Stories Across Borders: How female ex-offenders make sense of their journey through crime and criminal justice in Sweden and England

by

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Declaration of originality

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Abstract

This thesis contributes to the internationalisation of criminological knowledge about gender and crime through a cross-national analysis of female ex-offenders' qualitative experiences of crime and criminal justice in two European countries; Sweden and England. Grounded in a feminist methodological framework, the study draws on 24 life-story narrative interviews with 12 repeat female offenders in Sweden and 12 in England, who, at the time of the interview, self-identified as desisters. Three major phases of the female journey through crime and criminal justice are represented in the study, namely; the female pathway into crime, the female experience of criminal justice and lastly, the female route out of crime.

Some cross-national symmetry is detected across the samples, particularly in the areas of female experiences of gendered victimisation and issues around short custodial sentences. Overall; however, the findings demonstrate that diverse macro-processes and models, especially in terms of 'inclusive' versus 'exclusive' penal cultures, effectuallly 'trickle down' and produce distinctly different female micro-experiences of crime and criminal justice in Sweden and England. Providing new qualitative evidence of the 'Nordic Exceptionalism thesis', the findings indicate that, comparatively, the Swedish model offers a macro-context, supported and reflected in allied meso-practices, which is more conducive to the formation of lasting female routes out of crime and into active participation in 'mainstream' society.

The principal qualitative mechanisms that underpin this argument, identified as distinctive to the Swedish model through the cross-national thematic analysis, include: (1) a more robust infrastructure supporting individual change, exemplified in high-quality drugs and alcohol provisions; (2) lived experiences of legitimacy and trust in criminal justice interactions, encouraging less conflictual relations between the individual and authorities; (3) the impact of normalisation ideals and practices within criminal justice processes, ultimately enabling a smoother transition out from the system, and lastly; (4) subjective experiences of more accessible and attractive routes into participation and inclusion, including structured and holistic investments in quality employment support.
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It's really important for me to not live in exclusion.
I don't want to shut myself out anymore.
I want to be a part of Swedish history.
I want a Svensson life,
I want to have children,
I want a Volvo.
Give me a dog,
A villa,
A place where I can
Wake up at the kitchen table
And look out through the window.
Where I could just sit and sip my cup of coffee.
That's all I ever wanted.

Everything,
Give me
Everything normal.
That's all.

(Jasmin', 1986-2012)
Chapter 1

The female journey through crime and criminal justice in Sweden and England

1.1 Introducing: Gender and crime in cross-national contexts
Situated at the crossroads of feminist, critical, cross-national criminology, this thesis comparatively explores female ex-offenders’ life-experiences and subjective understandings of their journey through the sphere of crime and criminal justice in Sweden and England. Female experiences of crime and criminal justice have historically been marginalised and distorted in a quintessentially male criminological world. As noted by Naffine (1996:1); criminology has been, and very much remains, to be about ‘academic men studying criminal men’. However, despite meeting great resistance, the past few decades have witnessed the emergence of challenges to ‘malestream’ criminology from feminist perspectives. Feminists working in the field have accordingly made significant contributions to the development and establishment of new perspectives and consequently, the extent to which crime and offending is gendered has now been firmly placed on the criminological agenda (Silvestri and Crowther-Dowey, 2008), and the invisibility of women in the field is gradually beginning to be rectified (Barberet, 2014; Stanko, 1994).
In a globalised world cross-national research is taking on an ever more important role within the realm of knowledge production. Being a practical method for exploring particular phenomenon in different socio-cultural settings, cross-cultural analysis allows for a greater understanding of similarity and difference, extends knowledge of alternatives and can ultimately be a highly useful tool for increasing the likelihood of reform (Bryman, 2008). It can also be a useful aid to understand broader outcomes of diverse strategies of addressing crime (Kim and Merlo, 2014). In recognition of the value of cross-national research, criminology has recently begun to move beyond its traditional parochial confines inside the nation state (Hardie-Bick et al, 2005). This spread is, however, not evenly distributed across the globe. Despite a recent increase in comparative research on penality, criminology’s traditional focus on the extreme has led to research being centred in countries with high crime rates (Barker, 2013). In consequence, much less is known about countries with lower crime rates, as well as those with milder forms of sanctioning (Pratt, 2008b).

Reflecting these broader focuses within the criminological field, research on gender and crime is largely produced in the Anglo-American world, with studies predominantly applying monocultural perspectives (Barberet, 2014). Notwithstanding the rather spectacular growth of the criminological enterprise within English-speaking nations (Hardie-Bick et al, 2005), global developments, especially when it comes to female offenders, have been given limited attention. What we know about female offenders thus remains very limited cross-nationally. Moreover, macro-level variables are commonly missing from the analysis. As pointed out by Hudson (2002), research on women too often lack explorations of penal contexts and their particular consequences for the female experience of criminal justice. This represents a major limitation within the area of research on female offenders. Barberet (2014:31) argues that macro-level analyses of gender and crime can “help to contextualise global trends in crime and criminal justice, help us understand global economic forces as causes of crime and injustice and stretch our discipline’s narrow definition of crime”. In recognition of the potential value of such research, the Division on Women and Crime at the American Society of Criminology has recently called for the importance of promoting and actively encouraging cross-national research on women and crime (Burgess-Proctor and Sharp, 2014; Kim and Merlo, 2014). This study aims to address this particular gap in knowledge.
1.1.1 Potential for homogenisation and ‘policy transfers’?

Criminal justice is reflective of wider social and cultural values and norms in a society, so learning from elsewhere is not a straight-forward endeavour. While it is clear from both research and practice that some levels of ‘policy transfer’ do occur between some nation-states (Newburn and Sparks, 2004), it is likewise clear that globalization has not led to international homogenization of penal policy and practice (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006). Cavadino and Dignan argue that (2006:438) "while we may well see an acceleration of penal convergence, in many ways, we are still a long way from global homogenization of punishment, which may never occur". This is inevitably linked to penality being rooted in, and reflective of, particular social arrangements. Direct policy transfers may therefore be unlikely.

Critique of the heavy influence of American criminology in the European context (Tham, 2001) has led to growing calls for a European criminology (Schneider, 2001; Junger-Tas, 2001). A key part of the development of such a criminological enterprise includes the promotion and realisation of comparative criminological European research projects (Schneider, 2001; Junger-Tas, 2001; Tham, 2001). Tham (2001) notes that European countries represent enough similarity and variance to offer for interesting and valuable comparisons. In turn, some suggest that this context offers especially great potential for 'policy transfer' developments (Junger-Tas, 2001). It is argued that Sweden and England represent important differences in penality (see S.1.3 below) but yet, they share enough commonalities to make for a worthwhile comparison.

1.1.2 A timely and unique look from ‘the inside’

Penal policy in the Nordic countries¹ has recently been given increasing attention in the literature. Sweden, suggested by some to occupy a special place in the European consciousness, is often internationally portrayed as a form of 'utopia' (Andersson, 2009), or a ‘success story’ (Pratt, 2008a). Andersson (2009:237) suggests that the recently renewed interest in the Swedish model in the European context is in part an "effect of a growing

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¹ Much of the international comparative literature uses various 'clusters' for comparisons and thus, Sweden is commonly collapsed into the broader category of 'Nordic countries'. In contrast, England and Wales is often referred to under the heading of 'Anglophone' countries.
shift in European politics from Neo-liberalism to a renewed interest in social organisation and a social model [...] In this European search for new social solutions [...] Sweden has again emerged as something of a utopia in European politics, at the top of welfare leagues and benchmarking”. This resonates with Reiner (2012) who argues that, in the context of the 2008 financial crash and an associated ‘fracturing’ of the neoliberal hegemony, it is an ideal time for a revival of social democratic criminological thinking in the UK context. Situated in this particular contemporary socio-economic European climate, this research is particularly timely.

However, although the Nordic countries are receiving more international attention, much less is known about these countries 'from the inside'. Things can undoubtedly "look different from the inside than the outside" (Lappi-Seppälä, 2012:106). There is a huge gap in qualitative research focussing on the lived experience of criminal justice in cross-national settings. Some argue that this has led to unhelpful re-productions of official discourses of crime and criminal justice across countries; consequently thwarting alternative micro-perspectives from within (Jefferson, 2012). As highlighted by Nelken (2010:69), comparative criminology is an area overwhelmingly dominated by quantitative methods. However, qualitative and interpretative approaches can provide a vital additional source of information to the claims made by more mainstream work in the field, with quantitative methods only having a limited ability to deal with the complexity of social processes and ‘messy realities’ (Matthews, 2014:52). Thus, to grasp the more qualitative sides of crime and effects of criminal justice, we must move beyond large-scale quantitative measures and also explore the lived experience of crime and justice. As argued by Young (2011), it is the study of culture and context, through theory and critical conceptualisations, which give numbers relevance and utility.

1.2 Research questions and methodological approaches
In view of the noted gaps in qualitative cross-cultural research on gender and crime, this study aims to make a novel contribution to the internationalisation of criminological knowledge-production in the area of female offending. Specifically, the research seeks to
extend current understandings about the links between female ex-offender biographies, gender, cultural and penal cross-national contexts, and subjective experiences of crime and criminal justice. Wishing to also make a contribution to the gradual progress towards a more balanced representation of females in criminological academic work, women’s subjective experiences will be placed at the centre of the study; a key feminist endeavour within criminology (Gelsthorpe and Morris, 1988). This study is accordingly executed via a qualitative comparative analysis of female ex-offenders’ ‘journey’ through crime and criminal justice in Sweden and England and Wales. The study is guided by the following research questions:

- What are the similarities and differences between female pathways into crime in Sweden and England?
- How does the female experience of criminal justice compare and contrast in the Swedish and English systems?
- What does the desistance process look like for female ex-offenders in Sweden and England?
- Does gender ‘matter’ in different ways in the female ex-offending biography in Sweden and England and if so, in what ways?

The study focuses exclusively on subjective experiences and understandings of crime and criminal justice from female ex-offenders’ viewpoints. When dealing with complex human behaviour, Young (2011:198) notes that “to be faithful to reality means that we must of necessity take notice of subjectivity”. From a feminist perspective, the qualitative approach is also deemed to make most justice to the complexity of female lives (Barberet, 2014), while allowing for a contextualisation of such lived experience in broader structural settings (Segrave and Carlton, 2010-2011; Holsinger, 2000). Moreover, this approach is more sensitive to people (Young, 2011) and allows for both agentic powers and structural influences to be incorporated (Vaughan, 2007).

Forming part of a wider feminist methodological framework, the interview data has been co-produced via life-story narrative interviews with female ex-offenders with repeated
offending histories and interactions with criminal justice across Sweden and England. By learning more about women’s first-hand experiences of crime and criminal justice in cross-national contexts, I hope that some lessons can be drawn with regard to how to best aid the process of preventing and reducing female offending in a global context.

1.3 Situating the comparative context: The development of Swedish and English criminal justice

“Both the origins of crime and the responses to it are shaped by the cultures from which they emerge”

(Young, 2011:129)

Drawing on Melossi’s (2001) conceptualisation of penality as intrinsically linked to culture, this research is underpinned by an understanding of crime and punishment as embedded in broader socio-economic, political and societal processes and norms. Indeed, systems of punishment represent complex and varied phenomenon, with many variables being linked to multifaceted ideas around ‘culture’ (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006). Thus, different cultures produce different ways of thinking about crime and punishments. As well as being embedded in societal structures, Cavadino and Dignan (2006) suggest penality to also be embodied in the political economy of a country. Recognising both the embeddedness and the embodiment of penality in the very fabric of a society, to give meaning to the findings of this cross-national study, the comparison must be situated in its particular context. What follows is a brief overview of the development of criminal justice in Sweden and England².

In recent criminological writing, Sweden has been described as a key example of ‘Nordic Exceptionalism’, operating low rates of imprisonment and humane penal conditions (Pratt, 2008a). Beyond imprisonment, the Nordic countries also have overall fewer offenders on supervision and fewer annual entries into probation (Lappi-Seppälä, 2012). This is contrasted to a suggested growing ‘punitiveness’ in the Anglophone setting, with an unprecedented expansion of criminal justice in recent history (Pratt et al, 2005). Evidence

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² Partly due to writing for an English criminological audience, and thus assuming some levels of existing knowledge of this particular context, as well as aiming to address some of the uneven knowledge-production in criminology (see S.1.1), slightly more attention is given to the Swedish case in this section.
suggests that this trend is particularly marked for women (Gelsthorpe, 2003; Corcoran, 2010-2011). Following a period of expansion also in Swedish penalty (Jerre, 2013), more recent trends have witnessed a reversal of this development, with a decrease in imprisonment leading to, for example, the closure of four prisons in 2013 (Sveriges Radio, 2013). Given the difference in these penalty trends, Pratt (2008a:135) suggests that the Scandinavian model should "in the contemporary era of penal excess" be given “the opportunity to act as a focal point of difference and opposition”.

1.3.1 Historical underpinnings and the function of punishment
The underpinning reasons for these ‘exceptional’ penal practices in the Nordic countries are complex and multifaceted. Core factors are suggested to be found in the socio-economic, political and cultural structures and traditions in these societies. Explanations include strong welfare investments, high levels of trust and solidarity, and 'inclusive' penal policies (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006). In turn, these have derived from a culture of equality and are supported by a universal welfare state, a consensual orientated political culture and an educationally-responsible press (Lappi-Seppälä, 2012; Pratt and Erisson, 2013). These arrangements are rooted in, and have developed alongside, particular historical processes. Relevant historical developments for example include a relatively flat class structure and more local and democratic forms of self goverance in the Nordic setting (Pratt, 2008a). This is contrasted to a history of a very well-defined class systems in the English setting, originating in feudal societal structures and a cultural emphasis on land ownership and individual success (Pratt and Ericsson, 2013).

In these different historical contexts, punishment came to fill diverse societal functions. For example, suggested to help secure social order in less cohesive societies, public punishment played a much larger role in the development of English criminal justice compared to the Swedish (Pratt and Ericsson, 2013). In Sweden, with more stable political structures and egalitarian values, there was less need to use spectacular forms of punishment to assure stability or affirm class structures. These particular Swedish settings laid the foundations for the development of the so called 'Folkhemmet’, or ‘The People’s Home’, in the 1920s, which forms a core part of Swedish history (Trägårdh and Berggren, 2009). 'Folkhemmet' thinking
was built on security, well-being and anti-elitism (Barker, 2013), and was supposed to represent more than a safety net and signal a special form of togetherness. Within this framework, the state's principal role was to actively encourage inclusiveness and collectiveness. Hence ‘sameness’ and consensus paved the way for the primacy of the collective rather than the individual, with solidarity being a key feature of the Swedish culture, including within penalty (Pratt, 2008a).

1.3.2. The role of religion and education
Religious homogeneity, specifically Lutheranism, has played a major role in the development of Swedish history and culture. Lutheranism strongly emphasises the value of education and work, which for example has had lasting impacts on prison practices. Additionally, Lutheranism builds on strong social cohesion, based on sameness and collective contribution (Barker, 2013), and promotes values of moderation, inclusiveness and restraint. In turn, this societal focus has led to high levels of conformism to norms, as well as the fostering of egalitarian family cultures (Trägårdh and Berggren, 2009). While equality is generally upheld as a positive, some argue that there is a ‘darker’ side to this. Ugelvik (2012) for example argues that the strong culture of equality found in the Nordic countries signify high pressures to conform to norms, which may have excluding functions for some parts of the population.

Nevertheless, this particular emphasis on equality, interdependence, work and education allowed for more re-integrative punishment ideals to develop. This is contrasted to the Anglophone setting, which has historically focussed more on individuality, difference and exclusion in punishment (Pratt and Ericsson, 2013). These particular historical set ups have had real consequences for the development of different functions of penalty. For example, in the Anglophone tradition, where the role of prison originated in deterrent ideals emphasising difference and individualistic ethics, prisoners were to be humiliated and have their spirit broken (Ibid.). In this way, prisoners were easily construed as representing the bottom of society. In contrast, in the Nordic setting, with strong influences of Lutheranism, the prisoner was deemed in need of help to learn to resist temptation. Education was a

3 In Lutheran thinking there is no such thing as a gender-specific soul.
fundamental part of this, as it was argued that an individual would learn to know God better by an ability to read the bible (Pratt and Ericsson, 2013). Prisoners, in this context, were just like any other sinner, and they should not be stigmatised further but rather, they should be helped to make the journey back to redemption. The legacy of these diverse historical developments in terms of the role of punishment in Sweden and England are visible still today, with punishment promoting 'inclusion' and moral improvement, or 'exclusion' and differentiation respectively (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006).

1.4 The Swedish and English prison estate in contemporary times
The different historical developments of criminal justice in Sweden and England have led to differently operated contemporary prison estates. In their comparative study of prisons in Nordic versus Anglophone settings, Pratt and Ericsson (2013) identify 5 major differences in conditions:

1) **Size** – The Nordic countries have much smaller prisons which are more locally situated, whereas Anglophone prisons are larger and more geographically dispersed.

2) **Officer/inmate relationships** – A higher ratio of staff to inmate, as well as less social distance, is found in the Nordic setting. Not unlikely to be related to this is the fact that the Swedish system have comparatively less antagonistic staff-inmate relationships (Bondeson, 2005).

3) **Quality of prison life** – Prison life is found to generally be of a higher quality in the Nordic countries. This includes for example the quality of food, amount of time spent outside of cells and allowances for conjugal visits. Inmates are also allowed to wear their own clothes for family visits, and there is access to weekend family accommodation (Pratt, 2008a).

4) **Prison officers** – Different types of occupational cultures have been identified, with a more caring role detected in the Nordic setting versus a more militaristic style in the Anglophone context. Nordic prison officers also have more educational qualifications and the role carries higher occupational status than in the Anglophone setting.
5) **Work and education** – Nordic prisoners have better access to work and education, with studying being an equal alternative to labour. Additionally, educational qualifications are overall much lower in Anglophone prisons. For example, around 71% of female prisoners in England have no qualifications whatsoever upon entry (CIVITAS, 2010), versus 19% of the Swedish female prison population have not completed mandatory education levels (Kriminalvården, 2010).

Attributable to these particular conditions, Pratt (2008a) argues that the ‘pains of imprisonment’ are generally lower in the Scandinavian context compared to other countries. This is in line with other prison research, suggesting that some prison environments may be more 'survivable' than others (Liebling, 2013). That said, some argue that this is a poorly constructed comparative measure of the subjective experience of prison, as the ‘totality' of pains inflicted will be relative to, for example, the specific material conditions individuals would be accustomed to prior to prison (Basberg-Neumann, 2012). Moreover, Pratt's work on the Swedish prison estate has also received critique for running the risk of sweeping generalisations, as well as being too reliant on official representatives' portrayal of the system (Mathiesen, 2012). Indeed, there is a significant gap in qualitative cross-national research on subjective experiences of the 'pains of imprisonment'. This study aims to address this gap.

With the key aim of restoring an individual to citizenship, the Swedish prison setting operates on an ideal of normalisation. This is contrasted to the Anglophone setting, which is suggested to be more about differentiation (Pratt and Ericsson, 2013). As part of the normalisation process in the Nordic context, there is an emphasis on that institutions should be located close to family support networks, and prisoners should be trained in ‘ordinary life’. Furthermore, the Nordic prison estate also has a firmer distinction between open and closed facilities. So for example, as part of the normalisation focus, inmates at open institutions are commonly allowed to keep, and stay active in, previous employment on the outside (Pratt, 2008a). In contrast, two-thirds of prisoners in England and Wales, out of the minority who have jobs at the time of imprisonment, completely lose their employment due to prison (CIVITAS, 2010).
1.4.1. The imprisoned female in Sweden and England

While the overall prison industry has recently undergone significant expansion, the female prison population has experienced a disproportionate level of increase. This is especially the case in Anglophone contexts. In England and Wales specifically, between 1995 and 2005 the female prison population rose by a startling 126% (male equivalent 46%) (Fawcett, 2006). Despite some minor declines in the most recent years, the current female prison population in England and Wales stands at around 3900 (out of a total of circa 85,450) (Howard League, 2015). These total figures represent some of the highest levels of imprisonment across Europe, representing 149:100,000 of national population (ICPS, 2015). At the opposite end of the spectrum we find the Nordic countries, which uphold some of the lowest rates of imprisonment in Europe (Lappi-Seppälä, 2012), totalling 57:100,000 in 2014 (ICPS, 2015). With numbers decreasing consecutively since 2004, there are around 200-300 women imprisoned in Sweden at any one time (out of a total of around 5500 prisoners) (Kriminalvården, 2014). There are thus major differences in the actual rates of female imprisonment across these two countries.

However, the ratio of female to male prisoner is not too dissimilar. In broad line with the European average of 4.9%, the Swedish female prison population stands slightly above average on 5.8%, while in England and Wales it is slightly below on 4.7% (Barberet, 2014). In England and Wales these 3900 female are incarcerated across 13 women’s prisons in England (HM Prison Service, 2014). Only one of these, however, namely Holloway in London, was purposively built for the function of incarcerating women (Silvestri and Crowther-Dowey, 2008). The average capacity of the female institutions in England is 382, with numbers ranging from 100 to 840⁴. This is in stark contrast to the Swedish setting, where the female prison population is spread across 6 prison, each with an average capacity of 50 spaces/institution, ranging from as low as 14 to a maximum of 93 (Kriminalvården, 2014). These size variations represent one of the major differences across the female prison estate in Sweden and England, which, in turn, reflects broader differences across the two systems.

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⁴ It should be noted that some of the female institutions in the English setting share capacity with young offender institutions.
To briefly situate these imprisonment rates in wider criminal justice operations, in 2013 there were circa 117,000 conviction decisions laid down by Swedish courts or prosecutors, the majority of which resulted in a fine (and 10% resulted in a prison sentence) (BRÅ, 2015a). Women accounted for 16% of this total. (Ibid.). Comparing this to the English context, in 2013 a total of 1,112,148 convictions were laid down, 25% of which were of women (MoJ, 2014). Overall the most common sentence, to both female and male offenders, was a fine (Ibid.). In terms of indictable offences specifically, around 15% of female convictions led to immediate custody, while this figure stood at around 28% for men (Ibid.).

1.5 Political structures and citizenship processes in Sweden and England

There are important political structural differences across the two countries that also relate to the organisation of punishment. For example, the consensual, proportionally representative and corporatist political culture found in the Nordic countries is suggested to be an important factor in Nordic Exceptionalism (Lappi-Seppälä, 2012). Research shows that cross-party political systems are more conducive to long-term policy formation (Ibid.). In this type of system law-making processes are very lengthy, which help protect against knee-jerk criminal law reactions (Pratt and Ericsson, 2013). In contrast, the Anglophone majoritarian system, founded primarily on opposition and competition, is more prone to short-term political thinking, and is accordingly more conducive to populist penal policy (Lappi-Seppälä, 2012). There are, moreover, important differences in the nature of the policy-formation process. Reflecting broader levels of 'expert opinion' influence, intellectuals and academics maintain a much more prominent influence on policy in the Scandinavian setting than elsewhere in Europe (Bondeson, 2005). This is contrasted to the Anglophone setting where, historically, there has been somewhat of a 'suspicion' towards intellectualism\(^5\) (Pratt and Ericsson, 2013).

\(^5\) This is possibly rooted in the more exclusionary, class-divided, nature of university attendance traditionally found in these countries.
1.5.1. Relationships between the individual, the state and welfare structures

Interconnected to these different political systems are varied relationships between the state and the individual. The strongest relationship in Swedish society is between the state and the individual, with the idea that a progressive state can emancipate the individual and remove dependencies. This, Trägårdh and Berggren (2006:309) argue, translates to a particular form of 'state individualism', with autonomy of the individual, independence and solidarity being core variables. Contrary to British and American traditions, thus, in Sweden "individual freedom is concentrated through the state rather than conceived as freedom from the State" (Barker, 2013:11). This way of thinking paves the way for very particular forms of regulation, including a willingness to subordinate individual interests for the public good.

An illustration of this type of regulation is found in the very strict drug laws upheld in Sweden, which since the 1980s has defended the idea of a ‘drug-free’ society (Trägårdh and Berggren, 2006; Estrada and Nilsson, 2012; Lappi-Seppälä, 2012). The ‘nation’s health’ is accordingly, in the name of solidarity and justice, prioritised over individual rights (Trägårdh and Berggren, 2006). It is viewed that society is a victim of drug use and, therefore, individual’s use of drugs need to be strictly regulated. In a unique move in the European context, in 1989 Sweden criminalised the consumption\(^6\) of drugs, with compulsory forms of drug testing being operated. In conjunction with this, the same year also saw the introduction of 'kontraktvård' in Sweden, which directly translates to 'contract care', and is a form of treatment order for drug and alcohol users (Lappi-Seppälä, 2012). Barker (2013:5) argues that this epitomises how the Nordic penal regimes are 'Janus-faced', that is; on the one side "relatively mild and benign; the other intrusive, disciplining and oppressive".

Collective thinking about penality is key to the Swedish model, that is, if society is viewed to be the victim of deviant behaviour, society is also to blame. This type of thinking represents one of the major differences between the two countries. In their well-known comparative study of penal cultures across 12 contemporary capitalist societies, Cavadino and Dignan

\(^6\) This refers to the particular criminalisation of the use of drugs. It is thus a chargeable offence to have drugs in blood/urine at any time. This is contrasted with the English setting, where it is a chargeable offence to possess drugs, though charge cannot be made on what is currently in a person’s internal system. Based on a strong ethos of individual rights, non-consensual drug-testing is not permitted.
(2006:448) found that 'Social democratic corporatist' countries operate "less individualistic attitudes towards the offender, who is regarded not as an isolated culpable individual who must be rejected and excluded from law-abiding society, but as a social being who should still be included in society but who needs rehabilitation and resocialisation, which is the responsibility of the community as a whole". In contrast, the 'neoliberal' grouping, which England and Wales falls into, is found to operate a much more 'exclusive' penal culture, focussing on individualism and minimum welfare (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006). This implies different roles of the state and the broader community with regard to the reintegration of an individual, including the use of welfare to aid inclusion and rehabilitation.

Research shows a clear relationship between welfare provision and penal policy and practice, with welfare cutbacks signifying penal expansionism, as well as reduced social cohesion and higher levels of inequalities (Downes and Hansen, 2005). What is more, the type of welfare system is suggested to also be of importance. Specifically, research suggests that means-tested welfare systems are more conducive to processes of social stigmatization and exclusion than universal welfare systems (Trägårdh and Berggren, 2006). The need-based welfare system thus often leads to an 'othering' process (Lappi-Seppälä, 2012), while the universal system, making less distinction between people, promotes a focus on common problems.

1.5.2 Social trust, solidarity and citizenship

Different political and welfare systems in turn have an impact on levels of trust in a society. This is important, as social trust influences a range of different aspects in society, including factors such as trustworthiness of other citizens and willingness to pay taxes (Sønderskov and Dinesen, 2014). Sweden has some of the highest levels of trust in official bodies found in the Western world, with less suspect and conflictual state-individual relationships (Trägårdh and Berggren, 2006). Evidence shows a strong link between levels of trust in a society and general pro-social behaviours, demonstrated in, for example, significantly higher levels of reporting of crime in the Nordic countries (Lappi-Seppälä, 2012). The promotion of social trust is thus suggested to result in numerous benefits for the public good. Bondeson (2005) argues that, through creating tolerance of others and
stronger interdependencies, higher levels of social trust may in fact produce a built-in cultural resistance to the so called 'new punitiveness'. In turn, these different social processes are closely linked to different conceptualisations of citizenship.

Solidarity stands at the core of the Swedish citizenship model, which implies looking after the weakest in society, including those at the receiving end of justice. Values of equality, solidarity and universalism underpin commitments to inclusion and equal citizenship, and there is a strong emphasis on bonds between citizens, as well as participatory forms of citizenship (Lister, 2009). Included in these bonds are high levels of both informal and formal controls, resulting in high levels of conformity and self-regulation. Indeed, the notion of 'laglydighet', directly translated 'obedience to the law', is a core aspect of Swedish culture, ‘imprinted’ on the Swedish psyche (Trägårdh and Berggren, 2006). This goes back to the notion that what is good for the country stands above individual interests and hence, the state maintains high interventionist powers. As noted by Tham (2001:415) "State intervention is a traditional social democratic response to social problems. At the societal level, the reformist approach is expressed through social engineering, and at the individual level through the treatment ideology". While the British have a long tradition of reluctance to intervene in the private sphere, in the Swedish context it has been seen as a duty of the state to intervene in what has traditionally been viewed as a non-democratic and hierarchal family domain (Trägårdh and Berggren, 2006). Instead, citizens are a part of the bigger family, namely 'Folkhemmet'.

1.5.3 **State intervention: A treatment-ideology**

Sweden has a distinct history of operating a ‘treatment-ideology’ in the area of offending, with the goal of the penal code being "to ensure that the sanction would promote the convicted individual's adjustment to society" (Estrada et al, 2012:678). This emphasis on treatment must also be situated in the context of high influence of expert opinions, with the psy-professions having a particular role in Swedish history. This represents what some refer to as the ‘dark side’ of 'Folkhemmet', (Andersson, 2009), i.e.; that under the veil of the 'nation's health', highly problematic, violating and intrusive practices have taken place. For example, Sweden played a significant role in the eugenics movement, and also
had periods of forced sterilizations of ‘asocials’ (Pratt and Ericsson, 2013). Furthermore, there are critical questions raised regarding human rights violations in the Swedish setting, for example in the quarantine of HIV/AIDS patients in the 1980s, as well as present day treatment of pre-trial detainees and the use of non-consensual drug sampling (Barker, 2013). Sweden, together with its Scandinavian neighbours, have received particular critique for restrictive and isolating pre-trial confinements, including from the United Nations (Barker, 2013; Scharf-Smith, 2012; Mathieson, 2012).

Falling in line with the recent return of biomedical explanations of offending behaviour, the last decade has witnessed the emergence of a suggested link between ADHD and criminal behaviour (Savolainen et al, 2010). Sweden is a leading figure of this area of research, and a high prevalence of the condition is being reported in the Swedish criminal justice system (Kriminalvården, 2013). Recent figures indicate that between 15-45% of the Swedish prison population fulfils the criteria for ADHD (Ibid.). For women specifically, a recent study suggests that circa 29% of the Swedish female prison population fulfils the diagnostic criteria for adult forms of ADHD, with an even higher percentage diagnosed, often retrospectively, with child versions (Kriminalvården, 2010). ADHD has traditionally been viewed to be a child-diagnosis and it is only more recently that the diagnosis has begun to be applied to adults. This, Kärfve (2013) argues, reflects a general trend within neuropsychiatry of how ‘child’ diagnoses are increasingly transferred to adult populations, including retrospective diagnoses. In a recent compilation study of Swedish ADHD research to date, Kriminalvården (2013) concludes that it is likely that there are high levels of under-diagnosis of ADHD in the criminal justice system, and suggests that there are fewer receiving treatment than who would potentially benefit from it. Treatments include prescriptions of amphetamine-based pharmaceuticals, such as methylphenidate (Ibid.)

1.5.4 Gender politics

Sweden is well known for its strong support of feminism and equality and rejection of discrimination (Esping-Andersen, 1990). According to the United Nation’s Human Development Report, Sweden is ranked number one out of 109 countries in the world on the gender empowerment measure (GEM) (UNDP, 2009). The GEM reveals the level of
gender (in)equality around the world, measured via the degree to which women take an active part in economic and political life, along with the amount of gender disparity in earned income (Ibid.). The UK\textsuperscript{7}, on the other hand, ranks number 15 on the GEM (UNDP, 2009) and has generally been deemed to score very badly with regard to inequalities (Gray, 2004). Thus, especially relevant to the female offender context, it is suggested that there is a different gendered context in Sweden and England. However, the idea put forward by some of a 'Nordic Nirvana' is probably overly optimistic (Lister, 2009). For example, some aspects of gender equality are suggested to lag behind in the Nordic context, including female uptake in senior management posts (Ibid.). Moreover, there is also an identified continued gendered division of labour in the domestic setting, and although Sweden has a comparatively lower level of domestic violence, as pointed out by Lister (2009), the numbers nevertheless remain relatively high. To this end, some suggest that the willingness to break down traditional gender roles in Sweden may in fact be much more limited than commonly portrayed (Trägårdh and Berggren, 2006).

The response of the law has, however, been a rather active one in the area of gendered policy in Sweden. For example, rape definitions were recently further expanded, along with a legal recognition of prostitution and hard pornography as forms of violence against women, with direct impediments to gender equality (Lappi-Seppälä, 2012). Nevertheless, feminist writers point out that gendered assumptions and concepts, rooted in the fact that the criminal justice system was built on masculinist ideals, are still very much present in Swedish criminal law (Burman, 2010). For example this is found in the area of the dichotomous notion of the female as victim and agent (Ibid.). Moreover, not all women seem to benefit equally from the so called ‘Nordic Nirvana’, with minority ethnic and immigrant women suggested to suffer from economic marginalisation (Lister, 2009). Lister (2009) goes on to argue that, in terms of lower income populations specifically, research suggests that lower income women are still less vulnerable to poverty in Sweden than in other countries.

\textsuperscript{7}The GEM is not broken down across different parts of the United Kingdom and this figure thus refers to the UK in its entirety, rather than England and Wales specifically.
1.5.5 Private interests and involvements in criminal justice

Lastly, there are also important differences between the two countries in criminal justice policy and practice linked to private interests and the role of the state. Specifically, there is very little support for private interest involvement in crime preventions and responsibilities in the Swedish setting (Bondeson, 2005). This is starkly contrasted to the English setting, where there have recently been further privatisations in the area of crime and punishment, including most recently the majority of the probation service being sold off to private contracts (Prison Watch UK, 2015). Two out of the 13 female prisons in England are currently privately operated (HM Prison Service, 2014), while there are no privately operated prisons in Sweden. Linked to private interests making an inroad into English prisons, prison officer unions have been minimised and there are reduced levels of transparency (Pratt and Ericsson, 2013). Young (2011) notes how these trends fit extremely well with contemporary English political forces, now representing one of the most neoliberal systems in Western Europe.

1.6. The role of the media

Differently operated media systems in Sweden and England and Wales are also relevant for the diverse processes of criminal justice. The Nordic countries, on the one hand, operate a rather restrained media role (Bondeson, 2005), with a less sensationalist media culture and more focus on public education responsibility (Lappi-Seppälä, 2012). This is commonly referred to as a ‘democratic corporatist’ media model (Green, 2012). English media, on the other hand, falls into the 'liberal model' (Ibid.), characterised by more tabloid and sensationalist reporting practices, with competitive market-media forces being closely entwined with the political culture.

Green (2007), in his renowned comparative study of child-on-child homicide in Norway and England, compellingly demonstrates a strong link between the role of the press, political processes, penalty and public opinion about criminal justice. Interlinked to the noted differences in political systems, the British majoritarian/oppositional model is suggested to operate in a way which incentivises the political use of sensationalistic public cases (Green,
With the effectiveness of government policy being systematically undermined through a highly competitive model, maybe it is no surprise to find lower levels of political legitimacy and social trust in Britain (Ibid.). In contrast, the Scandinavian media market is less competitive and, interlinking this with a consensus democratic system, there is also more of an emphasis on compromise and inclusiveness. This is echoed in regulatory frameworks, with media outlets being much more tightly regulated in the Nordic setting (Pratt and Ericsson, 2013). Also, reflecting generally higher influence of the 'expert' voice in society at large, expert opinion is much more commonly advised in the Swedish media setting, while the English press more often rely on public opinion (Green, 2007).

1.7 Thesis structure

Having introduced the research and situated the comparison in its national contexts in this first chapter, Chapter 2 will highlight the relevant literature on gender and crime, along with outlining the major gaps in cross-national knowledge about female offending. Particular focus will be on three phases of the female journey through crime and criminal justice: pathways into crime; experiences of criminal justice and lastly, her route out of crime. Situated in a feminist criminological framework, the literature highlights the limitations to ‘malestream’ criminological knowledge production and offers alternative perspectives on female offending experiences from a feminist criminological perspective, especially highlighting the role of gender in the female journey through crime and criminal justice. Chapter 3 sets out the methodological approaches and frameworks employed within the study, including the theoretical justifications for the chosen approach and the practical characteristics of the research. This chapter will also underscore data collection processes, data management and analysis, along with the ethical procedures and concerns within the research process.

Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 will go on to present the findings from this empirical study. The findings are presented in three stages, firstly the comparative analysis of female pathways into crime will be presented (Chapter 4), secondly findings relating to female experiences of criminal justice in Sweden and England will be outlined (Chapter 5) and thirdly, female routes out of crime in Sweden and England will be presented (Chapter 6 and 7). Reflecting
the volume of data, as well as what has emerged as salient in the narratives, two data chapters have been dedicated to the third and final stage of the female journey, i.e. the route out of crime. The first one of these (Chapter 6) focuses on structural barriers and ladders for change, and the second one (Chapter 7) gives exclusive focus to the important process of (re-)entry into employment and active participation for female ex-offenders in these two different societal contexts. Chapter 8 'weaves together the threads' and discusses the significance of the core findings in relation to relevant criminological literature. The thesis is then brought to a conclusion in Chapter 9, summarising the core arguments and commenting on wider implications of the study, both in terms of conceptual contributions and policy and practice recommendations.

1.8 A final reflective introductory note on ‘Stories Across Borders’
Before moving on to the main body of the research, I would like to make a final introductory comment. It is important to point out that, informed by voluminous and rich data, there are many different stories that could have been written for this thesis. The findings presented are, inevitably, fragmented and simplified compounds of 24 unique and complex life-stories. I have endeavoured to make as fair compromises as possible, and dedicate suitable space to the stories shared, with the wish to do justice to each woman's individual narrative. However, guided by the set research questions, decisions have had to be made to exclude and/or give limited space to certain areas of life-experience and narration. This is not to say, however, that they are any less important, albeit less salient for the particular purpose of this thesis.

Overall it should be noted that the 'offender story' is not commonly the most significant one in the women's lives. Young (2011:188) helpfully reminds us of the common criminological fallacy of applying the ‘offender’ label as a form of master status to those we observe, understood to provide a 'clue to the very essence' of the individual, and accordingly defining the person by his or her involvement in crime and criminal justice. This, Young (2011) suggests, frequently leads to a distortion and elimination of the majority of people’s lives and actions, with an uneven concentration on the negative and predatory. This is an
important point. As researchers we need to remain vigilant, as well as critical, of our role in positioning and portraying the people we represent in our research, including misconstruing the role of offending in what typically is a complex and wide-ranging life-narrative. Thus, while maintaining focus on the criminological perspective of this thesis, my aim has also been to allow as much space as possible to not distort the women's life-stories with the application of a 'master status' as offender. By doing this, I hope to highlight the complexity of *lived* experience and the importance of situating individual behaviour in the context of *totality* of life-experience.
Chapter 2

Crime, criminal justice and criminology: The female experience

2.1 A feminist criminological examination of the female experience of crime and criminal justice

This chapter will situate the study in the relevant criminological literature, giving particular attention to feminist work on female offending. Emerging from the second wave of feminism, feminists working in criminology have over the last few decades challenged andocentric biases inherent in traditional criminology (Naffine, 1996) and made significant contributions to the development and establishment of new perspectives in the field. Consequently, gender is no longer neither invisible nor ignored (Heidensohn, 2002). While emphasising the multiplicity of perspectives in feminist criminology, Gelsthorpe and Morris (1988:97) helpfully sum up the key characterising tenets of feminist criminological thought:

1) Anti-positivist viewpoints.
2) A critical standpoint to stereotypical images of women.
3) The situating of questions about women as central.
4) A support for methodologies that are sympathetic to these concerns.
Forcefully challenging ‘malestream’ criminology and the wide-ranging ignorance of the gendered nature of offending, feminist criminological work has firmly placed gender on the criminological agenda (Silvestri and Crowther-Dowey, 2008). Naffine (1996:4) summarises the primary achievements of feminist inroads into the field to include:

1) Sex biases in criminal justice have been revealed.
2) So called ‘scientific’ methods in traditional criminology have been challenged.
3) Criminological theory has been critically re-evaluated.
4) Data from women’s viewpoints have been produced.
5) New epistemologies have been developed and promoted.

Moreover, adding to these achievements, feminist criminology has forcefully revealed the extent to which gender matters in the lives of criminal women and hence, the importance of including complex systems of oppression in criminological research has been brought to the forefront. Indeed, this represents one of the principal feminist critiques of criminology, that is, the neglect of incorporating wider structural processes into the lived experience of crime. Research that integrates such wider structural analyses has consistently found that economic marginalisation, powerlessness and attempts to deal with poverty are strongly associated with women’s crime (Parker and Reckdenwald, 2008; Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2004; Heidensohn, 2002).

Chesney-Lind (2006:9), looking critically at the links between patriarchy, crime and justice at a time of backlash against feminism, argues that: “The field must now put an even greater priority on theorising patriarchy and crime, which means focusing on the ways in which the definition of the crime problem and criminal justice practices support patriarchal practices and worldviews”. Thus, in order to truly extend knowledge about female offending, research which combines the specific with the general is needed. That is; the particular experience of the female offender must be situated within wider gendered conditions in society, including that of patriarchy (Lloyd, 1995; Naffine, 1996; Holsinger, 2000). Heidensohn (1996:14) suggests that this is the reason why biographical work plays such an important role in feminist criminological research, as it has the ability to link ‘private troubles and public
issues’, or as expressed by Chesney-Lind and Pasko (2004:137); it enables a woman’s crimes to be situated ‘within the totality of her life’.

In the current era of backlash against feminism, it is more important than ever to continue to challenge what Silvestri and Crowther-Dowey (2008:2) suggest to be a ‘growing mantra in criminal justice and broader circles that 'all things are equal now’’. Indeed, while it is important to acknowledge the significance of progress in many areas of gender and crime, much ground is still to be made. This is, arguably, especially the case in international contexts. To this end, much work lays ahead in terms of both the particular; such as integrating feminist thought into the very core of the criminological body, and the general, namely; the important role of feminist struggle as a continuum across all aspects of society, including political, social, penal and economic spheres.

2.1.1 Chapter outline
Following this brief introductory reminder of the role of feminist criminology, this chapter will go on to explore, specifically from a feminist criminological standpoint, what is known about the female offender. Firstly, female pathways to crime will be highlighted, giving particular attention to the ‘feminist pathway perspective’ and the growing evidence base for the existence of gendered pathways to offending. Although feminist theory of lawbreaking is one of the most underdeveloped areas of feminist scholarship (Daly, 1992), the growing evidence base demonstrating the particular influence of sexism and victimisation on female routes into crime (Holsinger, 2000) will be highlighted. Secondly, the female experience of criminal justice will be considered. Female imprisonment will be used as an illustrative example of how the gendered nature of criminal justice interactions plays out in practice, specifically exploring the argument of how and why women may experience the ‘pains of imprisonment’ (Matthews, 2009) more harshly than men.

Lastly, the final section of the chapter will examine what is known about the female route out of crime. This section will outline major desistance work to date and, via a gendered lens, also offer a critique of the dominant literature. The few studies to date that have included a female perspective will be highlighted. Moreover, a major gap in research in
2.2 Female pathways to crime

Female forms of offending have repeatedly been found to be closely related to women’s position in society (Heidensohn, 1996). Feminist studies into female criminality have demonstrated the important role of sexual and physical victimisation in the female trajectory into crime (Chesney-Lind, 2006); a relationship that has been found to cut across all ages of female offending (Hansen, 2006). Although female victimisation in the general population remains alarmingly high (UN Women, 2014), women who offend have undoubtedly experienced disproportionately high rates of abuse in their life. The acknowledgement of the influence of gender in female offenders’ lives has led to a growing global recognition of the existence of gendered pathways into crime; evidenced in both English and Swedish criminological writings (Estrada and Nilsson, 2012). Having developed as a critique to ‘male-stream’ criminological theorising and the fundamental neglect of the female experience (Belknap, 2006), this section will specifically highlight key tenets of the ‘feminist pathway perspective'. Noting that the vast majority of research within the feminist pathway perspective has, to date, been situated in the American context, more international research in this area is called for.

The available evidence suggests that it is only by situating the female experience of crime and criminal justice in the totality of lived experience that we can start to develop a more sophisticated understanding of particular female pathways into offending. Inevitably, this includes giving attention to the interlinking factors of victimisation, poverty and disadvantage in the lives of offending females. It is important to note, however, that emphasising a female offender’s experiences of victimhood and vulnerability is not about “reducing her to a mindless pawn of history”, but rather it “helps to illuminate the context in which she moves and makes choices” (Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2004:30). In turn, by developing a better understanding of the mechanisms and processes surrounding female
pathways into crime, we can start to build a more contextualised knowledge of not only how to better prevent women entering into a life of crime, but also how to best target provisions and campaigns for change in order to disrupt patterns and structures conducive to the development of female offending. As argued by Gilfus (1993:87); as we continue to develop our understanding of women involved in offending "we can begin to call for criminal justice policies and programmes which recognise the relationship between victimisation and offending among women".

2.2.1 A typology of female pathways

Daly (1992) is one of the few writers who has attempted to develop a typology of female pathways to offending. In her well-known study of female pathways into court, Daly (1992) found empirical support for five distinct categories:

1) **Harmed-and-harming women**: These women have extensive experiences of harm and abuse in their childhood and are now in one way or another reproducing harm towards others. Alcohol and drug abuse is a common factor in this category, as well as mental health problems.

2) **Battered women**: Although over 30% of the sample had experiences of battering, this group specifically came to court for cases linked to domestic violence, such as responding with violence to a violent partner.

3) **Street women**: This is the leading scenario, with 50% of the sample falling into this category. These women live on the streets often hustling and/or surviving on prostitution to support a drug habit. Though many of the street women had significant experiences of abuse, to fall into this category the woman’s convictions primarily related to drugs and prostitution.

4) **Drug-connected women**: In this group the women are involved with selling drugs via a partner or family member, though they themselves are not supporting a habit.

5) **Other**: This represents the smallest group and typically relates to economic motivations, unconnected to addictions, violence or street life.

With substantial levels of overlap and interaction between all of the above categories, Daly (1992) argues for a multi-dimensional interpretation of female pathways. It is noteworthy
that the majority of the women in her research were not motivated by economic gain but rather, their crimes related to various ways of coping and surviving. This is again a reminder of why it is so important to explore contexts and circumstances in women’s lives in relation to pathways, as only then can we start to interconnect girls’ private experiences with their public behaviour (Schaffner, 2007).

2.3 The feminist pathway perspective

The ‘feminist pathways perspective’ specifically emphasises the gendered nature of female pathways to crime and focuses on all aspects of women’s experiences and lived realities (Salisbury and Voorhis, 2009), including the functions and effects of patriarchy. The key argument represented in this perspective is a call for the importance of recognising that victimisation plays a significant role in female pathways towards crime (Moe, 2004; Holsinger, 2000). The association between childhood victimisation and later offending behaviour is especially significant, and inevitably involves a recognition of the fact that women are abused more often, for longer periods of time, starting at an earlier age and with the perpetrator more likely to be someone close to them than for male victims of abuse (Holsinger, 2000, Salisbury and Voorhis, 2009; Belknap and Holsinger, 2006; Schaffner, 2007). As noted by Kennedy (1993:98), “girls are more frequently abused than boys, perpetrators are more often male than female, and whilst male victims are likely to become perpetrators, females are more likely to continue as victims”. This process of victimisation and re-victimisation is an important one, and is supported by the growing evidence of the overlapping nature of victim and offender status especially for female offenders.

Although there are some rather wide-spread methodological limitations that are important to bear in mind when exploring the abuse-crime literature, including definitional issues, an over-reliance on official statistics, and inadequate recognition of social desirability factors (Widom, 1989), the evidence conveys a clear message. Both retrospective and prospective studies consistently show a link between childhood victimisation and offending behaviour (Schaffner, 2007; Siegal and Williams, 2003; McMahon and Clay-Warner, 2002; Macmillan,
The strength of this association, however, varies across studies, and many problematically lack an analysis on gender. The evidence that does exist suggests this association to be of a highly gendered nature, with research indicating that female offenders have comparatively experienced significantly higher levels of abuse, in both childhood and adulthood, than their male counterparts (McClellan et al., 1997; Belknap and Holsinger, 2006; Daly, 1992). Additionally, it has been found that “the abuse incident has a greater effect in the likelihood of incarceration for girls than for boys” (Jonson-Reid and Barth, 2002, cited in McMahon and Clay-Warner, 2002:1005).

This is a relationship that has been identified in international research on gender and crime. In her in-depth exploration of women in the English criminal justice system, Kennedy (1993:101) argues that; “a significant majority of women who go through the system have been subjected to more criminal behaviour than they have been responsible for”. The limited research in this area in the Swedish context very much supports these findings, with female offenders found to have experienced overall more disadvantage and complex problems in their childhood than their male counterparts (Estrada and Nilsson, 2012).

### 2.3.1 Sexual abuse

There is a suggestion that sexual abuse plays a particular role in female pathways to crime. Recent HM Prison Service (2010) data show that about 50% of the female prison population have experiences of some form of physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse, with about a third having experienced sexual abuse specifically (Fawcett, 2008). Looking at this in an international context, these figures seem to be in line with research in America. For example, McClellan et al (1997) found that 26% of incarcerated females in Texas had experiences of sexual abuse in their childhood (compared to 4.5% of the male sample). In a self-report study of incarcerated youth in Ohio, Belknap and Holsinger (2006) found much higher figures, with 60% of the girls (and 20% of the boys) reporting ‘unwanted sexual contact’. Again, definitional issues must be taken into account here. Importantly, many of the girls, but only some of the boys, reported that they viewed their abusive experiences as significant for their offending behaviour (Ibid.).
2.3.2 Progression victim-survivor-offender

The route from victimisation to offending can take multiple forms and impact on offending in both direct and indirect ways. Direct links would, for example, involve being prostituted as a child and then continuing a life of prostitution in adult life, or alternatively being introduced to drugs at a very early age, which is likely to lead to more problematic drug use later in life (Dehart, 2008). In terms of less direct ways, a key route is that of escaping abuse in the home. This is a gendered pathway, as research suggests that sexual abuse is a much more significant factor in running away from home for girls than for boys (Welsh et al, 1995, cited in Siegal and Williams, 2003).

In her study of women’s entry routes into street crime, Gilfus (1993) found that for 65% of her female sample running away from home was their first delinquent act. In view of this, Gilfus (1993) suggests a particular female progression pattern moving from victim to survivor to offender. This progression route typically has its starting point in escaping abuse in the home, which then leads onto criminalised survival techniques on the streets. It is at this point that, from the aspect of law enforcement, these young women are re-labelled as delinquents, rather than children in need of support. This link between escaping abusive home environments and runaways involved in illegal street work fundamentally "blurs the boundaries between victim and offender" (Gilfus, 1993:85). In turn, this transition from childhood into adulthood then comes to revolve around repeated forms of victimisation, drug abuse, street work, abusive and typically co-addict relationships with men submerged in the street culture, not uncommonly leading to young pregnancies (ibid.).

Dehart (2008) notes how sexual or physical abuse in the home may not only act to push girls away from family networks, but also away from pro-social peer groups and other informal, as well as formal, systems (such as school and community groups). The role of peer groups has an established role in traditional criminological theorising, and is prominent in for example life-course perspectives. The feminist critique of these traditional studies is considerable, as the vast majority not only lack a female sample, but they also fundamentally fail to deal with how the absence of females may limit their findings (Moult, 2008). From a feminist criminological framework, girls’ relationship-building and survival
techniques away from the home must be situated in a patriarchal framework, as the main source of power/commodity for a young female trying to survive independently on the streets is undoubtedly her sexuality (Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2004). Feminist writers argue that women’s survival strategies and resistance to victimisation, including moving away from traditional peer networks and formal systems such as schools, in this way develop into very particular, gendered processes of criminalisation (Holsinger, 2000; Chesney-Lind and Rodriguez, 1983).

2.3.3 Gendered reactions to trauma: The role of mental health, drugs and alcohol
There are also less direct ways that victimisation may influence pathways towards offending. For example, McClellan et al (1997), exploring gendered differences in the association between child abuse, drug use and criminality, found five empirically supported pathway associations:

1) Female offenders report higher levels and more severe experiences of childhood as well as adulthood victimisation.

2) Childhood abuse has a stronger correlation with adult depression for female offenders than male offenders.

3) Depression is more common amongst female offenders than male offenders.

4) Substance use has a stronger relation to victimisation for females than males.

5) The level of substance use is a stronger predictor for female offending than for male offending.

Research shows that drug and alcohol misuse and mental health issues have stronger links to female than male offending (Malloch, 2003; Baird, 2003). Female offenders consistently report more problematic forms of alcohol and substance use, as well as higher rates of mental health problems (typically more than twice as high) and lower levels of self-esteem, compared to male offenders (Teague et al, 2008; Belknap and Holsinger, 2006; McClellan et al, 1997; McMahon and Clay-Warner, 2002; Daly, 1992). For example, data in the UK suggest that two-thirds of women in prison are drug dependent, or report harmful levels of alcohol consumption, upon admission (Fawcett, 2008). These high levels are also found in the Swedish setting, with evidence suggesting more extensive drug records among females.
with criminal records compared to male counterparts (Estrada and Nilsson, 2012). The link between opiate misuse and histories of abuse is an especially strong one (Kennedy, 1993), being a common coping mechanism to deal with trauma (Segrave and Carlton, 2010-2011).

The literature suggests that reactions to abuse and trauma are gendered (Segrave and Carlton, 2010-2011; Belknap and Holsinger, 2006, McClellan et al, 1997). Thus, research show that women are more likely to self-medicate in response to dealing with trauma and mental health problems than men, which Holsinger (2000) suggests links to differences in socialisation processes in terms of internalising pain. For example, studies indicate that while women commonly develop depression and substance misuse following abusive experiences, male victims are more likely to develop heightened levels of aggression (McClellan et al, 1997).

2.3.4 Protective versus exacerbating factors and risks

Although all available research suggests a clear link between childhood victimisation and offending behaviour, it is nevertheless imperative to point out that most abused children, girls as well as boys, do not grow up to become abusers or criminal offenders themselves (Siegal and Williams, 2003; Smith and Thornberry, 1995; Widom, 1989). Looking particularly at reactions to victimisation, Schaffner (2007) highlights how a range of factors can shape and form responses to abuse, especially availability and access to support for dealing with abusive experiences. On a structural level, there is a suggested lack of available forums for girls and women to talk about and deal with the experiences of sexual abuse (Holsinger, 2000). Moreover, the nature, frequency and severity of the abuse have been found to play a key role in relation to prevalence of offending behaviour (McMahon and Clay-Warner, 2002; Widom, 1989). Further exacerbating factors have been found to include being expelled from school or generally an absence of positive influences (Teague et al, 2008). From a ‘capital perspective’, protective factors could include higher levels of human (such as self-efficacy), social and state capitals (for example the availability of victim services) (Salisbury and Voorhis, 2009).
Victimisation and offending also share some common risk factors. As highlighted by Macmillan (2001:13) “victimisation risk is not distributed evenly across social groups”. Thus there may be other factors, such as socioeconomic dimensions, that may act to exacerbate existing inequalities. For example, racism has been found to combine with both sexism and victimisation to further disadvantage groups of women (Holsinger, 2000). Macmillan (2001) notes that victimisation also has important long-term consequences in terms of poor educational attainments, lowered sense of agency, lack of self-efficacy and more negative perceptions of society and human contact in general; all of which in turn heightens the likelihood of socio-economic disadvantage in later life. In turn, research suggests this to be a gendered experience, not unlikely to be linked to particular female experiences of stigma. For example, in a comparative study of male and female offenders in Sweden, Estrada and Nilsson (2012) found noteworthy differences in female and male pathways with regards to social exclusion, with about two thirds of women experiencing exclusion in youth, versus around 40% of the men.

2.4 Female experiences of criminal justice
Moving on to the next phase in the female journey, this section will specifically examine what is known about the female experience of criminal justice. Feminist criminological work has revealed the presence of sexism, gendered logics and ‘gendered agents of power’ within the criminal justice system (Silvestri and Crowther-Dowey, 2008:33). When exploring inequalities within the criminal justice system, Gelsthorpe and Morris (1988:98) remind us of the importance to bear in mind that “gender blindness is not a trivial oversight; it carries social and political significance”. This is highly relevant in terms of for example the historical neglect of violence against women and the persistent unwillingness on behalf of the criminal justice system to intervene in the private sphere. Indeed, the prime accomplishment of feminist criminology in relation to female experiences of criminal justice in the 20th Century, both in terms of public awareness and policy impact, has been suggested to be the visualisation of gendered violence (Chesney-Lind, 2006). Recognising the importance of these achievements, as well as bearing in mind the significant overlap
between the female victim and offender highlighted in the previous section, this section will focus exclusively on the *criminalised* female experience of criminal justice.

Due to women up until recently being an afterthought in the development of penal policy (Kruttschnitt, 2005), women have been, and continue to be, slotted into a male-orientated and male-dominated system (Heidensohn, 1996). This was recognised on a political level in the Corston Report in 2007, where it was argued that women for too long have been marginalised in a system largely designed by men for men. Women-centred criminal justice approaches were accordingly called for. This section will go on to examine these arguments in more detail and by doing so, highlight the core feminist critique of the system and accordingly unpack what makes the female experience of criminal justice gendered. The female experience of imprisonment will be used as a practical illustration of the argument, presenting evidence on how the ‘pains of imprisonment’ are commonly more harshly felt for the female prisoner compared to her male counterpart.

**2.4.1 ‘Doubly deviant, doubly damned’**

Debates about the criminal justice system and female offending have traditionally centred on the level of chivalry practiced in the system. Though evidence with regard to this is somewhat inconclusive (Heidensohn, 1996), much research has found that lenient practices are typically something that is reserved exclusively for *some* women. In her detailed exploration of women in the British criminal justice system, Kennedy (1993) argues that the treatment of women in the system is directly related to the level of female conformity to traditional norms of femininity, with women who ascribe to conventional forms of womanhood being more likely to receive leniency. In turn, this links to prevailing underlying assumptions about ‘good’ and ‘bad’ women, and notions of for example the ‘good wife’ and the ‘good mother’.

In her study on female imprisonment in Scottish courts, Carlen (1983) found that ‘good mothers’ were less likely to receive prison sentences than women adhering to less traditional female roles. Likewise, Kruttchnitt (1982) found that the ‘respectability’ of a woman has direct consequences for the outcome of a case, with more 'respectable' women
receiving more lenient sentences. More recently, Hudson (2002) found further support for these claims when she detected that levels of blameworthiness of female offenders commonly correspond more closely to social characteristics, relating to gendered constructions of femininity such as motherhood, sexual conduct and lifestyle choices, than the precise nature of the offence. In view of such findings, Radford (1993) argues that female offenders in fact ‘earn’ their justice in criminal cases by conforming to prescribed standards of female behaviour. The female offender is thus not only judged as an offender, but also as a woman (Lloyd, 1995). It is exactly due to this double breach, of both gender norms as well as legal norms, that the female has been positioned to be ‘doubly deviant, doubly damned’ (Heidensohn, 1996; 2002; Lloyd, 1995).

Agents of law, then, are inconsistent even in their paternalism (Naffine, 1996), and certainly not all women are equal before the law, though notably neither are men. The ‘reasonable person’, positioned to provide an ‘objective’ standard of law, has been found to not only be male, but specifically a white, middle-class, heterosexual male (Hudson, 2002). This draws attention to how it is essential to look at differences within each gender as well as between (see for example Connell, 1995; 2000). For example, facing combined forms of sexism and racism, Kennedy (1993) argues that black women are some of the hardest hit in the system. This, she argues, is related to stereotypes and prejudices about black women, such as heightened levels of aggression and/or promiscuity, which mean that they are more rarely seen to conform to traditional forms of femininity idealised within the system, including passivity and female chastity. This is a prime example of how wider intersecting systems of oppression in society extend into the sphere of criminal justice (Ericson, 2003; Carlen, 2013).

2.5 The female ‘pains of imprisonment’

The last decade has seen unprecedented attention drawn to the plight of imprisoned women (Silvestri and Crowther-Dowey, 2008), including the gendered nature of the carceral experience (Carlen, 2002; Barberet, 2014). It is accordingly argued that the female prisoner experiences the ‘pains of imprisonment’ more harshly than their male counterparts (Matthews, 2009); often leading to destructive and harmful consequences. Furthermore,
these pains of imprisonment travel far beyond the prison walls in terms of having devastating effects on many thousands of children. This section will go on to highlight some of the core arguments in the growing literature on the particular experience of female imprisonment, highlighting how and why the female experience of criminal justice is of a gendered nature.

2.5.1 Distances and provisions

Due to the historical rarity of female prisoners, there are only a small number of dedicated female prison establishments, and they are accordingly more widely dispersed geographically (Matthews, 2009). Consequently, women are much more likely than men to spend their sentences further away from home, resulting in, for example, increased difficulties in arranging family visits. Another consequence of the small number of specific female establishments is that institutions hold a more diverse range of offenders. Catering for a more diverse population, they also typically have lower availability of specialised support, training, education and work (Matthews, 2009). Research suggests that there is a particular lack of holistic, needs-based programmes for women in prison (Lowthian, 2002).

The type of training and support available is also important, with a noted global focus on domesticity in the female prison setting (Barberet, 2014). Indeed, women's prisons have a long tradition to 'discipline, infantilize, feminize, medicalise and domesticize' (Carlen 1985:182, cited in Gelsthorpe, 2004:9). For example, extensive focus on domestic and beauty training has led feminist scholars to argue that prison can be utilised as a tool to refeminise the female, adapting her to more traditional forms of femininity (Barberet, 2014). Moreover, due to historically stereotypical constructions of the female deviant, typically portrayed as being ‘mad rather than bad’ (Zedner, 1991), women consistently experience greater levels of intrusion, discipline and surveillance during their confinement. This epitomises Eaton's (1993) argument of how the disciplined subject is, in fact, a gendered subject. This is exemplified by the fact that female institutions in England average 150 adjudications per 100 prisoners, compared to 124 per 100 for males (MoJ, 2010)\(^8\).

\(^8\)No comparable figure has been identified for the Swedish system.
The female experience of imprisonment furthermore varies significantly depending on the establishment, as great lack of consistency in quality has been found across prisons (Silvestri and Crowther-Dowey, 2008). Although the female prison estate shares many of the general shortcomings found in male prisons, such as poor healthcare standards, staff shortages and limited amounts of purposeful activity, there are also some particular female needs that are especially poorly provided for, such as women-appropriate hygienic and sanitary facilities (Lowthian, 2002).

2.5.2 Vulnerability and 'doing time'

As women’s incarceration has been modelled on a male standard, there are many procedures that affect women in disproportionate ways. A key example of this is the the strip search. The influential Corston report (2007) found that strip searches typically leave women feeling humiliated, degraded, embarrassed and dirty, and rarely lead to detection of anything illicit. This is a prime example of where the female offender biography needs to be taken into account. Research shows that background experiences and individual circumstances play a critical role in the understanding of how prisoners 'do time' (Kruttschnitt, 2005). As Sykes notoriously pointed out (1958:285); there are "as many prisons as there are prisoners". Thus, the impact of a procedure such as a strip search on women in prison can only fully be comprehended when situated in the context of female pathways and biographies, including widespread experiences of sexual victimisation.

Although it should be pointed out that the female prison population shares many disadvantages, including poverty and trauma, with the male prison population, female prisoners undoubtedly carry particular levels of vulnerability. Re-visiting the previously noted strong link between female offending and mental health, HM Prison Service data (2010) shows that about 80% of women in prison suffer from mental health problems, and about 50% have experienced physical, emotional or sexual abuse. In addition, 20% of imprisoned women have spent time in care (Fawcett, 2008). In terms of drugs and alcohol, an estimated 80-90% of women report using drugs before prison entry (Malloch, 2003). Comparing this to the Swedish setting, a recent study of the female prison population showed that 61% had experiences of childhood trauma, 53% had 'harmful' relationships to
drugs and 31% to alcohol, and about 22% were diagnosed as depressed, with below average levels of confidence and self-worth reported overall (Kriminalvården, 2010). Although there are some noteworthy variances across countries, it is clear that women have very high levels of imported vulnerability upon entry into the prison establishment (Liebling et al, 2005).

There are moreover important links between homelessness and female imprisonment. However, this is more pronounced in the English setting compared to the Swedish. Around 15% of the English female prison population report being homeless at the time of prison entry, with around 37% needing support to find accommodation upon release (MoJ, 2012). This is contrasted to circa 6% of the Swedish female prison population reporting being homeless at entry to prison, though 9% had ‘other’ forms of accommodation (i.e. not renting or owning) (Kriminalvården, 2010).9

2.5.3 Children

It is predictably difficult to be a long-distance parent and being away from family, especially children, has been found to be the defining feature of life behind bars for many women; regardless of where in the world they are confined (Kruttschnitt, 2005). Although all forms of parental imprisonment have consequences for children and may contribute to family breakdown (Snyder-Joy and Carlo, 1998), the imprisonment of mothers unquestionably affects children more acutely than that of fathers. This, in turn, relates to gendered patterns of parenting, with mothers typically being the primary carer. Research indicates that just 5% of incarcerated females' children remain in their own home following imprisonment (Fawcett, 2008). These gendered processes are moreover reinforced via criminal justice policy and practice. For example, while the vast majority of countries worldwide allow for women to have children with them during at least some periods of imprisonment, the Nordic countries are the only ones that has extended this right, in an attempt to address the gendered nature of parenting in prison, also to fathers (Barberet, 2014).

