aim of the HDC scheme was to relieve a severely overcrowded prison service, reduce reoffending, and create more space for dangerous and persistent offenders (Narey, 2004). It was claimed by the then Home Secretary Howard Clarke (2002) that reconviction rates were lower for offenders released under the home detention curfew scheme when compared to those serving their full sentence. The success of HDC was more recently highlighted in the review conducted by the HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland, who stated that it was evident through the 'process of this review that HDC had assisted a considerable number of individuals to successfully re-integrate into their communities. Many of whom had found employment during their time on HDC' (HMIPS, 2018: 10).

According to Rex and Tony (2002), the new Labour Government had a twofold penal philosophy. The aim was to invest heavily into strategies and interventions designed to rehabilitate and educate, while maintaining a tough stance on repeat offenders. Labour Home Secretary Jack Straw pledged to enforce a zero-tolerance approach on persistent offenders. By the end of June 2001, incarceration numbers reflected the government's tough stance on

reoffending, the prison population increased to 66,736; at the beginning of December, 2001, there were almost 'twice as many prisoners serving life sentences, as there had been in 1990' (Howse, 2003: 80). Furthermore, following the introduction of the Halliday Report in 2001, previous criminal convictions could now be disclosed during the trial; this directly affecting the type of sentence imposed by the jury (Genders, 2002). Due to this, it was estimated that a further 6000 offenders were incarcerated (Prison Reform Trust, 2004).

In 2002, British Prime Minister Tony Blair publicly stated the Labour Government's stance on crime through the publication of the White Paper 'Justice for All' (2002). A key message was the need to establish a penal system which is effective in 'detecting crime, in bringing offenders to court, in convicting those who are guilty and in sentencing them properly' (Narey, Blunkett and Goldsmith, 2002: 11). However, Rex and Tony (2002) were critical of the government penal philosophy, claiming that the general public were being left confused, due to the contradictory narrative in the paper. Despite this, Blunkett (2002) stressed the importance of introducing tougher sentencing measures; crimes such as street robbery and violence were targeted (Matthews and Young, 2003). Therefore, although incarceration rates had steadily increased, those imprisoned were more likely to have been convicted of serious crimes. It was hoped that through educating and rehabilitating serious offenders, we were increasing our chances of breaking high rates of reoffending (Blunkett, 2002). To summarise this period, there was a clear objective to focus on those hardest to reach, while continuing to provide leniency to low-risk convicts.

5.4 The move towards adult ETE services

Throughout the previous twenty years, the government had tried in vain to tackle high rates of unemployment and non-participation in further education and training. Moving away from mainstream education, the introduction of ETE programmes began in early 2003; the aim of these alternative provisions was to engage the most vulnerable and isolated. Blair (2003) declared that: ''Education, Education, Education'' was to be of primary importance. Ivan Lewis, 'Adult Skills and Young People Minister' voiced concerns regarding the effectiveness of previous training providers. According to Lewis (2003: 1) training providers 'had exploited Governments attempts to re-engage those most isolated'. Lewis believed ETE programmes were:

An integral part of the economy, they also stated that 'the long term vision by the LSC (Learning and Skills Council) was that by 2010, young people and adults in England and Wales would have the skills matching the best in the world, thus making them part of a truly competitive workforce.

From experience, when deciding on appropriate ETE training programmes, the criteria set must be realistic and achievable. Vennard and Hedderman (2009) stress the importance of encouraging positive offender participation, if the underpinning ethos is to reduce reoffending rates. We are reminded through the Government's (2005) report titled 'Reducing Re-Offending through Skills and Employment: Next Steps 2005', that a fundamental social benefit of breaking the cycle of reoffending are the financial savings related to the repeat government interventions for persistent criminals. However, it was noted during the research that not all participants benefit from attending education and employment training courses. In many cases, it is the client who lacks motivation and commitment when attending employment and training schemes (Vennard and Hedderman, 2009). Nonetheless, according to the director of the National Employment Panel, their primary aim was to focus on developing 'new approaches to intensive, work-focused support for offenders' so that 'offenders gain skills and experience to meet employers' needs' (Scotland, Hope and Murphy, 2005: 5). In 2006 the government set up the Working Ventures UK Project, which was sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions (Samele, Keil and Thomas, 2009). Prison employability workshops were developed, with external links being established with potential employers. Through a registered internet system, different companies and businesses were invited to view the profiles of the offenders.

To further demonstrate the government's commitment to providing more opportunities for the offending population, a new inter-ministerial group led by the Home Office and the Department for Education and Skills was established in 2006. Their underpinning philosophy was the belief that work-related learning must be acknowledged as a key driver when engaging offenders into productive avenues (Scotland, Hope and Murphy, 2005). However, despite initial optimism, findings from the project indicated that although employment was of primary importance, many lacked the soft skills needed to hold down a job. This issue was more recently highlighted in the report by Pedder (2017: 10), which reported that many

offenders lacked the 'soft skills necessary to gain and keep employment and there were no courses in the prison addressing this gap'. Therefore, although strong links were established with external employment and educational providers, there continues a lack of awareness and complacency with regards to how complex the transition into positive social pathways can be.

5.5 Rethinking education: A personal critique and concise summary of recent government ETE initiatives to reduce offending

In July, 2010, the Government released the Green Paper 'Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders'. The findings were presented to Parliament by the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice by Command of her Majesty. When reading this publication, and others previously mentioned such as the Home Office Crime Reduction Programme (2001) and Working Ventures UK Project (2006), I was extremely disappointed, mainly due to the lack of offender voice and insight contained within these papers. The statistical format left me feeling uninspired, frustrated and uneducated with regards to what offenders want and need, whilst participating in government ETE offender initiatives. In my view, these literatures consistently ignore the offender's voice.

Anne Owens, Chief Inspector of Prisons (2008-09: 46), agrees with these perceptions, suggesting that in general, current ETE provisions are inefficient and do not address the individual needs of the client; she stated the 'provision of education was often of insufficient quality to stretch young men to achieve their potential'. Her comments support a generalist view that if offenders are to become employable, greater emphasis should be placed on developing intrinsic aspects of the person; this can then be used as a criteria to measure success, rather than the traditional and academic perspectives which are currently used. Authors Grimwood and Berman (2012) and more recently Wright (2013) appear to acknowledge that dialogical relationships formed with offenders, and a recognition of individual needs, may, in fact, prove a powerful strategy in the quest to reduce reoffending; and that future ETE initiatives need to 'address offender needs in a holistic and sequenced manner' (Wright, 2013: 27). In the report by the Ministry of Justice:

Evidence as a whole suggests that mentoring may be most beneficial when it begins in prison and lasts beyond release. Mentoring is also most likely to be effective when the relationship is maintained over time rather than consisting of just one or two sessions' (Wright, 2013: 27).

As previously mentioned, there is a scarcity of research which has generated evidence-based knowledge regarding appropriate and overwhelmingly successful working practices and strategies; 'many gaps exist in our evidence base. Some of these gaps are more critical than others' (Wright, 2013: 28). Hence, the inability to capture authentic dialogue and narrative is a strong methodological critique of current political and government offender interventions. In my view, we require alternative research methodologies, if we are to examine and understand complex social phenomena. Rather than negatively categorising and statistically nullifying the complex life experiences of offenders, it may be more beneficial for educators to explore the undiscovered potential and creativity of this desolate community (Thomson and Russell, 2009). When educating the offending community, researchers must not be ignorant or complacent with regards to how difficult it is to relate to those hardest to reach; somehow the system must find compatibility with the lives of those alienated from minority cohorts.

5.6 Offender status and employment opportunities

As a starting point, statistics allow us to visually comprehend just how disadvantaged former offenders are in the labour market. Research evidence suggests isolation from employment and educational pathways significantly increases the likelihood of initial offending (Nally et al. 2014; Ramakers, 2014; States News Service, 2013). Without gaining employment, it is estimated around 50% of ex-offenders will return to prison within three years of being released (Gonzalez, 2012). These statistics are essential for my study given that research evidence also indicates there are over 9 million people in England and Wales with a criminal record (Stacey, 2014). With the British population estimated to be 65.6 million, this equates to around one-sixth of the general population having a criminal record (Bingham, 2014). Moreover, research by Stacey (2014) maintains a person is twice as likely to be convicted of

a criminal offence when receiving unemployment benefits. As stated in the report published by the Ministry of Justice (2014):

> The extent and frequency of offending diminish when offenders gain employment, and offenders with stable and quality employment are less likely to reoffend (Wright, 2013: 5)

Most research, based on statistical information, provides little hope that the life chances of offenders can be improved. It is clear from the literature, dating back to the 1960s that there is a strong correlation between employment and reoffending rates. Statistics from the mid1970s indicated that unemployed ex-offenders are four times more likely to reoffend than ex-offenders who are in employment (Dale, 1976). Moreover, it is evidenced that continued isolation from the labour market is a primary trigger for reoffending (Gendreau, Little, and Goggin, 1996). More up to date research by the Ministry of Justice 2010, reinforces the benefits of employment before being incarcerated:

> Those prisoners who are employed in the year before custody (51% of prisoners), only 40% are reconvicted within one year compared with 65% of those who were not in employment in the year before custody (Thomas and Hebenton, 2013: 234).

In England and Wales there are currently 136 active prisons, housing an estimated 85,500 prisoners (Ministry of Justice, 2017). More than one in four offenders will reoffend within a year of being released, committing 500,000 offences between them (Ministry of Justice, 2014). Prison has a poor record for reducing reoffending – '46% of adults are reconvicted within one year of release. For those serving sentences of less than 12 months, this increases to 58% - 3.5% higher than in 2000' (Prison Reform Trust, 2014: 8). Although many complex and interrelated factors contribute to high offending and reoffending rates, a few stark facts include:

- 64% of prisoners reported having used drugs in the four weeks before custody.
- In 47% of violent crimes, the victim believed the offender(s) to be under the influence of alcohol.
- 68% of prisoners thought that 'having a job' was important in stopping reoffending.

- In 2010, only 12% of employers surveyed said that they had employed somebody with a criminal record in the past three years, and around one in five employers (19%) said they did exclude or were likely to exclude them from the recruitment process (Prison Reform Trust, 2014: 5-8).

Traditionally, many (although not all) offenders are predominantly uneducated, socially excluded males from broken families who have experienced low paid employment with limited career aspirations (White and Cunneen 2006). Ineffective parental influences, negative peer associations, perceived isolation and helplessness have also been identified as significant amongst the offender community (Sutherland, 2011). Matsumoto (1997: 611), examined the consequences of being born and raised in offending households and communities; within certain cultures, criminal 'attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours shared by a group of people, are communicated from one generation to the next'.

White and Cunneen (2006) highlighted how employment is a major determining factor in how we decide to live our life. When prevented from entering such constructive social pathways, this alone can have a devastating impact on the quality of life we have. Expanding on this, the negative consequences of isolation not only affect the individual, but also have more extensive social implications, and thus, it is damaging to families, communities and society in general. They also noted the wider social mistrust and lack of forgiveness, resulting in the predominantly healthy transition into the labour market being either prevented or made problematic. Exclusion from the labour market can also have a detrimental effect on mental health, physical well-being and relationship status (Fergusson, 1997). Employment is not just about providing the offender with aspirations and pride, it also creates legitimate routes away from poverty, isolation and wider social alienation (Samele, Keil and Thomas, 2009). As highlighted in the study by Baur et al. (2018: 216), offenders remain largely unprotected against employment stigma and prejudice; on the whole, 'treatment discrimination against offenders remain rampant'

Alienation is something experienced by most, if not all offenders. When confronted with various forms of isolation, research associates this to a host of dysfunctional and undesired

social behaviours such as gang involvement, violence and other criminal activity (Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison, 2006; Suh and Suh, 2007). The terms alienation and social exclusion are concepts which have been used by politicians for decades. Teague and Wilson, (1995: 79) believe its terminology has 'gate crashed the debate about the direction of social policy without paying the entrance fee of a definition'. Those fortunate enough to secure employment, often find themselves in low paid positions, this reflecting their status, lack of education and accreditation (Holzer, Raphael and Stroll, 2003).

Writing over four decades ago, Hahn (1971) noted the exclusionary practices by employers towards offenders, which were and remain accepted and unchallenged (Prison Reform Trust, 2012). Research conducted by Baur, Hallb, Daniels, Buckley and Anderson (2018: 207) indicated there are 'few protections against this type of stigma-based discrimination'. In agreement with Lam and Harcourt (2003), we have accepted without political or government scrutiny, absurd discriminatory practices towards offenders. As this continues, we are no nearer finding a solution to the problem. The government, in my view, remain sluggish and uncommitted in helping reintegrate those hardest to reach. The vast majority, without a voice, are deprived of the same opportunities as a non-offending citizen, thus their criminal status perpetuates the difficulties of successful social inclusion; the labels attached to the most vulnerable members of society marks them out as 'either politically dangerous or as marginal outsiders – from the undeserving poor' (Hughes, McLaughlin and Muncie, 2002: 157). When we demonise the offender community:

> This is punishment without the consideration of having committed an additional offense. The conviction that brought on the original incarceration has been paid for; probation/parole/supervision in the community or whatever you want to call it, becomes a punitive tail stuck onto the end of that sentence, a most unwelcomed surcharge (Mobley, 2012: 10).

Although, unemployment may be among the principal causal factors involved in reoffending rates amongst young males (Dale, 1976), these men are also denied the opportunity for 'direct interpersonal engagement and identity development' and connection to 'their broader social world' (Blustein et al. 2008: 296). Confronted with lifelong employment prejudice, I can appreciate why many offenders resign themselves to the stark reality they find themselves

occupying. The narrative in my thesis addresses in detail the wider social inequalities encountered by offenders when seeking employment. Despite gaining a range of higher education qualifications, my autobiography (chapter two), communicated the difficulties of attaining trust and acceptance in certain employment sectors; this continues regardless of accreditation status. On the whole, a high percentage of offenders will inform you there are 'collateral consequences' to carrying stigmatising identities (Thomas and Hebenton, 2013: 228). In the Marmot Review into health inequalities in England (2010: 8), good health was attributed to fairer access to education, employment and social inclusion; unfortunately, 'social injustice is killing on a grand scale'. For many become conscious of:

> The total and ultimate meaninglessness of their lives. They lack the awareness of a meaning worth living for. They are haunted by the experience of their inner emptiness, a void within themselves; they are caught in that situation which I have called existential vacuum (Frankl, 2004 [1959]: 111).

Research conducted by the Prison Reform Trust (2014) indicated that one in five employers (19%) said they had excluded or were likely to exclude an ex-offender in their recruitment process. The research also highlighted that in 2010, only 12% of employers surveyed said they had employed somebody with a criminal record in the previous three years. More recently, a survey commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions in (2016) found that 50% of employers would not hire a former offender, regardless of offence or time spent (Brewer, 2017). The survey also maintained that in many cases, ex-offenders are filtered out of the application process, 'employers have a negative picture of what they think of as an ex-offender' and 'there is a perception among employers that [people with a criminal conviction] won't be highly skilled and that they won't be reliable'. In the same survey, Jocelyn Hillman, founder of Working Chance, the UK's only recruitment consultancy for women with criminal convictions, believed that 'people with a criminal conviction can face outright bigotry when trying to find work' (Brewer, 2017: 2).

From my experience, these figures do not reflect accurately the full extent of employer prejudice towards offenders. In general, this debilitating and widespread stigma continues unchallenged to disadvantage ex-offenders; to the best of my knowledge, policymakers remain reluctant to address this issue with any conviction or clarity. As recommended in the

research by Morris (2012: 268), when attempting to create a 'more just and fair society', this can 'only be achieved through restructuring the way policy is made and by allowing equal voice to the underprivileged in setting policy'. Furthermore, the largely inadequate theory available, examining and raising awareness of this deeply troubling and primarily uncontested social and political prejudice, is comparable to most sensitive offender rhetoric and theoretical inquiry; masked and nullified in numerical and statistical data (Gonzalez, 2012) Despite this, findings from the Commons Work and Pensions Committee research supports the productive contribution ex-offenders can make to society. Evidence was collated from two employers, Timpson and Virgin Trains, who actively employ ex-offenders into their businesses. Contrary to the concerns of employers, these stereotypes were found to be largely unsupported. It was emphasised in the report that:

> I do not think there are any real barriers. I personally think that it is a perceived lack of education […] Historically, the majority of employers perceive ex-offenders to be lazy, untrustworthy, problematic and so on. We have found the complete opposite to be true (Support for ex-offenders Fifth Report of Session 2016–17: 34).

5.7 A theoretical overview of subculture deviancy

Statistics on youth crime were first compiled systematically from around 1900. Although there had been a relatively stable period from 1900 to 1930, there was a steady increase in delinquency from this period onwards (Wills, 2009). In 1892, the University of Chicago was renowned for introducing one of the first sociology departments in the United States (Williams, 2011). As the population for this town expanded from 10,000 inhabitants in 1860 to more than two million in 1910, it became regarded as a prime setting for the development of empirically based urban research. As documented by Blackman (2014), the University of Chicago was developed into one of the most complete social laboratories in the world; deviance is explained and theorised from a cultural, community and wider social context, as opposed to seeing it as a pathological condition. Throughout the next two decades, theorists Frederic Thrasher, Paul Cressey and William Foote Whyte conducted detailed analyses on the study of urban subcultures (Williams, 2011).

Thrasher (1927, cited in Hunt and Laidler, 2001) conducted the first empirical study of subculture deviancy in the 1920s. The aim was to gain an understanding of adolescent crime, through the exploration of cultural and community influences. During this large-scale research, data was gathered from 1, 313 Chicago street gangs. Research strongly associated repressive social and economic conditions as being detrimental to those residing in lower working class surroundings. Denied fairness and equality of opportunities, this acted as a rationale for steering them towards and into likeminded peers and cultures. Thrasher (1927, cited in Hunt and Laidler, 2001: 45) described a deviant subculture as being:

> An interstitial group originally formed spontaneously, and then integrated through conflict. It is characterised by the following types of behaviour; meeting face to face, milling, movement through space as a unit, conflict, and planning. The result of this collective behaviour is the development of tradition, unreflective internal structures, esprit de corps, solidarity, morale, group awareness, and attachment to local territory.

Sociologist Edward Sutherland (1947, cited in Matsumoto, 1997) maintained that crime is a socially constructed phenomenon. His theory, **'Differential Association'**, explored the modes of micro symbolic interaction amongst deviant peers. He believed the intensity and unity, shaping verbal and non-verbal communications, created a unique cultured knowledge. Adjoined by similar lived experiences, values demonstrating a collective sorrow form the bedrock and fabric of socially isolated communities (Warr and Stafford, 1991). Wilkinson (2001) made the point that as we become further adrift, individually, and as a cohort, empowerment and gratification are received through non-conforming social behaviours. Therefore, through the complex interaction of proximity and compatibility, rewards such as self-esteem, confidence and meaning are the primary intrinsic motivators for those who view themselves as outcasts.

Robert Merton (1973) argued that for those occupying low economic status, society encouraged deviancy, through the inherent strain which existed for those chasing the 'American dream'. He believed the strain imparted on the human condition was a natural consequence of a person's inability to solve their problems (Lilly, Cullen and Ball, 2002). Underpinning his theory is the notion of 'cultural goals', where the primary rationale of deviancy is to improve material wealth; aspirations would entail the obtaining of luxury goods

and accessories. Therefore, in light of this, these individuals are more likely to resort to financially motivated crimes such as drug dealing and theft, their aim being to secure monetary security. Albert Cohen (1955), refined and expanded the theorising of Robert Merton. In his landmark study 'Delinquency Boys' he maintained 'all human action. . .is an ongoing series of efforts to solve problems' and 'that all. . .factors and circumstances that produce a problem come from. . . two sources, the actors ''frame of reference'' and the ''situation'' he confronts' (Cohen, 1955: 50). Offering a more detailed analysis of society, we are drawn to the concept of a 'dominant' social culture that coexists with, and in opposition to, other peripheral populations, which he referred to as subcultures. According to Cohen, the cultural values and norms overarching American culture have emerged from the middle class ranks. As such, working class boys are therefore assessed against what Cohen described as the 'middle class measuring rod'; irrespective of the fact most are rarely able to match or compete against these expectations.

When competing and striving to reach middle class aspirations and values, those who find themselves disadvantaged experience and internalise a source of associated strain. Therefore, tensions amongst working class youths are not in relation to achieving materialistic wealth, it is the endeavouring for prominence. Unfortunately, from birth, and as a result of their social class, such boys remain at a distinct disadvantage, they are not able to attain the criteria and value of those occupying the middle class ranks. Lilly, Cullen and Ball (2002) documented how Cohen succeeded in introducing expressive and non-utilitarian forms of delinquency. Crimes of a violent and malicious undertone were due to a 'reaction formation' amongst delinquent youth, this justifying as a rationale for certain lines of action (Williams, 2011: 25). Within these impoverished communities, the undertaking of violence against and amongst others, who may also harbour an adopted sense of status frustration, fosters an underpinning and valuable inner-city commodity, prestige is acquired. Impoverished communities are places of deprivation that offer little hope to those living there; lack of education, high crime rates, poverty and hopelessness are some of the endemic issues.

Other American functionalists Cloward and Ohlin (1960), maintain adolescents from deviant subcultures have developed an emphasis upon conformist goals. Drawing on Merton's (1938) anomie-strain theory and Shaw and Mckay's (1942) social disorganisation theory, Cloward

and Ohlin argue that lower working class boys encounter inadequate opportunities and life prospects. The inequity inherent in the wider social structure disadvantages many young adults, this leading to a conscious awareness of status and frustration. Experiencing severe disappointment, the accessing of illegitimate opportunities increases the degree and frequency of delinquency. In their writings, they theorise three formations of subcultures; they are the criminal, conflict and retreat subcultures (Nwalozie, 2015).

Bennett and Harris (2004) highlighted that during the 1970s, most American subculture theorists associated crime to the influence of social class inequality. Expanding on the influence of the Chicago School, British sociologists sought to inform further our understanding of how cultural influences contribute to deviant subcultures. Pioneered by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS hereafter), British studies of youth culture shifted the emphasis of research from gang based youth cultural studies towards stylistic fractions of youth. Due to this, non-conformist groups such as Teddy boys, Mods, Rockers and Skinheads, which had dominated British culture from the 1950s, became a primary focus. Influenced by the work of Stuart Halls 'Resistance Through Rituals' (1976), was the assertion that deviant subcultures had to be understood as the collective reaction against wider structural inequalities and fragmentation.

According to Williams (2011), scholars from the CCCS, schooled through the social sciences and humanity disciplines, adopted concepts such as structuralism, hegemony and semiotics, this establishing the foundations of their theoretical paradigms. Also, in contrast to American subculture inquiry, CCCS researchers incorporated a semiotic framework analysis, which attempted to deconstruct and make sense of the taken for granted meanings that defined and influenced the practices and behaviours of subculture participation. Epistemologically, the CCCS theory locates itself within an interpretive paradigm: 'their innovative approach was to undertake deviance as informed by consciousness and agency' (Blackman, 2014: 497).

Phil Cohen (1972), in his study 'Subculture Conflict and Working Class Community', sought to identify with, and explore the visible deterioration evident in inner city locations. What he found were that tensions resonated from the decline and breakup of traditional working class neighbourhoods and modes of living. Coining the phrase 'magical recovery of community', he

examined the cultural adjustment, and in particular the aftermath and effects of community fragmentation. From his perspective, the weakening and erosion in working class solidarity and identity had compromised notions of security and belonging, which predominantly affected uneducated and disengaged males. As Bartley (2017: 8) says, identity 'may be supported or threatened by any of the major forms of inequality'. For those concerned, it was theorised that many navigated towards other disadvantaged peers, which encouraged allegiance to likeminded associates and groups; it would appear having emotional needs met, outweighed the potential consequences (Bennett and Harris, 2004). Over numerous decades, this unfortunate minority was drawn together. The structural proximity and collective social status was perceived as being influential in the forming of resilient, defiant and anti-authority cohorts. Regarded as one of the most significant British subculture theorists, he described subcultures as:

> So many variations on a central theme – the contradiction, at an ideological level, between traditional working class Puritanism, and the new hedonism of consumption; at an economic level, between the future as part of the socially mobile elite, or as part of the new lumpen. Mods, Parkers, Skinheads, Crombies, all represent, in their different ways, an attempt to retrieve some of the socially cohesive elements destroyed in their parent culture, and to combine these with elements selected from other class fractions (Cohen, 1972: 23).

British sociologist Stanley Cohen opted to explore crime using a less liberal stance. During his 1972 case study titled 'Folk Devils and Moral Panics, The Creation of Mods and Rockers', his research famously explored the Brighton riots; he qualitatively observed and interviewed two opposing subcultures, the mods and rockers. When reporting on deviant events and happenings, he argued the media narrative sensationalised and distorted the nature and morality of these occurrences, and those involved. Due to this, there arises a moral and wider social panic, which in turn influence how we portray, define and label certain social groups. According to Cohen (1972: 43):

> When subculture theory appeared in Britain at the beginning of the seventies it was concerned to show how radically it differed from traditional. And it could hardly have looked more different.

Moving beyond this period of American and British theories of deviance, research began to acknowledge the importance of support, care and understanding. Through his research, Brake (1980), emphasised the advantages of supportive social networks. Expanding on this, Short (1998) wrote of the benefits of conformity and allegiance in offending communities, stating that through communal solidarity, some may even experience a notion of care and protection. Warr and Stafford (1991), pointed out that once deviant values become normalised, they, in turn, become a valuable and accepted commodity. Cultures bonded by profoundly personal life experiences provide something unique, they encourage the flourishing of non-conformist identity and personhood. Therefore, everyday actions, which may have previously challenged a less deviant identity, become blurred and less effective; desensitisation to law-breaking is eventually internalised.

A significant contribution is attributed by Stein (2006). He believed that teenagers who have periodically resided in the care system, missed out on a critical preparation stage between teenage years and early adulthood. In the research by Blome, Shields and Verdieck (2009: 259), they highlight the significant and lifelong disadvantages, which children in foster care encounter. For example, they noted that 'the lack of academic preparation impacts the ability of youths to obtain secure employment once they are emancipated'. This phase of self-exploration and understanding, imperative for personal exploration, is often denied, compromised or prevented; this jeopardising the healthy adjustment into adulthood. An independent review chaired by Lord Laming (2016: 26), examined the reasons why children, who have resided in the care system, find themselves over represented in the criminal justice system in England and Wales. Of concern, and one possible factor was the fact that '37% of looked after children in England have emotional and behavioural health that is considered to be a cause for concern, and a further 13% are considered borderline'. Other research by Refaeli (2017: 8), using case study narrative, found higher rates of later life loneliness and mental health problems amongst children who had lived in a child care setting; he identified and separated these individuals into two distinct groups, which he termed those 'struggling to survive and surviving through struggle'. Hauge (2007) research on identity formation, emphasised the complex interaction of external and internal variables, responsible for identity formation; they stressed the impact and influence of place, environment and stage

of life. As reported by Weich et al. (2002), detrimental health occurrences are most prevalent for those residing in penurious spaces and environments.

5.8 Reflection and personal overview of theory and research

When I consider Edward Sutherlands (1947, cited in Matsumoto, 1997) sociological concept of 'Differential Association', to what extent do I understand crime to be a socially constructed phenomena? If we are to accept that deviancy is through the macro symbolic interactions and relationships developed, then I suppose preference must be given to the social, as opposed to genetic and biological paradigms and theories. With this in mind, I remember when growing up as a young boy, etched in my community was an ingrained awareness of poverty and hardship. For the majority, there was a silent suffering, and together we borrowed and struggled daily, support was the bedrock of our impoverished communities.

Crucial other subculture theorists include Albert Cohen (1955) and Robert Merton (1957). For Merton, his 'Means and Goals' theory crosses the rationale for deviancy into the realms of envy and resentment; there resided anger and frustration at their status of existing in impoverished social conditions. The limited opportunities triggered rebellious feelings and actions towards those perceived as more materialistically and financially well-off, which reinforced class divisions, and reaffirmed anti-social and anti-establishment ideologies. Impacting on how the subjects thought and acted, and striving for social equality and fairness, motivated and united entire streets and communities; aspiring for materialism beyond their financial means never ceases to be a goal for poverty-stricken minorities.

However, the above theory does cause me concern, as both a researcher and somebody who has written extensively about the community I remember as a young boy and teenager. Although I cannot categorically either confirm or deny the reasoning or justification for the actions of my close peers, I believe crime committed entirely for financial gain neglects numerous other personal and wider social variables. Quite frankly, did we miss wealth? Not a chance, what we lacked in materialistic luxuries, we more than made up for in a genuine sense of wellbeing and community. On reflection, I do not believe that equality of wealth and finances would have eradicated deviancy in my community. When growing up, although we aspired for certain possessions and luxuries, I never felt the need to hurt, thieve or steal. There was loyalty and a sense of communal togetherness; the moto which stated 'you never

take from your own' made this unacceptable. In my case, it was the lack of boundaries and stability in the home which were more influential and problematic. From an early age, the motivation for crime was much more personal; it did not stem from either financial gain, envy or frustration.

Phil Cohen (1972), perceived the weakening and deterioration in working class solidarity and identity as detrimental to our sense of belonging. In minority communities, this brings together like-minded deviants, who also experience a sense of isolation. It is Hall's (1972) publication titled 'Resistance through Rituals', which equated envy and frustration as being significant in disengaged community criminality. Born and raised in abject poverty, lower working class populations remain multifaceted, comprising of diversity, uniqueness and differing notions of identity and personhood. This is crucial in my understanding and approach to theorising; it raises awareness of how difficult it is to interpret and analyse the lifeworld of the subject. In much of the literature written, there is little attempt to differentiate between the perspectives of individual subjects; this has major methodological, theoretical, as well as wider social and political implications. Although modernist sociology theories of crime have extensively articulated the oppressive political and structural influences impacting on subcultures, how can I best narrate the relationship between individual identity and the broader social and political context? (Gershon, 2009).

When we consider the theoretical viewpoints of both Sutherland (1947, cited in Matsumoto, 1997) and Wilkinson (2001), they drew attention to something of significance, the focus is directed towards the inextricable association between belonging, acceptance and criminal action. For example, as highlighted in chapter two, for young men such as myself, the care and acceptance received from my fellow peers proved crucial in whether or not I engaged in deviancy; it provided a sense of contentment and security. Short (1998) and Warr and Stafford (1991) also allude to the importance of belonging through conformity, pointing out that in impoverished working class communities, identity is shaped and reinforced through the receiving of positive stimuli; offenders are emotionally and psychologically rewarded through deviant relations. As further recalled in chapter two, when maturing throughout my teenage years, I began to see for myself the injustice of living unproductively, and I lost faith in those

responsible for providing opportunities; I assumed the notion of an 'us versus them' mentality (Williams (2006).

When I think back to my early teenage years, I am not sure if there was ever an embedded and ingrained perception of anger and frustration towards the fragmented and financially stricken nature of my community. It is important to remember that the majority of children from impoverished populations accept what they have. I can never recollect having the intellect or cognitive ability to scrutinise the external social and political context of our childhoods; on the whole, we were thankful and appreciative for the little things, expectations never exceeded ambition. Therefore, equating the theoretical perspective of Cohen (1972) to my recollection of community life is problematic and difficult. From my experiences, benefit dependent families showed tolerance to living life on the breadline, we collectively and communally adjusted to the struggles faced. Neither shame nor stigma was attached, we simply worked together in times of austerity and economic hardship. Looking back, we were easily pleased with the simpler things in life, and we accepted there was no money, we generally settled for what we had, which was by and large nothing. Therefore, although we were aware, to some extent, of the structural tensions and fragmented nature of our existence, when say compared to other more affluent neighbourhoods, it was never considered a deterministic rationale for either subculture engagement or crime.

Although, Bennett and Harris (2004) noted that those residing at the bottom of the social ladder are more inclined to form relationships with like-minded peers, a host of other social and personal variables contribute to this transition. Reflecting on my family circumstances, and for those who lived in similar situations, engaging in deviancy was neither accepted nor encouraged by parents and caregivers. In fact, although most of the families did live from hand to mouth, we were never encouraged to perceive crime as being a viable alternative. Even though many failed to embrace, value or excel in the education system, the determination to contribute to wider society through hard work was embedded in community and family life. In my view, there persists a generalised tendency to condemn and demonise youth and cultures who find themselves in conflict with the general public. As Bennett and Harris (2004) suggest, the derogatory way in which offenders are portrayed unites the majority of non-offending citizens. They also indicate that once exclusion and marginalisation

are accepted as an unfortunate reality, this increases two cultural functions; it solidifies values binding non-conforming social groups, and it justifies the chosen lifestyles of its members.

In general, hardship affected the lives of those who suffered from poverty and deprivation. The voice of working class boys was rarely heard, and dialogue, which challenged or contradicted those in authority, usually fell on deaf ears; more often than not, it became lost in translation. In agreement with Wilkinson (2001), the more detached I found myself becoming from traditional mainstream values, the less justification we needed for engaging in antisocial behaviours; as we matured, we realised the limited wider social prospects. To add to this, many parents living in academically deprived communities were unsuccessful in articulating the lifelong consequences of delinquency, there was never much opposition or deterrent to offending behaviour; although as highlighted, this was never encouraged.

Therefore, criminal activity, which extended beyond the thrill and gratification highlighted by Sutherland (1947, cited in Matsumoto, 1997), made sense; it helped mould and define a sense of identity, regardless of the implications it held for others. I often felt, as noted by Freire (1996) that over time, we stop challenging the actions and perceptions of those who oppress, we accept emotionally and psychologically their negativity, and we endure a state of oppression and self-depreciation. Although this process can take many years, even decades, for reasons difficult to pinpoint, its acceleration can also be rapid. The will to stand firm against the unyielding and forceful social powers slowly deteriorates; eventually, and over time, notions of confidence and self-esteem diminish. I agree with the observations of Berger and Luckmann (1971: 137), who noted that power in society 'includes the power to determine decisive socialisation processes and, therefore, the power to produce reality'.

5.9 The move to postmodernism

Even though the theoretical paradigms, contributions and understanding generated from theorists such as Karl Marx, Paul Willis, Emile Durkheim, Phil Cohen and Dorothy Smith, remain significant in social theory, they must and should be viewed in the social and political environment of the here and now. I cannot help feeling they portray and perpetuate a deterministically pessimistic perspective, something which, in my view, underpins the majority of literature and theory. We are reminded by Sanders (2005) that no single theory can claim to understand, without critique, why individuals and groups engage in offending

behaviour. He also notes that although Cohen (1972), Merton (1957) and Sutherland (1947, cited in Matsumoto, 1997) have written explanations of inequality, community tensions, fragmentation and social class, these narratives and theoretical accounts, detailing and describing the motivations, rationale and worldviews of the working class youth, have been primarily crafted and portrayed through the lens of the researcher. Sanders (2005: 339) stated why we must look beyond what we already know:

> Strain theory can explain why young people commit acquisitive offences; normalisation theory can explain the use of cannabis; the concept of transcendence can explain the reason for joyriding and vandalism because it changes how young people feel. However, no single theory alone can explain all forms of offending behaviour.