9 It should be noted, however, that these figures are significantly lower than what previous reports in the Swedish prison system have shown, and may in part be related to definitional limitations and selection effects (Kriminalvården, 2010).
Recent data demonstrates that around 55% of female prisoners in England have a child under the age of 16, 33% a child under 5 and 20% are single parents (HM Prison Service, 2010). Comparing these figures to the Swedish female prison population, 44% are found to have children below the age of 18 (plus around 5% were pregnant at the time of study) (Kriminalvården, 2010). To give an indication of numbers of children affected, in 2010 circa 17,000 children were forcibly separated from their mothers through imprisonment in England and Wales alone (Howard League, 2011). In turn, this has long-term consequences, with evidence showing that the imprisonment of mothers has detrimental effects on children’s well-being. This includes psychological and behavioural problems, emotional distress, sleeping and eating disorders, a slower development of social skills, as well as a six-fold likelihood of ending up in prison themselves (Murrey, 2005).

### 2.5.4 Female ethnic minorities and foreign nationals

All of these specific conditions and characteristics are suggested to contribute to how and why women experience the ‘pains of imprisonment’ more harshly than their male counterparts. However, it would be misleading to treat all women as a homogenous group. The composition of the female prison population is changing and disproportionate sections now come from ethnic minority groups, making up around 30% of the English total in 2007 (Matthews, 2009). Highlighting this concern, Corston (2007) found that the disadvantage that black and ethnic minority women experience in the community very much extends into the prison estate, where they experience racial discrimination, stigma, isolation and a lack of employment skills. This is an additional example of how intersecting layers of oppression and disadvantage in wider society are re-produced in the context of criminal justice (Ericson, 2003; Carlen, 2013).

The female prison estate also holds a disproportionate number of foreign nationals. In the English setting, in 2007, foreign nationals made up 21% of the female prison population (in contrast to 14% of the male population) (HM Prison Service, 2010). This is not too dissimilar to the Swedish context, where 26% of the female prison population are foreign nationals, the vast majority coming from other European countries (Kriminalvården, 2010).

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10 Swedish prisons do not record data on ethnicity and hence, there are no comparable figures available.
nationals may experience some of the harshest pains of imprisonment, especially with regard to heightened difficulties in keeping in contact with children and other family networks. Corston (2007) reminds us that these women also often leave children behind in their home-country, typically without any available welfare support to help them.

2.5.5 Self-harm and suicide among women prisoners

In view of these aforementioned findings, maybe it is unsurprising to find that women suffer from higher levels of distress during their confinement than their male counterparts. Eaton (1993) identifies withdrawal, retaliation and self-mutilation as three of the primary female responses to prison. Research shows that 37% of the female prison population in England self-harmed in 2009\(^\text{11}\), compared with 7% of the male population (MoJ, 2010). Women also have disproportionately high levels of suicide, with 14% of total prison suicides in 2004 in England and Wales being committed by women (Sharkey, 2010). Placing this in a cross-cultural comparative perspective, in a recent study of suicide rates across 12 different countries it was found that between 2003-2007 there was a total of 37 female suicides in the English prison estate, compared with 1 in the Swedish setting (Kriminalvården, 2010). Furthermore, the risk of suicide is not equally distributed across the female prison population. Silvestri and Crowther-Dowey (2008) note that remand prisoners have an especially high risk of suicide, which is particularly relevant for women, as 25% of the English female prison population is on remand, which is about 10% above the total remand population (14.5%)\(^\text{12}\) (ICPS, 2015). High levels of self-harm must, in turn, be situated in the context of high levels of previous trauma and mental health problems, combined with the confining and disciplinary environment of prison (Roberts and Townsend, 2014).

Moreover, research suggests that particular prison conditions may worsen the circumstances. For example, overcrowding negatively impacts on staff-prisoner association, through reduced staff opportunities for identifying and providing support, and thus, overcrowding has a particular negative impact on prisoners at risk of self-harm and suicide (Sharkey, 2010). However, exploring the issue of overcrowding across the two sample

\(^{11}\) No comparable data has been found for self-harm in the Swedish female prison population.

\(^{12}\) No equivalent comparable figure for only females was identified for Sweden, though the total remand population in Sweden stands at around 25% (ICPS, 2015).
nations, it only emerges as a problem in the English context, which is currently running at 111.6% official prison occupancy capacity (ICPR, 2015). This is contrasted to 84.2% in Sweden (Ibid.). Overcrowding generally creates a more stressful environment, allows for fewer hours of purposeful activity and puts added strain on basic provisions. In addition, with a lack of supporting staff aiding the transition out of prison, the impact of overcrowding extends beyond the prison setting. To this end, women recently released from prison are 36 times more likely than the general public to commit suicide (Fawcett, 2008).

2.5.6 The revolving prison door: Progress and reforms

The overwhelming majority of the female prison population are serving short sentences, for non-violent crime (Carlton and Baldry, 2013). In England and Wales specifically, over 80% of the female prison population are serving a sentence of less than a year (Home Office Women’s Policy Team, 2008). This represents a marked difference to the Swedish setting, where only about 30% of women are serving a sentence of less than a year (Kriminalvård, 2014)\(^\text{13}\). Furthermore, while the female prison population has seen an international increase of late, this increase is especially noticeable for unsentenced women (Mason and Stubbs, 2010-2011). Remand prisoners share some common issues with those on short sentences, i.e., an expressed lack of access to schemes or support. Thus, the conditions that women had prior to imprisonment, such as living in poverty and social exclusion, remain exactly the same (Corcoran, 2010-2011). As there is no real time to deal with rehabilitative approaches, though long enough for the woman to lose both her home and children, short custodial sentences for women are found to often be more destructive than constructive (Fawcett, 2006). For example, research in England and Wales suggests that around one third of women prisoners lose their home, and often their possessions, whilst in prison (Prison Reform Trust, 2010). In this way, short sentences have been identified as leading to repeat cycles of powerlessness and punishment, criminalisation and further disadvantage (Roberts and Townsend, 2014; Carlton and Baldry, 2013).

\(^{13}\) This is likely to be linked to the fact that Swedish courts operate a much higher use of alternatives to custody than the English system. For example, anyone sentenced up to 6 months may opt for electric forms of monitoring (Lappi-Seppälä, 2012).
The detrimental effects of female imprisonment are beginning to be more widely recognised, and attitudes are gradually shifting towards more women-centred approaches and diversion from custody (Matthews, 2009). The Corston Report (2007) signified a milestone in this context, calling for radical shifts in both policy and practice. One of the most successful outcomes from the Corston report was the removal of the standard ‘full strip search’ (Cococan, 2010-2011). On a global scale, 2010 also saw the introduction of special UN guidelines on the treatment of women in prison, highlighting areas such as: prior victimisation; mental health; health and hygiene conditions; the issue of using prisons as shelter; motherhood; geographical distances; stigma and discrimination, and the need for equal female opportunities (Barberet, 2014). However, restricted budgets, along with ideological and political barriers (Carlen, 2002), can make it challenging to implement reform. Already lagging behind on the level of implementation, the Corston agenda was further diluted with the shift to a Conservative government in 2010 (Corcoran, 2010-2011). In one of the government’s most recent initiatives, the ‘Transforming Rehabilitation Programme’, there are, for example, no special contracts for women (Townsend, 2014). This reflects the slippage of many women’s issues from the political agenda, as well as short-sightedness of current penal policy.

Many feminist scholars also critically question the nature of progress, with Pat Carlen (2002) famously describing the limits to prison reforms in the female prison estate as a form of ‘carceral clawback’. Many scholars thus call for a continued critical viewpoint on reformist policies, as they may in fact legitimise incarceration and hence, provide incentives to imprison more women (Mason and Stubbs, 2010-2011). Seagrave and Carlton (2014), for example, argue that ‘gender-responsiveness’ has paved the way for increasing rates of female imprisonment globally.

2.6 Female routes out of crime and criminal justice

The area of desistance has of late become a growing interest within criminology (Bottoms et al, 2004). However, as so many other areas of criminology, the dimension of gender is

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14 It should be noted that this is not a complete abolishment, but that ‘reasonable suspicion’ is now required.
fundamentally neglected in the vast majority of this work. In view of previous arguments, noting that both pathways into crime as well as experiences of criminal justice represent gendered processes, the question arises whether the routes out of crime and criminal justice are similarly gendered in nature? This is an area of study still in its embryonic stages. In this section I will firstly introduce the main themes in the growing criminological literature around desistance, highlighting strengths and weaknesses within different perspectives. Secondly, I will draw attention to the few studies to date that have included a female angle; starting by outlining some significant overlaps in female and male experience of desistance, before moving on to detail some suggested gendered differences.

Similar to offending, desistance is a complex area and it is suggested that for the most compelling comprehension of this transition, a process-view is required. Moreover, for a more rounded understanding of this process, both individual agency as well as wider structural factors, including social, economic, and cultural contexts, must be taken into account (McNeill et al, 2012). There is, however, a significant gap in research exploring desistance in these latter areas. With a particularly pronounced gap in research into cultural contexts within the desistance literature, this study aims to make a specific contribution to the criminological field of desistance not only by using an all-female sample, but also by incorporating cross-cultural perspectives into the analysis. Via the application of a cross-cultural analytical lens, the aim is to enable a clearer visualisation of the impact of broader macro-processes on the particular female micro-experience of desistance.

2.6.1 The life-course perspectives versus cognitive transformations

The desistance literature can, by and large, be divided into two major groups. Bottoms et al (2004) identify these two groups as, 1) Informal social control, or the life-course tradition, which primarily focuses on events in a person's life, with special attention given to social attachments, turning points and life-course transitions. This area of research is most commonly associated with quantitative methods (Farrall and Bowling, 1999). The second group of literature identified by Bottoms et al (2004) is, 2) Cognitive transformations, which focuses more on agency and argues that subjective shifts in identity are of primary importance for understanding the desistance process. In contrast, this area of literature is
more commonly associated with qualitative methods. This divide in the literature arguably creates a somewhat unhelpful polarisation in the desistance debate. Positively, however, there has recently been some convergence of these perspectives, which will be explored in more detail following a brief overview of these two key areas of research.

### 2.6.2 The life-course transition perspective

The life-course tradition is an area of research that is particularly associated with the well-known work of Laub and Sampson (1993; 2003). Laub and Sampson (1993; 2003) followed a group of boys from the age of 7 to 70 by re-visiting data initially collected in the first half of the 20th Century by Glueck and Glueck, exploring 'trajectories of offending' over the life course. Long-term studies of this kind are very rare, hence it makes a valuable contribution to the field. The link between transition to adulthood and desistance is a chief concern in Laub and Sampson’s work (1993), and the major finding presented is that criminal behaviour declines sooner or later for everyone, i.e; this is the familiar age-curve thesis. As all crimes decline with age, it is accordingly argued that desistance reflects a *general* process (Laub and Sampson, 2003). Considering continuity and change across the life course, Laub and Sampson (1993) develop an age-graded theory of informal social control, looking particularly at the role of bonds between the individual and society.

This perspective is associated with social control theory, an area of criminological research closely related to the work of Gottfredson and Hirshi (1990). While Gottfredson and Hirshi (1990) place prime focus on an individual's ability to exercise self-control, the informal social control perspective presented by Laub and Sampson (1993; 2003) gives more attention to structural role changes in the transition to adulthood, including marriage, working careers and parenthood. The suggestion is that transitions and trajectories of this kind can generate turning points in an individual's life, which subsequently can 'redirect paths' (Laub and Sampson, 1993:304). Although their data show clear support for the hypothesis that stable employment along with marriage (or cohabiting) can act as turning points for men to help refrain from crime, Laub and Sampson (2003) point out that this is not an automatic link. Rather, the quality, stability and the meaning the individual attaches to these life course transitions are also highly significant.
The work by Sampson and Laub (1993; 2003) has, in more recent years, received considerable criticism. There are a number of important limitations in the study, especially in terms of gender, race and time context. The sample they draw on is not only all male, but all white male and reflective of life experiences of this particular group of men growing up in the Boston area in the 1950s. It is highly questionable whether the experience of this particular group during this particular era can be generalised to contemporary circumstances and more diverse groups of individuals. This argument is supported by the fact that more recent research exploring the link between desistance, marriage, family, as well as employment, generally produces very varied results (Farrall et al, 2009).

Moreover, the interpretation of turning points as external events has received considerable criticism. For example, Carlsson (2012:8) argues that turning points "as a theoretical concept is not directly but indirectly related to changes in offending". It is thus suggested that it is not the event in itself, but the many related context-driven circumstances that are of primary importance for understanding desistance. Furthermore, as noted by Matthews et al (2014), turning points do not just happen randomly, and they also need to be actively responded to by the individual. From a gendered perspective, the gender-specificity of the study is also very limiting. As pointed out by Giordano et al (2002); the analysis of social bonds in Sampson and Laub's study is highly unlikely to reflect female bonds, as there are marked differences within structural roles such as marriage and parenthood for men and women. Gendered socialisation processes and mechanisms of informal social control are of particular importance in this context. In a unique study of female desistance, Giordano et al (2002) in fact found results directly contrasting Laub and Sampson's findings, namely that neither marital attachment nor job stability were strongly related to female desistance. We will return to this area of gender in the desistance process later in this section.

Most writers now agree that this event-orientated, one-way progression idea of desistance is artificial and that desistance needs to be understood as a gradual process; a continuum between criminality and conformity (Bottoms et al, 2004). The offender thus often ‘drifts’ (Matza, 1964) in and out of offending. Adapting this process view of desistance, Rumgay
(2004) argues for parallels to be drawn to drug treatment and ‘relapses’, where less frequent relapses are understood to constitute essential components of positive progress. Undeniably, the decision to initially desist and to maintain a desisting lifestyle are two very different things. Drawing on Lemert’s notion of primary and secondary deviance, Maruna and Farrall (2004) suggest that it is valuable to make a similar distinction between primary and secondary desistance, with the former representing short crime-free periods while the latter stands for more lasting change with the individual successfully taking on a new identity. In view of this, it has been suggested that reductions in the frequency and/or seriousness of offending should be recognised as important achievements in the move towards a non-offending identity (Farrall, 2002a).

2.6.3 Cognitive transformational perspectives: Constructing a desisting narrative

This idea of the importance of constructing a new identity, as linked to desistance, takes us on to the second group of desistance literature, namely, the one which focuses more on cognitive transformations. This perspective is closely linked to symbolic interactionism and places agency at the very core of its reasoning (Giordano et al, 2003). Motivational and attitudinal change are thus understood to be of fundamental importance. Shadd Maruna is a distinguished writer in this area. In his key piece ‘Making Good’ (2001) Maruna presents an in-depth study of desisting and persisting offenders’ self-narratives, collected via life-history interviews with 55 men and 10 women in the Liverpool area in the late 1990s. In his study it is argued that the link between self-concepts and desistance is of prime importance; if change in an offending identity is to be realised a person needs to shift his/her sense of self. Desistance is thus directly linked to an individual’s ability to construct a meaningful story to redeem the self.

Although Maruna discovers many common themes across his interviewees, he gives prime focus to two distinct ‘scripts’ - a concept borrowed from the psychological field - consistent within a persisting versus a desisting narrative. The major theme for persisting offenders is represented in the condemnation script, which signifies a sense of the person’s life script essentially being written for them, including an expressed feeling of injustice and irresponsibility, fatalism and being the victim of circumstances. In contrast, the major theme
within the desisting narratives is that of a *redemption* script, that is, the ex-offender has successfully reconstructed a chaotic and negative past into a meaningful contemporary narrative; a self-story in which desistance becomes a necessity.

Another central characteristic of the redemption script identified in Maruna's work is that of control. It is suggested that for a successful desisting identity to develop, it is essential to internalise the overcoming of obstacles. This new identity additionally needs to be incompatible with the criminal identity, which in turn allows for enhanced forms of internal control (Vaughan, 2007). Moreover, for a successful re-construction of one’s narrative, Maruna (2001) identifies the ‘generative role model’, or the ‘wounded healer’ to play a significant role. This ‘generative’ model involves the individual finding a new social purpose, and accordingly shift priorities, in what could otherwise be experienced as a ‘wasted’ life (Ibid.). Re-visiting this argument in more recent work, McNeill and Maruna (2008) suggest that the main significance of 'generativity' is that it fills a void in an offender’s life and provides a sense of purpose and meaning, as well as making guilt more manageable.

Continuing on the role of guilt, research shows that emotions such as shame and regret can play an important role in the formation of new values and goals (Farrall and Caverly, 2006). For this reason, some argue that moral reflections on an individual's past deeds is in fact an essential part of the construction of a desisting narrative (Vaughan, 2007). While emotions have been largely absent from criminology, with some noteworthy exceptions including the well-known work around the 'sensual dynamics' of crime by Katz (1988), there have been some recent attempts to develop a more emotionally-aware understanding of desistance. For example, Caverly and Farrall (2011) propose an 'emotional trajectory of desistance', where they classify emotions and feelings that are experienced at different points in the desistance process. Four key phases are identified (Ibid.): 1) *Early hopes* - including aspirations for a 'normal life' and a sense of feeling 'happier'; 2) *Intermediate phase* - commonly includes some setbacks, though regrets and improved levels of self-esteem are starting to develop; 3) *The penultimate phase* - typically developing after 3 years or more of crime-free periods. An important feeling during this phase includes the development of trust, especially *being* trusted, as well as pride and a sense of achievement, and lastly; 4)
Normalcy - where offending is experienced as very distant, with bonds to family as well as careers clearly being established, and confidence and self-esteem levels have markedly increased.

Returning to Maruna’s highlighted study (2001) with a more critical viewpoint, from a feminist perspective what is fundamentally lacking in this work is any real engagement with gender. Although Maruna interviewed both women and men in his study, narratives are not interpreted via a gendered lens. The only real mention of gender is found as a sideline to the main text, that is, in the appendices, where Maruna notes that he identified few differences between female and male narratives. He states that women’s stories were included "primarily in an effort to uncover the universal, rather than the gender-specific" (2001:176), though he acknowledges that it is likely that there are both. Maruna goes on to note that it is highly likely that there will be differences in terms of for example more significant experiences of stigma for female offenders. However, Maruna then makes the claim that society is more likely to keep faith in the reformation of female offenders, suggested to be related to popular accounts commonly portraying women offenders as victims of circumstances. This is despite previously making the point that women offenders experience significantly higher levels of stigma in society at large, which sits uncomfortably with the statement that society upholds more “hope that female offenders can be reformed” (2001:176). As a final note, it should be pointed out that Maruna’s work is heavily influenced by the field of psychology, and while this is not a drawback per se, it is helpful to be aware of this disciplinary orientation when aiming to explore desistance from a more criminologically/sociologically-orientated perspective.

2.6.4 Moving the debate on: Converging literatures

Farrall and Bowling (1999:261) argue that these polarised literatures, creating an unhelpful 'agency-structure' divide, treat people either as 'super-agents' or as 'super-dupes'. In an early attempt to bring these two strands of literature together, Farrall and Bowling (1999), in their integrated theory of desistance, aim to combine both individual decision-making processes and structural circumstances. Drawing heavily on the work of Giddens (1984), Farrall and Bowling (1999:261) argue that agency and structure are "bound up in the very
reproduction of each other”, and that “the process of desistance is one that is produced through an interplay between individual choices, and a range of wider social forces, institutional and societal practices which are beyond the control of the individual”. Moreover, their work also stresses the importance of incorporating power into the debate; recognising that power is differentially distributed across the population and hence, people have varying abilities to influence both their own and other's behaviour.

It is increasingly recognised that desistance represents a mixed process of subjective/agentic and social/environmental factors and forces (Vaughan, 2007; LeBel et al, 2008; McNeill et al, 2012). This sits comfortably with feminist orientations, as feminist criminological writers have long called for the importance of situating subjective changes within structural contexts (Eaton, 1993). However, although the interplay between these factors is increasingly recognised, studies which combine the two remain few. A welcomed exception is the work of Giordano et al (2002), who proposed a 'theory of cognitive transformation' that gives attention to both agentic and environmental factors. Specifically, Giordano et al (2002) do this by developing the concept of 'hooks of change', which they define as elements in the environment that an actor can effectively draw on to achieve individual change. These 'hooks for change', such as marriage or employment, are understood as a primary aspect of change, with secondary change representing more lasting cognitive shifts in the self. Contrasting this to the work of Laub and Sampson (1993), Giordano et al (2002) found neither job stability nor attachments were strong predictors for refraining from criminal involvement, though a 'respectability package', including both a job and marriage, provided important building blocks to increase the levels of a person's social capital. The availability of this type of package, however, is shaped by both ethnicity and gender. Highlighting the impact of intersectionality, the study found that white men are the most likely and African-American women the least likely to achieve such a package (Ibid.). For lasting cognitive transformations to take place Giordano et al (2002:1000-1002) identify four key conditions:

1) Openness to change.
2) Exposure to 'hooks for change' (which need to be understood as available, meaningful and incompatible with delinquency).
3) Ability to envision an appealing and conventional 'replacement self' (a cognitive blueprint for change may help enable this, such as NA\textsuperscript{15} or religion).

4) A transformed view of their previous deviant behaviour/lifestyle.

Giordano et al (2002) argue that to combine this perspective with a social control perspective provides the best tool kit available to investigate desistance. "The environment can provide a kind of scaffolding that makes possible the construction of significant life changes. Nonetheless, individuals themselves must attend to these new possibilities, discard old habits, and begin the process of crafting a different way of life" (Ibid:1000). This perspective thus situates choices in the context of structural conditions, and it is recognised that in order for a person to make specific choices, choices need to actually be available. "Actors make moves, but they do so within bounded territory, and a specific nexus of opportunities and constraints (as women, as highly disadvantaged, as minorities, as inhabitants of a late 20th-century environment, as all of these positions)" (Giordano et al, 2002:1004). This perspective has found support in more recent research. For example, studies by Farrall and Caverly (2006) show that the most successful desistance processes derive from a combination of a strong individual motivation and changes in personal and social circumstances, which are jointly associated with a lived sense of the ability to stop.

\textbf{2.7 Desistance: A gendered process?}

Gender is a significantly neglected area in the desistance literature, with women's experiences having received only minimal empirical attention. We know that gender impacts on all aspects of lived experience, so it would be likely that this is also reflected in the desistance process. The small literature that does exist suggests that some aspects of desistance-related processes are of a gendered nature (Cobbina, 2010). To start with, a principal identified difference, supported by numerous studies, is that women generally 'grow out of crime' earlier and have significantly lower re-involvement in offending than their male counterparts (Giordano et al, 2003; Rumgay, 2004; Graham and Bowling, 1995; McIvor et al, 2004). This is a finding confirmed in both self-reported and re-arrest data.

\textsuperscript{15} Narcotics Anonymous.
(Uggen and Kruttschnitt, 1998). Women are thus not only less likely to offend, but when they have done so, they are also less likely to do so again. Additionally, a small number of studies also suggest some differences in desistance across the genders in terms of social capital and the role of relationships (McIvor et al, 2004; Cobbina, 2010).

That said, the few existent studies into gendered layers of desistance have typically detected fewer gender differences than first anticipated (Giordano et al, 2003; Uggen and Kruttschnitt, 1998). Similar types of controls and opportunities, including the level of immersion in the criminal underworld, thus impact on male and female re-offending in not too dissimilar ways (Uggen and Kruttschnitt, 1998). In their gendered analysis of desistance, Giordano et al (2003) note how they set out with the expectation that there will be gender-specific practices that play a greater role in female desistance; however, the main themes for successful desistance processes discovered were shared by both men and women. In particular, these related to major themes such as poverty, low education levels, drug addictions and problematic family background. Similarly, McIvor et al (2004), researching young people and desistance, found significant consistency in desistance-related process for boys and girls, especially with regard to the importance of lifestyle transitions.

### 2.7.1 Social capital and the role of relationality in the female desistance process

Recognising the importance of gender symmetry across desistance-related processes, there are nevertheless some noteworthy gender-specific factors highlighted in the literature. A key example of this is in the area of social networks and relationality. While there is a consensus in the literature that the building of social capital generally plays an important role in the desistance process (McNeill and Maruna, 2008; Farrall, 2002a; 2004; Brown and Ross, 2010), some studies suggest that the value of this may be more marked for female desisters. For example, there is an argument that women generally develop more, as well as put a greater emphasis on the role of, relationships in their lives compared to men (Cobbina, 2010; Uggen and Kruttschnitt, 1998). Some suggest that this relates to a special female 'ethics of care' (Gilligan, 1982). Supporting this gendered idea of network processes, McIvor et al (2004) found that young women are more likely to emphasise relational aspects when discussing rationales for stopping offending. This is contrasted to young men, who more
commonly emphasise choice and agency factors (Ibid.). These arguments are furthermore backed-up by research exploring identity re-construction processes. For example, Herrschaft et al (2009) found that while men typically gain validation of new identities from status-related roles, such as employment, women more often experience cognitive shifts linked to social interactions.

Re-visited the literature on social bonds, Uggen and Kruttschnitt (1998) argue that the exclusion of exploring gender differences in attachments and informal social controls represents a fundamental limitation of studies in this area, as adult social bonds vary according to gender. Associated with women’s suggested higher connectedness to relationships than men, Mackenzie and Li (2002) argue that women may get drawn into crime via their partner. Indeed, research suggest that for women relationships are often an important factor with regard to the origin of offending (Leverentz, 2006), not uncommonly committing crimes to accompany their male partners (Uggen and Kruttschnitt, 1998). From this perspective, social bonds may in fact increase female propensity to re-offend rather than lessen it, as has been suggested to often be the case for men. Giving support to this idea, Mackenzie and Li (2002) find that, in direct contrast to their male counterparts, living with a spouse does not appear to reduce re-offending for females.

These debates link to the role that significant others may have on the desistance process. A normative partner, i.e. a partner with conforming orientations, can play an important role to help envision a replacement self (Vaughan, 2007), construct a lasting recovery narrative (McIntosh and McKeeganey, 2000), as well as provide an important gateway to conforming others (Giordano et al, 2003). Associated with these ideas, women as partners to ex-offending men are often portrayed as stabilisers; the so called ‘Love of a good woman’ thesis (Leverentz, 2006:464). However, considered through a gendered lens, this thesis becomes problematic. As noted, for many women relationships can often be part of the origin of the problem, and male intimate partner abuse is identified as having a strong negative impact on female desistance (Cobbina, 2010). Typically then, men are often central to women’s offending, but peripheral to their desistance (Leverentz, 2006).
Gendered experiences of intimate relationships and risk are thus important factors to take into account when exploring relationality as related to female desistance. In direct opposition to the 'love of a good woman' thesis, for women it may instead be that breaking off from relationships is a valuable desistance tool (Brown and Ross, 2010; Leverentz, 2006; Gilfus, 1993). In turn, this may allow for the development of more personal agency and autonomy; factors which research show are particularly important for successful female reintegration (Eaton, 1993). As a final note, though, it is also important to bear in mind the dynamic nature of relationships, i.e. that relationships evolve and change over time, including normative directions of a partner. Relationality could therefore be represent both potential risk and potential stabilisation for female ex-offenders.

In terms of wider social networks, an original study by Reisig et al (2002), exploring the link between social capital and the successful reintegration of female offenders, found that the level of support received through social networks plays a vital role. This is also supported by research in the UK context. In an original study into female paths out of crime, Rumgay (2004), drawing heavily on the literature on male desistance and also drug abuse, identifies two key aspects for female desistance, namely; 1) Personal resilience and 2) Social networks. Rumgay (2004:412) here positions resilience as 'resourcefulness in coping', which is developed through routines, while social networks emphasise the importance of pro-social friends and family connections. Although family formations are identified to play an important role in the desistance process generally (Farrall, 2002a), some research suggests that family ties play a more central role for female ex-offenders than for male ex-offenders (Cobbina, 2010; Giordano et al, 2002). However, it should be pointed out that access to these desistance-related processes is not evenly distributed across populations. For example, Reisig et al (2002) found that higher levels of education and older age positively correlate with larger networks and more emotional, social, instrumental and overall support. Thus, more affluent women have greater levels of support available to them.

2.7.2 Stigma and risk
Another significant gendered factor detected in the literature is that of risk and stigma. It should be noted that research has identified stigma as a general barrier to shifts in identity
and desistance-related processes (Farrall et al., 2011; LeBel et al., 2008); however, studies do suggest that this may be especially harshly felt by women. Indeed, research consistently, on an international scale, identifies higher levels of stigma and shame experienced by female offenders as compared to male (McIvor et al., 2004; Baldry, 2010-2011; Estrada and Nilsson, 2012). The costs of re-offending are therefore suggested to be higher for women (Uggen and Kruttschnitt, 1998; Estrada and Nilsson, 2012), including a more pronounced risk of a damaged reputation. Due to this, Giordano et al. (2003) suggest that women may have a higher personal motivation to stay 'straight'.

In turn, heightened levels of stigma are also found to correlate with higher levels of loneliness and a lack of confidence to form new contacts (McIvor et al., 2009). This is significant, as isolation has been identified as a key barrier in women’s reintegration processes (Baldry, 2010-2011). Interlinked to this notion of stigma and (in-)abilities to form new contacts, Mackenzie and Li (2002) found that female probationers more commonly develop deviant relationships, i.e. intimate relationships with offending/drug-using partners, compared to male probationers. Due to higher levels of stigma, it may in actual fact be much harder for women to find a ‘straight’ partner. This is backed up by evidence in the Swedish context, indicating that female ex-offenders are less likely than male ex-offenders to be in stable family relationships in mid-life (Estrada and Nilsson, 2012).

2.8 The significance of macro-contexts

There is a significant gap in research on the role of macro-processes in the desistance literature. In view of the above noted recognition of the interplay between agency and structure, more research into understanding how individual problems and circumstances are influenced by local contexts, including social and economic factors, is called for (Farrall, 2002a). Structures are suggested to matter "as they organise the processes, routes and symptoms of desistance for individual ex-offenders" (Farrall et al., 2011:221). Bottoms et al. (2004:373) also stress the importance of incorporating culture and habitus into the study of desistance, including how cultural contexts become “internalised by the people of the country”. It is thus not unlikely that desistance processes may vary across cultures.
The one identified cross-cultural study into desistance is a study by Savolainen (2009), exploring the role of social bonds in a group of Finnish recidivists. Savolainen (2009:293) draws on an all-male sample, which he states is due to that the female sample that ‘survived the selection criteria’ was very low. Applying Sampson and Laub's age-graded theory of informal social control in a Finnish setting, Savolainen (2009) argues for the importance of incorporating cultural contexts into desistance research, as he detects, for example, that in Finland cohabitation seems to have a stronger correlation to desistance than marriage. Showing more symmetry across place however; the strongest predictor of desistance was found to be transition into work from joblessness (Ibid.).

To enable a deeper understanding of macro social factors, Farrall et al (2009:83) suggest that we also need to look at society in a longer term perspective, as historical contexts mark different 'ways of doing and being', and thus provide different orientations for the individual. To study desistance across nations, through a historically and structurally aware perspective, may thus tell us something highly valuable about how embedded these processes are in cultural arrangements. To bring in gender into the equation would, arguably, strengthen the analysis even further.

### 2.8.1 Community capacities and access to reintegrative processes

The link between the individual and the community is of great significance. Bottoms et al (2004) suggest that the social cohesion of a community and its relations to desistance is an under-researched, yet highly worthwhile, criminological area. This is, for example, supported by research suggesting that community aspects (along with social and personal circumstances) may in fact be more influential for positive change than probation work (Farrall and Caverly, 2006). Logically, for the person to be able to reintegrate, there need to be conditions available in the community for full engagement. Briefly re-visiting McNeill and Maruna’s work on ‘generativity’ (2008); they strongly accentuate this point in their research when they highlight the importance of a reciprocal relationship between ex-offenders and society. Specifically, if the offender is willing to change and 'give back' to society, then society have to, for the desistance process to be a successful one, also be willing to re-engage with the individual (Ibid.).
Thus, for a person to embrace change they must have the opportunity to reform. This is why many authors argue that reintegration processes must be situated in broader socio-structural contexts (Hannah-Moffat, 2003). For example, Farrall et al (2010) note how wider economic conditions such as labour market forces potentially have major impacts on the desistance process, as it shapes access and availability of legitimate employment opportunities. In addition, the quality of opportunities to reform, including the quality and security of employment opportunities, must also be taken into account (Maruna 2001; Rumgay, 2004).

Furthermore, access to reintegrative community processes is not evenly distributed across the population. For example, in Carlsson’s (2012) study of Swedish desisters, it was found that a weak location in the social structure can have major impacts on the access to desistance related processes, including legitimate income opportunities and the building of social capitals. This is an argument that was also highlighted in relation to women’s desistance and social capital building (see S.2.7.1). Building on this argument further, Reisig et al (2002) argue that if the government wish to reduce female re-offending, it needs to invest in filling some of the gaps in capitals experienced by especially younger and poorer female offenders in disadvantaged communities. Additionally, there are also suggestions that wider operations of law and society have an impact on access to reintegrative community processes. For example, Uggen and Kruttschnitt (1998) argue that the social position of the individual may directly impact on the desistance process, as certain group of individuals and/or communities are more likely to have their behaviour defined as illegal, as well as being more policed.

Different communities may also vary in their abilities to open up reintegrative processes. The role of stigma as a barrier to change re-emerges as being of relevance here. Exploring the link between civic participation and desistance processes, Uggen et al (2004:285) suggest that communities are often ‘ill-prepared’ to accept ex-offenders as fellow citizen, and calls for more research into what they call the ‘societal management of stigma’. In turn, this links to broader societal conditions, including that of social trust and solidarity (see S.1.5.1-1.5.2), as well as to more specific practices, such as restricted access to certain types
of civic rights and responsibilities, including voting (Uggen et al, 2004). Although an area in its embryonic stages, some studies have identified a link between certain citizenship processes and desistance. For example, Farrall and Caverly (2006) found a correlation between having supportive citizenship values and lower levels of offending, with a mirrored correlation between distrust for the state and a heightened propensity to re-offend. It may thus be that experiences of citizenship and inclusion, along with the formation of a self-concept of a conforming citizen (Uggen et al, 2004), are in fact closely intertwined with the desistance process (Farrall et al, 2010).

Considering how more positive links between communities and ex-offenders may be developed, Brown and Ross (2010) argue that the breaking down of barriers founded on factors such as fear and ignorance would be a valuable starting point. The more extensive use of open prisons in Sweden, for example allowing prisoners to participate in education and employment in community settings, is arguably one way such barriers can start to be disrupted. Moreover, as noted by Bazemore and Erbe (2004), investment in the (re-)building of community capacities, such as community centres and local support groups and networks, may also be a useful tool in this process, to enable new spaces for relationship building on both the individual, interpersonal, institutional and community level.

2.8.2 Female desistance and community provisions
Recognising that female offenders typically uphold higher levels of need in comparison to their male counterparts, community-based services are arguably especially important for the female desistance process (Cobbina, 2010). This inevitably includes aspects such as substance misuse support (Malloch, 2003), childcare, holistic healthcare provisions, as well as access to education (Hannah-Moffat and Innocente, 2013). Another chief factor identified in the literature as essential for female desistance is the provision of safe and stable housing (Carlen, 2003; Hannah-Moffat and Innocente, 2013). As argued by Carlen (2003:34), the suggestion that women should think about their life-choices when they do not have a roof over their heads is just ‘irresponsible nonsense’. Additionally, there is evidence that living in hostels, typically sharing accommodation with other vulnerable and marginalised people, makes it hard to give up drug-use and break ties with offending networks (Matthews et al,
2014). There is, for instance, an evidenced link in the literature between female unstable housing and the selling of sex (Cuisick et al, 2003).

Infrastructures hence need to be developed on both the societal and individual level, which is why Rumgay (2004:415) argues that the study of desistance must also incorporate structural aspects, including the 'health of the local community'. Furthermore, such infrastructures are associated with broader socio-political developments. As pointed out by Farrall et al (2010), the macro shifts witnessed in the UK over the last 30 years in terms of a fundamentally shrinking social housing sector are likely to have an impact on would-be desisters, as it reduces access to stable housing options. Recognising particular forms of female offender vulnerability, recent cuts in for example specialist domestic violence services and legal aid is increasing the difficulty for women to access social housing when escaping abusive domestic settings (Crisis et al, 2013).

2.9 The role of meso-contexts

There is also a noted gap in research dealing with the area of meso-contexts and their relationship to desistance (Farrall et al, 2010). That said, most research suggests that change, in the main, occurs in individual lives away from criminal justice processes (Maruna et al, 2004). The impact of imprisonment on female lives was given considerable attention in section 2.5, and I will thus not repeat it in any detail here. What is worth reiterating, though, is that the clear message from the literature is that rather than enabling desistance, prison more typically impedes desistance processes for women, including producing further marginalisation (McIvor et al, 2009; LeBel et al, 2008), increased levels of vulnerability, reduced access to legitimate employment (Matthews et al, 2014), and generally deepening the cycle of dependency, institutionalisation and criminalisation (Carlton and Baldry, 2013). The following section will highlight the meso-context of probation and its relation to female desistance.

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16 Oxford Online Dictionary defines 'meso' as the 'middle', or representing the 'intermediate' (http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/meso). 'Meso-contexts' will be used throughout this thesis to refer to those aspects that are situated in-between micro- and macro-levels of analysis, such as criminal justice organisations and agencies.
2.9.1 Probation and female desistance

Research generally shows that probation interventions have very minimal impact on the life of (ex-)offenders (Farrall, 2002a). Farrall (2002a) argues that this is commonly owing to the fact that probation work is refuted by problematic factors in the person's life. Recognising overall limited impacts, there are nevertheless some aspects of probation work that have been identified as being more valuable than others. Research suggests this especially involves the negating of obstacles and action-orientated work, such as practical help with finding employment and accommodation (Farrall, 2002b; Farrall and Caverly, 2006). This is in line with research into women's reintegration, where the most effective post-release support has been shown to involve helping women to overcome structural blocks to subjective change, including access to housing, education/employment and general/welfare support (Eaton, 1993). However, placing these meso-contexts within wider macro-forces, for these processes to take place, the social and economic circumstances must be conducive to it. As noted by Farrall (2004), regardless of how effective probation supervision may be in the area of employment, this can only go so far with probation having no control over for example mass unemployment.

Moreover, the nature of the officer-probationer relationships plays a significant role for desistance-related outcomes, including the quality and supportiveness of probation officers. For example, studies into female reintegration processes identify key traits in a supportive probation officer to include the ability to listen and to be encouraging (Cobbina, 2010), promoting a sense of feeling valued, and overall adapting a tailored woman-centred approach (McIvor et al, 2009). This falls in line with wider findings in the area of valuable probation work traits, identified to include active and participatory support, flexibility and tailored supervision, underpinned by commitment, interest, empathy and genuineness (McNeill, 2006). McNeill (2006) goes on to suggest that legitimacy and trust are of fundamental value within these relationships.

Another identified factor in a successful probation supervision setting is that the probationer and the probation officer 'work together', though evidence for the existence of this type of positive working is, indeed, rather limited in the UK context (Farrall, 2002a). This
working relationship must also be situated in the particular organisational context. For example, very heavy caseloads will, inevitably, have an impact on the quality of the officer-probationer relationship (Cobbina, 2010). Farrall (2002a) notes that in the UK setting the reality is that probation officers have very limited time with probationers, with an average of 20h over 12 months. It is questionable what real influence towards change that can be achieved on such minimal timescales.

Some literature indicates that the nature of working frameworks is also of relevance. So for example, the recent shift towards 'risk' discourses in the criminal justice setting has received a growing amount of criticism, including suggestion that such a framework problematically diffuse individual 'need' with so called criminogenic 'risk' factors (Hannah-Moffat, 2003). The risk framework is suggested to have produced not only a decline in probation 'practice virtues' (McNeill, 2006), but also a neglect of individual ability to initiate positive change (Herrschaft et al, 2009). Moreover, as argued by Hannah-Moffat and Innocente (2013), by focussing exclusively on the individual, the need/risk discourse effectively deflects attention away from systematic structural barriers to women’s desistance.

In view of these recent developments in the desistance literature, there has of late been an increasing push for a more 'strength-based' approach in probation, that is, focussing less on 'risk' and more on the positive contributions that a person can make (Hannah-Moffat, 2003; McNeill, 2006; Matthews et al, 2014). Re-visiting the role of emotion in desistance-related processes, hope is suggested to play an important role in this framework. Studies show that hope can play a vital role in the desistance process by allowing individuals to visualise alternative futures, enable plan-making (Matthews et al, 2014; Farrall and Caverly, 2006), aid a person to deal with moderate setbacks, as well as take advantage of social opportunities (LeBel et al, 2008). There has accordingly been growing calls for re-thinking probation officers’ role from that of a correction officer, towards a supporter of desistance-related processes (McNeill, 2006; Farrall, 2004). A part of this, McNeill and Maruna (2008:229) argue, should include giving generativity a central role in offender work, and the provision of practical assistance to help ex-offenders to move away from an old identity via a 'narrative reconstruction of identity'. Furthermore, such work should also emphasise the
value of plan-making and the building of autonomy; a factor that research shows is particularly valuable for successful female reintegration processes (Eaton, 1993; Hannah-Moffat, 2003).

2.10 In summary: The female journey through crime and criminal justice

This chapter has examined, from a feminist criminological standpoint, what is known about the female offender journey through crime and criminal justice. Developed in response to the wide-spread neglect of theorising gender in criminological theory, the beginning of the chapter gave specific attention to the feminist pathway perspective; highlighting the gendered nature of female pathways to crime and how women offenders’ lived realities are shaped by their social positioning. The growing evidence base demonstrating the particular influence of sexism, victimisation and related mental health problems on female pathways was outlined. Acknowledging the dominance of Anglo-American research in this area, this study aims to make a particular contribution to this field specifically by applying a cross-national lens to the feminist pathway perspective, thus aiming to extend knowledge of how different social, economic, and political processes interact with female pathways into crime and criminal justice.

Secondly, the chapter examined female experiences of criminal justice. It was argued that due to women’s particular biographies, in combination with women being slotted into a system largely designed by and for men (Corston, 2007; Heidensohn, 1996), women experience particular pains once inside the system. An in-depth example of this was provided in the female experience of imprisonment. Exploring imprisonment through a cross-national lens, however, it is proposed that the pains of imprisonment are likely to be less harshly felt by prisoners in the Swedish prison system as compared to the English one. There is a particular lack of qualitative comparative research in this area, which is especially pronounced in the area of first-hand female perspectives. This study aims to address this gap by comparatively exploring the qualitative female experience of criminal justice, including that of prison, from a cross-national perspective, thus aiming to shed light on if and how different criminal justice systems impact on the female experience in diverse ways.
Lastly, the final section of the chapter has been devoted to the area of desistance and female routes out of crime. Recognising desistance as a multifaceted and complex process, it has been argued that the best analytical tool we have available for investigating this process includes analysing both micro-agentic as well as wider structural factors. This must also, arguably, incorporate meso-level settings. While highlighting the overall limited analysis of gender in this literature, it is significant to note that findings from the few-numbered existent studies to date suggest that there are many desistance-related themes that are shared by both men and women, including poverty, access to education/employment, housing issues, drug abuse and problematic family backgrounds.

Some gender-specific aspects have, nonetheless, been identified. Specifically, research suggests that relationality may play a more significant role in female processes of desistance as compared to males, including negative impacts of for example violent and controlling intimate relationships. Moreover, gendered processes of stigmatisation and marginalisation have been shown to pose additional challenges to the female route out of crime. Little is known, however, about how these processes differ across cultures and macro-contexts, presenting a large gap in the desistance literature. This study aims to make a specific contribution to the desistance field by comparatively exploring the qualitative aspects of the female desistance process in Sweden and England, thus allowing the female micro-process of change to be situated in broader macro- and meso-conditions and cultures.
Chapter 3

Methods and methodologies: Frameworks, implementation and ethics

3.1 Frameworks and approaches in ‘Stories Across Borders’

In this chapter I set out the methodological frameworks and approaches that have been employed in this project, including both theoretical justifications and practical characteristics of the research process. To start with, the specific aims and objectives of the study will be highlighted, followed by a detailed presentation and defence of the research methods and the wider methodological frameworks adhered to. The study is firmly located within the contours of qualitative interpretative research; specifically underpinned by a critical humanist perspective and governed by a feminist research agenda. Stressing the importance of reflexivity and transparency in the research practice, this section will also draw attention to what I, as the sole researcher, bring to the project and thus shed light on how my personal ideologies impact on the research process overall. Moreover, the suitability of the narrative life-story interview format is underlined, including reflections from the field on the practical aspects of this interview format in a feminist, cross-national criminological research project. The thematically organised analytical processes are subsequently outlined, followed by details regarding participant recruitment, selection
processes and data limitations. Lastly, the chapter is brought to a close by drawing attention to the project's ethical considerations and processes.

3.2 Research aims and objectives
With the overall objective of expanding on and contributing to international knowledge production about female experiences of crime and criminal justice, the specific aims of this study are to:

- Explore differences and similarities in female pathways to crime in Sweden and England.
- Compare and contrast the female experience of justice in different, namely the Swedish and English, criminal justice systems.
- Investigate the processes of female desistance from crime in Sweden and England.
- Shed light on if, and if so how, gender ‘matters’ differently in female ex-offending biographies in two different national settings.

3.3 Qualitative research
This study is of a qualitative nature, grounded in a critical humanistic perspective (Plummer, 2012); located within the wider framework of symbolic interactionism. Blumer (1986:2) identifies the three key tenets of symbolic interactionism as follows:

1. ‘Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them’.
2. ‘The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows’.
3. ‘These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters’.

Symbolic interactionism understands society as socially constructed through human interaction and hence falls under the major sociological tradition of interpretivist approaches. The interpretivist tradition views people and human interpretations,
perceptions, meanings and understandings as the essential source of data (Mason, 2002). In practice, this translates to a research methodology that focuses on subjective meanings and individual interpretations of reality, rather than on any form of 'objective' reality. Within deviance research specifically, Denzin (1974) argues that symbolic interactionism also requires the researcher to situate the data in specific contexts, as well as directs the researcher to adopt, to the best if his or her ability, the standpoint of the interviewee. In turn, the critical humanistic perspective, principally developed by Ken Plummer (2001:14), includes five central tenets;

1. A focus on human subjectivity and creativity.
2. Dealing with human experiences through their social and economic organisation.
3. An intimate familiarity with such experience.
4. A self-awareness of the moral and political role by the researcher to move towards social structures producing less exploitation, oppression and injustice.
5. An epistemological understanding of radical, pragmatic empiricism that knowing is always partial, though grounded in experience.

The critical humanist perspective emphasises social justice for all and argues for the value of human beings, along with the search for a more free and equal world, to underpin all aspects of theory, methods, ethics and politics (Plummer, 2012). This strand of thought thus aims to fortify the link between qualitative critical inquiry and the search for social justice. As suggested by Denzin (2010:31), this critical form of qualitative research "fits itself to the relation between the individual and society, to the nexus of biography and society and attempts to show how individual troubles and problems become public issues". The researcher is here understood to be 'an active agent for change' (Ibid.:16), who aims to make "the world visible in ways that implement social justice goals" (Ibid.:57).

Situating the research in these theoretical frameworks, the study will give exclusive focus to subjective experiences and understandings of crime and criminal justice from female ex-offenders’ viewpoints. Silverman (2010:6) argues that research that is concerned with
subjectivities, voices and ‘the authenticity of human experience’ is especially well-suited for qualitative research methods. In the context of criminological work specifically, qualitative research has been suggested to be a highly useful tool for exploring offender perspectives as well as their lived experiences (Byrne and Trew, 2005). Qualitative methods moreover produce rich, multi-layered data, which attempt to catch the complexity inherent in human life and experience. Reflecting what is known about female offenders, qualitative methods are proposed to also do most justice to women’s lived experiences, as well as allowing women to define their own problems and perspectives (Barberet, 2014).

3.3.1 Cross-national qualitative research
Cross-national research is an area dominated by quantitative methods, however, for a deeper exploration of the interrelations between the personal and the social in different cultural settings, the development of cross-national qualitative methods are essential (Chamberlayne and King, 1996). Nelken (2010:69) suggests that qualitative and interpretative approaches in comparative criminology provide a vital additional source of information to the claims made by more mainstream work in the field. To grasp the more qualitative sides of crime and criminal justice, the lived experience must also find a space in cross-national frameworks. It is likely, however, that the scarcity of this type of research is related to the many challenges involved. Mangen (1999:115) reminds us of the importance to stay aware of the fact that "by its very nature, cross-national research typically extracts greater methodological compromises than a single-country focus". Nonetheless, if successfully conducted, cross-national qualitative methods present a unique and intellectually-rewarding research opportunity (Ibid.).

Major pitfalls in cross-national qualitative research include lack of linguistic competence and cultural awareness, along with ethnocentrism and the "confusion of the familiar with the necessary" (Nelken, 2010: 18). In his discussion of benefits and limitations of qualitative cross-national methods, Mangen (1999) argues that for successful interpretation of cross-national data, sensitivity to historical, cultural and political specificities is essential. These potential shortcomings are significantly reduced in this study due to the fact that I, as the sole researcher, have resided extensively in both of the countries chosen for analysis.
Specifically, I spent my first 18 years in Sweden but have resided in England during the last 11 years. As argued in Chapter 1, criminal justice is reflective of wider cultures and norms and therefore, having personal experience of living in the countries under investigation is a substantial benefit. "Actually living in a place for a long period is the best - perhaps the only reliable - way to get a sense of what is salient" (Nelken, 2010:96). In support of this viewpoint, Pakes (2010:24) suggests that the category of the expatriate\textsuperscript{17} provides an exceptional position for the undertaking of cross-cultural research, combining virtues of "intimate knowledge of their home country but having moved abroad, with the ability to look at developments in ‘la patrie’ from a distance. That brings a perspective that is both sensitive to nuance and detail but at the same time can be broad brush and holistic".

Language barriers are a prime impediment to the development of more widespread use of qualitative cross-national frameworks (Schneider, 2001). However, my linguistic proficiencies in both Swedish and English radically limit the impact of this barrier. The chance for cultural-specific linguistic meanings to be lost, otherwise a major pitfall in research of this kind (Mangen, 1999; Nelken, 2010), are thus minimised. An additional linguistic barrier is that of translation, which is identified as a prime problem in comparative research, complicated by terms inevitably being embedded in cultural contexts (Melossi, 2001)\textsuperscript{18}. Due to the many challenges involved, qualitative forms of cross-national critical inquiry remains a marginal field. However, facing up to these challenges, it offers exciting prospects of opening up the traditionally parochial criminological borders, with the potential to “enrich our vocabulary, expand our explanatory frameworks and situate crime in a larger context” (Barberet, 2014:7). Cross-national research is also a fundamental tool for exploring whether “criminology’s claims are more than local truths” (Nelken, 2010:14).

### 3.4 A feminist research practice

"All inquiry reflects the standpoint of the inquirer. All observation is theory-laden. There is no possibility of theory - or value-free knowledge. The days of naive realism and naive positivism are over" (Denzin, 2010:24).

\textsuperscript{17} Defined in the Oxford Online Dictionary as ‘a person who lives outside their native country’ (see: http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/expatriate?q=expatriate).

\textsuperscript{18} See S.3.8.1 for how translation issues were dealt with in this study.
Reflexivity is an essential part of the research process, and maybe especially so in research guided by feminist perspectives. Reflexivity in research can be understood as the “critical examination and analytical exploration of the nature of the research process to demonstrate any assumptions” (Maynard, 1994:15). All research about society inevitably involves moral and political decisions, and “accounts of the world vary with the lens one brings to it” (Young, 2011:160). It is thus recognised that my personal ideologies play a significant role in the production of knowledge and, to borrow the words of Mills (1959:21); “I am hopeful that all my own biases will show, for I think judgements should be explicit”. Aiming to be as transparent as possible about these underpinning value-systems, this section will briefly reflect on what I as a researcher bring into the research process.

Located within the wider framework of critical qualitative inquiry, this study is guided by a feminist research agenda. Feminism encompasses a number of theoretical positions and perspectives, and there is no one definition or agreed consensus about what exactly characterises a feminist methodology or a ‘feminist research perspective’ (Maynard, 1994; Stanko, 1994). With this in mind, my aim here is to make explicit how I personally situate the feminist aspects in this research. Drawing on Bloom’s (1998) notion of an internally persuasive discourse, I position the feminist perspectives incorporated into this study as not only a way of doing research, but as a wider reflection of a way of thinking and being in the world. Feminism is thus understood to be a critical standpoint that guides everyday action and influences choices and behaviour throughout the social world. Kelly et al (1994:28), locating feminism as both a theory and practice 'which informs our lives', and therefore recognising that feminist research moves beyond the notion of just certain methods, suggest that the term 'feminist research practice' may be more suitable. In support of this wider interpretation of feminist perspectives in research, I employ Kelly et al's (1994) concept of a feminist research practice in this study.

While acknowledging difference and diversity within feminist thought, there are nevertheless a few key principles that are shared within feminist research practices. A core tenet involves the belief that women’s voices share common themes, especially living in a gendered, subordinated, context (Stanko, 1994). Maynard (1994:23) sums this up well
stating that "whatever perspective is adopted, feminism provides a theoretical framework concerned with gender divisions, women's oppression or patriarchal control which informs our understanding of the social world." Feministic methods moreover replace neutrality and indifference by conscious partiality (Bryman, 2008) and intentionally seek for emancipatory goals of feminism to be realised. Similar to the wider spectrum of critical research, social meanings in this type of research are, in contrast to positivistic models, analysed critically in terms of structural inequalities in society (Jupp, 2006) and include an ongoing search for the emancipation of those who are oppressed by existing social and power relations (Hudson, 2000). The traditionalist feminist idea that “feminist research is exclusively on and with women” (Kelly et al, 1994:33) is here rejected and gender is accordingly understood to be a powerful mediator of experience for women as well as men. Although this study does not include men, it is nevertheless important to recognise that the wider critical humanistic framework underpinning this study is supportive of a social justice agenda of a more equal world for all.

3.4.1 Transformatory research aspects

The political nature of research is another cornerstone of feminist research practice. Indeed, "no feminist study can be politically neutral." (Maynard, 1994:23). Research should accordingly be directed towards social change and aim to produce useful knowledge that attempts to “alter the oppressive and exploitative conditions in society” (Skeggs, 1994:87). These ‘transformatory aspects’ of feminist research (Maynard and Purvis, 1994:7) can, however, take different forms. Kelly et al (1994) argue that a major issue within this framework; however, is that most research fundamentally neglects to deal with the question of exactly how these ‘transformatory’ features is achieved. Bearing in mind this critique, I wish to make explicit how I am attempting to incorporate these aims in this study.

Maynard and Purvis (1994) helpfully identify two dimensions of the transformatory ideal; on the one level there is individual empowerment, and on the other there is social change on the group level. Primarily this study seeks to produce useful knowledge that will benefit female offenders as a group, including extending current understandings of women’s experiences of different criminal justice systems; making visible the realities of female
offenders’ biography and how gender ‘matters’ in this lived context; thus seeking to create knowledge that may enable policy and practice that is founded on, and is more sensitive to, the female lived experience and lastly; making a contribution to a more balanced representation of the female subject in criminological research. A general aim is accordingly to join force with other feminist criminologists in the scholar-activist role; working actively for political and social change and advocating for gender equality and women’s rights (Barberet, 2014).

However, the chosen methods have been designed to also make the research experience applicable on the level of individual empowerment. Evidence suggests that successful qualitative interviews can be experienced in very positive and empowering terms by the participant, including feeling listened to with interest, being taken seriously in a safe and sympathetic setting, and developing a sense of self-worth (Oakley, 1981; Skeggs, 1994; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Plummer, 2012). Furthermore, the methods are also framed around aspects of motivational interviewing, and therefore include elements that are designed to encourage an individual’s ability to move forward in a positive life-direction (see S.3.5.3 for more on this). Additionally, in recognition of social hierarchies and privilege, while emphasising the importance of reciprocity in feminist research practice and the significant value these women’s willingness to share their life-stories with me has for this research, the participants also received a £10 High Street Voucher at the end of the interview as a token of thanks for giving their time.

3.4.2 Power and intimacy in the research setting
Power is another important aspect of feminist research practice (Skeggs, 1994). Bloom (1998) suggests that key tenets of the feminist interview should include attempts to break down hierarchies, be personally engaged, interactive and open-ended, to allow for intimacy and for relationships to develop, give focussed attention and non-judgemental validation of narratives, and that for the researcher to aim to identify with participants and strive for egalitarian relationships. While this ideal of breaking down hierarchy is laudable, the concepts of power and egalitarianism in the research relationship arguably need to be problematised further. As noted by Maynard (1994), feminist researchers may be very
critical of hierarchal research positions; however, it is far from clear how these actually can be eliminated. In a similar vein, Skeggs (1994) criticises feminist ontology for often denying power relations *between* women. Importantly, it is a flawed assumption that women-to-women interviewing would always produce rapport through gender identification (Phoenix, 1994), as negotiation in the research setting is affected by many factors, including gender, race, disability and social class.

It should furthermore be recognised that the balance of power is not a constant, but is in continual flux. While it is typically assumed that power always lies with the researcher, especially when 'researching down' (though this term is arguably quite offensive and directly contradictory to the non-hierarchical idea about power), Bloom (1998) reminds us to remain reflective about power and read it as a complex and shifting matter. "*Power is situated and contextualised within particular intersubjective relationships*", and "*unidirectional notion of power can always be disrupted in practice*" (Ibid:35-36). Nevertheless, female researchers are typically in a relatively powerful position in comparison to many other women (Phoenix, 1994). So though we may never be able to eliminate power, the most important thing is nonetheless, as highlighted by Bloom (1998); that we learn to notice it, interpret it and allow it into our analysis, and accordingly start to unpack its meaning and consequences.

Bearing these caveats in mind, interviews should seek to be non-exploitative in nature and in accordance with the wider feminist epistemology; objectivity and detachment are replaced with sensitivity, honesty, empathy and emotion (Oakley, 1981). Rather than rejecting the value of emotion in research, as commonly proposed in positivistic research approaches, it is suggested that emotion should be viewed as a strength in the interview setting, as it can help to connect individuals as well as give a more in-depth understanding of subtle processes and theory (Young, 2011; Thompson, 2000). Without it, Young (2011) argues, the interview becomes an unnatural fixation of the instrumental, actively eliminating the expressive.
Moreover, as noted by Oakley (1981:49), there is “no intimacy without reciprocity” and any questions from the interviewee directed towards the interviewer should be met with as much honesty as the situation allows for. This sense of ‘trade’ in disclosing personal information has been found to be helpful for both the researched and the researcher to overcome differences (Skeggs, 1994). A key tenet of feminist research practice is undoubtedly about incorporating, rather than denying, personal involvement, and the interview is thus interpreted as a personal encounter. Linking this to the notion of power, Phoenix (1994) argues that one of the major contributions made by feminist research is the understanding that it is in fact not 'bad science' to shift the power balance and for the researcher to answer questions also from the participant. Evidence shows that in practice, allowing for this form of personal involvement is a vital factor for the establishment of trust in a research relationship (Maynard, 1994; Bloom, 1998).

3.5 Narrative life-story interviewing

“Human beings are storytelling animals” (Young, 2011:89)

Stories have always played an important role in criminology, especially within feminist strands, and it has been suggested that the field has recently experienced somewhat of a 'narrative turn' (Gelsthorpe, 2007). Placing people and their life-stories at the very heart of the project’s data gathering process, the data has been co-produced with ex-offending women via narrative life-story interviews. The life-story method suitably centres on lived experiences and personal views, meanings and practices, while additionally allowing such subjective conceptions to be linked with wider social and historical contexts (Messerschmidt, 1997; Adriansen, 2012). Recognising that gender is an important mediating factor in the lives of female offenders, feminist scholars in the field have argued that in order to truly extend knowledge about female offending, research that combines the specific with the general is needed. That is, the particular life experiences and circumstances of female offenders must be situated within wider gendered social circumstances in society (Lloyd, 1995; Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2004; Banwell, 2010; Lander, 2003), thus effectively “linking women's private troubles with public concerns” (Heidensohn, 1996:14). This arguably takes us back to the very essence of the ‘sociological imagination’ and the belief
that “the life of an individual cannot be adequately understood without reference to the institutions within which his [SIC] biography is enacted” (Mills, 1959:161).

The narrative interview is a type of qualitative, in-depth interview which moves beyond the question-and-response structure and instead uses everyday conversational interaction, especially storytelling and listening, to produce rich interview data (Bauer, 1996). A narrative has the power to convey what matters in an individual life (Mason, 2002) and can be understood as a way of constructing identity; shaped and performed through everyday activities (Bamberg, 2011). The telling of stories plays an important role in day-to-day interactions and some suggest that the sharing of stories can have therapeutic meanings, facilitate order and coherence in a life-story, and also help make sense of difficult life-experiences (Plummer, 2012; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Wengraf et al, 2002; Orbuch, 1997; Vaughan, 2007; Thompson, 2000). Providing further support for this notion of ‘rehabilitative storytelling’ (Maruna, 2001), Bamberg (2011) argues that the narrative positioning of the self in time and space can also enable constructive self-related actions, including self-disclosure, self-reflection and self-critique, which in turn may lead to improved self-awareness, self-understanding and consequently; enhanced levels of self-control and self-discipline. Stories can thus help to form identities (Herrschaft et al, 2009).

The narrative interview technique is deemed especially appropriate in research that deals with sensitive forms of personal experience. To this end, Bauer (1996) suggests that the narrative interview is particularly well-suited to the exploration of ‘hot’ issues, that is, social problems that may be embarrassing to the respondent, be of a highly personal nature or carry negative social implications. This conceptualisation of 'hot' issues is arguably very fitting in the context of in-depth interviewing with female ex-offenders, as we know that criminality typically carries particular stigma for females (Kennedy, 1993; Heidensohn, 1996; Naffine; 1996).

Alongside these noted advantages, it is important to also bring to light any drawbacks of using a narrative interview format. Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000) point out that a narrative presented in an interview is always a form of a purposeful account, which is guided by
expectations and shaped by the particular research situation. This will always have an impact on the data that is being generated. Moreover, it is also imperative to stay mindful of what narratives can actually reveal. As noted by Bryman (2008), it is questionable how far narratives can reflect any underlying ‘truth’ about what is going, or indeed to what extent they can access divergent realities experienced by different groups of individuals, including aspects of structural forces that may have a bearing on the lived experience. Narratives may thus not be able to offer a complete picture of a life-story. However, this is not what the narrative interview is trying to achieve. Rather, sitting within the symbolic interactionist framework, narrative interviewing place prime focus on subjective perceptions and experiences, as interpreted and defined by the participant (Ibid.). It is then up to the researcher to situate those personal narratives within broader structural contexts.

3.5.1 Interactionality and plurality in accounts

It is essential to recognise that the context of the interactive interview situation plays an important role for both the content and the structure of the narrative. Indeed, there is no such thing as ‘raw’ experience (Maynard and Purvis, 1994), or unmediated accounts (Skeggs, 1994; Matthews, 2014), and stories are accordingly understood to be socially constructed. Rather than producing 'hard' data, the interview material is seen to represent “rough indicators of offenders’ internal self-stories” (Maruna, 2001:49). Recognising that narratives are co-produced, the prime role played by the researcher should be that of an attentive listener. Each story shared by the participant should be allowed to finish uninterrupted and probes should seek to use the participant’s phrasing and order to the greatest extent possible (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). While some writers argue for the use of solely one question in a narrative interview, such as ‘Tell me your life story’ (see for example Wengraf and Chamberlayne, 2006), others suggest that it is naïve to claim that narrative interviewing actually can be unstructured to this extent. Bauer (1996) argues that the narrative interview in reality typically involves a compromise between narratives and questioning, as some standard questions/topic areas are necessitated if any comparison across interviews is to take place.
It is moreover highly problematic to expect that research participants will have the ability to provide a single, coherent and meaningful answer to such a huge question as ‘tell me your life story’ (Raggatt, 2006). Rejecting the notion of one definite life-story, Raggatt (2006:18) suggests that the narrative interview is in reality more likely to produce a selective section of a life-story, representing plurality, multiplicity and conflict in the ‘dialogical self’. In turn this reflects, as expressed by Young (2011:37), the “constant flux of identity”, with narratives constantly being re-written as people retell their story, reassessing the self.