As stated by Muggleton (2000:24), the 'CCCS failed to consider the lived reality of those under study'. According to Williams (2011), the theoretical literatures of the CCCS were developed in a radically different political and social context to the environments which now support the emergence of postmodern literatures. Overall, it appears inaccurate and misleading to suggest that crime is something unavoidable within impoverished working class neighbourhoods. More recently, Klein, Weerman and Thornberry (2006) maintained that European subculture and American gang literatures are now outdated, as research has developed beyond the thinking of Sutherland (1947, cited in Matsumoto, 1997), Cohen (1955) and Cloward and Ohlin (1961). With such a stark contrast between researcher and participant realities, it is problematic to claim validity and authenticity; the concept of truth becomes therefore questionable.

The goal of postmodernism is 'not to eliminate the traditional scientific method, but to question its dominance and to demonstrate that it is possible to gain and share knowledge in many ways' (Wall, 2006: 6). According to Chamberlain (2015: 152), postmodernism lies in the traditions of idealist and relativist western philosophy, and it is through this intellectual heritage that 'we cannot know anything about the so-called ''real world'', rather everything we experience is mediated through mental and linguistic constructs'. From what I have described, the need for broader academic investigations is required. As somebody who is able to relate theory and literature to real-life experience, I desperately seek a narrative which provides hope and possibility for change and transformation. I feel it necessary to move

beyond the explanations theorised by traditional sociological analyses. Since the 1990s, the term subculture has been used in a much broader perspective, denoting any group of people who deviate in terms of lifestyle choices, values, beliefs, behaviours and consumption patterns. It is not my intention to dismiss the relevance of previous theory and research; I have simply pointed out that when we deconstruct and analyse philosophical frameworks, we must resist the temptation of accepting theory as truth. Shildrick and MacDonald (2006) describe this phase as being the 'second wave of youth culture research'. To summarise this early period:

> The term post-subculture was substantially developed, and theorised, by Muggleton (2000) in work suggesting that contemporary youth culture can no longer be regarded as a direct reflection of class background; rather Muggleton argues, youth identities today are a product of individual choice and reflect reflexivity that is part and parcel of late modern, consumer based societies (Brady and Bennett, 2011: 304-305).

Williams (2011) highlighted how the emergence of the subculture rave scene during the 1980s, further took the researchers gaze away from both Chicago and Birmingham schools of subculture theory. Bennett (1999) indicated how, during the 1990s, the diverse and innovative forms of dance, fashion, technological and identity cultures, made it impossible to simplify and define the concept and framework of subcultures. Furthermore, extensive literatures published throughout the 1980s are accused by Williams (2011: 30) of being 'inward looking, critical, and rhetorical, focusing on the value and on youth subcultures from the 1970s, rather than on new research'. In this postmodern era, we have almost departed entirely from the traditional and symbolic notions of working class strain, status and frustration. Although this had been the overarching rationale and paradigm for both American and British scholars, the study of youth now expands into every aspect of community and culture. As highlighted by Ellis and Bochner (2006) and Donmoyer (2012), research must endeavour to source complementary paradigms and concepts, which help to strengthen the theoretical debate. He advises that we should look for ways to individualise this process, thus gain a more in-depth and informative understanding of the person. Examples of this include features such as gender, race, ethnicity, social status; also highlighted are intrinsic qualities, which include determination, resolution and perseverance (Rasmussen, 2008).

As stated by Joseph and Gunter (2011: 6), the main criticism is the failure of researchers to examine or explore 'attractions and seductions of crime', or the intense and rewarding intergroup dynamics; findings have traditionally been correlated to structural causes and explanations. I feel that offender theory and literature have a responsibility to look beneath the surface, articulating and drawing out variables, which although rather complex and ambiguous, dare to theorise what others wish to avoid. Gunter (2010), in his work titled 'Growing up Bad', condemns the punitive sanctions administered towards minority black working-class youth; he cites the dearth of 'opportunity to be heard on their own terms without first being re-interpreted by academics' as determining and reinforcing of the theoretical, wider social and political biases. For him, providing the offending youth with a voice to be heard, is the starting point for deconstructing negatively held assumptions.

In agreement with Joseph and Gunter (2011: 12), theories of youth and adult deviancy have offered little in the way of uniqueness and diversity, they appear to have run their course; politically motivated inquiry continues to adopt a 'misguided search for structural characteristics in an attempt to define and locate the gang' (Joseph and Gunter, 2011: 12). As a result of this approach, we are nullifying rich narrative and interactions; offenders are being pigeon holed into politicised statistical and theoretical frameworks. For example, research by Hallworth and Young (2005) argued that as a consequence of this, the deviant typologies and structuralised criteria presented, have overcomplicated the process. Imagination and creativity remain stifled, this adversely affecting the entire research framework of this potentially flourishing and vibrant phenomena. Stemming from inappropriate methodologies, we continue to publish data, which suggest little variation exists between persons; literature also dismisses rational choice and uniqueness of worldviews. Overall, we appear to have buckled and retracted from in-depth modes of inquiry. As a result:

> We have left the door wide open for policy makers, the police and practitioners to 'erroneously interpret' and criminalize groups of young people hanging about on the road and 'doing nothing', or viewing such groups as a springboard to much more serious offending and violence (Joseph and Gunter, 2011: 12).

In my analysis and overview of subculture research, I have been critical of the literature and theory which, in my view, clumps together communities and cultures, thus overlooking the uniqueness of mind, thought and feeling between members. As a researcher with first-hand experience of subculture participation, I believe the existing theory and understanding fails to inform the inquisitive non-conventional research mind. It seems to me that life experiences, the way in which we interpret them, and everything which makes us humanly unique, is reduced to generalizable facts (Ellis, 2011). The belief I hold in a relativist worldview, that is, that the world contains no absolute truth[s] (Kapoulas and Miljana, 2012), demands that we source other vibrant methodologies to seek out and articulate new forms of knowledge. Donmoyer (2012) made the point that we need to explore the complexity of micro-interactions embedded and underpinning deviant subcultures; a more humane understanding is required to bridge the gap in awareness and understanding. He further remarked that the structured criteria and numerical clarity required by politicians to justify political and social interventions demand that we strip away complexity (Donmoyer, 2012).

Williams (2011) maintained that the literatures of modernist social sciences are founded on abstracted and abstruse discussions; almost exclusively, they are void of authentic narrative and insight. According to Wilson (2006: 320) when investigating social phenomena through dynamic qualitative perspectives, research is 'illuminating, rather than obscuring aspects of human experience'. Rosemarie Anderson (2001: 6), has challenged the rigid and structured philosophies of crime. She believes that 'what can be known is interpretive, ever-changing, and creative. It can never be nailed down in an objective sense. What is true today interpretively is not necessarily so tomorrow'. Hodkinson and Lincoln (2007: 3, 5), describe how the introduction of the internet has taken partial or full membership to subcultures away from public spaces. He believes the different multi-media, artistic, stylistic and cultural practices no longer have to be performed in the structured community landscape; these 'virtual spaces' afford young people greater ownership, individuality, freedom and access of participation. Furthermore, expanding on this, they point out that, 'rather than forming fixed collective groupings. . . young people today are more likely to . . [negotiate] personal paths through a myriad of temporary and partial identities'. As suggested by Nayak (2003: 306),

post-subculture studies now 'dominate colourful, cultural accounts of young people's lives, which celebrate the optimism of stylistic and musical possibility'.

However, the shift into postmodernism does cause me concern as a researcher and practitioner. There has arisen a period of undecidedness and ambiguity in the move away from modernist thinking. Contributing to this changing and evolving debate is the concept of 'neo-tribe' highlighted by Muggleton (1997) and the more 'playful approach' to subculture participation, previously described by Bennett (1999). Nonetheless, in doing so, I believe we have moved research away from the social and political crux of the problem. Joseph and Gunter (2011) point out that the purported 'gang industry experts', consisting of primarily liberal policymakers and academics, have failed to reach a consensus, or make literary sense of the changing nature of youth and gang cultures; this should also be inclusive of research and theory which examines the lives of adult offenders, drug and alcohol service users. For genuine authenticity, a balance must be sought, which enhances and complements social structure theories with the trials and tribulations of original life histories. Williams (2011: 34) claims that in general, and to varying degrees:

> These authors have called for the dismissal of a concept that maintains no small amount of analytic usefulness. They tend to characterise subcultures as a rigid concept, too weighed down by the shortcomings of its CCCS past to remain useful.

Moving into the somewhat ambiguous and hazy landscape of postmodernism, a sensible starting point, according to Wall (2006: 2), is to challenge the value of 'token reflection that is often included as a paragraph in an otherwise neutral and objectively presented manuscript'. Although individuality is quite rightly brought to the forefront, there continues to persist a dearth of the kinds of literatures readily available for scrutiny and learning. In the main, post-subcultural studies negate and ignore the cultural lives of those residing at the bottom of the social ladder; they continue to be of less significance when compared to those who participate in stylistic and creative cultures (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2006). When taking this into account, Bennett (2005: 256) maintained that the further we distanced ourselves from modernist social theories, the more inattention we paid towards those who are suffering from 'structurally embedded inequalities'.

Although there has been a move away from theories which place emphasis on the collective, as opposed to the individual, in recent years, we have witnessed mass social unrest from cohorts of socially disengaged youth. In particular, political attention has turned to the crises of post-16 employment and education failings, the escalation in knife crime, and the rise in street violence and lawlessness. These disturbances have in essence brought to the forefront that 'subculture identities are shaped through material and social conditions' (Blackman, 2014: 208). As argued by Shildrick and MacDonald (2006), class-based inequalities continue to profoundly affect the lives of those who reside within impoverished communities and regions. Shildrick, MacDonald and Furlong (2016: 832) further suggest that through misinformed political stigma, labelling and rhetoric, there persists unscrupulous government focus and attention towards these communities, thus supporting the use of 'punitive policies directed at those in disadvantaged circumstances'. As theorised by Becker (1997 [1963]: 14), 'deviancy is not a quality that lies in behaviour itself, but in the interaction between the person who commits an act and those who respond to it'. Hence, as documented by my research volunteers, it is the gaze of the external other which determines how we are socially defined.

To conclude this chapter, subculture research has now expanded and set roots in numerous other aspects of social life. As maintained by Hodkinson (2002) and Shildrick and MacDonald (2006: 14), in order to understand the political and social inequality attributed to crime, we should be aiming to 'rework and update notions of subculture', as opposed to viewing them as irrelevant and outdated. I strongly believe that what we seek is a complementary balance. Therefore, research must locate itself within the collective, whilst narrating the impact of wider social and political injustices through rich individual narrative. As a methodology, autoethnography has the capacity to reduce the void which exists between the offending population and the wider social and political elite. Through this, opportunities are created to address issues of 'structural inequality' (Bennett, 2005: 256) and 'treatment discrimination against offenders' (Baur et al. 2018: 216); real and accurate insight can be attained, relational connectedness and acceptance can develop (Ellis, 2011). Unfortunately, as highlighted by Joseph and Gunter (2011) and Shildrick and MacDonald (2006), research is moving further away from understanding the initial reasons for subculture participation; greater focus and

inquiry is needed to explore the attributes attained through long-term subculture engagement; thus we are no nearer breaking the cycle of initial and repeat offending.

In the next chapter, I will present the first of two in-depth stories.

Chapter 6
Thesis story one: Mark's story: an in-depth narrative

6.1 Chapter introduction

In-depth narrative one is the thought-provoking and gritty life history of Mark. Recollecting his earliest childhood memories, we explore in depth his adverse and abusive childhood. Through countless conversations, I am granted a rich insight into the complexity of his life and circumstances of hardship. Discussed and evaluated are the individual, community and life-affirming happenings, which he came to acknowledge in this study as contributing to incarceration, substance misuse and decades of hopelessness. Working with Mark for approximately four years, I extract a substantial period of narrated data: first entry *4th July, 2013,* last entry *26th September 2016*. Applying this to the different theory, perspectives and literature, I locate his biography in the social and political context in which his offending took place. Throughout this chapter, I relate and interweave his life history to crucial theorists and other literary paradigms; this is supported throughout by Dictaphone and written narrative.

Due to the autoethnographic methodology applied in this study, I extract pivotal moments and events from my autobiography, which I perceive as life-affirming and life-defining. In doing so, I will explain how my life history has helped to nurture the kinds of learning relationship and authentic connection, described by Mark as imperative in his learning and aspirations to lead a non-offending life. Also, notably uncommon in mainstream ETE structures and services, I elucidate, in depth, how similar events of personal, social and political misfortune define my approach, pedagogy and work.

Fromm (2014: 7, 8) was intrigued and fascinated with the study of the 'condition of human life, and the evolution of man's physical and intellectual abilities'. To restore balance in a society which had become a soulless existence, he theorised about the preservation of the spirit of man; it is, the 'lifeblood of existence, the purpose of life and disintegration of society'. He also stated that harmony within and amongst cultures are the foundations, which create a sense of social and personal wellbeing. Hence, when absent, man is more likely to move towards destructive behaviours; impulsive and reckless, we strive to acquire a knowledge and

understanding of who we are, and the relevance of our existence. Acknowledging that man is gifted with reason; we have an awareness of ourselves, of others, our past, and we can think and reflect towards the future. When absorbing myself in his writings, I feel liberated; I am taken down a reflective path, which challenges and intrigues me. I am left pondering how best to begin a discourse of understanding, one which relates my own human existence to those of the people with whom I work and support.

When attempting to connect to the lifeworld of Mark, I was aware of his internalised feelings of loneliness, isolation and detachment from a world he fears, yet was intrigued to explore. Drawing on the insight of Fromm (1995: 7), I believe Mark had developed an 'awareness of his aloneness and separateness, of his helplessness before the forces of nature and of society, all this makes his separate, disunited existence an unbearable prison'. Sadly, in agreement with Stern (2009: 107), I feel these periods of isolation, blurred by his irrational thought processes, render him 'progressively incapable of making any kind of relationship that would overcome loneliness'. I would like to present two extracts provided by Mark, transcribed from two separate Dictaphone conversations. Mark spoke about his experiences of isolation and loneliness, which I believe had negatively affected his childhood and entire adulthood.

Mark: Thursday 4th July, 2013-I hated infants from fucking day one. I could not stand it, every morning I used to cry. I found it difficult to learn, I hated school. I was bullied, and I hated it, I was getting picked on and brayed (assaulted) by the teachers.

During school, I could not read and write, I tried to focus what they were writing on the board, I could just not get it. The teacher used to come up to me, and with the knuckle of his finger, he would smack me on the top of the head. I would be rubbing my head and crying, and he would say shut up crying it was only a tap. They never wanted to help you. These days they call it dyslexia, in them days they called you a dumb cunt.

Before I drank, I started taking drugs at sixteen years old. It was just weed and pot (cannabis).

Researcher question: Why did you take drugs, did it provide something else that you could not get in normal life?

It was just avoidance, just to get away from everything, from life itself and the people around you. When I was growing up, I was scared what was going to happen the next day, always scared.

Mark: Friday 5th March, 2015-I have had a good weekend, my daughter came up. I have eight children, and she is the only one who comes and sees me. When she goes, I am back on my own again. And when you are by yourself, your mind starts ticking, you are bored, and there is nothing else to do.

Researcher question: Does that pull you back?

It does pull you back, because I am sat looking out of the window, and I can see a wall and a few houses, television, and that is it. Alright, I can put music on, but after a few hours you get sick of it, you get sick of looking out of the window, you get sick of going to your friends' houses. You have to listen to their arguments. I want to do something different, I want to do something meaningful, not just for myself, but to help others, that is what I really want.

As highlighted by Fromm (1995: 1) 'most people see the problem of love primarily as that of being loved, rather than that of loving, of one's capacity to love'. For both myself and Mark, the dysfunctional and abusive upbringings have, I believe warped our perception of what it means to be loved. The years of isolation have taken their toll on the psychology of Mark; he now viewed himself as a separate entity, and hence, he now sought the reassurance of relational connectedness, for he feared loneliness and separation. In a Dictaphone conversation, Mark provided an insight into the impact isolation had on his everyday wellbeing.

Mark: Thursday 4th July, 2013:   *When I see my key worker (Colin), I feel safe. When I go to CRP, I feel safe. It is when I am on my own, that is when I am not safe, and I just can't stop fucking drinking. I will be quite honest with you Colin, as soon as you walk out of here, I am going straight to the shop to buy alcohol.*

I have just concluded a one-to-one appointment with Mark on the 19th August, 2013. He has continued his relapse over the weekend. Looking jaded and defeated, we decide to proceed

with the appointment. Due to Mark's withered and emotional frame of mind, I was reluctant to engage in a conversation, which placed undue stress upon him; I was concerned he would be unable to remember any meaningful dialogue communicated. He is a man burdened, I want to understand him, and if possible, help him in any way I can. When awaking in the morning, Mark, like many other demoralised souls, occupied a monotonous world; he found himself residing 'in a universe suddenly divested of illusion and light' (Camus, 2005: 4). Mark, through his written narrative, expressed his feelings of hopelessness. Questioning his existence, it was clear he was unable to foresee any happiness and contentment.

> *Mark: Wednesday 14th August, 2013: I find it hard to look to my future. I want to be right, I want a life. I want things that I have not had. I look at people with envy. I would love to live life right, but I don't. Why can't I? I have done so much talking, I am fucked in my head, and I am still in this shit. I have been told to get a grip, give yourself a shake. If I could manage this, I would not be writing this down, the way I feel now is shit. I really don't know why I can't cope with life. If anyone can make sense of what I have written, then good.*

The reason for this relapse was the news his daughter has been incarcerated for six months, convicted of a serious assault on her sister. Although Mark has been separated from his children's mothers for many years, the dysfunctional and immoral nature of the incident, and the sadness which that created in Mark, has triggered within him feelings of guilt and shame. A shattered family unit, he opts to mask his sadness through excessive alcohol consumption; he struggled to understand the amoral actions and attitudes of his children.

Etched in the voice of Mark is an indescribable pain and anguish, his barren existence is submerged in complexity, he struggled to see any escape from his reality, he was consumed with a total absence of hope. The tragedy of his situation, his reluctance to confront his existence, distorting truth through avoiding, confirmed his conscious awareness of the absurd, which 'implies a total absence of hope (which has nothing to do with despair)' (Camus, 2005: 30). His notion of personhood, infested with feelings of worthlessness and self-depreciation, is described by theorist Freire (1996: 45) as being another 'characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their internalisation of the opinion the oppressor's hold of

them'. Over a twelve year period, most offenders with whom I have worked, have at different times, and for various reasons, endured suffering and extreme periods of hopelessness. As a result of exacerbating inequality, 'notions of protecting health for future time, or investing in one's health, are less present in their lived experiences' (MacKay and Quigley, 2018: 380). For these men, they held the belief that those who attained social and political power, continued their repressed status through deceitful and illusive methods. Devaluing their uniqueness, dignity and humanness, successive governments have transmitted the rhetoric, which suggests:

> They are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything - that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive-that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness (Freire, 1996 [1959]: 45).

During these turbulent periods, I can relate to his pain, and his eyes are filled with self-hate; detached from the world, he is emotionally and psychologically tortured. He tells me he feels lost, he is situated within a world unique to him, and only he knows just how miserable that world is. Just before my incarceration in 2001, I did not believe my life would amount to anything, and I had resigned myself to the fact that I would remain in the miserable existence in which I had found myself trapped. The following reflection is an extract from my autobiography.

In the lead up to the court case which eventually led to my incarceration, I was feeling that my then existence was lacking in meaning, purpose and a sense of direction. I felt an overwhelming sense of personal and social failure. My failed educational venture, the lack of fulfilment in the employment options available and the breakdown of my family structure, created a combined sensation of immense dissatisfaction. In my world, all the things I became recognised, respected and accepted for became the same things that made me wake up every morning with the dreaded feeling that life, residing within the same current social context was a life in which I was never happy or content. I never looked too far beyond my immediate situation, primarily for fear of not wanting to imagine a life, which I believed I would be unable to aspire or achieve.

Searching for meaning, within a world underpinned by a meaningless existence, void of structure, happiness, contentment and prospects, is the reality faced by many. Denied access to productive social opportunities, Mark has lost belief, his internal and external worlds have stagnated, and he remains imprisoned in the 'objective reality of his society', a reality of the here and now (Berger and Luckmann, 1971: 185). As stated by Bartley (2017: 101), poor socioeconomic conditions increase behavioural risk factors, 'lower income seems to be a health hazard because it encourages certain patterns of consumption'. Suffering in the present from the past, the interconnectedness of many complex factors leaves him feeling 'like an alien, a stranger' (Camus, 2005: 4). When working with complex clients, it is important to remember that:

> The meaning of life differs from man to man, from day to day and from hour to hour. What matters therefore is not the meaning of life in general but rather the specific meaning of a person's life at a given moment (Frankl, 2004 [1959: 110).

I feel compelled to create a bridge into the lifeworld of Mark, with honour and respect, I am wanting and willing to accept the invitation to step into his existence. In the case of Mark, and every other client with whom I work, their individual realities are not just something 'out there'; I believe them to be in some way relationally influenced and constructed to a particular time and space (Laverty, 2003). When we communicate, the roles we have become secondary; power, status and authority dissipate; my primary aim is to make Mark comfortable in the space we share and occupy. I agree with Schutz (1967) that for reasons difficult to explain or theorise, there are times when something happens, I become drawn into a spiritual and intuitive interchange. I can only describe this as an authentic meeting of minds, and a connection is made between myself and some of the people with whom I work; captured 'within the flow of duration there is only a living from moment to moment' (Schutz, 1967: 51). Through the flexibility of my role, I was able to trial innovative methods of working. My reasons for wanting to do this were quite simply: I was unwilling to package and standardise the subjective experiences of the men with whom I work.

I have an appointment with Mark today, 20th, August, 2013. Mark is preoccupied during the car journey back to the office. He confides in me there are times when he has no care for his

own existence; it was the thought of leaving his children which prevented him from ending his own life. As a human being, I felt that Mark was lost, he had ventured into a place directed by his demons, trapped in a state of mental torture. Camus (2005: 30) believes when such a fate becomes embedded in the consciousness, 'it can never be fully eluded again, hence, a man who has become conscious of the absurd is forever bound to it'. I interpret this to mean that when we have no self-worth, and feel powerless to change our external social context, we will forever be condemned to an unfulfilled life. My gut instinct, informed and stemming from my own lived experiences, is often my only form of wisdom and knowledge. Unsure of what to suggest at that exact moment in time, my main priority was to find ways to support him. However, to regain some control back, Mark must understand he does have choices, many of which are within his immediate grasp. Despite the struggles faced by Mark, I embrace the philosophy of Frankl (2004 [1959]), who through the tragedy of his experiences, discovered the amazing resolve of the human spirit in times of atrocity. Therefore, although we may feel we have been stripped of every conceivable right and freedom, what alone remains is 'the last human freedom', the ability to 'choose one's attitude in a given set of circumstance' (Frankl, 2004 [1959]: 9).

I pulled the car over and reminded Mark his life was only just beginning. I comforted him, the way he feels is not unusual, I have myself experienced similar feelings of despair. From my writings, I have taken two extracts. The first, as a young boy, recalls my earliest memory of having no care for my own life. The second is the sadness and regret I continue to feel following the suicides of some of my close friends. Both examples have influenced how I perceive and work with Mark.

Extract one: I have questioned the whole concept of life, and the worth of my own life. I have asked myself whether having a life so unfulfilled is worth occupying. I can remember being an eight year old boy of such thoughts. I believe this is not normal. However, it is the way I felt. I distinctly recall wanting to relieve myself of indescribable pain. I had a mum who did not want me, and quite frankly did not particularly care where I slept from one night to the next. Returning home was never something I looked forward to, I was never asked where I had been,

what I had done or who I had been with. With sadness, I wish I had been adopted, I had little reason to ever return to a household in which I felt a burden.

Extract two: My dear friends who have taken their lives, I now know could not foresee anything except hopelessness, despair and sadness; they just gave up, surrendered and submitted to a world of uncertainty. Life, which I believe is now the most precious creation, is sadly for some their worst nightmare. Gone are the happy memories we shared together, and those which we may have created in the future. They become overshadowed by the deep- seated need to end their pain.

When I hear Mark *contemplating such actions, I think of the passing of my friends, who I still think about and miss today; I long to turn back time and revisit them as I am now. Maybe I could have helped them, my worldview now, could have made the difference to them being here now. They may have been married, had successful jobs, they may even have been happy and contented family men, who knows! I suppose, although we have to stand by the decisions we make, I do harbour a certain guilt that I am here and they are not. Maybe this is the passion which fuels my work; although I realise it is too late for them, I hope others can benefit from the learning I have gained from my own lived experiences.*

I have a duty of care for the people I work with, and I was concerned about Mark's health; therefore, after a lengthy conversation, he agreed to visit the doctor; 20th, August, 2013. On our way to the GP surgery, he was crying and kept emphasising the fact that ''he does not want to live''. Pacing around the waiting room Mark was eventually called by the doctor to discuss the situation. Following this appointment, I asked Mark to take some time off; he needed to recuperate and rest. During most of the September and October, 2013 period, I continued to make contact, primarily through phone conversations. I also conducted weekly home visits; I did not want him to feel abandoned during this tumultuous period.

Although research by Roberts and Ossel (2017) and Blome, Shields and Verdieck (2009), clearly correlates lack of meaning to higher rates of depression, anxiety, substance misuse, suicide and other psychological related disorders, this tells me little about how I can, in

practice, begin to understand and help those who have given up on life. Research carried out by Sher (2016) indicated that 'men die by suicide at a rate four times higher than women'. A complex phenomena, Bantjes and Swartz (2017) suggest that the debates about the sociocultural context in the aetiology of suicide can be traced back to the work of functionalist Emile Durkheim's literature titled 'Le suicide' (1897). More recently, in their exploration of critical suicidology, the sociological and socioecomonic context of suicide remains a primary causal principle of global suicide, hence, they explicitly assert that 'culture has an explanatory role in suicidal behavior' (Bantjes and Swartz, 2017: 515). According to Shaw, Tunstall and Smith (2003: 332), life and death are still marked by social position and status, 'our life chances continue to be related to our accumulated social (dis)advantage'. I intend, through my research, to create knowledge that provides useful understanding to those who feel life has lost all purpose, hope and meaning.

Having suffered from depression myself, I can directly relate to the dark, distorted and plagued reality which Mark found himself in. Rowe (1995: 77) maintains that 'no one escapes depression', and 'the experience of depression can be the very worst experience you can ever have'. The lasting effects of depression should not be underestimated. From birth, the influence of impoverished, tough working-class communities, demanded we portray a tough exterior, thus rendering us unable to display emotions, feelings and weaknesses (O'Dwyer, 2012). The need to disguise, hide and deceive others, presenting a strong, masculine and confident figure, conceals how we really feel. Findings of the research by Salaheddin and Mason (2016: 689) reported that persons are discouraged from seeking help as a result of 'feeling embarrassed or ashamed'. Further, Conrad and Barker (2010: 69), who examined the social construction of illnesses found that 'some illnesses are stigmatised, and other are not'; thus, seeking help is in many cases, influenced by the socioeconomic context of the person. In harsh environments, it is something we live with, it has a place, just like any other aspect of my character. Writing about depression is challenging. When rooted in desolation, there is neither a remedy nor cure.

When depressed, I can only describe this as never being able to awake from your worst nightmare. As an illness, it is unpredictable, taking many different forms, it has a disturbing

effect on the sanity of your life. Highlighted below are two examples from my autobiography, one writing about myself as a young boy aged ten, and the other as a man in my late twenties; both accounts provide an insight into my own experiences of depression.

Extract one: When I was a young boy, a pattern had emerged. I quickly developed strategies and techniques to deal with negative life experiences. Rather than openly confiding in family members and friends about issues concerning me, I came up with other means to cope and deal with anxious and problematic thoughts and feelings. I learned, by chance, that removing myself from the environment, usually by walking to a different location was an ideal way to reflect on my thoughts. It also allowed me the appropriate time needed to rationalise negative thinking processes. I would often walk to the park, circling its boundaries, thinking and reflecting on things which as a young man, I found problematic. The park, of which there were many trees and other natural resources was a place in which I felt spiritually removed from life. The trees, the grass, the flowers, and whole naturalistic atmosphere, was a forgiving and scenic location. This encouraged deep reflection, sheltered away from the busy and built up settings in which most working class communities are situated.

Extract two: When awaking in the morning, I would struggle to deal with the life I was involved in. Rooted in a deep depression, I was unable to imagine any hope and meaning. On many occasions, all I wanted to do was stay in bed and hide under the duvet. The thought of having to venture into a public place, surrounded by strangers monotonously engaging in their daily routines, ignited sheer panic. When you feel life is almost not worth living, everything and anything has the potential to tip you over the edge. We become fragile, and where possible seek places to hide from the hive of mainstream activity. You fear people, and you dread having to engage in a conversation, you want to become invisible, hoping that you can avoid anyone and everyone.

Although my demons remain uniquely embedded, I now awake every morning with a knowledge that it is possible to discover spiritual contentment. Therefore, when I read the narrative from Mark, I fully embrace the insight by Rowe (1995: 74) that all he wanted was 'a painless way of being, without having to battle against a world which hurts and ignores you'.

I can comfort, reassure and provide empathy. Regardless of age, I have yet to make a distinction between feelings of hopelessness, vulnerability and fear; they can debilitate and plague both man and boy with precisely the same ravenous intensity. Nonetheless, he must be brave enough to negotiate with his demons, I must respect this as being his battle. I must also remember that:

> When you're depressed you can observe the people around you being sympathetic and loving, but somehow their sympathy and love cannot get through the barrier which surrounds you. No matter what other people do, you are not comforted (Rowe, 1995: 77).

I write these reflections on the 30th October, 2013. A critical period, Mark is at an all-time low. Questioning the purpose of his existence, he described his daily life as being ''just a living hell''. I had not given up on him, and although 'he will have to accept his suffering as his task' (Frankl, 2004 [1959]: 86), he had my loyalty and support throughout and beyond this bleak period. Not for the first time, he recalled his experiences of being a client with other services, they patronised him, and generally left him feeling like he was a burden. Overly scrutinised and monitored by staff, every opportunity was taken to chastise him for being too vocal; personal opinion was frowned upon, it was not the role of a service user to question authority. Silenced by the struggle, his voice is muffled, the language he conveyed was often distorted and washed away. The failure to be understood left him frustrated, the rhetoric and truth he tried in vain to communicate, was one of the root causes of his alienation. Mark feared his words would be manipulated once transmitted into a public space. Generally, those who dominate through power have unchallenged access to this discourse. Loss of ownership invites scrutiny and manipulation; the vast difference in symbolic intelligibility between offender and professional makes the words of the oppressed there to be abused and exploited (Butler, 1997). When I read the theorising of Butler, and relate this to the communicative dilemma of those disadvantaged during relational interactions, is it any wonder most offenders opt for a silent stance?

Moreover, from my experiences working in public and private sector offender services, social funding policies directly impede on this aspect of my professional role. Due to this, and as noted by Thomson and Russell (2009), senior management dissuades relationships being

formed, they aim to desensitise us to the individuality, creativity and uniqueness of complex individuals and diverse cohorts. With this in mind, I had no intention of masking my values, and thus, I embraced and respected the life of Mark. A further principle informing my life and my pedagogy is the belief that every human being is sacred and unique. Moreover, every person, regardless of colour, creed or class, has a moral status (Bauman, 2007), entitling them to be treated with dignity and respect. I am not prepared to compromise this view. As a consequence of this, I have continuously found myself in conflict with the morally unjust values of traditional ETE services.

I wanted Mark to believe there was somebody occupying a role of authority who was willing to support and mentor him through periods of darkness. I want to encourage hope and belief, and I want to nurture and empower; together we can address and find resolutions to the individual and social obstacles; my loyalty was without compromise. Furthermore, without question, I believe every human being deserves the opportunity to live a productive life. Therefore, my pedagogy should not further alienate or disadvantage, either consciously or subconsciously. For Mark, decades of being neglected and labelled have impacted on his ability to trust external connections and relationships. As noted by Ospina et al. (2004: 55), trust between persons needs to be nurtured, and thus, 'comes only from relationships built over time'.

Unable to liberate himself from his feelings of self-depreciation, and the struggles he encountered forming positive and meaningful interactions, lead to him living a solitary existence; boredom appears a major factor in Mark's self-destructive behaviour (Bargdil, 2000). His need to be accepted, his desire to overcome separation and his imprisoned state of loneliness, evoked feelings of self-hate and loathing. The necessity to control, as opposed to being controlled was also problematic. Therefore, despite his desire to integrate with wider society, at the crucial point of engagement, he was consumed with panic; thus, he remained trapped in his lonely alternative world. Freire (1996: 29) would view Mark as having 'internalised the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines. Freedom would require them to eject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility'. Expanding on this, Fromm (1995: 9-10) provides an insight, which I believe offers a valid rationale for some of Mark's self-destructive behaviours:

> Alcohol and drug addiction are the forms which the individual chooses in a non-organic culture. In contrast to those participating in the socially patterned solution, such individuals suffer from guilt feelings and remorse. While they try to escape from separateness by taking refuge in alcohol and drugs, they feel all the more separate after the orgiastic experience is over, and thus are driven to take recourse to it with increasing frequency and intensity.

When working with complicated men such as Mark, I take heart from the theorising of Dorothy Rowe (1995). She believes that by acknowledging the inherent flaws located within our practice, we are showing a healthy respect for those we strive to help. Central to the relational understanding developed with Mark is my openness. Therefore, when I had no answers, felt powerless, or had no associated lived experience to his suffering, it was important to raise this. In times of desperation, we reach out seeking solutions. In many instances, due to the clients internalised feelings of self-depreciation, they allow themselves to be redirected back to the oppressors, continuing the cycle as the oppressed (Freire, 1996). Furthermore, for many service users, they find themselves powerless to contest the irrational and inaccurate judgements made by professionals when assessing their personhood and identity; rarely do they feel able to defend or challenge morally inaccurate views and perceptions. As suggested by Anderson and Honneth (2004: 132), when pertaining a sense of diminished self-respect, 'we are less in a position to view ourselves as the authors of our lives. Without self-respect, then, autonomy is impaired'.

As highlighted by Frankl (2004 [1959]: 86), no one can relieve Mark of 'his suffering or suffer in his place, he will have to accept his suffering as his task'. At that moment in time, all I could do was offer Mark a supportive shoulder to cry on, with honest non-judgemental guidance. Essentially, his actions to inflict harm and sacrifice everything, was ultimately a choice only he could make. In times of uncertainty, I take comfort from Frankl (2004 [1959]) who demonstrated the resilience and robustness of the human spirit. When beaten and battered, it has the amazing ability to restore, maintain and nurture a sense of hope and meaning; through times of atrocity, higher spiritual morality is possible. He also perceived there to be a unity in suffering; the meaningful connections I develop, stem from similar embedded feelings of lifelong isolation and rejection. Therefore, the concept of hope is defining of my

pedagogy. The journey we embark on is based on the belief that to 'find meaning in life at all, then there must be meaning in suffering' (Frankl, 2004 [1959]: 76).