“Every ego, so far from being a unity, is in the highest degree a manifold world, a constellated heaven, a chaos of forms, of states and stages, of inheritances and potentialities. [...] As a body everyone is single, as a soul never”
(Herman Hesse, 1929:71-72)

3.5.2 Structure and flexibility in the interview setting
In order to allow for comparison across interviews, as well as maintain focus on the set aims and objectives of the research, the narrative life-story interviews conducted in this study took a semi-structured, flexible design. The interview questions were initially developed in accordance with the set research questions, and these were then trialled in pilot interviews in both Swedish and English19. Following these pilots, the interview schedules and topic guides were revised and re-developed, primarily making the questions more narratively inviting, according to participant feedback and personal assessment of the ‘flow’ of the interview. The final interview schedules and topic guides were more flexible in structure and the questions were of a broader nature20.

With this built-in flexibility, the interviewees directed both the flow and order of the interview. If key topic areas were not naturally uncovered through this process, I would probe the interviewee for further stories in these areas. The interview hence took a pseudo-conversational form (Oakley, 1981), with the participant directing both the rhythm and the level of detail for each topic. Devault (1990:99) stresses the importance, especially for research grounded in feminist perspectives, of the respondent deciding on their own

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19 These pilot interviews were, in part due to ethical reasons, not conducted with female ex-offenders but with women in my personal network who volunteered to take on a ‘fake’ persona for the sole purpose of testing out the interview schedule.
20 See Appendix 11.2.3 for interview topic guides.
wording and direction of the interview, as this allows the interviewee to “provide accounts rooted in the realities of their lives”.

It is recognised, however, that participants inevitably presented a variety of story-telling abilities and while the aim was to use as few probes as possible, probes such as ‘Could you tell me a bit more about that’ or ‘What happened then?’ were used to various degrees in order to elicit further stories about experiences and perspectives as understood by the participant. This is a structure that has successfully been employed in other criminology-orientated research; producing rich and meaningful data (see for example Banwell, 2010; Hollway and Jefferson, 2001; Gilfus, 1993).

3.5.3 The use of timelines
The interviews were initiated by the making of a timeline. The use of timelines in qualitative interviews has been suggested to be an especially valuable tool for life-story work, when the lived experience is in focus (Adriansen, 2012). Some of the major advantages of using a timeline in a life-story interview include that it provides a visual representation of key events in a person’s life, it can help engage a participant to construct stories, it can aid to provide the interview with a chronological dimension, it allows the participant to take some ownership of the interview, and evidence also suggests that it can enable a more trusting atmosphere as it may remove some of the formal sentiment often present at the start of the interview (Ibid.). Similar to the variability in story-telling abilities, there was also variability in the degree to which participants were willing to engage with the timeline, and it was hence important to allow for flexibility also in this section. Importantly, it should be noted that the timeline was not about assuming linearity in stories but rather, it was viewed as an aiding organisational tool for the sharing of life-experiences by participants.

Inspired by aspects of motivational interviewing techniques, the timeline was in addition revisited at the end of the interview as a closing strategy; looking ahead at goals and aspirations for the coming five years. Motivational interviewing is a client-centred interviewing style, used primarily in treatment work with problem drinkers and drug users, and grounds the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewed on continual
motivational encouragement of a client’s ability to move forward (Rollnick and Miller, 1995). Other chief tenets of motivational interviewing include reflective listening, expressing acceptance and affirmation, eliciting and selectively re-enforcing the client's own self-motivational statements, avoiding resistance by not jumping ahead of the client, and affirming the client's freedom of choice and self-direction (Ibid.:328). Motivational interviewing thus shares some common characteristics with narrative interviewing, and in accordance with the underpinning ethical frameworks applied in this study, it was considered important to close the interview in a positive and motivational manner. In practice this was done by re-visiting the timeline and, turning the sheet over, drawing a new timeline from the current date to five years ahead. The participant was then invited to share some of her dreams and hopes for the coming years, which was followed by a brief chat about possible routes how to achieve these goals. This approach can help research participants to see their aspirations as tangible, develop their personal ability to move forwards and as a result, create a sense of hope for the future (Rollnick and Miller, 1995). The use of the timeline in the interviews was, overall, deemed successful, with positive feed-back and comments from the interviewees especially with regard to the value of visualising and making feasible routes to fulfilling personal goals.

3.6 Reflections from the field: The applied experience of the narrative life-story interview

Having completed 26 interviews with 13 Swedish women and 13 English, it is worthwhile to critically reflect on the applied experience of conducting narrative life-story interviews in a feminist cross-national research project. Firstly, while I expected to be personally affected by the sharing of intimate stories, I fundamentally underestimated the intensity of submerging myself into someone else’s life through this interview format. Aspects of self-discovery and the revelation of personal uncertainties, common in critical research (Young, 2011), undoubtedly played a role in the research process. I accordingly learned the importance of allowing time to digest the information and the stories shared at each encounter; spending a substantial amount of time writing in a personal research journal about the emotions and thoughts these evoked. There was also a constant questioning of
my own capabilities, as well as critical reflection around entitlement and privilege, to share intimate and often traumatic stories of human experience.

It was moreover a steep learning curve to accept that regardless of how much I prepared, I could never prepare ‘enough’ for every encounter. This is, after all, the essential nature of human interaction. As a reflection of my first interview experience, I share a brief extract from my research journal

05.11.12 Monday 20:54

‘I survived’. The first words noted down. And I did more than survive - I will dare to say it went really well. A first observation is realising the importance of eye contact, it helps to build that scene of pretence, of familiarity and closeness. The interview schedule, just a quick glance, is such a forceful reminder of the performance. Quickly it breaks the impression of improvisation, of the there and then, the natural flow of sharing an intimate moment. It may be that I have sacrificed some detail, but it felt like the right thing to do. Hopefully I will not regret it.

Learning to trust myself as an interviewer was definitely an important part of making the interviews flow naturally and as noted in the fieldnotes, not being distracted by the interview schedule and being able to keep eye contact played a central role in encouraging a natural interaction. This excerpt very much illustrates the conceptualisation of the interview experience as a performance, ”a masquerade of pretence and presentation” (Young, 2011:59). Adhering to the narrative ideal, paying minimal attention to the interview schedule meant that the conversations could take a more free-flowing structure and there was no forced linearity of accounts originating from the structure of the schedule. The participant was therefore allowed to decide on both the direction and rhythm of the interview, though I typically re-visited some topic areas towards the end of the interview if they had not yet been covered. I found this personalised aspect of the conversation to be a key ingredient for a successful interview, each interview taking a slightly different form and order. Reflecting critically on the experience in hindsight, I do believe some detail in terms of precision in comparability of interview data was sacrificed due to this, producing different volumes of data for different sections. However, producing rich and arguably more authentic data, representative of the ‘messiness’ of social life, this flexible format allowed

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21 All of my diary entries and fieldnotes recorded in Sweden were written in Swedish, however, for textual accessibility I have here translated these to English.
the data to reflect what was subjectively understood by the women as salient in their life-stories.

Taking a more critical viewpoint on the narrative technique overall, I agree with Bauer (1996), as noted above, that the narrative interview in practice does become more of a compromise between questions-and-answers and narratives. The line of when a response ‘becomes’ a narrative is, doubtlessly, blurry. Likewise, in support of Raggatt’s (2006) argument noted earlier, I think it is highly problematic to expect that all research participants will have the ability to independently construct coherent and meaningful life-stories. My interviewees demonstrated a range of storytelling aptitudes, with some quite confidently sharing stories from their past and present, while others needed considerable support to construct narratives. A couple of interviewees were even expressively uncomfortable with this type of structure. For example, one of my participants stated before we started the interview that “you’re just gonna have to ask me questions you know, I am not very good at talking about myself really, I don’t really like it” (Fieldnotes ‘Jenny’ 22 15.11.13). Although few stated this so clearly as 'Jenny', several of the women I interviewed did hint at a similar reluctance to just freely talk about themselves, preferring to have questions asked of them.

Adhering to the methodological ethos in this study, my priority was always to respect the woman’s preference and I thus formed the interview accordingly. Non-verbal indications were also incorporated into this ‘assessment’. A prime example of this would be the reading of body language and the level of comfortability in discussing certain life-experiences, especially traumatic ones. While some women used the interview as a therapeutic forum to talk at length about challenging life-experiences, others made it clear, verbally or otherwise, that the distress linked to discussing such experiences was too great. The woman’s preference in such situations was at all times prioritised, over and above data collection.

Differing storytelling aptitudes arguably represent a key problem inherent in the narrative technique, that is, the main onus is put on the participant rather than on the interviewer to

22 All participants’ names used in this study are pseudonyms. These were chosen by the participants after the completion of the interview.
lead and direct the interview. This is not only problematic in terms of assumptions concerning knowledge and ability, but it can also be experienced as a foreign and demanding experience. In addition, there must also be a personal interest in sharing stories. Some advocates of narrative forms of interviewing, such as Wengraf et al. (2002:254), suggest that; “The invitation to talk about the past, to recall from memory, puts the subject centre stage with the authority that comes with ownership of a scarce and unique resource: the personal account.” However, the problem with this in practice is that the subject may not actually wish to take centre stage! I had a number of examples of this across my data collection experience. I would accordingly argue that it is a flawed assumption that this interest, of a sense of ‘authority’, would be shared by participants.

Recognising these issues, the noted built-in flexibility in the interview structure was a hugely valuable aspect of the design, as it allowed me to apply more or less structure depending on each woman’s response and behaviour. That said, the majority of the women interviewed in this study, including ‘Jenny’ highlighted above, did become more at ease as the interview went on and became gradually more comfortable in telling their own story, in their own rhythm and words. In contrast then, this may represent one of the major benefits of the applied technique, namely that, with the right guidance, women gradually became more confident and able to talk about themselves in a more reflective and personalised way.

At the other end of the spectrum, I also interviewed women who were very comfortable in telling their story and who hardly needed any probing at all. A key example of this was my meeting with ‘Eva’, which went on for just over three hours. This was one of the few interviews that I needed to take some control of for the opposite reason, that is, if the narratives would not have been steered by me, we could very easily have been there all night. While reinforcing the fact that life-story work can be very time-consuming (Thompson, 2000), this was an interview experience in which I had the opportunity to stay more ‘true’ to the narrative ideal. It was evident that ‘Eva’ enjoyed sharing and reflecting on her life-story, and I therefore restricted my role to that of an attentive listener. I also felt that she was getting something positive out of narrating her own life. This notion was confirmed by ‘Eva’ herself when after the interview she said ‘wow I could just go on for ages and ages [laugh], this is like therapy this, isn’t it?’ (Fieldnotes ‘Eva’, 14.11.12). This arguably
provides some empirical support to the value of 'rehabilitative storytelling', which was commented on earlier in the chapter.

3.6.1 Feminist narrative interviews: ideals and conflicts

Lastly, I would like to make some brief comments specifically about feminist forms of narrative interviewing. Adhering to a feminist epistemology, I would suggest that there is somewhat of an inherent conflict between a feminist interviewing practice and certain aspects of the narrative interview format. With feminist ideals of the interview typically promoting personal, friendship-like forms of relations to develop, the narrative model of advocating almost a monologist form of storytelling on behalf of the participant is arguably very far from this notion of a natural and open interaction. However, the question arises; what is actually 'natural' in the interview setting? Bloom (1998) gives attention to this conflict in her work on feminist narrative interpretation and notes that, in real life interaction, a so called 'normal' conversation does typically include comments from both parties, allowing for a dialogue between two interacting parties.

Expressing empathy and sharing emotions often takes on an especially prominent role in interviews dealing with 'hot' issues (Bauer, 1996) and hence the need for dialogue to facilitate verbal validation of the stories shared by the participant became essential. Prioritising empathy and validation, I soon rejected the monologistic narrative interviewing model and employed a more flexible interpretation of the narrative ideal. Going hand in hand with this, and resonating with the methodological framework, the aspect of reciprocity in the interview dialogue emerged as highly important. I thus also shared snippets of my own life-story when asked by the respondent, which was deemed important not only for rapport building, but also on ethical grounds.
3.7 Participation, recruitment and selection

3.7.1 Sample numbers and selection

Due to the rich production of data in qualitative research and the demand on research resources, samples are typically quite small (Mason, 2002). Taking into account all aspects of this study, including the added complexity of collecting data in more than one country and language, the study set out with the aim of completing a total of 30 interviews; 15 in Sweden and 15 in England. In the end a total of 26 participant interviews were completed\textsuperscript{23}, 13 in Sweden and 13 in England. However, only 24 of these, 12 in Sweden and 12 in England were used in the final analysis. This was because two interviews could not be analysed in terms of either desistance or experiences of the criminal justice system\textsuperscript{24}.

The sample was of a purposive nature and participation was thus criterion-based; a common and highly useful sampling strategy in qualitative research (Ritchie \textit{et al}, 2003). The inclusion and exclusion criteria for participation in this study were as follows:

To be considered for participation in this research, all of the following criteria had to be fulfilled:

- Be female and over the age of 18.
- Have a minimum of two convictions (any offence group).
- Have at least one conviction within the last 10 years (at the time of recruitment).

\textsuperscript{23} An additional 12 practitioner interviews were completed. However, due to space issues, with priority given to the women’s voices, these have not been included in the final thesis. The aim is to re-visit these in a post-doctoral project.

\textsuperscript{24} In the Swedish setting this was due to one’s participant’s claimed innocence of all accounts of convictions, involving specifically repeated sexual assaults on her daughter. Thus, no discussions about change processes and experiences of routes out could be had, as the woman denied any wrong-doing. In contrast, in the English setting the excluded interview involved a meeting with a young woman, who was unclear about the differences between arrest and conviction and it emerged through the interview that, although she had been arrested several times, she had no experiences of being sanctioned, other than staying in the police station. Representing ‘outliers’ for various reasons, these two interviews were excluded to enable better data comparability.
• Self-identify as an ex-offender, i.e., not currently involved in any offending behaviour\textsuperscript{25}.
• Be sufficiently proficient in Swedish or English to be able to give informed consent and undertake the interview.

The exclusion criteria for this study were as follows:
• Be male or under the age of 18.
• Have only one or no convictions.
• Not have any convictions in the last 10 years (at the time of recruitment).
• Currently involved in offending behaviour (self-reported).
• Not being sufficiently proficient in Swedish or English to be able to give consent or undertake the interview.

\textbf{3.7.2 Participant recruitment processes}

Participants were recruited via organisations working with female ex-offenders, either in a statutory setting or within the charitable sector. Ex-offender organisations were identified and then contacted firstly via an email, in which the research project was introduced and a request for a personal meeting, to discuss potential co-operation in the recruitment process, was made. If the organisation responded positively to this request, a personal meeting with a key member of staff would be arranged. During this meeting the research was introduced in more detail, the organisation’s standpoint towards facilitating contact with ex-offending women was discussed along with, if they were willing to collaborate, possible recruitment routes. The organisation upheld autonomy to decide on their preferred recruitment route. Specifically, this could either be that they approached women they currently, or previously, had a working relationship with who they believed fulfilled the inclusion criteria or alternatively, I visited the organisational premises during scheduled activities and introduced

\textsuperscript{25} This was not externally validated, but was based on the women’s own assessment at the time of recruitment. This criteria was particularly emphasised to gatekeepers aiding in the recruitment process (see S.3.7.2 below) and hence, only women that practitioners understood to be currently desisting were approached. That said, a few women, during the course of the interview, hinted at having had a couple of minor relapses to crime more recently than their last conviction (particularly linked to a ‘survival narrative’, see for example S.6.4.2 and S.7.3.1).
the project in person. I would also leave recruitment flyers\textsuperscript{26} with the contact person at each premise, for them to distribute as they saw fit. While this represented the general recruitment process, the more precise recruitment route differed between the two countries. In both of the countries, however, the data collection was spread across several regions, which was deemed important in order to reduce the impact of regional specificities (Ungerson, 1996).

In the Swedish context I made initial contact with two organisations; the first one of these was a professional community based organisation run by and for ex-offenders, which works for ex-offenders’ rights in society and is sponsored by a wide range of companies and interest groups. I established positive contact with this organisation at three locations in Sweden and visited their premises and met with staff, as well as with members who were visiting at the time. While these were positive and collaborative meetings, it soon became clear that this was predominantly an organisational space used by male ex-offenders, with no women currently being active in any of the local groups that I visited. Nevertheless, I left flyers at each of the locations and welcomed contact if the situation would change. No women contacted me through this recruitment route, though I upheld active contact with especially the larger one of the three locations and re-visited their venue for a coffee and a chat at two follow up occasions. There were no women active in the group at either of these visits.

The second organisation I established contact with in Sweden was a multiagency cooperation, involving the local municipality, probation and employment services, working specifically with ex-offenders with the primary aim of enabling reintegration into the mainstream labour market. This is a statutory cooperation operating in a large number of cities across Sweden for male ex-offenders, and in a smaller number of cities for female ex-offenders. On the female side\textsuperscript{27}, they offer support and programs typically involving an intensive, holistic course over a 4-week period dealing with a range of employment-related issues, stretching from debt management and social skills in a team-based work

\textsuperscript{26} See Appendix 11.2.4 for examples of recruitment flyers.
\textsuperscript{27} I only had contact with branches specifically working with women. Although I have been informed that the cooperation operates in similar ways for both female and male ex-offender, I only refer to the female side here as I did not attend any of the centres working with men.
environment, to CV writing, criminal record disclosures and interview skills. Towards the end of this course the women are assisted to secure work placement/experience, typically starting on a wage subsidy scheme (to be faced out over a maximum of 4 years), with the aim to lead onto full-time employment. I established positive contact with this organisation across three locations in Sweden.

This became a highly valuable working relationship and the complete Swedish sample was recruited through this cooperation, though spread out over three different areas of Sweden. The key staff contact would contact women who they had worked with previously, that they believed fulfilled the inclusion criteria and might be interested in participation, and would introduce the project and inquire for permission for me to contact them directly to discuss a potential interview. In addition to this, I would also spend time at the local centres during open days. I, for example, participated in a cooking class and a movie night organised at two of the locations, and in this way I also recruited women directly. The data collection in Sweden was carried out between November 2012 and May 2013.

In the English context recruitment proved more challenging and I ended up working with a larger number of organisations; the vast majority located in the third sector. Recruitment in the English setting was also more geographically dispersed, with interviews being conducted over a larger number of locations. Although I identified and contacted a greater number of organisations working specifically with ex-offenders in the English setting, I also received a greater number of responses rejecting the possibility of engagement with the project. A lack of resources for engaging with external research, along with prioritising frontline work, were the main reasons offered. Overall, I successfully established contact with staff members at two ex-offender organisations. I also met with a manager of one statutory woman’s centre working specifically on issues around criminal justice. However, recruitment through these avenues proved slow, and a few months into the fieldwork I expanded my recruitment remit in England and initiated contact with a broader range of organisations working with women with offending histories, such as charities providing support with housing and/or drugs and alcohol.
From this expanded recruitment route I established a number of additional contacts and met with a further handful of practitioners working with supporting women in various contexts. One issue that emerged through these meetings; however, was that the majority of these services worked with women in a more acute capacity, i.e. women who were still living chaotic lifestyles and were active in some form of offending behaviour. In view of the exclusion/inclusion criteria, these women were not suitable for participation in the study. Staff at these locations often had some contact with women they had worked with previously though, who they knew had ‘moved on’ and who were therefore a more suitable sample target. Aside from these processes, I also placed a recruitment ad in an English ex-offender magazine, however, I received no responses from this.

In terms of the practical aspects of gaining contact with the women, the process was very much the same as in Sweden. That is, either the contact person at the organisation contacted women they had/had had a working relationship with and provided information about the project, and inquired whether I could contact them directly to discuss an interview, or alternatively, I attended events at the centre and informed women directly about the project. The final English sample came from a mix of recruitment routes, including drug and alcohol support services, women’s hostels, a homeless charity and an ex-offender charity’s work programme advice centre. The data collection in England was carried out between March 2013 and August 2013.

It should be noted that although the phrase ‘work programmes’ take a prominent role across the samples, the nature of these programmes differed significantly between the Swedish and English setting. In contrast to the Swedish setting, which involved holistic support over a 4 week period and then assistance with finding work placements, English work programme involvement was much more minimal. Typically, the women’s experience

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28 In addition to the ex-offender criteria, there were additional issues relating to ethical concerns recruiting in this setting. Specifically, the ethical frameworks adhered to specifically exclude recruiting women who are currently assessed as a vulnerable adult, including current struggles with problematic addiction and/or homelessness, or otherwise living under chaotic and/or exploitative circumstances, as it could pose challenges to the provision of informed consent. Please see Appendix 11.3 for ethical approvals and associated risk assessments, including factors around informed consent.

29 Specifically community-based drug and alcohol centres, offering structured day programmes and support groups.
of participation included a couple of one-to-one meetings with a dedicated advisor for people with offending histories, which focussed on putting a CV together and some discussions around criminal record disclosures and in some instances, referrals to general job and skill services.

Table 3.7.1. and 3.7.2 provide summaries of the participant profiles in each sample group (for a more descriptive overview of the women's life-stories, please see the 'pen portraits' in Appendix 11.1). Where it has been possible, mean figures for each sample group have been provided. However, it should be noted that, due to the nature of the data, there are limits to the preciseness of the quantifiable data presented. Relying exclusively on self-reported retrospective accounts, commonly situated in chaotic and substance-using contexts, many of the women could not identify with any certainly quantifiable variables such as the age of first conviction, number and range of offences, or indeed the number of sanctions experienced. This is reflective of the 'messiness' and complexity of researching lived realities, especially prominent in life-story qualitative research. The figures in table 3.7.1. and 3.7.2 should accordingly be interpreted as rough indicators of experience across the sample groups (please see section 3.7.4 for further commentary on the comparability of the two data sample groups).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Children$^*$</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>C.O.B</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Age left school</th>
<th>Main income$^*$</th>
<th>Age 1$^*$st conviction</th>
<th>Offence range</th>
<th>Total # convictions</th>
<th>Sanctions</th>
<th>Recruitment route$^{**}$</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Amanda</td>
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<td>White Brit.</td>
<td>ENG.</td>
<td>BRIT.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>JSA$^{**}$</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Shoplifting, theft, drugs</td>
<td>= 5</td>
<td>Comm./Prob./Fines</td>
<td>D&amp;A$^{**}$ support charity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>33</td>
<td>3 (2.5, 15$^*$)</td>
<td>Sgl.</td>
<td>White Brit. T</td>
<td>ENG.</td>
<td>BRIT.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>= 16</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>'Lots' Range/few prison</td>
<td>D&amp;A support charity</td>
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</tr>
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<td>White Brit.</td>
<td>ENG.</td>
<td>BRIT.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>JSA + Child benefit</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Drugs, drink Driving</td>
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<td>Comm./Fines</td>
<td>Ex-offender charity Work program</td>
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<td>ENG.</td>
<td>BRIT.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>PT job bar</td>
<td>= 15</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>= 30 Range/few prison</td>
<td>Ex-offender charity Work program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1 (8)</td>
<td>Sgl.</td>
<td>Black Brit.</td>
<td>ENG.</td>
<td>BRIT.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Shoplifting, fraud</td>
<td>= 5</td>
<td>Comm./Prob./Fines</td>
<td>Homeless charity Community church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2 (2.8, 12$^*$)</td>
<td>Sep.</td>
<td>White Brit. T</td>
<td>ENG.</td>
<td>BRIT.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>JSA$^{**}$</td>
<td>= 18</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>'Lots' Range/few prison</td>
<td>U&amp;A support charity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jade</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3 (27, 26, 8)</td>
<td>Mar.</td>
<td>White Brit.</td>
<td>ENG.</td>
<td>BRIT.</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>= 6</td>
<td>Comm./Prob./Fines</td>
<td>Ex-offender charity Work program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby Red</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3 (25, 24, 10)</td>
<td>Div.</td>
<td>Black Caribbean</td>
<td>ENG.</td>
<td>BRIT.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>PT job + Child benefit</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>GHB, theft</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Comm./Prob./Fines</td>
<td>U&amp;A support charity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serena</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1 (1.7$^*$)</td>
<td>Widow Partner</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>IRL.</td>
<td>BRIT.</td>
<td>Never went</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>= 60 Range/2 prison</td>
<td>Ex-offender charity Women's hostel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharon</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3 (31, 26, 19$^*$)</td>
<td>Sgl.</td>
<td>White Brit.</td>
<td>ENG.</td>
<td>BRIT.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>JSA$^{**}$</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>'Lots' Range/few prison</td>
<td>Ex-offender charity Women's model</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tia</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2 (5, 1)</td>
<td>Sgl.</td>
<td>White Brit.</td>
<td>ENG.</td>
<td>BRIT.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>'Lots' Range/3 prison</td>
<td>U&amp;A support charity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronica</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1 (27$^*$)</td>
<td>Sgl.</td>
<td>Mixed Carribean</td>
<td>ENG.</td>
<td>BRIT.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>JSA$^{**}$</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>= 60% Range/few prison</td>
<td>Ex-offender charity Women's hostel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total sample</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>392</strong> mothers</td>
<td><strong>Partner</strong></td>
<td><strong>White Brit.</strong></td>
<td><strong>ENG.</strong></td>
<td><strong>BRIT.</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>JSA$^{</strong>}$**</td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
<td>= 18</td>
<td><strong>= 60% prison</strong></td>
<td><strong>= 60% prison</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^*$Refers to the number of children with ages indicated in parentheses.

$^{**}$Refers to the recruitment route where D&A$^{**}$ indicates D&A support charity, and U&A indicates U&A support charity.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>C.O.B.</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Age left school</th>
<th>Main income</th>
<th>Age 1st conv.</th>
<th>Offence range</th>
<th>Total # conv.</th>
<th>Sanctions</th>
<th>Recruitment route</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Sgl.</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>SWE.</td>
<td>SWED.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Wage sub. 75%, Wage 23%</td>
<td>= early 20s</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>'Lots'</td>
<td>Range/3 prison</td>
<td>Ex-offender statutory org. Work program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bettan</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mar.</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>SWE.</td>
<td>SWED.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Activity support + Benefits</td>
<td>= 25</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>'Lots'</td>
<td>Range/= 5 prison</td>
<td>Ex-offender statutory org. Work program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolina</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Sgl.</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>SWE.</td>
<td>SWED.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Activity support</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Drugs, theft</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Comm/treatment</td>
<td>Ex-offender statutory org. Work program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sgl.</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>SWE.</td>
<td>SWED.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>'Lots'</td>
<td>Range/few prison</td>
<td>Ex-offender statutory org. Work program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eva</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Co-hab</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>SWE.</td>
<td>SWED.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>'Lots'</td>
<td>Range/lots prison</td>
<td>Ex-offender statutory org. Work program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmin</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Sgl.</td>
<td>White Other</td>
<td>TLR.</td>
<td>SWED.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Apprentice wage</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>'Lots'</td>
<td>Range/few prison</td>
<td>Ex-offender statutory org. Work program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sgl.</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>SWE.</td>
<td>SWED.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Student grant + Benefits</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>GHB, theft, drugs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Range/2 prison</td>
<td>Ex-offender statutory org. Work program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johanna</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sgl.</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>SWE.</td>
<td>SWED.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>50% pension, 50% benefits</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Comm/treatment</td>
<td>Ex-offender statutory org. Work program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Widower.</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>SWE.</td>
<td>SWED.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Wage sub. 75%, Wage 25%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Drugs, theft</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Comm/treatment</td>
<td>Ex-offender statutory org. Work program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malin</td>
<td>&lt;7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Div. Co-hab.</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>SWE.</td>
<td>SWED.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Activity support</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>Drunk, Driving, arson</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Range/few prison</td>
<td>Ex-offender statutory org. Work program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mia</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Sgl.</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>SWE.</td>
<td>SWED.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Activity support</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>'Lots'</td>
<td>Range/2 prison</td>
<td>Ex-offender statutory org. Work program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninni</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Sgl.</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>SWE.</td>
<td>SWED.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Activity support + Benefits</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>'Lots'</td>
<td>Range/few prison</td>
<td>Ex-offender statutory org. Work program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total sample</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>&gt;60% &gt;10</td>
<td>&gt;75% prison</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 Age of children in brackets. Children the woman has lost custody of are marked with an *.  
2 Country of birth.  
3 These categorisation should be viewed as rough indications, as the women would categorise their income in different levels of detail. Not everyone knew the details of the type of benefit they received. *Benefits* can thus mean a variety of income support.  
4 Age first conviction. Not all of the women could identify their age at first conviction with certainty. = indicates approximate.  
5 Only women with a smaller number of convictions could specify their conviction range.  
6 The majority of the women could not say how many convictions they had accumulated over the years. These figures are thus estimates.  
7 It should be noted that not all of the women were actively using the support/program/service they were recruited through, but some had previous experiences of them and were now either visiting sporadically, working as a volunteer or in occasional contact with a specific member of staff.  
8 Jobseekers allowance.  
9 Drugs and alcohol.  
10 During the course of the interview participant self-identified as 'Traveller'.  
11 Employment and support allowance.  
12 Ethnic group is not typically collected in Swedish data and these categorisations accordingly represent the interviewers' description of the participants.  
13 In process of regaining some contact.  
14 Lost custody in periods when son was younger, have had full custody ≠ 5 years.
3.7.3 Interview locations and outlines

When recruitment had been achieved the interviews were, in the vast majority of cases, arranged to take place in a private room located within organisational premises. This allowed for the conversations to take place in an environment which was safe and familiar not only to the participant but also to the researcher, thus minimising risk for all parties. Moreover, this was also a location that the woman typically was accustomed to visiting on a more or less regular basis, which made transport arrangements more convenient. However, there were three interviews in the English setting where this interview arrangement was not possible, as the woman had either relocated, or was no longer directly tied to an organisation. In these cases I rented a private room in a local community centre, to ensure easy access for the participant. These centres were always staffed.

All the interviews were initiated with an introduction of the project and the provision of a participant information sheet. Ensuring informed consent was a key priority at this stage, and following the participant reading the information sheet, we would go through it together in order for me to re-iterate the key points, ensuring the participant was clear about both the details of the project and the meaning of participation. After inviting further questions, the consent form was introduced and discussed, and subsequently signed by the participant as well as myself. In line with the methodological and ethical framework, a process-view of consent was adapted (see S.3.9.1). All of the interviewees consented to having their interview recorded on a digital recorder.

3.7.4 Data comparability and limitations

Overall the data comparability is deemed to be good. Though the Swedish sample is overall slightly younger, there are very similar ranges of offending histories across the two samples, with circa 60% of each sample group having what could be referred to as extensive offence histories (categorised here as over 10 convictions). The Swedish women overall have a slightly higher age of leaving school, and were also, on average, about 18 months older at

30 Please see Appendix 11.3.2 for copies of the original risk assessment carried out for the ethical approval of the study.
31 An extended version of the original risk assessment was undertaken and approved for this type of interview setting. Please see Appendix 11.3.2 for copies of the extended risk assessment.
32 Please see Appendix 11.2 for copies of all research tools, including a summary of the interview process (in the interview topic guide), participant information sheets and consent forms.
the time of their first conviction. The different age of criminal responsibility in the two countries, must, however, be born in mind when comparing these figures. A more marked difference across the Swedish and English data samples is found in the area of motherhood, with around 92% of the English women having had children compared to 40% of the Swedish. This somewhat limits what the data can say about the comparative role of motherhood in the female journey through crime and criminal justice across the two countries. That said, the data can still make some worthwhile comments on how motherhood was narrated across the data groups, and some limited findings on this theme are, to the extent the data allowed for, presented in the data chapters.

Moreover, as noted above, the English sample was more varied in terms of recruitment routes compared to the Swedish sample. This recruitment variation across the two countries presents a limitation to the comparability of the sample groups, especially in terms of employment (due to different level of focus on employment across the two sample groups). This exemplifies the argument put forward by cross-national methodologists, i.e. that cross-national research will typically include more methodological compromises than monocultural research (Mangen, 1999). That said, employment status per se was not a pre-set focus in the study, but rather, the research questions focuses on the process of female desistance in Sweden and England (although employment analytically emerged as a key tenet within this). With a pronounced focus on processes and subjective experiences of the route out of crime, rather than specific event-orientated goals, this limitation is not deemed to impact significantly on the validity of the findings. Rather, the different availability and nature of support around employment (re-)entry identified across the two countries is, arguably, a noteworthy finding in itself.

The reader is furthermore reminded of the specific inclusion criteria of women with repeated conviction histories. Logically, this means that the sample is skewed towards those who continue on an offending pathway despite first-time offence sanctions. In turn, this significantly limits the data’s ability to assess and comment on the overall comparability of outcomes of specific interventions, as needless to say, women who had positive responses

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33 The age of criminal responsibility in Sweden is 15, contrasted to 10 in England and Wales.
to initial sanctions, such as probation, and accordingly ceased offending, are not included in this study. This limitation is particularly relevant to bear in mind when discussing experiences of different types of sanctions, including probation, in chapter 4 and 5. That said, this is not deemed to limit the study overall as, reflecting firstly the research questions and secondly the underpinning theoretical framework (i.e. its focus on subjective experiences), the data can still make valuable discoveries about how intervention mechanisms comparatively impact on women’s journeys through crime and criminal justice in this particular sample.

A slight limitation in terms of recruitment and comparability of data is also found in the area of race and ethnicity. Firstly, with a small qualitative sample, no criteria for ethnic diversity of sample groups was included in the research design. Secondly, the lack of ability to comparatively record race and ethnicity between the sample groups, being a major under-developed cross-national concept, emerged as an additional barrier in this area. As noted by Aspinall (2007:59), the use of terms such as race and ethnicity reflect geographical specificity, “with much of the discourse being deeply rooted, historically determined and specific, resulting in some of the terminology being infused with conflict and power conceptions of social reality”. In contrast to English practices, in Sweden ethnic group belonging is not commonly recorded and it is not culturally normative to ask about race and ethnicity. Respecting cultural norms, I accordingly refrained from posing the demographic question on ethnic group in the Swedish context after the first couple of interviews. This hence poses a difference across the sample groups with regard to recording of ethnic group belonging.

That said, what could be recorded was country of birth. All but one of the Swedish women were born in Sweden and their mother tongue was Swedish. One of the women was born in Turkey and came to Sweden, with her family, as a refugee when she was 4 months old. In the English sample, all of the women were British nationals with English as their mother tongue, with 3 women identifying as Black British/Caribbean or ‘Mixed’ and 3 women

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34 One interview was commenced with a woman engaged in a Swedish work program who was not currently a Swedish national. However, this interview could not be completed due to insufficient language abilities, and associated ethical adherences, to comprehend the consent form.
describing themselves as ‘Travellers’. Overall, these differences across the sample groups somewhat limits the study’s capability to comparatively analyse the qualitative meaning of ethnicity within the female journey through crime and criminal justice across the two countries. That said, within-sample comparisons can still be conducted, as well as subjective experiences of impact of race and ethnicity on the individual journey through crime and criminal justice in this particular sample. The findings highlight these variables where they analytically emerged as pertinent in the data, which is predominantly found in the English sample in the area of police interactions and experiences of discrimination (see S.5.2.1).

3.8 Data organisation and management

3.8.1 Transcription and translation

All of the interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed verbatim by myself. Due to the in-depth nature of the interview, and to ensure that the interviews produced as comparable data as possible, consent to digital recording was a requirement for participation. Being a bilingual study, challenging questions were raised in terms of what language to use at different stages of the research process. The interviews set in Sweden were, as expected, conducted and fully transcribed in Swedish, with those in the English setting conducted and transcribed in English. At the outset of the study it was thought that the transcripts representing Swedish data would then be translated in their entirety to English, allowing for a monolingual analytical process. However, wishing to stay as ‘true’ to original cultural conceptions contained in the data as possible, and in support of the notion that "language constructs as well as describes society" (Temple, 1997:607), I decided to opt for keeping the original data language as long as possible in the research process. The analysis was thus performed on a multilingual basis, and only the data selected for presentation was fully translated into English; the principal language for the final thesis.35

It is important to recognise that words may carry different conceptual meanings in different languages, which may be of interest in and of itself. As highlighted by Nelken (2010:53); "whether terms have cross-national applicability has both intellectual and political

35 On a few occasions the original Swedish language/expression has been kept in data presentations, due to a lack of suitable English translation.
Understanding meaning in different cultural contexts is indeed one of the greatest challenges in cross-national research (Ungerson, 1996), and it is therefore of utmost importance, especially in qualitative studies, to give particular consideration to the issue of translation. One of the main practical challenges is how to achieve 'conceptual equivalence', that is; 'comparable meaning' (Birbili, 2000:2). Birbili (2000) contrasts 'conceptual equivalence' to 'lexical comparability', though noting that most researchers give precedence to the former. From this perspective it is a great benefit that I, as the sole researcher, acted as the data collector, analyser and translator, avoiding the extra layer of interpretation by external translators, which can otherwise be a major pitfall (Temple, 1997).

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that my personal competence and biography, as well as awareness of local culture, will carry meaning in the translation process. Giving trust to consistency in my own interpretations, I have opted for 'conceptual equivalence' throughout all data representation. In practice this means that I have prioritised 'free' translation (Birbili, 2000), rather than a word-by-word approach. Due to this layer of translation of the Swedish data, the English data have, arguably, had a slight 'advantage' over the Swedish data in this study. That is, the English data can be presented in its 'raw' form, while the Swedish data have had to be translated. Although I have done this to the best of my ability, aiming to stay as 'true' to the original data as possible, it cannot be excluded that some very particular linguistic nuances may have been lost in this process.

3.8.2 Data analysis and management
The data were analysed according to a thematic approach. Thus, the narratives produced in the study were primarily used as a method of inquiry (Orbuch, 1997), i.e., used to access other, thematically organised, aspects of the social world. Informed by symbolic interactionism, the analysis exclusively focussed on participants' first-hand interpretations and perceptions of their own lived reality, and no external validation of life-events or experiences were sought for the analytical reading of the data. A broad coding scheme was initially developed in accordance with the set aims and objectives of the study. However,

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36 This is contrasted to more narrative forms of analysis, which looks at the nature of accounts using the narratives as objects of inquiry (Orbuch, 1997).
recognising the qualitative nature of the methods, codes were also allowed to emerge out of the data, including ‘in vivo’ categories (Richards, 2009). The analysis was conducted in stages, representing the three major phases of the female journey through crime and criminal justice presented in the study, namely; pathways in, experiences within and routes out. To avoid any forced linearity of the data, however, the analysis was not conducted in a rigid sequential order, but rather it kept rotating between the sections, as more in-depth conceptualisations of the data emerged. This arguably allowed for more of the complexity of the data to be captured, including a focus on concurrently running processes and overarching themes.

At the outset of the project, the qualitative analytical software package MAXqda was purchased and used as an overall project management tool. The plan was then to use this software for coding, organising and exploring the data. This was initially completed for the first phase of the analysis, i.e. the ‘pathway’ section. However, following critical reflection of the coding structures and results deriving from this process, the use of MAXqda was subsequently abandoned. This was due to the fragmentation and over-prominence of indexing of the data that was experienced through this approach, which is a commonly noted possibility when using CAQDAS (Mason, 2002). It was deemed especially challenging to capture more subtle processes of change and long-running themes in a sophisticated way through this software tool.

As argued by Liebling (2001:483); "living with complexity is better than trying to control or eliminate it". Thus, the search for a coherent and unified narrative, a common approach to life-story work (Sandberg, 2010), was rejected. Instead, with the aim of trying to maintain as much complexity and ‘messiness’ of the data as possible, but yet exploring it thematically, a more open coding approach was subsequently employed. This involved working with the transcripts in a more holistic way, moving larger chunks of data into thematically organised documents, allowing the documents to evolve as the analysis progressed. This also allowed for a greater development of ‘in vivo’ categories, as well as the incorporation of writing processes running concurrently to the analytical process.
Following complete coding of each journey phase, the core themes emerging from two data sets were cross-compared. Both similarities as well as differences were analytically explored, as well as silences. As noted by Thompson (2000), silences can provide important insights and clues about a person’s life and subjective interpretations of lived experience. The writing up of the findings was directed by what analytically emerged as salient in the data.

3.8.3 The nature of the data

The analysis is based on retrospective, self-reported accounts. There are persistent questions raised in terms of validity of data and ‘truth’ in the application of such data. Recognising the underpinning methodological frameworks governing this study, however, the focus in this research is specifically on subjective interpretations of lived reality, though situated in broader cultural and structural contexts. Borrowing conceptualisations of data from the narrative field, narratives are deemed to provide useful tools that can help us understand more about local construction of values, culture and communities regardless of external validations of ‘truth’ (Sandberg, 2010). From this perspective, the relevance of objective forms of ‘truth-making’ is limited.

Furthermore, critical questions about power and claims to more valid constructions of ‘truth’ must be raised. Rawlinson (2008:18) reminds us that “legal status and truthfulness are by no mean synonymous”. The idea that ‘truth’ must be validated due to conducting research with people with offending histories is rejected. That said, having built a close rapport with most of my participants, I sincerely believe that the vast majority of my participants were honest with me, sharing their story as true to their lived experience as possible. Emotional expressions and sensitivities were especially important in this context, aiding in the process of building a positive and open connection (Young, 2011).

Reflecting the qualitative nature of the methods, there are moreover limits in the data in terms of empirical generalisations. That said, the data does lend to some theoretical

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37 It should be noted, though, that there were a small number of interviewees, in both sample groups, who were very reluctant, and openly refrained from, talking about unreported forms of offending, as well as significant others’, primarily partners’, offending behaviours.
generalisations. This includes showing cross-cultural generalities that are "derived from an understanding of processes of phenomena in specific contexts", and that have been systematically compared and examined in terms of specificity and difference (Mason, 2002:197). The findings thus extend our understanding of lived social realities and qualitative processes, situated in these particular cultural contexts. This form of qualitative data is deemed to provide a vital complement to more mainstream, quantitative, work in the field of cross-national criminology (Nelken, 2010).

There are also questions to be raised associated with the interpretative level of the data, including notions around 'hidden consciousness' and its analytical place in criminological research. Matthews (2014) notes that the idea of ‘hidden consciousness’ derives from Marxist thinking and involves the idea that people lack the ability to understand their own disadvantage and experiences of injustice. It is thus suggested that an individual may not always be able, or indeed willing, to recognise the forces that have played a role in their life-pattern. These ideas are also linked to the role of memory, with recalling “always being an active process” and can therefore easily be prevented by an unwillingness to recall, or memories being ‘hidden’ (Thompson, 2000:133). While for example psychoanalysis focuses specifically on these types of unconscious and 'hidden' thought (Hollway and Jefferson, 1997), the analysis of ‘hidden consciousness’ poses some challenging questions in the area of criminology. From a critical realist viewpoint, Matthews (2014) argues that the analysis of ‘hidden consciousness’ sits in a problematic position in criminology primarily on the level of ethical consent, as the person has not signed up to a psychoanalysis exploring their ‘hidden’ thoughts but rather, a criminological research project.

Moreover, from a feminist research perspective, research should aim to empower women to define their own problems and perspectives, according to their own lived realities (Barberet, 2014). The examination of a 'hidden consciousness' therefore poses some additional issues from this research perspective, as it aims to contain and analyse significances beyond the narrator’s own intentions or meanings (Hollway and Jefferson, 1997). This arguably stands in direct conflict with allowing women space to define their own lived realities and give authority to their subjective voices. In turn, these processes also sit
uncomfortably close to ‘liberal othering’ processes common in liberal criminological theorising, identified by Young (2011:197) to involve a diminishing focus on deficits in qualities and virtues in deviant populations and the assumption that, if their circumstances were just altered/improved/changed, they would start to think, behave and understand the world ‘just like us’.

Recognising these multifaceted and complex debates around data production and interpretation, this study rejects psychoanalytical approaches to narrative readings in critical criminological research. The participants’ narratives have been employed as a method of inquiry for investigating women's first-hand accounts of subjective realities, which in turn have been situated in broader structural contexts. This includes interrogating the data for silences and latent meanings, though notably not on the interpretative level of searching for participants' 'hidden consciousness', but rather in order to reveal the not always visual links between the personal and the structural.

3.9 Ethical considerations and approaches

3.9.1 Ethical frameworks

This research has been conducted in accordance with the ethical requirements contained within The Code of Ethics for Researchers in the Field of Criminology (British Society of Criminology, 2006), the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics (2010) and the Surrey University Ethical Guidelines for Teaching and Research (2011). To ensure compliance also with relevant ethical frameworks governing humanistic research in the Swedish context, I familiarised myself with The Swedish Research Council’s (‘Vetenskapsrådet’) ethical research principles and ensured that the project adhered to all applicable regulations and recommendations therein. During July-August 2012 the University of Surrey Ethics Committee critically reviewed all aspects of this study, and accordingly gave it a favourable ethical opinion in Sep. 2012. Following expanded recruitment routes (see S.3.7.2), the ethics application was supplemented and amended in spring 2013 and subsequently re-approved. In addition, my PhD was also randomly chosen for an ethical audit by the University of Surrey in summer 2013, when the entire research was carefully audited, to ensure compliance with all ethical regulations and frameworks. All regulations and directives,
including risk assessments, security of data protection, anonymity, duty of care etc. were successfully approved.

In accordance with a critical humanist framework, the ethics in this study are conceptualised through the notion of relational ethics; emphasising mutual respect, dignity, connectedness and being true to one's conscience and values (Denzin, 2010). This is an ethics of care, informed by human rights and a social justice agenda, with the search for a freer and more equal world underpinning all aspects of the research, including ethics (Plummer, 2012). Consent is in this framework seen as a process rather than a one-off event. In practice this meant that the participant’s consent to continue the interview was typically raised at a number of points during the interview, especially if sensitive topics arose.

3.9.2 Emotional well-being of participants and researcher

The vast majority of the interviews included personal discussions of highly sensitive topics, as defined and outlined in the ESRC's Framework for Research Ethics (2011: s.1.2.3). While evidence suggests that some participants may find it “reassuring and therapeutic to talk about an upsetting event in a safe and sympathetic context” (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000:87), others may find it emotionally distressing to talk/think about difficult/traumatic life experiences. There were examples of both in this study. The participant always, without giving a reason, upheld the right to terminate the interview without impunity. It should be noted that none of the interviews were, however, terminated in this way, though many included breaks to settle emotions, and a couple were cut somewhat short due to the emotional weight of the experience. At the end of each interview a brief chat was held regarding any emotions the interview had evoked and details of local Women’s Support Networks were provided, including a ‘hand-held’ referral service offered. While lengthier discussion about emotions and support was had with a number of women, no one took up the offer of ‘hand-held’ support centre access. It should be noted that the vast majority of the interviews took place within an organisational context where the women had established referral routes to further emotional support.

38 Please see Appendix 11.3.2 for risk assessments. In particular, see sections on participant's right to choice and self-determination, along with the section on emotional distress of participant during/after interview.
Having had previous experience of interviewing women about sensitive topics, I was well aware of the potential impact on the self arising from difficult and/or emotionally heavy disclosures of severe harm/victimisation by participants. In the field of research focussing on female physical/sexual victimisation this is commonly referred to as ‘secondary traumatic stress’ and involves for example compassion fatigue and vicarious traumatisation (Covington, 2012). There were experiences of this at some points in the data collection process, reaching a sense of emotional fatigue. Liebling (2001) argues that there is a strong and important link between sympathy and depth in research, and that this is especially important on the fieldwork level. This is a standpoint supported by the underpinning methodological frameworks and thus, to ensure continued quality and ethical assurance, including suitable levels of emotional support and sympathy in the interview setting, a brief break from data collection was deemed valuable at a couple of points.

One of these involved a major emotional challenge experienced through the loss of one of the participants, ‘Jasmin’, who chose to end her own life in the beginning of 2012, about 5 months after I met with her. At this point in time ‘Jasmin’ was assessed as stable and non-chaotic, she had been off drugs for about 2 years, had recently moved into her own flat and was successfully undertaking an apprenticeship. The emotional weight of her suicide was considerable, especially as it was revealed during the interview process that we shared some commonalities in our youth, including memories of and experiences within a particular geographical location in Sweden. She was my youngest participant and our meeting was very personal and emotional, and it took me considerable time to grieve for her. At the time of the loss I had not yet transcribed her interview, and this became a hugely challenging task. I inevitably listened to her life-story with a different ear and posed demanding questions about my own role. I had additional contact with key staff at the organisation where I met ‘Jasmin’ during this time and I contributed to her memorial.

While recognising the personal emotional weight of this, Liebling (2001) argues that empathy and emotion is essential for quality fieldwork, however, it is important not to allow too much sympathy and partiality into the analytical level. In this phase, she argues, distance produces more robust and less naïve findings. Critically reflecting on the role of emotion in
the research process, while I incorporated these emotional experiences into the conceptualisation of the analysis, I have also been very conscious to keep more emotional distance to the data in the analytical stages. For example, this included a mindful awareness of not privileging certain life-stories above others in the analysis (such as ‘Jasmin’), aiming to do justice to all participant’s life-stories, although I was inevitably more personally affected by, and attached to, some more than others.

3.10 Methods and approaches: some concluding reflections

This study has posed methodological challenges, both in its execution and in its broader conceptualisation, as well as opportunities, in terms of intellectually-stimulating and rewarding research processes. The ethical considerations in this research project has been of prime importance, and I have endeavoured to stay true to both my personal ethics and ideals, as well as adhere to all formal ethical practices, at all times throughout the research process. It is inevitably the case that, due to its cross-national approach, this study has had to make some compromises that may not have occurred if the data were collected in one country, particularly in terms of diverse recruitment routes. Bearing in mind the set research questions; however, the identified limitations are overall deemed to have very restricted impact on the validity of the findings and the accomplishment of the set aims and objectives of the study. On the whole, the research project is deemed to have successfully produced large volumes of incredibly rich and valuable data; more than what can be featured in this thesis. I therefore look forward to also re-visit the data in future projects. The following 4 data chapters present the core findings from the research process outlined in this Chapter.
Chapter 4

Female pathways into crime:  
‘Acting out’ and ‘seeking out’

4.1 Introducing female pathways into crime in Sweden and England

This chapter presents findings from the comparative qualitative analysis of female pathways into crime in Sweden and England. Deriving from a cross-analysis of a range of themes emerging as significant, including maltreatment/abuse, sexual exploitation, mental health, home environments, early/problematic drug/alcohol use, the presence/lack of support mechanisms, experiences of care and educational experiences, two main female pathways into crime have been identified in this study; a ‘reactionary/acting out’ and an ‘active/seeking out’ pathway. While there is evidence of both pathways in both samples, the majority of the Swedish women fall into the latter category and the vast majority of the English women fall into the former. The chapter will start by outlining the core defining features of each of these two pathway groupings, and will then move onto a thematic presentation of background themes across the two groupings, with particular attention given to areas such as home environments, health, education and experiences of intervention. Lastly, the chapter will make some brief conclusions regarding the comparative female pathways into crime in Sweden and England.
Considering pathway experiences overall, high levels of maltreatment and abuse in early life is found to be the norm rather than the exception. Indeed, for the majority of the women in this study the line between victim and offender is one that is very thin and often blurred. Comparatively, however, the analysis suggests that the Swedish women carry less ‘pathway luggage’ at entry point into offending. ‘Pathway luggage' is here conceptualised to refer to challenging/abusive/problematic factors and experiences in the woman's biography that, in one way or another, link to her pathway into crime. Moreover, for the majority of the women, across both samples, the pathway into crime runs parallel to the pathway into problematic drug use. There are noteworthy differences in terms of the nature of such drug use across the samples though, with two thirds of the English women having lengthy problematic heroin and/or crack-cocaine addictions behind them, while one third had no involvement (or only minor/temporary/non-problematic connections) with drugs. In contrast, in the Swedish sample all but one woman had lengthy problematic drug use behind them, though for the vast majority this has involved intravenous amphetamine use.

4.2 Two dominant pathways

While recognising that each individual life-story is unique and filled with narrative complexity, the analysis suggests that, by and large, female pathways into crime in this study fall into two broad types. I have categorised these as 'Reactionary/acting out' and 'Active seeking out'.

1) 'Reactionary/acting out'

This pathway commences in and around abusive/chaotic childhood experiences, leading on to a consequent pattern of some form of 'acting out'. Often these reactionary behavioural patterns begin at an early age, with disrupted school experiences and running away/being removed from the family home, not uncommonly leading into a cycle of repeated involvement with social services and/or institutional care. This pathway broadly falls in line with the 'feminist pathway perspective'.

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2) 'Active/seeking out'

In this pathway there is *relative* stability in childhood experiences, with a dominant theme of a non-disrupted/'happy' childhood, and the woman is not understood to be 'acting out' as a response to abuse and/or trauma. However, due to a variety of factors, for some linked to a lived sense of exclusion, for others to curiosity and thrill-seeking, the dominant entry theme in this pathway is that the women experience a particular attraction to risk-taking and impulsivity, and accordingly seek out 'risky' behaviour.

Providing a framework for this chapter, an overview of the distribution of the different pathways across the samples is provided in Figure 4.2 below. The figure also indicates substance/alcohol use across the samples. Supporting a multi-dimensional interpretation of female pathways, these categorisations should be interpreted to represent a continuum of experience. The far right in the figure thus represents the women falling most decisively into the ‘active’ grouping, while the far left represents the women falling most decisively into the ‘reactionary’ grouping. Many women fall somewhere in the middle.
While some of the participants presented a very particular dependency relationship with one type of substance use in their narratives, subjectively portrayed as a defining feature of their life-story, others suggested more varied relations with substances over time. In the table such variances are represented through a mix of colour-references. For example, though ‘Asterix’ described some potentially problematic use of cannabis and cocaine in her youth, she does not situate this as a defining feature of her adolescent life. Likewise, during one period of her adult life she used alcohol in what she describes to be a problematic manner, using it as a temporary coping mechanism following bereavement, but again she did not situate this as a defining feature of her overall life-story. The combined colours of green, yellow and black is representative of this variance over time.
4.3 ‘Acting out’: A reactionary pathway

The women in the ‘acting out’ category carry significantly more 'pathway luggage' than the women falling in the 'active/seeking out' category. The defining feature of such 'luggage' is the experience of physical and/or sexual childhood abuse. It should be noted that the vast majority of the women, across both samples, have experienced abuse in one way or another at some point in their life. However, for the purpose of this chapter, a distinction is made between 'pathway luggage', signifying experiences that occurred prior to entry point into crime and criminal justice, and other forms of 'luggage', which may be collected after and/or within either the criminal scene or within the criminal justice system. The vast majority of the women falling into the 'acting out' category had significant experiences of first-hand trauma and/or abuse previous to their involvement with crime and criminal justice. This group is the dominant pathway identified across the total sample.

4.3.1 Reacting to childhood trauma: Physical and sexual violence

There is wide-ranging prevalence of abusive and traumatic childhood experiences among the women in this study. From a comparative perspective, the women in the English sample have more extensive experiences of this compared to their Swedish counterparts. Around four fifths of the English women were victims of childhood abuse, either sexual and/or physical, compared to around one fifth in the Swedish sample. While it is problematic, and arguably un-useful, to create any type of 'hierarchy' of trauma, it is sufficient to say that there is a range of experiences amongst the women across the spectrum of abuse.

There is a strong association in the data between physical and sexual abuse in childhood and a particular pathway into crime via the reproduction of violence towards others. Circa a fifth of the Swedish sample and a third of the English sample fall into this category. The analysis suggests that violence here becomes a form of 'acting out' and reacting to trauma experienced in early life. Within this pathway link, i.e. the transitioning from victim of violence to perpetrator of violence, anger emerges as a major mediating theme. 'Mia/SW' and ‘Jasmin/SW’ provide illustrations of this in the Swedish data:

Mia: Yeah, if there wasn’t anyone who looked at me like I caused mayhem like, just so that I would get that attention. Cos’ I was so broken inside and I had been taught never to open my mouth, never to ever say how it really was. I mean, I could throw anything, just go out
and push someone over like or, just to get attention. And there somewhere I started acting out, I started hitting my teachers, I started hitting at my mum...

(p.6)

NARRATIVE BREAK

Mia: I had a love for violence in the end, cos' it was my way, when the drugs didn't shut off my feelings I had to find something else that could switch em' off. [...] Eh, so, like, I abused other people, eh...like, yeah, the most violent offences you can think of like. [...] I myself have also been put through a lot of violence though.

(p.36)

Jasmin: I was becoming a teenager and started to get really angry I guess, I'd stored up everything on the inside, the violence at home, the bullying at school, all of it really. Then it all just burst in the end, so I burnt down an entire sawmill. [...] And shortly after that I burnt down my school. [...] I ran away from home after that and then I got into contact with social services, but they didn't, they just saw me as a problem child, I mean, I didn't get the help I needed, I didn't...I wasn't seen with the eyes that I ought to been seen with.

(p.7)

For both 'Mia' and 'Jasmin' this set off a cycle of running away from home, repeated involvement with social services and periods of state care, which in turn led to numerous years of lived chaos, coloured by violence and drug addiction. Both 'Mia' and 'Jasmin' have extensive criminal records, though especially for 'Jasmin' this is a record dominated by violence against others. When asked to reflect on her use of violence, 'Jasmin' says:

Jasmin: I don't know, I've just not had a sense, or valuing life really. I've been so totally cut off from everything, no emotions for people, just completely zeroed I mean, so that meant it's been easier for me cos' I've known the consequences, but I've honestly not given a shit about them really. For me nothing meant anything, cos' I haven't had anything to lose, if you know what I mean?

(p.27)

‘Mia’ and ‘Jasmin’ provide examples of how violence can evolve into an outlet for anger, as a reaction to trauma. For most, this reactionary pathway becomes intertwined with problematic drug use. While this is a common link, it is important to point out that it is not a universal one. Rather, the key theme here, emerging as the most significant mediating factor, is that of anger in the context of surviving abuse. ‘Jade/EN’ exemplifies this in the English data:

Jade: We had, me and my sister had something going on when we were younger, eh, to do with our granddad...Um...eh...sexual abuse I suppose. And 'J' [sister] could forget it, I couldn't. So it made me angry, so I took it out on everyone I knew, mm.
[I: Did you tell anyone, did your parents know?]

Jade: Yeah, I told me mum and dad, um, dad was very angry, mum...um, because it was her own father. [...] He'd done it to her as well, so there was an awful, um [...]
days it was 'he's my father and you have to do what he says' sort of thing. And it still was for many years, but I was very angry about it.

(p.6-7)

For ‘Jade’ this anger was lived out via fighting, becoming known locally as a ‘fighter’ in her teenage years. She has a significant criminal record involving violent offences, though no problematic relations with drugs or alcohol (although alcohol could, at times, act as a trigger of anger). Moreover, in a not untypical cycle of re-victimisation, ‘Jade’ has also multiple experiences of being a victim of violence, surviving severe domestic abuse from her ex-partner. Having a criminal record linked to violence; however, when ‘Jade’ attempted to defend herself against her ex-partner’s violence she was prosecuted, with her criminal record being emphasised as a factor that showed her having a propensity for violence. This story of production and re-production of violence and victimisation is an important one, and one that is especially common among the women experiencing abuse in childhood.

Another example of this theme in the English setting is 'Becky/EN', who experienced an extensive amount of physical, emotional and psychological abuse from her father. She struggles to talk about the violence even today, as it brings back her anger:

[! Did you ever talk to anyone about the violence that you experienced by your dad?]
Becky: Um...I've tried to on a few occasions, but when I do, if I go really in-depth about it I get...I get too angry [...] And I'm scared to actually...push myself any further cos' I don't wanna come back out of there one day and be like grrrrr, like on a rage and then go and do something that I'm gonna regret. [...] There was a lot of verbal as well. Cos' he used to put me down, like, I've, I don't...it's only been the last like 6 months that I've started wearing skirts. [...] I used to be petrified, not even petrified but I just used to hate myself, I was bulimic for 7 years. [...] My dad be like 'ah you're a slag, look at you, you just look fat in that and...'

(p.18-19)

‘Becky’ started using violence herself in her mid-teens, parallel to her father’s violence escalating. She also suffered with mental health problems linked to this, including a long-running battle with bulimia and depression. ‘Becky’ tried to retaliate against her abuser, but being known as a ‘troublemaker’, she was regarded as a co-producer of the violence. Indeed, a common factor for these women is that, through being known as a perpetrator of violence, their stories of victimisation are commonly diminished, if not completely rejected. In turn, the analysis suggests that this carries significant meaning in the female journey
through crime and criminal justice in the long-term, especially in terms of responses to, and trust in, authorities.\(^{40}\)

### 4.3.2 'My truth was always questioned': ‘Silencing’ of abuse narratives

An important factor within the themed link of re-production of violence and victimisation is that for all of these women, the trauma/abuse they went through was ‘silenced’ in one way or another. Looking at this comparatively, there are some significant similarities across the samples, though overall, the ‘silencing’ theme is more prominent in the English data. The theme of ‘silencing’ comes through in two different threads in the narratives; 1) rejection by informal networks, and 2) rejection by formal agencies. Starting with the first strand; one example of this was found in ‘Jade’’s story above, with her mother refusing to recognise the sexual abuse she experienced at the hands of her grandfather. Another example of informal rejection of an abuse narrative is given by ‘Grace/EN’. ‘Grace' experienced some of the most extensive multi-factorial forms of abuse in her home environment identified in this study, including physical, sexual and mental abuse, as well as severe neglect, all before the age of 10. She here recalls how she tried to tell her mother about the sexual abuse she experienced by her uncle:

Grace: Of course, I couldn't tell her how the blood had got there, and when I eventually did say that my uncle X was like, touched me down there she said 'how did he do it?' and I said 'hurting me with his, with his thing', she just beat me right up. [...] Properly beat me, yeah, said that I was sick and I was imagining things and that I was a little, that I was a slag that would sleep with any male who spoke to me. And I was only 8! But after that I just shut it all out, but it's gone on all my life.

(p.11)

‘Grace’ ended up going into care in her early teens, though not for the violence she had experienced at home, but because she was deemed a ‘troublesome’ child, with severe behavioural problems. This transition from ‘acting out’ into being labelled a ‘naughty child’ is a common one (and is explored separately in S.4.7.1).

Turning our attention to the second thread of the ‘silencing’ theme, i.e. rejections of abuse narratives by formal agencies, we re-visit ‘Becky/EN', who here recalls her experience of being disbelieved:

\(^{40}\) This theme is further developed in Chapter 5 (see for example S.5.2.2).
Becky: Yeah, cos' there were times that I called the police like, for help, when he'd [dad] beaten me. [...] And not once did they try, my friend, I had red hand-marks around my neck once, my friend was there, witnessed it, and the police, the police didn't believe me. [...] And it was after that fight, like the big incident happened with my dad, and I called them and then my dad, well obviously cos' my, they'd seen my dad had got stabbed.

[I: Mm.]
Becky: They arrested me, and from there, ever since, any little things that happened, like, whether my dad calls the police or I do, it's always me that gets arrested for it.

[I: Really. So was social services involved?]
Becky: No...Well there was one, but they weren't actually doing nothing, they didn't believe my dad was hurting me so I guess they wouldn't involve them.

(p.32)

Ever since ‘Becky’ retaliated towards her dad’s violence, she continued to be arrested if/when the police were called out to their house. Via re-producing violence against others, ‘Becky’ had soon accumulated a considerable criminal record, and from her perspective it was due to this that her experiences of victimisation were consistently rejected by the police. In consequence, ‘Becky’ stopped involving the police and tried to find other ways of managing the violence at home, ultimately running away and gradually getting more involved with street life, drugs and alcohol. Getting ‘kicked out’ of school for being violent, living on friends' sofas, 'Becky' found herself making a living by dealing drugs.

Comparing this theme between the Swedish and English sample, slightly more validation of abuse narratives is found in the Swedish sample, seemingly linked to more statutory involvement. Nevertheless, the overlapping themes of 'silencing' and 'disbelieving' are still present. Often this sits alongside conflicting narratives given by other adults in the abusive setting, along with the context of abuse; such as for example a 'nice' family setting. ‘Mia/SW’ provides a key example of this, here recalling going into mental health treatment at the age of 6 following the uncovering of sexual abuse by her father, starting from what she believes was about the age of 3:

Mia: I think it was 89 or 90 that I ended up on an investigation at BUP\(^1\) [...] There they told me that, like it says on paper that they didn't believe the previous investigation which had been, my dad's not convicted, eh [...] I had to just keep moving around, after this investigation I moved around in 16 different foster homes, until I turned 18. [...] I was, in these investigations my truth was questioned, like, cos' it was a nice family, we had a good income, both parents

\(^1\) ‘Barn och ungdomspsychiatri’, which directly translates to ‘child and youth psychiatry’. BUP is a specialist service providing psychiatric support and treatment to children and youths from age 0 to 17 across Sweden. It also works together with families, carers or other individuals in the child's/youth's network, to improve their well-being.
worked, my dad had a company, my mum had her own shop. And really, because then when stuff like this comes up, my mum didn't confess, she said nothing, she knew nothing, she's never been beaten at home and my brother has never been beaten and it was just like, very much like that...just hush hush kind of thing. [...] I mean I had so much...aggression was always the first feeling. Eh, and people just thought that, I just got a lot of diagnoses, ADHD, Aspergers, you know, instead of checking what was going on behind.

While stressing the uniqueness and distinct complexity inherent in each of these individual life-stories, there are some important similarities worth re-emphasising. Firstly, the cycle of early life victimisation, ‘acting out’ of anger, the re-production of violence as well as re-victimisation, found in these abuse narratives is highly significant. Secondly, facing 'silencing' processes, the pathway of ‘acting out’ becomes reinforced via a subjective sense of being disbelieved, often negatively impacting on subsequent involvements with criminal justice. Via the gradual formation of a criminal record, the cycle is then further perpetuated by these women increasingly being construed, in the eyes of the law, as violent offenders.

4.4 Risk, thrill-seeking and status: An 'active' pathway

In contrast to the defining feature of abuse and trauma in the 'acting out' category, the theme of 'excitement', connected to the onset of an offending/drug-using lifestyle, represents the core defining feature of the 'active' pathway. Notably, with the exception of 'Asterix', narrative themes around 'excitement' in the pathway to crime in the English data are almost completely absent. For the vast majority of women in this pathway, drug taking, especially amphetamines and ecstasy, plays a key role in ‘thrill-seeking’ activities. There is also a marked subjective sense of agentic decision-making processes identified within this pathway, for some linked to particular status goals on the criminal scene, for others to a search for power and control, which is almost completely absent in the ‘acting out’ grouping.

4.4.1 'It just came naturally to me': A subjective sense of a pre-destined path

For the majority of the women in the 'seeking out' category, there is an expressed subjective sense of a pre-destined pathway, linking to both drug use and offending. This is commonly linked to a curiosity for the 'forbidden', which in turn leads towards ‘seeking out’ new experiences and thrills. Drug use in this pathway is found to be one factor, among others, which is attractive due to its 'risky' and forbidden nature. There is a sense of 'active'
decision-making within this, for some linked to status recognition. 'Linda/SW' and 'Eva/SW' exemplify this theme:

Linda: 'Cos' today when I look back, I mean, I have like the best family in the world, who's always been there like, I've just simply...it just came naturally to me; criminality and drugs and the kicks. [...] I mean, when I took my first ecstasy I resigned from my job, quit school and felt 'this is my thing, and this is going to go to hell', and 3 months later I was an intravenous narcotic user. And I knew that from, like from that first moment that 'yeah, this is the way it is'.

(p.13-14)

Linda: Looking back I can't really understand that I've, during all these years, fought so [...] it's just that we girls we ain't got no status at all and I've worked hard and I've been a criminal and a victim and everything, cos' my biggest goal was maybe not always about making money, but it was to reach this status [...] I mean it did take a really long time [...], and I had to overcompensate a lot [...] So, I've fought so many years, and I never really came up to that top status, still.

(p.40)

Eva: 'I've had this, like my curiosity about the forbidden it's...eh, like I knew when I took my first glass of alcohol [hits the table], I knew then that I was an alcoholic [hits the table again]. I knew, I felt, 'Ah, I like this' [...] And I'd made up my mind, I was going to be a gangster! I was endlessly curious, but I had to fight for it! We were gonna go with the guys out on tour, theft tours and stuff like that, but we [the girls] weren't allowed to come, so we had to figure it out ourselves.

(p.5-6)

More than re-emphasising what we already know about the role of gender in the criminal lifestyle, remaining a hugely male-dominated criminal sphere, these narratives also indicate a notable resistance to the acceptance of particular gender roles within the context of offending. That is, both 'Linda' and 'Eva' describe, despite meeting considerable opposition from men in their surroundings, 'fighting' for status recognition as a 'gangster' or a 'top' criminal on the active scene. This type of narrative, the active challenging of gender constructions within offending contexts, is notably completely absent in the English data.

4.4.2 Power, control and kicks

Furthermore, while a lot of offending in this pathway is linked to the women's drug use, it is important to point out that this is not an automatic link. Drugs and offending are instead suggested to share some common causal factors in the realm of thrill-seeking. 'Carolina/SW' exemplifies this, here answering a question whether she thinks she would have been involved in criminality if it had not have been for drugs:
Carolina: Well, I don't think I'd come into contact with crime in the same way so maybe not, but I don't think that...how should I put it, I still think I kind of got that driving force that makes me perhaps drawn to criminality. But I think, no, without drugs I don't think I'd done, no, but neither do I think it's that easy that if the drugs disappear then the criminality will too, I don't think.

[I: How would you describe this 'driving force' you’re talking about?]

Carolina: Eh, power and control, money, yeah. But above all power and control, I think I've got very, I've done like those PIC tests [unclear ref] on criminality and I scored really high. [...] Yeah, I like those kind of things like, I'm not sure how to explain it really...Eh, keeping busy, engaged in something, eh, excitement, adrenaline hits, everything like that I like.

(p.17)

The type and nature of drug use is deemed relevant here. All of the drug-using Swedish women in the 'active' pathway are primarily users of amphetamines, and they link their offending lifestyle to a very active, thrill-seeking routine. Excitement and adrenaline kicks thus come through the drug use itself, but also from living a life 'in the fast lane'. 'Bettan/SW' provides a last example of the 'active' pathway and the 'kicks' associated with the lifestyle, here reflecting on her onset to crime and drugs:

Bettan: Well yeah it was all pretty positive really, like...[...] Most things have been good, or like, it's been fun to do drugs you know, and it's been...Yeah I've had a hell a lot of fun, there's so many fucking kicks all the time like, yeah, it might sound awful but...how should I put it, I've had, eh...Yeah you just get so many kicks when you steal things and all that, you know, when you do burglaries and that. It's sick really...but yeah it's been really good fun.

(p.26)

More than these prominent themes of ‘excitement’ and ‘kicks’, an important interlinked theme that emerges as distinctive between the pathway categories (though detected throughout the narratives) is a subtle nuance in lived levels of agency and control. That is, the women in the ‘active’ grouping express a clear personal driving force in the making of their own pathways, while this is absent in the ‘reactionary’ grouping.

4.5 Home environments

Turning our attention to the role of home environments in the area of pathways, the analysis suggests that - overlapping considerably with the above section on abuse - the English women, overall, grew up in more challenging home surroundings. The Swedish women narratively portray a considerably more supportive and stable home environment
than the English women. This is something that is apparent both at the onset of, as well as throughout, offending/drug misusing periods.

4.5.1 Disruption and chaos
Disruption and chaos in the home environment is found to a significantly higher extent in the 'reactionary/acting out' pathway. Such disruptions rarely involve monofactorial elements, but rather, are more commonly multifactorial in nature. Thus, sexual and/or physical abuse often coexist with one or more factors such as neglect, emotional and/or verbal abuse, problematic parental drug/alcohol use and/or other offending behaviour, and mental health issues. Many of the women have grown up in and around domestic, male-perpetrated, violence and it is not uncommon that the first contact with police is in connection to such abuse. 'Jasmin/SW' here for example recalls her first ever contact with the police:

Jasmin: I was 6 years old. [...] My, or it didn’t have to do with me but my mum when she had protected identity, it was cos’ she was together with a man who abused her. And that was the first time actually I ever called the police. [...] I have very strong memories since I was four years old as well, traumatic experiences like, I’ve got post-traumatic stress from family situations. So, but when I was 4 then my mum was married with my dad and he beat her too, so then I had to stop the fights. So I stood between them, so yeah…that wasn’t much fun really.

(p.1-2)

More than witnessing direct violence, as well as being a victim of it, many of the women in the 'acting out' pathway have experienced various forms of neglect in their home environments. 'Veronica/EN' is an example of neglect at the more extreme end, leading to hospitalisation when she was 6 years old:

Veronica: Um, I got put into hospital when I was about 6, cos’ I suffered from malnutrition. So I was in hospital for a year. [...] From when I was 6 to 7. Um...came out of the hospital at 7, and went straight to the children's home [...] It was good, I liked it. It was just so nice to get away from my mum.

(p.2-3)

For ‘Veronica’ this led on to permanent placement in state care, from which she ran away at the age of 14 and subsequently entered a life on the streets; getting heavily involved with cocaine and surviving via prostituting.

For others, the home environment was associated with chaos/disruption in the form of growing up around criminality and drug use. 'Amanda/EN' provides an example of this:
Amanda: Um...I was a single, from a single-parent background, in council estates. And my dad, um, was put in prison, constantly, so I didn't really see him. Yeah, it was just pretty hard, really, cos’ it was just my mum. [...]  
[I: What did your dad go to prison for?]  
Amanda: Um, he's been to prison loads of times, for different stuff. So, um, he's a drug smuggler, so...um, heroin, smuggling heroin, smuggling cannabis, eh, base; everything literally.  
[I: Was he a user as well or?]  
Amanda: Yeah, yeah.  
[I: So did you come into contact with drugs and alcohol at home?]  
Amanda: Yeah, yeah I did.  

Overlapping with the above noted levels of abuse, the ‘reactionary’ pathway grouping have experienced significantly higher levels of chaos/disruption during childhood in comparison to the ‘active’ grouping. For the women falling into the ‘active’ group, i.e. the majority of the Swedish women, the main subthemes in the home environment are more related to stability and support.

4.5.2 Stability and support

By and large, the Swedish women’s pathways have, comparatively, been one paved by stability and support in the home environment. A prime question in this context is how the theme of 'stability and support' in the home environment impacts on lived pathways. What is evident from this research is that a stable home environment and a supportive family setting is certainly not an automatic recipe for a non-offending life-path. However, the analysis does suggest that a supportive family setting carries a number of valuable meanings, both in and around onset of, as well as throughout, active offending years. To this end, family support is identified as a constant factor across the female journey through crime and criminal justice, i.e. if the woman experienced support in early life, this is typically continued throughout her life-path. Family support accordingly becomes a resource that the woman can draw on when and if needed. For example, the analysis shows that a supportive and engaged family can act as a form of an emotional reminder of ‘straight’ life, triggering an 'interruption' to a criminal/drug-using path, exemplified here by 'Linda/SW':

Linda: Well mum’s like, she and my little sister [...] they could even sleep in a parking lot just to, if they couldn't get hold of me but if they could maybe just see me then, like, maybe...Cos’ it’s always painful, the worst thing really is when the family interrupts [/interferes], because then it kind of grows, even though you’re emotionally beginning to die, cos’ that’s what you
This is an illustration of the value of family support, particularly engaged support. The suggestion is that such support can function as an ignition of an emotional questioning of the current path. This is an argument that will be re-visited throughout the analysis, namely; that although support and stability do not necessarily per se interrupt onset to offending/problematic drug use for the women in this study, engaged support is a major contributing factor for the Swedish women experiencing their route back as more feasible as well as attractive.

The analysis suggests that engaged family support also carries consequences in terms of statutory involvement, particularly at the early stages of the pathway. This is a link that is exclusively found in the Swedish data, and is associated with a more interventionist structural model. In the pathway data this relates to the use of a particular care order called 'LVU' [Lagen om Vård av Unga][42] available in Sweden. In terms of engaged support, the relevant point here is that a ‘LVU’ can be initiated via social services, or by a family member or other concerned person, as well as by the police. About half of the Swedish women in this study had 'LVU' orders placed on them before the age of 18. 'LVU's, and their impact on the Swedish female pathway, will be further explored in section 4.8, dealing specifically with statutory interventions.

### 4.6 Mental and physical health

‘Health’ makes up another theme within the pathway phase. Generally, however, there is relatively little presence of specific health discourses in this section, but rather, they are primarily indirectly linked to other pathway factors. The one exception to this rule is found in 'Johanna/SW', who after a car accident in her early 20s, for which in her perspective she

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42 Directly translated ‘The Law regarding the Care of the Young’. A ‘LVU’ is a compulsory care order which can be ‘placed’ on a young person deemed in need of care either due to problematic home conditions, drug use, or who is for another reason seen to present a risk to themselves or others. The LVU investigation starts with a 3-month residential assessment, followed by possible treatment or placement consequences. The order is of an indefinite time length, with the young person’s case being re-assessed typically every 6 months. It can be seen as a younger version of an ‘LVM’, discussed in Chapter 6.
never received appropriate medical care, sought out other ways of dealing with her physical pain. In turn, this led onto long-term problematic drug use and associated offending:

Johanna: When I was 20–21 I was involved in a car accident and was injured in that and that led to me start experimenting with drugs. I, well, I got no real help from health care, I went around everywhere, but nothing. So in the end I took to other means [...] Just trying to find anything just to get away, yeah just escape the pain, just to dull yourself. But then it escalated really fast.

(p.2)

Aside from this one exception, the narratives around health are primarily about mental health, commonly interlinked to other problematic factors. These narratives are, moreover, typically not exclusively linked to pathways but rather, most of the women speak about experiencing bouts of mental health issues throughout their life. These are significantly more prominent in the ‘reactionary’ pathway, however, and are closely linked to dealing with experiences of abuse and/or trauma, with dominant behavioural reactions including self-harm, eating disorders, depression and suicide attempts. Linked to this, the onset of drug use in the ‘reactionary’ pathway is found to often correlate with processes of self-medicalisation as a response to dealing with mental health problems. Mental health issues in this context thus become one of several multi-factorial aspects that lead the woman into a ‘reactionary’ path. We saw an example of this in the Swedish data in ‘Mia’s story above (see S.4.3.1-4.3.2). ‘Amanda/EN’ and ‘Tia/EN’ provide further examples of how this link between trauma and dealing with mental health problems, situated in the context of lack of supportive networks, interrelates to the onset of drug use as a form of coping mechanism:

Amanda: Well because I was having a nervous breakdown and I was just ill and... basically, because of like stuff going on in my childhood, and with my son’s father dying, it just all caught up with me. [...] And I was having crack put around me, I didn’t want it, and then I went to see my dad and his door was kicked off by drugs squad, and then they gave me some crack as well and I just ended up smoking. I was...when I was ill I just thought ‘ah fuck it, I might as well’.

(p.19)

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A note on the nature of the data is required here. Data around mental health was collected on a self-assessment basis, and the women were not always certain about their condition. There is thus significant variety in subjective assessments and understandings of mental health across the samples. For example, some of the women reported self-diagnosed mental health problems, while others thought they might have received a diagnosis in their childhood but were not certain of what diagnosis they actually received when. Moreover, in the Swedish sample an ADHD diagnosis was described by some as a mental health condition, though not by others. Others again would state for example ‘emotional retard’ as a mental health condition. Due to the considerable variety in assessment and interpretation of mental health across the samples, no rigid categorisations of mental health conditions can accurately be made.
Tia: I moved in that flat with a kiddie and he turned out to be a paedophile, I caught him touching up my sister, like in a bad way [...] Then um, then, um... I had a break down [following a stillbirth] and landed up in X [mental hospital] and um... yeah it... I started drink and drugs really hard from then like. [...] A girl came in to the hospital who I knew, um, she said 'you wanna come out for the day?', I went out for the day... and that was my first ever time I ever used intravenous.

These data show the multifactorial pathway towards problematic drug use, deriving from a combination of themes such as childhood abuse, untreated mental health problems, loss and bereavement and an informal support setting rife with drugs, commonly found in the ‘reactionary’ grouping. Indeed, there is a clear association in the data between those with the highest level of trauma also experiencing the highest levels of mental health problems. In contrast, in the 'active' pathway the experiences of mental health problems are significantly lower, though still present in a minority of cases. A key difference, however, is that in this category mental health problems have typically developed in relation to experiences within the active scene, including paranoia and depression linked to long-term drug use.

Mental health is thus a notable theme within pathways, however, the analysis suggests that firstly, this is mainly relevant for the ‘reactionary’ grouping and secondly, it is not mental health issues *per se* that create a path towards offending for these women, but rather they represent consequential factors deriving from multifactorial problems experienced in childhood. Inevitably, though, mental health problems add to the overall ‘pathway luggage’ for women in the ‘reactionary’ pathway grouping.

### 4.7 Education and school environments

The Swedish women have, comparatively, overall higher levels of educational attainment than the English women in this study (though levels are still lower compared to general populations). While the majority of the Swedish women completed compulsory schooling levels, only a minority did so in the English sample[^4]. This is not to say, however, that the Swedish women have had a linear educational path, with a quarter of them completing

[^4]: Please see Table 3.7.1 and 3.7.2 for a break-down of the women’s age when left school.
school in some form of special school setting. Moreover, more of them have engaged in adult learning and gained formal qualifications later in life, including within criminal justice system settings. Thus, not only do the Swedish women start with a higher base level of education, this gap furthermore grows during their years journeying through criminal justice. In turn, this feeds into a broader argument presented across the analysis, which will be re-visited throughout the data chapters, namely; that the Swedish women, comparatively, face a less onerous overall route out of crime and criminal justice than the English women in this research. Focussing exclusively on the area of education in the pathway context, we now turn to consider how different schooling experiences fit into the comparative analysis of female pathways into crime cross-nationally.

4.7.1 ‘Acting out’ in a school environment: Being labelled as ‘naughty’
Struggles with concentration in the school setting are a prevalent theme across both pathway groupings. Bearing in mind the 'pathway luggage' discussed above, including extensive levels of maltreatment/chaos present in the home environment, it is maybe unsurprising that many of the women find the school setting a challenging one. The analysis shows a strong link between maltreatment in the home and 'acting out' in the school setting, in both samples. However, instead of recognising this behaviour as a sign of a potentially problematic home environment, in the majority of the cases the women experienced subjective forms of labelling as ‘naughty’ or ‘disruptive’. For some this led onto exclusion from school altogether, which meant that they either left school permanently without any qualifications, or alternatively that they were sent to a special school. We saw indications of this theme with both 'Mia' and 'Jasmin' in the Swedish setting in the beginning of the chapter (see S.4.3.1). ‘Ruby Red/EN’ and 'Claire/EN' exemplify experiences of this in the English data:

Ruby Red: School, I think...cos’ there was issues going on at home, school I just went to school and completely went on like an idiot. I was like, yeah I just wanted to be the laughing stock, so I got chucked out of school in second year of secondary school. [...] I then went to one of these schools that um...was for like children that wouldn’t behave theirself. [...] Cos’ there was issues going on at home, so...it wasn’t the school, it was more that I needed help, but no one could see the factors that I needed help sort of thing, you know? (p.5-6)

Claire: I was always in school, always in school, and I think if I hadn’t been going to school it would have flagged up more of what was going on at home and what a horrible home life I
was having, but because I was always in school, but always being told off, it was just put down to that I was badly behaved. No one ever sort of, no one ever... or once actually, once I was sent to a psychiatrist, but my mum was sat at the back of the room. So I'm sat there with this psychiatrist and they're asking me 'are there any problems?' and, you know, if I was just left alone they would have found out how horrible it was for me at home. But because my mum is sat behind me I can't turn around and say 'I'm having a horrible home life'. [...] Um, so that was that; I just sat there and clammed up and... sent off and they never really asked me again. Nobody ever did.

For the women who experienced maltreatment in the home the educational experience was commonly linked to so called ‘disruptive’ behaviour, conceptualised here as another way of ‘acting out’. Indeed, the theme of ‘acting out’ in the school environment is detected, though to various degrees and forms, in all abusive/trauma narratives in this research. However, according to the women's accounts, for none of the English women did this lead to support around the home environment, although some were sent to special schools for children with ‘behavioural problems’. In turn, this setting commonly led to the introduction of new peer networks, not atypically with existing involvement in offending and/or drug using behaviour. For others, exclusion from school led to a rejection of school altogether, which in turn often led to entrenchment in street life (see for example ‘Becky’ and 'Veronica' in S.4.3.2 and S.4.5.1 respectively). Arguably, rather than assessing 'disruptive' behaviour as simply a classification for 'naughtiness', if this form of behaviour would be seen as a symptom of a potentially problematic/damaging home environment, then maybe these pathways could have been disrupted before they had had the chance to evolve further.

### 4.7.2 Concentration and ADHD discourses

While all of the women in the preceding section fall into the ‘acting out’ pathway, the theme of concentration problems and being labelled as 'disruptive' in the school environment is not exclusive to this grouping (although it is more prevalent). ‘Concentration issues’ in the school setting is also a significant theme for several of the women in the ‘active’ pathway. In the Swedish data this is often interconnected to discourses around ADHD. ‘Linda/SW’ and 'Emma/SW' provide examples of this:

Linda: Well, school, already from first class really, it just didn't work. I could do everything at home, but when I got to school I was just disruptive and unfocused and mischievous and, you know, it came now at age 25, I get the ADHD diagnosis. But it wasn’t like that at the
time, then you were just a bothersome child and had to sit in the OBS-class and things like that. So, you know, school I've just never really had any interest in.  

(p.3)

Emma: Eh, I began [school] when I was 6 and quit after the sixth grade [12 years old].  
[I: After sixth grade ok. How was it up to the sixth grade then?]  
Emma: Mm, yeah well but, it was good I guess. I mean it's, it was kind of like, cos' I've got ADHD and it's quite, so, you know...Yeah, so except that I find it really hard to concentrate and stuff like that, mm.  

(p.3)

The ADHD-discourse is notably completely absent in the English data, but takes a prominent role in all of the women’s narratives who identify with an ADHD diagnosis in the Swedish data. The relevance of this discourse in terms of pathways specifically is that for these women difficulties to concentrate, labelled in adult life as ADHD-related, in school regularly led on to a lack of attendance. In turn, this process commonly resulted in the woman, in a similar vein to processes noted in the ‘acting out’ section, coming into contact with peer friendship groups that were outside of the immediate school context. It is important to emphasise, however, that these processes must be understood as multi-factorial in nature, and thus the issue of concentration is merely one of many factors leading into the ‘seeking out’ pathway. Bullying is another factor that emerged as salient in the data.

4.7.3 Experiences of bullying

The analysis suggests that bullying represents a significant pathway theme for a minority of the women in each sample group (circa one quarter in each). For some, this pathway runs parallel with other 'pathway luggage', such as trauma and abuse in the home. For others, however, bullying is suggested to be one of the more principal pathway factors. This is primarily detected in the Swedish ‘seeking out’ category. The core identified mechanism behind this pathway theme involves a lived sense of exclusion. In turn, in a similar process noted above in terms of consequences of lack of attendance, this leads to a search for

45 Directly translated to ‘Observation-class’. This is a special type of class with fewer pupils and a higher teacher ratio that was used in Sweden until the late 1990s for children with concentration difficulties and/or learning disabilities. The aim was to teach basic educational skills, rather than prepare for college entry.  
46 I.e. a small majority of the Swedish sample (between 50-75%). This figure is approximate as some women were currently in the process of being assessed, while others thought it was highly likely that they had it, but had no interest in a formal diagnosis (commonly due to a wish to avoid access to amphetamine-based medications). Only three of the women in the Swedish sample, namely ‘Ninni’, ‘Malin’ and ‘Bettan’ expressed a definite rejection of an ADHD diagnosis.
acceptance and friendship groups elsewhere. Bringing in gender to the equation, not uncommonly is this acceptance found in older, male, drug-using groups.

An example of bullying functioning as more of a primary factor in pathways is found in 'Jenny/SW', who began using amphetamines as a method of weight loss; being extensively bullied for being overweight in school (though her narrative is also linked to ADHD-discourses):

Jenny: I don’t remember much of my childhood more than I truant often, didn’t go to school, thought it was really boring, um, was overweight, got bullied lots for that, didn’t feel as much worth as everyone else. So, like, I started drugging cos’ I saw my aunt and then I also started experimenting with drugs, cos’ I saw how much weight she’d lost.

(p.2)

This link between drug use and weight loss is one that is found, to various extents, in a large minority of both samples. For many, however, this does not link to the onset of drug use, as in 'Jenny's' case, but rather as a contributing factor for continued drug use. Abstaining from drugs is commonly associated with weight gain47, which many of the women find challenging and thus, this acts as a ‘back-slide’ to drug use.

Furthermore, a leading subtheme within the broader theme of bullying, found across the samples, is that of a lived sense of lack of formal interventions. This is a theme that carries much symmetry across the samples. ‘Jasmin/SW’ and ‘Claire/EN’ provide particular examples of this. The role of race and ethnicity emerges as significant here, with both ‘Jasmin’ and ‘Claire’ falling into ethnic minority groups:

Jasmin: Eh, yeah the school time was, well that I had a really fun name because I was an immigrant and stuff and that wasn’t that common back then, so of course I’d get bullied for 5 years as well.
[I: [...] And was it someone who reacted to that?]
Jasmin: Well, yeah one of my teachers reacted, but the only thing he said was that ‘you must leave the classroom when you’re crying cos’ you’re disturbing the class’. [...] So that wasn’t anything positive really.

(p.4)

[I: And the bullying was never raised?]
Claire: No it was always my fault, always my problem. Always something to do with me, and the teachers...they would ask me, they would come up to me on a daily basis saying that

47 The data indicates that the issue of weight gain is also one that is present with the use anti-depressants, linked to treatment of mental health, which often leads to discontinuance of medications.
'you're here you're there, you're doing this you're doing that, I've been told you're doing this' and I'm just like 'I don't know'. [...] And if there was anything that anybody else did and got caught and it got found out they were just saying 'no it wasn't us it was her', and I would get into trouble [...] I didn't realise this was going on when I was at school, I just thought that the teachers was picking on me but no, it was like a huge little game for a group of people. So I really, I didn't like school, I didn't enjoy school, and in fact I was sent off to a boarding school for, eh, children with behavioural problems when I was 13.

(p.19)

Firstly, the intersection of ethnicity and lived experience is relevant here, especially pronounced in ‘Jasmin’s’ quote. Identifying as an immigrant, ‘Jasmin’ found it hard to fit in in school, growing up in a rural area of Sweden, leading to a lived sense of exclusion early on in her schooling. Identifying as Black British, the role of race and ethnicity in her experience of bullying cannot be excluded in ‘Claire’s’ case, who suffered severe forms of racism whilst growing up. ‘Claire’, for example, spent time during her teenage years in a white family looking after children, where she describes being treated as the family’s slave. In this setting ‘Claire’s’ virginity was arranged to be ‘given away’ to a colleague of the mother of the children she was looking after, which effectively resulted in 'Claire' being raped at the age of 16. It was suggested to 'Claire' that this arrangement was set up as black female sexuality was inherently promiscuous.

While there is bullying present in other narratives, no patterns along race and ethnicity variables have been identified in any of those. Secondly, the lived sense of rejection and non-intervention from adults in the school setting presents important symmetry across the data. Linking this to pathway perspectives, the data suggest that these processes can accentuate a woman’s lived sense of exclusion and a pronounced lack of trust in authorities, which, in turn, impacts on the individual pathway in terms of mental well-being, non-belonging and accordingly, a path of looking for acceptance elsewhere.

4.8 Official interactions and interventions

Reflecting the different models of societal organisation found in the two countries, maybe it is unsurprising to find different levels of interventional experiences across the two samples. Although the Swedish women, overall, comparatively carry less 'pathway luggage', they have nevertheless received more formal intervention during their younger years. This is
especially found in the use of 'LVU' orders. Exploring how interventions interact with pathways, it is suggested that interventions per se do not always carry positive impact/disrupt the female pathway. Indeed, the analysis raises significant questions around net-widening processes and the development of criminal capitals through particularly LVU interventions. While the sample may not be suitable for making assessments about the comparative success of different types of interventions, the data can nevertheless say something important about how intervention mechanisms comparatively impact on individual pathways in this particular sample.

4.8.1 Social services interactions in early life

A prevalent theme in the data, demonstrating much symmetry across the two samples, is a subjective sense of negligence and/or failure by social services in early life. This ranges from the extreme end of being re-placed with perpetrators of abuse and being re-victimised within state care settings, to a more general ‘fizzling out’ of cases. It is worth pointing out that, across both samples and pathways categories, if given free hands all of the women would spend more money and effort on re-structuring social services approaches and systems rather than the criminal justice system. The universality of this standpoint is, without doubt, significant, and is indicative of the women’s subjective interpretation of the prominent role played by state systems in early life. There is thus a strong suggestion in the women’s accounts that pathways into crime are often set in earlier life, regardless whether this is via processes of 'acting out' or 'seeking out', and that failures in social services to deal with traumatic and/or otherwise challenging/disruptive childhood and adolescence experiences carry meaning for subsequent routes into crime.

That said, the analysis suggests that the perceived nature of negligence and/or failure differ across the sample groups. A major difference is that, reflecting the different levels of trauma experienced in the home, the English women commonly experience negligence in terms of inaction, while the Swedish women more commonly experience these failures in terms of the nature of action, typically taking an institutionalised, compulsory, and not uncommonly

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48 See Chapter 3 (S.3.7.4) for more detail on this.
49 This section relates to interventions and interactions with official bodies specifically found in the pathway context. Chapter 6 focuses on female experiences of criminal justice interactions beyond the pathway phase.
medicalised form early on. For the women in this research experiencing such 'care', it seems to have done little, or indeed even had counteractive effects, to disrupt their pathway, typically due to the viewpoint that it did not address any of the underlying causes ('Mia' and 'Jasmin' provided examples of this in S.4.3.2 and S.4.3.1 respectively).

4.8.2 In the care of the state

Comparatively, a larger proportion of the Swedish women have experiences of some form of state intervention in their younger years. This higher level of intervention is exemplified in the use of 'LVU' orders and associated periods in state care. To put some figures to this, while about a quarter of the English sample spent time in care growing up, just under half of the Swedish sample did so. Specifically, all of the Swedish women in the 'acting out' pathway spent extensive periods in care before the age of 18, along with a few in the 'active' pathway. In contrast, only a quarter of women in the 'reactionary' category in the English sample spent time in care.

Moreover, the nature of state care is deemed significant here. For the Swedish women experiencing care in the 'active' grouping, this care was exclusively linked to 'LVU' investigations, commonly initiated by the woman’s family. In contrast, social service involvement in the English context is one that is of a more acute nature, primarily involving removal of the child from a dangerous home setting. However, though a small number of women in this acute setting did experience removal, it should be noted that for the majority of those experiencing abuse in the English setting the dominant theme was that of inaction. 'Claire/EN' and 'Sharon/EN' provide examples of the lived experience of this in the English data:

Claire: I had 2 weeks until I was home again, and I was begging to go into care at this point, because I didn't want to go home [...] One of them said, the one that I asked, or was begging to, she said 'you don't want to go into care, care is worse than anything you'll get at home'. But I didn't care, I just didn't want to go home.

Sharon: They just never really looked into it no...just, into why, you know, why isn't this, you know, this person attending school, you know, there's gotta be a problem at home... No they never, they never...[...] Like, why, why is she behaving like that, you know, why is she, like, why is she so nery and stuttering and, cos' I was a very nervous child, very, like I said, I could hardly talk a sentence without stuttering.

(p.22)

(p.30)
This expressed sense of inaction is contrasted to the Swedish context, where much of the care and institutionalisation is of a compulsory nature. Inevitably, this will have a bearing on how the care is experienced first-hand. The balancing act between compulsory institutionalisation practices, i.e. against the child’s will, versus removal from harm is a highly important and complex one. The significance of tailored and flexible care arrangements also emerges as prominent, as the data suggest that coercive and generalised forms of state care can, in fact, carry counterproductive effects on the female pathway, in the form of, for example, labelling and ‘uprootedness’.

4.8.3 Coercive care: Labelling, criminal capital building and 'uprootedness'
Reflecting the more extensive experience of interventions found in the Swedish sample, and importantly the higher level of coercive forms of care, processes of labelling and 'criminal capital' building emerge as significantly more relevant in the Swedish pathway. The analysis suggests that the primary mechanism behind this involves an earlier personal contact with heavier/more problematic drug use and older/more criminally experienced young people. 'Angel/SW' and 'Linda/SW' provide illustrations of this, here discussing their experiences of 'LVU' care:

Angel: So I went down there and was there for 3 months ['LVU' assessment resident] and then from there you're sluiced out ['utslussad'] to another family home from there [...]. I lived there for 3, for the last 3 months.
[I: [...] So did it feel positive to break away there in any way?]
Angel: No, no it was, no I just saw it as forced care, definitely. It was just to get there and I mean, like shit, I tried heroin in there for the first time and yeah. It was like one girl, some cool girls who sat in there and just, well, like just...proper miserable relationships they had to life like.

Linda: So I ended up at this [LVU] place up in X; very sad, lots of forest, just completely, I mean, yeah...And then I met girls in their 20s who'd walked the streets [prostituting], did heroin and everything. I mean, like I didn't even know really what heroin was at that point! [...] It just made me turn me against my mother completely...it's quite awful really...but yeah I was just so, so angry.

This theme of association with criminal and heavier drug using networks via state care is a common one in the Swedish sample. Mixing a range of young people with different needs is identified as a major issue in this context, as noted by ‘Ninni/SW’:

(p.12)
Ninni: Cos', you know, it’s not just when you’re abusing drugs that you can get LVU, but if you get beaten at home, if you have problems in school, eh, I mean, and still you’re put it in the same place. So a 14-year-old girl who has problems in school is at the same treatment centre as an 18 year-old heavy heroin addict. Yeah, it’s just not the right setting at all, so much need to be done within LVU care.

(p.36).

The aspect of lack of tailored ‘LVU’ care is significant, with the women being placed in mixed facilities with older girls, with a variety of backgrounds. In turn, not only do these settings help them build criminal capital, but the coercive nature of the setting also heightens a sense of anger and disconnection from close networks, as exemplified in ‘Linda's’ quote.

Another major theme within the care setting experience is a continual moving around to different forms of care, and a consequent sense of 'uprootedness'. This is a theme that is prevalent also for those women in the English sample that have been in state care. In turn, this often leads on to further ‘reactionary’ behaviour, such as running away from care settings. 'Anna/EN' and 'Mia/SW' provide examples of the symmetry in this experience across the samples:

Mia: Well, as a broken child who just wants affection from their own mother and nothing else was good enough really, so it was my way of, like ‘if I'd tire out this family then maybe I'll get to go home to my mother’, you know. And it was immediately when you got up in the morning, it was just like tearing down their whole house really, that was kind of my plan, cos' eventually they'll get tired, you know. [...] I'd put their cat in the washing machine or like throw their fishes in the frying pan, whatever really, just so I'd get to go home.

(p.9)

Anna: Um...I can remember like every time I used to run away I used to go and sit outside social services and wait for them to come in and then they would just send me somewhere else. So, I didn’t like it very much, so I just kept running away.

(p.8)

Though articulated in different ways, 'Mia' and 'Anna' tell an important story about social services mediation within the 'reactionary' pathway. Via further disruption, often running parallel to not being believed, the women keep ‘acting out' in different settings, living in a sense of 'uprootedness'. In turn, as noted above, this often leads them into contact with older, commonly male-dominated drug-using contexts. Although the root of this 'uprootedness' and search for belonging outside more conventional peer groups may be varied, the consequences in terms of pathways are, indeed, strikingly similar.
4.8.4 Going 'under the radar': Lack of follow up and continued engagement

A common pathway theme, identified across the two categories, is a subjective sense of general negligence from social services in terms of follow-up on cases. Thus, many of the women went 'under the radar' in various ways and forms. This theme of lack of case continuance commonly correlates with increased involvement in street life, not atypically leading on to a consequent onset/increase in drug use. The level of similarity found across the women’s retrospective account-making linked to social services is noteworthy. 'Amanda/EN' and 'Emma/SW' provide comparative illustrations of this; both dropping out of school at 14:

[I: You said you finished school when you were 14?]
Amanda: Yeah.
[I: So did you, cos’, you have to be in school until you’re 16 supposedly?]
Amanda: Yeah [...] well, eh, I just went under the radar. [...] No one, I’ve always done it, always. I don’t know why but I’ve always been left, like when they should have picked stuff up, they just don’t pick it up.
[I: Mm. So was there any social service involvement?]
Amanda: No, nothing. And my mum still can’t understand, why they didn’t pick up on it.

(p.6)

[I: So did you parents try get you back [from boyfriend/to school]?]
Emma: Yeah, well they didn’t live that far away after all, but... mm, it just didn’t happen like that [...] There were lots of appointments but nothing came from it, mm, a couple of conversations.
[I: And that was it?]
Emma: Mm.

(p.7)

This theme of a sense of negligence/lack of follow up is one that is present across the women’s narratives, including in those cases where more detailed assessments were initiated. 'Ninni/SW' and 'Veronica/EN' provide comparable examples of this, here responding to questions about the level and consequences of social service involvement in their childhood:

Ninni: I mean, when me and my sister were little, eh, like dad was well known to the police, mum got a lot of complaints about our home situation, and nothing was really investigated properly. [...] I don’t know how, but she always got away with it. Eh, when they did home visits you’d get like a week’s warning like 'this time we’ll turn up', so of course mum could clean up and, you know. [...] Yeah, they could have done it differently.

(p.44)
Veronica: No, no, no. I kept dodging them [social services] [...] They did try a bit, yeah...Tried but I kept running away [...] I was just like, I was like a yo-yo really.

[I: Did you prefer the streets then?]

Veronica: Yeah...cos' they didn't answer back.

Though with some nuanced differences, namely that in the Swedish setting slightly more action is suggested to be initiated (in the form of drug testing of ‘Ninni’s mother), from the women’s perspective there are major failings in terms of lack of comprehensive investigation. Both 'Veronica' and 'Ninni' were under the age of 10 when their cases were first opened. Although these stories inevitably represent retrospective account-making, the fact that a girl age 14 end up on the streets prostituting and using cocaine, as in 'Veronica’s case, or that a parent can be investigated but ‘get away with’ continued use drug and severe neglect, as in ‘Ninni’s case, is arguably a striking failure on behalf of any system.

Signifying much symmetry in the data, what is suggested then is that, due to social services negligence/failures, in various ways, interventions do little to disrupt pathways for the women in this study. In those cases where no action occurred, the women subsequently adopted other survival strategies, typically running away from abusive settings and entering a life on the streets, gradually being re-construed as a young offender in the eyes of the law. Where interventions did occur, however, on one level the constant passing on of cases and the lack of suitable tailored care often led the women to further disruption and 'uprootedness'. On the other hand, compulsory forms of ‘LVU’ care, with a pronounced lack of tailored investment in suitable care settings, was found to also reinforce the women’s 'active' pathway, through a combination of lived sense of coercion and the development of criminal capital.

**4.9 Children, ‘choice’ and agency**

Comparatively, significantly more of the English women (a large majority) have children in comparison to the Swedish women (a small minority) in this study\(^\text{50}\). Often pregnancies

\(^{50}\) See Chapter 3 Table 3.7.1. and 3.7.2 for an overview of participants’ profiles, including motherhood. The marked difference in motherhood across the Swedish and English samples signifies a limitation in the data in
come early on in life, for many in and around onset to drugs and/or offending, and are commonly problematised via drug use, but also through domestic violence and other chaotic factors. Moreover, there are marked differences in terms of custody. While the majority of the Swedish women who are mothers have kept custody of their children, the majority of the English mothers have lost theirs.

There are noteworthy differences in the data in terms of active decision-making around motherhood. Namely, many of the Swedish women express active decision-making processes of not having children early on in life, or generally within drug using/criminal contexts. 'Mia' and 'Eva' provide examples of this:

[I: You said earlier that you wanted children?]
Mia: I do want children.
[I: Is that something that's important to you?]
Mia: Yeah.
[I: Has that always been the case?]
Mia: No, well I mean, I've been pregnant and I've had abortions and I've had miscarriages and stuff, but I know, I mean, like I would never raise a child and let it go the same path that I've been on. I would never let my children see neither violence nor criminality or stuff like that...No.
[I: So how do you mean you'd do that?]
Mia: Um...well I'd never have a child with someone random like, or like in the active I chose not to have children like.

(p.62)

[I: 'Eva' do you have any children?]
Eva: No. [...] No, I've actively made sure not to have children, have always made sure that, I've had something called a P–Rod and they work to 100 %, you just replace it every five years or something like that.
[I: You don't want children?]
Eva: Eh, oh yeah, I'd love to have a whole football team, but I've known who I am. Eh, I love children to the point, I mean I'm a full-fledged alcoholic, full-fledged 'junkie' [tjackpundare], in horse doses, eh...
[I: So it's been a responsibility thing?]
Eva: Oh yeah yeah, or responsibility for myself because I would never forgive myself, and then I would have drugged myself to death, that would have been the only resort.

(p.32)

Discourses around choice and active decision-making in the area of motherhood are significant here. It is challenging to contrast these discourses around motherhood to those terms of comparability. The role of motherhood is discussed to the extent the data allows for; however, the data is not deemed suitably comparable for an in-depth analysis in this area.
found in the English data, as it is more often about what is not said rather than what is said. Nevertheless, exploring the data for the theme of motherhood narrations, some subtle, but arguably significant, differences emerge. ‘Amanda’ and ‘Grace’ provide examples in the English data:

[I: And how old were you then when you had your son?]
Amanda: Um, 19, I was 18 when I got pregnant and I was 19 when I had him.
[I: Ok, was that a planned thing or?]
Amanda: No not really [brief laugh].
I: No?
Amanda: [brief laugh].

(p.15)

[I: And that’s when you had that relapse you mentioned?]
Grace: Yeah, yeah, and I’m just like, I haven’t done, committed any crime, just the usual thing of getting in an abusive relationship, taking drugs. [...] And I picked up because...I ended up, I found out I was pregnant, didn’t know I was pregnant.
[I: Ok.]
Grace: Went to the hospital, done a scan try to work out if I was, the baby had a slow heartbeat. And in that time I had, like, been pushed down stairs twice, gone through some horrible shit, I’d picked up using, and this time I’d been smoking crack whereas I hadn’t before.

(p.41)

These narratives present differences in the interaction between the themes of agency and motherhood. In terms of pathways this is relevant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it carries meaning for entry into motherhood across the two sample groups, and for many the experience of losing custody of children through drugs is significant in the pathway stage. The analysis suggests that the loss of children and subsequent mental health problems positively correlate with a significant escalation of drug use and further entrenchment in a chaotic/damaging lifestyle. ‘Sharon/EN’ provides an example of this, reflecting on the experience of losing custody of her children in her mid-20s:

Sharon: She [cousin] told social services I was taking drugs. [...] So they took the kids off of me. I lost them. [...] I’ve never ever got em’ back. [...] It was just, pffffffffft...I was devastated, I was devastated. [...] I sold my flat and sold everything in it, cos’ I couldn’t live there without the kids, no. [...] I was just so, so devastated. And that’s why I carried on taking drugs, cos’ I felt like I couldn’t live without them and the drugs just, just blocked it all.

(p.25)

The loss of children can thus escalate a pathway towards heavier drug use and/or offending. A slight contrast; however, across the sample groups is found in the nature of the removal.
That is, in the Swedish data the removal of the child is more voluntary than in the English cases. This is commonly narratively linked to a wish to continue to use drugs:

   Bettan: So she [daughter] ended up being placed [with social services] [...] But you know, I didn’t do it voluntarily, or I did give her freely in a way, but not for her sake but for my own selfish reasons, so that I could do drugs alone, like that. So I struggle when people say 'aa but you made the right thing for her,' and sure maybe I did but I didn’t do it out of love for her, I did it for selfish reasons.

   (p.6)

Secondly, these narrative constructions around motherhood also say something important about differences in agency and control across the sample groups. That is, they provide further support to the notion that the Swedish women, in comparison to the English women, seem to have, at least subjectively, a higher sense of control and agency both at the onset of their criminal/drug-using path, as well as throughout it. In turn, the data suggest that this has consequences for the lived experience within the criminal scene. This is likely, however, to be a multi-factorial phenomenon, with a combination of pathway 'luggage', nature of drug use, educational attainment and home environments playing a role in this.

4.10 Female pathways into crime: Some conclusions

This chapter has presented findings from the first section of the comparative analysis, examining female pathways into crime in Sweden and England. Two dominant pathway groupings have been identified, namely a 'reactionary/acting out' and an 'active/seeking out' pathway. While there are examples of both pathways in both samples, the majority of the Swedish women fall into the latter, while the vast majority of the English women fall into the former. Breaking down these groupings, comparatively there are higher levels of 'pathway luggage' found in the 'reactionary' pathway, including prominent experiences of childhood trauma/abuse and problematic home environments. In this pathway there are a range of reactionary processes, conceptualised as 'acting out' in various settings. The line between victim and offender is, indeed, thin and often blurred in this pathway. Facing multifactorial problems in early life, substance-based coping mechanisms in response to trauma and mental health were found to be commonplace in this grouping. Moreover, this cycle is also found to often be reinforced via 'silencing' of abuse narratives and the
criminalisation of survival methods, increasingly construing the woman as an offender in the eyes of the law.

On the other hand, in the 'active' pathway a different route towards offending and/or problematic drug use was identified. For some, this pathway was closely interconnected to a particular curiosity of the 'forbidden', a general attraction to risk and a subjective sense of a pre-destined path. In turn, these narratives are not uncommonly linked to ADHD discourses. Looking specifically at the onset of offending/drug-use, 'excitement' and thrill-seeking emerges as prominent themes. The analysis furthermore indicates a higher subjective sense of agency and control within the pathway, including status-orientated aims. However, for others in this pathway we find stories of exclusion, through, for example, bullying or a general lack of educational connection, not uncommonly leading onto early interactions with offending/drug-using others via coercive forms of state care.

The analysis suggests that what both of these pathway groupings share, albeit through different mechanisms, is a search for belonging and acceptance outside of traditional peer group settings. In turn, bringing in gender, this acceptance is not uncommonly found in older, male-dominated, offending/drug-using groups. For many this provides the setting for the onset of a more persistent offending and a more problematic drug-using lifestyle. Furthermore, there are also marked differences found in the area of intervention and interactions with formal systems. Despite carrying less pathway 'luggage', though in line with differing macro-models of intervention, the Swedish women have overall experienced more extensive levels of state involvement compared to the English women. The data suggest that such care does not always act to disrupt the female pathway into crime, although for some it aids in the completion of educational attainments. For others, it leads to criminal capital building. Regardless of the nature of the pathway, however, this road universally leads the women into the realm of criminal justice, and it is to this phase of their journey that we now turn our attention.
Chapter 5

Female experiences of criminal justice: Police, sentencing and sanctioning

5.1 Female experiences of criminal justice in Sweden and England

This chapter presents findings from the comparative qualitative analysis of the female lived experience of criminal justice in Sweden and England. The aim of this chapter is not to provide a comparative evaluation of entire criminal justice systems, but to focus on those aspects of criminal justice that emerged, analytically, as salient in the women's narratives of their journey through crime and criminal justice. Overall, experiences of criminal justice are found to occupy a rather minor role in the women's narratives of change, relative to other life factors. Transformative experiences and desistance-related processes are thus overwhelmingly found outside the borders of criminal justice. 'Claire/EN' typifies this point well, here responding to a question whether her involvement with criminal justice made her question, or even regret, her actions:

Claire: No it didn't. I think my life falling apart around me made me regret it, but not the actual punishment.

(p.64)

While bearing this in mind, the analysis suggests that three areas stand out as relatively more significant in the women’s narratives relating to criminal justice involvement, namely; police contact, sentencing and experiences of sanctions. This chapter will present the major thematic findings for each of these three sections, including an end section on the female
experience of transitioning out of criminal justice. Continuing to build on the findings presented in Chapter 4, a key finding is a strong relationship identified between early experiences with criminal justice, especially the police, and the nature of later interactions. That is, trust building in authority, or indeed the lack of, often influences the women’s interactions later on. *Legitimacy* and *trust* are two major mediating themes identified in this context, which run as overarching themes throughout the chapter. Moreover, these two themes also link to the women’s ‘routes out’; an area explored in more detail in Chapter 6 and 7.

### 5.2 Police

Operating on the very frontline, the police are typically the first point of contact with the criminal justice system. Re-emphasising the blurred boundary between victim and offender, for about half of the women in this study (in each sample group) the first police contact was not in an offender capacity but either as a victim of crime, or being on the periphery of offending (such as growing up in a criminal home environment). The role of victimisation and home environments in female pathways to crime were highlighted in Chapter 4. Moving these themes into the realm of criminal justice, it is found that the nature of early experiences of the police have a significant impact on later interactional experiences, including reporting practices and general levels of trust in authorities. 'Grace/EN' provides an example of how this is experienced first-hand:

Grace: For an intense part of building up to when she [sister] did kill herself, it was constant like for about 6 years. Constant, like, overdosing, cutting her wrists, I found her, one time I went in the bedroom and there was just blood everywhere and I, I think I was only about 7 or 8. [...] I was sent out of the house and I saw all police and ambulances coming and then when I gone home, like she’s gone, but no one wanna talk about it. So, police I always put with...like *that*, her and death and her suicide thing. [...] When I started going out drinking, getting violent, getting arrested, when the police come I would go berserk, like *absolutely* berserk. And ambulances, cos' they couldn’t understand it with ambulances, but that was stained from, like, them taking her in the end and, like, not coming back.

(p.7)

'Grace' provides an illustration of how early experiences of the police, outside the role of an offender, can have significant impact on later interactions. In turn, this feeds into broader themes around *legitimacy* and *trust* in the criminal justice system. Having explored aspects
of childhood trauma and connections with authority in the previous chapter, we now turn our attention to female contact with the police specifically in an offender capacity.

5.2.1 On the receiving end: Police contact in an offender capacity

There are a wide range of experiences of police interactions both intra- and inter-sample\(^{51}\). One of the most significant differences across the samples in the area of police contact is found in the theme of ‘negative police interactions’. This includes major subthemes of ‘discrimination' and 'misconduct', which are both significantly more prominent in the English data. For those who identify as ethnic minorities in the English data, these themes are particularly pronounced\(^{52}\). ‘Ruby Red/EN’ provides an example of the lived experience of this; here reflecting on her first arrest (she was 7 months pregnant and wearing Islamic dress at the time):

Ruby Red: The police, um...they was a bit, really nasty to me like, they were saying like 'how was the woman suppose to know you was pregnant with that black sack you was wearing?'. Yeah they were really rude to me.

(p.8)

In turn, these early experiences have subsequent impacts on levels of trust. This is illustrated when the interview later turns to the domestic violence ‘Ruby Red’ suffered at the hands of her husband. When asked whether she ever reported the violence to the police she responded:

Ruby Red: I never bothered and you know, just even that experience with the police, I’ve never had faith in them again, do you know?

(p.10)

Starting with the police and a subjective sense of discrimination, later in the interview ‘Ruby Red’ continues to expand on this theme on a wider system level, drawing on a broader range of experiences:

Ruby Red: There is, there’s a different system; once your skin is coloured...they’re throwing the book at you, that’s the way I see it.

(p.17)

\(^{51}\) The reader is reminded of the differing ages of criminal responsibility in the two countries. This is significant for the nature of the initial contact with the police in an offender capacity, as before the age of 15 in Sweden the women are not processed by the police, but rather, are referred to social services. In contrast, reflecting the lower age of criminal responsibility, two of the women in the English sample were caught and dealt with by the police before the age of 15.

\(^{52}\) It is important to bear in mind the limitations of the data in this particular context; i.e. the sample is not representative, or indeed suitably comparable, in terms of race and ethnicity across the two countries.
This provides an example of the strong association in the data between how early interactions with the police influence later experiences. Additionally, it also says something important about the role of race and ethnicity in the lived experience of police contact. This theme of police discrimination based on race and ethnicity is exclusively found in the English data. Another example of this is ‘Grace/EN’, expressing a subjective sense of police discrimination due to being ‘gypsy’:

Grace: The police came, and some of them knew me cos' some would like get a bit gung-ho, don’t they? If you’re known they just think you’re fucking, cos' you’re gypsy, travel, my partner, well my family is gypsies, my partner is travellers, they don’t really like us a lot, if you know what I mean?

(p.15)

In addition to themes of ‘discrimination’, there are interlinked examples of lived experiences of ‘police misconduct’ in the English data. For example, ‘Claire/EN’ here reflects on how she feels her vulnerability was exploited by the police, when her legal counsel was absent, to ‘clear their books’:

Claire: Yeah I basically cleared their books of unsolved crime, because I signed off on all of these credit cards, and um, I was done in the end for 250.000 pounds worth of fraud. When in actual fact I probably only had about 100 quids, and a pair of curtains. [...] And the funny thing about it, I knew at the time that I shouldn't be signing it, but because it was the police, I knew that they were stitching me up. But I was on this really emotional roller coaster [...] So, it just seemed easier.

(p.56)

Comparing this broad theme of 'negative police interactions' in the English data with the Swedish, some marked differences emerge. ‘Bettan/SW’ exemplifies a common narrative in the Swedish police data:

Bettan: Sure, all police officers might not have been wonderfully pleasant exactly, but I’ve never really been mistreated in any way, I wouldn’t say.

(p.20)

Although contact with the police may not be ‘wonderfully pleasant’, there is very minimal narration around lived senses of ‘discrimination’ or ‘misconduct’ in the Swedish data. In contrast to the English data, the theme of ‘negative police interaction’ in the Swedish data is exclusively associated with attitudes and practices around drugs and/or alcohol. 'Angel/SW' provides an example of this; here reflecting generally on her experiences with the police:

Angel: Well, I mean if I see it from today’s eyes I guess that my behaviour hasn't been the best, in...Yeah, those times that you've been caught and stuff. I mean, I've probably behaved brash or cocky or something like that, and then they’ll just be the same [...]
Though I have some bad memories as well. Like it was this one time [...], I was in custody and I thought I was having a miscarriage cos' like, it was completely fucked. I was suppose to provide a urine sample and I said I can't do it [...] but they just said 'well you're going to do it!' and it didn't matter what I said, I mean it was crazy, you know, I sat inside and it was flipping blood everywhere and I was just 'wha'. [...] I was just, I mean [starts to cry]. I mean, I get fucking tears in my eyes cos' it was really horrible, it was completely fucked, I just felt so vulnerable.

(p.20)

While this is a story very particular to 'Angel', it says something important about compulsory drug sampling experiences in the Swedish context. 'Malin/SW' provides another example of this theme, here reflecting on her interactions with the police during her years dealing with alcoholism:

Malin: Like in a drunken state [...] you're not worth water really, in the eyes of the police. And sure to a certain extent I can understand that, but to a certain extent, it's very harsh by persons in authority to, to behave like that as well, behave like pigs against people who are evidently, like mentally disconnected due to drugs or alcohol [...] It's a very bad attitude, you know.

(p.6)

Thus, there are some important differences in experience in the area of negative police interactions detected between the samples, namely; in the Swedish data this is commonly linked to themes around police attitudes and practises relating to alcohol and drug use, while in the English data the narratives relate more to themes around discrimination and misconduct. In turn, these themes feed into the broader themes of legitimacy and trust.

**5.2.2 Legitimacy and trust in police interactions**

Police contact inevitably represents an *interactive* process, and bearing in mind the nature of this contact, it is unlikely to be experienced as particularly 'positive'. Nevertheless, what the data suggest is that there is a spectrum of subjective experiences with regard to legitimacy and illegitimacy within these interactions. In comparison, the theme of legitimacy is significantly more prominent in the Swedish data than in the English. 'Ninni/SW' and 'Linda/SW' provide examples of the interactional aspects of this, emphasising a reciprocally natured contact:

Ninni: Well, cos' I'm never like mouthy and stuff like this, when I've finally been stopped and it's a fact, like 'here I am with the cops', you know, then I just try to be compliant and cooperative. And I don't start to mess about if they ask me to get in the car, or if they want to put cuffs on me, but it's just, I just do it basically. And I come down and I piss and I do whatever I should.

(p.26)
Linda: I mean, they've [police] always been [...] they've been very kind and they've been, and then during this period when I was becoming a proper IDU and stuff, they soon found out about that [...] They could stop and be like 'Hey you' Linda', you're very thin for the moment, shouldn't we go and buy a hot dog at the snack bar', you know. [...] But then also, I've never been rude to them either, or well sure I might have been a bit mouthy at times and stuff like that, but it's been, it's been good really.

(p.31)

These interactional experiences feed into the broader theme of perceptions of fairness in the women's accounts, a theme which is rare in the English police data. Rather, the opposite, that is, an expressed perception of unfairness is common in the English data. In turn, this lived sense of unfairness often leads to further conflictual relations with the police'. This is exemplified here by 'Becky/EN', reflecting on her experiences with the police interlinked to the abuse she experienced by her father:

Becky: I had red hand-marks around my neck once, my friend was there, witnessed it, and the police, the police didn't believe me.

(p.8)

The association between early interactions with the police and subjective understandings of legitimacy are notable in 'Becky’s' quote. These experiences then often impact on interaction with the police later on, possibly producing a more, as expressed by 'Becky', 'rebellious' attitude (also exemplified by 'Grace' in S.5.2).

An interlinked subtheme within the broader theme of legitimacy and trust in police relations is found in the area of police tactics, a theme that has quite a strong presence in the English data, while being completely absent in the Swedish. 'Amanda/EN' exemplifies the lived experience of this:

Amanda: I was homeless at that point, um, and when you’re homeless you just get picked on by the police constantly. Like, PNCed, um, they stand around trying to listen to your conversations, um...just like, following you about and just, generally trying to annoy you as much as possible. [...] And they’re constantly questioning you, and you just gotta keep your mouth shut, completely shut, cos’ there’s no point in talking to them.

[I: So you wouldn’t say you have much trust for the police?]

Amanda: [brief laugh] Not at all, no. [...] They just try and get you into jail, literally, that’s all they wanna do [...] They were sending like drug squads to me all the time, so I’d go and score

53 Intravenous Drug User.
for them and then they can get me, put me in jail for two years. Um, well 6 years and I’ll get 2, but the thing was, I knew who they were.

(p.23-24)

‘Grace’ was similarly targeted in an undercover operation, though in contrast to ‘Amanda’, ‘Grace’ did not know ‘who they were’ and accordingly got convicted for ‘helping’ an undercover police officer to score drugs:

Grace: I'd had probation for years from then up to, like, all the way through that up until, like, 3 years ago when I, cos' I relapsed, unbeknown to me helped an undercover police officer score. I just thought it was another addict, I wasn't a dealer, she told me she was ill, came to me as a friend and I went and scored, they scored off a certain person and I got caught and went to jail.

(p.22-23)

'Grace' was sentenced to 21 months in prison for each bag of heroin, being convicted for a total of 354. This type of targeted undercover police tactic only exists in the English data, and correlates negatively with the themes legitimacy and trust.

Comparing this to the Swedish data, marked differences in the theme of legitimacy in the context of police behaviour are detected. In the Swedish data police interactions are, again, more themed around fairness and reciprocity in the interaction, here exemplified by ‘Mia/SW’:

Mia: Well I, um, was brought up with the view that the police were dirty, like [...] so I had a pretty tough mentality against the police, well against authorities as a whole, already as a child really. Yeah, but actually I think the police really, I mean if I think about it today, so all they did was just doing their job. [...] Sure maybe at that point in time I thought that they were pretty awful, you know, like locked me up and, yeah, but if I think about it today I wouldn’t be able to say that ‘this and that’ they’ve done wrong, cos' I wasn’t better myself [...] Like they never wrestled me down in an unprovoked manner or anything.

[I: So you’d say it was never unreasonable as such?]

Mia: No, no, not at all.

(p.15)

Thus, though experiences with the police may not be categorised as ‘positive’, subjectively the nature of the contact is never themed as illegitimate in the Swedish data. This difference between ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ treatment is one of the core analytical differences detected across the two sample groups in terms of police contact. Moreover, re-emphasising the importance of totality of lived experience, these themes overlap significantly with the women’s experiences of being on the other side, namely, reporting victimisation.

54 The judge allowed for her sentences to run concurrently.
5.2.3 On the other side: Reporting victimisation

Re-visiting the blurred boundary between victim and offender highlighted in Chapter 4, the vast majority of the women in this study have been victims of crime. Overwhelmingly, the women have been victims of male violence, both physical and sexual. All but one woman in the English sample, and eight out of twelve of the Swedish women, have experienced (and disclosed) physical and/or sexual violence by men. The nature of adult victimisation is wide-ranging; these women have been sexually exploited, raped and abused, beaten with chains, they have had lungs punctured, skulls cracked and bones broken, they have been shot, stabbed, drugged and scrubbed in bleach. Many have been left with both physical and mental scars for life.

Much of the violence experienced by these women; however, has gone unreported. The data suggest that there are several reasons for this. In the English data, linking in to the highlighted themes on legitimacy, there is a lack of trust generally in the criminal justice system, which translates into a lack of reporting. In addition, there is the specific context of the victimisation setting; a key example of this is prostitution and drug use. Prostitution is a theme exclusively found in the English data.

'Serena/EN' provides an illustration of the interlinking themes of victimisation and reporting practices, coloured by the context in which the victimisation occurs. ‘Serena’ has only reported one incident to the police, which was when she was kidnapped, drugged and had sexual images recorded of her with animals. At this time she had been ‘clean’ and had been out of prostitution for about a year. ‘Serena’ here reflects on the reasons why this was the only time she reported victimisation:

Serena: Well I never experienced it [violence] when I was out of it [not on drugs], other than that time, but maybe if I wasn’t out of it, would I have reported it, or? I don’t know what might have happened then. Cos' sometimes the women, cos' I've had bad incidents happened and I haven’t gone to the police.
[I: You never reported anything?]
Serena: No, so, and I know enough girls that have had it happen to them, they've come into the house where I'm staying, wrecked and...they still won’t go to the police.
[I: Why do you think that is?] 
Serena: Because it's so...because they get labelled already as a whore and they're not gonna listen to you [...] But I've only had a few experiences, but some of the girls that, they're still doing it till today, they're having it every weekend [...] Every week someone is getting raped [...] It's madness.
There are several important points worth highlighting here. Firstly, the inherently violent nature of prostitution must be critically raised\(^{55}\). Secondly, an important point is the subjective sense of justice being contingent on \textit{who you are} and \textit{what you do}. Although this is a theme somewhat present also in drug-using narratives, it is most prominent in the context of prostitution. Already being 'labelled as a whore' means that the women do not feel that they are likely to be listened to by the police. Their access to justice is thus experienced as limited. Moreover, this subjective feeling of a lack of access to justice can also be reinforced via police behaviour (interlinking to the theme of police 'misconduct' highlighted earlier), as exemplified by 'Anna/EN':

Anna: I've been charged with assaulting a police officer. But um, some of them are pervy...do you know what I mean? I've had like, when I've been picked up for prostitution like, them trying to come on to you and that...I just don't think that's right.

A reluctance to report violence in the English data is also rooted in lived experiences of police inaction. This is; however, again a theme exclusively found in the English data. In this theme the victim status is experienced to be linked to \textit{who you are}. Following the discussion about prostitution, I asked 'Anna' whether she has any trust in the police, now when she is clean:

Anna: Not really, cos' a few, like last year I got attacked by somebody from my past, like one of my, my, my 5 year old's dad, his ex-girlfriend or something like that, and like I'd gone into, walked to the police station and I was like really upset.[...] I had my daughter with me, my 2 year old [...] By the time they'd rung me they'd done a check on my name and this and that and the other and it's like, I was saying that my life has changed now, but like, they were more interested in how I knew her and the guy, and all that stuff. Nobody didn't even come out to see me for that.

Comparing these experiences to the Swedish data, narratives of police inaction on reported violence are not detected in the Swedish data. There is, however, evidence of women also not reporting victimisation in the Swedish data, tentatively linked to the violence taking place in a drug-using/otherwise offending context. It should also be pointed out that there are evidence of stories of victimisation, though rather small in volume, in each sample group, that have been both reported to the police and suitably acted on. What these all

\(^{55}\) And thus associated questions regarding regulation must be posed; this is discussed in the specific contexts of Sweden and England in Chapter 8, S.8.2.1.
share; however, is that they fall in the very serious end of victimisation, such as ‘Serena’s’ experience of being kidnapped. In addition, what they also share is that they take place in a setting where the women’s victim status is not dependent on who they are or what they do (such as violence taking place in a prostitution context, as in ‘Serena’s case, or violence being linked to people in the woman’s past, as in ‘Grace’s case). A finding is hence that in the woman’s accounts, access to justice is subjectively understood to be linked to the notion of being a legitimate victim. This theme is dominant in the English data, but rare in the Swedish data.

5.3 Sentencing and sanctioning
A wide range of sentences have been received in both sample groups\textsuperscript{56}. Subjective interpretations of sentencing practices are deemed to be significant, as they, similarly to police interaction, correlate to personal understandings of legitimacy. Focussing on what emerged as salient in the women’s narratives around sentencing, this section will give particular attention to the theme of transformative experience; referring to experiences that, from the women’s perspectives, had transformative impacts in terms of enabling positive change. Overall, the analysis suggests that sentences in the community, as well as shorter prison sentences, do not correlate with transformative experiences for women in either of the samples\textsuperscript{57}. The theme of transformative sentencing experiences is exclusively detected in longer prison sentences, along with residential treatment care (exclusively relevant for the Swedish data). A key mechanism behind this is that underlying factors relating to offending behaviour, such as drug and alcohol problems and a lack of skills and

\textsuperscript{56} See Chapter 3 Table 3.7.1. and 3.7.2 for an overview of participants’ sentence range. It should be noted; however, that due to relying exclusively on self-reported accounts of sentencing and sanctions, there are no precise data on the exact number and length of sentencing experiences for each woman. Commonly interlinked to a chaotic lifestyle, including heavy drug use, the majority of the women only have a rough idea of their sentencing history.