Throughout the previous months, little has changed, Mark has continued to drink excessively; he informed me these self-destructive behaviours are fuelled by a desire to escape the reality of a sober worldview. When viewing life through the lens of sobriety, he felt powerless to hide, he was burdened with conditions of suffering. In the opinion of Frankl (2004 [1959]: 86), his desperation to ignore life, and his need to seek sanctuary and gain a reprieve from his torment, has transcended him into a state of psychological denial. He would also have described Mark as being trapped in a psychological state of 'artificial optimism', he did not have the strength to face his everyday existence, and he viewed his suffering as unbearable. For his own wellbeing, he was accepted into a detox and rehabilitation centre. It was difficult at that moment in time to reason with Mark, who was deflated and demoralised. Careful not to probe too much, I was just glad we were back in touch. Mark thanked me for the support I was providing, he felt encouraged and inspired by the faith I had shown. The written narrative demonstrated his feelings regarding this. Moreover, despite this turbulent and unstable period, I could, nevertheless, sense the seed of hope and optimism that was beginning to take root.

Mark: Sunday 5th January 2014: *I feel really shit today. Just don't feel right, it may be due to the tablets I am taking. I just keep on thinking about my recovery. I do know that I am not going to go through this again. The drink is overpowering me and is taking over my life. I want my life back, which I am getting slowly. If it was not for Colin and Joanne (Alcohol key worker) I would have given up. I even thought about ending my life, but that is not going to happen. The people in my life have given me hope. But in saying that I am upset a lot of the time. I get through it because I think of my future and all the people that have put so much time in for me.*

At this moment in time, I am not drinking as much, I have cut down quite a lot. I am not eating much. I have not seen any of my kids over Christmas, they have got their own lives. I do not want to put my problems on them, but it would be nice for a little bit of support from them. It feels as if they do not care about me, and that makes me feel shit. I can cope, I have got my sister, Colin and Joanne. It is good to know and it gives me strength in my recovery.

> *I am positive more than ever, I would not be able to do this without the support from Colin. I do not even think he realises just how much he has helped me and other people. I do believe that without that bloke I would have given up. Things have been hard, but now I can see things moving now. I am not going to fuck up. I am looking forward to getting a life and working with Colin and CRP.*
>
> *I feel positive going away (alcohol rehabilitation). Just the fact that Colin will stay in touch with me, supporting me, makes me want to get my life sorted out. I wish I would have met him years ago.*

Referring to the wisdom of Fromm (1995), how do I challenge and transform the demoralised mindset of the people who feel they have nothing to live for, how do I begin to inculcate the belief that 'life was still expecting something from them; something in the future was expected of them' (Frankl, 2004 [1959]: 87). My own fear of failure keeps me grounded to the belief that the feel-good factors of today, may not be there tomorrow. I consider there to be fragility to the life I now have, while the many different aspects which inspire and empower remain, I feel blessed. I take nothing for granted, the dread of losing everything I have achieved is a conscious reality. My own niggling sense of fragility is associated with my ongoing struggles to gain control and ownership of my life; this remains and will persist as a lifelong battle.

For years, Mark had struggled to feel accepted and welcomed by the services there to help him. On numerous occasions, he stressed to me that they did not understand him, they perceived him as just another offender, a challenge and a burden to their important working day. However, I understood Mark, as best I could, and knew he had a desire to open up to somebody, just not anybody. In accordance with my values, and as highlighted by Stickle (2013), having a voice is imperative, a fundamental human right. Hence, we have a right to question, defend or scrutinise any factual or normative claim. When I listened to Mark, I encouraged the unburdening of issues; I ensured his voice was heard and respected at all times. In the experiences of Ellis (2002: 400), what works best 'is to listen to another's perspective – to try to really listen – and then add to what they're saying rather than challenge

it'. I would never have been so bold as to presume I knew what he was thinking, the dignity of this intelligent man was always of primary importance.

Informing my pedagogy are my own experiences of being a client in the criminal justice system. During this period, I felt those in a position of authority silenced my voice, overwhelmed with feelings of belittlement, I felt degraded. The inability and reluctance of many professionals to want to understand my worldview, meant they objectified and packaged my entire being; through relations of oppression, they imposed their power. The extract below recalls my own experiences of being devalued by a person who occupied a position of power.

I remember sitting in the probation office, where every query or question was perceived as being somehow defiant or obstructive. This evoked mixed feelings of frustration, helplessness and anger. To challenge her beliefs and stereotypical perceptions of me, to have a voice, to have the strength to stand up for what I felt I needed, would I feared have been viewed as hostile and in some way obstructive. Moreover, I was also scared that if I were audacious and bold enough to challenge my probation officer, hence questioning the recommended pathways of rehabilitation and reintegration, which she nonchalantly recommended, any perceived resistance would have been used against me.

The fear of being perceived as problematic was my barrier to engagement during every appointment which I attended. I felt belittled and misunderstood; thus, I was being viewed as just another offender who had a chip on his shoulder. My voice was not being heard, respected or understood by those who have no lived association with my experiences. You quickly begin to realise that their commitment, motivation and genuine desire to recognise me as an individual, is not something they feel the need to do. In the eyes of the criminal justice system, I was just another number, who is insignificant, an inconvenience and beyond help. I found it more productive to say nothing, pay lip service and refrain myself from vocalising my thoughts, feelings and perceptions.

If my probation officer had treated me as an individual, who knows, she may have tempted me to share some of my lived experiences with her. My experiences, similar to those of Mark, reinforces the chasm that exists in worldviews, between those who hold positions of power, and the men who refuse to be objectified and dehumanised. Due to this, opportunities for relational understanding become muted and stifled; both practitioner and client instinctively regress to a way of being which further alienates and oppresses. A relational interaction where one dominates, and one is dominated, is an accepted fate for the majority of offenders involved in the criminal justice system. As a consequence, we assume a subordinate sense of self, and we become passengers in the process. Recalling one particular meeting with my probation officer, the feeling of being dominated and dictated to, not only ensured my silence, it rendered me unable to provide an honest rationale for my actions to the prosecution.

I was asked by the probation officer to discuss the personal reasons associated with the offence I was being charged with. She asked me to reflect on my childhood, suggesting that my dysfunctional upbringing was influential in my offending. As I sat there, I was being pressured, I felt uneasy, and I just wanted to escape this intrusive persecution. Unqualified to do so, she continued to psychoanalyse me, insisting on my cooperation during this invasive line of inquiry. Still not resolved to date, she simply expected me to allow her access to my subjective and emotive childhood experiences. I explained that I was not willing to discuss my past with a total stranger. The thought of engaging in this process, in such an objective manner, filled me with anger and rage, thus reinforced the need to recoil, shelter and protect myself.

Her insistence on pushing this line of inquiry allowed me the strength to rise to my feet, and I hastily walked out of the meeting. As I exited the room, she informed me that "failure to comply would have grave consequences". She warned me that due to my actions she had "no option but to recommend a custodial sentence to the jury". True to her word, the prosecution read out a report from my probation officer indicating that in her professional opinion I "warranted a custodial sentence". Maybe, if my probation officer had treated me as an individual, who knows, she may have tempted me to lay some of my lived experiences on the table.

As Gair (2009: 136) suggests, you do not have to have experienced incarceration to display empathy as a professional, and as such, she 'rejected the use of empathy if it means that the listener must be able to feel and understand through a lens of their own shared experience'. Nonetheless, displaying empathy and compassion is essential to balance out the void in contrasting worldviews; this may also reduce any unhealthy biases during communication. Service users must also accept some responsibility, for years I felt bitter, I labelled and held a grudge; in essence, I was no better than them. Back then, my inability to view life beyond my biases, stereotypes and attitudes was reinforcing the harmful ideology, practiced and held by those in power. Over time, these notions of deviancy become entwined and congealed into our communal and subjective realities, we become the 'carriers of this alternative definition of reality' (Berger and Luckmann, 1971: 124). On reflection, the self-fulfilling prophecy I had internalised (Becker, 1964), helped to maintain my oppressed identity.

Mark believed that being listened to and understood was imperative for him to lead a more productive life. Williams (2006) would view his inability to be understood as detrimental to his chances of rehabilitation, thus affecting his opportunities of moving into non-offending pathways. The question we should be asking is, how do we bring harmony, rationality and equilibrium to the communal space occupied by the offender and professional; how do we remove the 'us versus them' mentality from proceedings? (Williams, 2006: 23). Through the work undertaken, either individually or as a group, I am informed that I create an environment where the men feel safe, where given time and attention they learn to trust; and as that trust develops, they feel able to share with me what they are thinking and feeling. In the Dictaphone conversation below Mark expressed why he and the other members of the group benefited from a client centred culture of learning.

Mark: Friday 9th January, 2015: For me it is all about the people there and yourself (Colin). Because we can all contribute to the group, we are all individuals, we are all different people from different backgrounds, and some of the group are in recovery. Some of the group are still using (reduction programmes). However, we do not attend intoxicated, we go there for the education, and we get something out of it. We just do not sit in a classroom getting tutored and taught, talked down to and talked at. We are asked questions and it is informal, it is good and I enjoy it. I get a lot out of it, without the group I think I would be back to square one

again, back to the drink. I have been to some other services, and to be honest with you, they are just not for me; I have tried them all. You can come when you want, there is no pressure, that is why I like the group.

There is a good atmosphere between everybody. Everybody gets on and everyone understands about everyone else's problems, and there is no judging. No one judges anybody else, it is all supportive. I have been to other services where it is all about the individual, wherein our group it is about us (collective), and I get a lot from it. Although I am speaking for myself, I can guarantee you that if you speak to the rest (other group members), they will tell you the same as what I am telling you. Most other groups and services patronise you, whereas now I feel that I am finding myself, and I feel like I know where I am going now. Before you would be asked to attend a group and do a twelve-week course and after that twelve-week course you are either cured or educated, and that is it, you can get on in life. That is not right, if I did not enjoy coming to this group I would not come.

Researcher question-I asked Mark if the group has helped him to reflect on where his life is going and who he is as a person.

Mark: Yes, because the thing is, some of the other services I have been to, I have been asked to sit in a room with twenty or thirty other people. Although I am comfortable about talking, I am just not comfortable about talking about myself when they (services) do not give a dam. Whereas in our group I have got more confidence, I know where I want to go, I know where I am going to be in the next twelve months, and this has helped me along the way. Without our group, I would be in the same situation I was in twelve months ago.

My own life, and the lives of the people I work with are unique, our lived experiences should not be slotted into an authoritative and objective framework. As highlighted by Frankl (2004 [1959: 85) we should never lose sight of the fact that, 'life does not mean something vague, but something very real and concrete'. Progress with Mark continued, he was relishing his mentoring role in the group, and accepted the responsibility which this entailed; he seemed to have acquired a sense of purpose and meaning. As I observed him tending to the needs of his peers, patiently catering to their every requirement, I was witnessing his growth and transformation. Referring back to my reflective journal on Wednesday 5th May, 2015, I note

how fit and healthy he looked. I also remark how he now understands what a professional role entails, and he appears very aware of the responsibility this brings. Over the course of this inquiry, the loyalty, care and genuine bond evidenced between the men, nurtured into the foundations of this learning community (Lave, 1996).

For Mark, many exciting opportunities had now presented themselves. He was now accepting the responsibility he had. He was also aware that his future was very much determined by himself. From a personal perspective, I felt he was now ready to move onto pastures new. Due to this, I contacted the Directions Offender Service in Halifax. Having worked with this provision previously, I knew Mark would receive full support in whatever role he wished to do. Although my role as a mentor was to continue, it was agreed that I would gradually phase this out; thus, my guidance will move towards the boundaries. This would leave Mark free to make the many professional decisions and implement the numerous modes and methods of working, which would define his practice.

Moreover, although care and compassion towards the people I work with are essential, there becomes a pivotal moment in the relationship when the service client has to fly the nest; although as stressed, my support was unconditional, and would have continued for as long as was required by Mark. To frame and capture this period in Mark's life, during a Dictaphone conversation I asked him a series of questions regarding the purpose, meaning and sense of contentment which he felt was now enabling him to live a more productive existence. Although Mark was now moving into new and exciting pathways, I had no doubt that this was just the beginning, and during the next few years, he would face many other challenges. However, I did feel that at that moment in time, he was perhaps the happiest he had ever been.

Researcher: Tuesday 29th September, 2015: During the last two years there has been a lot of ups and downs, it has been a long journey, how do you feel today? You are due to start working as an offender mentor for the Directions Service in Halifax?

Mark: Tuesday 29th September, 2015: It is the best that I have felt in a long while to tell you the truth because I have only ever be surrounded by drink. The Directions Service, really made me feel like they wanted me to be there. And I can't wait to start next week, half a day

on Thursday and then a full day on Friday just to start with and then as I progress, I will take some more days on.

Researcher: Tuesday 29th September, 2015: Do you feel that you are now taking ownership of your life in a way that you have not done previously?

Mark: Tuesday 29th September, 2015: Well yes. I am still in recovery, and I will always be in recovery. But, I have come to help people (other service users) who are not getting the right service. Because from my own point of view they (clients) have been going to the wrong service because you can't get what you want out of some services. But I will know what the client will want and expect, and I will also get a lot myself (gratification) from helping other people. They will come in, and they will have somebody to listen, I will help them in any way I can.

Researcher: Tuesday 29th September, 2015: I can sense that this is a real passion:

Mark: Tuesday 29th September, 2015: Well, this has always been a passion, but I have always been intoxicated, I have never been as absent for so long. The times I have been, it has not been one hundred percent (in terms of commitment), there has always been that shadow of a doubt that I will want to drink. Whereas now, I don't want to drink. I just want to focus on my life and my future. Researcher: Tuesday 29th September, 2015: You have spoken about hope for the future, what do you want for your future? Mark: Tuesday 29th September, 2015: Well, I would hope to get a full-time job, mentoring and doing this type of work. But I am not looking at that yet, I just want to get in there (start volunteering) and learn as much as I can, because there is plenty to learn, because you are always learning and get some type of qualification under my belt. I mean, when I apply for a job, which is hopefully going to be next year, I will be applying for that job confidently, with a view that I am going to get this job. I know there will be other applicants for the job, but he will have just come out of college, or he has just been to university. They (employers) want to see some experience and where he (worker) has come from. Later in the conversation: I have got life experience. I have had to educate myself, and I have still got a lot of learning to do. And being given the opportunity to work with Directions, it is going to push me forward. Because that is all that I can do now is go forward, I can't go back. I reckon if I go back to where I was Colin (Alcohol dependent) then there will never be any going forward again, and that will be

it, there will never be another chance, I just know that there won't. This time is for me, and I am going to grasp it with both hands and do some good with it. Mark, later in the conversation: The thing is with you, you have not given up on me, and a lot of people have done. They have closed the door in my face. Where with you it is different, you have never judged me, you have never given up on me, and you have always been there for me. Mark, later in the conversation: When somebody gives up on you, you don't know how it feels. If you would have given up on me, I would have still been sat here with a bottle, that is without a doubt. Even though I did not want to drink, I just did it; there was fuck all else going on in my life

When finally easing away from the men, one purpose of this research was to feel that they would be able to resist the lure of future offending. Although, as evidenced in this investigation, a primary aim of my role was to work with former offenders in an educational capacity, it was equally important that these changes impacted on their feelings and ontology towards offending. Thus, it was imperative they felt able to live independently without feeling the need to return to a former offending lifestyle. As I write these reflections towards the end of September, 2016, Mark has since left his volunteer role at the Directions Offender Service in Halifax. Similar to my experience, he felt there were many structural barriers, which prevented him from forming the types of relationships he considered crucial between service professional and service client. Following this, he has decided to spend some time reflecting on his next voluntary role. To conclude, I would like to present the following extracts below, which capture his present-day views on crime and deviance. I contend that this is testimony to the power of education, time and empathic educational relationships. Although his next voluntary or employment role remained undecided, this extended educational process had supported Mark to finally lead a more productive non-offending life.

Researcher: Monday 26th September 2016: How do you view crime now?

Mark: Monday 26th September 2016: I view crime as a waste of time, you are going to get incarcerated and you are going to hurt your family and hurt yourself. And you are stuck in a place which is bad and where you meet other people (offenders) and crime is going to escalate. For me now, crime is not for me. At one time, I did not care about doing crime, I enjoyed crime,

I enjoyed doing violence and stuff like that, but rather than doing that now I would rather deter people from and say look, where the hell are you going. Because it (crime) is going to take you in a dark, dark place. You are going to lose your family, you are going to lose your friends, your kids, and you are going to be locked up, and then you are going to come out angry. And, it won't be long before you get to my age and you think, well, I should have listened to what people are saying. I know what I am talking about, it has just taken me a long time to get where I am. If I could turn the clocks back, which is never going to happen, then I would change it (the past).

Later on in the conversation: You know Colin back then, I was not scared of anybody. I do not care how big the man is, at the time I did not care about the police, I did not care about anything. But, reflecting back on what I was like, I am pretty embarrassed really Colin, and a bit ashamed of why I was like that. But, as far as crime is concerned, I do not want to know anything about it, I do not want people to do crime. And now I want to deter people from doing it. It is not worth it. Researcher: Monday 26th September 2016: Do you feel that you have been saved Mark? Mark: Monday 26th September 2016: I have been saved by the past three years, I am not saying that you have saved me, but you have been a part of it. You have made me realise that it (life) does not work like that. And I have got to know you over the years, and I was taken aback about what you told me about your life because I thought you were just a key worker. I did not know that your dad died of drinking, I did not know nothing. But when I got talking to you, and you made me realise that you don't do stuff like that (crime), you have to walk away from it and stay out of it. And you have to live a life. Researcher: Monday 26th September 2016: I do prefer to say stuff that is relevant?

Mark: Monday 26th September 2016: Yes, it makes a lot of sense. Colin, what you say to me, I mean, sometimes I am laid back and I am shocked. And I think what has he just fucking told me (details of my life), and then when you go, and I am sat here, and I think eh! I did not see you as that (practitioner with similar life history). I mean you come and tell me about your life, and it is good for me. It makes me think about my life. And that is what I need in my life. I think that people who are doing crime, and are trying to get out of it, they need people like me and you Colin. If services had people like me and yourself, then they (offenders) have got some kind of chance.

Researcher: Monday 26th September 2016: Do you feel a stronger person in yourself:

Mark: Monday 26th September 2016: Oh yes, without a doubt. I mean, I am not saying that I have to look up to this person. But, I think he (worker) can help people, can't I do the same thing? Because rather than do something bad, I would rather do something good to help anybody. Whether it is drink, drugs or crime, if I can help them in any kind of way, then I will do, because it is not the way to go. Colin, it has come to the point now where I am fifty-six next year. The thing is, talking to you has made me realise that I can't go on like this forever. Because a lot of criminals do, they die in prison, or they get killed or end up on drugs. But if you get somebody talking to you in a civil manner, and you engage in my life, and I engage in your life; well that means a hell of a lot to me. And if somebody came now to my door, causing trouble, I would not open the door, I would just phone the police. And years ago it was the other way around, I was getting locked up. I am not into trouble now, I don't want none of that, I would just lock the door and phone the police and do it that way. The law is there for a reason, the law is the law, and you have to abide by that law. And if you don't abide by that law, you are going to be taken away, and that is it.

In the next chapter, I will present the second in-depth story.

Chapter 7
Thesis story two: Craig's story. An in-depth narrative

7.1 Chapter introduction

My second in-depth narrative was undertaken in collaboration with Craig over a three year period. Similar to Mark's story, I have extracted an extensive section of narrated writing from a much larger volume of data; first entry Thursday, 10th, July, 2014, last entry, Wednesday, Monday, 9th November, 2015. Drawing on the wealth of data gathered, I present a detailed and thorough analysis. Stemming back to his early boyhood memories, we unpick his early childhood and teenage years. In particular, a substantial proportion of this chapter recollects the obtrusive and deplorable experiences in formal education; this extended into adulthood as a service user. There is also an examination of subculture engagement, which isolates fundamental structural and community influences. My research volunteer recalls the intrinsic and rewarding motivation for his decision to seek sanctuary and solace in disadvantaged and destitute communities.

Applying the writing of relevant theorists, I articulate how environmental and structural factors have disadvantaged both myself and Craig. We discuss how they subsequently influenced dysfunctional life choices; Craig speaks about decades of substance abuse which blighted his existence. Using extracts from my autobiography, and referring to theory and literature, I describe a way of working that helped to foster a meaningful, honest, productive and sincere relationship. Moreover, Craig communicates passionately and truthfully about the relationship we developed; he describes how this has impacted on his sense of morality and identity. He also highlights how in the course of this study, his learning has provided him a platform to re-evaluate his life external to this research context. He articulates how with my support and guidance he was able to nurture an inner self-confidence and belief, described are the 'moments and 'movement' paramount in his journey from his former offender status to voluntary service mentor (Rogers, 1961). Towards the end of this chapter, Craig speaks about succeeding in his ambitions to live a more productive and meaningful existence.

A lifelong offender, Craig has been involved with crime, drug and alcohol services in Bradford for three decades. Summarising the previous four years as a service user, the narrative speaks of a divide and alienation from those assigned to help him; uncaring and impassive, relationships were non-existent. In giving of oneself, a sensible approach is suggested by Lietaer (2016: 9), who asked us to remain open to the fact that 'never does not mean never'; when emotionally bonded, we give more of ourselves than we planned or wanted to. Of personal interest is the recognition amongst his network of peers that I am offering something different; a service, alternative support, a place where they have a voice:

Craig: Thursday, 10th July, 2014: I have not been with any service, just my drugs worker for the past four years. I have been going to see my drugs worker, which involved going in once a fortnight, saying ''how are you doing'', what you tell them they believe. I have been telling them that I only use once or twice a week when really I have been using every day. Really, I am only kidding myself. They (workers) cannot help me, I have been from worker to worker, to worker. All they do is just give you your script, and see you later. They don't give you any positive input, it is just see you later. All they come up with are the same old things. I was left out and felt by myself, I had no one to talk to because my girlfriend does not know anything about drugs, so it was all left on my toes. I know I need to do it, I just need the courage and the balls to make a move on it. A resident of where I am staying, has been to this service and said that Colin is very good, and if he can help you he will in any kind of way.

Typical of many clients, he is somebody who has failed to integrate into the crime, drug and alcohol services; abstract relations denoting objective interactions and communications. When first meeting a client, I try to understand their manner; many variables can influence this initial engagement. When forming the foundations of any potential relationship, the thoughts, sensations and feelings we wish to nurture, mature and develop, can only ever come to fruition on fresh ground; thus, my role is neither to judge nor generalise. Yalom (1980) would describe me as being a 'fellow pilgrim', somebody who has walked their lonely road.

I wanted Craig to engage and be part of something new, something of personal relevance. My initial aim was to make him feel welcome, respected and valued, an integral cog in the workings of the group. Focusing on becoming abstinent from substance misuse and offending, the aim is to work towards developing an alternative worldview, an internalised confidence and optimism; my clients have to be able to fend for themselves in the long-term. Still influenced by my experiences of how frightening reengagement back into an educational setting can be is something which drives my passion. When enrolling at college, I recall, how:

Feeling out of place was an understatement, when entering the reception area of Halton College for the first day. If I am being honest, what I needed at this moment in my life was somebody to support and be there for me. I did not need somebody to patronise or dictate to me, I needed my hand held at this stage in my life, when I felt entirely out of my depth and comfort zone. As I walked into the room, the students were all settled in their places, and I could feel a familiarity amongst my new cohort. Although my body language may have portrayed a man who was confident and eager to engage, I was seriously considering whether I had made a grave mistake. The whole environment yelled formal, from entering the college, to walking down the corridors, clustered with information, to entering the classroom, which was set out in a traditional format. Nervously, I grabbed the first seat I could see, hoping that there would be no attention made regarding my arrival. Not really understanding of the subjects I had chosen, all I wanted to do was become invisible and avoid attention from other students. Sometimes when you feel like an imposter or feel out of place, it is much easier to stay tight-lipped and say nothing.

There is something quite significant, taken for granted, accepted and normalised in the relationship between client and professional, a general belief that common ground cannot be achieved between such opposites. Many of my former colleagues accepted, without concern or reflection, the distrust and rebellious attitudes bestowed upon them by disgruntled clients. However, there is something quite sad and ironic in this, for all most actually want is to feel valued. Referring to his time as a service user, Craig had felt rejected, programmed to fail; he had little faith in the sincerity and integrity of service professionals. During a Dictaphone conversation, he opened up about these experiences.

Craig: Thursday 19th March, 2015: It is not some people, it is everyone. When you go to the services, it is like you will build up a really good repertoire with somebody, your worker, or whoever it may be. While you are doing well, you are in favour, and you are this and that and the other. And then you think that you have built a nice repertoire with them, not only a working relationship, but a friendly relationship. But in their mind, there is always that barrier that you are not a friend, you are just a client. And you get yourself thinking oh you are all right, and you have got a bit of banter talking, and you are opening up. And as soon as things go pear-shaped, basically, it is like buff, door shut in your face. Yes, maybe so, they have to have barriers, but the support should not have to stop.

It is like we are not your friend anymore. I think that most addicts and offenders my age, who have been through all the services are programmed to that now. Say you are struggling, you know that as soon as you open your mouth and say that you are struggling, or you have done this, or have done that, boom, door is getting shut in your face. So you don't open up and tell them, so then, it is kept to yourself, and when it is a secret to yourself, there is nobody to stop you doing it, or nobody to help you, you just carry on in your own little way.

Craig, like many other clients, resented and feared the education system; these formalised surroundings evoked negative childhood learning experiences. As a consequence of this, the initial stages are spent attempting to understand the individual. I am conscious that my professional role, as educator and mentor, depicts certain traits, which elicits negativity and distrust. Statistics paint a dismal educational outcome for most offenders. Nonetheless, despite the importance of education, there remains a continuous and consistent failing of offenders (Prison Reform Trust, 2014). Reflecting on his educational experiences, he highlighted the following:

Craig: Thursday 10th July, 2014: Well back when I went to school, the cane was just finishing. There was one teacher who would call you creating (causing disruptions), he was really strict and would just slam the ruler on the table. There was another one who would just grab you by your sideburn and just pull you up. I had one teacher tell me that I was illiterate, and would never learn. I was only about seven, I went home and told my mum, she had a right go at him.

Regrettably, for Craig, opportunities to establish relations have never been possible. Throughout the past five years, he has worked with numerous practitioners; he highlights this as being problematic in his attempts to forge relationships and develop trust. There is a dissatisfaction with the support received, and he feels there has been neither a relationship nor rapport with his former key workers. Stressing the difficulties encountered as a service user, he states:

> *Craig: Friday 29, May, 2015: Trust is key because in most services you can't be honest and you can't be truthful if you are struggling, they punish for it. You could have been doing really well and not used drugs for a year and a half, and only been on a little bit of meds (medication) and been volunteering, and then as soon as you admit that you are struggling, they are like, there are your bags, see you later on. Not let's contain this and nip it in the bud. They like to isolate him so that he has got no one else, so then he will just use more.*
>
> *You just can't be honest (to other services), how can you be honest?*
>
> *Craig: Thursday, 10th July, 2014: And it is also about taking time to get involved with the person and ask what it is they want to do, and where they want to be, instead of just saying you need to get a job, because you need to get off the social (benefits). Any job will do, a job is just a job. I am a strong believer in that if you are happy what you do in work, then you will stick to it more. If it is meaningless, and you can't be bothered, and you don't want to get up in the morning, then you are not happy in yourself, are you?*

When I asked Craig whether he is enjoying his early experiences of the group, he maintains that there is:

> *Thursday, 10th July, 2014:   No pressure, it has been laid back and you feel free to open up and to talk about personal problems, and where you want to be, you know? In some groups, if everyone is mucking about and talking rubbish, you don't want to open up, you don't want to let your personal stuff out, because you get people sniggering and snipping and stuff. This group really seems to be a select few who really want to learn something.*

Interpreting the writings of Ellis, I am aware that I will never be able to understand the previous life stages of Craig truly; this extends to any other service user. However, what I can do, is try and identify with the wider social and political influences, and the impact they have had on his subsequent life choices. Although disregarding past experiences is unforgivable, it is commonplace in formal education. In agreement with Ellis (1997), I believe the values and beliefs of every human being are inextricably interrelated to the inner working of the subconscious and conscious being. The extract below describes how detachment from education predisposed his involvement into delinquency:

> *Craig: Wednesday 29th April, 2015: Because if I go back to when things started going wrong at school, it was late to middle school, and I started to go wrong a lot because I was in the area where I lived. I was taking solvents with them (peers) and stuff like that, and then once that starts happening you have not got the mind space for school. Well, that is how I felt, I just did not want to be at school, it was more fun not to be at school, and to be fucking about in the arcades in town and getting into trouble, and doing what I wanted. It got to a stage where my mum did not even send me to school because she was not giving me bus fares and dinner money no more to waste, so I was not even going to school. The board man would pick me up, take me to school, and as soon as he was gone, I would be fucking gone.*

Craig maintains that opportunities rarely, if ever, presented themselves. He puts this down to his inability to develop trusting relationships with those employed within the various support services. He indicated that although entering previous relationships with optimism, they quickly became frayed and eventually broke down. He equated this to the lack of respect and tolerance towards minorities, including ex-offenders, drug and alcohol service users; for him, they are the carriers of negative social stigma. As a consequence of this, practitioners can seem reluctant to invest time and build rapport; he remarks, how they instead dehumanise, thus, view and treat all as being the same. Due to my experiences of mistreatment by service professionals, I was determined to ensure his experiences would be remembered for the right reasons. Through dialogue, I wanted to connect to the memories, feelings and sensations about which he spoke; deconstructing, contextualising and making sense of his story. As a

starting point, Craig expresses the values he feels should direct the practices of service professions:

> *Craig: Friday 29, March, 2015: I think the services should be about the client. For a service to get a client right, they need to put the emphasis on the client. It is not about making them jump through hoops, do this, do a little bit more and let's see how far we can push you. And we will offer him this, and then he will work harder, and then we will fuck him off, and then he will relapse; it is just a vicious circle. It seems to be that they are not bothered as long as they are getting their fucking wage packet.*
>
> *We come and go, and I could imagine at a night time that they say daft cunt, I only said something to him today, and he has gone off and used (taken drugs), you know, how selfish is that? I can imagine that that is what they are like.*
>
> *I can't say that someone in the service goes to bed, and loses any sleep at night about going to work. I don't think they have one worry, or one thought about that person, whether he is there client or anything, when they leave work. They have to have some compassion and thought haven't you, wanting to help the person, not, could not give a shit whether he does it or he doesn't.*

Mottern (2012), holds the view, that if education is to support in the reduction of reoffending rates, time must be spent exploring the motivating factors underpinning this reengagement back into learning. The extract below makes reference to the developing emotion bonds within the group. Providing evidence that reinforced principles of relational connectedness, his sense of belonging and acceptance was allowing him to flourish, he now felt an obligation and responsibility of collective unity; he now had a reason to lead a more productive life (Thayer-Bacon, 2009; Frankl, 2004 [1959]). The following Dictaphone extract highlights the benefits of a client-centred community of learning, a setting in which we feel we are treated as an individual; a place of empathy and inclusion:

Craig: Friday, 9th January, 2015:   The group has been a life saver for me because you look forward to it; it is a place where you can be free and be honest with yourself instead of putting a bravado on for everybody else. I probably know some of them guys (group members) more in-depth than I know my brothers and sisters, so it is good, I look forward to it.

You put more into the education because you are comfortable. You walk into other educational services and you don't know anybody else, you are all sat at desks, you are all looking at the board, you have to do this, you have to do that. You have forms in front of you, and you are just not stimulated to do it, it is just a chore. But, if it is put to you were you are all conversing, open with each other and doing it as a group…. Individual needs are not all the same, there might be twenty people in the room, the only thing they might have in common is they have all been addicts or all been criminals, so you have all got the same thing on the same paper. Whereas, people have got different needs, and if you meet each other's personal needs, you feel like it is for you, rather than just going through the motions.

Craig is adamant that he desperately wants social and personal change. He is also honest that such a challenge is both frightening and filled with apprehension. My concern, already highlighted, is a reluctance to push him into paid employment. My lived experiences, often my only source of insight, is informing me that, at this exact point in his recovery, this may be a step too far. Very often, when clients have had years and decades of substance misuse, they have been merely existing, observing life through a muddled, clouded and distorted perspective. Stressing the need to be treated as an individual, rather than a commodity, he provides an insight into the role and responsibility of the ideal practitioner.

Craig: Thursday, 10th 2014: They need the skills to be able to target different aspects and skills in every different person, not just one format because everybody is different aren't they, so if you look and see what everybody else has got, their own little skill, or niche. So if you can work as a group, and on an individual basis for what they need, because not everybody needs the same thing. So if we are sat in a group and all doing the same thing it might not work, because people at different stages need different things, don't they? So that is what I like, individuality, you will know what that person needs, and what it will take to get that person forward.

Craig believed it was my duty and obligation to invest time, how else are we to understand the individual? Expanding on this, he stated that:

Craig: Thursday, 19th March, 2015: It is like everybody needs help no matter where you are. Especially if you are articulate and you can talk, do stuff and you can function in your daily lives? Just probe, unless you get to know someone and ask questions you don't know where they are at, or what they need do you, if you are not going to dib any deeper. You know, it is about getting into conversation, opening up, digging deeper, and finding out isn't it. Because nobody is just going to open up straight away until they feel comfortable.

Craig's life, the influences and memories while growing up

As a young boy, Craig was passed from pillar to post, and he describes his childhood as unsettled and disjointed. Through the depth of conversations, we can recollect similar experiences as children; these have influenced the ontology and worldviews we hold today. When exposing such personal details, I am mindful of the difficulties men face when revealing emotive and sensitive moments and happenings. As highlighted by Lietaer (2016), there are no hard and fast rules with regards to how much we reveal of ourselves, the context in which we disclose, or the depth of dialogue we engage in; there remains an ambiguity to this process. As suggested by Wachtel (2017: 344), 'what can help the patient grow and change can be silent listening and relative restraint; at another, it can be more obvious engagement, sharing of my own feelings in hearing what the patient has said'.

Craig recollected how for reasons unknown, he can never remember a time when either parent or guardian spoke of the love they had for him. For both myself and Craig, I am not implying we were unloved by parents and guardians. There just resides the absence of such words and feelings, and there remains a deep-rooted sadness. He recalls the heartache of being separated from his family.

Craig: Wednesday 14th January, 2015: There were ten of us, five lads and five lasses. My mum had me (gave birth) when she was forty-seven, then my dad dies two years later, so then she was left with ten. So a friend of the family was a nursery nurse, so I went to stay with them for a bit. She looked after me for a bit, and it just ended up that I was living with them. I stayed

there till I was about thirteen. I would go home occasionally on some weekends, or see them all the time. But it was like we are a different family, because when you have been taken at eighteen months, and you have been somewhere else, so that is your family, so it was like I was visiting somebody else's family. That is where I am muddled, I came from like ten brothers and sisters, but I feel like a lonely child, because I lived with Lyn and I was the only child till she started having kids. So it is weird, how can you have ten brothers and sisters but feel like you are an only child? It is weird. I still lived in the same area, so I still had a lot of contact with them. But you could always tell because it felt like I was not part of them because I was not brought up with them so it was different, so I did not have their struggles, so it just felt like I was an outsider all the time.