\textsuperscript{57} We are reminded that the sample is inevitably skewed towards women, due to the specific criteria of repeat involvement with criminal justice, who did not experience any ‘transformative’ impacts from first-time sentences.
qualifications, are, at least to some extent and for some women, addressed in this specific sentencing setting\textsuperscript{58}.

\textbf{5.3.1. Sentences in the community}

All of the women, across both samples, have had \textit{some} type of sentence in the community at \textit{some} point. In this category I include probation, fines, community service and electric monitoring; essentially everything that is not prison or compulsory residential rehabilitation (only relevant in the Swedish context). The analysis suggests that sentences in the community, in their various forms, make only a minor, possibly temporary, impact on the women's offending behaviour. The prime identified qualitative mechanism behind this is that very rarely do these sentences involve any effective addressing of underlying reasons for offending. Importantly, \textit{none} of the women, in either of the samples, position experiences within a community sentence context as transformative. For example, 'Amanda/EN' is one of the minority of the English sample who has exclusively had community sentences, primarily fines, and she here reflects on her first-hand experience of receiving yet another one of these sentences:

\begin{quote}
Amanda: I ran up out the court crying actually [...] Um, for when the sandwich, the £1.50 sandwich I was like 'look, I’m homeless, I got problems that need addressing'. [...] And they were like, they didn’t give a shit, they were just like ‘well here’s an £80 fine’ and it was like, ‘well I’m homeless, I’ve got problems with drugs and you’re fining me 80 quid?’. That’s just pathetic, you know there’s no way I’m gonna pay that 80 quid. So like, why even bother? [brief laugh] It’s just a bit stupid, it’s really, it’s...ah it’s just stupid.
\end{quote}

(p.26)

In turn, these subjective experiences of 'stupid' sentencing feed into the wider theme of criminal justice legitimacy. As 'Amanda' goes on to suggest:

\begin{quote}
Amanda: I mean 80 quid for stealing a £1.50 sandwich is pretty pathetic I’d say. [...] Surely it would have been better to just offer me some help and some understanding [...] To be honest that’s just made me hate them even more, and hate the whole system.
\end{quote}

(p.27)

'Amanda' here effectively draws links between sentencing and lived experiences of justice, which in turn overlaps with the overarching theme of system-wide legitimacy. 'Amanda' goes on to reflect on what she believes could have been more transformative sentencing options:

\textsuperscript{58} Longer prison sentences typically come at later stages of an offending path, and it is hence also likely that these will fall at a point when the woman may be more ‘ready’ to capitalise on any transformative experiences gained.
Amanda: Maybe even, like, some training or something, just something good like. Um, to make me see the system as a good thing rather than as a bad thing. Um...yeah, that would have been good. When you're homeless, not trying to beat you down all the time [...], not try to ostracise you all the time or follow, just like, caring a bit about you, a tiny, not loads just, when you get done for begging sort of like, try and improve the person's circumstances or, sort of, like they could have taken me to get a script there and then. They could have engaged with the drugs services, like, on my behalf.

(p.35)

More than reinforcing the importance of addressing underlying causes within sentencing practices, as well as re-iterating the point on legitimacy, ‘Amanda’ additionally makes a noteworthy comment about ostracisation and exclusion here. This theme of a lived sense of exclusion through criminal justice interactions is a common one in the English data and presents a major contrast between the two samples. That is, in the Swedish data the theme of a lived sense of inclusion is much more prominent. This is an argument that is re-visited in the coming chapters, relating specifically to the women's routes out of crime and criminal justice.

Another woman who had exclusive experiences of community sentencing in the English data is 'Jade/EN'. Despite consistent contact with the police while growing up, 'Jade' mainly 'got away with' what she views to be a 'slap on the wrist', primarily involving fines and probation, neither of which had any transformative impact on her use of violence:

Jade: I wish they offered more help as in to why I caused trouble, why I fight, um, and ongoing help as well. You know, I...I know I was the one in the wrong, but you need help if you're the one in the wrong [...] They used to say [in angry raised voice:] 'why you do this sort of thing? And bla bla bla', you don't need that, you need somebody who's, um, who will sit and listen to you and not, not judge you, because cos' when, back then you're judged by what you've done and that's it. [...] But um, you know, um, I wished, I really wished that there was help, not just for the, the ones who were hurt, but for the ones that do it as well.

(p.17)

Echoing much of ‘Amanda's narrative above, this subjective emphasis on a lack of addressing underlying issues within sentencing practices, as well as an expressed harshness in attitude within the system, is a common one in the English data. 'Claire' provides a final example of community sentences in the English sample. 'Claire' has a long record of shoplifting behind her, with some experiences of fraud when she was younger. 'Claire' is one of the few women across both samples who has not struggled with drugs and/or alcohol addiction. Rather, in ‘Claire’s’ account offending is strongly linked to mental health, in particular depression. She
has received a range of community sentences and here reflects on her experiences of these and why, in her view, they did not have a transformative impact on her behaviour:

Claire: I just needed somebody in my life, I just needed a coach, I needed somebody that could just set me on a path, just do something with me, because I had nothing. I didn’t know, I had no qualifications, I wasn’t going anywhere, I couldn’t get another job, yeah I was working in a pub, but I was depressed working in this pub […] I had nothing. So yeah I’d [sniffles] […] I just needed somebody normal in my life. […] If I had somebody that I could go and just say ‘what are my options? What can I do with my life? How can I do this, how can I do that? I want to be this, I want to do this’. […] I never got [that], you know, it was kind of like […] ‘Do your community service, and off you go!’ […] You pay a fine, and then that was it. […] So I didn’t have anybody telling me that there are other paths, there are other ways that you can go, there are other things that you can do.

(p.68-69)

For ‘Claire’ her sentences had no impact on her offending behaviour, suggestively because they did not address any of the underlying factors that played a role in her offending. What ‘Claire’ ‘needed’ in her life was some ‘guidance’, including knowledge about options and an understanding of how to access them. As ‘Claire’ goes on to suggest, mentoring might have been of relevance:

Claire: I think after, after you’ve committed a crime I think, or been caught or been sentenced I think there need to be something in place for women for mentoring, because I felt like there was nothing there for me. There was nothing. There was absolutely nothing; I got fined and then sent off. Nobody at any point turned around to me and said ‘what’s wrong, why are you doing this?’ […] It was just a case of ‘you’re a bad person, you’re a bad seed, we’re gonna punish you! Now go away, and live an honest life!’ […] It doesn’t work like that. I mean if you’ve, if you got a child that’s playing in the mud you don’t drag them out the mud, clean them up and then say ‘right go back over there where the mud is but I don’t want you to get dirty’.

(p.101)

‘Claire’s’ analogy about ‘the mud’ is meaningful. Indeed, placing the woman in exactly the same conditions as she found herself in before the sentence does nothing to address the reason why she got ‘dirty’ to start with. The analysis clearly suggests that, from the women’s perspective, examining and addressing individual need, including discussions about options for positive change as in ‘Claire’s case, or a chance to process trauma/abuse as in ‘Jade’s’ case, have the potential to lead to more transformative impacts.

Comparing the English experiences of community sentences to the Swedish female experience, there is substantial overlap. That is, a minimal transformative impact of community sentences is identified also in the Swedish data. However, the analysis suggests that the qualitative mechanisms behind this finding are somewhat different in the Swedish
context. In contrast to the English data, in the Swedish data there is an expressed sense of opportunity to address factors relating to offending, via for example access to programs; however, there is only minimal impact due to low uptake of such within probation contexts, as well as a lack of follow up. 'Ninni/SW' provides an example of this, here recalling her early experiences with probation:

Ninni: Well, yeah, I got some probation at that time, I imagine, yeah I think I did, yeah. Eh, a year maybe [...] So then the thought was that I would do a program [...] So I went there once but the condition was, of course, that you’d be drug-free when you’re there and I rocked up, well I was sitting there falling asleep already at the info meeting. So I wasn’t welcome back, but, like, it never happened anything, cos’ I didn’t get probation with any written conditions or anything, but it was more like ‘yeah we plan to this and we plan to do’ kind of thing [...] So I didn’t give a shit about it really [...] Yeah, I just lived as normal, the only thing maybe was that ‘Oh yeah, the probation service, I’d forgotten about them’, like, when they rang me up or whatever.

(p.21)

A prominent factor here is a suggested lack of follow-up in the community setting, along with a personal disinterest in change, which in turn links to continued drug use. Indeed, probation does not seem to be experienced as a sentence at all in the Swedish sample. ‘Bettan/SW’ provides another example of this, reflecting on receiving a sentence of 7 years of probation:

Bettan: I’ve had probation, I’ve been sentenced to special, you know, one time I think I got surveillance from 2000...I mean I got it for 7 years, I was sentenced to probation for 7 years and well, seriously I don’t know anyone who’s ever had that.

[I: Did it make a difference would you say?]

Bettan: No, it didn’t, like I was too new in it really, that was in the beginning of my addiction, if I put it like that, and really, and I was just too sold on the drugs, so I had no intention of stopping.

(p.13)

The key point here is that ‘Bettan’ had no ‘intention’ of stopping. This is a common, and arguably logical, finding, i.e.; without the motivation to quit the drug-using lifestyle, no transformative experiences will take place.

Another example of a sentence in the community is electric monitoring. A large minority of the women in the Swedish sample had had experiences of some form of electric monitoring, compared to none in the English sample59. Again, however, this seems to have only limited

59 Although Sweden make more extensive use of electronic monitoring than other European countries (Lappi-Seppälä, 2012), electric tags are also available in England and Wales. However, none of the women in this particular sample had experiences of such.
influence on lived experiences, with minimal transformative impacts. For some, it was a bit 'troublesome' in terms of getting into a routine and keeping times. For others it had even less impact. 'Angel' for example recalls her first experience with an electric tag:

Angel: I think, yeah before, I'd been fined maybe or stuff like that [...] Oh no, I'm missing things now, I fucking got, I'd been sitting with a tag that month. [...] Yeah that's right, I'd had a month of tagging in my apartment in X, that was it. [...] I thought most of it was just...ah, just fuck it, it works alright, yeah it was just really easy, I sold a shitload drugs during that time.

(p.19)

The key finding in the area of community sentencing is thus that, regardless of the precise type of sentence, for the women participating in this study there are minimal transformative experiences identified. However, the reasons behind this seem to differ slightly. The analysis suggests that in the English sample the tools for change are experienced as lacking, while in the Swedish sample, the motivation for change at the point of sentence is seemingly lacking. Prison sentences, however, present a different ‘transformative story’ to community sentences.

5.4 Experiences of prison

The majority of the women in both sample groups have spent at least some time in prison; a small majority in the English sample and a large majority in the Swedish. Comparing the experiences of prison across the groups, there are some noteworthy similarities, though accompanied by some marked differences. A major issue identified within the prison context overall is around the use of short sentences, and especially the pronounced lack of access to purposeful activity within these. In terms of transformative experience, the analysis identifies three broad subthemes within the prison setting, namely; removal from the scene, structure and safety, and access to some form of constructive activity. I will commence this section by giving some attention to the issue of short sentences, before moving on to detailing each of the three subthemes identified as having transformative value in the prison setting.

5.4.1 Experiences of short sentences

There are a myriad of short sentences amongst the women, all of which have had very minimal transformative impacts. The lack of relevance of short sentences presents great
symmetry across the data groups. 'Becky/EN' and 'Bettan/SW' provide comparative examples of this:

Becky: To be fair, the little sentences didn't...they weren't applicable to my life to be fair.  

(p.65)

Bettan: No, there certainly wasn't [any impact], it was far too short a time for that [...] Yeah, that prison sentence was nothing else than to get some rest.  

(p.15)

Lack of access to drug treatment programs on a short sentence is a particularly prominent theme. 'Anna/EN' and 'Mia/SW' provide comparative examples of this across the samples:

Anna: I put my name down for [...] a drugs worker, but it takes months to get the referral to go through. So nobody don't see you by the time you're in and out, on a short sentence.  

(p.14)

Mia: I've been offered [programs] but haven't had enough, like enough time to do em' [...] Cos' it takes certain weeks to go through certain programs [...] So if you end up inside only on short sentences then maybe you haven't got the time to get into a program before you're about to 'muck' like. So it doesn't really serve a purpose.  

(p.40)

The analysis shows manifest cross-national similarity in terms of experiences of short sentences for women in this study, with minimal 'application' to the woman's life and no transformative impacts identified. Moreover, the analysis suggests that, rather than enabling transformative impacts, short prison sentences can have the opposite effect, that is, they can exacerbate existing problematic factors, such as drug use. As expressed by 'Tia/EN':

[I: Was there anything in that experience that gave you a second thought about your lifestyle?]  

Tia: Mm, no not really, it was just about doing the time. As soon as you get out you get back on drugs anyway, just to block out that you've been in jail and what you've experienced in jail.  

(p.11)

Taken together, these cross-national findings raise serious questions about the use of short prison sentences for female offenders. In contrast, long prison sentences are often

60 Slang for release from prison.
experienced as more transformative for the women in this study, with three major subthemes emerging as significant; 'structure and safety', 'removal from the scene' and 'constructive activity'.

5.4.2 Structure and safety
Prison provides a structured and ordered setting. For many, this is the first real experience of routine and structure, and this is often portrayed by the women as a positive aspect of prison life. The data suggest a clear association; the less previous life-experience of routines and stability, the more prison emerges as a positive space specifically in terms of structure. 'Grace/EN' and 'Ninni/SW' provide comparative examples of the symmetry in data:

Grace: I like jail.
[I: You like jail, what do you like about it?]
Grace: Eh, first routine I'd had, first boundaries, security, I knew what I was doing, it was safe.

(p.25)

NARRATIVE BREAK

Grace: And the boundaries set up, cos' I've never had that, and that was a real turning point for me. It sounds mad and I still say to people now, I say 'I love prison, I think it's brilliant'.

(p.29)

Ninni:...And then also, the prison time I think I'd actually say was the time that I, in myself, have felt the best in my entire life really. Fixed routines are something I've not had since I was born, I mean like fixed meal times, like, nothing like that. Eh, and there it's like every day exactly the same, like, and then the free time you fix as you want. But that's where I started to work out, I've never trained in my entire life, I love it; fixed meal times, fixed go-to-bed and get-up-times, and I thrived amazingly well with that.

(p.46)

The symmetry across these quotes is significant. Prison provides a safe space where the woman can engage with structure and routine. More than this, prison can also provide a point of security in a chaotic life, as well as meeting needs, including homelessness. 'Jasmin/SW' provides an example of this:

Jasmin: It was good really, I went in the same month I was homeless as well and it was in December, so it was really cold outside, and it was in the middle of the night when I arrived to the prison in X and I felt it will be just so nice, like, to come inside. So I looked forward to it. Get a chance to come inside and lay down in a bed, like; 'this is where I'll be, there's no one who can throw me out of here', you know. [...] Somehow it became my home, or my first security. It sounds really weird but it was there I felt, uh, I was able to calm down, you know, and feel safe. It was where I belonged.
[I: In what way did you feel safe there?]
Jasmin: In the way that I had my bed, I, yeah I had like food every day, a meal each day, and then that no one could tell me 'you have to leave now.' I knew, like, that no matter how the day would turn out I would get to sleep in a bed that night. So it kind of became my security in that way.

For some women prison can thus become a space for meeting need, such as 'a bed', 'a meal each day' and a sense of 'security'. Arguably; however, this data say significantly more about the realities of these women's lives leading up to entry point to prison, rather than the prison space per se.

5.4.3 Removal from the scene

Another dominant subtheme within the broader theme of transformative impacts in the prison setting is that for those women who are struggling with addiction, i.e. the majority of both samples, a longer prison sentence can signify a 'removal from the scene' and some time off drugs/alcohol. While there is evidence for this across the samples, the Swedish women express the value of this to a greater extent than the English women (which is not unlikely to be related to how time is spent whilst inside; see S.5.4.4). The key transformative factor within the ‘removal’ theme is that time off drugs overlaps with an initiation of consideration of other choices. The data strongly suggest for all women involved with heavy drug use across the samples, the breaking of drug use and associated offender patterns whilst being 'inside' the drug is hugely difficult. 'Jenny/SW' and 'Tia/EN' demonstrate comparable examples of this:

Jenny: Well, once I got away from it all it became easier to make other choices. Uh,...on the outside I would never have managed to give it up like, I would never have done a treatment myself and got myself in and done the come down if I had, eh, so it, like, required a prison sentence. Mm.

(p.47)

Tia: Yeah in prison, when you've got your head about you and you're straight, if they were to put more things in place for when people come out of prison, perhaps people wouldn't go straight back down the wrong road.

(p.20)

This space for consideration of options with a 'straight' mind can accordingly be experienced as a 'positive side effect' of prison; as suggested by 'Malin/SW':

Malin: Yeah, for me it [prison] gave so damn much, many kind of positive side effects, I mean it, jokingly I tell people that 'yeah, commit a crime and you'll get a natural', you know, 'distance to a sober or drug-free life', cos' for me that was the case. [...] The time combined with the
automatic sobriety, I mean I haven’t had to occupy my mind with 'should I or shouldn’t I drink,' but rather simply 'I just don’t drink during this time'. [...] And then I did the programs, meanwhile, and specifically this to find yourself in a relatively vulnerable position, with emotions that goes up and down, and challenging decisions, fun decisions; to kind of face all of that completely sober, for such a long time, eh, that was really just kind of healthy.

(p.31)

Removal from the scene can thus provide some 'distance' from alcohol and/or drugs, which for many means that new motivations and decision-abilities develop. What is suggested here; however, is that it is not so much the prison environment per se that produces this, but rather, it is the nature of removal. Whether prison is the most suitable space for this is a separate question. Moreover, what is clear from the analysis, exemplified in ‘Tia’s’ quote above, is that this removal presents an opportunity for alternative choices to be considered; however, whether the women are provided with the tools to capitalise on these opportunities firstly within the prison context and secondly, upon release, is a different question and relates closely to how time is spent.

5.4.4 Constructive activity: Treatment, education, programmes and training

The final subtheme linked to the broader theme of transformative factors in the prison setting relates to how time is spent. The analysis indicates that a key aspect of the mechanisms behind positive narrations of prison experiences involves access to treatment, education, programs and/or training. While there is clear symmetry in the data regarding the value of ‘constructive’ activity, the level of access to and quality of such activity differ across the sample groups. A particularly marked difference is found in the area of access to durable drug and alcohol treatment options, both during sentence and upon release. Another major interlinking difference is the experience of open facilities, which is much more prevalent in the Swedish sample. So for example, many of the Swedish women have had the option to spend some or all of their sentence in an open treatment facility, or undertake training in the community whilst on sentence.

There is a range of transformative experiences identified within the subtheme of 'constructive activity', reflecting different pathways and needs, across the two samples. The most important factor identified in this context is the opportunity to participate in programs and/or training that are suitable to the woman’s individual needs, as well as to particular
offending patterns. For example, for 'Becky/EN' this included dealing with anger-management and developing victim-awareness:

Becky: The thinking-school was first, it's about like triggers, um, like red flags and white flags, so your red flags are your bad areas, your white flags are your good areas […] That helped me find my inner self […] Um, and then the TSP [Thinking Skills Programme], well the thing, um, like the victim-awareness course…like that actually found my heart again like, and the remorse in myself.

(p.76)

Another example in the English setting, relating more specifically to qualifications, is found in 'Grace/EN':

Grace: Like, the person who exams you on reading […] I've done that, I passed all that, done all the short duration programs for the drugs. I've done, I was an assessor, […] I got trained and passed the test, so that I could, I took the girls to a job, taught them, assessed them and then give them their exams […] I've for pretty much all my life been told by my mum and schools, and some authorities, that I was thick, a gippo, and that I'd never amount to nothing. […] All the qualifications I've got now, and people skills and life skills, I got in jail.

(p.28)

'Serena' provides a final example, unique to the sample in this study, in the English setting. She was given the opportunity to participate in a restorative justice program during her time inside, and met up with the woman she was in prison for robbing. She here reflects on the qualitative experience of this:

Serena: I really felt terrible, but it was really good cos' I had 3 sessions with her. […] I couldn't even look in her face, it was so nerve-wrecking. But it was a wakeup call, cos' blimey […] if someone done that to me I'll have, I said to her 'I'd have a heart attack'. […] I was really forcing myself to do it, but it was really positive. […] Honestly, I really, I was sick to my stomach. Yeah but it was really good, I'm glad I done it, definitely.

(p.21-22)

'Becky', 'Grace' and 'Serena' provide three examples of engagement in different types of activity/programs in the prison setting that fall under the broader theme of experiences that, subjectively, have had significant transformative impact. Indeed, the programs that are suggested to be of most value are those that provide some tools for change via being individually suited, and importantly, address some of the underlying factors linked to offending.

Comparing these English experiences to the Swedish sample, some clear symmetry emerges, though with some nuanced differences in the access to care and treatment especially on the individual level. As a comparative example, similar to ‘Becky/EN’, 'Jasmin/SW' has a long
record of violence behind her and struggled with anger-management. This was her experience of dealing with this in the prison setting:

Jasmin: There was some treatment, or there were lots of different programs rather. [...] There was this one woman who I worked with and her I remember really well, we had a very, eh [...] yeah, like straight and honest communication and all that. And she also helped me to process my childhood and I got to work in different chapters, if you know what I mean, and I got homework and we talked and I had that 3 times a week for 3 hours, time which we just talked. She really kind of helped me to understand how I could have acted differently, if anyone messed with me. [...] For me, there was never the option to walk away from a conflict, and she taught me kind of...So there somewhere a light was lit in my mind, like 'oh, I've always been able to walk away'.

(p.29)

There are some noteworthy cross-national differences here relating specifically to access to individualised support, with 3 hours of individual work 3 times/week representing a stark contrast to how programs are experienced in the English prison setting, where they are, if at all, primarily group based. Thus the quality of access to constructive activity is found to be significantly higher in the Swedish data.

Similar to the English data, education and qualifications are identified as an important aspect of purposeful activity in the Swedish sample. A marked difference here though is that, reflecting the wider use of open facilities, several of the Swedish women accessed education outside of the prison setting whilst on sentence. ‘Jenny’ provides an example of this:

Jenny: I got a tailored program of education [...] so I got to go to school every morning in X [local town] [...] Um, and then there I got, like they gave out an award for achievement in primary level, for having achieved personal goals, and I won the primary level award, so that was fun. [...] They understood my conditions, cos' we talked to them, X [key worker] was with me when I applied to the school, so they knew everything about me as well, you know, and everyone was just really, like supported me at the school and, yeah like, pushed me. So that was really good.

(p.21-22)

Comparing this to ‘Grace’s quote above, there are some definite similarities in terms of the positivity of gaining qualifications, though with some pronounced differences in terms of the setting of this, with ‘Jenny’ participating in a local community education through an open prison setting. This represents an important difference across the samples, and links to a broader theme of normalisation within the Swedish criminal justice setting, which in turn overlaps with a smoother transitioning out of criminal justice (see S.5.5 below).
Another difference in relation to programmes is found in narrations around more women-specific, holistic programs, which are found to a greater extent in the Swedish data. ‘Bettan’ here reflects on her experience of this:

Betty: When I've got a bit longer in prison, then I feel that they've, I've done programs during each, I've done ‘Våga Välja’ and I have done “Vinn”61, and what was...yeah I've done a lot of those flipping treatments, or programs, you know, when I've been inside. I've got lots of stuff from it every time, though it's not until now that they, that they've really lodged themselves, if you know what I mean? (p.20)

‘Vinn’ is a program that all of the Swedish women who have experiences of longer sentences have gone through, and that they all speak very positively about. The qualitative benefits suggested in the narratives is the holistic nature of the program, exploring the totality of lived experience, ranging from victim-awareness and family impacts, to developing consequential thinking and healthy relationships. Moreover, 'Bettan' also makes an important point in the second half of this quote, suggesting a cumulative effect of treatment and programs over time. This is a significant point, and one that is returned to in more depth in Chapter 6.

5.4.5 Staff-inmate relationships

A major difference in the lived experience of prison across the samples is found in the area of staff-inmate relationships. The analysis suggests that the nature of these relationships impacts directly on the woman’s behaviour during sentence, as well as, though to a lesser extent, on a long-term level. This prison subtheme significantly overlaps with the overarching theme of legitimacy and a lived sense of being supported. Comparatively, the English women’s accounts are significantly more dominated by conflictual/negative relationships with prison staff than the Swedish women’s. 'Tia/EN', 'Veronica/EN' and 'Sharon/EN' exemplify these experiences in the English setting, here responding to a question about how they felt treated in prison:

Tia:…They treat you like animals in there I reckon. (p.8)

Veronica: Horrible, I hate them. [...] I’m not being funny, I don’t like, I don’t like the police and I don’t like screws [prison officers].

61 Direct translation: ‘Dare to Choose’
62 Direct translation: ‘Win’
Sharon: In X I hated it, I hated it so much, the staff were terrible.

Comparing this to the Swedish narrations around staff-inmate relationships, a very different experience emerges, with the vast majority of the Swedish women reporting positive relations with prison staff. 'Eva/SW' and 'Mia/SW' here respond to the same question about how they felt treated in prison:

Eva: Good, really good, eh, prison officers are really amazing. I've been here a lot in X prison, I've got one, they care about me and they wonder and, eh, yeah you're treated in a very dignified manner.

Mia: Like here in X there's the X-prison, a women's prison, that's the most humane prison I've ever come across, I mean the staff, carers who work there for like the right reasons, not some key horny bastards who will just lock you up and, like, just stand and grin you right in the face. But these were humble, caring men and women who worked there and who cared about us, like, did everything to make it easier for me as an intern.

The power aspect is significant here; staff who are there for 'the right reasons', rather than some 'key horny bastards'. More than presenting a humanistic argument, the analysis suggests additional benefits of positive staff and prison relations. 'Bettan/SW' provides an example of this:

Bettan: It would just never occur to me to do drugs during a treatment or when I'm in prison, I just don't do that, cos' I think it's completely pointless. [...] Like at X for example, where I've been quite a few times you know, and yeah, the staff knows me, so no I wouldn't want to embarrass myself like [...] Like to do that there, cos' it's, like it's such a small institution which, and they, the staff who are there they're totally awesome, they're so damn good [...]. And they help out to the extent that they can, I mean, they really do. [...] Yeah they, like of course it becomes quite square and all that, but to the extent they can, they do help you.

There are a number of aspects worth highlighting in this narrative. Firstly, 'Bettan' notes that due to positive relationships with the staff, she does not want to take drugs in the prison setting, invoking emotions of 'embarrassment'. She thus chooses to stay 'clean' during her sentence due to internal motivations rather than external. The analysis suggests that these internal emotional motivators are far more effective than any external processes, such as threat of further sanctions, for maintaining change (this argument is further developed in Chapter 6 and 7). Secondly, the fact that the institution in question is rather
small, that she knows the staff quite well and that she feels they do what they can to help, re-enforces this internal motivation. This makes an important point about the qualitative value of smaller, more familial institutions, as well as the significance of positive staff-inmate relationship.

Overall then, while there are some significant overlaps in the women’s accounts of prison experiences across Sweden and England, notably the lack of impact of short sentences, the value of a safe and structured space away from the chaos of ‘active’ life on the outside, and the usefulness of ‘constructive activity’, there are also some major differences. Specifically, the access to quality and individualised ‘constructive activity’ is significantly more prominent in the Swedish women’s accounts. Additionally, the nature and location of this activity also varies in important ways across the samples, with some Swedish women accessing, through open facilities, for example education in the community whilst on sentence. Lastly, major differences have been identified in terms of staff-inmate relations, with the English women’s accounts being dominated by conflictual and negative relations. In contrast, the Swedish women’s accounts of these relationships are predominantly positive, which in turn impacts positively on how their time is spent.

5.5 Transitioning out of criminal justice systems
While the following two data chapters exclusively focus on routes out of crime, the final section in this chapter will explore the transitioning out of criminal justice and the comparative experience of women within the contours of criminal justice. This is an area of the analysis that represents a manifest difference between the two samples. Specifically, the Swedish women, overall, subjectively experience a more supported transition out of criminal justice. For those spending time in prison, the chance to spend the later part of the sentence in an open facility, focusing on work and/or drug/alcohol rehabilitation is a key example of this. Although a prevalent experience in the Swedish data, the value of open prisons is nevertheless identified in both samples. ‘Becky/EN’ is the only one of the English women who had experiences of an open facility. After the main parts of the interview were finished, she adds:
Becky: ... And like, with the criminal justice thing, I, the most amazing aspect of jail, and what’s helped me, has got to have been open prison [...] Like, being given that chance and go out and work and, in return, I’ve been allowed out to visit my family like one weekend a month. Like that was, like, really giving me a huge boost, but not just that, it put me into a working routine, like 7 months before I’d left prison.

(p.110)

As a comparison, 'Malin/SW' was one of numerous women in the Swedish sample who spent time in an open facility towards the end of her sentence:

Malin: So first I had a month in a treatment home, eh, and then these last few months on X and supported housing in X, yeah [...] What's been so good I feel, like, is the fact that I've been able to, I've had like a few months when I've kind of been living freely. It felt just so weird in the beginning, sitting on the train by myself and like 'I'm normal'. Eh, that you're still able to move very freely, except that I must be home before 10 o'clock in the evening, and that I have to blow into one of those breathalyser when I've been away for a few hours or like, it's not every day but it's, in the beginning it was every day, now it's maybe every other day or so. So you still have a bit of monitoring, that you stay clean and sober.

(p.39)

The analysis suggests that one of the major benefits of open prisons is that they provide additional tools for maintaining change in 'real' life. To get into a 'working routine', as highlighted by 'Becky', and start to feel 'normal' again, as expressed by 'Malin', are important factors for lasting change. The underlying themes here are suggested to be normalisation and graduality; gradually evolving freedom and participation in 'normal' activities outside of criminal justice settings. For many of the Swedish women this transition towards the end of their sentence involved being moved to an open treatment facility. The analysis indicated numerous benefits within this transition, especially in terms of providing 'tools' for 'making it' on the outside. 'Malin/SW' here reflects further on this:

Malin: Eh, and I mean of course there should be a punishment, fine, but if you don't provide the conditions [...] I mean, what's important is that you prepare people for, like, credible alternatives after the prison time, that you lay down the foundations for a life that will sustain and function, there I think, like...the most essential time is definitely after the sentence [...] The most important factors is that, like, to help people who've never had a normal life. Though I may not be an advocate for 'Svensson' life or anything like that, but that you, I mean, that you know that you can have a home, you can have a key and lock your door, you can eventually, like, become economically independent. [...] I mean if I think, you know, that my situation is a bit miserable, it's not the least miserable in comparison to what it is for far too many people; those who actually need a brand new, like a completely new map, like 'This is how life works'.

(p.34)

The key challenge for change for many women is thus not during the sentence but rather, to develop a ‘new map’ and learn how to live a ‘normal’ life on the outside following sentence (exemplified also in the English data in ‘Tia’s quote in S.5.4.3). The value of providing tools
for long-term change, including the transitioning out of sentences, is huge. It is suggested that open prison facilities can play an important role in enabling this transition.

Moreover, the importance of these processes are not restricted to the prison setting, but are also identified in the area of treatment. Reflecting the significantly more extensive experiences of treatment in the Swedish setting⁶³, along with having treatment options as a part of the sentencing structure, this is a theme that is exclusively identified in the Swedish data. 'Carolina/SW' provides an example of the lived value of normalisation in an open residential treatment facility:

Carolina: Well I’ve been on an open treatment [...] Eh, and then I’ve lived there as well, but it hasn’t been an institution as such, but I’ve been able to come and go, maybe not exactly as I want to but still be out as usual and go away over the weekends and stuff like that. Partly I think it’s been really good cos’ it’s meant it’s not such a huge contrast I think, like, be inside an institution, get through it and then get out, but rather you still have, like you learn to live drug-free in ordinary life straight away. And then also I find it really challenging to be controlled, so it suits me for that reason as well. Like, I need some freedom and responsibility to succeed.

(p.19)

This is a sentiment echoed by the vast majority of women in the Swedish sample, namely the value of learning to deal with responsibility and ‘freedom’, to limit ‘the contrast’ of living life inside an institution and instead 'learn to live drug-free in ordinary life straight away'. The analysis suggests that learning to deal with the responsibilities of ‘real life’ is an essential pre-requisite to a successful transitioning out of criminal justice. For this reason open prisons, as well as halfway treatment facilities, are deemed highly valuable for enabling successful female routes out of crime and criminal justice.

5.6 The female experience of criminal justice in Sweden and England: Some conclusions

This chapter has presented findings from the comparative analysis of female lived experience of criminal justice in Sweden and England. The main themes explored, reflecting what was identified as salient in the women’s narratives, were contact with the police and experiences of sentencing and sanctioning. Firstly, in terms of police contact, a key finding was that early interactions with the police very much influence the nature of later

⁶³ See Chapter 6 (S.6.6.1) for more on this.
interactions. Looking comparatively at the nature of police interactional data across the samples, dominant themes in the English data were subjective experiences of 'discrimination' and 'police misconduct', while in contrast, the dominant themes in the Swedish data were more related to a lived sense of reciprocally-natured interactions, though with some negative themes being present especially around police attitudes and practices relating to drug/alcohol use.

In turn, these contrasting themes fed into the broader overarching themes of legitimacy and trust, which were also found to be relevant for the area of victimisation and reporting practices. Different lived experiences of access to justice were identified across the samples. That is, the English women's experiences of reporting victimisation to the police were subjectively felt to be more contingent on who they were and what they did. Being a victim of violence in prostitution contexts was a prime example of this.

Secondly, in relation to sentencing, community sentences for the women in this study were found to have very minimal transformative impacts. In the English data this dominantly related, from the women's perspective, to a lack of addressing underlying factors linked to offending in this sentence context. In contrast, in the Swedish data the minimal transformative impacts were not, from the women's perspectives, due to a lack of opportunity to address underlying factors, but rather, were more closely associated with a lack of 'readiness' to capitalise on such opportunities.

In terms of prison, both symmetry and difference was identified in the women's experiences across the samples. Firstly, a fundamental lack of transformative impacts from short sentences was identified across the two samples, though for some, short prison sentences were suggested to, in fact, exacerbate existing problematic factors. The lack of access to any 'constructive' activity, such as programs or drug/alcohol treatment, on short sentences was identified as a prime underpinning factor for this. Moreover, the prison subthemes of 'structure and safety' and 'removal from the scene' also showed considerable cross-national symmetry in the data, that is, that prison was for many women subjectively experienced as a 'safe' space, with the potential to provide 'distance' from drug/alcohol use and enabling the building of routines. Recognising these accounts, it is argued that these themes say
much more about the women’s lives on the outside than about prison per se. Whether prison is a suitable space to provide safety and structure for women living chaotic lives, many in exploitative contexts, is indeed, highly questionable.

Furthermore, the analysis suggested a clear link between ‘constructive’ use of time in prison and transformative impacts, especially linked to gaining access to avenues addressing factors subjectively associated with offending behaviour, including developing skills and processing trauma. However, while the importance of this was identified across the samples, the quality of this access was found to be markedly different. Specifically, the Swedish women had significantly better access to tailored and individualised forms of support, situated in smaller and more familiar facilities. In turn, this more extensive support structure was found to continue into the phase of transitioning out of criminal justice. In particular, the more extensive use of open prisons, as well as the use of open residential treatment facilities towards the end of sentence, emphasising gradual freedom and routine building on the outside, was identified as an important factor within this. The analysis suggests that a significant advantage of open facilities for the women’s transition out of criminal justice is to encourage a process of normalisation.

Lastly, a final point to highlight is the overarching theme of legitimacy and a lived experience of humane and fair treatment within criminal justice interactions. This overarching theme represents possibly the major divergent finding in this section, that is, subjective emotions of fairness, legitimacy and trust in criminal justice interactions are hugely more prominent in the Swedish women’s narratives. This comes through strongly in prison-inmate relationships, as well as in police interactional contact and sentencing. In turn, this subjective sense of legitimacy correlates with less conflictual engagements with criminal justice agents overall. These are important themes beyond sentencing and sanctions, and also have relevance for the final phase in the female journey through crime and criminal justice, namely her route out of crime; which is where we turn our attention for the coming two chapters.
Chapter 6

Female routes out of crime part 1: Barriers, 'ladders' and the role of relationality

6.1 Female routes out of crime 1: Enabling personal change

This chapter presents the first of two data chapters dealing with the final stage of the female journey through crime and criminal justice in Sweden and England; looking specifically at her route out of crime. The area of desistance has recently experienced exceptional growth in the criminological field; however, the majority of this work is based on male samples and the consideration of gender is commonly neglected. Desistance is here understood to mean 'the long-term abstinence from criminal behaviour among those for whom offending had become a pattern of behaviour' (McNeill et al, 2012:1). However, recognising that offending is typically merely one of numerous disruptive/chaotic factors in these women's lives, and that ceasing offending commonly runs parallel with several other life-altering transitions, this chapter will predominantly employ the wider term 'routes out' to describe this process.

While recognising that female routes out of crime are inevitably complex and paved with micro-related processes, this chapter presents a comparative analysis that suggests that these routes also vary in important ways across structural dimensions. It is at this junction that micro-processes meet macro-forces, which are both in turn coloured and influenced by meso-contexts. Drawing on data of female ex-offenders’ lived experiences in Sweden and
England, it is argued that, overall, the Swedish model offers a setting which is more conducive to the formation of female desisting narratives. The analysis suggests that there are two key underpinning processes to this; 1) a more effective addressing of individual need, via more accessible and holistic infrastructures for positive change (i.e. well-resourced and durable service provisions), and; 2) via the opening of societal doors, that is, more structural investments in meaningful opportunities for participation (such as employment). In turn, these processes are suggested to jointly produce a lived experience of inclusion and self-worth, which effectively promote a willingness to participate in, and positively contribute to, society.

Due to the volume of data relating to routes out, the findings will be presented over two chapters. This chapter will predominantly deal with barriers to change, infrastructures for enabling positive change (‘ladders’), and the role of relationships in the female route out of crime. Chapter 7 will focus more exclusively on the second process; i.e the opening of societal doors and mechanisms for inclusion and participation, with particular attention given to the role of employment.

6.2 Personal motivation for change
An essential prerequisite to a successful route out of crime, identified across the two samples, was a personal motivation in making a change. Bearing in mind the particular research question relating to this final stage, namely; how the desistance process is comparatively experienced, rather than the nature of the psychological onset of that process, only very limited attention will address this initial internal motivational shift. It is sufficient to say that for this personal interest in change to occur, the woman needs to feel ‘done’ with her previous lifestyle and ‘ready’ to make a change. For those in the sample for whom problematic substance/alcohol addiction is connected to their offending behaviour, both in direct and indirect ways, this readiness for change must also (typically primarily) involve a readiness to give up the drug in question (see for example quote by ‘Bettan’ in S.5.3.1). The key point here is that personal willingness to change is a prerequisite to the onset of change across the data groups, regardless of a subjective sense of opportunities
and support for that change. 'Malin/SW', one of the more privileged women in my Swedish sample, provides an example of this:

Malin: Like in my case, it couldn't have been done differently cos' I, even though I knew damn well [the impact of alcoholism] and I had good support around me, it just didn't click somehow. So for me it was solely about that I had to decide that 'that's it, now I just have to change lifestyle', if you know what I mean?  

(p.62)

Although maybe not always as well-articulated, the need for initial internal motivation for change to be successful was a universal finding across the entire sample. Recognising this as an essential starting point, the remainder of the chapter will focus on the subsequent step, specifically; how the transitionary period following this initial motivation for change is experienced by women in these different national settings.

6.3 Female barriers to change in Sweden and England

Along the route out of crime women face multiple barriers to change. These barriers are; however, very rarely fixed, and the analysis indicates that the micro-experience of barriers can be effectively lowered by macro-levelled inputs. I conceptualised these as allegorical 'ladders'; providing useful apparatuses for overcoming barriers. Before exploring such 'ladders' in more detail; barriers to change need to be outlined. Both 'external' and 'internal' barriers to change were identified in this study; 'external' barriers being defined as challenging factors in the woman’s life relating to her external environment and situation, while 'internal' barriers relate to aspects of the woman’s mental and emotional well-being. Reflecting the prominence of narrations around the different types of barriers across the data, more attention will be given to the latter of these two. Exploring barriers from a cross-national perspective, marked contrasts emerge. The analysis indicates that a) barriers to change feature more prominently in the English narratives (in particular 'external' ones), and b) fewer ladders are, or are at least subjectively felt to be, provided to overcome such barriers in the English setting.

64 A reminder of the interview format is useful here, with the woman being able to narrate rather freely about what was more salient to her. In consequence, external barriers were typically just stated, while the internal barriers were reflected on in significantly more length.
6.4 External barriers to change

A range of external factors in the women's lives acted as barriers to change. The data show that, maybe unsurprisingly, for the female route out of crime to be a successful one, basic needs have to be met. Three major themes emerged as especially salient in the area of external barriers to change, namely; 'housing', 'entrenchment in the scene' and 'lack of access to a liveable income'. Due to the first two barriers being significantly intertwined, these themes will be presented conjointly.

6.4.1 Housing and 'entrenchment in the scene'

Comparatively, the barrier of unmet housing need was much more frequently presented, and also portrayed as being significantly greater, in the English sample than in the Swedish. Thus, women in the English sample, especially those who most recently initiated their route out, are more commonly in temporary forms of housing, and stay there for longer periods of time, than the Swedish women. In turn, this translates to a pronounced lack of stability and safety in the early stages of the route out. Moreover, temporary accommodation is commonly located in the same geographical area where the woman has been ‘active’, and where she is accordingly surrounded by ‘active’ networks (i.e. still using/offending). Indeed, a key finding resonating with the women across the two samples is that maintaining 'active' connections to networks and geographical areas associated with offending and/or drug taking is a major risk factor for destabilising the desistance process. The analysis indicates that this theme interlinks with a personal struggle to successfully re-construct a local identity that is entrenched in offending and, commonly, drug use. Especially in the English data, this identity also often overlaps with sexual exploitation, via prostitution. In this way, 'entrenchment' and 'housing' act as mutually reinforcing female 'external' barriers to change.

‘Veronica/EN’ illuminates this link between unstable housing, entrenchment in the scene and barriers to change. When I met ‘Veronica’ she had been in temporary accommodation for 14 months, after coming out from serving a 6 year prison sentence. Though she was motivated to change, she found it a struggle to 'stay clean' in this setting:

Veronica: It's not that...it's not that I like doing it [smoking crack] though, if you know what I mean? Cos' I've said to myself "I'm gonna change completely", especially when I get my flat,
you know? [...] But I gotta wait, I think it's...maybe 16 months, 16 to 20 something like that.

(p.18)

NARRATIVE BREAK

Veronica: To lose the track that I'm on now? Going back into the same crowd and that lot, do you understand what I'm saying? I mean I could go down the road and get in with the crowd just like that [claps her hands]...Just like that.

(p.29)

While the lack of stable housing is a barrier to change in and of itself, it also provides a secondary layer in terms of 'getting in with the wrong crowd'. The factor of familiarity is important here, and acts as a reminder of the importance of situating the route out in the totality of lived experience, including a consideration of what type of lifestyle the women are actually trying to desist from. Having been on the street scene since the age of 14, this is the life that 'Veronica' knows, and the crowd that she identifies with, and can 'get in with' 'just like that'. Being in temporary accommodation in the same area where she has been 'active' for over 30 years therefore acts as a major barrier to sustaining change, including the ability to construct a new non-using/non-offending identity.

Another example of the multi-layered nature of the housing barrier, particularly identified in the English sample, is 'Serena/EN'. Similar to 'Veronica', 'Serena' has had a long life on the streets and she is now, after a couple of years of being clean, in temporary hostel accommodation. However, she finds it a challenge to shift her identity in the local area, where she spent numerous years prostituting:

Serena: But they [the police] used to say 'please don't walk down these areas', but I've lived around here all my life! So I walk around, and men still...It's embarrassing but they still, they don't so much now, but they did back then 2-3 years ago...like stop me and say 'business?'

(p.21)

For 'Serena', living with her previous identity as a prostitute in the same local area led to a traumatic experience of victimisation, when she bumped into an old punter who she then started dating. A few weeks into this 'relationship' 'Serena' was drugged and kidnapped for 6 days, a period during which she was a victim of recorded bestiality abuse. Though she interprets this experience in terms of 'being lonely' and subsequently 'just meeting the wrong person', it doubtlessly has links to her geographical setting and the identity she carries in the local community.
Comparing these English experiences to the Swedish, marked differences emerge. Firstly, housing was identified as a barrier to change for only one woman in the Swedish sample (‘Ninni’), who had been in temporary accommodation for about 4 months when I met her. Linking 'housing' to 'entrenchment in the scene', the Swedish women’s accounts were rich in reported levels of *choice* in terms of housing location. Often this was linked to where they had chosen to do treatment, or the location of residential halfway houses after leaving prison. Although some of the Swedish women chose to stay in the area where they had been ‘active’, the majority opted to move to a different part of the country. The value of this geographical relocation comes through strongly in the Swedish data. 'Angel/SW' provides an illustration of this, here describing a recent relapse in the new area:

Angel: Cos' I mean, what I thought was nice about getting to X was, like, that I don't know that many 'pundare'* here, like no one really, and I have no associations whatsoever to drugs and, like yeah, it just felt completely new and fresh. So when I have been high here I've felt that, well... fuck, it just feels completely wrong.

(p.25)

The benefit of relocation is thus suggested to be two-fold; a) via a disassociation from active (drug-using/offending) networks and b) providing a setting where a drug-using/criminal identity seems 'out of place'. For 'Angel' to use drugs in this new city, to be 'high' in this context, *'just feels completely wrong'*'. This is a common experience among the Swedish women who have re-located as part of their route out. In turn, this provides an important example of how structural enablers, i.e. the provision of not only safe and stable housing, but interlinking such choices to opportunities for re-location and a removal from 'the scene', can act as an important 'ladder' for enabling positive change.

### 6.4.2 Lack of access to a liveable income

The third major theme of external barriers to change was ‘access to a liveable income’. This is, again, a theme that is hugely more prominent in the English data. Starting with mere access to *any* income, a barrier found in the English sample, which is completely absent in the Swedish data, is difficulties in claiming benefits and associated periods of no legitimate income.  

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65 Closest translation 'junkies'. However, it should be noted that 'junkie' generally carries more negative connotations than 'pundare' in Swedish. While 'junkie' is rarely a self-describing term in active drug-using narratives, mainly directed at the 'other' (worse/'real' drug addicts etc.) (Copes, 2014), 'pundare' is not uncommonly used as a descriptive self-identity in the Swedish narratives.
income. ‘Serena/EN’ was one of the two women who identified this as a major barrier, which was for her linked to not having an English ID card:

Serena: I was really positive when I was in prison that I’d do this and I’d do that, but I couldn’t, cos’ like, cos’ I’m Irish and I need my birth certificate [to get an ID card] and it’s really hard to get one, and I didn’t have money, no means of getting it anyway. So that stopped me from getting a claim, then I couldn’t get re-housed...so I’m back on the street again.

(p.24)

A lack of formal identification can thus act as a direct barrier to change, as it leads to a cycle of lack of access to a legitimate income and subsequently; a return to the streets (in ‘Serena’s’ case prostituting). Re-emphasising the arguments presented in the previous chapter; this is about missing tools for maintaining positive change following prison release, effectively disabling the woman from capitalising on any initiated change. Although ‘Serena’ is the only woman in this study who experienced this particular issue, it is a problem that she identifies as common for many women currently in temporary accommodation:

Serena: Being without identification is one, there’s a big thing without identification, half the women in here [hostel] aren’t, ain’t getting no money cos’ they haven’t got their IDs. [...] And that’s a big thing, they can’t get their [benefit] claim. So they, and that’s to start, they have to have money to eat don’t you, so they have to go out [and prostitute]. That’s a really big problem around here.

(p.36)

There are numerous other examples of challenges in accessing a legitimate income in the English data, especially following sentence. Coming from a chaotic lifestyle, it can, for example, be a challenge to navigate the benefit claim system, which can lead to a lack of access to income. ‘Sharon/EN’ provides an example of this:

Sharon: I’ve haven’t had my money no, um...cos’ I was on ESA66 and because I failed my medical and then I lost my appeal, eh, so now I’m, I’m on that Jobseekers Allowance. [...] And I signed on last week Monday, today is Tuesday, so last Monday, and I would have thought, like, normally 3 days later you get your money, I would have think. But nothing, so...

(p.47)

‘Sharon’ is reluctant to explain to me how she has survived on ‘nothing’ over the last week, but she hints at getting some food from friends. I conceptualise this particular type of narrative in the women’s accounts, that is, a lack of access to a liveable income to cover for basic needs such as food, as a ‘survival narrative’.

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66 Employment and support allowance.
The ‘survival narrative’ is also identified for some women that have been able to claim some benefits in the English data. However, these incomes are, from the women’s perspective, often inadequate to survive on. Becky/EN’ provides an example:

Becky: At the moment I don’t even have a penny [...]. And even when I was signing on or when I was working it still wasn’t...enough...Like, there's been a few times that I've been very close to going back and selling drugs.

(p.51)

‘Becky’ is currently struggling to make ends meet and is back staying on friends’ sofas. Having sold drugs for many years in the local area, and being in a strenuous economic situation, means that she has been very ‘close to going back and selling drugs’. In addition, surviving homelessness, ‘Becky' views herself as lucky to have friends with whom she can 'couch surf' without paying rent. However, re-visiting the theme of 'entrenchment in the scene', the fact that 'Becky' has a known identity as a drug dealer in the local area means that at many places where she is staying she is being asked to supply drugs. The ‘survival narrative’ then, commonly overlapping with other external barriers, becomes a barrier to change, as the women must find alternative means to secure a liveable income.

An important comparative difference in the data is that this type of ‘survival narrative' is exclusively identified in the English data. In addition, this is a narrative that is not only detected in relation to benefit claims, but is also, as hinted at in ‘Becky’s’ quote, present in the English data within part-time employment.

6.5 Internal barriers to change: The importance of mental and emotional well-being

The data show a strong link between mental well-being and a successful female route out of crime. This theme offers the greatest symmetry across the sample groups, and is also one that is given significantly more space in the women’s narratives. The nature of the challenges associated with mental health and well-being are varied, and range from dealing

67 This issue of lack of a liveable income as linked to employment is a significant one, and one that will be dealt with separately in Chapter 7 (see S.7.3.1).
with depression and paranoia, to living with ‘unprocessed’ forms of trauma and/or abuse. Often, such ‘unprocessed’ forms of trauma/abuse are narratively linked to ongoing offending behaviour. A prime example of this is a link between childhood sexual and/or physical abuse and violent offending (highlighted in S.4.3.1).

Examining the link between mental well-being and routes out in more detail, some clear patterns emerge both inter- and intra-samples. A major one of these relates to drug use and the experience of a form of ‘emotional awakening’ in a drug-free identity. I use ‘emotional awakening’ here to portray a process, described by the majority of women coming off drugs, of starting to feel emotions again after years of 'numbing' the self with drugs. This is a common theme across the drug-using sections of the sample, and is experienced as a major barrier to change.

### 6.5.1 Emotional 'awakening' in the desistance process

Emotional awakening after years of substance (ab)use is a common theme in the narratives of change, both in the Swedish and English data, although it is slightly more articulated in the Swedish data. The dominant storyline of this theme is that following years of 'numbing' the self with substances, re-connecting with emotions becomes overwhelming. Often, this process links to relapses into both drug use and offending. 'Emotional awakening' thus becomes an internal barrier to change. In order to understand how appropriate 'ladders' for overcoming this barrier may be constructed, it is important to understand the nature of this phenomenon.

An illustration of this theme in the Swedish sample is provided by 'Ninni'. 'Ninni' has around 28 documented overdoses on her record, and she here describes how her 'emotional awakening' often became a barrier for lasting change in attempts to get clean:

*Ninni: I've never wanted to die ... but it's been periods when I haven't coped with living [...] So when I got it [smack] I've just been like 'aaaah', and that's been, like, just to feel ok... or rather, to just not feel at all [...]. I was feeling so terribly low, and that was a 12-step treatment program as well, and there you're expected to dig, and that just made everything even worse. Eh...nah ugh! When I'd pushed everything to the back of my mind, both with X [long-term partner who died recently in consequence of being tortured, linked to a drug deal.*

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68 I use ‘unprocessed’ here to refer to an expressed subjective sense of not having dealt with, or had a chance to work through, earlier experiences of abuse and/or trauma.
gone wrong] and X [short-term partner who died from an overdose years back] and, eh, for
such a long time, and everything just came to the surface. So, I bailed from there [rehab]
after 3 months."

(p.53)

'Ninni' effectively captures the multi-dimensional aspects of the role of emotional well-
being for the desistance process. Firstly, 'Ninni' describes using drugs as a form of 'numbing'
tool, to 'not feel at all'. Secondly, she describes the process of trying to deal with the
'emotional awakening' of going clean, specifically in a treatment setting. In particular, she
refers to a 12-step program, where it is seen as essential to look back before moving
forwards. However, what 'Ninni' suggests in her narrative, which is one that resonates with
other female experiences of NA\textsuperscript{69} in this study, is that this particular treatment model
actually bars her from positive progress at this point, as the 'emotional awakening' per se is
more than enough to deal with, never mind being in a program where she is expected to
'dig'. This emphasises the importance of taking emotional aspects into consideration when
individually tailoring treatment programs.

Thirdly, 'Ninni' describes dealing with bereavement of two partners in this setting, which is
what in the end becomes too overwhelming for her. Indeed, the presence of death in close
relationships in the female life-stories is prominent, across the samples. While the
psychological aspects of loss rests outside the borders of this thesis, the fact that
bereavement is often described as an untreated mental health need is significant. In turn,
this can perpetuate a cycle of continued drug-use, as 'Ninni' goes on to describe:

\begin{quote}
Ninni: Once you've got into drugs, especially when you end up in the heroin scene, people
just die all the time. People who are close to you, people who you have intimate relationships
with, and...that means that you can't really hack it, to get off it like. Cos' first you just keep
feeding yourself, so you don't have to feel it. And then once you get clean, sitting in the
arrest and everything comes up, you just can't take it. So that's, I mean, so it's the drug
lifestyle itself that pushes you to stay in it, but not the positives of it, but all that is painful
with it.
\end{quote}

(p.82)

'Ninni' here reinforces the numbing effect of drugs and how the challenge of dealing with
'emotional awakening' when getting clean, and 'everything comes up', becomes a barrier to
change. This use of drugs as a numbing mechanism is present in the majority of the drug
using sections, although it is significantly more pronounced in the 'reactionary/acting out'

\textsuperscript{69} Narcotics Anonymous.
grouping. The reason behind the numbing effect is, however, diverse. For ‘Sharon/EN’ it involved losing custody of her children:

Sharon: I couldn’t live there [flat] without the kids, no. Everything was there, all their toys and pictures and...I was just so, so devastated. And that’s why I carried on taking drugs, cos’ I felt like I couldn’t live without them and the drugs just, just blocked it all. [...] [It] helps you forget everything, yeah, numbs it, yeah. Just, not made me forget, I could never forget them, but it just numbed the pain.

(Drugs can thus become a management tool for ‘numbing’ emotional despair, in these cases following loss. In turn, relapsing back into problematic drug use then often links into continued offending behaviour. The key point here is how these ‘narratives of loss’ become an internal barrier to change, which suggests that the provision of more holistic forms of support, focussing on complex emotional aspects such as bereavement and managing emotional 'luggage', may be an important structural ladder for facilitating the female route out of crime.

'Jasmin/SW' provides a final example of how 'emotional awakening', interlinked to other aspects of mental health, can be an internal barrier to change. When asked what she sees as her biggest 'pull back' factor 'Jasmin' explains:

Jasmin : It’s that I feel, like...that I’m hopeless, I can often feel like I’m worth less, or I’ll be, I’ll never be able to, eh...to be like fully accepted or be myself [...]. Those types of thoughts can pull me back, and that...I feel condemned all the time.

[I: By who?]
Jasmin : I mean like by what I've done, I've done so, I've treated people so horrifically bad that I condemn myself, I receive a sentence every day like, within myself. So I guess that's what, and then I feel I just can't hack it, cos' I, like I'm in so much debt, I have so much, so...so much more to do to get forward...I mean it feels, it's really heavy some days like, and I feel hopeless [...] So I guess that's what, that it feels...It's hard, it's really hard sometimes, so I guess that's what makes me wanna give up, cos' my old life it was like, there were no demands, there were no responsibilities.

(P.66-67)

The interlinkage between mental well-being, 'emotional awakening', and barriers to change are clearly illustrated in this quote. For 'Jasmin' her escape route was to return to her ‘old life’, where she could numb the emotional challenges of drug-free life, and where there were ‘no demands’ and ‘no responsibilities’. This is also about numbing the additional emotional 'weight' she has picked up within the scene of 'active' life, struggling with heavy...
emotions of guilt and remorse. These data demonstrate how mental and emotional health can play a dominant barring role in the female route out of crime.

### 6.5.2 'Numbing' in non-drug using narratives

While all of the 'internal' barrier examples have thus far had a drug component in them, the data make some significant discoveries when cross-comparing non-drug using narratives with drug-using ones\(^\text{70}\). Indeed, to make this link between mental and emotional well-being and desistance exclusively about drugs would be too simplistic. What the data suggest, rather, is that the drug-using and non-drug using narratives share commonalities. For some women offending *itself* (here excluding drug use as an offence) can act as a way of numbing/dealing with challenging emotions. 'Claire/EN' is an example of the small minority of women in this study who did not report any problematic relations with either alcohol or drugs. However, her narrations around emotional well-being and offending patterns are very telling, here responding to a question about why she believes she has been able to keep her desisting identity for a number of years:

Claire: Well I've got more self-respect now, and I think that I demand more self-respect now, [...] because I don't have the self-loathing any more. I've gained more respect, I've gained a point where I have nothing to be ashamed of in my life [...]. Definitely, I think that the two were intertwined, I think going out and stealing is a sign of low self-esteem. I think it really was. Every time when my life hit rock bottom and I had no self-esteem whatsoever, I'd go out and steal.

(p.60)

'Claire's' lack of confidence, what she describes as 'self-loathing', is subjectively positioned as the major barrier for a successful route out of crime. When 'Claire' was low, she would go out and steal, which in turn was also linked to isolation and 'filling a gap' in her life:

Claire: You know, the only thing I had was my daughter and this flat. And on most days I would get bored sitting at home with my daughter, so I would go out to fill a little corner in my flat. I'd think 'yeah that could do with a lamp', and I'd go out and I'd steal a lamp and I'd come back and I'd plug it in and I'd think 'yeah, that looks nice'. It's like my daughter wasn't filling anything, filling that gap, but the stealing was.

(p.57)

'Claire' illustrates how offending can fill a type of emotional 'gap'. However, whilst stealing filled this gap, her daughter did not. This is a common suggestion in the accounts of the women who are mothers, that is, that becoming a mother very rarely produces a turning

\(^{70}\) See Figure 4.2 for a reminder of drug/alcohol use across the samples.
point away from offending and/or drug use per se for women. Rather, emotional well-being correlates much more strongly with a successful route out, though it is not uncommon that once this route has been initiated, motherhood can be an important new identity to draw on for maintaining change (see 5.6.8 for more on this theme).

Overall, mental and emotional well-being is found to play an essential role in the female route out of crime. In the drug-using narratives a particular theme of 'emotional awakening' has been identified, involving overwhelming emotional despair when attempting to go 'clean', trying to deal with, for example, severe loss. In turn, this can create a barrier to positive change. The link between mental and emotional well-being and a successful route out of crime was also identified in non-drug using narratives, showing much symmetry across the data. Having identified the importance of mental and emotional well-being for the female route out of crime cross-nationally, attention is now turned to cross-national differences in the responsiveness to these identified barriers; an area which reveals marked difference.

6.6 The provision of structural ladders to tackle barriers to change

There are marked cross-national differences in terms of responsiveness to the above noted barriers. Specifically, the Swedish women’s narratives are rich in stories of subjective experiences of structural ladders being put in place for overcoming barriers to change, both internal and external, while these are almost wholly absent in the English narratives. Examples of structural 'ladders' in the 'external' category were provided above, specifically on the themes of 'housing' and 'entrenchment in the scene'. This section will particularly focus on how structural ladders tackling mental and emotional barriers to change impact on the female route out; something that comes through very clearly in the Swedish narratives.

'Johanna/SW' for example talks about how coming into contact with a conversation therapist, via the police, made a huge positive impact on her route out:

Johanna: Just to get that, get... get to process everything that you’ve gone through, that's so important. I've really learned that it has to be done in order to move on. It's really difficult to move forward if you have a lot of raw stuff lying.

(p.35)
'Johanna' ended up staying with her therapist for 2 years and she now sees this experience as the most positive outcome she has had from her contact with the police. The fact that this contact was set up via the police is significant, which is a theme that is unique to the Swedish data. ‘Eva/SW’ and ‘Ninni/SW’ provide additional examples of the type of ‘ladders’ which are subjectively identified as meaningful for enabling the route out:

Eva: It’s amazing, ah, so many doors exist! I have my psychologist, I can just make an appointment, it doesn’t cost me anything [...] I can make a visit to the medical centre without it costing me anything, to make a health check, eh, yeah there’s a sexologist, in X where I can get, well, about sex and intimacy and that, all free information. I mean, there’s an array of fantastic back-up, like that I can just [snaps his fingers] [...] So, now when I have finally chosen this step, I have such a fabulous, like if I want it [...] We have, we live in an apartment and they come and say hello and it comes, the Red Cross goes on excursions fortnightly, it’s free to go away by bus, and there’s this...I mean X [support centre] and X [drug support centre] are open every day, you can just go there and work out for free, and you get materials to do stitch work or make jewellery, I mean there’s so much money and resources [...] Yeah, um...yeah and just be treated like a human.

(p.63)

Ninni: I’ve got probation, I have, eh, a lay supervisor, I have ‘C’ here [work program] who is my contact, but then also the others who work here. I have my counsellor up at the clinic, I have a psychologist in town, eh, I have one at the drugs unit at soc [social services], I have one at economy, I have one at housing, eh, and I feel that everyone wants to help me. [...] So I feel pretty secure [safe].

(p.78)

More than providing examples of robust infrastructures for support, the value of a subjective sense of humane support is emphasised. Specifically, the analysis suggests that the fact that ‘Eva’ and ‘Ninni’ feel supported and ‘treated like a human’ carries additional meaning for their route out, as it promotes feelings of safety, stability and inclusion. In contrast, there are very minimal narrations around these kinds of infrastructures for support and building of well-being in the English sample. When they do appear, it is primarily in terms of a gap, or a lack of provision, as exemplified by ‘Tia/EN’:

Tia: They put all the pressures on but then they don’t really help them [offenders], like, to be honest, I don’t think. [...] They’re quick enough to get me in there and drug test me and all that [...] but then they just chuck you back out after drug testing. Never mind give em’ a bit of counselling to go with it, you know? It’s just a probation officer, ain’t a counsellor is there?

(p.14)

This theme of, from the women’s perspective, missing ladders that carry the potential to enable the overcoming of internal barrier to change (in ‘Tia’s example in the form of counselling), is common in the English narratives. Another example of this is found in
'Jade'/EN. 'Jade' has an extensive record of violent offending, which she now, quite a few years into a successfully maintained desistance identity, understands as linked to 'unprocessed' abuse in her childhood. She here describes what she feels could have enabled her route out earlier on:

Jade: But um, yeah, um, thoughtfulness in care but also ongoing, don’t just leave it, if they say ‘oh yeah yeah it’s alright now’ don’t just leave it there. Cos’ they will say that, I used to say 'no, no I’m fine' bla bla, but no I wasn't. [...] I wished to God somebody would help me, but I wouldn’t ask for help [...] But just, help not just for the person that’s been hurt, but help for the person that’s done it, because they’ve done it for a reason and also keep it ongoing, as well.

(p.99)

'Jade' makes an important point on the value of exploring underlying factors behind patterns of offending, as a way of overcoming internal barriers to change. Also, the significance of ‘thoughtfulness’ in care is emphasised. An additional example of this identified lack of structural ladders in the English data is found in 'Becky' and her anger management problems:

Becky: They don’t focus on people that...there’s not, there’s no anger-management courses out there. [...] I have to do another serious offence to be sectioned to be able to get on to another anger-management course. [...] Because that’s more what I’ve seen, I’ve seen violence all my life.

(p.82)

'Becky's and 'Jade’s stories reinforce the potential value of throughcare and holistic support in the community, for dealing with various aspects of mental health linked to offending behaviour. The value of a subjective sense of structural 'ladders' being put in place to enable lasting change is evident in the Swedish data, while the presence of such ladders are almost completely absent in the English women’s accounts. In turn, this feeds into the broader argument, presented across the previous chapter, regarding the value of providing tools for maintaining change, including encouraging inclusionary processes and a lived sense of legitimacy and trust.