When Craig returned to his birth home, something had changed, he described it as like ''visiting somebody else's home''. The earliest memories I have of similar experiences are from around the ages of five and six. Rehoused, I was temporarily sent to a shabby decaying building; the stench of cheap disinfectant lingered and wafted down every corridor. As recalled:

Following the initial breakdown of my family structure we were moved by the social services to a women's protection home. Unsure of the exact name, it was situated within the Stockport area of Cheshire. On the positive side, we all stayed together during this major life-changing experience. With regards to my other siblings, I am not sure how this affected them, we have never really discussed this early upheaval; or anything since in any depth. As kids, you are acceptant of the situation, thus you accept the hand which life deals you. Returning to the family home, nothing had changed, daily life resuming, everything was back to normal. What did remain was a terrifying feeling that such periods of separation were not yet finished. In reality, my mum was unable to love and care for us at that particular time. As my mother's mental health continued to deteriorate, it was decided that she needed to be sectioned. On deciding my mother was medically unfit to care for us, it was a very swift transition from being in the family home to being sent to a children's home, without time to think, this happened almost overnight.

Being removed from your family environment, when young and vulnerable, changes the worldview you possess. Research supports the detrimental effects for children residing in the care system. As highlighted by Stein (2006), they are more likely to have engagement with the criminal justice system and substance misuse agencies. He also suggests that once leaving these supported settings, research associates ongoing emotional and psychological suffering, many endure loneliness and mental health problems; this lasting for decades and even lifetimes. Therefore, for those children leaving the care system, the ability to connect and forge a positive relationship with at least one adult, increases good outcomes.

The extracts below details Craig's downward spiral into deviancy. It also portrays the actions of a lonely and vulnerable boy who craved the love, acceptance and support of other disengaged youth. The need to belong is something which has continued into adulthood. The second Dictaphone extracts highlight the wider social pressures of criminal communities:

Craig: Thursday 14th November, 2014: I just got straight into doing what I wanted. Getting into trouble, staying out all night, glue sniffing, taking drugs and pinching motorbikes, stealing, just doing whatever I wanted. And then, I got into the wrong crowd in that area, it was just wild from there; that is when I started not going to school. At the age of twelve or thirteen, I was knocking off school all the time and hanging around with the lads in the area. It was just truancy all the time, glue sniffing, smoking weed all the time, arcades. I wanted a sense of belonging that I wanted to be part of my family, and they were all in that circle. So to be like them, I don't know, you just do the same thing.

Craig: Thursday, 15th January, 2015: Not from my peers (family), but from the area. Because it is not just like family, it is the area as well, because they were all up to no good, big criminal activity. So to fit in with them, to have to be like them, so if you can't beat them, join them. It is survival, if you are living on an estate. I wish I had not wanted to fit in, I would rather be different, I would rather be different, and things could have been so different

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When listening to Craig, this does evoke a personal sadness and understanding, which I can relate to. Being separated from your family home demands you adjust quickly, it devastates

childhoods; angry and resentful, you will never entirely recover. Although like Craig, I craved protection and belonging, when the sanctuary and safety of the home are unavoidably removed, you become consumed with fear and vulnerability. I can remember:

> *Waiting once more to be taken, gentle kissing my twin sister, we were inseparable, everything we did made sense, we supported, loved and looked out for each other. The sadness experienced as I was escorted away by a figure of authority is something which words are unable to express. I do know such experiences were equally damaging for my sister and other siblings, how could they not be? Even though I was only eight years old, in the absence of a father, I felt the sole responsibility to protect and shelter my sister from any harm. The feelings for my own wellbeing quickly became secondary to my instinctual duty to care for my sister. At such moments, the bond we have is so strong that we forget about ourselves, even today, there remain emotional scars. To know, just like me, she was frightened, vulnerable and lonely, still triggers a deep-seated feeling of apprehension to the present day.*

Darius Leader (2009: 176) believes separation from our primary caregiver distorts our early perceptions of life; he argues that the 'dramatic removal of our fundamental point of reference', can have profound lasting effects on the child. At a symbolic level, the pivotal loss of maternal security, the 'lynchpin of our existence', presents a world of uncertainty, denied a sense of wellbeing, the world is now revealed in all its precariousness. Due to this ingrained sense of loss, feelings of emptiness and anger remain masked in the dysfunctional identities myself and Craig have developed. In his writings, Leader (2009) further distinguishes between mourning and melancholia. When experiencing the latter, the sufferer is not always aware of the central point of their loss. I find this point extremely important, and I believe myself and Craig remain unable to distinguish between the object of loss, and what that has represented for us. In light of this, a logical starting point is the relationship with our mother. The question is, what have we been deprived of, what embodied significance remains from these relationships? I can relate to the view by Butler (2004: 21) that:

> I am not sure when mourning is successful, or when one has fully mourned another human being. I'm certain though, that it does not mean that one has forgotten the person, or that something else comes along to take his or her place. I don't think that it works that way. I think instead that one mourns

when one accepts the fact that the loss one undergoes will be one that changes you, changes you possibly forever, and that mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation the full result of which you cannot know in advance. So there is losing, and there is the transformative effects of loss, and the later cannot be charted or planned.

When I speak about loss, I am not referring to the sudden death of a loved one or close friend. The loss I am referring to is elusive and is therefore difficult to accurately express through dialogue or words. Yet, despite this, its remains are indivisible from the lives we lead today. Fromm (1995: 39) suggests that motherly love is the unconditional affirmation of the child's life and their needs. He believes that most 'mothers are capable of giving milk, but only a minority of giving honey'. The adoration of a mother, her influence on our emerging worldly perceptions, is the difference between merely surviving as a child, or forming healthy ontologies of self and the surrounding world. In healthy family relations:

> It is this attitude which instils in the child a love for living, which gives him the feeling; it is good to be alive, it is good to be a little boy or girl, it is good to be on this earth (Fromm, 1995: 39).

Fromm (1995) writes that from birth, there is an instinctual dependency on food, warmth and security. For the child, the purity and innateness of our being is considered a state of narcissism; things external to our existence, only have significance if they provide satisfaction, love and nourishment. As we develop, we learn to differentiate between objects in the external world. These experiences become crystallised and integrated; through this creative and exploratory process, we form identities, thus slowly disconnecting ourselves from the unconditional love of the mother. For myself and Craig, we found ourselves deprived of motherly love within the boundaries of the family structure. I am not suggesting that care and warmth did not circulate within the home, I just question why such emotions and sensations were never truly felt. Despite this, I had a reason to stay strong, I felt my suffering had a purpose, the love, care and devotion for my twin sister provided some rationale to my helplessness (Frankl, 2004 [1959]). This relational connection was the difference, it gave me the willpower to face the challenges which lay in the future, and it provided a purpose to the suffering.

Braithwaite (1989) theorised that once engagement into deviant subcultures is complete, identities are maintained by the reaction of others, we are confronted with social disgust, onslaught, ridicule and shaming. He goes on to state that for all types of crime, shaming 'runs the risk of counterproductivity when it shades into stigmatization'. According to Braithwaite (1989: 55) disintegrative shaming involves stigmatizing the individual; it 'divides the community by creating a class of outcasts'. Throughout my teenage years, I remember feeling angered by the responses of others, deflated almost; this added to my defiance and unwillingness to cooperate. The greater the disapproving reaction, the more I considered it necessary to seek care and comfort from those who understood me. For Craig, the stigma, labelling and disdain he received, angered and increased resistance, thus reinforcing his deviant identity (Williams, 2006). In the following extract, Craig recalls the pressures from his environment and peers. Born and raised in a working class community, there is a deterministic, almost inevitable pathway into offending:

> *Craig: Thursday 9th April, 2015: No society did not dictate that, I dictated that, because I did not want to be seen like that. So I just skulked about in the shadows with my hood up. I come from an estate, probably the same sort of estate where you come from, where no one says no and everyone is up to what they are up to. Everyone is a wana be gangster, everyone has something on the fiddle. There were more of them people, than there were working class people, you know, so that is how you are born and bred, isn't it? Brothers and sisters who are older than you have also been born and bred into it, so it is part of your identity, isn't it?*

For me, a 'provisional existence' was the daily struggles of life, stumbling through monotonous daily actions, I was reluctant to plan, foresee or imagine a future of prosperity and contentment (Frankl, 2004 [1959]). Resigned to the actuality that the prejudices bestowed upon me would confine me to a reality of stagnation and misery, I could not envisage opportunities for social mobility. I never felt the urge to imagine an existence beyond the postcode where I resided; the doorway to a life of prosperity was unrealistic and unachievable. Therefore, regardless of the suffering, I felt incarceration confirmed what I already knew; it was in essence, an extension of my 'provisional existence' (Frankl, 2004 [1959]). Spanning a lifetime, Craig also existed in such conditions, he 'ceased living for the

future' (Frankl, 2004: 79). The following extract describes his dissatisfaction with living an unfulfilled existence:

> *Craig: Friday 9ᵗʰ January, 2015: I don't know, I have tried to put my finger on it. You know that you have got qualities, but because you know that you have issues with drugs, crime and you have not had a good education when you were younger, it holds you back, and people always look at what is on paper you know. Before you even go for a job interview or anywhere, they are looking at you on a piece of paper, and it is not an individual you. And you know if you have got something inside, and I did not have the tools to be where I wanted to be, I had the knowledge and the skills, but it seemed so far away to get a job in what I was happy doing. So, if you can't meet your own expectations, you take drugs to get through, to hide it away, to pass time, wasting your life away probably. It is sort of like frustration because you have got something in you, you just can't get to where you want to, so you are frustrated. But saying that, you can't just have something handed to you on a plate, you have got to go out and get the actual work in. Nobody is going to come up to you and say come on, so you have to get out there and show people what you have got.*

When you retreat from the exterior world, some never regain the strength to overcome a soul in irreversible turmoil. The sad reality is, for years I have reluctantly felt helpless as talented and passionate offenders have recoiled from the outside world, becoming social recluses, many have lost the willpower to return. During a Dictaphone conversation, Craig provided an insight into severe drug abuse within impoverished communities. The narrative portrays the ingrained sense of hopelessness embedded in the fabric of socially excluded communities.

> *Craig: Thursday 14ᵗʰ November, 2014:   The thing is with heroin, if you are not struggling for money, and you are not scrapping your arse on the bottom, you won't stop. I don't think, because if you can fund it, it is not a problem and you will carry on doing it. It starts becoming a problem when you wake up in the morning and you have not got the money for it, and you are spending bill money, and you are going out robbing for it, and not looking after yourself. It is then more of a problem because it is impacting more on your life then, do you know what I mean? If you can fund it, it is sort of not a bigger problem in your life, as in social ways. Its peer pressure, if you are with some mates that you are not aspiring to be, but to look up to, or*

> *whatever, or you are in the in crowd, and all your peers are taking it, it is the social norm. They all do it, I am with them, then you do it. Then it was glorified, it was just like all the main heads. I started at seventeen or eighteen till now. I have not been opiate free since I was eighteen, never once. For crime, it is social deprivation what does it, because I was in with wrong uns, thieves, fucking gypsies, gangsters, going to blues clubs, going to the wrong places, what you think are good places.*

The following extract is taken from my autobiography. Similar to Craig, I had little faith in the forgiveness and humanity external of my community:

> *Researcher: This is life, there is no other meaning or purpose to it, there is no light at the end of the tunnel, and you are unable to imagine life beyond the boundaries in which you exist. Education, work and acceptance into mainstream society are just a vision, which is out of the reach from somebody who feels excluded and isolated from society. Deceived and temporarily lifted by the false hope and rhetoric spoken by others, they proclaim they are willing to provide disadvantaged populations an opportunity. However, the older and wiser you become, the more you understand this to be a socially constructed and liberal myth, the opportunities we seek do not exist. You have little faith in those responsible for providing opportunities, words mean nothing. Through various factors, restrictions and reluctances, possible even through prejudices, there are general negative attitudes embedded and overarching the powers that be.*

Rogers (1961: 186) through client case studies theorised the meaning of a good life. His research led him to believe that 'the good life is a process, not a state of being. It is a direction, not a destination'. Frankl (2004 [1959]: 84), referring to the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, believed that 'he who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how'. However, the direction or destination for the offending population hinges on wider social factors beyond their control. For some, the most important factor influencing an offender's decision to lead a non-offending life is their acceptance and integration into education and wider social

institutions. The following Dictaphone extract outlines the significance of my role in this process; he undoubtedly felt I was providing direction and hope.

Craig: Thursday, 10th July, 2014: If someone believes in you, it gives you hope, and you can get to where you want to be. If people are just treading all over you, and not giving you any positive feedback that it is possible then you are always going to feel like that, aren't you? Then you will just go through life thinking that there is no hope for me. I have done what I have done, and I am where I am, so I just have to get on and deal with it. I have been a builder for forty years, and now I want to do something with my mind and my mouth, instead of working my body into the ground. I want to give something back and get some happiness and positivity.

As Craig grew in confidence, he gradually became more aware of how gifted and talented a man he is. Rogers speaks of a connection in which 'what I will be in the moment, and what I will do, grows out of that moment, and cannot be predicted in advance either by me or by others' (Rogers, 1961: 188). These moments were inspiring him to perceive life with greater optimism. Through such 'movements' he was emotionally and psychologically detaching himself from these constraints and shackles; from a distant observer, he was transcending towards a more complete and fully functioning human being (Rogers, 1961). Through this, inquiry, I have come to appreciate that change, those instances which inspire or take the client a step closer to their dream, can only ensue in a relationship based on mutuality. Buber (1958 [2000]: 68), describing the importance of such moments, believed 'the person becomes conscious of himself as sharing in being, as co-existing, and thus as being'. Through these experiences:

> The qualities belonging to the remembered Thou had certainly remained sunk
> in his memory; but now for the first time, things are for him actually composed
> of their qualities (Buber, 1958 [2000]: 41).

The role as researcher. My impact and influence:

When working with individuals such as Craig, I allowed myself to be guided by the other. As highlighted by Rogers (1961: 351) 'creativity is not a tool. It is a mystery that you enter: an unfolding: an opening process'. Moreover, he viewed the role of the client as the one who

establishes the relational conditions. In concurrence with Rogers (1961: 214), I know the relationship with Craig is 'lived, not examined'; I regard him 'as a person, not an object', and 'a person who feels, chooses, believes, acts, not as an automaton, but as a person'. Frankl reminds us of the need for human forgiveness; nothing is rectified or solved through hatred and demonisation:

> Human kindness can be found in all groups, even those which as a whole it would be easy to condemn. The boundaries between groups overlapped and we must not try to simplify matters by saying that these men were angels and those were devils (Frankl, 2004 [1959]: 93).

Raelin (2001) underlines the moral duty I have to question and scrutinise the probable influence of my position. In relation to this, my aim was to eliminate any conceptualising power elements; this leading to a kind of 'humanistic egalitarianism, in which all parties in the human condition are treated as empowered entities or as human beings with dignity' (Raelin, 2001: 15). When asking Craig why he felt we were relationally compatible, he remarked.

Craig: Friday 29th May, 2015:   The point is, you don't have any control over me, you don't have any power about where I live, you don't have any power about my medication, which I am not on anymore. People hold that as power because that is there little broker, you will come and jump through this if you want your medication, you will come and jump through this if you want a house. My last education place, to get to the bit what you actually need, you have got to go through all the bull shit first. And you (Colin) are just giving us the stuff what we need right now to move on, not all the shit what we already know. Like you will go through (at other services) a six-week course, just to get to the last week to get something what you need, you do know what I mean?

For the first time in his life, Craig was part of a group which made him feel appreciated and understood. Having a voice, and feeling wanted and accepted by peers fostered trust and confidence between each group member. For Craig, being able to impart himself through communication, in a non-judgemental group setting, united by related social and political setbacks, was a welcomed alternative educational approach. This is highlighted:

Craig: Friday, 9ᵗʰ January, 2015: It is a small group, and we are supporting each other. You feel comfortable talking about your situation. You do not hold back, everyone shares their deepest problems what they have got, what they would probably not talk to other males about or other people about. And for males to feel comfortable to talk about themselves in truthfulness is good. You are not alone in your problems and you can help each other, with their problems. It is good, it is different to anything else. It is like a small group, it is like having a chat, read a newspaper, have a chat and break the ice; and then you feel comfortable to talk, instead of all going into a classroom, with a pen and paper, and you are just listening to someone chirp on, and write this down, and write that down. Here it is about planning for your future and giving you hope, because people (other services) don't give you any hope that you can do it, they just leave it all on your back, if you want to do it, you will do it.

Throughout this previous twelve months, I have borne witness to a transformation in Craig. The process, void of time restraints or accreditation demands was providing him the opportunities to explore his life history. The depth and extent of this education process, the blurring of personal and professional boundaries and barriers (Gershon, 2009), was helping him to deconstruct a former identity steeped in offending, substance misuse and personal neglect. Although time-consuming and professionally challenging, dissecting aspects of his past has ensured this evolving process has made attempts to deconstruct the many complex phases of his past. Craig now recognised the significance of taking his time to achieve his personal goals. He now appreciated:

Craig: Friday, 9ᵗʰ January, 2015: It is more important of me to take it a day at a time, because if I would have planned all this eight or nine months ago, and thought I want to be there in nine months, I would probably have not done it because I would have been striving to do it. But doing it at your own pace and taking day by day, it soon ticks away.

As highlighted, there were instances, when for reasons unknown, I found myself slipping into something most unconventional, I would describe it as a spiritual and intuitive interchange and entanglement with another. Put another way, 'each phase of experience melts into the

next without any sharp boundaries as it is being lived through' with each phase being 'distinct in its thusness, or quality, from the next insofar as it is held in the gaze of attention' (Schutz, 1967: 51). I can only depict this as an authentic meeting of minds, a deep connection was fostered between myself and some of the men with whom I worked. There was, in these moments, 'an ongoing correspondence between my meanings and their meanings in this world', in which, we shared 'a common sense about reality' (Berger and Luckmann, 1971: 37). The genuine care I felt towards the men arose from the mistreatment I myself experienced as a service user. Never forgetting my past, when interactions are negative, unbalanced or oppressive, this only succeeds in reproducing 'an important site of inequalities' (Kaur, 2012: 486).

I believe there was something special which united myself and Craig. Moreover, 'if I can transparently be what I am and what I feel in relationship to him. Then perhaps he can be what he is, openly and without fear' (Rogers, 1961: 67). My role was neither to point out nor impose my own views; I also refrained from providing clear direction. Simply being there, listening attentively, as his life was unfolding, a voice and mentor, I was somebody who was there for all occasions. Nonetheless, it was important he accepted his challenge, long-term, this rested with him. In his own words, Craig emphasised the value of trust and respect. The informality of relations, the freedom to explore, is all encapsulated in the following extract:

Craig: Thursday 19th March, 2015: Yes, it is important. Trust is important between me and you. Respect me as a person, not just Craig who has been the ex-addict or ex-offender. It is just like Craig, do you know what I mean, you are just like Colin. You have got to have personal respect, and respect for each other, their feelings and their past. I mean I think a lot. I see you more as a mate than anything else, and if you have a good relationship where you are free to open up and say personal stuff and have banter, it just makes the whole learning process as more informal, it does not seem like a chore. It is like bettering yourself in an environment where you can be free, and have fun, and not be conscious about this, that and the other. But I do know that there has to be a limit on that, because when people are doing a job, we can't all be friends you know, you know. But there has got to be some sort of leeway.

Entering a new phase

Craig decided that he wanted to educate and mentor crime, drug and alcohol substance misuse clients. In agreement with Craig, my role as education mentor was to continue. He described stepping into a professional environment as a daunting task. As a means of supporting Craig, I arranged a series of personal and social development sessions for the young adults who attended the ORP in Bradford. After speaking to the manager of the project, it was agreed I would continue to guide Craig for however long was required. Through the joint facilitation of sessions, I wanted to build Craig's confidence. Reflecting on his situation, he expressed his feelings towards this unfolding journey:

Craig: Friday, 9th January, 2015: It is very important, because seven, eight or nine months ago when I was still using I do not have any hope for the next day, let alone hope for the future. If you would have told me eight or nine months ago where I would be today in eight or nine months, I would have thought that you were having a laugh.

Researcher: Do you feel you have changed as a person?

Craig: Friday, 9th January, 2015: Yes, simple. I feel like a different person. The addict in me was never me anyway. It was just a bravado which hid behind drugs because I was not happy in life.

For Rogers (1961), openness to new experiences and situations are more likely when we accept, rather than distort or try and fit together, dysfunctional and damaged existing meaning structures. It was important not to underestimate the enormity of what lay ahead; failure at this pivotal point could have been long-term detrimental. When enquiring with Craig about the influence of my role, he spoke of the rewards when engaged in a meaningful relationship:

Craig: Thursday 19th March, 2015: Like stuff that I come out with now, what twelve months ago it was not even in my head, you know. If someone would have said what do you think about that, I would have said it was alright, do you know what I mean. Until you get broken down (by mentor), start breaking things down, and analyse what is wrong. They (other

> *workers), don't go that far into it. It is just like what can he learn here, what can we learn out of him, is he doing alright.*

Over an early morning coffee, we have a heart to heart about how he was feeling. As I suspected, the dawning of such an important transition had caused feelings of self-doubt and apprehension. Of particular concern was his fear of not being accepted by the clients. Progressing into such a life-changing transition, Craig opened up about his trepidations, many of which are commonplace amongst the offending community. Being labelled and stigmatised, rejected and even hated imposes lifelong damage on the recipient. To date, only a small number of studies have examined the impact on the offender when subjected to resentment and stigma. For example, Alarid, Burton and Cullen (2011), in their research, found that the negative reactions of wider society have intrinsically damaging consequences; we internalise the principle that we are deserving recipients of such stigma. In the opinion of Dippong and Fitch (2017: 5), 'criminologists have given little attention to the emotions involved in label acceptance and internalisation'. It is only when we endeavour to change our lives, do we wholly realise the role society has in our marginalisation. Craig emphasised this in the extract below.

> *Craig: Wednesday, 29th April, 2015: I get paranoid because I am thinking one of them kids (who I taught) last week lives on my street, he lives two doors away from me. And his mum and dad know me as a junkie. So when he goes home, and he says that kid from three doors away has been teaching me at school, his parents are going to be like ''fucking what, he has been a junkie for I don't know how long''. That is what I worry about.*
>
> *Interviewer: Are people still labelling you?*
>
> *Craig: Wednesday, 29th April, 2015: Well they are. I was thinking, I was over analysing that when he goes home to see his mum and dad, ''or that lad from two doors is working at our school'', and they are going to be thinking ''fucking hell''. Would you want someone (like me) teaching your thirteen-year-old kid, that has not got any (qualifications)?*

In the extract below, I recall similar emotions when preparing to volunteer with service users a decade previous. In my mind, every aspect of what was to unfold, the impending failure, inevitable and expected had been contemplated. By drawing on this experience, I am able to support and comfort Craig during his transition into voluntary work.

> *My main fear was either being exposed as nothing more than an ex-offender or as somebody who had educational aspirations far beyond what they were capable of. At this point, my identity was rigidly stuck in the past, although open to negotiation, deep-seated fears and concerns prove resistant to change. My developing identity was fragile, and I was still trying to make sense of this complex transition period. When exposed at this delicate midway stage, we withdraw back into the safety of our previous identity. However, the belief and care of just one person can empower us to reflect on who we are, what we have become; how damaged we actually are. When attempting change, without a guiding mentor, it is much easier to resist the temptations of self-reflection and interrogation, unless we are sure that what we are to uncover is reinforcing of who we want to be, and how we wish to be perceived. Taking on new challenges, is testament to, and defining of change; support and understanding can make the difference between failure and success.*

Buber (1958 [2000]), theorised two opposite relational situations, I-Thou (Ich-Du) and I-It (Ich-Es). I-Thou relations can be characterised as 'dialogical', I-It as 'monological'. When communicating and perceiving the other as an 'It', we are objectifying and categorising the other, denying or attributing any authentic understanding to them. Although dialogue is exchanged during I-It relations, there is an absence of meaning, care and connectedness; both parties approaching and communicating from solitary positions. According to Buber (1958 [2000]), entelechy, originating from the Greek word 'entelecheia' is the process which allows the individual to reach full self-actualisation, as opposed to mere potentiality. To begin working towards a greater authentic understanding of self, the process of self-actualization can only begin and end in relationships with others.

Buber (1958 [2000]), when referring to dialogue with spirit uses several different references. He described this as being dialogue with the 'eternal Thou', with God, and other; all denoting relations with the 'other'. Thus, a precondition for dialogue communities rests on the ability

of its members to engage in long-term relations with the other; they find themselves adjoined by a common cause, an 'eternal Thou'. Due to the nature of my work, words become a lifeline, a source of comfort and care; they have the capacity to influence the day ahead. I viewed it as my challenge to re-engage Craig in ways which were inclusional (Cahill 2007) and transformational (McNiff 2002). Jean-Paul Sartre, during an interview with Robert Solomon (1981: 14), spoke of when he:

> Came to trust one thing, the quintessence of things-words. Words have always been my metier, my way of meeting people, relating to them, my way of defining myself, my way of taking hold of things, my hold on the world.

As we approach the end of April, 2015, Craig has agreed to take the position of education mentor volunteer at the ORP in Bradford. After discussions with the manager, it has been decided that Craig will be eased into a voluntary work role. As we speak openly about the upcoming task, what he envisaged at the beginning of this relationship, is soon to be a reality. Positive and optimistic, he foresees the future decades as being meaningful and productive. He explained how:

Craig: Wednesday 29th April, 2015: If I can do this what I have done. If I can turn my life around in about a year, from having all them years of shit, then them kids (ORP in Bradford); I know it is not about the kids, but them kids can turn it around. They should think of their future, think of how prosperous their future could be in thirty years if they sorted themselves out now. It has took me forty years to sort myself out, but when I have got on it, it has flown by in a year, by getting on with it.

Something much more significant emerged from this same conversation with Craig. There is now a genuine feeling of hope and optimism, for, at last, he feels, he can now embrace a future of wider social integration and acceptance. He stated that the more he understood himself, the more accepting he was becoming of his past (Matsueda, 1992); this growing psychological awareness was contributing to his thriving sense of self. Allowing the appropriate time has been imperative. It is only now he realises that 'life is expecting something from him' (Frankl, 2004 [1959]: 87), it is now his responsibility to fight for his

future. According to Frankl (2004 [1959]), by engaging in creative work, deed or act, we discover fulfilment, meaning and contentment. He states, in his writings, that in order to 'find meaning in life at all, then there must be meaning in suffering' (Frankl, 2004 [1959]: 76). Craig, highlighting the importance of leading a more productive life, remarked that:

Craig: Friday, 9th January, 2015:   It is imperative for me because being an addict for so long and getting clean this year, I know my limits and I know my motivation. And being bored, it just leads me down a path of using or just not doing anything in life, and I want a better life for myself. I have got qualities, or I would like to think I have qualities to help other people, and plus, helping myself along the way. So yes, it is imperative, it is important.

I need to feel like, I know this sounds daft, but when you get to forty and think how long have you got left, and it is like do you want to go through life and then think you have never made an impact, you have never actually done ought with anything you know. So, I want to do something where I am happy helping others or just for me really. It is more about me being happy, having some self-worth.

I am convinced, given the choice, neither myself nor Craig would have wanted a life of crime or substance misuse. However, from disadvantaged beginnings, leading to destructive and dysfunctional lifestyles, we remain the fortunate few. We are testimony that despite the lives once led, there lies the hope that every man and woman can contribute to society. Note the passion, the new outlook emerging since becoming abstinent for the first time in three decades.

Craig: Wednesday 29th April, 2015: Because I am clear minded, I can be the person I want to be. I have not got the stress of drugs, needing, wanting, having to get money to keep your habit, having to spend money, just to feel normal. And then when you have had it your head is clouded, so you can't be the person you want to be because it (life) is squashed down. And then when you get off, there seems to be a light at the end of the tunnel, you can see things that you could not see before, you see your behaviour.

Researcher: Wednesday 29th April, 2015: So is there is light at the end of the tunnel now?

Craig: Wednesday 29th April, 2015: Yes, I am nearly at the light at the end of the tunnel. Twelve months ago I could not even see a tunnel it was dark. I am seeing a bright future, if I knuckle down and put some hard work in, it does not just come free, does it?

The transition he has made, is matched by his growing sense of awareness, there is an unquestionable commitment to separate himself from deviant peers. Rogers (1961), would consider this transition as characteristic of the process, the move towards full potentiality, his openness to embrace new experiences. Viewed as the 'polar opposite of defensiveness', for the first time in his life, he no longer feels fulfilled or rewarded when surrounded by deviant peers. A key requirement of this in-depth narrative has been to demonstrate personal growth, without the desire to seek comfort or solace through deviancy or substance misuse. When we aspire towards an existence of contentment, Rogers (1961: 188) believes that:

> The ''good life'' appears to be a movement away from the pole of defensiveness towards the pole of openness to experience. The individual is becoming more able to listen to himself, to experience what is going on within himself. He is more open to his feelings of fear and discouragement and pain. He is also more open to his feeling of courage and tenderness. He is free to live his feelings subjectively, as they exist in him, and also free to be aware of these feelings. He is more able fully to live the experiences of his organism rather than shutting them out of awareness.

I have every reason to claim that my influence, relational and professional, has placed him on a certain pathway, filled with hope, confidence and optimism. I am not proposing that I have been the sole external influence, certain family and peers have also contributed. However, the narrative spoken exemplifies the trust, respect and integrity, bonding and binding our worlds. Rogers (1961: 276) stated that ''I have come to realise that the only learning which significantly influences behaviour is self-discovery''. On my own, I have neither changed the behaviour nor thinking of Craig. However, through tailored education support, unburdened by time restrictions, a meaningful relationship developed, which encouraged the gentle transcending through numerous 'moments of therapy', within a learning context (Rogers, 1961). According to Buber (1947 [2014]: 123), when we meet man 'in the most precise sense as a subject', and 'where the subject is man in his wholeness', the role of the educator changes

from distant observer to self-reflector; the divisive stance, common in formal education, becomes blurred and less problematic. With every man and woman I have worked with, I give to them both in body and mind. I have been challenged, exposed rigorously, consumed with conflicting sensations and emotions, at times euphoric, others burdening:

> It is not enough for him to stake his self as an object of knowledge. He can know the wholeness of the person and through it the wholeness of man only when he does not leave his subjectivity out and does not remain an untouched observer. He must enter, completely and in reality, into the act of self-reflection, in order to become aware of human wholeness. In other words, he must carry out this act of his life, without any prepared philosophical security, that is, he must expose himself to all that can meet you when you are really living (Buber, 1957: 124).

Unfortunately, we have an education system in which monitoring, accreditation, safeguarding and ethics, prevent the appropriate time required to establish healthy relationships; 'Pure dialogue', 'dialogical moments' or 'mutuality' (Buber, 1958 [2000]), 'moments of movement', 'existential moments' or 'empathetic understanding' (Rogers, 1961), have limited inclusion in conventional structures. However, the narrative which emerged in this study highlighted the advantages of having somebody there to speak freely with, a mentor who communicates with honesty and integrity:

Researcher: 29th May, 2015: Is having someone to talk to helping?

Craig: 29th May, 2015: Yes. Well, I need grounding sometimes, someone to keep me in check.

Referring to my support: This last twelve months I would have probably ended up grafting, volunteering, and they would have just let me down. What I am saying is that if I would have not been coming to your group and doing all this, and just been here (DISK HOUSING SUPPORT), I would have just been going to all the services and listening to all their fucking hype, and then I would have set myself up to fail again.

Craig was now considering himself ready for work, and felt capable of ''holding his own with any professional'' in his chosen field. Adopting the perspective of Blustein (2008), I believe

there is a positive correlation between meaningful employment and optimal psychological wellbeing. I would also extend this association to other social avenues such as voluntary work, mainstream education and training. To capture this period of immense personal growth, I put forward a series of questions, regarding the impact and influence of my practice. Captured during the series of Dictaphone conversation is a sense of optimism and belief in his ability to finally reach his potential. He now trusted in his ability to work in a professional role.

Researcher: Friday, 29th May, 2015: A year later, why are we sat here then?

Craig: Friday, 29th May, 2015: Because we have got trust. It is give and take, I get out of it as much as you get out of it. If I was not getting anything out of it I would not come. The last twelve months I have had quite a good turnout. I can't say that it is all down to you, you have been positive and pointed me in the right way, but I have had to put the leg work in and stuff like that, but it is about give and take isn't it?

(Pause) You just can't be honest (to other services), how can you be honest?

God Colin, (laugh), how much do you want, you know me better than my family or anywhere, more than anybody. To be honest, you are having to have to keep picking it out because what I am saying is it is coming out in stages.

Researcher: Friday, 29th May, 2015: Do you feel the progression (since working with me) has been honest, positive and put you in the position you are now?

Craig: Friday, 29th May, 2015 (Referring to paid work): Yes I do want it, this is what I have been working to. Yes, I just have to do some more groundwork. But I know that I can go in there, what they are getting paid for, quite easily without even putting any thought process or effort into it. Just by being there, do you know? It is surreal though, because people are getting paid and I am stood there, and it is like I am doing more than them, just by being stood there, if you can get what I mean?

Researcher: Friday, 29th May, 2015: So from meeting twelve months ago, just coming to the service, coming to CRP, we are saying a year later, that you now believe that you can walk into a job tomorrow, and do a better job?

> *Craig: Friday, 29th May, 2015: Let's rephrase that, I could walk into that job tomorrow and do the job. I am not bothered anymore what anyone else is doing anymore, it is about what I do.*
>
> *I have picked up on something what you said, that you just can't go into the services and tell them what they are doing wrong. So I just go in there and keep my mouth shut, and do there drift (work).*
>
> *Researcher: Friday, 29th May, 2015: Do you think there has been a major transition from meeting me, not wanting or knowing what to do, to now believing that you can walk into a professional service and ply your trade?*
>
> *Craig: Friday, 29th May, 2015 (Pause): Yes definitely. I don't usually get myself all giddied up about what I am doing because it is, do you know what I mean? I can just go anywhere me, and fit into the fixtures and fittings, but that has been my life, when you have had to blend into different social settings.*

In the next chapter, I will give a detailed explanation and discussion of my research findings.

Chapter 8
Reflection on learning

8.1 Chapter introduction

In the course of this chapter, I will present a comprehensive explanation of my findings. When analysing the two in-depth narratives, key themes emerged; this also involved contributions from other group members, detailed in chapter four. Drawing on different theories, literatures and theoretical perspectives, this chapter will discuss and analyse the key themes, which emerged from the narratives of chapters four, six and seven. By providing an explanatory account of my research findings, I intend to contribute to the existing theoretical debate on how best to work with former offenders in an educational capacity.

The opening sections of this chapter will discuss the individual, wider social and political circumstances which have adversely affected the men researched. Constructed from the verbal and written recollections of each research volunteer, it details the lifelong consequences of dysfunction and disadvantaged childhoods, including the role of education, youth exclusion and unemployment. Moving on from this, a more significant proportion of this chapter contributes to analysing the transformative impact of an alternative educational approach, which supported the successful reengagement of Mark and Craig back into education, training and voluntary work; thus enabling them to live a more productive life.

8.2 Primary socialisation: paternal and care system relationships

One of the central themes to emerge from my research are the lasting effects of parental disengagement and loss. It became evident early on, primarily through individual and group conversations, just how negatively we had collectively been affected by the immensity and magnitude of unstable and hurtful childhood happenings. With the exception of Chris, the men who participated in this inquiry had suffered from the aftermath of early family relationship trauma. In particular, conversations tended to navigate towards the loss or fragmented nature of relations with the mother. Every member of this thesis cohort, except one, were socialised in dwellings which consisted of single-parent family structures.

Sporadically, male role models, including the biological father, would become involved; the duration and extent of this influence were regarded neither as positive nor caring. Except for Mark, the mother was the sole source of guidance, love and lifelong learning.

Drawing on the work of Griffith (1995: 9), in the households in which we were raised and nurtured, the mother's role was fundamental in the cultural and social reproduction of values we adopted and internalised; within many deprived working class communities, 'family values do not necessarily coincide with those embedded in schooling discourse'. Throughout childhood, these shaped the attitudes, perceptions and positions we held towards schooling, offending and life external to the community where we resided. Expanding on this, Sutherland (2011) cites the impact of ineffective parental influences, which she believes attribute to later life deviancy; Matsumoto (1997) also correlates this to behaviours and practices we become exposed to when raised in poverty-stricken households and communities. When speaking with Mark, Craig and Terry, it is difficult to precisely and accurately articulate the permanent damage inflicted throughout childhood; this is a complex and extremely difficult narrative to ever fully understand.

For Mark, his life was to take a sinister twist when suffering physical and sexual abuse over numerous years as a vulnerable child; this was only ever spoken about when we had established a trusting and caring attachment. While recollecting the deprived nature of these occurrences, his voice became softer, stopping to pause, reliving the hurt and pain deeply embedded, he never recovered from these heinous acts. When initially leaving care, attempts were made to inform the relevant care system authorities. However, he was silenced by those in power, they disregarded and rebuffed the accusations of Mark and others alike. Without a doubt, he carried this vulnerability and tormented childhood into adulthood. As documented in the research by Carr et al. (2019: 53), when suffering abuse while living in care accommodation, as adults, the risk of 'negative physical health, mental health, and psychosocial adjustment' is dramatically increased. Further, in the opinion of Goldman (2006: 27), 'childhood abuse, and the stability of the home environment, can affect a wide range of behavioural and physical outcomes in subsequent years'.

For Mark, Craig and myself, the implications of parental influence are central to the worldviews we possess. Although numerous other events throughout childhood have shaped our sense of being, this chapter will only be able to touch its fragmented surface (Pescitelli, 2016). Nonetheless, with certainty, the predominantly unconventional and unhealthy early socialisation was instrumental in determining our distorted self-constructs. Rogers (1961), highlighting the enduring significance of dysfunctional upbringings, says that when positive regard is unconditional, as opposed to conditional, we are more likely to internalise empowering and self-rewarding values which help to formulate 'conditions of worth'; this was something lacking for the men in this research.

As noted, when attempting to convey clarity from the mass of narrative collated, it was difficult to state the exact association and influence of the mother or father; it remains problematic to speculate, and unethical to elaborate on the definite long-term impact because I don't have sufficient information or knowledge to justify any claims I might make about this. It is important my findings do not embellish or exaggerate, I do not want to be unequivocal with such sensitive aspects of existence. It is crucial to bear in mind that loss during childhood includes that of either parent. As touched upon by Terry, the suicide of his father through depression is still painful for him to accept. During this research, he spoke of his regrets regarding the ignorance which he feels society continues to adopt towards the general wellbeing of men. However, the dominant discourse was the damage inflicted through the loss of motherly love.

Although extremely complex, without question, and to varying extents, the abuse, trauma and loss suffered, have manifested in our actions and behaviours throughout youth and early adulthood (Rowe, 2005). Evidence has shown the relationships we have developed as adults, have all entailed similar difficulties and patterns. Hence, there was a consensus amongst the group regarding the lack of trust which emerges and transpires in intimate relationships, especially those involving former female partners; again, this is difficult to theorise, numerous other variables would need to be taken into account. It is also worth noting that throughout the cohort, besides myself, every member was single in status, though this could just be a coincidence. Fromm (1995) believes that motherly love is the unconditional affirmation of the child's life and their needs. When this is negated or neglected, it has been shown that rarely

do we emerge unscathed from such emotional and psychological damage. However, blameworthiness should not and must not be placed on this single primary variable. Research by Carr et al. (2019) and Stein (2006) found that turbulent childhoods, blighted by physical, emotional and psychological abuse during short and long-term residence in the local care authority, had adverse effects on the relationships we develop as adults.

As emphasised by Craig, it is only as an adult, and through the deep narrative reflection undertaken, that the immensity of blighted early years happenings becomes apparent and self-evident. For myself and the men researched, and through the various avoidance strategies developed, we foolishly believed we were able to distance ourselves from, and objectify, these unsettling childhood events. My analyses lead me to conclude that this was neither through rational choice nor planned foresight. In the preceding years and decades, when confronted with further separation and loss, we tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to block out and remove ourselves from the sources of anguish. Through denial, offending behaviour and substance abuse, we developed the capacity to get on with things, to have faith in the power of time as a healer; we have tended to equate this method of renunciation to other adverse social circumstances. Due to this, I believe we have developed a fragile and multifaceted identity and personhood, each with its own voice, each resonating and arising in tandem, accordance and in response to the specific social and political context. I now share the view by Butler (2004: 21) that 'one mourns when one accepts the fact that the loss one undergoes will be one that changes you, changes you possibly forever'. For others, the brutality of abuse and violence endured, has 'forced them to become jaded to human suffering. Lack of remorse has developed as a mechanism for coping with daily tragedy in their environment' (Morris, 2012: 67).

8.3 Subcultural participation: The human need for inclusivity, care and togetherness

Almost exclusively, the men in this research have extensive histories of subculture participation. Over time, external of their subculture, they did not feel they had any value; lurking in the shadows of society, they became 'imprisoned in an absence', and existed 'as a body known by the other' (Sartre, 1972, cited in Moran, 2010: 135, 136). As they approached their early to mid-twenties, their increasing sense of alienation exposed them to a host of

other settings, ones in which its residents were equally at odds with the dominant external culture. In agreement with Nayak (2003: 320), the cultural influence imparted on the identity of my research volunteers was 'thoroughly intertwined with family history, gender, place, class, region and locality'. As the years passed, their human and social status fell into irreparable social decline, they were no longer viewed 'as persons with feelings, hopes and concerns, but as sub-human objects' (Bandura, 2002: 109).

In my view, early forms of social unjustness hardened my clients to trauma and circumstances not experienced in what would generally be considered a healthy upbringing. For example, at a young age, parental loss, physical and sexual abuse and violence in the home, are noted by myself and the volunteers as profoundly affecting our childhoods, and later adulthood (Klein, 1975). Detached from our primary source of love and care from a young age, this could be one reason why the majority of our adulthoods were spent attached to numerous nonconventional groups; we never stopped searching for care, love and acceptance. In the view of Klein (1975: 309), traumatic childhood events 'profoundly influence the course and the force of the emotional lives of grown-up individuals'; and as evidenced through the narrative, we have tended 'very much to keep these feelings of guilt in the background, because of their painfulness'. However, the richness of these experiences, the rationale and facets of social and political hardship underlying and contributing to a deviant lifestyle, remain woefully under-researched. In this inquiry, when we began to unravel the multi-layered and multifaceted dimensions of adult subculture participation, the sensitive discourse captured is difficult to locate in modern and postmodern literature in any depth (Brady and Bennett, 2011).

Moving through colourful, complex and impressionable teenage years, all the men, except perhaps for Chris, were resigned to the inevitable reality of what lay ahead. From this point forward, dysfunctional actions and boisterous defiant attitudes all contributed to the symbolic struggle against the overarching ruling society. Once labelled as an offender, both Craig and Mark noted how any progress made during youth and early adulthood, the foundations on which this rested, entailed little assurance and certainty. Moreover, each progressive movement was dependent on the judgements made by external forces; we could

do little else but place trust and hope in their sense of forgiveness. Nonetheless, as documented in the research by Altschuler and Brash (2004: 82), when convicted by the criminal justice system, 'youths carry a criminal record with them upon release, which may exclude them from certain jobs and will generally disadvantage them in the search for employment'. As we became further alienated, this confirmed what we already feared; with each passing year came the stark reality, we now occupied a meaningless life. As months and years passed, we fully accepted the distorted judgements of the institutions, authorities and policies, which we considered to be partially responsible for our unjust social status; we resented the arrogance it fosters and its heinous attitudes towards its bordering cultures. Nwalozie (2015: 2) describes how in general 'subcultures are groups of people that are in some way represented as non-normative and/or marginal through their particular interest and practices'. From a personal perspective, and one which is endorsed through the narrative, the display of rebellion was no more an act of aggression than it was a cry for help.

To feel worthless and redundant from the hive of social activity, has taken the men through a painful and gradual journey, until we came to the realisation that society was a closed door. When comprehending the magnitude of this, evoked were feelings of panic and depression. The men described their gradual acceptance of a wider social alienation which began to take hold internally. With a limited stake in society, our lives became more chaotic, thus increasing this unstoppable demise. Those who were in similar situations provided reassurance and support, the compassion and care reciprocated, becomes imperative. Once integrated into likeminded cohorts, we took on a distinct in-group and wider social status; adopting concurring values and modes of behaviour, we became even more distrusting of those in authority. As a consequence of this negative downward spiral, opportunities for rehabilitation and integration rapidly faded, and as time elapsed, hope and meaning dwindled. As documented in the stories of myself, Craig and Mark, aroused was a conscious reality of hopelessness and helplessness; when 'living in chaos, the present is experienced as empty and static, and the future appears desolate' (Smith and Sparkes, 2007: 223).

Etched in their stories are details which demonstrate how fragile and vulnerable life is for those residing on the cusp of society. As emphasised in chapter four, there is a dearth of

literature and research conveying and expressing the ingrained vulnerabilities repressed and masked by the majority of ex-offenders. Moreover, highlighted in this study are the unproductive years living stagnated and unfulfilled; for the most part, 'poor health is not so much about being poor as feeling poor' (Sapolsky, 2018: 63). Drifting into manual trades, we began various forms of employment, which we believed was the very most we could achieve, and aspirations remained modest in scope. After years spent trying to forge a living in unsteady employment, crime which initially began many years previously became a more attractive and lucrative proposition. The inability to remain in secure and rewarding employment had a twofold effect. It resulted in my volunteers moving further from dependable and stable forms of social integration, while gently easing them towards the sanctuary and security obtained in non-conventional subcultures. Although they had adequate sources of finance, they were dreadfully unhappy and discontented.

Following incarceration, most of the men persisted in engaging with some form of petty criminality, for years, even decades after. In the cases of Mark, Benny, Craig and Terry, when opportunities arose to make a quick buck, they would supplement primarily poor incomes by getting their hands dirty. They would frequently speak about the concept of respect, a term consistently used in a variety of social, political and scientific discourses (Simon, 2007). There was a yearning from my volunteers that one day they would be treated with regard and dignity external to their current social standing and subculture. Baumann (2007: 6) deems the concept of human dignity as being a normative one, and 'human dignity is like a right in this respect: It does not go away if violated'. According to Mark and Craig, they generally felt respected when they were treated in a manner which was fair, unbiased and free from discrimination. For both men, outside of the dominant culture, respect was received and reciprocated. They knew that external to this safe haven, they were subordinate, looked at with disdain, demoted to places they resented; they refused to adhere to the repressive rules, laws and regulations, responsible for their growing sense of marginalisation.

Craig recalled how he became inspired and attracted towards older peers, they appeared contented in the roles they had, and they seemed to have accepted the subculture way of life. Research by Smith et al. (1998), observed that respectful treatment by an in-group

authority increased group member's self-esteem. Jones (2013: 22), looking at this from a different perspective, remarked that social identities, for disengaged youth, have a tendency to 'communicate strength, autonomy and toughness'; they are 'left ashamed of any feelings that suggest vulnerability and weakness'. On numerous occasions, we recalled how it felt to feel like somebody, as opposed to nobody. Such feelings of euphoria and wellbeing never arose through conventional routes. According to Simon and Sturmer (2003: 191) once emotional, spiritual and life-affirming sensations are present during interaction, this alone 'reinforces the recipient's relationship with his or her in-group, a relationship that gives access to other desirable experiences, such as a secure sense of identity'; it also 'entails obligations to the group and its goals so that both the recipient of respect and the group as a whole wins'. As detailed by Osler (2009), we associate ourselves with the people and the places that provide a sense of citizenship; we access the benefits of collective citizenship on the basis of equality. Without exception, the security and belonging described by my clients were a fundamental reason for their participation in subculture deviance.

8.4 Early education: The effects of teacher and pupil relations, the injustice and mistreatment experienced

Another key theme to emerge from the data was the total absence of care imparted from teacher to pupil throughout primary and secondary education. As documented by Owen (2011), Grimwood and Berman (2012) and Wright (2013), numerous difficulties are encountered when educating complex cohorts and individuals. In the case of Mark, he recalled the verbal and physical brutality suffered as a young boy. Throughout the decades between the 1960s and 1990s, we see an education system which was more brutal, objective and authoritarian than we witness nowadays, it was 'built on the principle of keeping the social order intact' (Syriatou, 2010: 119). A shared consensus amongst my cohort was the inability of teachers to integrate emotion and empathy into their pedagogies; interactions were unfriendly, unsympathetic, and at times ruthless and barbaric. As detailed in the research by Hill and Jones (2017: 23), this mistreatment is more detrimental when pupils 'are young and still developing a sense of their own capabilities'.

For myself, and my volunteers, learning through primary and secondary education was conducted through impassive interactions; warmth and care were mostly void, although glimpses on rare occasions have been documented; this includes extracts from my autobiography in chapter two. As stated by Ivan Illich (1970 [2002]), the modern education system are institutions which persuade people to exchange their real lives for a more consumerist packaged deal, offering instead a substitute replacement. Regarded as a modern day form of colonisation, this is disadvantaging the poorer working classes, who have become alienated, isolated and oppressed. In contrast, children raised and socialised in privileged families, who reside in elitist and affluent settings, embrace and adopt this bourgeoisie mentality (Bourdieu, 2001). The writings by Illich (1970 [2002]) are dedicated to developing an education system which is socially just and inclusive, thus accepting of all social classes, colours and creeds. In his view, the current framework turns children into natural resources, who are fed into society's 'industrial machine'; emotionless and indifference define this archaic structure.

In the view of Chulz and Rubel (2011), outside of the family unit, the education system is, without doubt, a fundamental influence during primary socialisation. Moulding and shaping perspective and opinion, it is determining of educational attainment, future prosperity and employment status (Nally et al. 2014; Ramakers, 2014; Gonzalez, 2012). As illustrated by Craig and Mark, they never perceived themselves as being cared for or included within the ethos and framework of primary and secondary schooling. What they described were complex and varied routes of progressive disengagement from learning, they felt powerless and inadequate. Almost exclusively, this disconnection began during primary school, the prejudices described during individual in-depth narratives, and group conversations, details their gradual disinterest and detachment. Comparable to the research by Paul Willis (2016 [1978]), the men recalled being drawn to the support of others, who similar to themselves, were also alienated. As Hurn (1993: 64) says, the education system is 'far from a pure form of meritocracy'; in his view, schools perpetuate distorted notions of equality and fairness, they 'are an essential prop of this legitimacy'. According to Becker (1963), when negativity is continuous and relentless, over time, this creates a self-fulfilling prophecy, this proving detrimental to the educational advancements of already underprivileged and destitute cohorts; this is reinforced throughout this inquiry.

When the education was founded upon inclusion and fairness, Mark and Craig became more enthusiastic towards the prospect of learning; they strived when being educated through encouragement and passion. Other factors such as showing respect, kindness and understanding were also valued by the men (Sutherland, 2011). The men responded approvingly when the climate encouraged and embraced diversity and acceptance, and permitted room for error; this included minor altercations between the men. Establishing the appropriate ambiance was imperative, generating an enriching environment was essential; this allowed for the flourishing of 'emotional support, warmth and attention or a lack thereof by teachers through cues indicating support and approval' (Smith, 2008: 3). Furthermore, as demonstrated in the research by Jussim, Eccles and Madon (1997: 807), irrespective of your social and economic background, ethnicity, or special needs requirement, positive teacher expectations were perceived by 'stigmatised groups' as being significant in their learning journey. Although many challenges were encountered, Carr (2011: 174) believes that:

> Good teachers will need courage or nerve to get them through often difficult and trying circumstances; they will need temperance in order to act in a calm, patient and controlled way under stress or provocation; they will need wisdom and honesty to act with required integrity; and, above all, they will need justice to be perceived by pupils as fair.

8.5 The ineffectiveness of adult ETE services: Contesting traditional ETE structures

Generally, if we take the time to speak to the service users, they will often inform you that traditional educational cultures have nullified their learning encounters to date. Moreover, through conventional positions of power and hierarchy, there is an inequality of relational dynamics. Due to this, learning is deprioritised, it becomes of secondary value. It was no surprise to hear the men speak about their negative engagements with previous education and criminal justice organisations and structures. When enrolling at these provisions, they wished to be assigned with professionals who were objective, open-minded and unbiased; this is usually absent in such time-bound, chaotic and target driven cultures. Almost immediately, they felt further disadvantaged, the clear and dismissive stance of practitioners created a tentative time for both client and professional. Relationships, which began with

such disparity, rarely improved. As time passed, this resulted in them being overlooked, forgotten, and further stigmatised; they perceived these derogatory attitudes as directly stemming from the ontology of the practitioner.

Offenders are often the victim of an education system which has systematically neglected them throughout primary and secondary school education; research evidence highlights the continuation of this abuse and neglect during adult ETE engagement. Ironically, when attempting to rehabilitate them, court orders usually insist they attend ETE organisations, the aim being to improve employment and education prospects; progress is regularly monitored by the probation and other service staff. On several occasions, Terry spoke of the disingenuous and cynical actions of adult services and employees. An observant service user, months would be spent attempting to determine the genuine motives of his key workers. However, time and time again, they reinforced his biases and stereotypes. A misconception held by countless service professionals is that the obstructive attitudes demonstrated by some clients stem from a desire to disrupt proceedings, they are intent on stifling interactions through an unwillingness to embrace change. My research findings contest these subjective and unfounded practitioner assumptions.

In general, the crossing of emotional boundaries is discouraged in traditional educational settings. It is, however, as demonstrated in the stories of Craig and Mark, a key finding to emerge in the research. During the last three years, meaningful and sincere connections have supported my clients to challenge beliefs and values detrimental to their existing social status. However, reflection and change is a two-way process, and my role as an active researcher demanded that relations were based on equality and fairness. Moreover, throughout this research, I had a responsibility to scrutinise and adapt many facets of my practice, including the aspects of my pedagogy which inadvertently dissuade or disadvantage service users.

When departing from previous organisations, Craig remarked ''feeling used'', his swift exit and lack of follow up contact left him feeling depreciated, he was of no more use. Without exception, the warming interactions you would expect, were largely non-existent. When accreditation had been achieved, there was no reason for them to hang around. Once their usefulness had come to an end, they were discarded, sent back to the community. This did

not necessarily deter them from engagement with the same, or other services, they just approached future relationships conscious of their devalued status. In the writings of Buber (1957), he speaks about the unhealthy influence bureaucratic organisations and other state powers have on the individual (DeLue, 2006). More recently, Griffith and Varbelow (2012) note that the experiences of the student must work alongside the statistical and target driven framework and ethos of the education system; learning is now conducted in a business like arena, as opposed to a culture based on convivial values. Nussbaum (2010: 6), speaking about the global crisis of education says 'we seem to be forgetting about the soul', 'about what it is to approach another person as a soul, rather than as a mere useful instrument'. Due to this, we become dehumanised through mass education, individuality and personal growth is replaced by mechanistic workings and financial profit. As a consequence of this imposed oppression, real mutuality and authentic relationships become lost, they struggle to exist independently.

Traditionally, the main characteristics associated with positive teaching are practitioner qualities such as 'humour, honesty, empathy, more democratic than autocratic, able to create a rapport with students, both individually and in groups, open, spontaneous, adaptable to change' (Dutaa, Tomoaicaa and Panisoara, 2015: 1229). As repeatedly touched upon in chapter four, the ontologies separating teacher and student have created a void and general inequality. According to Ellis (2005), the meanings and interpretations we associate to new learning encounters stem from prior learning; in my experience, most practitioners remain unaware of this. Also noted is the inability and failure to find a commonality of ground. As portrayed in the narrative, in general, teachers and service users are from very different worlds. In response to this, the men and women they work with, streetwise and savvy, are shrewd enough to play along with the expectations of these organisations; my clients assumed the role of passive participant. Appeasing and pleasing those in power, they ensured interactions remained distant, thus, there was a great reluctance to forge meaningful connections.

For me, it was always my intention to transform and develop my practice in accordance with the needs of the men with whom I worked. Buber (1969), makes a distinction between 'to

learn' and 'to know'; for him, learning is a gateway to fostering 'an even deeper recognition of what the human being needs in order to grow' (Buber, (1947 [2014]: 101). Therefore, informed by the narrative of my clients, being passive and flexible in my approach, enabled me to feel assured that I was accurately portraying and articulating the voices of Mark and Craig.

8.6 The community of practice: empowering through the relational deconstruction of existence

When establishing Hope Education and Support Services, its philosophical framework was a resistance movement against what I perceived to be an unjust archaic education system. To achieve this, I formed a learning culture of acceptance. Regardless of qualifications acquired or past learning encounters, I operated an open door policy; this tends to be in contrast to the principles of traditional ETE adult educational settings. From this, my objective was to encourage a communicative discourse, which had a reflective capacity to explore and examine the autobiographical influences of the past (Flynn, 2004). The prior ineffectiveness of services, which go primarily unchallenged, stagnates client progress, hindered by a situation of incompatibility; this is an everyday reality for service participants. I wanted more than this, and knew from personal experience that authentic change can only ever become a reality when at some point, interactions change from being guarded and objective, to that of I-Thou (Buber, 1958 [2000]). It was imperative to rid my learning culture of formality and learning based on statistical attainment and data.

To help ensure and preserve authenticity, I considered it best to work with men in the same manner that has served me well for over a decade. What emerged was evidence to support that the simplest modes of teaching induce the more significant personal gains; I understood that change possesses a certain fragility, impossible to predetermine, foolish to guarantee. Thus, concepts such as positive reinforcement, kindness and other positive stimuli were underpinning of interactions throughout this process. In essence, 'defensiveness and rigidity tend to be replaced by an increasing openness to experience' (Rogers, 1961: 115). As highlighted in both in-depth narratives, when teachers harbour negative attitudes towards students, and lack the understanding and empathy required, they are more inclined to

critique learning weaknesses; errors become defining of the students learning status, hence practitioners demand less and expect limited effort. During group meetings, every conceivable aspect of our learning culture was taken into account. To ensure good practice, we would routinely deliberate various aspects of the programme; it was imperative to involve everybody.

A correlation was made between how the men in this inquiry learned, and how I taught. Catering to their requirements, my approach to learning was ever evolving. Teaching through care and empathy nurtured tremendous gains, and the research volunteers remarked they could all relate to such an approach. My way of working reflects the viewpoint made by Lave (1996: 154), who says that 'Learning is the more basic concept, and that teaching (transmission) is something else. Teaching certainly is an object for analytical enquiry, but not an explanation for learning'. Although various definitions and interpretations can be applied when describing communities of people who learn in distinctive ways, I prefer the following description by Lave and Wenger, (2014: 6), who refer to them as:

> A group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis. Communities of practice spend time together and share a common goal.

In previous employment positions, adhering to an overarching set of structures was, in many respects, stagnating and stifling my pedagogy. Accreditation and keenness to micromanage students made it problematic to foster the kind of relationships required for the personal growth and development of the client. Reversing this process ignited passion and ownership of learning and volunteers had freedom to explore their learning identity; they decided to what extent, if any, they contributed within this social space. When traditional shackles were removed, there was a fluidity which continuously shaped and reconfigured this arena; the symbolic representations and modes of I-Thou dialogue further supported collective engagement and learning (Buber, 1958 [2000]). Therefore, education should be viewed as more than just another accomplishment; for some, it is the difference between leading a nonoffending existence and being drawn into further offending or substance misuse.

When considering the notion of relational learning, Lave (1996: 156), asks the following question, hence 'where does reality lie (in the world or in the subject?), and how can we come to know it, depending on where it is'? Early on, it became apparent that I was unable to negate or overlook the subjective perspectives of each client. As noted, these experiences are central to the reality, worldviews and outlooks of Craig and Mark; concealed within, are their apprehensions and trepidations when endeavouring to establish meaningful learning connections. Therefore, when initially reengaging them back into an educational setting, it was paramount to neither discount nor objectify subjective viewpoints and feelings, which is generally the situation in mainstream education. I support the view by Code (1983: 537) that 'knowing well is a matter of deep moral significance'. When devaluing such rich modes of existence, we are inadvertently recreating the conditions which initially failed them, thus, further alienating them, albeit in a different social and learning context.

There were moments of sheer relief as psychologically burdening memories were shared amongst these men. As we became more settled, this created a reflective discourse, which was all-encompassing of chequered and non-conventional pasts. With this in place, giving students a 'voice' for active participation in decision-making about the content and discourse, increased engagement and motivation for learning (Cook-Sather, 2006). My findings confirmed that learning was enhanced when I encouraged a deepening process of participation (Lave and Wenger, 2014). Moreover, by moulding the content around personally meaningful values and prior existence, this helped safeguard against exclusion; less vocal members were encouraged to contribute, although the extent and detail of this would inevitably vary.

When trying to ascertain how I influenced the people I worked with, I found myself drawing on a wealth of rich embodied knowledge. The exactness of how this happened is very difficult to locate in traditional theory and literature (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). As confirmed by the research volunteers, the learning hub was a place of exploration and self-discovery; developed was a new form of confession, which affirmed individual identities, and also helped the men to deconstruct complex notions of self. Only through soul searching and honesty were we able to gain a greater understanding of what we had become; where we were going

was of primary significance in this inquiry. With integrity and acceptance as our foundations, the words and utterances imparted and reciprocated were taken and transcribed as being authentic and pure. Cook-Sather (2006: 383) maintains that the student's voice is a fundamental characteristic of democratic education; thus, 'education is a process based on rights and relationship, to the most basic premise that education is about change'. Whitehead (2008: 15) asserts that 'each individual has his or her own unique constellation of energy, values and understandings that give meaning and purpose to his or her life as explanatory principles'. By using autoethnography, to emerge from the in-depth narratives was an abundance of rich and coherent knowledge to draw on, which was developed through a subjective, rather than an empirical understanding of the world we live. This knowledge is, according to Whitehead (2008: 10), crafted by an 'awareness and assimilation into understanding of the special possibility that permeates within, around and through natural features from sub-atomic to University in scale'. As we effortlessly drifted through the many months spent together, the positive educational environment, laden with meaningful values and principles, emboldened the group members to become more self-aware and confident. The ability of my volunteers to organise proceedings made sure that it retained its ethical and moral values, which also helped to uphold its distinctiveness and originality. As well as learning from each other, newer members of the group embraced the already established productive and positive group values. As they grew in confidence, the acquisition of knowledge, arising from the intimacy of dialogue, supported the forming of bonds through compassion and empathy; over time, the entire cohort became their bedrock of support (Marquardt and Waddill, 2004). Ryan, Amorim and Kusch (2013: 120) suggest that 'the time, space and conversational negotiation of meaning lead us to a shared meaning, a process of negotiation and persuasion'.

Over a three year period, as new people joined, their duration largely depended on what it was they required. For some, they stayed for many months, for others, it was a matter of weeks. There was never any pressure to retain client numbers, they were free to use the service informally and periodically; the only commitment was the pledge to retain confidentiality. According to Thayer-Bacon (2003: 3), the 'art of knowing is described as being a socially constructed concept', through the relationships which connect and intertwine

persons. Morgan, Hoadley and Barrett (2017: 1), adopting a social realist position 'recognises that knowledge is provisional, fallible and socially produced'; it should be 'judged on its truthfulness and explanatory power, not just on who produces it or who is seen to benefit from it'. My findings support the powerful and communal impact of care, which was instrumental for every member of the cohort, and was something infrequently experienced at other services and ETE organisations. However, the hard work and endeavour can amount to nothing if complacency seeps into proceedings. Thus, although I may have been within my rights to conceive that I had insider status granted by the community, narrative and group Dictaphone data reinforced the need to respect my privileged position amongst my peers. As emphasised by Thayer-Bacon (2003), when we fail to take the subjects into account, we are acquiring knowledge through empiricist epistemologies.

Practicing by way of human kindness was neither by chance nor was it tailored to individual clients. This act of giving, deriving from my own sense of knowing, and resonating from an instinctual care towards ex-offenders, ensured that integrity and wellbeing formed the framework of the learning paradigms. Their needs, and how I judged them to be, stem and rise from the neglect to which I have myself been exposed. Nonetheless, this approach is not without potential critique. Loughran (2007: 5) advises that in the process of self-study 'being personally involved in experiences can limit one's ability to recognize oneself as a living contradiction and therefore impact the self-study'. During the manual activities on the farm, where tasks were carefully delegated, I was aware of the clients' strengths and weaknesses. It was important to set challenges which they wanted, and with some hard work could achieve. Gulcan (2010: 259) speaks of the benefits for students when teachers empower through achievement, resolve and reflection; the importance of affording the students the 'right to participate in the decisions as to their development', helped to foster desired behaviours. As highlighted by the cohort, there developed a togetherness amongst the men, this positively impacting on the general attitude of each group member. On the whole, learning became more intrinsically stimulating and meaningful, volunteers became empowered, they 'had a voice' and a strengthened 'connection with others'; their learning experience was deemed to be significant to the individual and the cohort (Cattaneo and Chapman, 2010: 650).

Each of the men in this study craved care, attention and support. However, this was not just about what the volunteers received. A two-way process, my expectations were that they would give something of themselves. How and to what extent this manifested, rested with them. For those who were more reserved, every word and utterance they contributed was of immense personal worth, I appreciated the richness of thought, which conveyed its value. Staying true to who I was, and where I had come from was essential; discussed were aspects of my past which may have been perceived as unethical in previous employment. However, this honesty amounted to more than the words spoken, it made me human, at times fragile, others strong; it made me no better or worse than them. This is further elaborated on by Quinn and Poirier (2006: 31) who maintain that passionate relations are developed and built when we can communicate:

> As friends who they could talk to comfortably and who were willing to listen. Good practitioners were also people who did not take a joke too seriously, and would not discriminate against you.

Through a series of carefully thought out sessions, we dissected the strands of time, we reflected and ruminated on life-affirming happenings. Although unique to each member, the volunteers became critical thinking agents; previous abstract thoughts and events began to have a more transparent application to real life. For the practitioner, overlooking the importance and value of evaluation and reflection can lead to the 'production of mechanistic descriptions of teaching experiences' (Watt and Lawson, 2009: 611). It is suggested by Niemeijer and Visse (2016) that only when we deconstruct the individual and collective biographies of those defined as 'other', can we authentically relate and empathise. As noted by Rogers (1961) and Buber (1958 [2000]), there were moments when I genuinely felt I touched the lives of Mark, Terry, Craig and many others; these intuitively driven connections remain theoretically less understood in literature and theory. During such encounters, I would myself be overcome with a feeling of spiritual entwinement, I felt a sense of liberation in the words communicated to my fellow peers, and I was free to convey my thoughts and reflections as they appeared (Buber, 1958 [2000]). My experience appeared to be similar to those of Craig, who on Friday, 9th January, 2015, was quoted as saying that ''the group has

been a life saver for me because you look forward to it; it is a place where you can be free and be honest with yourself instead of putting a bravado on for everybody else''.

For those we label and define as 'other', when do we deem there to be an appropriate and ethical time to begin analysing the tiers of biographical complexities in an educational capacity? In contemplating this, Pantic and Wubbels (2010: 699) suggests that teachers need to detach from the criteria which strangle the autonomous nature of this profession, one which is bound by pre-set standards and aims, 'teacher education should be based on competencies teachers need in practice'. In previous employment positions, applying a pragmatic approach to learning ensured compliance to the wider framework of education; reflection held little value in this process. The reasons for this are quite straightforward when we consider the funding channels and methods financing the majority of private sector ETE offender organisations; this was discussed at points in chapter four. Lifting the lid on repressed memories and epiphanies are not only overly time-consuming, they also slow down the rapid attainment of accreditation demanded in the brief periods of client service engagement. Nonetheless, the life-changing benefits of exploring the context of our oppression has enabled men such as Mark to embrace opportunity and change.

8.7 Hope is developed: the world presents opportunities previously invisible, meaning is suddenly revealed

There is no exact science to how much we reveal, in what context we disclose. There resides an ambiguity to this, although in general, most ETE senior managers would enforce that such boundaries remain strictly professional. As already noted, remaining on the perimeters, when you feel touched by an authentic sensation, one which leads you into a world of intrigue, is denying yourself moments, which otherwise seldom reveal themselves; you must remain open to their possibility. As mentioned in chapter four, when leaving CRP, I feared the service users might seek other education programmes, due to the lack of stable accommodation. However, my volunteers remained loyal towards myself and the project. Following me to different educational settings, they embraced my way of working and connected to me as a person. By continuing to attend for several years after this initial period of unsettlement, the success of this learning community can be attributed to the loyalty and integrity of the men. As I became more confident, so too did the people I worked with, together we evolved in

harmony. The words and actions demonstrated and positively reciprocated, were in contrast to the strains and stresses I had become accustomed to when working in previous teaching settings. Moreover:

> Self-awareness on behalf of the researcher can assist in finding communion with the participant. Communion does not seek to conquer but find a mutually shared space of understanding, empathy, and intimacy. Achieving communion creates space for communication to flow both ways (Pearce, 2010: 10).

I entered this inquiry with the belief that my volunteers' voluntary attendance, and eagerness to work in numerous roles, affirmed their harboured desire to lead a non-offending life, and contribute back to society; although this does not necessarily have to be through paid employment. Although, a more primary objective was to reengage through an alternative pedagogy, I knew long-term aspirations were to find meaning in other productive social pathways. However, informed by my own longstanding employment struggles, the difficulties of the steps we take into conventional routes, is as much a psychological as it is a wider social struggle. In establishing the appropriate setting for this transition, fostered was a 'mutually shared space of understanding', which supported the type of environment required by clients who seek creativity of thought, pertaining to a rich, expressive narrative (Pearce, 2010: 10). Over the proceeding months, there developed optimism and an emboldening aura, which captivated the men in this organic non-judgemental environment. Davies et al. (2013), consider such intimate learning conditions to be dependent on 'the nature of the relationship between teachers and learners, including high expectations, mutual respect, modelling of creative attitudes, flexibility and dialogue'. The ability to learn, independent of the conventional and repressive issues discussed throughout, inspired the men to prosper; their sense of agency and hope thrived almost instantly beyond recognition.