6.6.1 Substance and/or alcohol treatment

Due to the high prominence of substance/alcohol problems within both samples, and the salience of support relating to this taking a prominent role in the women’s narratives, this section will specifically consider the experience of treatment across the two samples. The differences in experience for women in the English and the Swedish samples in this area are considerable. An overarching identified theme is the cumulative impact of treatment over
time; with quality and length of each treatment carrying significant meaning for enabling change over time. A prime example of this is the physical and mental benefits of having breaks from heavy drug and/or alcohol use, which in turn is found to shorten the female route out of crime. Years of substance misuse can take a heavy toll on the body and often the physical impact of this can leave permanent scars. The analysis indicates that such visual scars can make the route out longer and more problematic, as it is harder to successfully re-construct a new identity when one's appearance insinuates a different story. 'Linda/SW' portrays this well:

Linda: And well, it shows of course, I mean now I've been lucky that I have my teeth left and that it's like that, yeah, and that's mostly due to that I've had so much rehab. But many girls that nobody cares about, who doesn't have a mum, or something that forces them in [to rehab], they just go down and down and down and who wants to hire someone who looks like that, who has become so scarred as you do? I mean, it gets you, I mean those who wake up and are like 30, 35, 40, and it looks, you know the subcutaneous fat disappears and everything and it really shows, what, what are they going to for work? (p.74)

'Linda' clearly positions her appearance, not carrying visual scars from years of substance misuse, as an important factor for enabling her identity re-construction. The type and nature of drug use, including the level of entrenchment in the street scene, must be taken into consideration here, with the women involved in the English drug scene carrying significantly more visual scars from their active drug/offending life. It is thus suggested that the Swedish women may experience this visual barrier to change to a lesser extent than the English women. In turn, this links to particular lived experiences of lived stigma and labelling (see S.7.5.2 for a development of this theme).

Furthermore, 'Linda' also mentions her mum, who 'forces' her into rehab. This is an example of how a supportive family can act as a resource for (indirectly) enabling a route out. That is, although 'Linda' did not stay clean after the majority of her rehab experiences, the cumulative impact of treatment over time has overall shortened her route back, now when she has chosen to make this lasting change. This 'forcing in' process in the Swedish context is typically done via a 'LVM':

71 'Lagen om Vård av Missbrukare', which directly translates to 'The Law about Care of Addicts'. This is by and large the adult version of a 'LVU', which was discussed in Chapter 4 (see S.4.8).
danger, run an obvious risk of destroying his/her life or cause serious harm to self or others’ (Sveriges Domstolar, 2014). Most of the women in the Swedish sample with drug problems have experienced at least one LVM, with many having numerous ones. The use of LVMs provides a useful example of how broader structures, in terms of a more interventionist model, impact on the female route out of crime.

The Swedish women’s narratives around the use of LVMs are typically that whilst still active users, they are experienced as punitive and intrusive, and none of the narratives suggest that a LVM can provide a turning point per se. Linking back to the starting point of this chapter and the onset of change; the fact that they are compulsory and not based on an individual’s own wish to quit is of significance here. However, many of the narratives suggest that in hindsight, the breaks from the hectic drug-using/offending lifestyle that the LVM often provided was useful in terms of a cumulative effect of shortening their route out.

Continuing on this theme of ‘shortening’ the route out, the data also suggest that there are numerous mental benefits of repeated treatment stints. Specifically, this often relates to how to learn to live drug/alcohol free, or as 'Linda' puts it; 'become educated in ordinary life':

Linda: With all these turns to rehabs I've had a chance to be clean and cleared my head, and I've had periods of a year or so when things have gone well and everything. During those periods when I'm healthy, when I'm not doing drugs, then of course I develop, when I am drugging then I stop evolving and become a caveman [...] But thanks to the fact that I've had the chance to somehow become educated in ordinary life [...] like, somewhere in the back of my mind I always knew 'this is just so wrong, so wrong, so wrong'. Those who grow up in it, who's just seen this, they've got completely different pre-conditions [...] And even if they fall back, take them back, you know like, so they obtain this, this knowledge of 'normal life'.

(p.87)

More than emphasising the numerous benefits of quality treatment, the value of encouraging a process of normalisation within the criminal justice system is also re-iterated in ‘Linda’s’ quote.

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72 Similar to an ‘LVU’, a LVM investigation can be initiated by social services or other statutory organisations, but can also be instigated by a member of the public/family. The investigation starts with a 3-month assessment period, commonly leading to a stay in a ‘LVM-home’ (a closed treatment institution) on a holistic treatment plan, running over a maximum of 6-months. The goal is to transfer the individual to a voluntary treatment centre at the earliest possible time.
Another key societal difference identified in the analysis with regard to treatment relates to choice and suitable treatment options, with the Swedish women’s accounts expressing significant levels of choice in terms of length and type of care. This discourse of choice around treatment options is notably absent in the English data. For example, ‘Eva/SW’ recalls the first time she accessed treatment for her alcoholism and amphetamine misuse:

Eva: I mean, I'll never forget it, and so she [staff at the local council] came there with one of those thick binders, ‘smack’, ‘here’s residential treatment options’, and so she had to explain what it was, right. And I started browsing...ah Sweden is just fantastic! [laughs] Absolutely incredible, what a safety net like, I mean, what resources! [...] So I ended up choosing a treatment centre according to the length of time, because I knew, I mean, I'd been doing it for many many years, so this doesn't just pass over a quarter of an hour. It'll not be one of those 3-months' holiday camps somewhere. [...]  

[I: So you chose a longer option?]

Eva: Yeah, and then it became a place in X, X-rehab, a therapeutic environment it's called, yeah. Only girls, only female staff. I was there for a year and a half.

(p.21)

In addition to illustrating the theme of choice in the Swedish data, ‘Eva’s’ quote also feeds into the overarching theme of a lived sense of legitimacy identified in the Swedish women’s accounts, mediated here via a subjective view of a well-developed ‘safety net’. In terms of length, 'Eva’ emphasises her need for a lengthier stay for more lasting change, as 'this doesn't just pass over a quarter of an hour'. This is a markedly different experience to the ones found in the English sample.

When narratives around treatment support do appear in the English data, they are typically around a gap of provision. Discourses around subjective feelings of choice in terms of rehabilitation are completely absent in the English data. There were only two examples of residential treatment care experience in the English sample. However, these were not linked to ongoing treatment per se but rather crisis care, not uncommonly connected to victimisation and hospitalisation. For example, 'Anna/EN' describes how she lost custody of her daughter, linked to hospitalisation following domestic violence, and although rehab is mentioned in this context, it never materialised:

Anna: So when it all came out and like, eh, the domestic violence and everything, my mum got all... my mum took her [daughter]. Cos’ I was suppose to go into rehab with my daughter, so we

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73 Linked to ‘Anna’ being 'thrown out' of hospital after reacting to having her mum taking her daughter against her will.
went into stabilisation in the hospital and then they ended up throwing me out because of my behaviour and, so I couldn't continue, I couldn't go to rehab.

(p.73)

When treatment narratives do appear in the English setting, they most typically relate to different types of structured day programmes. A lack of availability in terms of other options than structured day programs is commonly discussed. 'Grace/EN' exemplifies this:

Grace: I left X in the end of 2006, I just thought ‘fuck it, enough’. I was doing DRRs [Drug Rehabilitation Requirement] and it just weren't working and I kept saying to them, and I said to my probation officer ‘I need rehab, not day program...’
[I: Yeah.]
Grace:...or prison’.

(p.23)

'Grace' illustrates the value of accessible quality treatment options in the community in more than one way, namely; the lack of available community options can 'drive' some women into prison. This is not an uncommon story, i.e. that prison is used as an access gate to treatment and/or care ('Becky' illustrated another example of this in S.6.6). This is; however, a theme only present in the English data. The provision of quality community care/treatment options, including residential options, is thus suggested to not only produce cumulative positive impacts on the female route out of crime, by shortening the route, but also potentially reduce women's re-entry to prison.

Moreover, quality of treatment does not only relate to the length and type of treatment, but also to the nature of the care interaction. Similar to 'misconduct' in the area of 'police contact' (highlighted in S.5.2.1), the theme of 'misconduct' in the area of drug/alcohol support settings is also one that is exclusively found in the English data, experienced by a few of the women. ‘Amanda/EN’ for example describes her subjective experiences of mistreatment, as linked to relapsing back into drug-use and offending:

Amanda: In X they were terrible and...the things they did to me was disgusting. I mean, um...they dropped me off my script for no reason, and I was about to get my son back, and eh, I ended up back on heroin cos' I couldn't deal with being ill, I didn't sleep for 2 weeks. [...] Cos' they'd made a mistake, and then I found out that my ex-partner [...] was going out with the woman, the main woman from the drug services, the manager. And basically they, it was all a lie, they dropped me, maybe she’s, and she isn't even allowed to do that, like, but because, so they kept it quiet and um, and he got her pregnant and eh, and maybe, like I swear, she was just trying to get me back sort of thing. [...] It affected me not getting my son back, it affected all areas of my life, dropping me off my script.

(p.28)
The quality in treatment experiences can thus act as a barrier to the female route out of crime. In turn, this may also have wider consequences for family connections, such as the loss of custody of children.

Overall, the area of substance and/or alcohol treatment represents a major difference across the Swedish and English data. The Swedish women’s narratives are rich in stories of holistic and durable treatment experiences and availability, including a pronounced subjective sense of choice in regards to the nature of care. Though not all treatment stints will result in long-lasting change, a key beneficial theme is the cumulative impact of treatment experiences over time; enabling, for example, considerable benefits to mental and physical health. In turn, this is suggested to shorten the female route out of crime, as exemplified in the Swedish data, via allowing easier access to a re-constructed identity and reintegration. Lastly, these treatment experiences also feed into the broader themes presented across the data chapters, that is, positive experiences of treatment care also seems to encourage a lived sense of system legitimacy, and an associated subjective feeling of support and inclusion.

6.7 ‘Relationality’ and agency in the female route out of crime

Family networks and relationships vary significantly both inter- and intra-samples. Some women have close relationships with family networks, while many have little or no contact. Comparatively, positive family contact is significantly more prominent in the ‘active/seeking out’ pathway category than in the ‘reactionary/acting out grouping’. For those who do have a supportive family network to draw on, this can act as a valuable scaffolding, aiding the route out. However, a supportive family network is certainly no automatic factor for a successful desistance process. The data suggest that the family factor is one that is more or less constant over the life-story, and represents a theme that features much more prominently in the pathway data than in the route out narratives. An aspect of relationality that features more prominently in the desistance narratives; however, is the role of intimate relationships.
6.7.1 Intimate relationships as a barrier in the female route out

The area of partners and/or fathers of children is a relationship area that features prominently in the female desistance narratives. This is a major theme present across the sample groups, though is found in its most problematic form in the drug-using sample sections. Specifically, the data suggest that there are relational constraints and conflicts in women’s intimate relationships to men within the desistance process. In practice, this often relates to women supporting men and act as their enabler to desistance. The gendered dimension of this comes in multiple layers; in relation to children, in relation to histories of domestic violence, and lastly, as related to a suggested 'ethics of care' (Gilligan, 1982). The first one of these dimensions also relates to ex-partners, as fathers to children, and thus the women ‘invest’ in their ex-partners’ routes out, as they want to encourage a relationship between their children and the father. 'Johanna/SW' exemplifies the emotional challenges within this type of support:

Johanna: But now, he, he doesn’t have the program and he does drugs on and off, so I don’t dare to let my daughter be with him. [...] He was suppose to have come home this weekend, eh, on the Saturday, but he wasn’t allowed to come cos’ when I met him last week he’d been smoking pot and then I thought ‘no, you can’t come’, like ‘you’ll have to keep away and then come on Sunday in that case.’ And then on the Sunday he got in touch and like ‘yeah, so I was out partying last night, like’, so yeah, obviously stuff like that is more important, so then I thought like, I mean a bit I feel just fuck, it’s better if he stays away for good cos’ I get really sad when my daughter gets upset, when she gets disappointed. She wants to meet her father, you know, she doesn’t understand. [...] [voice breaking] Yeah, no ugh, I get really sad [gets teary]. I sat there and cried and felt it was just [nervous laugh], but it’s so sensitive, you know, I just really want her to be happy. [...]. I mean if he continues to keep doing this, then, then, why should I...I have supported him like hell, I’ve been there and well... yeah done that because, yeah so he’d be able to meet her and it should be good everything, but I mean no...I mean, you can’t just hold on indefinitely.

(p.24)

This narrative illustrates the impact of relationships experienced in the female desistance process. Reminding the reader of the above findings regarding the importance of emotional well-being as a key enabler of a female successful route out, this supportive role can become a barrier to emotional health.

Partners can also present a more direct risk to destabilising the desistance process. This is exemplified by ‘Ninni/SW’. 'Ninni' has recently met a new partner, who is still ‘active’, which constructs new challenges for her route out:
Ninni: Well I've stopped hanging out with most of them [still active]. But with X [new partner], I can't really stop hanging out with him...cos' I'm in love with him. But I've tried to set my rules as to where I can't, like I can't compromise on this [drug use] [...]. But it's been really tough cos' it's so much hassling and 'pund' [drug-taking], you know, I've had to come around with him, like bike around half the bloody town so that he could pick up something here, get something there [...]. I've talked a lot with those who work here [work program], which was good as it helped me to dare to talk to X [partner] and, you know, like stand up for myself, to say that this is really important to me. Cos' you know, I don't want to seem mean or be demanding in any way...It's just that I need to try to keep a clear head.

(p.34)

More than demonstrating the challenges of having a partner who is still 'active' while trying to stay on a clean path, 'Ninni' also re-iterates the importance of having access to holistic support structures. Speaking to staff at her work program helped her to set up more boundaries with her partner, to help her prioritise her own route out. 'Amanda/EN' provides a comparable example, of the challenges of having an 'active' partner, in the English data. When I ask 'Amanda' what she views to be her biggest 'pull back' factor, she says:

Amanda: So, um...yeah the biggest thing is my partner, cos' he's still on valium and methadone. [...] Yeah, and he doesn't want to get off it and, that's the hardest thing...And it's like, whether our relationship is worth [the risk].

(p.45)

Support to partners, and the risks attached, is also for some set against the backdrop of having experienced a significant amount of violence perpetrated by the man they are supporting. An example of this in the English data is found in 'Tia/EN', here reflecting on the upcoming release of her partner from prison, who she has had to take out restraining orders on in the past:

Tia: When he comes home he's, cos' he's coming home not even on a script this time, like he's come off his script in there, he's gone on the subus [methadone] and he's come off the subus in there. [...] So he's determined to coming...to sort out this, but we will see won't we, only time will tell....[...] I says to him 'why can't you be the strong one for once?'

(p.31)

'Tia' illustrates the subjective emotion of needing to provide care, to always be 'the strong one' for her partner, situated in the context of an expressed doubtfufulness whether her partner will stay off drugs after completing his sentence. This supportive narrative to partners/ex-partners is considered a particularly gendered theme in the female desistance phase.
6.7.2 Intimate relations as enabling female desistance

While the vast majority of intimate relationships are experienced as a challenge to enabling female desistance, there are two exceptions in the data to this rule, i.e. where relationships are situated as having a positive impact on the route out. ‘Eva/SW’ is one of two exceptions across the samples who describe her partner as a key enabler for her route out:

Eva: You know, my man has never demanded anything, he's not an alcoholic [...] but he's a 'pundare', 'jackpundare' ['amphetamine junkie'] you see, and hash. So when I got hold of a phone [in prison] and we would decide that when I'd 'muck' that eh, yeah 'I'll see you at the booze shop in X', of course I mean. And then he says 'no!', 'What the hell are you saying?', 'No, I won't meet you unless you take Antabuse before 'muck' ['Eva' slams the table]. I'll be damned!

(p.54)

For 'Eva' and her now husband this was the start of their communal route out of drugs and crime. Of course, other factors were also involved to enable this change; reportedly being 'fed up' with the lifestyle, surviving on the streets for 9 years together and a recent loss of her sister in a drug-fuelled suicide. However, from ‘Eva's’ perspective, though she was ready for change, the fact that her partner took initiative to change became a key enabler for her own recovery. ‘Eva’ is one of only two women in the total sample who positioned an intimate relationship as an enabler for change. The other example is 'Serena/EN'. After circa 15 years on the streets in a major city in England, ‘Serena’ recently met a 'straight' man. Although Serena met her partner after she got clean, i.e. he was not a part of her onset to change, she positions him as a key factor for enabling her to keep ‘straight’. He also has a large family that welcomes her, which is something 'EN/Serena' herself has never had before:

Serena: So, I'm in a relationship now, but it's a lot better than what it used to, like other relationships that I've had. He works and he's really stable, he's not a smoker, he's straight but um...and he's got a family, a big family, so I'm sort of around family life now, which I never really had. So that's good.

[I: Is it important for you to have that?]

Serena: Yeah definitely, he's got a big family, so he involves me in and around his family, his family are really good.

(p.31)

The uniqueness of this type of positive narrative of intimate relationships as an enabler of change for female ex-offenders across the two samples is noteworthy. It is also worthwhile to point out that a common denominator for both 'Eva' and 'Serena's enabling relationships is that neither of them have involved violence, which is also a notable rarity in the women's relationship narratives.
6.7.3 Relationships, vulnerability and agency

Relationships can also, in less specific terms (as related to a particular individual) and in more general terms (i.e. relationships to men in general), have an impact on the female route out of crime. 'Grace/EN' illustrates this theme, here reflecting on her last relapse:

Grace: I'm just like, I haven't done, committed any crime...just the usual thing of getting in an abusive relationship, taking drugs.

(p.69)

'Grace' illustrates a subjective causal link between abusive relationships, relapsing to drug use and inhibiting the desistance process. Due to this, that is, an expressed vulnerability to abusive men, 'Grace' is trying to stay away from intimate relationship all together. This is a theme that is especially pronounced for those women who have been active on the street scene in the English sample. Another example is provided by 'Anna/EN':

Anna: Like, I think I'm very vulnerable to men, so it was good for me to be in an all-women environment. [...] [I: And what bit are you the gladest to get away from?] Anna: The men. [...] Yeah, just like being a slave to the addiction and the men really.

(p.58-59)

The importance of an all-female environment is significant here, and is positioned as an enabler of sustaining change. In contrast, this theme of relationships in general as a risk factor to the desistance process is completely absent in the Swedish narratives (though as highlighted, there are examples of specific relationships being positioned as a barrier). The significantly higher level of prostitution and associated levels of violence is relevant here. It is suggested that involvement in prostitution, problematic opiate drug use, and experiences of physical and sexual violence interrelate with how relationships with men in general become a barrier in the female route out of crime. In turn, this interconnects to expressed levels of agency. I will use the example of prostitution to briefly illustrate this argument.

6.7.4 Prostitution, agency and female routes out of crime

Though agency is a challenging area to measure, often 'hidden' in complex narratives around choice, decision-making and 'silences', some concrete differences do emerge in the cross-national analysis of this theme. Explicitly, there is a definite, and rather coherent, storyline in the Swedish narratives of an expressed sense of active decision-making and
choice\textsuperscript{74}; exemplified here in the link between prostitution, type of drug use, violence, and relationships to men in the female route out of crime\textsuperscript{75}. Reflecting the different levels of prostitution involvement found across the samples, a major difference presented in the data is that the vast majority of the women in the Swedish sample express a very exacting decision of \textit{not} turning to prostitution. This is exemplified here by 'Emma/SW' and 'Linda/SW':

\begin{quote}
Emma: I would never ever sell myself to get dope, ever.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Linda: Yeah I was, well I never 'banged' for crime, you know. Cos', I mean, there you've got a choice really; either I give my body, so to speak [...], but I'd very early on made up my mind that that will never ever happen [...] So there it's been...yeah, really like no, no, no, so then it's just, so then I just had to choose crime.
\end{quote}

(p.42)

(p.20)

In contrast, this discourse of a subjective sense of choice is completely absent in the English narratives. In the English data, prostitution is something that the women just 'end up' doing, or 'just have to do'. Though it is hard to pinpoint these agentic sentiments, illustrations of relevant narrative differences are found in, for example, 'Sharon/EN' and 'Veronica/EN':

\begin{quote}
[I: So were you homeless at any point during that period?]
Sharon: Yeah, yeah, cos' I sold my flat, um, my council flat and I ended up at X, um...prostituting myself there...yeah.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
[I: And how did you survive on the streets then?]
Veronica: I was prostituting.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
[I: Did you start that when you were 14 as well?]
Veronica: Yeah [...] But then in the end you just have to do it, you got a habit you have to do it, you know what I mean?
\end{quote}

(p.8)

The data suggest a marked difference in sense of availability of choice, and also therefore \textit{ability} to make such choices. Doubtlessly, what is also of significance here is, i) what options are available to women on the criminal scene overall, being a very male-dominated sphere

\textsuperscript{74} This was a theme highlighted in the pathway phase, as related to children (see S.4.9).

\textsuperscript{75} A note on the sample is required in this area. Firstly, prostitution is much more prevalent in the English sample than in the Swedish, with only one woman in the Swedish sample describing a regular involvement in prostitution, versus a third of the English sample. Moreover, the \textit{nature} of this involvement is also significantly different, with the Swedish woman using informal contacts rather than street and/or brothel set up. This difference is, in turn, likely to be linked to the different legal frameworks and regulatory practices around prostitution in Sweden and England. See Chapter 8 (S.8.2.1).
(which is clear in both the Swedish and the English sample), and ii) how such choices link to particular types of substance misuse (i.e. opiate vs. amphetamine-using drug scenes). In turn, this again raises important points about how the desistance process, to be a successful one, must be linked to a qualitative knowledge of what type of lifestyle the women actually are trying to desist from.

Bearing in mind the limitation of the data sample size, it is nevertheless notable that it was the one woman who battled with a heroin addiction in the Swedish sample who was also involved in prostitution. Nevertheless, the nature of the prostitution experience is markedly different from the English setting, as illustrated here by 'Ninni/SW':

Ninni: I continued to whore then as well when he [partner] did time [...] [That's something I've returned to] when I've become by myself. [...] It's easy quick money, eh, and when you're in a bad way and stuff then you're not really in the space to do burglaries really, which might lead to money. It's [prostitution] always guaranteed money and I always choose who, and so I've always seen it as an easy and quick way to get money.

[I: Is that on the street, or have you worked for anyone?]

Ninni: Nah, it's more like friends of friends' who know someone. [...] Like, I mean I've never stood under anyone else, but I've been self-employed.

(p.34)

Even within the prostitution setting then, a subjective expression of choice and agency is found in 'Ninni's narrative. In contrast, the prostitution narratives of English interviewees are dominated by an expressed lack of choice, riddled with stories of violence and sexual exploitation.

Linking these themes to relationality and female routes out of crime, it is suggested that through the intersections of experiences of prostitution, type of drug use and levels of agency, the women subjectively experience different levels of vulnerability, with regard to relations with men acting as barrier to change across the samples. Highlighting gender processes on a wider scale, tentative links can arguably begin to be drawn between macro-forces of gender equality (in terms of the legal framework around the exploitation of women) and the micro-experience of female survival on the criminal scene.
6.8 The role of children in the female route out of crime

For the vast majority of women who are mothers in this study, motherhood did not produce a turning point away from offending and/or drug use. There are two exceptions to this rule, one in each sample group; namely 'Tia/EN' and 'Johanna/SW', for whom motherhood was positioned as a primary motivator for change. A noteworthy common denominator for 'Tia/EN' and 'Johanna/SW' was that they both described longing for motherhood over a period of time, and also had previously failed pregnancies. Becoming pregnant thus allowed them to re-construct a self-narrative that they had been 'ready' to take on for some time. ‘Johanna’ and ‘Tia’ here reflect on the experience of becoming mothers, positioning it clearly as an enabler to desistance:

Johanna: It's the best thing that has happened to me, that's it. Yeah, it is just absolutely wonderful. [...] Like I need something to put my time on, like when I put time on myself it just went to hell [laughs] [...] You know, I didn’t do much positive with it, if we put it like that. Yeah, I just cannot explain how good it’s been for me, like truly the best thing that has ever happened to me, really.

(p.17)

[I: Would you say you had a turning point, and if so what would you say that was for you?]

Tia: My children, definitely.

[I: Yeah?]

Tia: Like a lot of things in my life, um, with the drug taking, probably boiled down to because I lost kids, do you see what I’m saying? And then once I had a kid, it sorted me out a bit.

(p.32)

Except from these two exceptions, for the remaining of mothers in this study motherhood is not positioned as a primary motivator for change. That said, for many it appears as a factor for maintaining change once the desistance process has been initiated. This is a common theme across the sample groups. 'Jenny/SW' and ‘Anna/EN’ provide comparable examples of this, indicating how children can act as a motivator, among others, to maintain change:

Jenny: I mean, I can't really say that it's the kids that makes me drug-free, cos' that's not the case, because I mean I choose it before they were back in my life, and before I got the smallest. But I wanted a change, I didn’t want to live, be homeless and not have anything, and then it's the kids too of course."

(p.48)
[I: What’s your strongest motivation to stay clean and straight?]

Anna: My children now, and...just don’t wanna, I just don’t wanna, just can’t aff, I just can’t, I just don’t wanna go back there, you know. And then it’s just...for me as well, I just don’t wanna be that unhappy again.

(p.66)

Thus, while motherhood per se only rarely acts as a turning point for women, it is not uncommon that once the route out has been initiated, motherhood can be an important new identity to draw on for maintaining change. This does, however, run parallel with other factors, such as mental and emotional well-being, as exemplified by ‘Jenny’ and ‘Anna’.

### 6.9 Female routes out of crime part 1: Some conclusions

This chapter has presented the first part of findings from the cross-national analysis of the female route out of crime, specifically exploring barriers to change, structural 'ladders' for overcoming barriers, the role of intimate partner relationships, and lastly, in more brief, the role of motherhood. Overall it has been argued that the English women face significantly more barriers, especially external ones, compared to the Swedish women. Lack of housing, entrenchment in the street scene, and a lack of access to liveable incomes have been highlighted as major external barriers. Lack of housing and entrenchment in the scene, including experiences of commercial sexual exploitation in the local area as linked to prostitution, are considered as particularly gendered barriers to change. Moreover, the link between mental unhealth and continued offending is a strong overarching theme identified in the data, and one that stretches across both sample groups. Again, some aspects of this link are deemed to be of a gendered nature, especially mental health problems deriving from sexual and physical abuse.

In terms of responsiveness to barriers to change, it has been argued that the Swedish model contains infrastructures offering significantly more structural 'ladders' aiding women to overcome barriers, both in the external and internal context. In practical terms this translates to, for example, offering options for relocating away from ‘active’ networks and providing holistic support avenues for enabling mental and emotional well-being. Furthermore, quality treatment for substance and/or alcohol misuse has been identified to play a key role for enabling a long-lasting route out, specifically detected in the Swedish
The analysis suggests that the value of such must be understood in cumulative terms, overall shortening the female route out of crime. That said, it has been shown that treatment settings overall may benefit from more tailored forms of support, including taking into account experiences of ‘emotional awakening’ and the destabilising impact this may have on the female desistance process, including dealing with ‘narratives of loss’.

Additional gendered barriers to change were identified in the theme of intimate partner relationships, found across the sample groups. The dominant theme in this area involved the woman providing a supportive role to previous or current partners, for some linked to children and a wish to encourage a better relationship between the child and her/his father, which commonly signified a risk to her own desistance process. Furthermore, a general vulnerability to men, mediated via experiences of sexual exploitation and involvement in opiate drug scenes (identified exclusively in the English setting), was also recognised as a gendered barrier to change.

Finally, returning to the overall significance of ‘ladders’, it is suggested that state provision of structural ladders to support the female route out carries multidimensional values. Not only do they enable the female route out of crime in terms of overcoming barriers to change, but the analysis suggests that such ‘ladders’ can also produce a subjective sense of legitimacy and inclusion. In turn, this allows for a more tangible, as well as attractive, route out of crime and into societal spaces of inclusion and participation. It is to this last stage we now turn in Chapter 7, specifically exploring participation in the form of employment for female ex-offenders in Sweden and England.
Chapter 7

Female routes out of crime part 2: Employment, inclusion and participation

7.1 Female routes out of crime 2: Opening up societal doors

This final data analysis chapter will explore the end destination of female routes out of crime, namely; inclusion and participation in what could be described as 'mainstream' society. The link between the individual and society is a key piece of the desistance puzzle, although one that has been given only minimal attention in the literature. By situating the female ex-offender experience of (re-)entry into the 'mainstream' in different social, cultural and economic contexts, we can begin to explore how different societal processes interact with her experience of transitioning out of criminal justice, and in towards processes of inclusion. The core argument presented in this chapter is that the Swedish female ex-offenders in this study are not only deemed to have a less onerous route out, but that they also experience their opportunities for inclusion and participation as more accessible, tangible and attractive than their English counterparts. In turn, it is suggested that experiencing these opportunities as more accessible, feeding into a subjective sense of a well-supported route overall, carries meaning for the women's willingness to participate, via a lived sense of inclusion and self-worth. Having explored the first stage of transitioning out of criminal justice in the previous chapter, including looking at barriers to change and state
provisions of ‘ladders’, this chapter will focus specifically on the final phase of reintegration, that is, the area of legitimate labour market participation.

For the vast majority of women in this research, in both countries, employment is situated as an essential factor for a lasting route out. This is, however, identified as a multifaceted factor, operating on several levels. The chapter will start by examining the different roles played by employment in the female route out of crime, and will then move on to comparatively explore the experience of accessing employment across the samples. Gendered barriers to employment will also be highlighted. Lastly, the role of employment-support, including work programs and active labour market policies, will be explored across the samples. The chapter will finish with a brief consideration of the role of ‘generativity’ (see S.2.6.3) in the female route out of crime and criminal justice in Sweden and England.

7.2 The role of employment

The vast majority of women in this research, across both countries, consider employment as an essential factor for a lasting route out. This is identified by women at all stages of the transition journey. However, the processes behind this link are varied, and the value of employment seems to differ depending on how far in on the route out the women are. Indeed, the further outside the 'mainstream' the women have been, both in duration and nature, the further 'distance' they have to travel to adapt to a more conventional lifestyle. A common story of change for women in this study is thus learning how to live a ‘straight’ life. Employment can play a vital part in this process, initially especially through ‘keeping busy’, ‘filling time’ and ‘building routines’.

7.2.1 ‘Keeping busy’ and ‘filling time’

The largest initial challenge in learning how to live a 'straight' life is identified as dealing with boredom and restlessness, which are both experienced as major risk factors for relapsing back into crime and drugs. ‘Keeping busy’ and ‘filling time’ hence emerge as significant themes for a successful route out. These are positioned as the first level value of employment, expressed by the vast majority of women in both countries. ‘Tia/EN’
exemplifies this, here responding to a question whether she feels that working is important for her:

Tia: Um, once I got the kids settled in school, cos' she's so young at the moment, yeah I think, cos' it would take up time wouldn’t it? Yeah, it would be something to do...boredom is a lot of drug taking and crime using as well. [...] So yeah, definitely.

(p.32)

This is a common narrative theme, namely; linking boredom to crime and/or drugs. Giving support to this argument, the data suggest that the link between employment and desistance runs parallel to a link between unemployment and relapsing to offending. However, emphasising the interconnectedness of experience, this is often also interrelated to other destabilising life factors, such as, for example, temporary housing and/or a lived sense of isolation. 'Claire/EN' describes how losing her job, interlinked to other situational factors in her life, led her to relapse into crime after a period of desistance:

Claire: When the company went into liquidation, funnily enough [...] that was the very same week that I got temporary accommodation. So I got a flat, and I suddenly found myself on the 14th floor of a high-rise building in X, I didn't know anybody...unemployed. And I went out stealing [brief laugh], I went out stealing. [...] You know, the only thing I had was my daughter and this flat. And on most days I would get bored sitting at home with my daughter, so I would go out to fill a little corner in my flat.

(p.56-57)

'Claire' provides an example of how unemployment can interact, and overlap, with the theme of boredom, as well as unstable housing and loneliness, and how these themes in turn can act together to destabilise the desistance process. While this theme of boredom is dominant across the two data sets, there are some nuanced differences in how it is narratively constructed. Specifically, the Swedish women commonly link 'boredom' to discourses around ADHD. ‘Angel/SW’ exemplifies this, here comparing her current lifestyle to her previous 'active' criminal lifestyle:

Angel: It's just become such a fucking contrast, now it's like just really quiet everything, if I put it like that, you just have to find, try to be creative and find other stuff to satisfy your ADHD, I mean, if you have to sit still....Yeah it's this thing that you always think something should happen. Like, that doesn’t just disappear in a day.

(p.25)

This theme of ‘restlessness’ is one that is particularly dominant for the women who are transitioning out of intravenous amphetamine (mis)use (i.e. the vast majority of the Swedish sample). This reminds us of the significance of the differently presented drug scenes in the Swedish and English sample, and how these are important to take into account in terms of
what lifestyle the women are trying to desist from. As noted in previous chapters, the lifestyles associated with intravenous amphetamine use, in comparison to heroin/crack use, are markedly different, with the amphetamine-using sample describing a much more active, and often 'thrill-seeking', lifestyle. Although described in different terms and linked to different life factors, in the search for learning how to live a 'straight' life, employment becomes an important factor for enabling female routes out cross-nationally, aiding the women to 'keep busy' and avoid 'boredom'.

7.2.2 Building routines
Another dominant subtheme associated with employment, clearly identified in both data sets, revolves around the importance of building routines. Many of the women in this study have only had limited amounts of routine in their life, with those falling in the 'reactionary/acting out' pathway grouping having experienced the least, often non-existent, routines overall. This is a second aspect of the value of employment, i.e.; a job is a helpful tool for aiding the formation of routines in a new 'straight' lifestyle. For some, this routine is first established in a prison setting, which can become a starting point for structuring an active daily routine also on the outside (see quotes from ‘Grace’ and ‘Ninni’ in S.5.4.2). 'Emma/SW', who at the time of the interview was doing an apprenticeship in carpentry, provides an illustration of the value of this leading into an employment context following sentence:

[I: Are you still doing work experience now?]  
Emma: Yeah.  
[I: […] How you finding it?]  
Emma: It's fun. […] Yeah...mm, everything's fun. Eh...to learn, I get to learn new things, I get, eh, routines, even though I've had routines for a while now [from rehab], but eh... mm it really feels great, like, and just have something to do.

(p.46)

The overlapping nature of the themes of routine and 'filling time' - 'just have something to do' - are reinforced here. Furthermore, 'Emma' also points out the value of learning76. Further examples of the value of ‘routine building’ are provided below (see S.7.3.2), as interlinked to additional employment values.

76 This was a theme highlighted within the context of criminal justice settings in Chapter 5 (see S.5.4.4 for further data on this).
7.3 Economic independence and work satisfaction: The importance of a 'good job'

While 'filling time' and 'building routines' are two key themes in the area of employment in the early stages of change across the samples, the data suggest that these factors per se are not necessarily sufficient for long-term lasting change. This is where the third aspect of the value of employment comes in, namely; the quality of employment opportunities. The data suggest that the relevance of this quality is two-folded; firstly in economic terms and secondly; in terms of at least some level of work satisfaction. However, it should be noted that the latter is most relevant for those women who have already come some distance on their route out. While 'routine building' and 'keeping busy' were themes with substantial symmetry across the two samples, this third aspect of employment showed a marked difference between the two countries.

7.3.1 Economic values: Access to a liveable income

All of the women, across both countries, emphasise economic independence as a major driving motivator for gaining employment. A ‘good job’ in this context is described as a job that, minimally, allows the women to stay above the poverty line and not rely on the state to support themselves and their family. However, there are marked differences in the two data sets in terms of access to a liveable income through employment and the ability to meet basic needs. This is a theme that was touched on in relation to access to benefits in the previous chapter (see S.6.4.2); however, it also overlaps with data for women who are currently in some form of employment. Similarly to the 'survival narrative' presented in the context of benefits, this is a theme only present in the English data. Many women in the English sample accordingly report struggling to meet basic needs on their current incomes, despite being in part-time employment. A few of the English women even hint at, during the course of the interview, having had minor relapses into crime, primarily involving shoplifting for necessities, when their part-time casual jobs have not provided enough income to cover for essentials. 'Amanda/EN' provides an illustration of this experience; here responding to a question about whether working is important for her:

Amanda: Yeah, yeah it is, cos' it gives you enough money to be able to survive, usually. But not at the minute, not in X, the wages are so crap. [...] Um...but yeah if I got a decent job that had decent wages, then you can, it gives you what you need to survive, you can't survive on benefits, it's almost impossible. [...] But then if you're in debt like I was, cos' they
didn’t give me money for 3 months [linked to statutory sanctions], then you can’t survive on, I know if I got, it’s gotta be, I wouldn’t really be able to survive on wages at the moment. [...] (p.41)

'Amanda' makes a significant point regarding access to a liveable income, which feeds into a broader 'survival narrative' that is prominent for a majority of the English women. For some this 'survival narrative' is linked to relapses to crime, and 'Amanda' admits that she has recently had relapses to shoplifting, to cover for essentials. Moreover, the importance of situating the female ex-offender experience in the totality of life-circumstances is reiterated, including that of dealing with debts. Indeed, the vast majority of the women in this study, across the sample groups, have experiences of huge debts. A combination of being in debt, having statutory sanctions placed on her benefits (and thus being without access to any income for 3 months), and 'crap' wages meant that ‘Amanda’ was not getting enough income to cover her essentials, leading to a destabilisation of her desistance process.

Another example of this 'survival narrative' is provided by 'Ruby Red/EN'. ‘Ruby Red’ is currently working part-time cleaning, though she struggles to pick up enough hours following being sacked from a job in a school, linked to her criminal record (see S.7.5.1 for more on this). When I ask her whether she has engaged in any other form of offending since her last conviction she says:

Ruby Red: No...[hesitant].
[I: Hm?]
Ruby Red: Oh yeah...well I've nicked a few times, like, a loaf of bread, like just, yeah sometimes I've had to nick food, just so that my kids can eat. [...] I've had to, yeah, nick like soap powder and just things like that. [...] When I, um, fled domestic violence I started off in a...in a woman’s refuge, I started off in X, then I moved down to X [...]. So yeah, my housing’s alright for the moment, yeah. Like I’m in a bit of rent arrears at the moment but I’m getting there, paying them off slowly but surely. But yeah. (p.27-28)

Later in the interview, when discussing current incomes, 'Ruby Red' describes how she, due to a combination of rent arrears and debt, is currently struggling to make ends meet:

77 For an example of how this can add weight to internal barriers to change, see 'Jasmin’’s quote S.6.5.1.
Ruby Red: But um...yeah I’m just gonna have to pay something like £50 a week, just to get it [fine 78] cleared up, I need to get debt free, ah it’s just, ah it’s just [marked inhale]...yeah.

[I: And how are you surviving money-wise?]

RR: Um...pfft, it’s hard man, it’s really hard at the moment. Cos’ the money doesn’t have no value at the moment like [...] [whispers:] It’s just really hard man.

(p.49)

’Ruby Red’s’ narrative illustrates an important example of the intersections of destitution experienced by many women, some of a highly gendered nature; combining consequences of fleeing domestic violence, forcing to re-locate her family, becoming the single carer of 3 children, struggling with debt, and lack of access to a liveable income in her part-time casual employment situation. ’Ruby Red’ is keen to point out to me that she is currently trying to stay away from stealing, due to being worried about her criminal record. In addition, with her oldest son recently going into prison on a 5 year sentence for selling drugs, and lacking any informal support network around her since re-locating, ’Ruby Red' is especially worried about the care of her younger children if she would be convicted of another crime.

Contrasting this theme of ’access to a liveable income’ to the Swedish data, though there are clearly expressed desires to get off benefits and be independent from the state, this type of ’survival narrative’ in terms of access to bare essentials is completely absent in the Swedish narratives. This marks an important difference in the lived experience of female routes out of crime across the samples in this study. In contrast, a ‘good job’ for the Swedish interviewees goes further than mere survival and also links to a chance to start to re-build a new life and a non-offending identity. A key example of this involves dealing with debts; an expressed barrier for positive change in the women’s lives in both countries. Overcoming this barrier is seen as a fundamental enabler to start to build a new identity. For example, 'Angel/SW' here describes what she feels has enabled her to stay straight for the last two years:

Angel: Well, I’ve got a great job now like, and I really want to treasure that and I know it doesn’t bloody work to get into work high and it doesn’t work not sleeping and not eating and going to work and get things rolling cos’ I...I’ve got a fucking income now like, I can even pay my debts, it’s just like ‘wow’. You can do things that you’ve never, like I mean, that’s what’s so sick too, you’ve never really had an economy before.

(p.43)

78 Fine as part of a sentence.
Being able to pay off debts and have the economic means to ‘do things’ is positively contributing to 'Angel's' abilities to re-construct a new identity. 'Angel' is accordingly experiencing new opportunities through her employment, including paying off her debts, which is one of several reasons why she 'treasures' her job. These are all important findings around the monetary value of employment for a successful route out (further examples of this theme are provided below, but as interconnected to additional employment themes). However, the value of a ‘good job’ goes beyond monetary factors.

7.3.2 Humanitarian values: The role of colleagues, inclusion and self-worth

The data suggest that the role of employment also stretches beyond monetary meanings. However, as a reflection of the greater monetary need and the lack of access to a liveable income found in the English data, the additional value of employment beyond monetary aspects is notably more pronounced in the Swedish narratives. Two major subsections within this broader theme are, firstly, the value of pro-social contexts in terms of having colleagues, and secondly, the meaning of employment for self-worth and a sense of inclusion in society. 'Jasmin/SW' provides an illustration of the multifactorial value of employment; here responding to a question whether she feels that working is important to her:

Jasmin: Really important, for me it's my stable point, my lifeline.
[I: [...] In what way does it feel like your lifeline?]

Jasmin: I feel established in society, it's really important for me not to live in exclusion. Cos' I don't want to shut myself out anymore, I want to be, like, a part of Swedish history [laughs]. It's really important to have routines in the morning, eh, go to bed on time, wake up in the morning, eh, go to a job. It's really important to have colleagues wondering where you are when you fail to appear, you know, I mean just that feeling that people wonder where you are like, if you're, that eh...yeah to be missed by colleagues and that.

(p.92-93)

This is a common narrative in the Swedish data, with employment commonly being portrayed as a form of 'lifeline' that carries meaning beyond monetary aspects, including starting to feel part of society again. The emphasis on colleagues in 'Jasmin's' quote is significant, and one that is also echoed by several other Swedish women. 'Angel/SW' for example describes how having work colleagues is contributing to her learning curve of living a ‘straight’ life:
Angel: I want to do this as well, like I feel that I’m kind of starting to get a little bit into reality now, like especially with people and stuff. I mean at work, like, I have so damn funny people that I work with, who has the broadest sense of humour and I just, yeah, they are bloody the best. [...] This is like the dream job, really.

(p.68-69)

Employment can thus enable the development of pro-social contacts and provide an important new context that the person can be part of; acting as an enabler in the route back to 'reality'. In turn, this can contribute to more lasting constructions of a non-offending self-narrative. It is suggested that the provision of 'ladders' in terms of access to quality employment, i.e. jobs that go beyond mere survival, make a significant contribution towards enabling successful routes out of crime for female ex-offenders. What is more, all of these aspects conjointly interact, and play a role in producing a lived sense of inclusion and a willingness to participate in ‘mainstream' society.

Feeding into the broader theme of 'inclusion', what comes through in the Swedish data is that employment can carry significant meaning for a lived sense of belonging. 'Jasmin' provided an example of this above, and 'Bettan/SW' offers another illustration of this link, responding to a question on why she says it’s ‘important’ for her to work:

Bettan: Well for me what’s important is that I feel valued, that I can take care of myself, that I don’t need to ask soc [social services] for money, that I don’t need to be dependent on them and that I, that you feel a value, but it’s that, yeah, that you’re a part of society. I feel it’s pretty important to me, and then also, this, I mean I’ve never really, I’ve barely known what day it’s been like, but now, yeah definitely you treasure the weekends, eh, and I am tired when I get home after work and stuff like that, in a good way as well. And yeah, I...I don’t know really but it’s stuff like that that’s really important to me.

(p.38)

The overlapping multifactorial values of employment in terms of routine building, keeping busy, self-worth, and a lived sense of societal inclusion are illustrated in ‘Bettan’s’ quote. However, these deeper layers of employment values are notably only found in the Swedish data. Inevitably, for those employed but struggling for mere survival, with the ‘survival narrative’ dominating the English data, the monetary aspect of employment is, logically, primary. This represents a marked contrast between the two countries, with the Swedish women, via more accessible routes to quality employment opportunities, being able to tap into more multi-layered values of employment than the English women. In turn, these processes have significant enabling effects for the Swedish women's route out of crime.
7.4 Access to employment

Having identified the multiple values of employment, this section will examine the contrasting experiences of attempting to enter the formal labour market for female ex-offenders in Sweden and England. Cross-nationally, it is evident that differently organised labour markets, interlinked to wider state structures, have an influence on the female route out of crime and into societal spaces of inclusion. Indeed, the differences in experience detected across the two sample groups in the area of searching and applying for work are considerable.

7.4.1 The role of criminal records and work programs on the road to employment

The data suggest that the Swedish women are overall closer to the labour market in terms of distance. That is, their route to employment is deemed shorter compared to the English women’s. This relates to a number of factors, including the levels of ‘pathway luggage’, type of drug use and associated impacts, external as well as internal barriers to change, the cumulative effect of substance treatment, and a general higher level of educational attainment in the Swedish sample. In consequence of the totality of these factors, the Swedish women face, overall, fewer barriers to employment compared to the English women.

However, the data suggest that there are also marked differences present at the actual entry point, that is, in the practical experience of searching for, and maintaining, employment. Barriers to gaining employment are, overall, found to be significantly higher for women in the English sample. These barriers are particularly identified in two areas; firstly in the impact of criminal records and secondly; in structural support-related factors, such as inadequate work programs and missing links to accessible employment opportunities.

The reader is reminded of the different access routes to the sample (highlighted in S.3.7.2), with the full Swedish sample being recruited through a work program context (or having previously had contact with such), while only a minority of the English sample were recruited through an employment-support related context. Though it is important to bear these limitations in mind, the data nevertheless tell an important divergent story in the different national settings in terms of lived experiences of access to employment, which is arguably significant beyond these noted methodological limitations.
7.4.2 Barring employment access: Criminal records and unsuitable work programs

Criminal records emerge as a major barrier for access to employment for all women (who are actively searching for work) in the English sample. In contrast, there is little/no presence of this type of barrier in the Swedish sample. The role of work programs\(^\text{80}\), specifically working with individuals with criminal records, is noteworthy in this context. There are major differences identified in access to employment support across the samples. Even if focussing exclusively on the minority section of the English sample who have had engagement with some sort of employment training/program specifically relating to people with offending histories, the experiences of these women still markedly differ from their Swedish counterparts in how this involvement has impacted on the job search experience.

Specifically, a major difference for women in Sweden and England is, firstly, the actual link with employers, that is; in the English sample there is a suggested gap in terms of direct contact avenues between work programs/job centres and potential employers. Secondly; the possibility for the women to undertake work experience via a wage subsidy scheme, commonly leading onto employment, is exclusively found in the Swedish setting.

To exemplify this point; 'Asterix/EN' has been involved in employment-support organised via the job centre and an ex-offender charity in a medium sized city in southern England. She has not had very positive experiences of this overall, as with no individual attention given to her skill development, she has been sent to general training, which she feels has been a waste of time:

Asterix: It's teaching you how to use a computer, and I'm just, well yeah, money budgeting and, they make you go to these workshops and tell you everything that you already know. I don't think they take into account life experience. And the fact that I am a single parent family and I do have to live on a budget [...] 'Do you know how to open an email account?' stuff like that [...] 'Can you switch on a computer?' [...] Some of them just make you feel really stupid, and they're like 'right, here's an instruction booklet on how to turn on the computer and get on to the internet' and I'm like that 'Ok, I've done it, can I go now?' but you got to stay there for 2 hours even though everything on the sheet is done [...] You have to, because they report to the job centre, so if I don't go they will sanction my money.

(p.88)

This narrative of participation in what is subjectively deemed to be unsuitable training due to the threat of sanctions is something that is completely absent in the Swedish data.

\(^{80}\) It is essential to bear in mind the marked difference (highlighted in S.3.7.2) in regards to what is referred to as a ‘work programme’ in the Swedish and English setting.
'Asterix' is not the only participant in the English sample who has experiences of this (see for example 'Amanda' losing her claim due to sanctions in S.7.3.1).

Aside from the training being experienced as unsuitable, and do little as an enabler of improving 'Asterix' chances of gaining employment, overall the link with employers within these employment-training settings is very weak. 'Asterix' goes on to describe how this, in combination with her criminal record, is experienced as a major barrier for her to get into employment:

Asterix: I mean, you can be as speculative as you want sending out letters and walking into temping agencies 'I'm such and such', and on face value they're like 'yeah can you fill out an information form?', Look at her and [low voice:] 'we're never gonna get her a job'. Do you know what I mean? [...] So yeah, people do judge you on what's written on a piece of paper rather than what kind of person you are. And I'm quite happy to say 'I haven't been arrested for 6 years! I'm a reformed character' or however you want to put it, but they don't see that, they just see a criminal past and the fact that you might re-offend. [...] Stamped, denied, in the bin. Yeah. [...] I do feel that maybe the job centre and the work program could, maybe set up open days or, for people that do have a criminal record, like 'these are the skills that you've got', they'll obviously take your criminal record into account, but if there's certain companies or organisations, corporations, that will focus on the people that are out of work for a certain reason [...] and give them a chance, it might be easier for anybody who's got a criminal record.

(p.94-95)

'Asterix's' problem, which she shares with the majority of women in the English sample who are actively looking for work, is that she struggles to get in actual contact with potential employers, as her criminal record acts as a barrier to getting past the initial application stage. The overlapping aspects of a criminal record and this noted gap in access to potential employers thus operate as a combined barrier to employment. The suggestion is not that the criminal record should always be invisible, but rather, that a more structured avenue for contact with employers that would consider employing would be a hugely useful ladder. 'Asterix' suggests ‘open days’ as an example of what such a ladder could look like.

'Jade/EN' provides another illustration of this multileveled barrier around work and a criminal record identified specifically in the English sample. ‘Jade’ has also been connected to employment support through an ex-offender charity, but stopped the contact after a period as she did not feel she was treated well by the job centre staff, and felt she was being forced into work that was impossible for her to combine with childcare responsibilities.
'Jade's' subjective experience of this barrier is exemplified in this quote, here recalling the last conversation she had with a member of staff at the job centre:

Jade: I got to work as far out as X, half way to X, I got to be, you know, 'if you get a job you can do this, you can start at 8.30 in the morning', and I said 'hold on, I've got a child I got to take to school and a child I got to pick up from school [...] 'You can get care for him', I said 'no I can't!', 'he's 6 years old!', and I said 'I've got to be there', 'ah, people can do that for you, you can get help', I said 'no! I cannot, I'm not gonna rely on somebody to have to take my child to school and pick him up' [...] I don't want him to grow up thinking that he was picked up from school, never saw me and things like that. [...] And I've said to them I can't work full-time, 'yes you can, he's at full-time school', and I said 'I can't work full-time', they insisted I could and I said to them 'I don't drive', they said 'that's alright, you get public transport to X and back again'. [...] I said 'I'm not a 20 year old with a child', I said 'I'm 47 years old and I got a small child at home' [...] And, um, and they spoke to me like I was a naughty girl. I didn't like that at all, no.

(p.70-72)

There are important gendered dimensions present in this narrative, relating specifically to childcare responsibilities as a barrier to employment for female ex-offenders (see S.7.5 for more on this). Comparing these experience of support around re-entry into employment to the Swedish experiences, marked differences emerge, with the vast majority of the Swedish sample viewing the work program they have participated in as a major enabler in their access to employment.

7.4.3 Enabling employment access: Quality work programs and active labour market policies

All of the women in the Swedish sample have overwhelmingly positive experiences of the multiagency work program they participated in, and many are now in permanent employment on a wage subsidy scheme leading on from this. One of the major identified enablers in the Swedish data is found within the application process, where the program staff acts as a practical link between potential employers and the individual. The analysis suggests that this acts as an enabler in several ways, though a major subtheme is that it encourages a transparent communication. Due to this, the lived experience of criminal record barriers within these work programs are minimised, as employers are aware of this at the outset.

81 See Chapter 3 (S.3.7.2) for a detailed break-down of what this program involved.
Presenting a major difference across the samples in the area of employment access, a note on the use of active labour market policies and wage subsidy schemes in the Swedish context is required. Linked to wider socio-economic structures, and in recognition of the fundamental value of employment for the successful (re-)integration of ex-offenders, Sweden has used creative employment solutions to establish more accessible connections between ex-offenders and employers. Specifically, this is achieved via the use of wage subsidy schemes and multiagency employment-support. Links are established with a range of employers and following an initial trial period of work experience, the employer has the opportunity to offer a permanent contract to the individual via a wage subsidy scheme. Though the precise nature and operation of these schemes rests outside the remit of this chapter, as it is an area that features as a major difference in female ex-offenders' narratives of labour market (re-)entry cross-nationally, it provides a meaningful example of how different models (on the macro-level) directly interact with the female desistance process (on the micro-level).

Exploring the lived experience of this type of scheme, numerous enabling desistance effects are detected. Firstly, a fundamental difference is found in the economic aspects of being on a wage subsidy scheme. The women in the Swedish sample accordingly talk about not just having a wage, but a *living* wage; one that allows them to start to re-build their life, including paying off debts. What is more, these narratives overlap considerably with the above noted themes on the humanitarian values of employment, in turn linked to subjective emotions of inclusion and participation. 'Bettan/SW' provides an example of these interacting themes, describing her experiences of this type of work program/scheme:

Bettan: And then I think they’re so damn good, both 'A' and 'I’ [staff at work program], and you really get good support and, and then this with wage subsidies I think is completely amazing […] I mean before tax I have 24 and 5, like what the hell, seriously, on one of those, like with my background, so that’s… And it’s because of that, I mean it’s thanks to this flipping, that it’s possible to get wage subsidies, and 'M' [boss] put 140kr [£14] per hour, so it’s of course that I, well it’s a lot down to that that I want to work. [...] Like, we’ve never really had it crap or bad with money like, but this money that we have now, now I earn so ok that he [partner] doesn’t receive benefit contributions meanwhile, you know, and so we live

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82 In practice this means that the state will provide a contribution to the employer over an agreed period of time, gradually reducing the contribution, over a maximum of typically 4 years. This will thus encourage the employer to take on staff that may represent a higher ‘risk’ in one way or another, while at the same time be able to pay a good wage to the individual in question.
There are numerous significant points worth highlighting in this narrative. To start with, 'Bettan' makes clear that the fact that she feels she has been given an 'amazing' chance to get into work, and that her boss has chosen to give her a rather high hourly rate, has a hugely positive consequence for her desistance process; it is a lot down to that that she 'wants to work'. As she goes on to describe, ‘Bettan’ is one of the more ‘well-off' offenders in my sample, that is, she never really had it ‘crap or bad with money’ during her ‘active’ years. Nonetheless, the money that she now earns carries a higher value to her. Thirdly, the fact that her wage is high enough for her partner to come off benefits provides an important monetary argument. By the provision of a wage subsidy scheme in this example, which is a typical one in the Swedish data, the employer has been able to set a decent wage for 'Bettan', who for this reason does everything she can to keep the job. She works hard as she values her work, though also, she feels valued. 'Bettan' describes being so grateful for the situation that she finds herself in now that she does everything she can not to lose it:

Bettan: Yeah, well I just want it to go away [identity as an ex-offender/addict], so that I can be a part of society [...] You know, I don't dare to do anything, for example in my apartment I'm terrified that the neighbours will complain about me or anything like that now, I hardly dare to vacuum at 8 o'clock in the evening, just because 'what if they call?', you know. Cos' then they'll think 'yeah she's started taking drugs up there now' or something, I mean you think like that, it's weird but you do!

It is suggested that this internally lived sense of inclusion, and being 'a part of society', linked to quality employment opportunities and the chance to earn a liveable income, provides a major motivating factor for lasting change. In turn, this feeds into the broader theme of the value of inclusion and self-worth for a successful route out of crime echoed throughout the findings in this study.

Another identified key part of this process is the chance to be honest about who you are and start to build a sense of self-worth. The data indicate that how the Swedish women are met and treated plays a fundamental role in this experience, which presents a marked difference to the English women’s accounts (see for example ‘Asterix’ and ‘Jade’ in S.7.4.2). 'Angel/SW' provides an example of the subjectively experienced value of this:
Angel: It was my therapist on the women’s penitentiary who had said ‘oh Angel’ [...] ‘you know as well we’ve got X [work program] here now’, and I was like ‘yeah okay’ [...] Like, she felt that I needed something with just women you know [...] And then I meet these three amazing people [staff at work program], and straight away when I got here I was just like ‘wha’, such fucking warmth! Yeah...it’s just absolutely awesome [...] And the fact that you knew that they do this for people who’ve had involvement in crime and stuff, so you don’t come here and feel you have to be something else, you know, you don’t need to come here and sit down and like be, yeah, ‘uh’ and try to act like that, you know....you can just be yourself. Like ‘this is me’ and like ‘this is my CV, and no it doesn’t look that flipping good!’ you know? But then when they help you to pick up on lots of stuff, and I can start to see maybe I’ve actually done some stuff...cos’ you always think you’ve got nothing to show for yourself, if you know what I mean? [...] And they pick up on all the good sides as well, yeah sure you can sit and talk about seriously shit too but they’re not like ‘aaaaaa, oooooh,’ poor you, but they like push you properly as well, so that’s really positive.

(p.38)

'Angel' highlights the qualitative meaning of the nature of support, especially emphasising the value of being met with ‘warmth’, set in a context where you are able to be honest about who you are, and in turn being given support to start to build a sense of ability and self-worth. What is more, the importance of being 'pushed' and given responsibility comes through strongly here, which echoes findings from the previous chapter with regard to the importance of normalisation processes and preparing women for ‘real’ life.

In addition, this also feeds into narratives about opening up choices, as linked to being given a chance for participation. 'Mia/SW' provides a final example of the enabling value of this support, detected solely in the Swedish data:

Mia: Well you know, I’ve never worked, I’ve never had any routines, except from those at treatment and like in prison. And then when I came here [work program] and I was told that there’s things like debt restructuring programs and that you have studying options, I mean it was like a smorgasbord and I became awake to that I could participate in what I wanted...like I got the chance to sit and listen, I was entitled to have opinions and come with ideas and questions as well. No one’s ever offered me that before [...] And women and men and everyone came and talked about self-esteem, we talked about, eh, debt management, we talked about unions, like fuck, I didn’t even know what the union was! And I mean, like I just got so much information that one needs to survive, to know what paths.... and I was offered so many choices, like ‘you can do like this or like this or like this’. So then you had to really think about what you yourself wanted and then you could start to pick away at that together. So I just got so many amazing chances through this place.

(p.92)

The multilayered value of holistic support comes through strongly in ‘Mia’s narrative. Learning about choices, and making these more accessible, sets up a context in which the women are encouraged to start to think about those options more seriously. These narratives once again reiterate the broader argument presented throughout, namely; the fundamental value of a lived sense of participation and inclusion, which is prominent in the
Swedish data while absent in the English. The nature of employment support thus emerges as a major enabling factor for making the route out of crime and in to societal spaces of participation.

### 7.5 Gendered barriers to employment

Turning our attention to the presence of gender within the employment theme, gendered barriers to employment are detected. This is present to some extent across the two countries; however, it is significantly more prominent in the English data. Three core themes of gendered barriers were identified in the analysis; the impact of ‘feminised’ labour markets, the role of childcare responsibilities, and lastly, particular female experiences of stigma and labelling.

#### 7.5.1 'Feminised' labour markets, criminal records and childcare

Care work (along with hospitality) is a sector dominated by female labour (ONS, 2013). However, the care industry, which commonly involves working with vulnerable populations, is also a sector where a criminal record is a particularly marked barrier. Both the care work industry and hospitality represent sectors that many of the women, especially in the English sample, express a special interest in. There are; however, particular challenges in gaining employment in the care sector with a criminal record, and several women in the English sample have lost their employment within these sectors due to criminal records. An example of this is 'Ruby Red/EN', who following an arrest lost her job working in a school:

> Ruby Red: I was working in a school, I told the, I was doing cleaning in a school and dinner lady, I told them about it; no problem. I was at work one day and they came and removed me off of the site the next, they said I was a danger for the children.

(p.27)

A criminal record, especially when working with vulnerable populations, can act as a direct cause for loss of employment. These are work sectors that are especially accessible for women with low education attainment. Another example is 'Asterix/EN', who had started training in nursing but had to give up her studies due to a drug possession conviction. She subsequently tried to enter into other areas of care work, but soon found herself in long-term unemployment. Furthermore, being a single mother of a young child, the irregular working hours required in the hospitality industry posed difficulties for her in terms of
childcare. 'Asterix' illustrates the intersectional dimensions of barriers experienced by many women in the English sample:

Asterix: After the, um, caution for possession, if you got a drug charge on your record you can't study nursing. [...] So that was that career out the window. So I sort of focussed on the health and social care, and was doing really well at that, passed all my courses. Eh, started work for another company and...you didn't have to tell them then if you had a criminal record, being years ago, so I didn't disclose my criminal record, worked well with them for 6 months, got called in on my day off and they fired me [...] because I hadn't declared my criminal record, and because it was drugs, and I was working with, um, vulnerable people, young adults and I was fitting dosette boxes [...] So they thought I would be stealing people's tablets or whatever, so they fired me from that job. [...] Then I worked in a warehouse for a while and, that was with a temping agency, and the warehouse cancelled the contract, so I lost that job. [...] I've worked, um, in catering for a while as well, but that was anti-social hours for my son, so I left that job, and I am currently looking for more work.

[I: Right.]

Asterix: So yeah, these are my barriers to employment. (p.76-78)

These intersectional barriers to employment, namely; the challenge of criminal records in care sector work, the volatility of being on temporary contracts and the role of child-care, are significant ('Jade' provided an additional example of the gendered nature of childcare barriers to employment in S.7.4.2).

Contrasting these experiences to the Swedish women, these barriers were not identified in the Swedish data. However, this marked difference does not necessarily relate to the nature of the barriers per se, but rather it is likely that the women in the Swedish sample did not experience it due to involvement with work programs that effectively bridged contact with employers. Moreover, it may also be related to the type of employment sought by the women in the Swedish sample. Specifically, the majority of the women in the Swedish sample, as opposed to the English women, expressed a particular desire to work in manual labour type of occupations (where the barrier of a criminal record is not as prevalent as in care work settings). 'Jasmin/SW' and 'Jenny/SW' provide examples of this:

Jasmin: To do physical labour is really important to me, so that I can have an outlet for my energy [...] Yeah definitely. (p.93)

Jenny: Eh, yeah [I need to work with] something practical. [...] I’ve applied to the property technician [caretaker] program, and I got into that. And the...I really thought it would be kinda more practical, we’ve sat a lot in the classroom and I really struggle with that. [...] It would have to be to stand at the spot and fiddle and learn, cos’ that’s what I have to do. (p.63)
Furthermore, in terms of childcare responsibilities, highlighted as a barrier in the English sample, this is almost completely absent in the Swedish data. However, a significantly smaller section of the Swedish sample has children, and thus childcare responsibilities are less of a concern generally. In addition, on a structural level, Sweden is well-known for having accessible and affordable childcare. There is only one woman in the Swedish sample, namely ‘Jenny’, who has struggled with combining employment and childcare responsibilities. 'Jenny's' son, though, has complex mental health problems, with reoccurring periods of inpatient psychiatric care, and thus she describes having chosen to focus all of her time on his health for the moment, before returning to active employment search. Overall, due to a combination of these highlighted factors, i.e. in particular the type of work sought and the role of childcare, the data indicate that the gendered structure of the labour market has a more discriminating impact on the female lived experience of (re-)entry into employment for the English women in this study compared to the Swedish.

7.5.2 The lived experience of 'double deviance': Stigma as a barrier in the route out

Additional barriers to participation and inclusion in 'mainstream' society were detected for the women, particularly in the form of stigma. Many of the women carry visual scars from their experiences of domestic violence and other forms of victimisation on the criminal scene, as well as from self-harm. These scars can, in turn, act as a barrier to change, via processes of labelling and associated challenges to successfully form a new identity. The data indicate that this is qualitatively experienced on a number of levels by women across the samples. There is noteworthy symmetry in the two data sets within this theme, although there are more extensive forms of physical scaring found in the English data. Several of the women discussed their scars openly, while for others it was left unspoken\textsuperscript{83}. For those who chose to talk about these, it is evident that they were experienced as a form of stigma. For example, ‘Jenny/SW’ talks about the relationship she has with her ex-partner, the father of her daughter, when she mentions how she got her facial anaesthesia:

\begin{quote}
Jenny: I don’t know if I should say hate but...an inner loathing, somehow, like a love-hate relationship to him. Cos’ he’s really beaten me badly in the active, eh, that’s how I got my facial anaesthesia, eh...So that can make me hate him a lot. [...] Nothing when he’s sober I
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{83} For ethical reasons, especially linked to sensitivity around stigma and identity-formation processes, questions about physical appearance were not raised in the interviews, but were only discussed if it was brought up independently by the participant.
mean, but in the active. Yeah, and I can just feel disgusted that I look the way I do, my face...cos' I think it really shows heaps.