As a practitioner, it is imperative that once I sense hope, I respect this. I now have a solid foundation which enables me to build, develop and organically nurture proceedings. After leaving my previous place of employment, I knew that key aspects of my pedagogy, stifled through bureaucratic restraints, had a setting to blossom, they were now free to perform unrestrained; this feeling of liberation, provided me the scope to explore its full impact.

Moreover, by incorporating the principles of Rogers's (1961) humanistic theory into my educational practice, there arose an ever-evolving learning phenomenon; this in my experience, unsettles and send shivers down the spine of the traditionalist, when there is a complete reversal of teacher and client roles. Through congruent interactions, notions of control, power and authority were overturned, they faded and became irrelevant, and clients become empowered to take ownership of their journey. It was never my aim to dictate or demand conformity, I only ever wanted to form understandings based on mutual respect and cooperation. According to Buber (1947 [2014: 106]), when the individual's confidence has been gained:

> His resistance against being educated gives way to a singular happening; he accepts the educator as a person. He feels he may trust this man, that this man is not making a business out of him, but is taking part in his life, accepting him before desiring to influence him.

It is not easy being drawn into the world of another, emotions were routinely triggered, at times they unexpectedly resurfaced, on other occasions they remained elusive and hidden. However, being exposed to the deeply troubling confessions of the client, sitting attentively as they find the words to describe their lives, I believe is a privilege and truly special moment. Its personal significance left me humbled, more so than startled or shocked. You learn there is no appropriate time or place for such self-revelations, they have chosen you to feel their pain, hurt, joy and ecstasy. Moreover, the practitioner cannot extract such personal dialogue, these moments remain a relational phenomenon, and they celebrate my world meeting his, if only for a 'fleeting moment' (Rogers, 1986). Without the right connection, the volume and content of dialogue will remain informative, and its depth will never venture beneath the surface. Tierney et al. (2017: 11) believe that when communication stems from personally meaningful discourse, we increase the ability to 'personally identify with a patient's situation which could bolster the flow of compassionate care by supporting professional compassion through focusing on individual needs'. Research by Morris (2012: 265), conducted on urban African American adolescent gang members, documented the need to 'respect' and 'value

the words' of the offender, when attempting to capture authentic insight and narrative. The notion of respect was defined by gang members as:

> Listening non-judgmentally to what they had to say, accepting but not necessarily condoning what they had to say, and offering gentle and nonjudgmental guidance.

When walking in the countryside or reflecting in the training room, to think about the future, entailed appreciating the things we had; discussed were the endless and rewarding aspects associated with a non-offending life. Although mental health issues have affected every member of this cohort, at that moment in time, we realised how fortunate we were to have peace of mind. Nonetheless, we also understood from experience that depression and other forms of mental health problems can occur unpredictably through the complex interplay of biological and environmental factors (Piscitelly, 2016). We also came to the realisation that we are here to make a difference, even though the journeys we accepted were very much unique and individual. Over different periods of time, we revisited sections of writing we had collaboratively constructed; contained within these narratives were the interweaving threads pertaining to the multifaceted reasons responsible for the paths we had chosen. Through these activities, there resurfaced countless repressed emotions and thoughts; isolated childhood traumas began to assimilate and interconnect with defining adult circumstances, many of which stay hidden in dialogue in more formal teaching contexts. As conveyed by Clandinin, Cave and Berendonk (2017: 90):

> Narrative inquiry is a way of inquiring into experience that attends to individuals' lives but remains attentive to the larger contexts and relationships within which lives are nested. Stories are lived, and told, not separated from each person's living and telling in time, place and relationships, not seen as text to be separated from the living and telling and analysed and dissected.

I believe that seeking answers, in a world which entails little certainty, one in which events can change from minute to minute, day to day, is a fundamental human requirement. When supporting clients into avenues of choice, this did, for some, rattle their confidence; they needed the continuation of support. From this foundation, they began to appreciate and

value their own self-worth. Therefore, rather than perceiving progression as being centred on the expectation or actions of others, O'Dwyer (2012: 171), drawing on the literature of Camus (2005), asserts that change and transformation are dependent 'on one's own actions and one's own experiments of trial and error'. The findings denote the inadmissible and conclusive bearing the past has imparted on the present; the men were challenged to turn their gaze inwards. Hence, through the gradual processes of introspection, they began to unfold and dissect aspects of existence they perceived as being definitive biographical moments. Although psychologically and emotionally challenging, there was never any undue pressure to engage in this aspect of learning. By supporting the clients to analyse and self-examine current and previous life histories, awareness was attributed to distinct life events. This appeared to enhance a sense of wellbeing for those participating, and many similarities connected every member of the research (Marquardt and Waddill, 2004).

As highlighted, by spending time with each client away from the farm and training facilities, assisted by regular group outings, this transformed the relational dynamics between myself, Craig and Mark. Furthermore, as a group, the frequent excursions visiting local museums, the relaxed and informally held coffee mornings, and the peaceful, tranquil rambles through the beautiful West Yorkshire landscape, all helped further strengthen and reinforce group solidarity; a greater unity developed between and amongst all group members. Although there already existed warmth and intimacy, the feelings and care I observed appeared to intensify. Moreover, aspects of individual personality, which often remain hidden in formal learning environments, emerged and flourished to new heights. Ellis describes this bond as 'existing in each other's story', and by drawing on her own experiences of this organic interaction, she depicts herself as being 'a person who speaks and listens empathically from a place of my own losses' (Ellis and Rawicki, 2006: 378). Seizing such inspiring moments, Ellis feels 'a responsibility to unearth injustices and inequalities', thus claiming 'activist motivation and therapeutic value for our autoethnographic endeavours' (Elis and Rawicki, 2006: 378). In agreement with Kaur (2012), giving oneself to those we educate will enhance one's professional development.

When we speak of 'moments' or 'movements' in therapeutic dialogue and interactions, we are referring to incidents which are often fleeting and transient (Rogers, 1961). As shown in

the in-depth narrative, I became helplessly immersed, there was an exuberant feeling of exultation, and both I and my client were enticed into these real encounters. The world around, its external importance and relevance, is in that very moment secondary in every conceivable way; we were adjoined in this intimate encounter. It became apparent that the concept of time, as a marker with which to gauge this connection, was also secondary; time did not stop, nor was it less important. What was essential was the conscious intertwining of two persons, minds firmly adjoined in this connecting stream of thought; something else of great significance was at play. Such happenings are unscripted, they are impractical and impossible to foresee or predict. In such instances, Buber (1947 [2014]) describes a meeting of two souls, one providing direction to the other. In this research, the genuineness and purity of dialogue were internally embracing. This made possible a 'continuous, synchronised, reciprocal access to our two subjectivities' (Berger and Luckmann, 1971: 52). Charmed by a remarkable and distinctive sensation, the magnitude of this is articulated in the study as resonating in both persons. According to Buber (1947 [2014]: 105):

> Only in his whole being, in all his spontaneity can the educator truly affect the whole being of his pupil. For educating characters you do not need a moral genius, but you do need a man who is wholly alive and able to communicate himself directly to his fellow beings. His aliveness streams out to them and affects them most strongly and purely when he has no thought of affecting them.

To date, little is known about what inspires an individual to find meaning in adversity. Rowles (2008: 128), reflecting on the theorising of Frankl (2004 [1959]), 1948 [2011]), determines that the human existence rests on the essential and ultimate questions of ''Why am I here?'' and ''What makes my life meaningful?''. As noted by Rasmussen (2008), the concept of meaning is created through the complex interaction of countless variables. Moreover, personal experience, trauma and upheaval are not objective and emotionless phenomena, they define how we view the world, and they shape the lens of perception. For myself, Mark and Craig, the strands of lived existence have emerged as being inseparable from the world we view, perceive and occupy in the here and now; some instances, due to their life-defining impact, have even been 'immortalised in time' (Smith and Sparkes, 2008: 6). Envisaging a world of fairness and prosperity is never easy when all you have known is isolation, rejection

and stigmatisation; years have been spent living as second class citizens. By contributing to wider society, we need no longer to be confined to the boundaries.

According to Frankl (2004 [1959]: 128), meaning can be discovered by 'creating a work or doing a deed, by experiencing something or encountering someone, and by the attitudes we take towards unavoidable suffering'. Both Craig and Mark expressed their passion and commitment to make a difference to others who had faced similar life situations; they aspired towards either employment or voluntary work in the service sector. Learning in the context of this inquiry had ignited the belief that avenues once feared, beyond their reach and potential, denied through wider social prejudice, were now achievable and attainable; this was demonstrated in both in-depth narratives. Although incarceration strips many former offenders of this inner faith, my findings provide narrative which shows the potential for teaching and learning to bridge and negotiate the boundaries across numerous spectra; for instance, 'between practitioner and product, producer and audience, theory and practice, so that it becomes the space for reflection, contemplation, revelation' (Stewart, 2006: 5). Therefore, regardless of whether you perceive yourself to be a victim of social injustice, or an ex-offender who feels that life has nothing to offer, the 'spiritual freedom to choose ones future now became possible, hence their lives became more meaningful and purposeful' (Frankl, 2004 [1959]: 76).

This client-centred process emboldened my cohort to rise against the repressive external regimes, partly accountable for their unjust social status. Moreover, this teaching haven and sacred 'opening communicative space' (Wicks and Reason, 2009: 244), reinforced the immeasurable transformative potential education holds, than say other provisions such as probation and other rehabilitative programmes (Besley, 2005). The primary purpose of this space was to encourage and nurture the unique learning of these men, through the unrestricted and non-conventional expression of inner raw emotions, void of fear and judgement. In terms of drawing on subjectivity, I needed this place to eclipse all others. Louise et al. (2006: 41) affirm that a 'welcoming and safe environment is a social space in which people have freedom to be themselves'; it is one which permits them to 'express their own creativity, voice their opinions in decision-making processes, try out new skills and roles, rise to challenges, and have fun in the process'. From this stable foundation, the vines of

ambiguity and hope, which were collectively nurtured, were thus supported throughout by the deep-seated bonds established. On reflection, this helped to protect the men against the many unexpected twists and turns of this complex research inquiry. Given that much of the content seemed to filter back into the richness of our lives, I found it relatively easy to incorporate the impact of wider social and political injustices. The aim was never to engage in self-pity, they yearned to be liberated, as opposed to remaining stagnated in the past; these key aspects were central to the philosophy of learning.

8.8 I am human: my condition is fallible, although I do care for you as a person. Sharing myself with you

Kaur (2012) raises the question, how can education be more effective when catering to diverse groups and students? He also notes that the term 'diverse' can be used in a variety of social and community contexts. Moreover, Ikaheimo and Laitinen (2007: 6), ask the following question, 'what is the most important thing that you, me, and everyone like us, share and that distinguishes us from everything else'? They suggest that despite the differences which exist within and amongst individuals and cohorts, is there anything else more important than the fact we are all human?

Similar to the finding from Hamre and Pianta (2001: 634), Mark when recalling his service user experiences, described the ''relational negativity'' and clear disparity that existed between professionals and client; both sides preferred distance rather than closeness, were nonconformist, mechanistic and lacking in positive interaction. Thus, as evidenced in this study, caring practitioners can positively impact on the student, they can achieve greater outcomes, both academically and intrinsically. Due to this, I find it difficult to comprehend why so many professionals, with the exception of the few, enter these complex interactions unprepared to meet the individual half way. Moreover, through this lack of understanding, I feel they take the moral and hierarchal high ground, they insist on devaluing their client by implementing an 'us vs them mentality' (Williams, 2006: 23). With this in mind, and taking into account the insights recalled during this thesis, it is understandable why so many ex-offenders opt for caution and safety, only those foolhardy would commit willingly into this

uncaring relationship stance. However, every now and again, practitioners such as myself have been brave enough to rebel and fight against the system.

As emphasised, stepping into the shoes of another, regardless of their past, is extremely problematic; very often, you can find yourself at odds with the twists and turns of their lives. Tierney et al. (2017: 2) describe empathy as 'experiencing vicariously another's positive or negative feelings'. She also perceives it as being a necessary condition in the development of relational compassion; the two remain entangled. In the cases of Mark and Craig, they remarked on the absence of care and compassion during previous ETE service user engagement. As highlighted throughout, as a result of other structural and practitioner demands, the wellbeing of the client is less of a priority. A complex phenomenon, many definitions of compassion exist. One example is provided by Dewar (2011: 23) in her address at the 2010 Royal College of Nursing (RCN) International Conference:

> …the way in which we relate to human beings. It can be nurtured and supported. It involves noticing another person's vulnerability, experiencing an emotional reaction to this and acting in some way with them, in a way that is meaningful for people. It is defined by the people who give and receive it, and therefore interpersonal processes that capture what it means to people are an important element of its promotion.

My findings, support the research and theory of Tierney et al. (2017), Rogers (1961) and Buber (1958 [2000]). They maintain that by empathically engaging in dialogue with a client, by being attentive and alert to their general needs, whilst also displaying kindness; all of this helps to foster the flow of professional compassion described by my volunteers. Kirbya, Dayb and Sagar (2019: 27) describe the flow of compassion between persons as involving a 'calming, soothing, and connecting' sensation; this reciprocal process helps to foster feelings of wellbeing and reassurance. Through the gentleness and respectfulness of my approach, there emerged 'a heightened sense of shared and interconnected personal identities, in which the perspective taker comes to incorporate the self within the boundaries of the other' (Maner et al. 2002: 1609). Moreover, Goldstein, Vezich, Shapiro (2014: 942) believe that:

> The extant literature has demonstrated clearly that walking in the shoes of a target individual tends to foster not only increased liking for the target but

also a greater sense of self-other overlap (e.g. similarity, shared identity, relationship closeness) with the target in the perspective taker's mind.

In contrast to a practitioner who directs learning from the perimeters, my autoethnographic stance ensured that I was able to adjust and amend my practice. For example, when Mark and Craig required time away from the process, I was able to draw on my own experiences of solitude, which were then used to inform my subsequent actions and response. Rather than perceiving these absences negatively, I was aware that retracting during the cycles of transformation and change is, in fact, one way of coping and controlling external demand and pressure. When Buber (1947 [2014]) theorised about isolation, he did so with the belief that for some, we find strength in blank solitude; it demands we question the logic and reasons for our existence.

> In the ice of solitude, man becomes most inexorably a question to himself, and just because the question pitilessly summons and draws into play his most secret life he becomes an experience to himself (Buber, 1947 [2014]: 126).

When becoming emotionally connected to the men, I became accepted, valued and integral to their lives. Furthermore, the principles and morals I embrace and implement are nonhegemonic, they are guided by an intuitive knowing and empathetic identification towards my volunteers. Instinctually, I found myself slipping into their shoes, envisaging from their perspective the potential impact of the words I imparted and the actions I took. Thus, by observing their gestures and other symbolic references, 'my intentional gaze is directed right through my perceptions of his bodily movements to his lived experiences lying behind them and signified by them' (Schutz, 1967: 101). In academia, this type of scholarly inquiry is 'largely restricted to the psychology of the perspective taker. In contrast, little is known about the resulting attitudes and behaviours of the targets of perspective taking' (Goldstein, Vezich, Shapiro, 2014: 942). It is important to note that over time, the egotistic and defensive nature of some volunteers was reformed, they began to empathise with others, there was fostered a genuine concern for the welfare of their fellow peers. This is supported by Dewar (201), who believes that in times of personal trauma, compassion can unite and build meaningful human connections.

Underpinning the relationships formed was the notion of care. Perceived as clouding ethical boundaries in formal settings, I can only describe this as being an emotional attachment to the people I work with. Through a genuine understanding of the plight they have faced, I used this natural resource to inform and inspire my practice. The concern I had for each client was genuine, I felt an overwhelming responsibility to impart warmth and empathy. Although some clients felt the need to resist this affection, it was never overburdening or excessive. This aspect of relational interaction, underlying and embedded through the heart of what we collectively aspired to, was also 'unconditional' and uncompromising (Rogers, 1961). By displaying kindness and acceptance, the men, in turn, opened up, albeit to different extents; there was a willingness to reveal themselves, they became emotionally engaged. Through the process of 'unconditional positive regard', I related to the men I worked with through acceptance, and a 'continuing desire to understand' (Rogers, 1961: 34).

As highlighted, these connections, complex and at times ambiguous, were developed through a mutually shared understanding. When invited into their world, I knew that I had no right to the emotive significance of past epiphanies and woes; you must and should feel honoured to be entrusted with such rich and vibrant lived experiences. To enhance the authenticity of findings, removing the barriers of time restraints, granted me the opportunity to address the raft of personal sorrows; you will learn these are never-ending when working with service users. On many occasions, I was aware of the countless and unwitting errors of judgement I made. Unsure as to whether my clients had even detected these judgemental errors, I would, as a matter of practice, engage in communication with that individual. Talking through what was on my mind with Mark and Craig ensured I remained firmly grounded in the interests of the volunteer; their health and happiness were always my priority. They could see the fallibility in my pedagogy, I displayed no pretence of knowingness, my practice was often shaped and strengthened by its inherent weaknesses. I became somebody whom they could envisage external to the role I originally had whilst employed at CRP. I was no different to them, no better than them, just an average guy who held honourable intentions. I suppose, on reflection, I became liberated from the stereotypes which act as divisive between professional and client, I challenged their lifelong prejudices.

As suggested by Lietaer (2016), being aware of the many factors which make us less than perfect, demonstrates openness, it also helps to unravel and relate to numerous other aspects of identity which often go unnoticed and unseen. Over time, the men were able to identify and recognise the reasons for my work, and they understood the value I placed on learning. By engaging in deep and meaningful reflective cycles during the first two years of this research, I was able to acquire a complex understanding of my pedagogy. I was also able to associate and apply this learning when catering to the evolving needs of the men; no experience is ever wasted, it merely remains dormant, but never lost.

8.9 The simplicity of time and unconditional support: their ability to return back to the group unjudged and without stigma or mistreatment

There were many variables I was unable to influence or control throughout this research. However, due to pivotal moments and events in my own life, prior to commencing, I appreciated and recognised, from the beginning, the value of allowing unrestricted and extended time. As written about in chapter two, as a young boy, due to the chaotic and dysfunctionality which adversely affected my childhood, I found solace by taking myself away from these troublesome home and community circumstances. This granted me some reprieve from these damaging and unavoidable happenings, time became my ally. Thus, by walking amongst the trees, and listening to the gentle breeze, I was able to emotionally and psychologically detach from the real reasons for me being there; I reaped the therapeutic benefits which accompanied this coping strategy. Spanning over three decades, there were countless other occasions, some of which are recalled in chapter two, which exemplify why I appreciate and regard the concept of time as being much more than the numerical value and usefulness with which to plan everyday existence.

To expand on the previous paragraph, in chapter two, I have spoken passionately regarding the impact of my primary school teacher, Mrs Clemmons. Aware of my apprehension and trepidation towards learning, I was provided the necessary time to contribute; the gentle encouragement and care imparted ensured that my stuttering voice was heard and equally valued. Many years later, when returning to education following my release from prison, Howard the psychology teacher, for reasons I am still unsure, invested the necessary

extended time to help support my introduction into adult education; this provided me with the confidence to cope with the demanding learning schedule. When presenting himself, he related to me to such an extent, that I believe he was able to sense my concealed insecurity and fragility; something resonated in him which gave him the awareness of this. In both of these examples, their willingness to provide me with extended quality time, remains etched in my memory for all the right reasons. I would describe these type of teachers and individuals as having the intuitive ability to spot vulnerability, and they can make the difference in the life of the other. Thus, drawing on my experiences, assigning extended time to the significant other is one of the greatest attributes a teacher can have. Ospina et al. (2004: 63) in their research titled 'From Consent to Mutual Inquiry', spoke of the importance of time throughout research inquiry. In particular, they highlighted the necessity of 'taking the time to work through relationships' with participants.

As a whole, the group responded well when we slowed down the entire research process. Therefore, the pace of engagement, followed by reflection, complemented and helped untangle the knots of mistrust, many of which can never be entirely resolved. Created was a learning culture that ever so gently progressed, which was all-embracing of offender needs and wants. My data reinforce the writings of Ellis and Rawicki (2006) who acknowledge that relationships need longevity, their success or failure is often dependent on the time allocated. This also helps raise awareness of how we interpret and make sense of the surrounding world; the aim was to enhance the human condition of my client (Rogers, 1961).

As highlighted, new members were given unrestricted time to settle into these unfamiliar surroundings. Moreover, as documented by Mark, Craig and the other group members, by providing them with the necessary time and support to integrate, this was viewed by the men as important in helping them to feel included and accepted; I resisted and refrained from prejudging the volunteers' rationale for attending. Regrettably, had my former co-workers shown greater forbearance, they would have realised the importance of allowing clients enough time to feel comfortable in their new surroundings. As demonstrated with Chris, Terry and Benny, being attentive to the positives they contributed, irrespective of the weeks and months of waiting, was more meaningful to them, than applying undue and unnecessary pressures.

When void of time restraints, and with a little encouragement, there began an uncomplicated exchange of dialogue, thus gratifying the simplistic needs of the men and women who have by some of my former colleagues been depicted as feral, unnatural and deviant in nature. When we communicated moments of significance, I encouraged them to verbally relive the magnitude of their adversity and suffering. Cassel (1999: 531) describes suffering as being 'an affliction of the person, not the body…a specific state of distress that occurs when the intactness or integrity of the person is threatened or disrupted'. Despite the limited inclusion and importance of compassion in mainstream academic ETE literatures, it should, as documented by Tierney et al. (2017) hold equality with medical skills and knowledge. As highlighted by Mark and Craig, suffering is also the person's sense of vulnerability and fear, a harboured anxiety with regards to what their future holds; something all too common in the life of a service user.

Authenticity of the narrative was never compromised, the positives as well as the negatives were discussed during this inquiry. Developed was a shared responsibility to confront issues and unexpected circumstances which embarrass, frighten and deflate; some may even prove indefinable, intangible and difficult to capture; themes rarely jump onto the page (Niemeijer and Visse, 2016). Over time, created were the conditions for evolving and unfolding vibrant dialogue, the strength of congruent interactions, which engaged me into the world of the other, supported a more intuitive knowing; hence, as researchers, we must never 'look behind the door. The way experiences are told are in a sort of remote way, sometimes even in third person' (Niemeijer and Visse, 2016: 173). Through the perseverance I attributed, detailed accounts, deriving from a genuine and authentic exchange, enabled the organic development of in-depth bonds; this did, however, vary on an individual basis. In order to achieve this, unrestricted time was allocated to initially integrate and then maintain connections with clients. Due to this, I was able to develop and spend time forming the types of meaningful connections, which have been my greatest asset in my everyday working practice.

Throughout this lengthy process, it was paramount to respect that 'each meaning is dynamic, subject to reinterpretation and modification as it is filtered through the lens of time, reflection

and subsequent experience' (Rowles, 2008: 130). By encouraging them to express, as opposed to simply describing events and circumstances, insightful data was collated; the presence of 'previously silenced voices', and the 'overwhelming intensity of emotions spoken', evoked and unearthed heartfelt dialogue (Mizzi, 2010: 11). Although this process did at various times become immensely challenging, I deemed the therapeutic advantages of sharing such sacred encounters and narrative to be paramount; it brings persons 'who lack the power to make their voices heard through traditional methods of academic discourse' to the forefront of research inquiry (Finlay et al. 2010: 855). Without a doubt, when attaining knowledge from complex sources, permitting unrestricted time is essential. Furthermore, how I perceived them altered during the periods we spent together, I was fortunate enough to witness their growth, I became a key influence in the process. When setbacks did temporarily halt client progress, I did not over elaborate on these mishaps, and this seemed to quell the fears and concerns of the men. Without exception, my living values ensured that I acted with the sole wellbeing of the person in mind; actions were never rushed, collaboration and consensus were essential.

Every so often, when I had no answers to unexpected dilemmas, when I questioned my own contributions and self-worth, or simply needed to step back from such pressurised engagement, the essence of time was absolutely imperative. When addressing the countless personal and educational issues which arose, instant solutions or wise words were sometimes not possible. Aware of my moral and ethical responsibility, the advice I gave was never conducted in haste. When able to step back and reflect, things always seemed to work themselves out; this is not to indicate they were necessarily resolved. At other times, more established members of the cohort turned to me for answers that only they knew. My role was neither to direct nor instruct, by providing guidance, they began to formulate their own conclusions; my evidence demonstrates the importance of taking responsibility for the decisions one makes in life. In this type of research, it was crucial to 'provide a climate which contains as much of safety, of warmth, of empathic understanding, as I can genuinely find in myself to give' (Rogers, 1961: 167).

At every step, changing the flow and direction of proceedings ensured that, to the best of my ability, I was supporting and 'encouraging others (students) to adopt the role that one might

find most profitable for that particular encounter' (Gershon, 2009: 404). As highlighted, when unburdened from traditional pressures, the judgments and decisions, informing and defining my practice, were re-evaluated and redefined over many years. This process is a lifelong commitment for the self-reflective practitioner, understanding how and why we work with others is crucial. Once my clients were engaged in their chosen pathways, the relationships formed continued for many months beyond this initial progression. Thus, as demonstrated, they can, given the appropriate guidance, find contentment in something of personal relevance. When the appropriate duration of time was given, relationships transcended to a much deeper level; this gave men such as Mark and Craig a much greater chance of reaching and maximising their personal and social potentiality. It was fundamental that I accepted the other person as he is, I entered into his life with the intention of discovering him in his wholeness. Rogers (1961: 21), expanding on this, considered that 'acceptance' of the other 'does not come easy'; in contemporary society, it is an 'increasingly common pattern in our culture for each one of us to believe, every other person must feel and think and believe the same as I do?'.

Something else happened, which was only possible when the time was neither rushed nor restricted. Through this process, the knowledge and wisdom attained was shared and used for the learning of others. Thus, the more established we became as a learning community, the greater the influence Mark, Craig and Terry were to have on newer members of the group. For the first time in their lives, they had a voice, a platform to inspire and empower. During group meetings, they stood tall, and proudly shared the message of hope. Recalling their own journeys, they stressed the importance of keeping focus and vision; no man should be afraid of the unknown. More significantly, it helped the men to challenge their internalised fears of change. I witnessed the growth of their uniqueness, individuality and potential. The men, by finding the strength and insight to scrutinise decades of self-doubt, became more courageous and willing to engage in self-introspection and analyses. Over time, this became less daunting for my volunteers. In essence, and for those who participated in this research, 'our world undergoes a change, and we become changed as people along with it' (Kakkori, 2009: 25). When stifled by impinging academic criteria, Freire (1996) would urge the masses to brave the challenges we face, to strive for social justice, bringing equality; contesting the broader social and political structures, which oppress and alienate.

Throughout the course of many months, men who had started this venture as strangers began to enter into friendships with each other. Without undue pressure or expectations, we quickly became embroiled in the subjective, as opposed to the objective paradigms of learning. Berger and Luckman (1971: 85) speak about the bonds which arise through 'intersubjective sedimentation' and the 'stock of knowledge'. They state that due to the similar biographies, which connect myself to the men, something mutual, yet deeply personal was evoked. For those involved, there is a rush of euphoria, an overwhelming acknowledgement that in this moment, we have reached a pivotal happening, inspiring and relevant; the experience is there to be savoured. Due to this, 'we become knowers and are able to contribute to the constructing of knowledge due to the relationships we have with each other' (Thayer-Bacon, 2003: 2).

As documented in the in-depth narratives, when suffering periods of relapse, when feeling anxious or temporarily overcome with depression and numerous other debilitating symptomologies, the men were able to return to the group, unjudged and welcomed with open arms. As highlighted, at times, they seemed to take two steps forward and one step back, unexpected setbacks would routinely require that other non-learning aspects were prioritised; everything else was secondary to the wellbeing of the men. At other times, without warning, they accelerated and flourished way beyond my expectations. There really does not exist any definitive patterns or trends in client growth. Although patience and perseverance is undoubtedly required, expecting the unexpected is usually a sensible approach. Every attempt was made to relate to the worldviews of the men being researched; the genuine empathy reciprocated allowed me to enter, delicately and respectfully, into their past and present lives. Once accepted, I became more relational influential to their future wellbeing.

Irrespective of the sudden mishaps which are commonplace in the lives of those who live unconventionally, there was a fundamental aspect of learning and progression that was never compromised when working with Mark and Craig. The volunteers in this inquiry knew that, despite the reasons for their absences, they could return to my care and guidance, they had

my unconditional support. As discussed at length in both in-depth narratives, situations which may seem trivial to more rounded identities can profoundly impact on the people who live by way of a unique street code; how they perceive and interpret events can often be taken out of reasonable and rational context (Anderson, 2001). As detailed in chapter two, informed by my own past, I understand the importance of solace and confinement. On the passing of these phases of social withdrawal, on their return, interactions were never tense or laboured; we embraced being reunited with our fellow peer.

Once reengaged, there would, of course be an appropriate time to sit down and discuss any additional support they may require. At no time did I feel the need to force this communication. There may only ever be one opportunity for conversation, and waiting for that 'moment' or 'movement' is of primary importance; this research taught me the essence of time and patience (Rogers, 1961). The urge to sit them down, and unnecessarily extract highly personalised and sensitive information, was never in my thoughts. This is, in fact, a tactic adopted, albeit unsuccessfully, in mainstream offender services. Embracing them back into a supportive educational environment, regardless of what was yet to be disclosed, I would reassure them of the acceptance, forgiveness and understanding ethos of myself and the group. It was always my intention to develop a culture which worked around the disjointed existences of Craig and Mark, hence never forgetting the importance of allowing the necessary time required to account for unexplained and unexpected adversity; my door was never closed, my care was never compromised. Tillmann-Healy (2003), in her writings, speaks of the advantages of conducting research in which 'friendship as method' is part of the process. She goes on describe how this helps to ease the loneliness which can affect the subjects during extended research processes and participation. Furthermore, although traditional forms of data gathering may be employed, the primary focus throughout the research process is to 'build and sustain friendship: conversation, everyday involvement, compassion, giving, and vulnerability' (Tillmann-Healy, 2003: 734).

As stated at various writing stages of this thesis, in previous teaching positions, my unorthodox teaching style had blurred the boundaries, and I practiced by way of care and friendship towards the students and clients. My experiences are similar to those of Ellis (1997: 10), who, through her own research, contends that 'we became friends with those we studied

because we couldn't help ourselves'. Other research, by Beresford, Croft and Adshead (2008: 1393), which investigated what service users required from specialist palliative care social work staff, concluded that above all else, 'friendship was seen as an important element of the relationship'. Despite this, for years, I deemed it necessary to conceal these working practices from my former colleagues, I was unsure of what their reaction would be. When I initially began working with the volunteers at CRP, as is the case in most new roles, relationships start conventionally and pragmatically. However, when establishing Hope Education and Support Services, and when breaking free from the bureaucratic and the traditional stranglehold of mainstream academia, the nature and quality of relationships were instantly enriched. Presented with copious amounts of time, and with greater freedom and liberation to work with my clients, this provided the scope to nurture the types of organic connections evidenced in both in-depth narratives.

Although the quality and strength of these relationships did vary between volunteers, the men themselves embraced the opportunity to form authentic and genuine interactions. Socialised in similar adverse surroundings and from the same frayed social fabric as my research volunteers, Tillman-Healy (2015: 2) believes that this was crucial in the forming of positive and rewarding friendships. Furthermore, through this, we became 'friends who bonded and stayed together primarily through common interests, a sense of alliance, and emotional affiliation'. On reflection, this was, I believe, one of the fundamental reasons why the people involved in this research remained so loyal to the project. Or maybe, as already stated by Schutz (1967: 153), the compassionate relationships which evolved and developed between myself and the men nurtured an aura of contentedness; we learned the importance of listening to each other, we became subjectively embroiled, and we were 'growing old together'. By allowing myself to enter into the world of the other, and vice versa, fostered were the types of interactions which allowed the entirety of this process to proceed with a sense of humanity.

When analysing the in-depth narrative of Craig, on numerous occasions, he made a point of depicting the relationship we had, as being one of friendship and care. In doing so, he also highlighted other key facets, which he perceived as being fundamental in the meaningful connection which grew and transpired. When describing how we worked together, he states

on Thursday 19th March, 2015 (in-depth narrative two), that ''trust is important between me and you. Respect me as a person, not just Craig who has been the ex-addict or ex-offender. It is just Craig, do you know what I mean, you are just Colin''. Over the years conducting this study, I dedicated extensive time and commitment, engaging with Craig in everyday activities, such as working side by side on the farm and going for long walks in the countryside.

Similar to the fields of the farm in which we planted and harvested a variety of stock, the relationship to emerge stemmed from organic foundations, we entered into a spiritual interchange (Lietaer, 2016); these proved to be pivotal moments in the relationship formed with this talented man. Furthermore, through the ebbs and flows of this venture, my research interests always came second to the needs and wellbeing of the men. Sergi and Hallin (2011: 198) describe how when carrying out research practices which contest traditional modes of researching the social world, emotions like 'dislike, sexual attraction, fear, as well as happiness and satisfaction and so on arise, not only affecting the research setting, but coconstructing it'. As articulated throughout, this helped to support the different stages and processes of this research, which supported a 'friendship as method' research context (Tillmann-Healy, 2003; Tillmann-Healy, 2015). Ellis (2011: 13) depicts this method of research as requiring persons who are 'willing to subject themselves to scrutiny by a friend'.

By allowing the relationship with Craig to grow and blossom as friends, I found that autoethnography complemented this way of working. For example, on Monday, 9th November, 2015, Craig communicates that ''I would like to think that you view me as a friend or someone whom you are helping''. This, I believe, highlighted the respect and genuineness which had developed between myself and Craig; it also moved me nearer to 'knowing the wholeness of the person' (Buber, 1957: 124). As a result, we were able to research through friendship, this supported 'friendship as method' (Tillmann-Healy (2003). Over time, his willingness to bear his soul and communicate to me the rich, emotive and sensitive narrative, reinforced the similarities which adjoined our individual and social backgrounds. From a research perspective, it laid the foundations for my use of autoethnography; it also provided the platform to have our voices heard and our stories told in a research context. And this is one of the key reasons why I believe Craig realised the responsibility he had to transform his attitudes and perspectives on life. By revealing so much of himself, there arose a personal

passion and desire for change. With my support, he found the resolve and determination to grasp the opportunities presented to him. He knew my loyalty and friendship were genuine, and thus I was by his side, step by step.

In this chapter, I have presented a comprehensive explanation of the research findings. Using an autoethnographic methodology, and by drawing on relevant theory and literature, I have researched the lives and learning experiences of Mark and Craig. Further, to support the findings of the two in-depth narratives, additional data from Terry, Chris, Benny and Martin were used. In the final chapter, I will conclude and summarise this thesis inquiry.

Chapter 9
Conclusion

9.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter begins by providing a brief overview of the research findings. I summarise the essential revelations, re-visiting the key factors which emerged in this study as being significant when working in an educational capacity with former offenders. I then restate the personal, social and political barriers and difficulties faced by current and former offenders.