(p.54)

It is noteworthy how 'Jenny' makes such a strong differentiation between her ex-partner 'in the active' and now; a time when she is trying to build a better relationship with him, for the sake of their daughter. This is a common temporal separation of abuse narratives found in the data, across the samples.

More than the emotional aspects of dealing with the consequences of violence and visual scars, the data suggest that the appearance of scars can also carry meaning in terms of labelling. ‘Grace/EN’ provides an example of how this can be experienced first-hand:

Grace: People say it to me in the groups that I do it. ‘Do you think people are scared to give you feed-back?’ Cos' the way I look they're generally, but that's protection. [...] And my scars are just pain and, what they have taken as anger is pain, and it's a protection I put on trying to keep people away from me.

(p.14)

NARRATIVE BREAK

Grace: Where like I got scars and that, people don't see it, as I've had a fucking hard, horrible, horrific [brief laugh] life, that's it.[...] Like all the scars, I just look angry, but that's cos' I've been hurt so much.

(p.25)

Visual scars can thus create a certain label, an ‘angry’ or ‘scary’ look, which in turn makes it harder for the woman to successfully construct a new identity. There is an important gendered dimension to this experience. Owing to traditional ideals of femininity, we know that female offenders have been portrayed as ‘doubly deviant’. Arguably this becomes especially pronounced when a woman cannot hide her past, via the presence of visual scars.

In turn this feeds into a wider theme around general levels of stigma experienced by female offenders; something that comes through in both sample groups. ‘Anna/EN’ and ‘Linda/SW’ provide an illustration of the symmetry of this subjective experience of 'double deviance' in the female route out of crime:

Anna: But my other 2 [children] won't know nothing about it [prison] hopefully. [...] Cos' I don't think it's like, um, something that you'll be proud of that your mum's been to prison, I think like, if your dad's been to prison it's slightly different. But if like...like the friends that I meet now they don't know that I've been to prison. [...] Because you're a mother and a woman, I just don't think that people feel it's acceptable.

(p.57)
Thus, a cross-national finding is that, comparatively, female ex-offenders subjectively experience their route back from crime as longer relative to male ex-offenders, due to their gender and higher levels of stigma. Moreover, this sense of stigma also links to physical appearances for the women and the ability to disassociate with an ex-offending identity in employment contexts (see for example ‘Linda’s’ quote in S.6.6.1). The cumulative value of access to quality treatment is reiterated here, as providing value also in terms of employment (re-)entry and access. That is; not carrying such visual signs of stigma aids the transition process towards inclusion and participation in that it enables access to employment and reintegration in society for female ex-offenders.

7.6 'Generativity' in the female route out of crime

The theme of 'generativity' (McNeill and Maruna, 2008) is found to be of relevance for some female ex-offenders, across both samples. The nature of this generativity is; however, slightly varied. 'Mia/SW' provides an illustration of a generative narrative in the Swedish context:

Mia: I want to become a productive member of society, you know, do the right thing. I want to pay my debts, eh, sure I pay tax on like inheritance money and that, but to, I mean, pay taxes and become debt free...Like, keep a steady job, you know, and be on a permanent contract and...be able to help others as well. Yeah, and I can't do that if I fall back into crime or drugs, you know, I have to have continued abstinence from drugs really.

(p.114)

'Mia' here draws on a generativity narrative to construct her abstinence from drugs as an essential precondition for helping others. The notion of 'giving back' provides 'Mia' with a purposeful 'hook' to reconstruct her new identity as an ex-offender. This is a significant storyline that is found among a large minority in both the Swedish and English sample.

84 ‘Kriminellas Revanch i samhället’ is the most prominent ‘ex-con’ organisation in Sweden, directly translating to ‘Criminals’ Rematch in Society’.
However, analysing this theme of 'generativity' inter-sample, some interesting patterns emerge. In the Swedish context this theme commonly relates to 'paying back' to society in general, while, in contrast, in the English sample, the theme of generativity is more focussed around specific support services, which the woman feels has played a positive role in her personal transition out of crime and/or drugs. This is exemplified by ‘Ruby Red’, who is now volunteering at a hostel where she spent some time after escaping domestic violence:

Ruby Red: Yeah, I don’t think there’s a lot of support for women, and I think that, um, it’s nice when you can try to get a job in an organisation when you’ve been there, so you’re not reading from a book. [...] You know, I’ve been there, done it, worn the jacket and got out safe on the other side, you know?

(p.67)

What is more, 'giving back' and thus helping others make similar transitions, the classic 'wounded healer' story, carries additional personal meaning for an enabled route out for some, as exemplified by 'Anna/EN':

Anna: Cos' I, that's like, like I do volunteering here, that's why I like, I know it sounds really, like it helps me to realise that that's not where I wanna be. [...] Like see it, the desperate states that people are in, and it just reminds me very clearly.

[I: So that's been like a helping factor for you, volunteering?]

Anna: Definitely, yeah. And like, I do a bit of family support. [...] And like seeing like the whole child protection in like, I've been through it like twice and, um, it's just so upsetting.

[I: You see it with different eyes now?]

Anna: Yeah. I can see it from social services eyes now as well.

(p.61)

Thus, though the theme of generativity is found across the two samples, the nature of its meaning varies considerably. The Swedish data suggest this link is more general, linked to citizenship values and wider participation, while in the English context it is more specific to particular organisations and contexts. It is not unlikely that these diverse meanings of 'generativity' are associated with the different level of societal inclusion and support detected across the women’s accounts in the sample groups, and hence a different object for ‘giving back’ either to society at large, or to specific organisations.
7.7 Female routes out of crime part 2: Some conclusions

This chapter has presented findings focussing specifically on the end destination of the female journey through crime and criminal justice; conceptualised as participation and inclusion in 'mainstream' society. The vast majority of the women in this research, in both countries, situate employment as an essential factor for a lasting route out. This is a multifaceted factor; however, operating on several levels. The findings suggest that the first value of employment includes monetary aspects, as well as the building of routines and ‘filling time’. However, the cross-national analysis found that for the English women the monetary aspects of employment are significantly more challenging than for the Swedish women. For employment to act as a functional desistance factor, an essential starting point is that labour involvement provides enough for basic survival for the woman and her family, which is something lacking in several of the English narratives. In contrast, the Swedish data show that the provision of a liveable income, along with work that can stimulate the development of pro-social contacts and self-worth, can provide additional employment values. In turn, these factors can also help to encourage a lived sense of inclusion and establishment in society. It is suggested that such subjective emotions of societal value enables a willingness to participate in, and contribute to, a society that has provided a second (though often also a third and a fourth) chance.

Considering the practical experience of searching and applying for work cross-nationally, it is found that the English women face higher barriers to employment than the Swedish women. Some of these factors are of a gendered nature. ‘Feminised’ labour markets, childcare and the role of stigma were themes identified to carry gendered significance. However, the Swedish women overall felt these barriers to a lesser extent than the English women, partly because different employment industries were sought (and the relevance of criminal records across such), as well as greater child caring responsibilities in the English sample.

Additionally, the data suggest that differently structured employment-support, including the use of wage subsidy schemes, play a major role in the route back being experienced as more accessible by the Swedish women. More precisely, quality work programs, based on multiagency cooperative provision of holistic employment-focussed support, was identified
as a central contributing factor for enabling successful female routes out of crime in the Swedish sample. The findings showed that the provision of wage subsidy schemes, and thus liveable income systems, in conjunction with more accessible employment routes, create a route out that is subjectively experienced as more feasible and attractive in the Swedish sample. In turn, the analysis indicated that these factors collectively can contribute to a lived sense of inclusion and value, associated with a willingness to positively engage with, and contribute to, ‘mainstream’ society. The evidence in this research suggests that this internal drive, via a lived sense of inclusion and worth, is a far stronger motivator for maintaining change than any external threat, such as further sanctions and exclusion.
Chapter 8

Weaving together the threads
A discussion of the findings

8.1 Women, crime and criminal justice in cross-national contexts

In this chapter I will pull together and discuss the significance of the empirical findings presented in this study, and situate them in the relevant criminological literature context. The findings provide both support and challenges to existing knowledge, as well as make some new contributions to the criminological arena. Echoing international criminological scholarly voices in the field (Nelken, 2010; Barberet, 2014); a clear message in this research is that crime and criminal justice cannot be separated from the wider context in which it operates. In support of Melossi’s (2001) conceptualisation of penalty; crime and punishment are found to be embedded in broader socio-economic, political and societal processes and norms. That said, the findings in this research also indicate that there are some phenomena that go beyond borders and are shared by female offenders across cultures and penal models.

Situating individual realities in broader societal processes, the findings raise challenging questions about the interplay between macro-level structures and micro-level experiences, as well as the intervening role of meso-contexts. It is argued that, comparatively, the Swedish model seems to offer a macro-context, supported and reflected in allied meso-
practices, which is more conducive to the formation of female routes out of crime, and into positive change processes and participation in 'mainstream' society. Initial personal motivation for change is; however, a pre-requisite for women to capitalise on such conditions. This chapter aims to, by linking the core findings with wider literature, explore this interplay in more detail. By doing so, we are compelled to take a step back and return to some of the broader themes; weaving together the major threads running through the findings. For the presentation of this chapter I will return to the metaphorical conceptualisation of a female 'journey' through crime and criminal justice, with the core themes that emerged within each phase of the journey highlighted and linked to relevant literature.

8.1.1 A journey?
The application of a ‘journey’ is meaningful in multiple ways. The Oxford online dictionary suggests two parallel definitions of a ‘journey’; 1) as ‘an act of travelling from one place to another’, and 2) as ‘a long and often difficult process of personal change and development’. It is precisely this dual understanding of a journey that gives the metaphor value; on the one hand it suggests movement and direction, going from somewhere to another, but on the other, it refers to the often challenging process of personal change and development. It is through this combined definition that I wish to build a metaphorical female journey through crime and criminal justice. It should be pointed out that this model inevitably represents a simplification of complex life experiences and 'messy' social realities. However, while giving reverence to each individual life-story, for the purpose of comparison and comprehension, it is vital to bind together narratives in order to connect individual experiences thematically. It is this interweaving application of narratives that enables us to animate the ‘sociological imagination’ and the links between ‘the personal troubles of milieu’ and the ‘public issues of social structure’ (Mills, 1959:8).

85 See oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/journey.
For most female ex-offenders the journey towards participation and inclusion in ‘mainstream’ society is a long and winding one, paved with a variety of barriers. However, as illustrated in Figure 8.1 below, there are clear differences found along the routes, with barriers and structural ladders creating differently experienced journeys. In summary, it is argued that Swedish female ex-offenders’ routes back to participation and inclusion are not only generally less onerous, especially linked to processes of normalisation within the criminal justice borders, along with more extensive experiences of treatment interludes, but the barriers are also fewer. Moreover, the Swedish women are also better positioned to overcome the noted barriers, firstly due to the fact that they start the journey with comparatively less 'pathway luggage', as well as the existence of more ‘ladders’ to help them over. The findings indicate that, via the provision of more robust structural ladders, the Swedish route out is experienced as more accessible and well-supported. In turn, emphasising the constant interplay between structure and agency, it is suggested that the fact that the Swedish women feel more supported effectively translates into a subjective view of the route out as more feasible as well as attractive.

8.2 Pathways into crime: The thin boundary between victim and offender

Starting with the onset of the journey, two dominant female pathways into crime were identified, namely a ‘reactionary/acting out’ and an ‘active-seeking out’ pathway. The majority of the women interviewed for this research fall into the ‘reactionary/acting out’ category. This says something important about the overlap of experience shared by female offenders at the onset of their journey through crime and criminal justice across borders. Although it is important to highlight these overlaps, significant differences across the samples were also detected. Specifically, while the vast majority of the English women fell
into the 'reactionary/acting out' category, only a minority of the Swedish women did so. This section will focus on this overall dominant pathway grouping.

The feminist criminological literature has forcefully demonstrated the overlapping, and often blurred, line between the female offender and the female victim (Barberet, 2014). The role of sexual and physical victimisation in the female trajectory into crime has been especially emphasised in the ‘feminist pathway perspective’ (Chesney-Lind, 2006). The findings in this study provide support to this established pathway perspective. Indeed, the majority of the women in this study had experiences of physical and/or sexual abuse in their childhood. Experience of childhood victimisation was identified as a core defining feature in the ‘reactionary/acting out’ pathway.

There is a clear established link in the literature in terms of the gendered nature of not only trauma but also responses to it (Segrave and Carlton, 2010-2011). The literature suggests that women more commonly develop depression, self-blame and substance misuse following abusive experiences, while male victims are more likely to develop heightened levels of aggression (McClellan et al, 1997). However, parallel to finding evidence for internalised forms of female coping (Holsinger, 2000), the findings also show evidence of women developing particular patterns of re-producing violence as a consequence of abuse, through heightened levels of aggression. A particular transition from victim of violence to perpetrator of violence was thus detected, providing support to Daly's (1992) 'harmed-and-harming' female grouping. The 'silencing' of abuse narratives by both formal and informal networks was identified in this study to further re-enforce this link.

Additionally, lending support to previous research into the nature of the link between female childhood abuse and offending (Gilfus, 1993), a particular progression pattern moving from victim to survivor to offender was identified in the 'reactionary/acting out' pathway, through an early entry onto the street scene. Gilfus (1993:85) argues that the link between escaping abusive home environments and getting involved in street scenes fundamentally "blurs the boundaries between victim and offender". In turn, this process also has a bearing on girls' peer networks. Dehart (2008) notes how sexual or physical abuse in
the home pushes girls away from both formal and informal networks, such as school peers and extended family connections. The findings showed support for these arguments, with the women commonly coming into contact with older, typically male, drug-using peer groups as a consequence of avoiding/escaping home environments.

While sexual and/or physical violence represents the defining feature of the ‘reactionary/acting out’ pathway, the findings show that that this pathway needs to be understood as multifactorial in nature. In support of Barberet (2014), although categorisations are deemed to be analytically useful to highlight compound differences, they should not be viewed as wholly dichotomous or fixed. Rather, a multi-dimensional interpretation of women's pathways into crime is called for even within typological constructions (Daly, 1992). For example, for most women in the ‘reactionary/acting out’ category, childhood victimisation ran parallel to other destabilising factors, such as challenging home environments and school disruption. Comparing the Swedish sample and the English sample specifically within the ‘reactionary/acting out’ pathways, the Swedish women had experienced more overall intervention in home environments compared to the English women.

8.2.1 Sexualised survival: The role of prostitution
Girls’ survival techniques away from the home must be situated in a patriarchal framework, as the main source of power/commodity for a young female trying to survive on the streets is undoubtedly her sexuality (Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2004). The findings in this study; however, show that wider cultural structures and norms can produce important differences in the lived experience of this. Specifically, there is greater evidence of commercialisation of female sexuality as a survival technique in the English data than in the Swedish. Different gender politics are likely to play a role in this, including the regulation of, as well as societal norms associated with, prostitution. Providing a useful illustration of the link between the female micro-experience and macro-level inputs, a brief commentary on prostitution across the countries is deemed valuable.

In 1999 Sweden pioneered, in the Violence Against Women Act, the 'Nordic Model' of regulation of prostitution, criminalising demand while decriminalising supply (Home Office,
In accordance with this position, prostitution is inevitably a form of violence against women, and viewing women’s sexuality as a marketable commodity makes up a fundamental part of men’s oppression of women (Hoigård and Finstad, 1992). Prostitution is thus not only recognised as harmful on an individual level, linked to female vulnerability and endemic levels of violent and sexual victimisation (Hester and Westmarland, 2004; Sanders and Campbell, 2007), but also on the societal level, with commercial sexual exploitation understood to constitute a major obstacle to the promotion of gender equality (Ekberg, 2004). The Swedish law has also been suggested to serve an important normative function, as it challenges the conception that men own the right to buy women for sexual purposes (Ibid.), a disturbing notion deeply embedded in many cultures (Poppy Project, 2005). The Swedish legislation has provoked wide-ranging debate, linked to the fact that it challenges traditional power relations; women’s non-normative sexual behaviour is decriminalised, while male normative heterosexuality is regulated (Hannah-Moffat, 2000, cited in Bittle, 2002).

Linking this to the findings in this study, it is not unlikely that the Swedish shifts in macro-regulation, via a commitment to gender equality and political rejection of commercialisation of female sexuality, have had a bearing on the lived experience of female street-survival techniques. It is suggested that the trade of female sexuality was more accessible as a survival technique to women in the English sample, which in turn must be situated in the context of a burgeoning and expanding commercialisation of women’s sexuality in neo-liberal environments (Jeffreys, 2009).

8.2.2 Victim or survivor? Passive or active agent?

The use of the term 'victim' has received critique in recent years from some feminist corners, with a victim identity suggested to imply weakness, vulnerability and passivity, and the new term 'survivor' has accordingly been promoted (Burman, 2010; Pollack, 2000). However, this binary interpretation of victimisation is suggested to unhelpfully condense the complex nature of the multifaceted boundary between victim and offender. Matthews (2014:140) maintains that the "argument of some liberal feminists that presenting women as victims somehow renders them passive and devoid of agency is misguided". My findings

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86 Numerous other countries have since followed suit, including Norway, Denmark and most recently, France.
give support to this argument, rejecting the notion that a ‘victim’ status necessitates passivity and weakness. Instead, it is argued that the ‘victim’ status can help contextualise women’s choices as rational decision-makers operating in a limited arena of ‘choice’; an arena which in turn must be situated in broader structural contexts including power structures (Naffine, 1996; Holsinger, 2000; Bumiller, 2013).

The findings demonstrate that victimisation can lead to active and resistant female behaviour, including responding to violence, leaving abusive situations and reporting it to either formal or informal networks. However, the findings also suggested that the criminal justice system structure, and this was found in both England and Sweden, is not well-positioned to deal with the notion of an ‘active’ victim, with criminal justice discourses persistently reinforcing an unhelpful dichotomy between victim and agent (Burman, 2010). The findings revealed numerous examples, in both Sweden and England, where women have been criminalised for reacting to, and/or defending themselves from, intimate violence. Echoing feminist calls in the field (Barberet, 2014; Segrave and Carlton, 2010-2011; Holsinger, 2000; Gelsthorpe, 2003), it is argued that there is a need to break down binary thinking about women as passive versus active agents, and promote research and practice that include women as both victims and offenders, including how these two statuses may be mutually reinforcing.

8.3 Pathways into crime: An active female criminal path

While a minority of the Swedish sample fell into the ‘reactionary/acting out’ pathway, the majority fell into the ‘active/seeking out’ category. The dominance of this category in the Swedish sample problematises some of the prevailing theorising around gender and offending. The core defining feature of the ‘active/seeking out’ pathway was a particular discourse around ‘excitement’ in and around the onset of the female journey through crime and criminal justice, and a personal account of actively 'seeking out' risky behaviour. In some of the women’s accounts the 'seeking out' process was linked to a lived sense of a predestined path or status-recognition, though for some women it related to a lived sense of exclusion from traditional peer networks. The use of drugs such as amphetamines and ecstasy was particularly associated with the onset of this pathway. Re-iterating the point
highlighted for the 'reactionary/acting out' pathway, a multifactorial interpretation of this pathway is called for. For example, a parallel key tenet in this pathway was identified as a relatively stable and supportive home environment. In addition, the findings indicated a higher subjective sense of agency and control within this pathway.

In his seminal work on the 'seductive' nature of crime, Katz (1988) accused criminology of a fundamental neglect of the positive, 'sensual' dynamics of offending. Although Katz's (1988) analysis is, especially from a gendered perspective, weak in several respects, he opened up criminology to a focus on the lived experience of criminality. Katz's (1988:64) suggestion that “success brings in its wake emotions that go beyond the joy of material acquisition” finds support in my study. This was especially found in the ‘active/seeking out’ pathway, with a common outspoken rejection of exclusive monetary aims and a pronounced search for ‘thrills’.

Recognising the 'sensual dynamics' of crime presented in this pathway, these experiences must be situated in wider socio-economic contexts. Katz (1988:321) notes that while ‘emotional processes’ seem to seduce people to deviance, the nature of how these dynamics differ with social positions remains unclear. In today's consumer society, 'thrills' represent a purchasable experience. Thus, for adolescents with a high 'attraction' to risk-taking and impulsivity in a high income family, these may be met by legitimate means. For example, there has been a growing trend to take ‘gap years’ in late adolescence, involving a break from educational settings commonly filled with travelling. The first official report into gap years by the Department of Education (2012) found a clear link between young people previously engaged in 'risky behaviour' and the uptake of gap years. Gap year takers were much more likely to come from higher socio-economic families (Ibid). There is hence a suggestion that different socio-economic positions may allow for a different context of 'thrill-seeking' and 'risk-taking'. Would all of the women in the ‘active/seeking out’ grouping have become as involved with crime and drugs if they had had the opportunity to stimulate their ‘thrill-seeking’ in more legitimate ways? At the bare minimum, I would suggest it is

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87 For example, at times sensationalist and broad-brushing, as well as lacking any sophisticated analysis of power structures.

88 For example smoking of cannabis and truanting from school.
important to be aware of the intersecting dimensions of socio-economic conditions when exploring ‘thrill-seeking’ pathways.

8.3.1 Agency and status: Crime as a resistant femininity?
Female offenders have traditionally been portrayed as “mad rather than bad”, with behaviour persistently linked to mental inadequacy and biological limitations (Zedner, 1991:307). In turn, this construction of the female offender is associated with that society generally, relating to particular ideals of femininity, upholds a strong reluctance to define women as criminal (Kennedy, 1993). The findings in this study suggest the possibility of a more 'active' and role-seeking form of femininity in offending contexts. This 'active' criminal femininity comes through in a number of ways in the 'active/seeking out' pathway, including for example the explicit aim of becoming the ‘worst gangster’ and aiming for 'top status'. These findings fall in line with what Katz (1988) refers to as 'ways of the badass' and an offending rhetoric about 'acting tough'. However, Katz (1988) rejects the relevance of these discourses for women, linking the 'tough' discourse exclusively to masculinity. The findings in this study, specifically relating to the Swedish sample, problematise such traditional understandings of the role of gender in the performance of criminality. While performing masculinity has been linked to offending in the criminological literature in a variety of ways (see for example Messerschmidt, 1993; Collier, 1998), the conceptualisation of criminality as linked to performing femininity, or achieving female status, is absent in the literature.

Nonetheless, this suggestion does not signify that the women’s ‘active’ role-seeking within the criminal scene is not of a gendered nature. Indeed, many of the women in the ‘active/seeking out’ category have experienced gendered forms of victimisation on the criminal scene. Additionally, reflecting rigid gender roles, a clear 'glass ceiling' was detected in criminal contexts, with none of the women actually reaching 'top status'. That said, from a feminist criminological perspective, we need to remain vigilant of patterns and variations of patriarchy across space, as well as various forms of female resistance to such forces. Resistance to patriarchy is a notably under-theorised area in criminology (Barberet, 2014). Could this active status-seeking form of femininity in a strongly male-dominated sphere be interpreted as a (both direct and indirect) form of female resistance to patriarchal gender
hierarchies? As questioned by Barberet (2014), does a more 'active' female offender character open up the possibility that we have underestimated women's agentic role in lieu of more traditional gender discourses of passivity? Although the data sample is far too small to make any generalisations on this, it is noteworthy that this resistance discourse to gender hierarchies is only identified in the Swedish sample; a country consistently ranking high on formal gender equality (UNDP, 2009).

The link between gender equality and female offending is one that has been drawn before, most notably in the so called 'liberation hypothesis', formalised in Adler's 'Sisters in Crime' (1975). However, the nature of the link is suggested to be of a different character. Specifically, the 'liberation hypothesis' (though repeatedly disproven) suggested that the women's liberation movement would lead to a surge in female offending, fostering women to start to act as men. In contrast, what is hinted at here is not that women are achieving equality and starting to behave like men, but rather via an active form of femininity they express a form of resistance to dominant patterns of patriarchy across different spheres, including criminal scenes.

8.4 Meso-contexts: The role of criminal justice interactions in the female journey

The findings showed marked differences across the samples in terms of lived experiences of interactions with the criminal justice system. Overall, the Swedish women had significantly less conflictual interactions with criminal justice agencies, including police and prison staff. A major overarching finding in this area was that these differently natured interactions in turn translated to diverse levels of trust and legitimacy in the female journey through crime and criminal justice, with the Swedish women experiencing much higher levels of a lived sense of legitimacy. The findings suggested that the women's accounts of legitimacy also overlapped with experiences of 'access to justice', and the reporting of victimisation. This section will discuss these themes in further detail, as linked to existing literature, before moving on to highlight 'transformative' impacts in criminal justice settings.
8.4.1 Access to justice and support

The findings indicated that the women in the English sample subjectively experienced significantly lower levels of ‘access to justice’ than the Swedish women in this study. In the women’s accounts, this was commonly linked to experiences of negative, often discriminatory, police interactions. We are reminded that the vast majority of the women, across both samples, have had first-hand experiences of serious criminal victimisation, and many of the women's early experiences with the police were not in an offender, but in a victim capacity. Moreover, access to justice was also found to be linked to who you are and what you do. A finding in the English data was that there was a particular sense of lack of ‘access to justice’ in the context of prostitution. These findings lend support to previous studies indicating that access to victimisation support is linked to contextual factors. Research has, for example, shown that criminal records, outstanding warrants and immigrant status may prevent women from reporting violence for fear of arrest (Moe, 2004).

Burman (2010) argues that the criminal justice system is still permeated by masculinist ideals and gendered assumptions, and that these are especially visible around victim-blame discourses. In support of this, this study found evidence for the criminal justice system's inability to allow for an intertwined construal of women as concurrent victims and offenders. This is something that is found across the two penal systems. In practice, this means that the women have often been prosecuted as co-producer of violence in domestic violence situations, not uncommonly responding to years of ongoing abuse. Women's survival strategies responding to domestic violence thus mean that they become "criminals for becoming active agents in their lives" (Moe, 2004:135). Burman (2010) argues that women should be able to oppose and act against male power and control without being blamed for the violence. However, providing evidence for how criminal justice continues to operate on ‘gendered logics and gendered agents of power’ (Silvestri and Crowther-Dowey, 2008:33), the system seemingly remains unable to diverge from the dichotomous notion of the female as either victim or agent and thus, female offenders' lived realities of violence are often marginalised and diminished.
8.4.2 Legitimacy and trust within criminal justice contexts

A subjective sense of being supported and treated fairly was found to effectively translate to a lived sense of legitimacy. In turn this lived sense of system legitimacy - running across from childhood experiences including, for example, the silencing of abuse narratives, to adult interactions with criminal justice staff and support during as well as after sentence - was suggested to play a major role in the woman’s attitudes towards the system, and her willingness to engage with agencies. This lends support to previous research with female offenders, showing that mistrust of statutory agencies is likely to lead to reduced willingness to engage (McIvor et al, 2009). Indeed, relationships in meso-contexts have been shown to be significant for the offender experience. For example, McNeill (2006) found that probation ‘practice virtues’ such as fairness, respect, compassion, optimism, hope, patience, persistence, loyalty, compassion, sensitivity and flexibility are key to an effective and ethical working relationship. In turn, such relationships are likely to aid the development of normative mechanisms (Ibid.). The findings indicate that the Swedish model may offer a meso-structure that promotes more prominent subjective experiences of legitimacy than the English model.

Previous research suggests that lived experiences of system legitimacy can encourage cooperative attitudes to authority and law-abiding behaviour (Liebling, 2013). Via enabling better access to justice, a less conflict-driven relationship between the individual and the 'system' is encouraged in the long-term. In addition, Liebling (2013) suggests a strong relationship between a sense of trust and justice and processes of human flourishing. Having established a clear link between mental well-being and an enabled route out of crime, my findings support this argument, and suggest that meso-contexts that are more focussed on building trust, legitimacy and a subjective sense of justice are likely to be more effective in reducing female offending than a system emphasising differentiation and harshness. Subjective experiences of harshness and injustice were commonplace in the English women's account of criminal justice interactions, while being almost completely absent in the Swedish women's accounts.
8.4.3 ‘Transformative’ experiences in criminal justice

In terms of different meso-contexts, community sentences for women in this study were found to have minimal ‘transformative’ impacts. This finding presented much symmetry across the samples, and supports previous research in the area that identifies, for example, probation as having very little impact on probationer's lives overall (Farrall, 2002a). However, there were some differences across the samples in terms of the underpinning reasons for the lack of impact. In the English data this dominantly related, from the women’s perspective, to a lack of addressing underlying factors linked to offending. In contrast, in the Swedish data the lack of transformative impacts were not, from the women’s perspectives, due to a lack of opportunity to address underlying factors, but rather, were associated with a lack of ’readiness’ to capitalise on such opportunity. These findings provide support to existing literature that emphasises the important interplay between personal motivations and circumstances, and structural factors for the desistance process (Giordano et al, 2003; Farrall and Bowling, 1999).

Furthermore, there was a noteworthy symmetry in the data with regard to short sentences, i.e. there was a pronounced lack of ‘transformative’ impacts from short sentences across the two samples. As there is no real time to deal with rehabilitative approaches, though long enough for some women to lose both home and children, short custodial sentences have been identified in previous research to be more destructive rather than constructive (Fawcett, 2006; Roberts and Townsend, 2014; Carlton and Baldry, 2013). Previous evidence also shows that the conditions that the women had prior to imprisonment, such as living in poverty and social exclusion, typically either remain the same, or become worse, when they are released from short custodial sentences (Corcoran, 2010-2011). The findings in this study lend further support to these arguments, identifying no ‘transformative’ impacts from short custodial sentences, for both the Swedish and the English women. The dominance of this finding across the samples raises critical questions about the use of short sentences for women.
8.5 The female experience of prison: Prison as more or less 'survivable'

There are many similarities shared between women in prison globally (Barberet, 2014:176), with evidence showing that women experience some of the harshest 'pains of imprisonment' (Matthews, 2009). That said, comparative studies into different prison estates suggest that some prison environments may be more ‘survivable’ than others (Liebling, 2013). Providing qualitative support to this argument, also echoed by Pratt and Ericsson (2013); the comparative analysis demonstrated that the Swedish prison estate was qualitatively experienced by women as more 'survivable' than the English one. More amicable officer/staff relationships, better access to quality ‘purposeful’ activity and the more extensive use of open prison facilities, and interlinked processes of normalisation, were identified as important contributing factors for this.

8.5.1 Normalisation processes in prison

Prison research has shown that the prison experience can act to exclude women from decision-making and reduce autonomy (Eaton, 1993; Berberet, 2014). In turn, reduced autonomy and self-efficacy has been found to negatively correlate with female desistance-processes (Mclvor et al, 2009). Moreover, prison studies also suggest that prison, generally, can have 'criminogenic' effects (Liebling, 2013), including the removal of structures encouraging 'maturation', reducing agency and resources (Farrall and Caverly, 2006) and an increase in isolation and disconnection from community support (Pollack, 2000). Instead of such processes of 'pathologising', Carlen (2003) argues that it would be more beneficial for female prison structures to instead focus on 'normalising'. Lending support to this argument, the findings in this study suggest that processes encouraging normalisation were important factors for making the Swedish female prison experience more 'survivable' than the English one. In particular, normalisation was identified as a significant ladder for maintaining change following sentence in the Swedish setting.

The findings suggested that open facilities, with gradual allowances for freedoms, engagement with educational and training facilities on the outside, along with quality support to reduce 'internal' barriers to change, provided useful 'ladders' for enabling women to 'make it' on the outside in day-to-day life. These findings support international research on female offenders. For instance, Hannah-Moffat (2003) notes how basic survival
skills including securing housing, navigating social welfare, getting an ID-card, and dealing with stigma and criminal records, as well as the responsibilities of freedom more generally, are commonly identified priorities voiced by women for maintaining change post-sentence. In turn, these aid the women to develop more autonomy and skills to maintain change in the long-term.

8.5.2 Removal from the scene: Prison as a suitable space for safety and structure?

Presenting noteworthy symmetry across the data, 'removal from the scene' was identified as an important theme in the prison data. Often this removal included a safe, secure and structured 'rest' from a chaotic life on the outside, and a break from cycles of victimisation. Arguably, however, these findings say more about the women's lives on the outside rather than on the inside. As questioned by Barberet (2014:171); “If victimization – or fleeing from it – is criminalized, what can prisons possibly offer women besides temporary safety?”.

Identifying prison as a safe space for a 'break' feeds into a tension identified in the literature, namely; that imprisonment can both help to prevent further trauma in women's lives, via the provision of a home, separation from hardship and rest from abusive relationships, as well as reproduce harm via further marginalisation (Segrave and Carlton, 2010-2011). Finding support for this tension in the data, the suitability of prison to provide such a 'break' and access to structure is, arguably, highly questionable.

That said, the findings indicated that this 'unsuitability' runs along a spectrum, with some prison contexts providing less suitable spaces for 'removal' than others. Specifically, the Swedish setting seemed to offer a 'removal' context that was more conducive to the women to capitalise on this 'break'. Firstly, this was identified in the data in terms of quality of support for overcoming 'barriers' to change and better access to 'purposeful' activity, secondly; in more humane conditions and amicable staff relations and thirdly; as related to processes of normalisation and a better preparation for 'real life' on the outside. This approach is more in tune with the 'whole system' strategy for female offenders which grew out of the Corston Report (2007), emphasising a more integrated approach with holistic support delivered in smaller local units. The value of this approach has recently been reiterated on a political level (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2013). However, in terms of the level of implementation, progress stalled when the government shifted to
Conservative leadership (Corcoran, 2010-2011). The findings in this study provide further qualitative support of existing policy and practice research (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2013; Corston, 2007), which demonstrates substantial benefits of a 'whole system' approach when working with female offenders.

8.5.3 A critical lens on prison reforms
As a final point, I would like to make a brief comment on the existent critique of reformist prison policies. Some argue that reformist prison policies may in fact legitimise incarceration and hence provide further incentives to imprison more women (Mason and Stubbs, 2010-2011). This critique is especially voiced from abolitionist corners. For example, Segrave and Carlton (2013) argue that 'gender-responsiveness' has paved the way for increasing rates of imprisonment globally. Moreover, there is also notable critique in the area of therapeutic interventions. Some suggest that therapeutic discourses and practices may be just as punitive for women as other forms of punishment, becoming a process for individualising responsibility for criminality, which in turn deflects attention from other more contextual, such as social and political, factors (Moore and Hannah-Moffat, 2005). These are significant arguments, and remind us of the importance of remaining critical of any shifts in policy and practice, including those seemingly benevolent.

That said, a key finding in this study is that poor mental and emotional well-being can be a major barrier to change for female offenders cross-nationally. In turn, this underlines the importance of enabling access to quality therapeutic support, based on individual circumstances and biographies. For example, if the woman identifies the ‘processing’ of trauma and/or other previously negative experiences as an enabler for change, then that should be regarded as a valuable ladder rather than as a punishment, even if it does take place within the contours of a sentence. It is essential; however, that the quality and structure of this type of support is critically and continuously scrutinised, and that it is sensitive to women’s particular needs and wishes.

The findings in this study presented a clear message, supported by previous research, that some prison environments are more 'survivable' for women than others. Thus, while recognising the unsuitability of the criminal justice system for dealing with many of the
complex issues faced by female offenders (Carlton and Baldry, 2013), this argument should not be allowed to hinder the development of more 'survivable' and less 'damaging' prison structures. Taking a process-view of change, it is suggested that reforms benefit from being conceptualised in terms of stepladders. As argued by Matthews (2014:48), from a critical realist perspective; "even small gains are gains, and it is recognised that piecemeal reforms often lead to further reforms". Therefore, until we have a political and public climate that is ready to engage in critical re-thinking of the entire criminal justice machine, we must continue to push for more 'survivable' alternatives for women. Moreover, what is clear from the Swedish example, with a total female prison population of around 200-300 women at any one day (Kriminalvården, 2014), and a recent decrease in prison intakes (Sveriges Radio, 2013), pushing for more 'survivable' prison conditions does not automatically imply a system expansion. Rather, criminal justice expansion must be viewed as a political matter. As argued by Lappi-Seppälä (2015); there is nothing inevitable about prison trends.

8.6 The role of children in the female journey through crime and criminal justice

Significantly more of the English women had children in comparison to the Swedish women in this study. Noteworthy differences were detected across the two samples in terms of active decision-making around motherhood. Specifically, many of the Swedish women expressed very active decision-making processes of not having children early on in life, especially within drug-using contexts. Marked differences were also detected in terms of custody of children. While the majority of the Swedish women who were mothers had kept custody of their children, the majority of the English mothers had lost custody of some or all of their children. The analysis suggested that the loss of children had consequences on female pathways into crime, commonly correlating with a negative impact on mental health and an escalation of drug use. This was found for women across the two samples who had lost custody of children. These findings support previous research showing that the impacts of loss of children on mothers with existing alcohol and/or drug problems can be numerous.

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89 Due to the considerable difference in proportion of mothers across the groups, the sample was limited in its ability to comparatively analyse differences in the role of children in the female ex-offenders journey through crime and criminal justice in Sweden and England.
including psychologically detrimental impacts and increased residential instability (Robertson, 1991).

For the vast majority of women, motherhood did not produce a turning point away from offending and/or drug use per se. This was a prominent theme found for mothers across the two sample groups. These findings thus pose some challenges to life-course transitional perspectives that suggest that structural role changes, such as parenthood, can effectively generate turning points in an individual's life and 'redirect paths' (Laub and Sampson, 1993:304). However, the findings suggested that once the route out of crime had been initiated, motherhood could provide an important motivating factor for maintaining change. This finding provides some support to Giordano et al's (2002:1002) argument that a 'cognitive blueprint' can play a central role for the successful formation of a more conventional 'replacement self' in the desistance process.

8.7 Female routes out of crime and criminal justice: Barriers and ladders
The female route out of crime is one that is paved with numerous barriers. These barriers are both 'internal' and 'external' in nature. Overall, the analysis demonstrated that barriers to change, especially external ones such as a lack of housing and access to a liveable income, were much more prominent in the English data than in the Swedish. Additionally, the Swedish women’s route out was found to be enabled via more extensive provisions of structural ladders, effectively aiding them to overcome barriers to change. In support of previous research in the desistance field (Farrall et al, 2010), structures are accordingly understood to have the power to both enable as well as block individual change. While personal motivation for change was identified as a pre-requisite for the onset of desistance across the samples, it was at this next stage that the major societal differences were detected, i.e. in the availability and quality of supportive infrastructures that allowed the individual to capitalise on initial motivational change. Overall, the findings showed that different contexts provide differently structured paths (on the macro-level) and have major consequences for the female route out (on the micro-level). The findings indicate that the route out can be:
1) Viewed as more or less accessible.

2) Understood as more or less onerous.

3) Experienced as well-supported or perilous.

4) Have an end destination that appears more or less tangible, as well as more or less attractive.

What is important to consider in this context, as Farrall et al (2010) helpfully remind us; structures are not static but rather, they are flexible and open to change. Thus, identifying structures that enable and bar change can provide important clues about reformative ideals for creating more viable female routes out of crime.

**8.7.1 External barriers: Meeting basic needs**

The findings indicated that for an enabled female route out of crime, basic needs have to be met. This supports existing feminist criminological research emphasising the importance of situating women’s offending in broader structural perspectives, including in the context of economic marginalisation, poverty and powerlessness (Parker and Reckdenwald, 2008; Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2004; Heidensohn, 2002; Naffine, 1996; Holsinger, 2000). The literature identifies financial strain as one of the major desistance-related issues for women, including living with debt (McIvor et al, 2009; Matthews et al, 2014), and the provision of opportunities for sustained economic survival is deemed to be an essential factor for a successful female desistance process (Hannah-Moffat and Innocente, 2013). My findings very much lend support to these arguments, with the analysis showing that without means for basic survival, the desistance process becomes significantly more challenging. The factor of debt was found to be an important one that needs to be taken into account when considering financial survival for female ex-offenders.

However, there was a clear difference detected across the samples in this area. Specifically, the ‘survival narrative’, i.e. an inability to legitimately cover for basic needs, was only detected in the English data, and was particularly related to experiences of inadequate welfare support, housing problems and subsistent wages in unstable employment conditions. These findings support existing evidence in Anglophone settings, where research shows that being without adequate paid work often leads women to commit further offences in order to provide for herself and her family (McIvor et al, 2009). Some even argue
that lacking welfare systems and subsistent wages could be understood as a form of structural violence (Barberet, 2014). The 'survival narrative' was notably absent in the Swedish data, which falls in line with research showing that the socio-economic structures in Sweden allow for a setting where women on lower income and support are, relatively, better protected against poverty than elsewhere in the world (Lister, 2009).

Furthermore, the findings support existing literature that identifies housing as a major post-release issue for women (McIvor et al., 2009; Hannah-Moffat, 2013). There was; however, mixed support for this across the sample groups, with lack of housing being a significantly more common barrier in the English data. Some of the English women had spent years trying to move out of certain areas, for example council estates with high drug use. Evidence is thus provided for the argument that people can become 'socially caged' in certain housing conditions, where crime is often embedded (Mann 1986, cited in Farrall and Caverly, 2006). Others had spent years in temporary hostel accommodation, with daily interaction with other vulnerable/drug-using/offending populations. Matthews et al (2014) argue that hostel accommodation is not only a stressful environment, but it is also an environment that may further harm and exploit women, as well as make it harder for women to give up drug use and for many, break ties with prostitution. Evidence was found for this in my study. An identified valuable ‘ladder’ in this context, detected solely in the Swedish sample, was not only the provision of stable and secure housing, but also the chance to re-locate and start ‘fresh’ in a different location. Moreover, the aspect of choice in this context emerged as a ladder per se, as it seemed to encourage women to take 'ownership' of their route out.

8.7.2 Internal barriers: Enabling mental and emotional well-being

The findings showed a universal link between mental and emotional well-being and a successful female route out of crime, with many of the interviewees having had experiences of mental health problems. These findings are in line with what is already known about female offenders, with high mental health needs recorded in the English female offending population (HM Prison Service 2010; Fawcett, 2008; Baird, 2003), as well as in the Swedish (Kriminalvården, 2010). Recognising the needs of women offenders across borders, the findings indicate that there are mechanisms that can be put in place that can open up more avenues towards improved mental and emotional well-being. For example, a useful 'ladder'
identified in the Swedish setting was good access to quality mental health support, both within and outside meso-contexts. This supports previous research suggesting that accessible health services may go a long way to support female desistance (Richie, 2001). Recognising that female offenders typically have higher levels of mental health needs in comparison to their male counterparts, community-based services are arguably especially vital for the female desistance process (Cobbina, 2010). This includes aspects such as housing services and holistic healthcare provisions, along with access to education and childcare (Hannah-Moffat, 2013).

Moreover, a key part of service infrastructures identified to enable mental and physical well-being for female offenders was high-quality alcohol and/or substance treatment. Considerable differences across the samples were identified in this area, with the Swedish women having access to noticeably more durable and holistic support provisions than the English women. This finding is supported by previous research identifying good community provisions offering substance and/or alcohol support to women as lacking in the English setting (Malloch, 2003). The significance of access to quality drug and alcohol rehabilitation services were identified in the Swedish data especially in terms of long-term physical and mental health benefits. Additionally, the findings indicated that such support needs to be understood in terms of cumulative value over time, making routes out of crime not only less onerous, but also more accessible. Lastly, subjective experiences of high-quality drug and/or alcohol support were identified in the Swedish data as feeding into overarching themes of legitimacy, and a lived sense of being supported.

**8.8 The role of relationality in the female route out of crime**

Family networks and relationships vary significantly both inter- and intra-samples. Positive and supportive family contact was significantly more prominent in the 'active/seeking out' pathway group than in the 'reactionary/acting out' grouping. For those who do have a supportive network to draw on, this could act as valuable scaffolding in the woman's route out of crime. The findings accordingly give support to the literature that suggests a beneficial value of social capital in the female desistance process (Cobbina, 2010; Uggen and Kruttschnitt, 1998). However, a supportive social network was certainly no automatic factor...
for a successful desistance process. Overall, family network support was found to be rather constant over the female journey, with the most salient narratives identified in the earlier parts of the journey. An aspect of relationality that featured more prominently in the desistance phase; however, was the role of intimate relationships.

8.8.1 Intimate relationships as a barrier in the female route out
Intimate relationships were, in the vast majority of cases across the samples, identified as a barrier rather than an enabler of change in the female route out of crime. A key finding in this area was that the women were often supporting men, in current relationships or as fathers of children, to act as their enabler to desistance. In turn, the emotional strain of this emerged in the data as significant, with potential destabilising effects on the woman’s own route out. This was a theme detected across the samples. These findings thus lend support to existing literature (Giordano et al, 2002) that highlights the limitations in traditional social bonds analyses, such as Sampson and Laub’s work (1993; 2003), and the argument that structural roles, such as marriage and partnerships, are likely to support desistance from crime. Additionally, my findings show support for the argument put forward in more recent feminist research, namely; that for many women relationships can have a negative impact on the desistance process (Cobbina, 2010; Leverentz, 2006). This area is identified as a significant gendered factor in the female route out of crime.

8.9 Routes out: Participation and inclusion
The findings in this study support previous research which suggests that desistance is associated with becoming an integrated member of society (Farrall et al, 2010). In turn, this is closely related to processes and experiences of citizenship and inclusion (Ibid). Recent studies have seen an increased interest in the link between citizenship values and desistance. For example, there are some suggestions in the literature that engaged citizenship is linked to normative compliance (Gelsthorpe, 2004) and supportive values, which are in turn associated with lower levels of offending (Farrall and Caverly, 2006). The findings in the Swedish sample give qualitative support to these arguments, identifying factors such as a subjective feeling of playing a productive part in society and a lived sense
of inclusion as significant enablers in the female desistance process. These factors of societal inclusion, however, were exclusively detected in the Swedish data.

In contrast, dominant themes in the English data related more to a lived sense of exclusion. These findings lend support to existing research in the UK context suggesting that many people meet significant problems re-qualifying as citizens post-conviction, which in turn leads to further social exclusion (Farrall et al, 2010). Moreover, research also indicates that access to citizenship processes and participation may be related to different locations in the social structures (Reisig et al, 2002; Carlsson, 2012), such as gender and particular female experiences of stigma.

8.9.1 Stigma: A barrier to citizenship

Though an under-researched area, some studies suggest that stigma can act as a major barrier to active citizenship (Uggen et al, 2004). However, this may be experienced in different ways across societies, linked to what Uggen et al (2004:285) refer to as differences in the 'societal management of stigma'. My findings support this argument. That is, the women in the Swedish sample perceived their access to participation as more accessible and feasible than the women in the English sample. Thus, it is suggested that there may be processes that can encourage more tolerant and inclusive cultures, and a more effective 'societal management of stigma'. As highlighted in 5.1.5, broader macro-structures, including political, media and civil arrangements are likely to be of relevance here.

Although research suggests that stigmatisation generally has negative effects on desistance-related process for all ex-offenders (LeBel et al, 2008; Farrall et al, 2011), female ex-offenders are likely to experience distinct levels of stigma. This is linked to particular notions of femininity and what in the literature is identified as female offenders being ‘doubly deviant, doubly damned’ (Heidensohn, 1996; 2002; Lloyd, 1995). My study finds support for this notion across both sample groups, i.e. a number of the women, in both Sweden and England, subjectively felt that due to being women, they experienced more stigma as ex-offenders than their male counterparts.
Lived experiences of stigma were in turn found to produce additional barriers in terms of reduced access to re-constructed identities, as well as being subjected to labelling processes. In support of previous studies, it is suggested that due to these processes, the costs of re-offending may be higher for women as compared to men (Uggen and Kruttschnitt, 1998; Estrada and Nilsson, 2012), with stigma and rejection ultimately leading to a loss of the restorative benefits of civic participation (Uggen, et al, 2004). This includes a reduced access to community networks and the development of pro-social contacts (McIvor et al, 2009). This is significant, as isolation and disconnection from community networks has been identified as a key barrier in women's reintegration processes (Baldry, 2010-2011). However, this may be experienced in diverse ways in different societal and cultural contexts. The findings suggest that, through a well-structured support system, the Swedish women in this study expressed a greater sense of stability and connection to supporting community networks, while this was identified as lacking in the vast majority of the English data. These findings also correlated with the overarching themes of legitimacy and trust.

8.9.2 Re-integration, self-worth and active participation

Previous research has shown that feeling valued and supported play a key role in successful work with women post-release (McIvor et al, 2009). Liebling (2013) argues that to feel part of a community, as well as to play a constructive part in it, is an essential condition for human flourishing. Having a sense of self as a person with rights and responsibilities can also be an important factor for an individual to start to see themselves in this light (Eaton, 1993). The findings in this study give support to these claims. That is, some of the strongest desistance factors detected in the Swedish data were found in the subjective emotion of being an included and valued member of society. Indeed, experiences of being a 'productive member of society' is an important factor for active citizenship (Uggen, et al, 2004:287). To provide structural conditions enabling a sense of inclusion and self-worth are thus suggested to play an important role for a successful route out of crime and criminal justice. For example, building community relationships and providing spaces that connect ex-offenders to conventional groups on the community level are suggested as useful mechanisms for this to occur (Bazemore and Erbe, 2004). An example of this in the Swedish the data was how, through the more extensive use of open prisons, female offenders could
engage with community networks through education facilities in community settings during sentence.

Re-visiting Cavadino and Dignan's (2006) categorisation of penal cultures, we know that the level of 'exclusion' or 'inclusion' towards deviant individuals is closely related to different types of political economy. Sweden, falling into the 'social democratic' categorisation, upholds an inclusive and 'caring' ethos towards offenders, while the 'neoliberal' grouping, which England and Wales falls into, operates a more socially exclusive penal culture. As argued by Cavadino and Dignan (2006:442) "The term 'social exclusion' is not merely a synonym for poverty, but is used to refer to the denial of full effective rights of citizenship and participation in civil, political and social life". It is at this junction that some of the core differences in terms of the function of punishment in the two countries are brought to the forefront. Namely, in the Nordic model an explicit aim of criminal justice is to restore individuals to citizenship, while in the Anglophone setting it is more about disqualifying the individual (Pratt and Ericsson, 2013). Out of the two ethos, my findings indicate that an inclusionary penal culture, emphasising contribution, value and legitimacy, is significantly more supportive of the female desistance process.

8.9.3 Social trust

Trust plays an important role in societal processes. Research indicates clear positive outcomes of high levels of societal trust, including producing more pro-social behaviour and promotion of cooperation (Sønderskov and Dinesen, 2014). Based on my findings, I would like to extend this argument and suggest that social trust is also an important factor for the successful reintegration of female ex-offenders. This is firstly on the micro-level; i.e. the findings indicate that encouraging trust in authorities can foster a less conflicting and more subjectively legitimate relationship between the ex-offender and authorities, and secondly on the macro-level; higher general levels of social trust seem to enable more reintegrative and tolerant community relations. It is important to point out that levels of trust in a society are not static, but rather, as demonstrated by Sønderskov and Dinesen (2014), social trust is, via increasing the quality of institutional mechanisms and legitimacy in political and other official processes, manipulatable.
8.10 Employment in the female route out of crime

The findings indicate that employment plays an essential role in the formation of lasting female desisting identities. This hints at a challenge to previous desistance studies, which suggest that employment may be more important for men in comparison to women, related to women's successful role transformation being more linked to personal interactions rather than status-related goals (Herrschaft et al, 2009). In terms of the value of employment, this was found to be multi-layered and included factors such as filling time, building routines, being part of pro-social contexts and having access to a liveable income. These findings support previous research on the general positive role of employment for ex-offenders, showing that it can help structure people's lives, provide financial security, encourage maturation, produce a new social role, increase self-esteem and give a sense of a stake in society (Farrall and Caverly, 2006; Farrall, 2002a).

Linking with the arguments presented in 8.9.2, on the role of self-worth and active citizenship in the female route out of crime, the qualitative importance of contribution and participation, via employment, was identified as playing a significant role in terms of enabling a lived sense of value and belonging. This supports previous research on women's re-settlement that argues that employment can aid a heightened sense of value and usefulness, which in turn helps to recover self-worth (Eaton, 1993). Matthews et al (2014) suggest that providing avenues for meaningful employment, as well as raising women's expectations of what they can achieve, are an important part of the female desistance process. This study found support for the value of this especially in the Swedish sample. Opening up avenues to employment, as well as raising female aspirations, also falls in line with recent research calling for a more 'strength-based' approach in working with offenders, that is, focussing less on 'risk' and more on the positive contributions that a person can make, including raising individuals' hopes for the future (Hannah-Moffat, 2003; McNeill, 2006; Matthews et al, 2014).

8.10.1 Barriers versus enablers for female ex-offenders' employment

In terms of barriers to employment, my findings support previous research which shows that criminal justice involvement, via reduced access to legitimate employment opportunities, can act as a barrier to desistance for women (McIvor et al, 2009; Matthews et
al, 2014). However, this barrier was significantly more marked for the women in the English sample, with criminal records being identified as a particular barrier to employment. The recent increase in employers asking for criminal record disclosures in England and Wales is likely to be a relevant factor in this (Farrall et al, 2010). Childcare responsibilities and a lack of suitable employment-support were also identified as additional barriers to employment experienced exclusively by the women in the English sample.

Exploring the comparative experience of employment entry across the two samples, the findings suggested that there are structural ‘ladders’ that can be put in place to help female ex-offenders overcome employment barriers. Firstly, tailored and suitable work programs were highlighted as a major enabling factor for the Swedish female ex-offenders to overcome employment barriers. The role of the staff in these programs was identified as crucial, providing quality and personalised support, as well as offering a mediating role between the women and potential employers. In contrast, for the few English women who had experiences of employment support, though minimal in comparison to what the Swedish women received, such support was not found to aid in the overcoming of employment barriers but rather, programs were typically perceived as unsuitable and generic.

Providing accessible opportunities for legitimate incomes, along with creating community contexts that are safe and upholding quality services to deal with mental and physical health, are identified in the literature as useful tools for enabling female desistance (Richie, 2001). This resonates with the broader desistance literature. For example, Farrall et al (2010) suggest that the restructuring of legitimate routes out of crime, such as availability and access to employment, is likely to hold a key role for enabling desistance processes. My findings lend support to these arguments, indicating that investment in more structured and holistic support around employment access can have a significant desistance value for female ex-offenders.

However, regardless of how crucial employment may be for desistance, if there are no quality jobs available, there is little room for ex-offenders to capitalise on the identified values of employment. Critical authors argue that socio-economic forces have firmly
reduced opportunities for good jobs in neoliberal societies, while simultaneously cut community-based services that deal with the consequences of insecure job markets and widespread unemployment (Bumiller, 2013; Segrave and Carlton, 2013). It is due to such processes that some scholars argue that the 'market society' can be understood to be 'criminogenic' (Currie, 1991). Linking this to desistance specifically, Uggen et al (2004), in their exploration of the role of wider socio-economic processes and desistance, argue that the lack of legitimate employment opportunities represents a major impediment for the development of active citizenship. Falling in line with the different political economies in the two countries, my findings support this argument. That is, a particular lack of secure legitimate employment opportunities for female ex-offenders in the neoliberal English setting was identified, while a commitment to full employment, through active labour market policies, was detected in the Swedish setting.

**8.10.2 Gendered barriers to employment**

My research supports previous studies which argue that women are often marginalised following sentence by the sexual division of labour (Eaton, 1993). In Eaton's (1993) study of post-release experiences for women, this was emphasised in relation to 'women's jobs' being particularly centred in lower-paid areas. Furthermore, Barberet (2014) notes how recent shifts in the labour market represent gendered processes of disadvantage, with women increasingly being pushed into low-wage, non-unionised areas of employment, thereby underlining the feminisation of poverty. My findings lend support to these arguments regarding gendered aspects of employment access. However, this was exclusively detected in the English data, with several of the English women being unable to support themselves on subsistence wages in insecure employment conditions. In turn, this is likely to further contribute to the re-production of internal barriers to change for the English women. As noted by Hannah-Moffat (2013), the inability to access legitimate employment, leading to long-term dependency on social services for financial survival, erodes women's self-esteem and reduces a lived sense of dignity. The cycle of marginalisation is thus further perpetuated.

An additional gendered barrier to employment was identified in the area of parental responsibilities, with low-paid jobs, typically demanding irregular working hours, being hard
to combine with childcare responsibilities. This was a barrier also exclusively detected in the English sample. In part, this is likely to be linked to the fact that a significantly higher proportion of the English women had childcare responsibilities. In addition, Sweden is well-known for having well-developed infrastructures for childcare provisions, enabling women’s economic independence (Lister, 2009). It is not unlikely, therefore, that these findings also are related to the fact that women in the Swedish sample have better access to childcare support. My study accordingly lend support to previous feminist research (Hannah-Moffat and Innocente, 2013), which position good and affordable childcare as essential for enabling women to access employment.

8.10.3 The role of wage subsidy schemes

A final major difference across the samples in terms of access to employment was detected in the use of wage subsidy schemes in the Swedish setting. This was found to play a major role in aiding the Swedish women into employment, meanwhile securing a decent living wage. Active labour market policies are suggested to be a form of crime-fighting tool in Sweden (Pratt, 2008a). This is what Currie (1991:348) identifies as a ‘genuinely social crime prevention strategy’, i.e. labour market policies which aim to provide all citizens not only with the skills to participate, but also with access to quality employment opportunities. In the English context, some authors have questioned whether there is a role for probation in developing schemes that could increase legitimate employment opportunities (Farrall, 2002a). My findings suggest that there is clear beneficial potential in such schemes. This includes enabling the criminal justice system to develop high-quality, multi-agency employment-support programs, with established links to employers, as well as considering the introduction of wage subsidy schemes to effectively aid more ex-offenders into stable employment.

On the micro-level, my findings suggested that participation in such schemes, and the chance to actively engage in legitimate labour, was intertwined with subjective emotions of inclusion and self-worth, and a lived sense of making a valuable contribution to society for women in the Swedish sample. In turn, on the macro-level, this could enable more associations between ex-offenders and wider communities, thereby potentially improving the societal management of stigma.
8.11 Weaving together the threads: Some conclusions

This chapter has pulled together the core findings of the study and situated them within relevant criminological literature. Firstly, two different female pathways to crime were identified, with the 'reactionary/acting out' pathway providing significant evidence for the established 'feminist pathway perspective' (Holsinger, 2000, Salisbury and Voorhis, 2009; Belknap and Holsinger, 2006; Schaffner, 2007). The role of gendered forms of victimisation, and subsequent responses to such trauma, was identified as a core feature of this pathway. The findings suggested that different macro-regulations of commercial sexual exploitation had an impact on the micro-experience of this pathway, with the trade in young female sexuality seemingly being more accessible as a survival technique in the English context than in the Swedish. All but one of the English women fell into the 'reactionary/acting out' pathway, and a minority of the Swedish.

In contrast, the majority of the Swedish women fell into the 'active/seeking out' pathway; dominated by on-setting discourses of 'excitement' and a pronounced attraction to risk-taking. With 'seductive' and status-orientated attractions to crime predominantly being associated with male offending in the literature (Katz, 1988), the dominance of this pathway in the Swedish sample problematises some of the current thinking about gender and crime, proposing the possibility of a more 'active' female criminal path. This included discussions of the possibility of a form of femininity that attempt to resist patriarchy on a male-dominated criminal arena.

Core findings in the area of female experiences of interactions with criminal justice were subsequently highlighted. A major finding in this part of the female journey was that the Swedish women had significantly less conflictual criminal justice interactions than the English women, which in turn linked into a lived sense of legitimacy and trust in the Swedish women's accounts. Higher levels of legitimacy were found to positively correlate with more supportive citizenship values and a more pronounced willingness to actively engage with 'mainstream' society. In contrast, the English women's accounts were dominated by conflicting and distrusting interactions with criminal justice, which were found to further reinforce their lived experience of exclusion. This lends support to previous research in the
UK highlighting ex-offenders' problems of requalifying as citizens after sentence (Farrall et al, 2010).

In terms of ‘transformative’ impacts within criminal justice interactions, short sentences and community sanctions were found to have no ‘transformative’ influence on the women's lives, for both the Swedish and English women. Lengthier prison sentences, on the other hand, were found to have 'transformative' impacts both for women in Sweden and England. A beneficial 'removal' from a chaotic, often drug-using, setting, and the chance to access to 'purposeful' activity, was identified as significant factors for this. The quality of this 'removal'; however, differed significantly between the groups. Supporting previous research in the area (Pratt and Eriksson, 2013; Liebling, 2013), the Swedish prison setting was found to be subjectively experienced as more 'survivable' than the English one. An additional major difference detected across the samples was the enabling value of processes of normalisation found predominantly in the Swedish experience of prison. The more extensive use of open prisons emerged as a particularly prominent theme within this, allowing the Swedish women gradual freedom and re-integration into community settings. It was suggested that such re-integration during sentence may also encourage a more effective 'societal management of stigma' (Uggen et al, 2004), by opening up avenues of contact between wider society and ex-offenders.

Lastly, the core findings from the final phase of the female journey through crime and criminal justice were highlighted. It was suggested that female ex-offenders in England face more barriers in their route out of crime, and have fewer 'ladders' provided to overcome them. In support of previous research, major barriers identified included lack of appropriate housing (McIvor et al, 2009; Hannah-Moffat, 2013), financial strain (McIvor et al, 2009; Matthews et al, 2014) and mental and emotional ill-health (Fawcett, 2008; Baird, 2003; Kriminalvården, 2010). These barriers must also be situated in the totality of lived experience, with women in the English sample overall carrying more 'pathway luggage' at the entry point of criminal justice, which in turn makes it harder to overcome barriers to change. Valuable ‘ladders’ identified to aid women to overcome barriers, identified overwhelmingly as enablers in the Swedish sample, included good access to stable housing,
a chance to re-locate away from 'active' (drug/offending) networks, and durable high-quality substance and/or alcohol support provisions.

Furthermore, intimate partners and/or fathers of children were identified as a gendered barrier in the female route out of crime. This barrier was detected for women both in the Swedish and the English sample. While posing a challenge to traditional social bond theories (Laub and Sampson, 1993; 2003), my findings support more recent feminist research in the field, suggesting that while men are often central to women's offending, they are typically peripheral to their desistance (Leverentz, 2006). The role of children in the female journey through crime and criminal justice was also highlighted. Although the sample was not suitably comparable for an in-depth analysis in this area, it was found that motherhood typically did not provide a turning point away from offending for the women. However, once the desistance process was initiated, motherhood could provide a 'cognitive blueprint' (Giordano et al, 2002:1002) on which to base a replacement self.

Lending support to previous research with female offenders (Eaton, 1993; Matthews et al, 2014), the findings suggest that employment plays a vital role in the female route out of crime. However, major differences were detected across the samples in terms of access to employment. The women in the English sample experienced significantly more barriers to employment than the Swedish women. This finding was partly linked to the identification of better employment support programs in the Swedish setting, including access to work experience via wage subsidy schemes. This quality support process was identified as absent in the English sample. These findings lend support to the argument that criminal justice may benefit from investing in schemes that open up legitimate employment opportunities for ex-offenders (Farrall et al, 2010). In turn, my findings indicated that by opening up a lived sense of better access to participation and inclusion, the route out of crime was experienced as more accessible and attractive from the Swedish women's perspective, ultimately leading to a greater willingness to engage in active citizenship.
Chapter 9

Concluding ‘Stories Across Borders’

9.1 A novel cross-national insight into female offending

Situated at the crossroads where feminist criminology meets cross-national qualitative frameworks, my PhD research has aimed to make a contribution to the internationalisation of criminological knowledge about gender and crime, through a comparative exploration of the female journey through crime and criminal justice in Sweden and England. Owing to concerted efforts by feminist scholars and activists working in the field, the last two decades have seen the plight of women in criminal justice make a decisive entry onto the criminological arena. However, reflecting traditional borders within the criminological field, this growth in knowledge is not evenly distributed across the globe. Research on gender and crime remains largely produced in the Anglo-American world, with studies predominantly applying monocultural perspectives (Barberet, 2014). What we know about women who offend is, therefore, very limited cross-nationally. Corresponding to criminology’s characteristic focus on the extreme, this is especially true for countries with lower crime rates and milder forms of sanctioning, such as Sweden (Barker, 2013). Recognising this knowledge gap, this study has made a novel contribution to the criminological field firstly by exploring female offending through a cross-national qualitative lens and secondly, by including a country of analysis outside of traditional Anglo-American criminological borders.
9.2 Methodological reflections

Aiming to analyse qualitative mechanisms of change, while also wishing to redress the overwhelming dominance of quantitative work in comparative criminology (Nelken, 2010), this study has exclusively focussed on the female lived experience of crime and criminal justice. Grounded in a feminist methodological framework, the research has drawn on life-story narrative interviews with 12 repeat female offenders in Sweden and 12 in England, who self-identified as desisters at the time of the interview. The findings from the thematic analysis were presented in four data chapters, representing the three key phases running through the research, namely; female pathways into crime, experiences of criminal justice, and routes out of crime in Sweden and England.