From this, I discuss the importance of alternative learning settings, which are more inclusive and understanding of minority groups. This research has provided substantial evidence which stresses that complicated life histories and backgrounds necessitate non-conventional learning systems and methods of work. My findings assert the importance of learning and teaching which does not nullify previous life experiences. Furthermore, when teaching through client-centred methods and strategies, and recognising the uniqueness of embodiment and existence, we attain far greater success when building bridges into the lives of those most vulnerable in society.

The essence of authentic relationships:

Based on the findings from this study, the chapter conveys the value and nature of authentic educational relationships. Findings from this inquiry stress the need to continue searching for new ways of working with those who are politically and culturally disadvantaged. Moreover, from a wider social and political perspective, the general connotations, stereotypes and misinformed biases, requires that we further analyse and investigate this complex phenomenon; autoethnographic inquiry provides one possible solution and way forward. Towards the later stages of the chapter, I revisit the importance of time, tolerance and patience in the learning journey of a service client. I conclude this inquiry with a reflective summary of the thesis.

9.2 Overview of research findings

When starting this inquiry, it was always my intention to evolve a culture of education which expressed the multifaceted and disjointed lives of my clients. To achieve this, demanded the continuous revising and readjusting of the framework of learning. Throughout this process, and conducted in accordance with my own values of teaching and learning, the culture of education was developed by offenders, for offenders. When establishing the group, we decided to contest the rigid and inflexible teaching constructions of conservative and timebound teaching settings. Alternatively, we evolved paradigms of learning which transpired from natural modes of working; collectively we pledged to trust in the process. Moreover, I could never have predicted that from these humble beginnings, there would have emerged from this initial period of concern and trepidation a group that defied and resisted all conventional private sector values and modes of teaching.

My research has made attempts to demonstrate what education can achieve when we step back from the financial pressure and profits of accreditation. Without the direction of traditional structure and pedagogy, tending to the basic human necessities of the men was where this inquiry started, and this was always going to be the foundations of the research. Over the years, I had become increasingly frustrated with the inconsistencies of provisions; I felt that in some cases, service clients were more disengaged than before they had started. Although at this point, I could never have foreseen myself as a future PhD student, I knew from personal and professional experience just how incompatible conventional methods, approaches and paradigms can be when educating disadvantaged and disengaged minorities. I further appreciated that the type of investigation I was aspiring to undertake was enigmatic and ambiguous, and during the early stages of autoethnographic inquiry, it is described by Ellis (2004) as like going 'into the woods without a compass'. When engaged in research that entails self-learning, Stern (2009: 153) describes how this requires the 'courage to understand oneself', and in some cases, there is 'pain associated with much self-learning that requires courage to endure'. Furthermore:

Courage is needed by researchers, but it is not enough; there is also the need to be trusting. In the world in which complete knowledge is impossible, researchers need to trust in others and in the future (Stern, 2009: 153).

Mark highlighted that, in every instance, he was made to endure disingenuous relations between himself and former practitioners. Moreover, without a voice, he was left feeling perplexed by the nature of these arduous interactions; service professionals have, in some cases, displayed an unforgivable ignorance. In this investigation, a learning hub was created, which explored new ways of working with offenders. By drawing on existing theory and literature, from theorists such as Illich (1970 [2002]), Buber (1957) and Rogers (1961), I was able to apply their frameworks and paradigms to help explain how I conducted learning with the men. The bond which developed between myself and the volunteers has been theoretically depicted in this research as being 'movements or moments' of personal growth (Rogers, 1961), I-Thou relationships (Buber, 1967), or the meeting of two minds interlocked in a stream of connected consciousness (Schutz, 1967).

As comprehensively examined and discussed in the two in-depth narratives, how I worked with Mark and Craig resonated from a natural and embodied stream of knowledge, and as explained in chapter four, my ways of working unsettled several of my former colleagues. As further evidenced, there were times when I was uncertain of the direction my volunteers were taking. Although, at times, this did leave me feeling somewhat helpless, I always believed in the aspirations and determination of the men. My purpose was to encourage them unconditionally, helping them to accept responsibility for their future. As documented by Lave and Wenger (2006), we should have confidence in our capability to learn non-conventionally. As a cohort, we were bored with having our education managed and fashioned by nonlearning purposes and objectives. And, as illustrated in chapter eight, when educating these men through alternative strategies and ways of working, this was documented to have real outcomes and rewards.

Although other provisions do offer non-accredited training, there is usually some underpinning financially driven criteria, aims, objectives and a learning plan. Due to the mechanical structure of these training organisations, expression of the student's life

experience and history was described as being secondary to the stringent teaching criteria and accreditation requirements. From the best of my knowledge, I have never known of any other offender ETE service to have worked so organically and authentically as the one in this inquiry. As highlighted in earlier chapters, although there were constant slip-ups, setbacks and disagreements among my volunteers, this all contributed to making the investigation unique. Together we learned how to tolerate each other, and respect the many differences which existed; the men always found a way to resolve disagreements. From a teaching perspective, nurtured were many worthwhile and noteworthy life skills, all of which proved invaluable to the men. In the context of this research, learning amounted to much more than accreditation, it captivated the men, and challenged them to overcome personal biases, which they came to recognise as negatively affecting their ability to live more productively and meaningfully.

From my experiences in offender education, infrequently do practitioners associate a reduction in crime to an increase of personal happiness and client growth; there appears to be blissful ignorance of this. As highlighted, the emphasis on teaching is to meet the target driven criteria set by senior management. Furthermore, when asking the clients to adhere to, and focus on, pre-set standards of accreditation, this is not prioritising the essential needs of that person, a factor which this research has been determined to rectify. Also, as highlighted in chapters five and six, both Mark and Craig had worked for many years in a variety of manual trades. Therefore, the need for them to attend and acquire certification for general employment courses seemed to me to be questionable. When we insist on delivering meaningless accredited training, we are failing in the duty we have to tend accordingly to the essential requirements of the men.

Socialised in fragmented and hostile community contexts, my clients belong to a distinct generation, of a certain kind, and from a complex social fabric. As shown, rather than chasing basic forms of certification, the time was better spent tending to the wellbeing of the men, and it was never my aim to force service users into training routes which offered them no benefit whatsoever. From a personal perspective, and as endorsed by my research volunteers throughout this inquiry, it was imperative that this type of research expanded and reached

beyond the formats and practices of traditional learning and adult educational settings. As demonstrated in this study, education amounted to more than accreditation, it changed lives, it transformed identities, and it instilled hope and meaning in persons who previously had little aspirations, dreams and desires. Unfortunately, without the forgiveness and compassion of educational, wider social and political forces, the nature and types of personal growth described in the two in-depth and group study narratives will remain confined to this thesis inquiry.

On the evidence of the research findings, ETE offender services must, on a case by case basis, evaluate the proper action for each person. To achieve this, we require alternative learning programmes, which do not equate rehabilitation to the sweat and toil we contribute back to society through the process of labour. For Mark and Craig, they discovered how to live constructively and contentedly without acquiring or being pushed into monotonous paid employment positions. Moreover, for other research volunteers, such as Chris and Benny, although they did not possess the aptitude or the level of required skills needed to hold down a paid employment position, they eventually found meaning, purpose and immense satisfaction in voluntary work placements; this matched their aspirations and passion. As mentioned in chapter five, gaining work for ex-offenders is hugely problematic and challenging; there is a widespread social stigma when employing former offenders (Brown, Spencer and Deakin, 2007). Therefore, for a high percentage of ex-offenders, productive and creative living need not involve securing regular employment, other avenues such as rewarding voluntary work placements can be just as meaningful and fulfilling; the choice, must ultimately rest with the individual.

My findings have challenged the traditional knowledge of learning, defined by the volunteers as dehumanising and ineffective. Furthermore, reinforcing the literature of other theorists such as Wenger and Lave (1996), I have attempted to show how teaching and learning, when conducted with vision, imagination and insight, and developed in tandem with the cultural and community values of the clients, change the dynamics of this noble profession. The willingness of the cohort to help me understand the delicate details of my work, made this research unique; the men spoke of being emotionally engaged with the project. Thus, in the

struggle to reduce reoffending rates, education must be more inclusive, meaningful and rewarding for the student, the richness of individual and collective adversity should not have secondary value; we must become knowledgeable of the client's biographies and requirements; this can be a crucial learning resource. Providing the clients with the necessary time enabled me to realise their array of undiscovered skills and qualities, and they began to shine. For decades, the men's passionate desire and enthusiasm had gone undetected, they had been overlooked and depreciated when attending previous training settings.

According to Jennings et al. (2006) the majority of former offenders who stop crime do so through reasons other than education; support from the family and community, and returning to employment remain instrumental in reducing offending. In this study, to live contentedly was represented by the men as their ability to feel happy, fulfilled, joyous and proud of the personal steps they took. Moreover, they considered that, for the most part, this research had improved their emotional and psychological wellbeing. Mark and Craig remarked that this was more significant than obtaining accreditation or gaining employment. Due to this, they contributed to society as persons rehabilitated from the inside out, with a greater appetite and determination to exist as nonoffending citizens. For decades, there has been a hesitation by successive governments to promote client-centred educational change, especially change in which the voice of the offender is valued and recognised as a source of knowledge and direction (Wright, 2013; Grimwood and Berman, 2012).

9.3 How do we begin educating those responsible for re-engaging those hardest to reach, how do I evaluate this research?

Applied throughout this inquiry have been the theoretical contributions of Rogers (1961), Buber (1957), Frankl (2004 [1959]), amongst many others. Rogers (1961) himself accepted the inherent limitations of his theory. Understanding the theoretical and epistemological necessity of creating new knowledge, he spoke of the need to try and assess existing structures of knowledge against new unchartered domains of exploration. Believing his theory challenged the rigidity of scientific and behaviour sciences, he objected to methods, ways of viewing the world and epistemologies which removed 'spontaneity, freedom, responsibility and choice' from the human existence, enterprise and endeavour (Rogers,

1961: 391). He considered the current epistemological modes of knowledge creation required expansion; he predicted the unlimited possibilities of discovering new literary insight, understanding and wisdom. This thesis has provided one example of this. The educational benefits for offenders when teaching them through client-centred humanistic methods and paradigms have been evidenced. Moreover, values such as dignity and respect have also been emphasised in this research as fundamental, if harmonious relationships between teacher and student are to be developed.

According to Barbour (2004), researchers and academics who observe the world through a universal epistemological lens have difficulty recognising the value of embodiment. In general, they do not accept embodied or unbeknown knowledge (Uotinen, 2011) to be of relevance in the design, application and articulation of new knowledge. Anderson (2001: 16) takes the view that 'our bodies are a web, a delicate filament of senses coupled to the world'. When studying persons who live unconventionally, there is a need to reconceptualise and recreate how we perceive knowledge. Other less traditional ways of knowing need recognition and acceptance in mainstream academia and theory, and require a more comprehensive inclusion. As argued at length by Ellis et al. (2011), research which employs alternative methodologies presents a platform to explore the endless potential of alternative non-conventional knowledge. This thesis set out to challenge and contest the taken for granted assumptions and offender stereotypes, which have been shown to prejudice how we perceive and work with disadvantaged communities (Thomas and Hebenton, 2013).

When engaging with the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945), I find his literatures captivating. His philosophy articulates the necessity for other means and methods of practice when teaching persons who harbour the emotional and psychological scars of disadvantaged lives. To make this point, he says that 'time never completely closes over', and 'the specific past, which our body is, can be recaptured and taken up by an individual life only because that life has never transcended it, but secretly nourishes it' (Merleau-Ponty, 1945: 98). Moreover, the body, unique to each person, is perceptually presented to the world through distinguishing characteristics such as gender, race, and age. In his research, he defined the body as being composed of two layers; one is the habitual body (le corps habitual), and the

other is the actual body (le corps actual). Through the habitual body, everyday actions are conducted through unconscious movements, and they manifest from natural and instinctual origins in the habitual body. These actions are described as resulting from 'knowledge of familiarity', and are those in which we find ourselves 'doing without representing' (Tanaka, 2013: 53).

In the private and public sector adult learning services, the uniqueness and richness of the students' existence is, in the main, unimportant in how we work with these men and women. Organisations and services judge the success of programmes by the number of clients who move into some form of progression, and the pressure to work quickly and efficiently render the learning experiences of the individual secondary. From a teaching perspective, this lessens the time and quality of interaction, and relationships suffer as a consequence. Despite this, this study highlights the advantages of teaching frameworks which take into consideration the individuals past, as well as future aspirations. Moreover, as commented upon in chapter six, seven and eight, by reliving and sharing in the collective dialogue of sadness, regrets and happier times, this for my group, gave learning a purpose. Just one example of this is when we would speak about our childhoods, a time in our lives when as children, we still had an innocence, an untarnished identity, and a relatively unblemished spirit. This kind of personal revelation, and the sharing of meaningful life histories, never failed to foster a passionate and communal feeling of embodiment, togetherness and 'intersubjective sedimentation' among the men (Berger and Luckmann, 1971: 85). As a facilitator, my influence and role became imperative, when the men accepted me as their equal. From this point forward, boundaries quickly dissolved, and we travelled through the past in a unified and resolute manner. In the context of this research, individual change helped create community change, the volunteers felt compelled and inspired to contribute back to the community; they all exceeded expectation in their successful roles as volunteers.

With the cooperation of Mark, Craig, Philip and Benny, a learning culture of collective and personal significance evolved. Through a yearning to discover the meaning of life, learning for my volunteers became relevant, transformative and invigorating (Rogers, 1961; Frankl, 2004 [1959]). In the main, life-defining happenings and events could not be disregarded or glossed

over, and the supportive ambiance underpinning our community of learning ensured acceptance of the revelations which were to emerge. However, early on in the proceedings, we decided as a group that we would not embellish or glorify aspects of the past which could be considered inappropriate, offensive or of concern to others. Furthermore, as a group, we also appreciated that past wrongdoings and ways of living were, in some instances, now recognised as irrational and foolish. Moreover, as stated in the two in-depth narratives, Mark and Craig reformed their attitudes and perceptions towards crime. They were both quoted as saying that the extended educational process was fundamental in this ontological transformation; their thinking and attitudes towards crime were now far more in line with conventional rationality and reasoning.

From the initial day of meeting the clients to their eventual progression, the men described my role as paramount. Therefore, the approaches implemented in this research, and explored in chapters eight and nine, must be viewed as being of educational value. Had I been hasty in my choice of actions, prejudging how and to what extent they wanted to integrate, the bonds which eventually materialised would never have evolved in the manner they did. Giving myself to them, not as a teacher, but as a caring equal, proved overwhelmingly successful; communicating through human equality was described as being hugely powerful in their response and acceptance to embrace the nature of this inquiry. Following years of service user neglect, equality of interactions and care transformed the direction and intensity of relationships; there arose a platform to nurture 'congruent relations' (Rogers, 1961), 'pure dialogue' (Buber, 1947 [2014]), even 'we-relationships', in which 'our respective streams of consciousness are interlocked' (Schutz, 1967: 102). Shown was the capacity to evolve through learning, the men became more self-aware and knowledgeable of how their ontologies had interacted and been influenced by the external social world.

9.4 The importance of time, tolerance and patience

Craig and Mark also draw our attention to the importance of showing patience and tolerance in the learning journey of a client. When I created an ambiance, capable of touching the lives of these misunderstood and reckless personalities, I developed a greater appreciation of how their histories had impacted on their present perceptions and circumstances. From this, I had

a platform to work with them, to address the responsibilities they now had to themselves, their family and the community. As demonstrated, when learning objectives are more inclusive and relevant to the subject, their reasons for attending amount to more than the short term elation of achievement; the men described attainment of general employment qualifications as mostly unimportant in what they valued in education.

In an ideal teaching context, I assume many of my former co-workers would have responded more empathically in supporting their clients, had they been designated the necessary time to work more productively, and in the best interests of the individual. However, time is something you do not have in any significant quantity in the private and public sector of education. Based on the conclusions from this research, allowing the necessary time must be acknowledged as paramount in the structure of learning. Evidenced as imperative when working with adult offenders, self-enhancement and growth was not attainable or achievable as a short-term objective in this inquiry. As highlighted by Terry, he spent many months observing my work-related values; only when he felt a sense of trust had developed, was he prepared to work with me in a manner conducive to client growth. Although devalued in traditional settings, the importance of time has been explained in this research as being essential; and it goes some way towards addressing the government's omission that currently, 'many gaps exist in our evidence base. Some of these gaps are more critical than others' (Wright, 2013: 28). Furthermore, from this stable foundation, I was able to guide the direction and flow of interactions more effectively. Thus, with time to stop, reflect, adapt and challenge dysfunctional actions and thinking, I engaged productively with service clients.

As highlighted, also considered was the necessary time required by each member of the group when preparing them for their eventual transition into voluntary work and further learning. ETE provisions should ensure that it is the service users themselves who determine when they are ready to take the next step. By working with Mark and Craig over a considerable period, I was able to obtain voluntary work placements of their choosing. For the first time in their lives, they were free to apply their passion and aspirations in a work-based context. When contributing and making a difference, their whole persona and outlook on life was enhanced, their spirit was rekindled, and they exceeded and thrived, they now had a stake in society.

And for these men, applying their skills and creativity to their passion, gave their lives an immense satisfaction; it had 'its own seductive power' (Sennett, 2008: 54). Therefore, I have shown that by investing time, this pays huge dividends, in that those on the receiving end of such help progress to become productive members of society, rather than to return to offending behaviour and likely re-imprisonment, which would result in them continuing to be a major and long-term cost, both in financial and social terms.

When the men felt they were leading a more productive social existence and proactively contributing to the wider community, this boosted the self-esteem and confidence of these truly inspired men. Their opinion and viewpoints of what they regarded as meaningful and rewarding concerning employment were listened to, and this, as explained in chapter seven, became crucial in the long-term progression of Craig. The process of allowing unrestricted time enabled and supported client growth. It also provided the volunteer with the opportunity to step back and reflect in the comfort and capacity of the group. Although the strides made by each client could never have been predicted beforehand, the adjoining social contexts which connected their struggles have been well documented. As noted by Gendin (1968: 222):

> If the client is a troubled person, he cannot possibly fail to rouse difficulties in another person who relates closely with him. He cannot possibly have his troubles all by himself whilst interacting closely with the therapist. Necessarily, the therapist will experience his own version of the difficulties, twists, and hang-ups which the interaction must have. And only if these do occur can the interaction move beyond them and be therapeutic for the client.

As demonstrated by Mark, if teachers, practitioners, mentors, social workers and other professionals can support the person to begin aspiring towards their full potential, they become somebody in the eyes of the service user. From occupying an initial objective stance, the professional becomes embedded in the different stages of client transformation and change. Thus, when the connection is genuine, and when the dialogue reciprocated between men is authentic, the role of the practitioner progressively alters, and they steadily move closer to forming 'we-relationships' (Schutz, 1967) and 'I-Thou' relations (Buber, 1958 [2000]).

The sensations and feelings, which myself and my volunteers recalled, were instrumental in nurturing the extraordinary relationships, and over time, I developed the belief that:

> I now understand the other's momentary subjective processes, I understand the world in which he lives, and that world becomes my own. We now not only understand each other's definitions of shared situations, we define them reciprocally. We not only live in the same world, we participate in each other's being (Berger and Luckman, 1971: 150).

Through the privilege of connecting and engaging with the subjective world of my volunteers, teaching was much more than the intentional transmission of knowledge between myself and the men (Illich, 1970; Rogers, 1961). Although this was at times immensely challenging, it was also fascinating, as educators are invited into the private lives of the student. To ensure I ethically and morally respected this blessing, I always prioritised the health and well-being of my men. Also, I tried to ensure that the clients were in control at all times; they determined the steps taken, and contested their past experiences in learning (Rogers, 1961). Reinforcing Williams and Stickley (2010), displaying awareness and understanding at the appropriate time was paramount; the men embraced a way of working which empowered them to make decisions. In the course of this research, allowing them the necessary time was never compromised. And due to this, there arose a connection, a unity of persons embroiled in closeness with each other, supporting and nourishing notions of personhood. Therefore, it is worth remembering that when you give something of yourself 'only now can the conscious act of the I-It take place. This act is the first form of the primary word I-It, of the experience in its relation to I' (Buber (1958 [2000]: 35).

Far too often, the men highlighted that what mattered to them became lost in translation, pre-service objectives took priority, their needs being overlooked and neglected, and what they wanted was unimportant. As illustrated in chapter nine, and as demonstrated by Lave and Wenger (2006), dominant political hierarchies have oppressed creativity of teaching; learning in westernised cultures is prescriptive and uniform, and when you try and change this, you are likely to find yourself – as I did - a lonely figure in the system. The primary function and social agenda of traditional schooling are to educate the next generation of workers; which as evidenced in this investigation, succeeds in separating, alienating and

discarding early on, those who are unable to meet the demands of the system. When this research experimented with the boundaries, thus departing from the drudgery and monotonous practices described by Mark and Craig, learning embraced the needs of the client. Based on this, there is an urgent need for services and offender provisions to attain a better balance between the client's learning experience and the financial requirements of funding and accreditation; we then have a solid foundation to cater for less academic students. From this, we have the scope and potential to tailor and transform the learner's experience, which as concluded in this four-year investigation, began and ended by maintaining and prioritising the changing needs of the volunteers; we open ourselves up to alternative ways of working.

Learning in this investigation was also described as thought-provoking, as it stimulated a flowing and harmonious feeling of liberation and excitement. The group acknowledged they were part of something special, and there was an undeniable and indisputable intense connection which swept through the cohort. Although for Schutz (1967: 99, 106), it is absurd to believe that we can 'observe the subjective experience of another person precisely as he does', I was comforted in the fact that 'everything I know about your conscious life is really based on my own lived experiences'. By exploring with the cohort how they wanted to learn and what this learning would entail, they no longer had the same apprehension with regards to employment and voluntary work; they were more prepared to branch out into new and exciting pathways. When we consider that Mark and Craig had not worked for decades, their stories are of great personal magnitude to educators and researchers. It reinforces the powerful impact of non-conventional learning cultures, and is a testament to the fact that, it is never too old to contribute back to society (Lietaer, 2016).

9.5 The research volunteers journey of transformation and change

Transformation is a uniquely complicated process. Personal and community change requires time, and as shown in this research, the research volunteers flourished when engaged in relationships founded on care, compassion, and professional love. In this research, the term 'transformative learning' was used to describe, explore and theorise subjective and ontological growth for former offenders who participated in a non-traditional form of

teaching and learning. Formenti and West (2018: 242) maintain 'lifelong learning is too frequently ontologically sanitised as well as instrumentalised, to the neglect of the whole human subjects at its core'. According to Taylor and Cranton (2012: 3), transformative learning contains a diversity of approaches, it is a 'rational endeavour; for the same person in one context, it could be emotional and intuitive; in some contexts, individual transformation drives social transformation, and so forth'. In agreement with Formenti and West (2018: 117), ontological and psychological movements are 'rooted in the quality of our relationships with actual people'. In the context of this exploration, psychological change has been theorised as the processes of gradual movement to developing self-confidence and renewed aspirations and hope; avenues once perceived as unattainable became the goals of the men. The different stages of personal development depicted required providing the men a platform for discussion; former offenders and other minority groups are, by tradition, oppressed in westernised literature. Working with the men to foster individual autonomy, behavioural and attitudinal progress was supported by the men's right to express their beliefs, interests, and values. Nodding's (2013: 20) notes how:

> When the attitude of the one-caring bespeaks caring, the cared-for glows, grows stronger, and feels not so much that he has been given something as that something has been added to him. And this "something" may be hard to specify. Indeed, for the one-caring and the cared-for in a relationship of genuine caring, there is no felt need on either part to specify what sort of transformation has taken place.

Mezirow (1991: 42), a key influence and philosopher of transformational and educational change, believes learning is associated with our interpretations of the external world; the influences of other persons and the impact and context of previous life experiences are important transformational dimensions of adult learning. He describes a meaning perspective as 'a habitual set of expectations that constitutes an orientating frame of reference that we use in projecting our symbolic models and that serve as a (usually tacit) belief system for interpreting and evaluating the meaning of experience'. He asserts that 'meaning schemes are much more likely to be examined critically and transformed by reflection than meaning perspectives' (Mezirow, 1991: 44). He proposes two forms of critical reflection; critical reflection on assumptions and critical reflection on self-assumptions. In transformative learning, the individual is encouraged to scrutinise their perceptions, ideas, and cognitive

frames of references. As documented, Mark and Craig considered themselves to be living and residing as second class citizens, and they had internalised the words, hateful rhetoric, and language of the oppressors (Freire, 1996); their psychologies reflected the 'sociolinguistic distortions' used to depict former offenders (Merizow, 1991). As stated by Mezirow (2012:87):

> A mindful transformative learning experience requires that the learner make an informed and reflective decision to action his or her reflective insight. This decision may result in immediate action, delayed action, or reasoned reaffirmation of an existing pattern of action. Taking action on reflective insights often involves overcoming situational, emotional, and informational constraints that may require new learning experiences in order to move forward.

Due to the research volunteers' background and the methodology employed, it was theoretically impossible to envisage the extent, nature, and context of the men's development. As discussed, growth for former offenders with a history of substance abuse pertains an unstable fragility, difficult to foreknow, impossible to guarantee. Throughout my time working alongside the men, critical reflection held value and prominence to the learning undertaken by the research volunteers. From a teaching perspective, reflection and evaluation of my work held central importance, 'learning about teaching are not a part of becoming an educator, but rather that development requires moving beyond the acquisition of new knowledge and understanding' (Cranton, 1996: 76). As recalled by the men in this research, the practitioners' sociolinguistic meaning perspectives are noted as being diverse and wide-ranging; pedagogy and practice are shaped accordingly. When we hold predisposed and distorted sociolinguistic perspectives, these are viewed by Mezirow (1991: 130-131) as the mechanisms by which 'society and language arbitrarily shape and limit our perception and understanding, such as implicit ideologies; language games; cultural codes; social norms, roles, and practices'.

In concurrence with Sambrook and Stewart (2008), when engaging in critical reflection, I knew the imperativeness of providing a unique and sacred space for the men; Craig and Mark described it as essential in attaining a more holistic and deeper understanding of self. Further, I agree with Mezirow (2012: 85), who says that meaningful learning refers to 'transforming a problematic frame of reference to make it more dependable in our adult life by generating

opinions and interpretations that are more justified'. Thus, discussing and raising awareness of the instances that have burdened their ability to live contentedly was key in their progress and growth. In the course of working with the men, created was an interpersonal space 'where minds meet and new understandings can arise through collaborative interaction and enquiry' (Cummins, 1994: 45). Moreover, through critical engagement and reflection, Merizow (1991: 104) maintains this bolstered 'our effort to interpret and give meaning to an experience'. Perceived as fundamental for cognitive modification and meaning-making, emancipatory learning aims to:

> Help learners move from a simple awareness of their experiencing to an awareness of the conditions of their experiencing (how they are perceiving, thinking, judging, feeling, acting – a reflection on process) and beyond this to an awareness of the reasons why they experience as they do and to action based upon these insights (Mezirow, 1991: 197).

Taylor and Cranton (2012: 461), examining the work of Mezirow (1991), use the term 'antenarrative' to describe taken for granted ways of knowing, schemata and perspectives that go unquestioned and uncontested; these become our 'default settings for explaining all new experience, simplifying our process of moving through the world'. Connecting us with 'indigenous patterns of seasons and events', antenarratives distort and bias the unfolding story, while the teller is 'speculating on the direction in which the story is heading, antenarratives comes prior to the story being coherent, potted and practiced – in essence, before it is crystalized in to narrative' (Taylor and Cranton, 2012: 460). According to Mezirow (1991: 7), developing new ways of viewing the social world, while attributing meaning to new experiences, requires that we reflect and revalidate upon experience by moving towards 'a more inclusive, differentiated, permeable . . . . and integrated meaning perspective'. He also says that we interpret 'an old experience (or a new one) from a new set of expectations'; in doing so, we reconfigure the past with new meaning; this was evidenced in Mark and Craig's stories. (Mezirow, 1991: 11). As stated by Mezirow (1991: 146):

> Experience strengthens our personal category systems by reinforcing our expectations about how things are supposed to be and about the circumstances in which the rules for a particular language game are appropriate. What we actually experience nonetheless remains a category that is evoked by a particular stimulus, not an occurrence in the world.

Due to the openness of conversation between myself and the research volunteers, the words spoken were reflected upon in a manner that supported rational discourse; the men were 'able to become critically reflective upon presuppositions and their consequences'. Thus, through discussion, we collectively deconstructed internalised forms of reference; these meaningful debates acted as a 'legitimate test of validity' against existing worldviews (Merizow, 1991: 77-78). As a result, Craig and Mark were empowered to scrutinise and examine their deeply held assumptions. To varying extents, and with the support of their fellow peers, cognitive dimensions and schemata of selfhood and self-worth, ability and potential, were examined and debated; in some cases, they were reframed. As suggested by Mezirow (1991: 5), 'uncritically assimilated presuppositions may distort our ways of knowing'. Therefore, by engaging critically with consciously evoked content, the research volunteers' psychocultural assumptions were challenged; alternative perspectives found acceptance and assimilation with existing outlooks and worldviews. Cranton (1996: 85) says when attempting to make sense and rationalise the origins and causes of these ways of thinking and reasoning, 'critical questioning, discussion, and practice will lead to the development of insights into consequences'.

As documented, over time, the men became more aware of the interplay and influence of the many complexities outlined in chapters four, six and seven. As described in Mark and Craig's stories, the initial starting point for change began through their ability to rationalise and contextualise the years and decades of self-hate and destructive behaviours. The men accepted the mistakes they had made, and with my support, reviewed and reframed their life histories. As explained, they began to appreciate the role other external variables had played in their adverse biographical accounts. Demonstrated, narrated and theorised were unpredictable stages of growth; newfound beliefs, optimism, and a passion for contributing to society as productive members were captured. Furthermore, the feelings of scepticism and resentment towards authority figures were cognitively re-evaluated and assessed. In agreement with Taylor and Cranton (2012: 356), a 'growth supporting environment' reinforced learning in this research; the research volunteers knew that regardless of what was disclosed, the group honoured confidentiality and valued acceptance. The ambiance and patience of the 'community of practice' (Lave, 2006), supported by crucial dialogical moments

(Buber, 1947 [2014]), brought together the complex array of identities, who over an extended period, created 'a unique container in which transformation can occur' (Taylor and Cranton, 2012: 356). As noted by Dirkx (2000: 3), 'imaginative engagement' stimulated a 'deeper understanding of ourselves and our relationship with the world around us'. These individual and community processes required a space of therapeutic importance. Thus:

> The qualities of a dialogic group provide a unique container for transformative learning, in that the norms and directional force of the relationships foster critical self-reflection, brought on by member's commitment to the group (Taylor and Cranton, 2012: 357).

It was difficult to assess and narrate the extent of change wholly and absolutely. The responsibility for taking the opportunities that presented themselves rested solely with the men. As discussed, my role was to support and guide them along the way. Although each of the men's journeys was complicated in many different ways, I never lost perspective; my passion, heart, and the pledge made to the men, to honour and remain faithful, were never compromised. During periods of self-doubt, I always trusted in the process. Working alongside the men, my development was fostered by the togetherness and interconnectedness of the learning community. As depicted by Tisdell (2003: 190), solidarity and cohesion are the foundations of making-meaning and knowledge creation; this emboldens emancipatory learning; hence, 'within the individual is the communal, and within the communal is the individual'. At different stages of the process, my openness and honesty regarding my inadequacies and weaknesses are considered by Palmer (1998: 2) as crucial to the authentic work undertaken with the men; 'when I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are'. My ability to connect on a deeper level was noted as being important to their journeys, and eventual progressions. Palmer (1998: 10) speaks about making one's identity accessible in the pursuit of connectedness. He says 'only one resource is at my immediate command; my identity, my selfhood, my sense if this ''I'' who teaches without which I have no sense of the ''Thou'' who learns'. Recognising and appreciating the talent, creativity and aspirations of each research volunteer was imperative. I worked with the given talents and potential presented, and I understood that each endeavour was unique, and that 'each of us arrives here with a nature, which means both limits and potentials' (Palmer, 2000: 41). I now consider that:

The formation of authentic and transformative relationships requires self-awareness of the teacher, an awareness of students as individuals, the formation of a relationship with students on an appropriate level, an awareness of the situational context of the learning relationship, and critical reflection by the teacher on his or her individual role within the teaching relationship (Cranton, 2006, cited in Mottern, 2012: 6).

Catering to the diverse needs of the men is where this inquiry began and concluded. Palmer (1998: 11) says that good teachers 'weave the fabric that joins them with students and subjects'; thus, 'the courage to teach is the courage to keep one's heart open in those very moments when the heart is asked to hold more than it is able to'. According to Tisdell (2003: 193), 'educators need to think not only about ways of being grounded in their own authenticity and how to bring that authenticity to the learning environment, but also about what is culturally respectful'. She communicates that educators often prioritise the task ahead, and as such, 'we give little thought to what bringing our own authenticity (much less our spirituality) that attends to teaching for cultural relevance might mean'. An essential learning dimension to promoting growth was revisiting and reliving in conversation the different characters portrayed to survive in harsh, rough, and unforgiving communities. To live a more productive life entailed following one's true inner self; through discussion, time was spent understanding and unmasking the 'faces that others have taught us to wear' (Tisdell, 2003: 89). Palmer (2000: 4) speaks about the need to strive towards wholeness, to honour our authentic self, to listen to the voice that is calling, 'vocation does not mean a goal that I pursue. It means a calling that I hear'. He also says that 'our created natures makes us like organisms in an ecosystem: there are some roles and relationships in which we thrive and others in which we wither and die'. Therefore, the transition towards a more productive existence, required that the men formed an understanding of these different strands of identity and distorted self-concepts; to what extent had they repressed their true inner self? According to Palmer (2000: 9):

> What a long time it can take to become the person one has always been! How often in the process we mask ourselves in faces that are not our own. How much dissolving and shaking of ego we must endure before we discover our deep identity – the true self within every human being that is the seed of authentic vocation.

As maintained by Palmer (1993: xi), 'authentic spirituality wants to open us to truth – whatever truth may be, wherever truth may take us'. In light of this, the spiritual moments and encounters narrated and theorised did not 'dictate where we must go'. Throughout the process, we placed trust in the paths we walked. The men aspired towards leading a more meaningful and fulfilled existence. As highlighted, I found myself encountering numerous dilemmas and difficulties; helplessly, I drifted into unwanted places. Emotionally draining and psychologically testing, these experiences have been imperative in my pilgrimage. In these moments and subdued periods, the struggles and self-doubt, the questioning, and self-interrogation left me exposed and fragile. At times, I regressed to a former self, a young, vulnerable child, who was psychologically isolated and powerless to control happenings and events. By trusting in the process, and with the men's support, these turbulent and perplexing periods passed. As stated by Formenti and West (2018: 124), 'there are moments when we feel confused and unable to play, and somebody comes to our aid'; the support provided proved pivotal in my journey.

Mackeracher (2012: 346) describes transformation in adult learning as involving 'imagery, and sensations; body, mind, and spirit; messy and disorienting contradictions as well as clear and recognizing choices'. In the course of this research, I found myself being more authentic when I acted and spoke from the heart. Palmer (1998: 13) deems that identity and integrity are imperative to good teaching; they are the subtle dimensions of a 'lifelong process of self-discovery'. Accordingly, he asserts that these concepts are elusive; they can never be fully known 'by anyone, including the person who bears them'. Moreover, when we silence and neglect our inner voice, we present ourselves objectively, our presence is disingenuous, and discourse remains incongruent and I-Thou (Rogers, 1961; Buber, 1947 [2014]). In contrast, 'when we honor that voice with simple attention, it responds by speaking more gently and engaging us in a life-giving conversation of the soul' (Palmer, 1998: 32). As noted by Freire (1970), transformation is often experienced by the student and the teacher through the nature and intimacy of dialogue. In Palmer's (2000: 52) opinion, our pedagogy's facets that define and prove most impactful cannot be discovered in isolation. He contends that:

> My gift as a teacher is the ability to ''dance'' with my students, to teach and learn with them through dialogue and interaction. When my students are willing to dance with me, the result can be a thing of beauty. When they refuse to dance, when my gift is denied, things start to become messy: I get hurt and

> angry, I resent the students – whom I blame for my plight – and I start treating them defensively, in ways that make the dance even less likely to happen.

For Craig and Mark, transformative learning lay in the capacity to engage with their story. Attaining a greater appreciation, awareness and understanding of previous experiences, 'preconscious processes' (Mezirow, 1999), evoked to consciousness an immense, powerful and 'felt sense' phenomena. In the view of Taylor and Cranton (2012: 462), in communication 'the influences of presentational construal are brought into conscious awareness by feelings, intuition, dreams, and changes in physiological states, all elements that are at play in story'. Emphasising the role of social action, he regards that 'transformative is by definition concerned with social change' (Cranton, 1996: 141). Yorks and Kasl (2002: 181), critique the work of Mezirow (1991) for the lack of emphasis he places on conscious lived experiences. Reviewing his work, they surmise that 'he perceives experience to be a stimulus from the life-world that becomes important when it provokes reflection and critical reflection'. From this perspective, the power and sensation of the 'felt encounter' are watered down; in essence, it becomes categorised and formatted. It is also neglectful of fleeting spiritual moments and encounters. In the opinion of Mottern (2012), practitioners who touch and intertwine with the lives of others through appropriate education foster a sense of empowerment for both teacher and student. Tisdell (2003: 8-9) reminds us of the need to listen attentively to the voices of marginalised individuals and groups; this requires attending to what is 'culturally relevant to those community members and honouring what is sacred for them in terms of academic knowledge, narrative writing, art, poetry, symbols, and ways of interacting'. Nodding's (2013: 22) describes this interaction as being a process in which 'consciousness assumes a similar mode of being, one that attempts to grasp or to receive a reality rather than to impose it'. As echoed by Medina et al. (2013: 7), understanding the complicated interplay of the personal, political and wider social factors that disadvantaged Mark and Craig, proved to be a productive use of time. He also considers these factors should not be addressed 'in isolation and think that tackling one will offer a magic bullet'.

As stated by Girod, Rau and Schepige (2003: 578) 'a person is transformed by what they have experienced and what they have come to know out of that experience. Knowing changes the individual as well as the individual's world'. Taylor and Cranton (2012: 364) use the term

'depth psychology' to describe transformation as the complex process involving the interaction and internal dialogue between the different psychological selves. They state that 'dialogue does not solely focus on the self; it is dialogue with the self, that is, dialogue between the ego and other hidden parts of one's self, ultimately integrating those other parts into an expanded self-concept'. According to Dirkx (2000: 3), unconscious psychological dynamics seek expression in our lives; remaining mostly repressed, they manifest as troubled and disruptive psychological remains. As discussed in chapter four, created was a learning space that embraced the diverse needs of the men; Mark and Craig flourished in a setting that was 'safe, trusting and respectful' (Taylor and Cranton, 2012: 393). This environment encouraged and allowed for sensitive and emotive discussions between the men, new understanding and knowledge was discovered and nurtured. The views and values of others helped to co-create and support change; this was crucial in the progress documented. In the view of Freire (1996), the narrated stories of the men, support their liberation from the internalised images of their oppressors.

During this exploration, my role was continuously being refined and tailored to accommodate the changing needs of the research volunteers. By creating the conditions that encouraged spiritual and emotive engagement, transformation was immaterial; the exact 'moments' and 'movement' (Rogers, 1961) are speckles of fleetingness. Awareness of such pivotal encounters was captured dialogically in the weeks and months that followed. Defining spirituality is not easy. Tisdell (2003: 47) notes how spirituality and religion are not the same things. She states that spirituality is 'more about how people make meaning through experience with wholeness, a perceived higher power, or higher purpose'. In her research, spiritual development constituted moving towards authenticity; a process when one 'is operating more from a sense of self that is defined by one's own self as opposed to being defined by other people's expectations' (Tisdell, 2003: 33). In these moments, she describes how they evoke a 'warm tingle' as each person is 'affected by the collective experience of projection onto symbol, or collective meaning' (Tisdell, 2003: 14). She asserts how participatory learning fosters a forum for knowledge creation, individuals with shared histories come together as characters embroiled in a symbolic interaction; their stories fostering unity and devotedness. Denoting the distinctive nature of group learning, she

describes how these 'poignant moments were more intense because of the effect of others in the experience with me' (Tisdell, 2003: 14).

Working with the men to make sense of the unfolding and evolving narrative is described by Cranton (1996: 2) as necessary for 'emancipatory learning – becoming free from forces that have limited our opinions, forces that have been taken for granted or seen as beyond our control'. She affirms that 'learning about teaching involves understanding other people: the differences among individuals, how people get along with each other, the expectations and values of the learners and the community'. Palmer (2000: 78) believes good teachers can 'project either shadow or light onto some part of the world and onto the lives of the people who dwell there'. As highlighted in this research, the men were brought together to a learning forum; nurtured was a platform to experiment and explore the unknown. I agree with Formenti and West (2018: 244) who question traditional ways of knowing. More must be done to accept other truths; we must embrace more uncertain, evocative and ambiguous ways of knowing. They further propose that 'transformation, even in the academy, requires faith in the possibility of illuminating a truth or in developing deeper understanding, even when driven by postmodern scepticism'. Thus, 'love matters in our formation, and maybe transformation when a good enough other comes alongside; someone or something celebrating or legitimising our existence, which in turn enables us to feel seen, welcomed and curious about the world' (Formenti and West, 2018: 244). Palmer (2000: 78), considers that teachers whose 'hearts fear change' find themselves confined and imprisoned; personal development transpires when allowing oneself to meet the other in the moment, 'consciousness precedes being: consciousness, yours and mine, can form, deform, or reform our world'. He also suggests that:

> Teachers who create the conditions under which young people must spend so many hours: some shine a light that allows new growth to flourish, while others cast a shadow under which seedlings die.

By supporting the men to revisit their past, learning became an endeavour of self-discovery; the essence of time was imperative in this unpredictable process. Through storytelling, Tyler and Swartz (2012: 455) describe how personal development emerges through the interchange with personal experience; it is not 'a performance but a relational, emergent, and

nonlinear exchange that depends on both listening and poststory conversation'. Arendt (1998 [1958]: 175) affirms that 'all stories can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them'. Her writings, illustrating the fragility of the human condition in modern society, asserted that 'trust in the reality of life, on the contrary, depends almost exclusively on the intensity with which life is felt, on the impact with which it makes itself felt'. For Mark and Craig, the story pertained its 'own aliveness, beyond the self' the words conveyed and spoken were recalled from their present, repressed and unconscious selves; the decision to tell their story was down to personal choice and involved the 'negotiation between the teller and the story' (Tyley and Swartz, 2012: 459).

By engaging in story and dialogue with the research volunteers, they discovered the resolve to unpick adverse events associated to self-destructive behaviours and modes of being. Thus, behavioural and attitudinal adjustments occurred through reflective engagement with burdening emotions and memories in a learning environment that enabled and supported this process. Taylor and Cranton (2012: 358) maintain that change is possible 'not merely in the sharing of the story, but also in what happens once we share our story'. They describe learning as the process of meaning-making and one which fosters and invites 'changes in our epistemologies and the assumptions, perspectives, and frames of reference that inform and underlie the meaning we make' (Taylor and Cranton, 2012: 359). In concurrence with Dirkx (2000: 3), the intent was to 'deepen a sense of wholeness by, paradoxically, differentiating, naming, and elaborating all the different selves that make up who we are as persons'.

Mark and Craig developed a belief in their capacity to make a difference to the lives of others, whom like them had been imprisoned by the gaze of their oppressors. At the start of the research, they had little faith in their ability to contribute productively and positively to the external world. As they grew in confidence, they wanted 'to find their voices, speak their voices, have their voices heard' (Palmer, 1998: 46). Over time, negative schemata and cognitions became less stable and fixed; certain patterns of behaviour, perceptions and ontological biases suddenly revealed themselves as being barriers to living a more contented and fulfilled existence. The stories recalled, which challenged antenarrative worldviews (Mezirow, 1991), created a channel to reconnect to repressed biographical moments. For the most part, the men in the research had accepted the past's unyielding influences on the present. Due to this, Mark and Craig required a learning space that yielded resolution,

compromise and acceptance of childhood, teenage and adult events. Thus, by sharing in storytelling, the research volunteers were reconnected with these life experiences; it was at this point that they began to have faith in their capacity to take control and ownership of their lives and destinies. Palmer (1998: 46) speaks about the pedagogical essence of listening to a voice before it is spoken. He emphasises the importance of 'making space for the other, being aware of the other, paying attention to the other. It means not rushing to fill our students' silences . . . . and not trying to coerce them into saying the things that we want to hear'. Tyler and Swartz (2012: 465) further explain this process:

> In storytelling, the right context and the quality of listening creates the ''field'' that elicits the story – an energetic negotiation between the teller and story. When the system instability forces the old linear narrative to fall apart, the story can restory itself into a more complex form. A change of form may reflect a transforming of the storyteller that occurs through interpersonal interaction. By moving to this different systems level, where it is now open to interaction with other people and other stories, the story may build more complex connections and ultimately have meaning at an even greater scale.

The boundaries described by the men as being divisive and alienating when attending other service providers became blurred; the communitive space fostered imaginative, creativity, and connectedness between myself and the men. The sharing of stories 'deepen the possibility that their stories will spark other stories, prompt authentic dialogue, and contribute to meaning-making' (Tyler and Swartz, 2012: 466). Sat attentively as the men found the words to revisit, unmask and deconstruct memories and experiences helped me to 'notice the story in a way that goes beyond the content'. As Palmer (1998: 5) says, 'the most practical thing we can achieve in any kind of work is insight into what is happening inside us as we do it'. On the evidence of this research, I do agree with Cranton (1996: 11) that 'our most profound learning experiences are transformational'. He further maintains that 'the central process of transformative learning is critical reflection – not detached reflection on past experience, but reflective action and reflecting on why we are reflecting'. Over time, trust and respect developed, I listened for 'what is not expressed – for that which may not even be known to the teller' (Tyler and Swartz, 2012: 466). Providing a voice for marginalised individuals meant tending to what was personally and culturally relevant for the research subjects. As described by Tisdell (2003: 8):

> Story telling is gentle, because it stems from an authentic curiosity and care. It is a fearless, powerful listening grounded in the profound trust that both storyteller and the story have sufficient strength to engage in exploration without strain or injury (Tyler and Swartz, 2012: 466).

9.6 The social and political significance of this inquiry

For the reader who is unable to comprehend the tragic happenings in the biographical accounts depicted in this inquiry, it is fine; I guess it further demonstrates the wider social and political importance of this research. It is only due to the bravery of my research volunteers that I have been able to offer the reader a unique insight and background context into their world. A question which arises is, why would we treat fellow human beings with such disdain? Does our entitlement to human kindness cease once incarcerated, and are we to be forever banished to the outskirts of society? Kaur (2012) raises the question, how can education be more inclusive and representative when catering for diverse groups and students? Throughout the last thirteen years working as a practitioner, I have discovered that the single most important factor influencing an offender's decision to lead a non-offending life, is the feeling they have been accepted, valued and integrated into external social pathways.

Rowe (1995) urged those in positions of power to err on the side of caution when making calculated opinions of the other. When we knowingly or willingly disregard this association, when little value or emphasis is placed on understanding the human being, we remain a 'detached spectator'; judgment is made through an inadequate awareness (Ellis, 2006). When engaging with the human story, the unfolding catalogue of life events, articulated through dialogue, produces heart-breaking, tragic, powerful and inspirational accounts; only then can we begin to understand the lives of the people reduced to a state of nothingness by our society. It is suggested by McIlveen (2008: 7), that perhaps 'story is the soul of empathy– genuine understanding, a shared humanity that reaches across, touches; and in feeling with the other, we become our own self – the human intertextuality of existence'. Thus, for those who are unable to connect personally to the stories of the men researched, I ask you to imagine a time in your own lives when you have experienced low points, such as meaninglessness, depression and helplessness. By drawing on these happenings and feelings,

is there the capacity to use this as a means of connecting to the lives of those with whom we have no particular association? Could these experiences help to create other nonconventional ways of working and supporting former offenders on a wider social and political scale? Should acceptance, care and compassion be viewed as an entitlement, denied to some, and given to others? Thus:

> We can never know reality directly, I mean the reality of what goes on around us. There is one aspect of reality we do know directly and that is our inner world of thoughts and feelings. In judging the world around us, however carefully, we can only make approximations; we can never enter and know another person's inner world, but we always know directly and accurately what we think and feel and why. We know our own truth (Rowe, 1995: 24).

When educating disadvantaged communities, the system of education must invest time working with practitioners, promoting a greater awareness of how essential it is to integrate into educational settings the qualities of care, empathy and understanding. The volunteers have portrayed ETE provisions as systems that strip them of their humanness, uniqueness and self-worth. Unfortunately, private sector models of offender learning appear to be moving even further away from what their clients want and need. Just imagine, if we could create an education system, which not only liberated the learning of its students (Illich, (1970 [2002]), but also crafted and moulded development around meaningful existence, encouraging a deepening process of participation (Lave and Wenger, 2014). To add to this, it fostered the potential to learn through the power of congruent relationships (Rogers, 1961), and liberated the human condition from their state of oppression (Freire, 1996). However, in formalised business cultures of education, this learning utopia and educational vision is unrealistic and unattainable.

We have to accept that the knowledge imparted from practitioner to client is, for the most part, bound by tradition, restricted by pre-set standards and aims; woven into the fabric of society, its influence is only second to that of the family. This research is not proposing that we abandon the contemporary system of education. However, when educating and supporting current and former offenders, what do I feel needs to happen at a broader social and political level? How can they, politicians and other influential figures, begin to understand

what it is we require from them to promote positive offender change and management? What is the most productive way to work with the people who, for the many multifaceted and complicated reasons discussed, have given up on life, and now find themselves without a voice in the complexities of the more comprehensive social system?

As a starting point, we must realise there is no simple answer to this question. By continuing to research and inform through lifeless epistemologies, politicians and educators continue to disguise their unknowingness. Through objective and dehumanising methods of inquiry, data is ground in the belief that 'no one will care, keep it statistical, inhuman, no compassion' (Bosworth et al. 2005: 259). As recalled and discussed, Mark and Craig amounted to nothing more than finance and fodder, they suffered by way of the unethical and immoral practices of government sanctioned programmes. In this present-day climate, and despite the evidence supporting empathetic relationships, we are no nearer finding a balance. What we require is a society that responds with compassion and empathy, rather than the inherently aggressive response evidenced time and time again in this investigation. The findings from this inquiry stress the necessity to continue searching for new ways of working with those who are politically and culturally disadvantaged. What we currently know is not sufficient, it is inadequate.

However, before we begin contemplating the magnitude of this task, we should take heart from the findings of this research. Because, as evidenced in both in-depth narratives, under the right conditions, ex-offenders can aspire and succeed in living a more productive existence; this contradicting statistics and research, which offers little hope that the life chances of former offenders can be improved to any great extent (Gonzalez, 2012; Stacey, 2014). In my view, research would be better trying to articulate what makes engagement with crime a better life choice than striving for a legitimate non-offending existence; detailed insight into micro and macro aspects of modern existence in minority communities needs greater analysis. As noted by Joseph and Gunter (2011), British subculture theories have become disconnected from deviant youth subculture inquiries. Trends in music cultures, internet consumption, identity and cultural studies have taken the emphasis away from conventional ways of knowing. According to Joseph and Gunter (2011: 9):

> Unfortunately, the primary criminological and positivist traditions on which these current concepts are premised, has resulted in a relentless – and in our opinion – misguided search for structural characteristics that attempt to define and locate the 'gang', but in so doing fail to reflect the interplay between those complex local factors and nuances that are oftentimes the cause of interpersonal and collective youth violence.

It is not the intention of this thesis to detail the exact working partnership strategies and approaches required between the government, political elite and service provider. Nonetheless, what the data from this research does present is a basis with which to begin structural and pedagogical change between the service user and offender organisations; this must include the voice of the service user, regardless of offending status. Therefore, what I can state with relative certainty is that forward-thinking, proactive and collaborative partnership working, and extensive time, must be recognised as imperative when attempting to begin the processes of change. Furthermore, as demonstrated in chapters four, five and six, the landscape on which this must take place needs to be agreed upon by the service professional and user; change is only possible under conditions which promote equality and freedom of speech. Therefore, to bridge the gap between service practitioner and client, I maintain that the natural starting point has to be through dialogue which acknowledges the issues which currently exist; they have been documented in this study as being extremely divisive and problematic. Also, as shown in this research, it is imperative that we allow the necessary time for the many setbacks and challenges which may arise unexpectedly and halt proceedings.

By conducting this process on neutral ground, we increase the probability of stripping away the layers of inaccurate assumptions, detrimental to proactive change, and which are held by both sides. Equally imperative to this process is the need to approach negotiations with an understanding of how important it is to give and sacrifice themselves authentically and truthfully to the other. There can be no place for deceit or distrust; the process would be over before it has begun. Thus, it demands above all else, individuals who genuinely and wholeheartedly wish to achieve change for the greater good of society. I would also suggest that for this to happen, the rationale for this must entail no specific initial gain for either party.

Hence, the primary aim should only be to ascertain some preliminary balance, trust and understanding. I would hope that over time, we could move forward together in greater unity, I feel that this is the only sensible starting point.

9.7 The life-changing capacity of one practitioner: The importance of learning relationships

What this research demonstrates is the life-changing capacity that one practitioner can have. Through the perseverance of just one person, there is the ability to change the lives of many. As shown and extensively narrated, relating to service users with compassion, integrity, respect and humanity, helped to nurture the formation of stimulating connections detailed by Mark, Craig, Benny, Chris and other group members. As referred to in chapter four, this gave learning a platform to work more productively with the client. Moreover, as recollected during group Dictaphone discussions, the openness and sharing of sensitive life histories became a key learning facet of this thesis. As observed by Schutz (1967: 163), intimate client relationships can only develop in circumstances and settings which foster care, compassion and understanding. These specific places and interactions evoke a:

> Shared community of time with me when his experience is flowing side by side with mine, when I can at any moment look over and grasp his thoughts as they come into being, in other words, when we are growing older together.

As a result of what educationally transpired, for the first time in years, the volunteers found the strength to take their place in the external world, which they had previously viewed as daunting. More importantly, awakened was a new found belief and optimism, a gradual movement towards full human potentiality had begun, which supported the steady and progressive growth of the men (Rogers, 1961). In the preceding weeks and months that followed, there was an increase in the men's self-confidence and appreciation for life. Furthermore, both in-depth narratives spoke about how this had enabled them to overcome and venture beyond their prior restricted outlook on life; Mark and Craig spoke passionately about helping others in similar situations. They talked of finally having a stake in society. The boundaries, which they had so passionately referred to as being oppressive, were now seen as being less divisive and alienating. Researching through friendship supported their progression into new and exciting pathways, I bore witness as the men excelled beyond

recognition (Tillmann-Healy, 2003). This demonstrates that change is attainable for those struggling to liberate themselves from oppressive ontologies and adverse social circumstances, just don't expect too much too soon, time is of the essence. What I offered was something different, a navigation tool and a way of working that catered to the diverse needs of the men.

On reading the emotive narrative etched and embedded in this inquiry, any passionate practitioner, who genuinely endeavours to make a difference, will at key biographical moments, stop, pause, reflect and think. As highlighted through research and statistics by Stein (2006), Gonzalez (2012), Ferguson (2006) and White and Cunneen (2006), these life stories are not rare or uncommon; the generic themes highlighted are an unfortunate social reality. Moreover, the personal, social and political misfortune detailed in this study will resonate with the majority of service user men and women, who feel little reason to awake in the morning; they have become the lost generation. With regards to the practitioner, teacher and any other professional employed in offender service roles, appreciating a greater recognition of the responsibility they have to the client was described by the men as helping to instil a sense of equilibrium to the relationship. From this solid foundation, I received and accepted them as my human equal, and thus I opened myself to other useful and productive ways to engage with the service clients. As described by Bramley and Matiti (2013: 2795) 'it has been recognised that compassion and care take time and commitment from practitioners'. By creating and implementing innovative pedagogical ways of working, the potential of education to reduce the wider social and political injustices, which continue to disadvantage certain minorities, is without question, attainable; this was further elaborated on in more detail in chapters, four, six and seven.

When contesting traditional boundaries, I experienced an overwhelming sense of pride and joy, and I felt immense satisfaction watching the research volunteers defying political and social misconceptions. As noted earlier by McNiff (2012: 134) 'there is an urgent need for them (teachers) to develop new identities as scholars and independent learners'. Based on the conclusions of this research, I contend that some practitioners have forgotten why they

initially decided on this challenging vocation. Over time, and as a result of the structural barriers discussed in chapter four, they have become demoralised, worn out and dejected.

Nevertheless, when they made their career choice, they accepted a professional responsibility to honour the men and women who rely on their guidance and care. Thus, commitment and passion must work alongside the endeavour to transform client lives, or in the pursuit of refining and improving one's practice. Instead, we continue to observe generation of teachers who have in many respects been demoralised by the incessant and repetitive structural and financially motivated principles which suffocate education. In general, institutions are failing minorities on a broader social scale.

9.8 The potential for future research

This research has provided evidence to support how I worked with former offenders in an educational capacity. Throughout chapter eight, I discussed and theorised approaches to teaching and learning, which were successful in supporting Craig and Mark into tailored ETE pathways. The evidence reinforced the relational and pedagogical advantages of connecting to the men on a deeper level. However, to what extent do I feel that my gender, former offender status and ethnicity impacted on the research process and findings? As highlighted, the men who participated in the inquiry, except for one, were white working-class males. Therefore, my research findings are not inclusive of other ethnic groups. Subsequently, the voices of British Black, Chinese, Asian or White Other are absent in this thesis. Recent statistics released by the government for England and Wales, show there are higher arrest and conviction rates per thousand people for black, mixed and Asian individuals than those of British white origin (Gov.UK, 2019). Therefore, using stratified sampling, future research could include volunteers from other ethnic strata; this would more accurately represent the trends identified by official government data.

Although this inquiry was open to both male and female clients, it was only men who attended and who agreed to take part in this research; the reasons for this have not been explored. In my opinion, the lack of female participation was due to other non-academic responsibilities and factors. For example, to work around the teaching and learning timetable of the ORP,

access to training room facilities and the farm area, were primarily during the afternoons. Therefore, childcare and other domestic responsibilities could have been one potential barrier for female engagement and attendance. All the men who attended Hope Education and Support Services were single, and with the exception of Chris, were living alone. They were not restricted with regards to the days and times they attended; children and siblings were either living with the mother or living independently. Despite the absence of female narrative and participation, throughout previous employment positions, I have developed equally compassionate and caring relationships with female service users. Although not documented in this inquiry, many have successfully disengaged from substance misuse and crime; countless have also secured voluntary and paid employment positions in varied ETE pathways. Nonetheless, future research projects could be conducted to represent the voice and perspectives of female research volunteers.

As Kaur (2012) highlighted, education needs to become more inclusive and representative when catering to diverse groups and students. This includes gender and research that explores women offenders' voices. Although incarceration rates for men continue to outnumber those of women, statistics now portray women's involvement and affiliation to the types of crimes once perceived to be male-dominated. Nonetheless, in general, women are less likely to be convicted for serious crimes, have fewer previous offences, and have less prominent patterns of previous offending (Prison Reform Trust, 2017). As Blome, Shields and Verdieck (2009) noted, the personal, social, and political barriers common in male and female offenders' lives are similar throughout their lifetimes. Newburn (2006) highlights that social exclusion, high unemployment levels, adverse living conditions, and high repeat offending levels warrant further research and investigation for female offenders. Based on the evidence of this research, employing methodologies that invest the necessary time to unravel and hear female offenders' voices would inform the current literature in this area. As previously pointed out, 'two-fifths of female sentenced prisoners (39 percent) admit to hazardous drinking' (Prison Reform Trust, 2004: 2). Other research by Stacey (2014) reinforces the high rates of offending for unemployed women. Although key feminists have significantly contributed to researching gender and crime phenomena, this theoretical insight remains insufficient compared to male crime; subculture theories have, by tradition, focused on male discourse and writings.

Throughout this inquiry with Mark and Craig, much of what they said resonated. I felt my own life experiences associated with the biographical moments told in their stories, and over time, helped nurture the types of relationships narrated and theorised throughout this inquiry. By employing and implementing a similar methodological approach to research female former offenders' lives, I could foresee different complexities and challenges being encountered. For example, by asking the women to recollect events and happenings relating to male victimisation and abuse, emotions and attitudes could be evoked that hinder data authenticity; some female participants may feel that a male researcher will be unable to understand, from a gendered perspective, the magnitude and impact of specific female experiences.

As detailed, capturing women's gendered experiences as victims and perpetrators of crime will inform how best to work, educate, and rehabilitate former female offenders. There is the potential to isolate working ways that female offenders consider appropriate and practical; these may challenge and expand on the themes, narratives, and recommendations supported in this investigation. Nonetheless, my role as a male researcher could prove a barrier to the type of methodology used in this inquiry. The intimate nature of autoethnography works best when meaningful relationships are formed with research participants. Therefore, in some cases, a male researcher's involvement may prove difficult for some female participants throughout the research process.

In considering future research projects with female-only and mixed-sex sample groups, working in partnership with a female researcher could acquire greater depth and insight than that involving a sole male researcher. Moreover, in light of the fact 'around half of female prisoners have attempted suicide at some point, which is twice as high as the rate among male prisoners'; additional safeguarding procedures may be required (Osterman and Masson, 2016: 2). Therefore, future research, not sensitive to female offenders' distinct issues, could increase women's vulnerability. Thus, a broad range of safeguarding and ethical matters would need implementing in the research design. For example, spending the necessary time understanding female participants' vulnerability and background, implementing research-specific measures, and agreeing on the boundaries of dialogue when broaching intimate details; these would need to be initially agreed and revised throughout research proceedings.

However, my status as a former offender, and the influence on this investigation, was significant; it supported the forming of relationships with the men. However, during my time working as a NEET tutor, I was able to establish caring bonds with service users who were neither offenders nor substance misuse clients. Drawing on these experiences, I contend that the concepts of care, compassion and providing the necessary time required for personal exploration and transformational growth, are no less important or devalued when working with individuals belonging to other gender, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, implementing the practices, principles, strategies and methods evidenced as being successful in this investigation, further inquiries could assess their value and potential benefits in other offender settings. Furthermore, this line of exploration could also be extended to any other educational and work settings who work with complex persons.

9.9 Final thoughts

For other professionals employed in similar fields, I hope that my findings encourage you to reflect on your practice, scrutinising whether you genuinely treat every client in a humane and dignified manner. Although how we define learning in non-conventional contexts remains ambiguous, accommodating the changing and diverse requirements of the student[s] will help you foster the types of relationships needed, which takes learning beyond the current threshold. For the practitioner brave enough to contest the taken for granted educational norm, there are endless pedagogical defining and embracing 'moments' and 'movements' to be reaped and savoured (Rogers, 1961). The men in this research thrived when provided with care, compassion and empathy (Tierney et al. 2017). I found that when I empathised with their existence and departed from traditional intellectual paradigms of learning, the volunteers viewed learning as being more accessible. Moreover, when they realised that I valued them as persons, they came to understand the genuine care I had for them (Buber, 1947 [2014]; Rogers 1961; Thayer-Bacon, 2009). They also knew that as individuals, they were neither a means to fund the project, nor to bolster accreditation figures.

For those service professionals who wilt and remain a servant to the well-structured and mechanistic security provided by conventional paradigms of learning, careers begin and end

without ever really understanding the human condition of the students they serve. As noted by Haslam (2006: 262), this type of 'mechanistic dehumanisation' involves the denial of 'essentially human attributes to people toward whom the person feels psychologically distant and socially unrelated'. By remaining on the peripheral edge, they are unwittingly maintaining a position of hierarchy; such inequality of relations was denoted in this research as stagnating the client growth of complex persons. On a personal note, it is difficult to articulate the joy you receive when engaged in compassionate and caring modes of learning. Morally just values, care and empathy should define the pedagogy and practice of any service professional. Due to the similar life histories which connected the clients, we experienced a sensation of unity in the assumption that 'the others stream of consciousness has a structure analogous to mine' (Schutz, 1967: 103).

As unambiguously demonstrated in this research, at the heart of this inquiry was the depth of relationships connecting myself and the men. Moreover, discovering meaning and contentment in later life, through alternative client-centred teaching strategies, has been endorsed as realistic and possible in this research, regardless of your time of life. All the men in this inquiry demonstrated a capacity for personal growth and change. We would, in my opinion, be wiser practitioners if we could learn from theorists such as Schutz (1967) who encourages intimate sharing between persons in a specific community space. Thus, in intimate education settings, we evolve together, we learn together and to some extent we are growing old together; hence, 'caring involves stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference into the others' (Noddings, 2013: 24). Education should not be a means of separating the good from the bad, the inferior from the superior, and so forth; harmony is dependent on human forgiveness. From unknown beginnings, we discovered just how much in common we had, and when given the appropriate time to bare our souls, we embraced the solace provided by our community and peers. From this foundation, we discovered there was light at the end of the tunnel.

What can be stated with relative certainty is the boundless potential of education, when applied in a manner that embraces and caters to the genuine needs of the men and women who crave professional love and support. For example, when the men were inspired and

empowered, they spoke of the intrinsic 'moments' and 'movements' experienced, this was individually received and embraced by each client (Rogers, 1961). For those employees who aspire to take a different path, one which sets you at odds with the overall objective and pragmatic learning ethos, you can make the difference. By being more understanding, there is the potential to foster the closeness required, only then are we more inclined to practice with a 'suspension of judgment' pertaining to a greater 'apprehension the other's reality' (Nodding, 1984, cited in Niemeijer and Visse, 2016: 172). Towards the end of this inquiry, Mark and Craig felt self-assured and trusting in the decisions they made. They commented on how instrumental I had been in their success to leading a more productive and rewarding life. Transcending through various cycles of self-discovery, they became the reader, reflector, and critique of their stories and life histories. As noted in previous chapters, this inquiry began and ended through purity of dialogue and integrity of relationships, thus 'the therapist encounters his client directly, meeting him person to person. He is being himself, not denying himself' (Rogers, 1961: 185).

When I reflect over the last five years, what happened could not have been directed or manipulated. Even now, I continue to appreciate and be touched by the significance of these encounters; through a reflective gaze, they were, without exception, moments of immense personal gratification. I hold the same views as Wood (2009: 111), who through her research, wanted 'to make a real difference, to contribute to continual and growth-enhancing learning both in my life and in the lives of those I touch'. As pointed out by Husserl (1950, cited in Zahavi, 2010: 295) 'had I the same access to the consciousness of the other as I had to my own, the other would cease being another and would instead become part of myself'. The moments, molecules and happenings, described by Rogers (1961), as being fundamental in the growth of the client, although fleeting and instantaneous, changed - beyond recognition -the concept and application of teaching; this had proved more difficult, although not impossible to achieve in the formalised business learning environments of previous employment.

For the practitioner who disagrees or contests the generalised assumptions I make, they should examine the dynamics of relations they have with their client, scrutinising why they

know so little about these men and women, and perhaps ask, how might their time be applied more productively? In the years to follow, when I ponder on the difference I made to the lives of the men with whom I worked, I will always feel it an honour and a privilege to have supported them in finding contentment and meaning; I can think of nothing else which could possibly give me greater pleasure in my professional life. Finally, in my view, teachers, social workers, probation staff and the many others who are fortunate enough to work with such gifted people, have an obligation to resist the broader structural pressures which have been documented as dehumanising to our fellow human beings. I hold the belief that, despite past errors and ways of living, there is nothing more important than the fact that we are all human. Thus, irrespective of our pasts, we should be the 'holders of some basic rights or other moral (or normative) statuses' (Ikaheimo and Laitinen, 2007: 8).

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Appendix
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Title of research project: How do I support former offenders to gain meaningful work or educational qualifications?

Name of research project leader: Colin O'Connor

	Yes	No
1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above research project and have had the opportunity to ask questions		

	Yes	No
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.		

	Yes	No
3. I agree to take part in this research project.		

Name of participant

Signature

Date:

Name of researcher

Signature:

Date:

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

Outline of the research

The aim of my research is to support former offenders into meaningful work or to gain educational qualifications; and also to examine barriers which make it difficult for offenders to feel valued and unable to participate in employment and educational opportunities. The aims of the research is to improve my own practice, in order that I can better help you, and the other men that I work with.

Who is in charge of the research?

Name: Colin O'Connor

Institution: York St John University

Contact details: hopeeducationcic@gmail.com.

What will my participation in the research involve?

I am facilitating education groups for ex-offenders, drug and alcohol service users. As part of my research, I will be asking you and other participants to take part in one-to-one and group conversations. This participation is completely voluntary; there will be no disadvantage to you if you do not wish to participate. With your consent, I will tape-record these informal conversations.

Will there be any benefits in taking part?

My aim is to improve my practice in helping individuals I work with to become successfully involved in education, employment and voluntary work pathways. As part of that process I

will be listening to you, and working with you to help improve your situation. Hence my hope is that the benefit to you will be a better chance of entering into work or education that gives you satisfaction and enables you to feel you are making a useful contribution to society. Ongoing support will continue, and it is hoped that through participation, you and other participants will be able to live a more meaningful and productive life, without feeling the need to reoffend.

Will there be any risks in taking part?

All efforts will be made to reduce any emotional and psychological discomfort to yourself; and at all times I will respond to any concerns or fears that you have. No unnecessary pressure will be placed on you to participate. If any concerns are raised, these will be discussed and the appropriate action taken. Following the research, you and all other participants will have the opportunity to read what I have written, and to discuss any issues arising with me.

What happens if I decide I don't want to take part during the actual research study, or decide I don't want the information I've given to be used?

You will be allowed access to the data at any time. You can examine what has been said and written. Your participation is voluntary; you are free to leave at any time. If you do withdraw, data will be shredded/wiped/tapes destroyed. Prior to the final submission of my thesis, I will contact you to confirm the data can still be used.

How will you ensure that my contribution is anonymous?

Your name will be kept confidential when collating, transcribing and storing participant data. Personal documents, written narrative, emails, notes and session resources have been stored in a secured cabinet. Memory sticks and access to my PC will be password protected.