9.2.1 Methodological limitations

This study has produced rich and meaningful data, and the methodological approaches and frameworks employed through the research process are, overall, considered to have been successful. Nonetheless, there are some methodological limitations that need to be highlighted. A major methodological limitation relates to the different sample recruitment processes in the two countries. Specifically, the Swedish sample was recruited through one particular organisation, albeit spread over three different regions of Sweden; a multi-agency statutory organisation delivering holistic ‘work programs’ for female ex-offenders. In contrast, more diverse recruitment routes were required in order to reach the target sample in the English setting, involving a range of charitable support organisations, including some delivering so-called ‘work programs’. The nature of what ‘work programs’ entailed across the two countries were; however, not of a comparable nature, with the Swedish setting providing comprehensive, tailored, and from the women’s perspective, more useful support. These different recruitment routes are especially likely to have impacted on the findings in the area of employment. This limitation exemplifies the argument put forward by cross-national methodologists, i.e. that cross-national research will typically include more methodological compromises than mono-cultural research (Mangen, 1999; Dullum and Ugelvik, 2012).

Recognising this limitation in recruitment, it should nevertheless be noted that these differences are representative of varying organisational structures in the two countries.
Specifically, no multi-agency statutory ‘work program’ of the kind identified in the Swedish setting was found in the English context. The variance in service delivery across the two countries is noteworthy, with statutory organisations delivering the vast majority of services for female ex-offenders in Sweden, including employment support programs, while in England charitable organisations delivered the majority of support services for female ex-offenders. In view of the aims of the study, including exploring differences in the female experience of criminal justice and the process of female desistance in Sweden and England, this difference in availability and delivery of ‘work programs’ across the two countries is, arguably, a significant finding per se. Being representative of broader macro-structures in delivery and organisation of support for (ex-)offenders, this limitation is not deemed to invalidate the findings.

In addition, there are some limitations in the data in the area of motherhood. A significantly larger proportion (the vast majority) of the English women had children compared to the Swedish women (a minority), which inevitably limited the comparability of the findings on the role of motherhood in the female journey through crime and criminal justice cross-nationally. As noted by Nelken (2010), for quality comparative research, it is essential to compare ‘like with like’. In hindsight, it could have been beneficial for the study design to include more specific selection criteria around motherhood, which would have allowed for more meaningful comparability on the experience of this across the samples.

Lastly, there are also some limitations in the data with regard to race and ethnicity. Specifically, the two sample groups are not, due to the imbalance in the sample groups, deemed suitable for in-depth comparison in this area, with the Swedish sample being significantly more homogeneous than the English sample. In a similar vein to the aforementioned area of motherhood, the study could potentially have benefitted from more specific selection criteria around race and ethnicity, in order to make the samples more suitable for comparability also in these areas.
9.3 A summary of the core findings

Young (2011) argues that criminological work commonly exaggerates differences and ignores similarities. Recognising this common skew, this study has aimed to identify and discuss both similarities and differences in the female experience of crime and criminal justice in Sweden and England. The findings conclude that female ex-offenders both share cross-national similarities as well as differences. The main shared elements are related to gendered experiences of violence, in particular experiences of male-perpetrated physical and/or sexual abuse. In terms of major differences, the findings demonstrated how diverse macro-processes and models can have divergent impacts on the female micro-experience of crime and criminal justice. The chief cross-national similarities and differences detected in this study, corresponding to the set research questions, of the female journey through crime and criminal justice are summarised below.

9.3.1 Chief similarities and differences in female pathways into crime in Sweden and England

Some noteworthy cross-national overlaps in female pathways into crime were identified, with the vast majority of the English women and a minority of the Swedish falling into the ‘reactionary/acting out’ pathway category. The women in this pathway, across the samples, shared significant experiences of violent and/or sexual victimisation in their childhood, as well as instability in home environments and disruption in schooling. These experiences collectively resulted in significant higher levels of ‘pathway luggage’. Dealing with multifactorial problems in early life, substance-based coping mechanisms dealing with trauma and mental health were commonplace in this grouping. In addition, ‘reactionary’ behaviours were found to often be reinforced via ‘silencing’ of abuse narratives, with formal and informal networks rejecting/disbelieving the women’s abuse narratives. The experience of sexual violence, and responses to such trauma, was identified as a particularly gendered factor in the pathway phase.

The ‘active/seeking out’ pathway, on the other hand, was almost exclusive to the Swedish sample, with the exception of one woman falling into this grouping in the English sample. This pathway was closely interconnected to discourses of thrill-seeking and ‘excitement’ in the onset to offending, along with relative stability in home environments. Drugs such as
amphetamines and ecstasy played a significant role in this pathway. A minority of the women in this pathway; however, also had disruptive school experiences, which for a significant number of the Swedish women was retrospectively linked to ADHD and associated issues with concentration. ADHD discourses were completely absent in the English data. Lastly, a noted difference across the two pathway groups was a higher subjective sense of agency and control within the ‘active/seeking out’ pathway, including status-orientated aims on the criminal scene, which was absent in the ‘reactionary/acting out’ group.

A theme within the pathway phase that showed marked differences across the Swedish and English data was intervention and interactions with formal systems. Despite carrying less ‘pathway luggage’ overall, the Swedish women had more extensive experiences of state involvement compared to the English women. Such interventions did not; however, act to disrupt the path into offending for women in this study, and the analysis indicated that there were significant problems with ‘LVU’ care in the Swedish setting, including net-widening processes and criminal network building. That said, higher levels of interventions signified a delayed onset to more problematic forms of drug-use and offending for some Swedish women, through more persistent monitoring up to the age of 18. Higher levels of intervention also seemed to aid the completion of educational attainments. It is not unlikely that this noted delay may also be related to the higher age of criminal responsibility operating in Sweden.

What both of the highlighted pathway groupings shared, though through different mechanisms, was a search for belonging and acceptance outside of traditional peer group settings. In turn, this acceptance was not uncommonly found in older, male-dominated offending/drug-using, groups. The girls’ sexuality would often be a central factor in this, either through commercial sexual exploitation (as for many of the English women), or via sexual relationships with significantly older men on the drug scene (as for many of the Swedish women). The vulnerability of young female sexuality in these settings is deemed to be another particularly gendered factor within the pathway phase.
9.3.2 Chief similarities and differences in female experiences of criminal justice in Sweden and England

Major differences were identified in the women’s experiences of criminal justice across the two sample groups. The Swedish women’s accounts of criminal justice interactions were significantly less conflictual and negative in comparison to the English women’s. This was found across the criminal justice process, from frontline police contact to relations with prison personnel and post-sentence support staff. A clear association between the nature of early interactions, including the women coming into contact with police in a victim-capacity, and later interactions was detected. That is, early negative experiences of police, including subjective experiences of discrimination and being disbelieved, typically led to further confrontational interactions with authorities later on. This theme was exclusively detected in the English data.

Emphasising the overlap between victim and offender, most of the women in this research had been victims of crime; the vast majority of the English women and a small majority of the Swedish women. The nature of adult victimisation, predominantly by male intimate partners, is wide-ranging; these women have been sexually exploited, raped and abused, beaten with chains, they have had lungs punctured, skulls cracked and bones broken, they have been shot, stabbed, drugged and scrubbed in bleach. The resilience and survival skills of these women are both remarkable and admirable. The shared experience of male-perpetrated violence in intimate relationships was identified as a major gendered cross-national factor in the female journey through crime and criminal justice.

However, there was a noteworthy difference across the samples in terms of their lived sense of 'access to justice' and the ability to report victimisation. Specifically, from the women’s perspective, the English women had significantly reduced ‘access to justice’ compared to the Swedish women in this study. A prime example of this was that the English women expressed a subjective feeling of lack of access to justice due to violence taking place in a prostitution context, or due to a personal background of perpetrating violence, and thus not being treated as a ‘legitimate’ victim by the criminal justice system.
In terms of ‘transformative’ impacts from sentences, there were some significant overlaps in experience across the two sample groups. Specifically, none of the women in this study, in Sweden or England, experienced any ‘transformative’ impacts from community sentences or from short custodial sentences. However, lengthier prison sentences were experienced as ‘transformative’ for women who had experiences of such across the sample groups. Dominant sub-themes in this area included ‘removal from the scene’, ‘safety and structure’ and access to ‘constructive activity’. The quality of the time spent in prison, though, varied significantly between the two groups. Specifically, the findings indicated that the Swedish women experienced prison as more ‘survivable’ (Liebling, 2013) compared to the English women, relating to factors such as smaller and more local units, quality support and treatment, amicable staff/inmate relationships and more extensive use of open facilities, including the encouragement of normalisation processes. Interlinked to these factors, the Swedish women found the process of transitioning out from criminal justice as more supported and enabled in comparison to the English women.

A dominant overarching difference between the English and the Swedish women’s subjective experiences of criminal justice was identified in the themes of legitimacy and trust. Overall, the Swedish women’s accounts were dominated by a lived sense of system legitimacy, fairness and support, while the English women’s accounts were dominated by system illegitimacy, unfairness and lack of support.

9.3.3 Chief similarities and differences in female routes out of crime in Sweden and England

Marked differences were detected also in the female route out of crime in Sweden and England. The findings indicated that the English women overall faced more ‘barriers’ to change compared to the Swedish women. Emphasising the importance of situating the female desistance process in the totality of lived experience, the greater amount of ‘pathway luggage’ carried by the vast majority of the English women also made it more challenging for them to overcome barriers. Both ‘external’ and ‘internal’ barriers to change were identified. Lack of housing and a particular ‘entrenchment in the scene’, such as experiences of sexual exploitation in the local area through prostitution, were barriers that were identified as being of a particularly gendered nature in this phase of the journey.
‘Internal’ barriers to change, that is poor mental and emotional health, was a barrier that showed more symmetry across the two sample groups. Some aspects of this link was also identified to be of a gendered nature, in particular mental health problems deriving from sexual and/physical abuse.

Comparing meso-practices in relation to these noted ‘barriers’ across Sweden and England, major differences were identified in terms of the provision of structural ‘ladders’. Specifically, the Swedish women’s accounts were rich in stories of subjective experiences of ‘ladders’ being provided, ranging from mental health support in the community to quality housing in chosen locations, to overcome both internal and external barriers to change. In addition, high-quality alcohol and/or substance treatment was a particularly important ‘ladder’ identified in the Swedish sample. The more extensive provision of structural ‘ladders’ in the desistance phase, detected in the Swedish data, overlapped significantly with the overarching findings on legitimacy and a lived sense of feeling supported.

The vast majority of the women in this study, across the sample groups, identified employment as an essential factor for a lasting route out. Multi-dimensional benefits of employment for a successful route out of crime were identified, including filling time, building routines, having access to a liveable income and participating in pro-social contexts. However, marked differences were noted across the sample groups in terms of access to these desistance enablers. Specifically, for the English women the monetary aspect of employment was significantly more challenging than for the Swedish women, with many struggling to cover for basic essentials in insecure and subsistent wage structures. This is what I have referred to as a ‘survival narrative’, which was exclusively detected in the English data.

Considerable differences were furthermore identified across the sample groups in terms of access to and support around employment. The English women experienced significantly more barriers to employment than the Swedish women. A chief underlying factor within this difference was found to be the provision of quality employment-support in the Swedish setting, offering holistic and practical support in accessing and securing employment for the women in this study. In addition, a major divergent factor between the two sample groups was that the Swedish women’s access to employment was further enabled via the provision
of wage subsidy schemes, opening up work experience opportunities and the chance to receive a decent living wage, often leading to permanent work opportunities.

Further supporting previously highlighted findings, the analysis suggested that the fact that the Swedish women subjectively experienced more support along their route out, including in employment contexts, significantly contributed to a lived sense of inclusion and self-worth, which was associated with a willingness to positively engage with, and contribute to, 'mainstream' society. In contrast, the analysis indicated that the English women subjectively experienced a significant lack of support and a lived sense of exclusion. The evidence in this research suggests that this internal drive for change identified in the Swedish sample, via a lived sense of inclusion and valued participation, is a far stronger motivator for maintaining change than any external threat, such as further sanctions and exclusion.

In term of gender, a number of gendered barriers were identified in the desistance phase. Firstly, showing much symmetry across the sample groups, the role of (ex-)partners was identified as a gendered barrier to change for many women in this study. By acting as a supportive ‘ladder’ for enabling a current or ex-partner’s route out, many of the women risked destabilising their own route out. While this was identified as a barrier experienced by women in both sample groups, the English women faced an additional interconnected barrier in way of a subjective vulnerability to men in general. ‘Entrenchment in the scene’ overlapped with this theme, including links with the prostitution scene and problematic opiate use. An inability to re-locate from such ‘active’ networks was identified as a missing ‘ladder’ in the English context.

The findings also identified a number of gendered barriers to employment, although these were, overall, much more prominent in the English sample. Firstly, child caring responsibilities, reflecting higher levels of motherhood in the English sample, were found to act as a gendered barrier to employment for the English women. Secondly, the particular requirement of criminal record disclosures in ‘feminised’ labour markets, especially in care industries, was another gendered barrier to employment, which was also exclusively identified in the English sample. In part, this is likely to be linked to a more pronounced interest in working in these sectors in the English sample. Lastly, the findings suggested that
stigma was experienced as a gendered barrier to change by women in this study, through subjective experiences of labelling and shame, not uncommonly linked to the visual presence of scars. This lived sense of stigma was shared by women across the sample groups, although overall, the English women carried more scars of violence and/or problematic drug use in comparison to the Swedish women.

9.4 Implications of the findings

Situating the noted differences in their national contexts, the findings support the notion that processes of crime and punishment are intrinsically linked to wider structures and developments; thus supporting the conceptualisation of crime and punishment as *embedded* in societ al processes (Melossi, 2001), and *embodied* in political economies (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006). Indeed, the findings show that diverse macro-processes effectually ‘trickles down’ to the female micro-level journey through crime and criminal justice. Lending support to previous research (Farrall *et al*, 2010), the findings verify that different structural settings can act to both enable as well as block individual change. Providing new qualitative evidence for established cross-national categorisations, the findings demonstrate how ‘inclusive’ and ‘exclusive’ penal cultures (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006) impact on the female lived experience of criminal justice in diverse ways. Overall, the study concludes that a more ‘inclusive’ form of penality, as evidenced in the Swedish setting, offers a model which is more conducive to the formation of lasting female desistance narratives, and the fostering of active participation in social and civic life by ex-offenders.

We are reminded that, as noted by Farrall *et al* (2010), structures are not static. Rather, socio-economic forces, along with cultures and norms, are in constant flux and importantly; they are open to change. Thus, by having identified different penal models and societal structures that have the power to either enable or bar positive change, important lessons can start to be drawn about the potential value of alternative social, as well as penal, models. As pointed out by Cavadino and Dignan (2006), it is only rather recent, since the 1980s, that England and Wales moved out of the more ‘inclusive’ Social Democratic
grouping. The findings imply that for England and Wales to return to a more 'inclusive' penal culture may have significant value for enabling the female desistance process.

9.4.1. Gendered implications

A core function of feminist research is to make visible commonalities of oppression, with the ultimate aim of reducing it (Stanko, 1994). The highlighted similarities in the findings tell us something significant about gendered realities across space. The shared experience, across the samples, of male-perpetrated sexual and physical violence, in childhood through to adulthood, is a prime example of this. In turn, this finding underscores the continued importance of the international feminist struggle for gender equality and women’s rights. While there are many large-scale organisations focussing on violence against women worldwide, re-emphasising the gendered nature of overlap between victim and offender, there is arguably great scope for such transnational movements to expand their focus and also direct attention towards women as offenders.

In support of feminist criminological work, I would also like to join in the call for the importance of continuing to push for knowledge-production that contributes to more informed, and nuanced, understandings about the complex relationships between women’s lives, circumstances, choices and offending behaviours. In turn, such knowledge helps us to better situate the female experience of crime and criminal justice in larger contexts, beyond national borders and models. The findings also provide further support to existing research and the continued need to challenge the ‘growing mantra in criminal justice and broader circles that ‘all things are equal now” (Silvestri and Crowther-Dowey, 2008:2).

However, as argued by Gelsthorpe (2003); collecting information about gendered realities and oppression is not sufficient, feminist research must also involve the active deconstruction of known frameworks and the constant questioning of policy and practice. Indeed, "no feminist study can be politically neutral." (Maynard, 1994:23). What is clear from the discussion in this study is that, adding force to previous feminist scholarly voices in the field (Barberet, 2014; Chesney-Lind, 2004), shifts outside of criminal justice policy and practice, such as: addressing female offender's basic needs; improvements in gender equality; better resourced community care; investments in more pro-active work against
violence against women as well as better responses to it, along with a more robust welfare safety net, would doubtlessly go a long way to mitigate female offending. However, recent shifts in socio-economic conditions in the UK context mean that, worryingly, some of these areas have regressed in recent years.

The findings in this study have showed that trauma and abuse can have a direct impact on women’s pathway into crime, through destructive coping mechanisms, mental health and emotional ill-health and an associated lack of self-worth, often leading to further victimisation experiences. Thus, on a preventative level, there is a need for avenues where girls and women can talk about and deal with abusive experiences. However, there is a noted lack of such forums (Holsinger, 2000). The findings in this study demonstrate the value of extending such avenues, across the two data settings. However, on a broader scale, for the reporting of abuse to take place, there needs to be a climate where abusive narratives are not silenced, not tabooed or dismissed. Indeed, recent child abuse cases in the UK, such as the Rochdale case and the Jimmy Saville case, have brought renewed attention to the plight of survivors of sexual abuse, including the systematic 'silencing' of abuse narratives in various meso-organisations and settings. Notably, the findings in this study demonstrate the long-term consequences of such early life experiences, not only in terms of impact on individual mental health, but also in terms of contributing to a lack of general trust and legitimacy in authorities. In support of previous research (Baldry, 2010-2011), it is argued that the state has a responsibility to aid in the creation of safe and supportive spaces for the voicing of abuse, including the active fostering of occupational cultures of believing such voices.

The provision of quality community services and avenues for women to deal with the long-term consequences of abuse is also implicated in the findings. However, despite seeing a significant rise in demand for women’s support services in England in the last few years, funding reforms and cuts have meant that many women’s organisations are being forced to close down (Women's Resource Centre, 2013). Cuts are also having an impact on women’s access to housing, which has been identified as a major enabler for positive change for women in this study. For example, cuts in specialist domestic violence services and legal aid have made it increasingly difficult for women to access social housing when escaping
abusive domestic settings (Crisis et al, 2013). This is moreover situated in a UK macro-context that has witnessed a fundamentally shrinking social housing sector over the last 30 years (Farrall et al, 2010). In view of the findings presented in this study, it is deemed highly likely that these macro-level cuts and shifts in priorities will have significant negative consequences on the micro-level for female routes out of crime. The long-term consequences of such short-term policy thinking are likely to be substantial, with potentially highly damaging effects to women’s well-fare.

In turn, this reminds us of the importance of keeping women and criminal justice high on the political agenda, as political shifts can quickly halt positive progress. As an example of this, already struggling on the level of implementation, the Corston agenda was further diluted by the Conservative government in 2010 (Corcoran, 2010-2011). Additionally, in one of the government’s most recent initiatives, the ‘Transforming Rehabilitation Programme’, there are no special contracts for women (Townsend, 2014). The findings in this research imply that is essential to keep fighting for keeping female offenders high on the political agenda. This includes pushing for a critical debate especially around the use of short prison sentences for women, alternatives to prison, including quality substance and alcohol treatment, as well as a thorough re-consideration of prison conditions, including staff training and organisational cultures.

Alongside many shared gendered experiences detected in this study across the two sample groups, there are also some noteworthy differences. Firstly, the pathway phase shows major differences in terms of levels of abuse experienced in childhood between the sample groups, being significantly more prominent in the English sample. Secondly, these differences are also carried through to adulthood, though the difference in levels of victimisation in adulthood is significantly smaller between the two sample groups when contrasted to childhood experiences. Though the sample is too small to generalise from this, these findings do fall in line with previous research showing that Sweden has, internationally, comparably lower level of domestic violence, though overall, the numbers nevertheless remain relatively high (Lister, 2009). Thirdly, on the macro-level, the study has identified how targeted gender politics can influence the female micro-level experience. Namely, the Swedish state-level recognition of the damaging nature of the commercialised
trade of sexualised female bodies, positioned to *inevitably* represent sexual exploitation and a societal barrier to gender equality, was found to qualitatively impact on female street survival strategies, as well as conditions of vulnerability within such settings. Indeed, as we are reminded by Gelsthorpe and Morris (1988:98), when exploring inequalities, it is important to bear in mind that “*gender blindness is not a trivial oversight; it carries social and political significance*”. The different approaches towards dealing with sexual exploitation are politically significant, as it proposes a *normative* function in terms of macro-levelled rejection of practices reinforcing patriarchal forces.

### 9.4.2 Beyond gender?

In support of feminist international criminological scholars (Barberet, 2014), I reject the need to conclude a study on women with ‘so what about men?’. Men have for far too long been the yardstick in criminological research and practice, and there is great scope to explore gender and crime solely from a female comparable perspective. That said, the traditionalist feminist idea that ‘feminist research is exclusively on and with women’ (Kelly et al, 1994:33) is likewise rejected, and gender is accordingly understood to be a powerful mediator of experience for women *as well as* men. While this study has exclusively focussed on women’s subjective experiences; a key feminist endeavour within criminology (Gelsthorpe and Morris, 1988), it is nonetheless useful to consider some general applications and implications of the findings.

One of the major overarching themes identified in terms of difference across the sample groups was the qualitative value of humane and fair treatment in criminal justice interactions in the Swedish data, ranging from early police contact to prison conditions and practices, and an associated lived sense of legitimacy and trust. The importance of such a lived experience of legitimacy and support is believed to represent a universal, rather than a gendered, factor. Furthermore, there are no significant reasons why the highlighted findings around the beneficial value of criminal justice processes accentuating *normalisation* identified in the Swedish data, including the use of open prison to allow for the development of individual autonomy, routine building and gradual responsibility, would not also be applicable to male ex-offenders. Additionally, although the literature indicates that substance and/or alcohol abuse is more closely associated with female offending in
comparison to male (Malloch, 2003), the long-term benefits of quality and durable support around drugs and/or alcohol misuse identified in this study is likely to also be applicable to male offenders with addiction problems.

In turn, these notions of quality support and legitimacy feed into findings around the role of active and inclusionary citizenship processes in the route out of crime and criminal justice. These citizenship processes are, in a similar vein, likely not to be gender-specific. A prime example of such citizenship processes was identified as access to legitimate income opportunities. There is no significant reason as to why the macro-level inputs detected to be of particular value for female ex-offenders’ (re-)entry to labour markets in the Swedish setting, such as the provision of quality and tailored work programs, improved links with potential employers and the use of wage subsidy schemes to aid this transition, would not be equally applicable to male ex-offenders’ routes out of crime and criminal justice.

Moreover, the findings give further support to existing research that demonstrates an inability on behalf of the criminal justice system to deal with the overlap between victim and offender (Burman, 2010). While recognising the gendered elements of this link, there is also a growing literature indicating a strong general correlation between victimisation and offending (Farrall and Caverly, 2006). To lend support to Farrall and Maltby (2003), it is likely that further exploration of this link will reveal uncomfortable truths about social inequalities and oppressions via existing social and power relations. This is a prime example of how feminist research on and with women can usefully be assimilated in, and make meaningful contributions to, more mainstream criminological work; opportunities that have persistently failed to be capitalised on in criminology (Naffine, 1996; Hughes, 2005). In turn, this can further a more nuanced gendering of the field, enriching knowledge about women as well as men (Barberet, 2014).

9.5 Policy and practice
In support of a realist criminological standpoint (Matthews, 2014), I believe that criminology has a responsibility towards the production of, and commitment to acting on, policy relevant
research. Drawing on the highlighted core findings from this study, the following policy and practice recommendations are proposed:

- **A more robust recognition in criminal justice policy and practice of the complex relationship between female victimisation and offending**
  The findings in this study have shown how the criminal justice system in its current form is unable to deal with the complex relationship between female victimisation and offending. We need a more robust recognition of this relationship on both the level of policy and practice. A prime example of this would be to allow for a more contextualised framework of female violence in domestic violent cases, problematising the use of criminalisation of women responding to and defending themselves in intimate violent situations.

- **Shift criminal justice processes to focus on normalisation, inclusion, legitimacy and welfare**
  This study provides evidence for the value of normalisation processes and subjective experiences of legitimacy and inclusion for the female route out of crime. In the women’s account, a personal feeling of being treated fairly, stretching from police interactions to inmate/staff relationships in prison, and being well-supported, through a range of structural ‘ladders’, was found to play a major role in the Swedish women’s greater willingness to engage with agencies and positively participate in, and contribute to, ‘mainstream’ society. We are reminded that the focus on normalisation in the Swedish system is based on active decision-making processes (Pratt and Ericsson, 2013), and that priorities and structures within penality are *manipulable* via political choices. Additionally, this shift should also include state investment in structural ‘ladders’, including the provision of suitable and affordable housing, opening up access to liveable incomes, rights to quality mental and physical health support, and equal opportunities to develop skills and qualifications.

- **Invest in quality employment-support for ex-offenders, including a consideration of wage subsidy schemes**
High-quality, holistic employment support was identified as a prime enabler for Swedish female ex-offenders to start to capitalise on the desistance benefits of employment. In contrast, the lack of adequate or suitable support was identified as a major barrier to employment for women in the English setting. Thus, it is recommended that investing in quality ‘work programs’ for ex-offenders may be a useful desistance tool. Additionally, proving successful in the Swedish model, innovative employment schemes to aid ex-offenders into legitimate labour market should be considered on the policy level, operated via, for example, wage subsidy schemes and collaborative working strategies across statutory agencies.

- **Make social trust a political priority**
  This study has provided evidence of the importance of building trust and legitimacy for active, law-abiding forms of citizenship. In view of this, it is argued that policy should be actively directed towards encouraging the development of higher levels of social trust. Research shows that social trust is, on a medium to long-term, manipulatable (Sønderskov and Dinesen, 2014). A major aspect of this, identified in this study, as well as in previous research, is ensuring improved quality of institutional practices. This includes enabling better and fairer ‘access to justice’ for all. More than presenting a humanist goal, the provision of improved quality in institutional support and services should be viewed as an important strategy to encourage higher levels of social trust in wider society, and thus fostering less conflictual, more law-abiding, relations with the state (as well as with other citizens).

- **Reform political structures to enable more long-term policy-formation**
  This study has identified the structural value of long-term policy aims, such as the cumulative benefits of robust state investments in durable drug and alcohol treatment. Research shows that different political structures are more or less prone to such long-term policy-practices. There is, for example, an established link between consensual political systems and lower populist strategies for criminal justice policy and practice (Green, 2007). The gradual reformation towards a more consensus-based and proportionally representative system would be a valuable tool
for enabling the formation of more long-term, less populist policy and practice in the area of crime and punishment.

- **Shift prostitution policy to the ‘Nordic Model’**
  See discussion in section 8.2.1. The findings in this study suggest that macro-level shifts in the response to prostitution, with a political rejection of market trading of female sexuality, would not only be a step in the right direction for gender equality, but it may also help to reduce the harms involved in girls and women’s survival techniques and their pathway into crime.

- **Sentencing and sanctioning**
  The findings in this study have particular implications for policy and practice in the area of sentencing and sanctioning. Explicit recommendations include to:
  
  o Enable better access to tailored, quality support during sentence, including service provision dealing with substance misuse and mental health.
  o Eliminate/significantly reduce the use of short prison sentences for women.
  o Invest in the formation of smaller, more local women-centred units to be used for sentences of female offenders. Prison policy and practice should also actively encourage an organisational culture that fosters humanity, respect and dignity.
  o Reform more prisons into open facilities, accentuating the significant desistance value of gradual responsibility and the building of autonomy, trust and self-worth.
  o Enable better ‘access to justice’ for all, including for women involved in commercial sexual exploitation.
9.6 Final concluding remarks: A call for a humanist criminology and an active global citizenship

One of the major threads running through this research, stretching from the underpinning frameworks and execution, to the core thematic findings, is the role of a broader humanist ethos and practice. This has permeated all aspects of the research process, and extends to a wider societal platform in the form of justice and care for some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged populations in our societies. On this note, I would like to conclude by joining in Young’s (2011) call for the further development of a humanist criminology, actively working for human welfare and fulfilment. In line with a critical humanist perspective, this framework would inevitably involve a focus on social justice, with the search for a freer and more equal world underpinning all aspects of phenomenon (Plummer, 2012). On a criminological level, this should at a bare minimum involve an extension of such an ethos to the area of criminal justice, and an active search for a system where each individual is given equal access to justice and a fair opportunity to flourish. This framework is in line with the ethos of global citizenship. Barberet (2014:212) defines global citizenship to be about “finding links between what seems to be isolated social problems and fighting against social injustice, at the local and global level. It is about how the world works politically, economically and socially and in our case, criminologically”. It is, arguably, our responsibility as critical criminologists, as feminists and as privileged citizens of the Global North to not only support, but actively contribute to such a global citizenship focussed on social justice.

Re-emphasising the importance of animating the ‘sociological imagination’ (Mills, 1959), or perhaps more suitably, the ‘criminological imagination’ (Young, 2011); within this global citizenship we need to continue to push for research that effectively visualise the links between ‘the personal troubles of milieu’ and the ‘public issues of social structure’ (Mills, 1959:8). Cross-national qualitative research arguably carries great potential in this area, continuously helping us to stretch "our imagination of what is possible" (Nelken, 2010:23). Indeed, “imagination is the precursor to empathy, global understanding and solidarity” (Barberet, 2014:212). Through this global and visionary lens we need to remain vigilant about the lessons that cross-national frameworks can provide beyond policy and practice perspectives. As argued by Pratt (2008b:289); “Scandinavian exceptionalism has an
importance that goes well beyond these three relatively small countries in Northern Europe. It illustrates the way in which the social arrangements of some modern societies can combine to produce low rates of imprisonment and humane prison conditions [...]. As such, it is a reminder to us that the penal excesses of other modern societies are not universal or hegemonic”. Thus, although being linked to the particular social arrangements that they are embedded within, at a bare minimum, the findings in this study act as a forceful reminder that there are alternative penal models available.

Acknowledging the intrinsic link between criminal justice and wider cultural systems, a consideration of different models must; however, go beyond the narrow walls of criminal justice policy and practice. Through the lens of the criminological imagination, these choices must be conceptualised along the horizon of broader social change. This would inevitably necessitate a fundamental shift in strategy in the ‘Anglophone’ context. For broader change to occur, policy formation needs to give emphasis to long-term thinking, underpinned by inclusionary values that actively aim for accessible citizenship processes and positive participation for all. The current European climate, including a suggested ‘fracturing’ of the neoliberal hegemony in the UK following the 2008 financial crash (Reiner, 2012), as well as a renewed wider European interest in exploring more egalitarian social solutions (Andersson, 2009), arguably provides an ideal time to reinvigorate this debate on alternative, less exclusive, models of social organisation. Primarily this is a humanitarian argument concerning societal investments in individuals and the search for a more equal society. Secondarily, this is about mitigating against pathways into, as well as relapses back to, crime and criminal justice, thus producing long-term savings for not only an incredibly costly, but also hugely damaging system. I am hopeful that the findings in this study can make a modest contribution to the furtherance of such a humanist criminological agenda, founded on solidarity and equality in an active global citizenship model.
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Appendix 11.1

Pen Portraits

This Appendix provides ‘pen portraits’ of the women who have contributed to this study. Emphasising the importance of the ‘whole’ and subjectivity in narrative interview formats, the pen portraits aim to provide a largely descriptive window into each woman's life-story, to allow the person to 'come alive for a reader' (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000:70). Though inevitably being constructs, presenting fragmentations of complex narratives, the aim is for these 'portraits' to provide a summary of the women’s stories, as told by them. I have attempted to use as much of their own wording and narrative order as possible.

11.1.1 English sample

AMANDA (3890)

Amanda grew up in a single-parent household on a rough council estate. Her father was in prison for most of her upbringing and there were often drugs and alcohol around at home. Growing up Amanda’s mum struggled to make ends meet and she was left to her own devices a lot. They never had much food or clothes. Amanda started shoplifting clothes in her early teens. Overall Amanda describes her childhood as a horrible time in her life, including having gone through ‘traumatic childhood experiences’, though she prefers to not talk about the nature of these in any detail. Amanda never enjoyed school, never felt she fitted in, and she left when she was 14. Around this time Amanda started spending more time away from home and got into the rave scene. Soon she was smoking cannabis daily, and she started dealing weed to get by. Amanda was first arrested for shoplifting at 15, for which she mainly got cautions for in the beginning.

Amanda met her first long-term partner at a rave when she was 15. She describes their relationship as a very equal one, though he was heavily criminally involved. 5 years into their relationship he died, which Amanda believes was linked to a heroin overdose. At this point they had a son on 6 months. Surviving as a single mother, Amanda went into social housing and survived on benefits, though now and then she would sell drugs to make ends meet. She was struggling to pay her bills and care for her son, and she ended up being evicted for rent arrears and she and her son began squatting. At this point Amanda describes having a mental break-down, which she puts down to the combined effect of losing her partner, dealing with consequences of childhood trauma and struggling to provide for her son. A new partner she had started seeing introduced her to heroin, which she found helped her get through her break-down, by numbing her completely. Lacking any family network to help her with her son, she ended up living on the streets and her son was soon taken into care. Amanda had a 3 year relationship with the man who introduced her to

90 Age at the time of the interview.
heroin, a relationship she describes as extremely violent. She tried to kill herself at repeated occasions when the violence became too severe.

Surviving on the streets, Amanda funded her heroin habit by shoplifting, dealing and begging. She has some minor drug offences on her record, but never got caught for the dealing. She has also been caught shoplifting on a number of occasions. The major one of these was for an expensive ring, for which she was given a 2 year suspended prison sentence. This was her last conviction, which was about 5 years ago now. Amanda has been in touch with drug support services on and off over the last 10 years and she is currently working on getting off her script. A major challenge for Amanda is that her new partner is on valium and methadone, and he does not want to get off it.

In terms of working, Amanda has had a variety of casual jobs over the years. It is important for Amanda to work, to survive and to keep busy, and she could like to do more care work, but knows it is hard with her criminal record. Amanda has recently been back to uni, which she feels has changed her life. Thinking about jobs, she would also like to start volunteering at the local drug service, and she is also currently working on writing a novel. Amanda looks forward to, after getting off her script, getting a decent job with a decent wage, passing her driving test, and one day, she would like to have another child.

**ANNA (33)**

Anna's first contact with the police was when she was 7 years old, after her school reported her father, who she describes as a violent alcoholic, for sexually abusing her. Her father went to prison, and Anna never saw him again. With her mother struggling to cope, also an alcoholic, Anna ended up going into care not long after, though she kept running away. At around 10 she was placed in a special unit for children with behaviour problems and at 13 she went into boarding school. Anna had a few foster families along the way, but hated it and would just run away. She would often self-harm. At the special boarding school she was given more dedicated attention and she started enjoying learning a bit more. Anna moved into supported housing at 16. At this point she had got into using drugs and was drinking a lot, which she funded through shoplifting. She had got caught shoplifting a few times through her early teens, and had also been arrested for fighting, but cannot remember anything really coming from it.

Anna fell pregnant at 17, which was around the time she has started smoking heroin, and she used methadone to get through the pregnancy. She stayed clean for a short while but continued shoplifting, and following a lot of probation, when her son was 2 years old she got her first prison sentence. Anna describes the father of her son as extremely violent and she was trying to break from him; however, when she got out of prison she found that her partner had moved away with their son. Anna could not track them down and struggling to cope, she started injecting heroin, and was soon without housing. She returned to shoplifting and also did credit cards to fund her habit, but constantly getting arrested for shoplifting, Anna started prostituting. On the streets she would have ‘boyfriends’ looking
after her’, taking most of her earnings. Anna experienced a lot of sexual and physical violence while prostituting.

Accumulating a range of minor convictions, Anna got her first lengthier prison sentence in her mid-20s, for a range of offences. From this sentence she ended up going into a treatment centre for the first time in her life, but relapsed as soon as she got out, returning to a life on the streets. After a year on the streets, at 27 Anna fell pregnant again and she went into a dry house and managed to stay clean for a while. The father to her daughter was a dealer, whom she describes as extremely violent. Due to a range of domestic violence incidents, when Anna's daughter was 15 months she was removed from her and Anna subsequently fell back to drug use. She then began to sell drugs for her daughter’s father. Struggling to cope with the violence and the drugs, she attempted suicide at a number of occasions. Following being hospitalised linked to one of these, Anna found out she was pregnant again. This time; however, she was determined to stay on track and she has been clean ever since. Social services recently closed the case on her youngest daughter, who is now 2 years old.

Anna is motivated to stay clean and straight now, and stay away from violent relationships, especially for her children. About 2 years ago Anna re-gained contact with her oldest son, who has a lot of problems with drugs. Her 5 year old lives with Anna's mum, but as Anna has lost all contact with her mum, she is not allowed to see her. Anna is currently studying health and social care, and does peer mentoring and volunteering at her local drug support centre. She has never had a legitimate job, but she dreams of one day becoming a qualified drug and family support worker. Beyond employment, Anna looks forward to having more contact with her children, do more training and re-build some contact with her family again.

**ASTERIX (33)**

Asterix grew up in a single-parent household, with her mother and 2 sisters, on what she describes as a rough council estate. Asterix enjoyed school, did well and describes herself as always having a lot of friends and generally having a safe and happy childhood. When Asterix was 10 the family moved away from the rough council estate to a very affluent area, after her mum met a new partner. At around 13, 14 Asterix started smoking cannabis and partying at the weekends, though she still managed school and stayed there until 16, when she got her GCSCs and went on to start a college course in health and social care. At 17, Asterix moved out from home and got her own flat.

Asterix’s first direct contact with the police was at 19, when she was arrested for possession of drugs at a rave, and she recalls the arrest as very heavy-handed. She had started taking ecstasy at around 17, occasionally dabbling with coke. Charged for possession, Asterix was released on bail and paid a fine. In her early 20s, Asterix had her son, with a partner she had been with for 4 years. Asterix describes the father to her son as heavily criminal. The relationship ended after she found out he was cheating on her and she describes herself as not having any trust in men since. Her ex-partner has a very limited role in her life today, and only sees his son very rarely.
Asterix’s next arrest came 4 years later, when she was done for drunk-driving. At this time Asterix was driving across the city to pick up her son, who would not settle with the babysitter. She subsequently lost her driving licence for 12 months, paid a fine and did a drunk-driving awareness course. Asterix’s third and last arrest came a few years later, at 27, when she was once again done for drunk-driving. This time; however, she was severally over the limit and caused a serious accident. Talking about her life at this time, Asterix links this incident to the recent death of her nephew, entering a period of depression and excessive drinking. This time, Asterix lost her licence for 3 years, received 100h community service and a fine. Looking back, Asterix sees this last court experience as a major turning point, as she was on the brink of a prison sentence. Linked to this, Asterix sought out counselling and also started eating medication for her depression. Asterix struggled with the anti-depressants; however, as they made her gain weight, and she came off them quite soon. Asterix is still classed as a high risk offender and she gets pulled over by the police constantly.

Though Asterix started college with a view to go into nursing, her drug possession conviction at 19 meant she had to give up on this dream. She continued to study health and social care, but struggled to get any jobs due to her record. Asterix has found it very hard to find employment, especially work that combines with her childcare responsibilities. Though she describes herself as constantly looking for work and applying, Asterix has now been out of work for 4 years. Working is important for Asterix, especially to be able to uphold her independence.

BECKY (28)

Becky grew up with her mother and 2 brothers, with her father leaving the family when she was very young. There were always a lot of violent arguments at home, first between Becky’s mum and her dad but then after that, between her mum and her new partner. It was not until her mid-teens; however, that Becky started experiencing her father’s abuse first-hand, when she moved in with him as her mum was moving abroad. Becky describes her father as both physically, emotionally and psychologically abusive. She was often beaten up and she developed severe bulimia and depression, which she battled with for over 10 years, and she also has a history of self-harm. Becky has been prescribed a range of medications over the years, but found they often just made her worse, in particular in terms of gaining weight.

Becky describes herself as always struggling to concentrate in school and easily getting agitated. In secondary school Becky started ‘rebelling’ and, linked to a suspension following a violent angry burst out, Becky permanently left school before the end of year 11. Becky describes herself as always having battled with a lot of anger, and she struggles to talk about her father’s abuse as it fuels her anger. She often retaliated towards her father’s violence and called the police, but Becky never felt that the police believed her. Her father was never arrested. However, Becky was herself arrested several times for her retaliation against her father, including once when she was 15 and she stabbed him, when he was beating her up in the kitchen for not doing the washing up properly. This was one of her first arrests.
Around this time Becky started spending more and more time away from home ‘couch surfing’ with friends. After having started experimenting with drugs and alcohol in her early teens, when leaving home she started selling drugs to get by.

Since her first arrest at 15, Becky has built up an extensive criminal record, primarily for violence, with circa 25 convictions overall, though she also has some convictions for drug offences, some driving offences and 1 grand theft auto. In her late teens Becky met her long-term partner, who was also a dealer, and gradually over a few years they got deeper into the drug trade. Becky has a few shorter prison sentences behind her and some probation, neither of which she felt had an impact on her life. After about 5 years of what Becky describes as ‘large-scale’ dealing, they got busted and Becky was convicted to 4 years in prison. When I met Becky she has been out about 8 months. She has; however, during this time been re-called into prison for one month, as she explains she ‘smashed up her house’ after going through a challenging abortion. Coming out from prison, Becky describes that she has lost her home, her job, her dog, her ex-partner has been deported and she has lost most of her friends. She is struggling with to find both housing and employment, currently sleeping on friends’ sofas. Nevertheless, Becky explains that she tries to keep a positive attitude, trying not sign on and to stay away from returning to selling drugs; a life-style she feels she has now put behind her.

CLAIRE (43)

Claire is the youngest in a large family of 13 siblings. She describes her family as ‘screwed up’; she would frequently receive beatings and the girls in the family were typically not allowed to leave the house. In later life she found out that her father had sexually abused her older sister. When Claire was about 7 her parents split up and she moved away with her mother and 3 siblings into a very poor area, and Claire then lost contact with the rest of the family. Claire was bullied quite badly and generally found school challenging. At 13 she was sent to a boarding school for children with behavioural problems, but she left without any qualifications at 16. Claire cannot remember exactly when she started stealing, other than she was very young. It was not until 13 that she was actually caught shoplifting though, for which she received a caution. Ever since then Claire has had periods of more or less persistent stealing, which she links to periods of depression, isolation and chaos.

When Claire left school she started working in childcare and she ended up working as a live-in nanny. She describes herself as being severely taken advantage off in this family; they would be openly racist with her and treat her like a slave. At 16 Claire non-consensually lost her virginity to a colleague of the mother in the family, which she later understood had been pre-arranged by the mother. Though struggling with mental health, Claire managed to break away from the family after 2 years and she went to live in hostels. This initiated a chaotic period of partying and stealing. After some time Claire moved back home to her mum, found employment and met a boyfriend and fell pregnant. Describing her boyfriend as very controlling and a chronic liar, she did not feel she could keep the child and she had an
abortion, which exacerbated her depression further. Claire has had a couple of very short relationships since then, but describes herself as struggling to form healthy relationships.

In addition to the stealing, Claire also did a few credit cards together with a girl she met in the hostel. They were caught and Claire ended up signing police papers taking on responsibility for over £200,000 more than what she actually had been involved with. Claire accordingly got 250 hours community service and a large fine. Feeling increasingly isolated and struggling with depression, Claire attempted suicide at repeated occasions during her sentence, mainly with over-the-counter tablets. Living in hostels and struggling with unemployment, Claire returned to persistent stealing. She was caught and arrested a few more times, and received a conditional discharge for 12 months for a stolen handbag.

A turning point came when Claire managed to enrol at university and complete a degree in media. Not long after graduating, in her early 30s, she fell pregnant and even though the father of the child did not want anything to do with her, Claire decided to keep the child. Although she returned to stealing on a few occasions when her daughter was little, she describes having a wake-up call when she was caught using her daughter's pram for stealing. She decided that she could not let her daughter grow up in that way, and she has not stolen since. Claire describes herself as a more confident woman now, with more self-respect, and she enjoys saving up for things. Claire is currently doing a second degree in medical science and she is keen to go into care, though she has had to fight for this due to her criminal record. Claire is also active in the local church and looking ahead, she is hopeful to get a good job, maybe one day find a partner and possibly, have another child.

**GRACE (43)**

Grace grew up with 4 sisters and her mother, until she was about 10, when her mum remarried. Her biological father left when she was less than a year old and she has never had any contact with him. Grace describes a horrific home environment growing up, going through severe mental and physical abuse by her mum. Her first memory of the police was when she was about 8 years old and her sister tried to burn down their house. Following the fire her sister was sectioned and during the house was fixed up, Grace and one of her other sister’s went to stay with their aunt and there Grace was sexually abused and repeatedly raped by her aunt’s husband. She found out later that this had also happened to all of her sisters. When Grace was 13 her older sister succeeded in her repeated suicide attempts. At this stage Grace had developed severe mental health problems herself, with a number of attempted suicides, persistent self-harm and ongoing eating disorders, which were all exacerbated by her sister’s death.

Grace has a long string of violent convictions behind her. Her first proper arrest was at around 19, which was linked to violently retaliating against an abusive boyfriend, though she had some cautions and fines previous to this. Overall she thinks she has around 50 convictions, all for violence and shoplifting. Grace describes herself as being extremely aggressive when she was younger and, consistently getting into trouble, she struggled in school and left when she was 15. Having started drinking early on, Grace’s aggression was
typically further fuelled with alcohol. Grace has been through a lot of domestic violence over the years; she has been shot, beaten with tools, had her ribs broken, her jaw and skull fractured, had her teeth knocked out and her arms broken.

Grace’s contact with the criminal justice system in her late teens initiated a lengthy mental health assessment, and it was not until this point the extensive abuse in her childhood started to surface. Struggling to deal with this process, Grace was hospitalised for mental health treatment. Grace had become a mother a year before, but struggling with her mental health, Grace permanently lost custody of her daughter after another hospital spell. Not coping with the loss of her daughter, and also being housed in a council state which she described as ‘saturated with drugs’, Grace ended up turning to heroin. Although she had dabbled with weed and party drugs in her teens, she had never done any heavier drugs before this. This kick-started a 10 year battle with heavy addiction, homelessness and persistent shoplifting.

Accumulating arrests, Grace started going in and out of prison, and has also had ongoing contact with probation. Grace got clean in 2006, but had a relapse in 2009, linked to a miscarriage following being beaten up by her ex-partner, which led to a more lengthy prison sentence for dealing. When I met Grace she had been out of prison for a few years and she is currently back on a script. In terms of employment, Grace had a job for about 3 years in her teens but has not had a legitimate job ever since. She would like to get into working, but is currently just figuring out what she is actually able to do. She looks forward to starting doing some volunteer work, especially supporting women escaping domestic violence, and then possibly one day start to get a paid part-time job. Working as a cleaner in prison was an important experience for Grace’s self-esteem, as it made her feel, for the first time in her life, that she was actually good at something.

**JADE (48)**

Jade has a long history of violence behind her. She was first arrested for fighting when she was 16, though she describes it as being ‘quite fun’ back then. Jade describes her upbringing as ‘lovely’, growing up in a working family with strict discipline with a twin sister and an older brother. Both Jade and her sister were victims of ongoing sexual abuse in their childhood by their granddad. Jade’s mother had also been sexually abused by her father while growing up. The abuse caused a lot of friction in the family, as Jade’s brother never believed her and her sister, and he left his own children alone with the granddad, which Jade reacted strongly against. Jade describes herself as always being very angry. Although being a bit of a joker in class, Jade enjoyed school, had lots of friends and learnt well. She left school at about 16 and at this point her fighting was escalating and she was asked to leave home. She started working in the local hotel, where she stayed on an off for about 15 years.

Jade was out fighting every weekend, though the police would only ever get involved occasionally. In the beginning Jade remembers getting a lot of conditional discharges; however, as the damage caused began to get worse, she started getting more severe
sanctions. Overall, Jade estimates that she has about 6 proper convictions for violence, but they were all a while back now. She has 2 prison sentences behind her, one on 3 years and a second for 18 months. Both of her prison sentences were suspended due to mitigating circumstances.

Jade met her first husband at about 16, who she had 2 children with. She suffered from post-natal depression, which went untreated for many years, and she has struggled with depression on and off ever since. Finally receiving suitable treatment after her third child, who she had about 7 years ago with her new husband, she was on medication until very recently. Some days Jade struggles to leave the house, and she suffers from occasional paranoia. Though Jade feels there are open doors to turn to if she has a bad day, she does not like to burden people with her problems. Jade draws a strong link between her depression phases and her anger, though she feels her anger has got more manageable as she has got older. Between her two marriages, she had a 2 year relationship with a younger man, who was extremely violent with her, and she was repeatedly hospitalised during this period.

Jade has always worked, often in hospitality, and feel grateful she has had employers who has been acceptant of her criminal convictions in her earlier days. She has struggled to find work in periods and have had lengthy periods as unemployed. She is currently working as a dinner lady in her son's school, which she really enjoys, though it is only a very limited amount of hours. Staying in the same village where she grew up, Jade still feels judged her for her past and she finds it hard to get rid of her local label as a 'fighter'. Her criminal record and experiences of stigma, together with her childcare responsibilities, has made it very hard for her to find work. She feels work is important, as it helps her stay busy and get out of the house. Looking ahead, Jade and her husband are considering moving to a different part of the world, where he has a lot of work. Jade looks forward to going somewhere where she can start completely fresh, where nobody knows her history, although she worries about the impact of her criminal record on the VISA-application.

**RUBY RED (44)**

Ruby Red prefers not to talk about her childhood in any detail, more than that she grew up in an extremely religious family and experienced a range of abuse from an early age. Struggling in school, Ruby Red got kicked out of secondary school and went to a special school for children with behavioural problems. In her late teens, Ruby Red fell pregnant with an older man, but he was deported soon after she gave birth and they lost contact. Soon after this, in her late teens, Ruby Red got married via an arranged marriage, converted to Islam and then had her second child at 20. The marriage was extremely violent and the coming 15 years was a constant battle with severe forms of domestic violence. Her husband was also violent with her children, and especially her oldest son had a very tough time growing up. He is now 24 and is currently doing a 5 year prison sentence for selling drugs.

Ruby Red’s first conviction was in her early 30s, when she was done for GHB, after a violent incident with a woman vandalising Ruby Red’s husband’s car. She was 7 months pregnant at
the time, with their second child. Her husband also had previous involvement in crime, but Ruby Red does not wish to discuss that. For the GHB she had to pay compensation and do community service, but due to being heavily pregnant, she could not complete the community service. Ruby Red has 2 more convictions, though she admits to having done some shoplifting over the years, which she has never been caught for. The first one of these was for theft, after she stole money from her employer by orders of her husband. She thinks she received a suspended prison sentence for the theft, along with requirement to pay back the money and some community service, but she is not sure. Ruby Red has never managed to pay this money back, and she just recently found out that there is a warrant out for her linked to this.

In connection to her second arrest and conviction, Ruby Red managed to leave her abusive husband and she and the children went into a woman’s refuge and then relocated to a different part of England. Struggling to cope, Ruby Red turned to drink and drugs after the separation from her husband, and describes having a quite chaotic lifestyle ever since. Ruby Red got into another fight with a woman not long after moving and she was charged a third time, this time for threatening behaviour in a public area and causing alarm to the public. She was sentenced to a fine. At this time Ruby Red was working in a school, doing cleaning, but was kicked out after they found out about the incident. She was also studying a B-tech in care, which she also had to interrupt. Ruby Red has always wanted to be a social worker; however, with her convictions it is challenging for her to get into any care profession.

Ruby Red struggles with rent arrears, but is trying to stay away from offending. For the moment she is doing part-time cleaning work, as well as volunteering at her local drug and alcohol support centre and in a women’s hostel. She has also recently returned to studying, doing health and social care. Though she has had a couple of relapses, Ruby Red has been clean for close to a year now. Looking ahead, Ruby Red would like to learn to drive, get a good job and get debt free.

**SERENA (39)**

Serena grew up with her mum in a traveller community, and did not come to England until the age of 13. Her dad died before she was born. Serena never went to school and describes witnessing a lot of violence growing up, including between her mum and her step-dad. At around 14 years of age Serena started smoking cannabis and taking LSD, and she moved out from home and started sleeping rough. She recalls getting into bad relationships with men and had to move around a lot. Around this time she began to regularly get into trouble with the police, mainly for shoplifting, though she did not get properly arrested until she was 16.

Struggling with depression, and her mum being ill with cancer, Serena developed an addiction to prescription drugs in her late teens. However, in her early 20s she got married, had a daughter and she started living a more settled life for a while. Serena’s husband was a heavy speed user, and he died a few years into their marriage. Not being able to pay her rent, she and her daughter were kicked out of the streets. Surviving on the streets, Serena
Serena has had a few relationships during her active years, which she all describes as very violent. She also has extensive experiences of violence connected to prostitution. Just after she got clean, Serena went through additional trauma when she was kidnapped by an ex-punter and drugged, tortured and made a victim of bestiality. After what Serena describes to be a hugely challenging trial, the man was convicted for 16 years. Serena has struggled with mental health since the trauma and she is on a range of medications, and has also recently developed a problem with alcohol. Nevertheless, Serena is determined to avoid relapsing to heroin. Serena has not really ever had a legitimate job, but she has done some training in prison and she is currently on a catering course. Looking ahead, Serena would like to get a job, find a flat and start living a normal life. For now though, she is concentrating on stabilising herself. Serena is currently in a relationship with a ‘straight’ man who is in full-time employment, which she is finding very positive. Serena’s daughter is now about 17 years old, they have recently re-gained contact and she is a major motivating factor for her to stay clean and straight.

SHARON (52)

Sharon left home at 16, growing up with her alcoholic mother and about 7 different step-dads. In later life she found out; however, that this was her adopted mother, who her father had a very brief affair with before she was born. Sharon describes her childhood as a horrible time in her life, being sexually abused by several of her mum's partners. Sharon hated school and describes herself as a very nervous child, struggling with a bad stutter. She stopped going to school at around 12. Around this time she ran away from home and stayed out for 3 months. Refusing to go to school, her mum got her to start working as a waitress at 13, to help bring in money to the household, though all of the money would go on alcohol. Looking back, Sharon feels she grew up without knowing what normality was.

At 14 Sharon fell pregnant, but her mum made her give the child up for adoption. Craving her own independence, Sharon moved away from home as soon as she could, and at 16 she moved into temporary accommodation where she met her first real boyfriend, who she describes as much older and very violent. She was first arrested at 16, after she carried her
boyfriend’s drugs for him when they got stopped. Trying to resist getting searched, Sharon was also done for assault on a police officer. She got a £35 fine. Struggling to deal with her violent partner, Sharon attempted suicide on several occasions in her late teens, being hospitalised repeatedly. When Sharon was 19 she finally managed to escape her violent partner and she went into a women's refuge.

Meeting a new man at 20, Sharon fell pregnant at 21 and she moved in with the child's father, who she describes as another ‘woman beater’. Only a few weeks after she had given birth to their daughter, he beat her up really badly with a chain, filming the beating, putting Sharon in emergency hospital care. After a challenging trial, he ended up getting 4 and half years in prison for GBH. Sharon then moved in to her own flat and soon met ‘M’, who became her long-term partner. ‘M’ never laid a finger on her and together they had 3 more children, spread out over time. However, ‘M’ sold drugs, got caught and went to prison for 5 years. Struggling on her own, Sharon began using drugs to deal with her depression, and she ended up losing custody of her children. This exacerbated Sharon’s mental health problems and her drug use, and she lost her flat and started prostituting. When ‘M’ came out from prison they had twins, and they stayed clean for 4 years, but then relapsed and also lost the twins. The twins are now 19 years old and Sharon has very little contact with them, one of them being in prison for drug dealing.

Sharon was involved in a variety of frauds in her 20s, for which she received probation and a few conditional discharges. She began to shoplift more regularly in her late 20s, which is what the vast majority of her convictions are for. More recently she got into heavier offending, and her last conviction was for robbery, for which she received a 6 years prison sentence. Since coming out, Sharon has largely stayed clean and now lives in supported housing, as she needs support around her mental health, currently eating a lot of anti-depressants. Looking ahead, Sharon looks forward to get into stable housing, getting closer to her kids, including her grandchildren, and just living a normal life.

**Tia (35)**

Tia's first memory of the police is when she is 10 years old and their house was busted, which she thinks had something to do with her step-dad, who was a heroin user. She grew up in a large family and being one of the oldest children, she always helped out a lot around the house. At around 12 she stopped going to school and focussed on helping her mum at home. Tia hints at having had traumatic experiences in her childhood, but she does not wish to talk about these in any detail. Going into her teens, Tia left home as soon as she could and got her own flat at 16, the same flat that she is still in up to this day. At 17 she fell pregnant, but the baby was stillborn. Around this same time she also realised that her partner was a paedophile, after she found him touching up her younger sister. She ended up having a mental breakdown and was hospitalised for a short period. At this point she started using alcohol and drugs heavily, and she has struggled with addiction ever since.

Tia was first arrested when she was 16, when she was raiding garden sheds with her boyfriend, but think she only got a caution. She did not get into more persistent offending
until she started using drugs more heavily and she needed money to feed her habit. Typically she would shoplift, as she felt that that was the quickest and easiest money to get by. She soon got known to the police in the area; she would get pulled regularly and done for mainly shoplifting, but also some drug related offences. Tia has done 4 jail terms in total, all short sentences, and has had probation a number of times. She had a number of further failed pregnancies throughout her 20s, and describes her mental health struggling as a consequence, which led to an increase in her drug and alcohol use. She finally had her first daughter when she was 29 and then tried to break with the drug lifestyle, but has had a few relapses since. Tia is currently on a methadone script. At 33 she had her second child. Around this time she also found out that she had a rare blood condition, which was a bit of a wakeup call. Having children changed Tia's life dramatically, as she wanted her children to grow up safe. The father of her children is still a part of her life, but he keeps going back to the drug using lifestyle, and has been very violent with her in the past. She had injunctions taken out on him, for example after he smashed her windows. He is currently in prison.

In terms of work, Tia has had quite a few temporary jobs over the years, but nothing that ever really stuck. Looking ahead, Tia would love to have a job, and is also considering trying going to college, but feels that she needs to wait until the kids go to school. She is not very fussed about what type of work she would do, as long as it pays, and it would be good to just fill some time, as Tia feels that a lot of drug taking and offending is due to boredom.

VERONICA (49)

When Veronica was 6 years old she was hospitalised for over a year, linked to neglect and severe malnutrition. Coming out, she went straight into care. At the age of 14 she ran away from the children’s home and she started living a life on the streets. Veronica describes her childhood and teenage years as absolutely horrible. Surviving on the streets, Veronica started using cocaine heavily and, to support an expensive habit, she began prostituting when she was 14. She managed to ‘dodge’ the police for a number of years and her first arrest was not until she was 18, linked to prostitution offences. Veronica does not wish to discuss her experiences of prostitution in any detail as it upsets her; all she can say is that she has taken a lot of beatings in her days and that being on the streets has put her off men for good. Accumulating numerous unpaid fines, Veronica went into prison the first time when she was 19 and she has been in and out of prison ever since, mainly doing shorter stints. Though not really sure, Veronica thinks she has convictions for burglaries, robberies, GHB, a range of prostitution-related offences and drug possessions. When I met Veronica she has been out about one year from a 7 year prison sentence, linked to two aggravated burglaries she committed in one of her punter’s house.

Veronica has been homeless on and off for most of her life. She has occasionally had a flat, but always lost them due to drugs. Currently she is in a female-only hostel and she is on a waiting list for a flat. Veronica is now on a methadone script, though she admits occasionally using on top. In terms of children, Veronica has one daughter, who she had custody of for about the first 5 years of her life, when she mostly kept clean. Her daughter is now 27 years
old and she has no contact with her. Veronica describes the father of her daughter as a horrible and violent person.

At the hostel, Veronica feels that she has, for the first time in her life, started to settle down a bit. She struggles with loneliness and getting into the wrong crowd, and she finds it hard to change her whole life around. In terms of working, Veronica has had sporadic periods of working in catering over the years and she would like to get back into employment again, eventually. Looking ahead, Veronica would like to get her own flat, a good job, and maybe one day start her own business doing nails and hair, and just be happy.

11.1.2 Swedish sample

ANGEL (34)

Angel grew up in a small town in Sweden with her mother and two brothers. She describes her home environment as loving and secure. Starting school, Angel was bullied for wearing glasses and she found the school environment as a very challenging one. She also found it hard to concentrate; something that she now in hindsight links with her ADHD. Angel describes her challenges in school also led her to rebel at home, and she recalls having constant fights with her mum. In her early teens Angel started shoplifting, mainly for the thrill of it, and she got caught a couple of times before the age of 15. At 16 Angel was given lenses, which she positions as a major turning point in her life, and she then started hanging out with what she refers to as the ‘cool kids’. Through these groups Angel got in contact with drugs, starting with LSD, ecstasy and amphetamines. Angel describes a life-long attraction to risk-taking and describes her drug using as fun and natural for her. Getting more in to her amphetamine use, and also continuing shoplifting, at 17 Angel receives her first LVU. Following an assessment she is placed in a family home where she is meant to work with horses and other animals; and environment she describes as harsh and unloving.

Coming out from care around 18, Angel went straight back to the drug lifestyle. She is only out for about 6 months before she is given a LVM, which leads to Angel entering her first drug treatment. During this treatment she meets ‘G’, who becomes her long-term partner; a relationship she describes as equal and respectful. In the years to follow, Angel and ‘G’ have a period of heavy drug use and persistent offending. She described this time as being a very exciting and social time in her life. Angel has difficulties remembering details of arrests and sentences, though she recalls that she and ‘G’ had their flat raided numerous times. It was likely she received some fines and possibly probation during this time for minor offences. It is not until her mid-20s that Angel can recall a noticeable sentence, when she received 1 month in prison, which she sits off on electric tagging. In her late 20s Angel receives a string of shorter prison sentences, between 3 to 9 months, though around 30 she receives her longest sentence to date; 3 years for 300 ecstasy pills. Looking back at her offending history, Angel’s main offence history involves drugs, shoplifting, theft and various driving offences.

Being together for close to 10 years, Angel and ‘G’ split up in her late 20s, which leads her into the most chaotic period of her life to date. Though she had short periods at treatment
facilities during this period, Angel never really felt ready to give up the drugs. However, during her 3 year sentence she opted to go into treatment during the last year, and this was the time when she describes things starting to turn for her. When I met Angel she has been out from this treatment for 2 years. Following participating in a back-to-work program, Angel is now in full-time employment via a wage subsidy scheme. Angel describes missing the action and freedom of a life with no responsibilities, and she has had a few relapses. Working in a heavy manual labour role; however, keeping busy helps her to stay on track. She enjoys, for the first time in her life, to plan for the future. Looking ahead, Angel looks forward to finding more spare time interests and, when she has more stability, she would like to have children. She is currently in a stable relationship with a man she met at an NA meeting; a relationship she describes as very positive and equal.

**BETTAN (41)**

Reflecting on her early life, Bettan describes her childhood as a stable and happy time in her life. She found school ok and learning was easy for her. Starting to drink with friends in her early teens, Bettan partied now and then, but it was not until she turned 20, when she had left home, started working in the care sector and met a new boyfriend, that she started to get curious about drugs. She began to experiment mainly with amphetamines. At 21 Bettan fell pregnant with her boyfriend, which made her take a short break from the drugs. After a few years; however, her partner began to develop severe paranoia and started controlling all aspects of Bettan’s life. She ended up leaving him, but due to continued harassment, she had a restriction order taken out. Being single again and her daughter now a few years old, Bettan started going out partying and re-connecting with old friends. Soon the weekends started spilling over into weekdays, and just a month into moving into her own flat, she was back on using amphetamines on a daily basis. She tried to hold it together for a while but when daughter turned 4, she was removed from Bettan, following a report by a babysitter. Over the years Bettan has tried to stay in contact with her daughter, though she admits that she has been very unreliable and missed a lot of pre-arranged visits.

In her late 20s Bettan met ‘Simon’, who was a heavy drug user and involved in organised criminality. They have been together ever since and got married a few years back. For about 10 years they lived an active criminal and drug-using life, which Bettan describes as both very exciting and profitable. They were in constant contact with the police, and in total Bettan thinks she has circa 30 points on her criminal record; the majority of them relates to narcotics and driving offences, but she also has a few handling stolen goods, assaults, threats and threat of violence, counterfeiting and vandalism. She has been sentenced to probation what she describes to be innumerable times, along with ‘contract care’. In her mid-30s, Bettan received her first prison sentence, and she has been in prison about 4-5 times since. Though she has done a few treatments over the years, it was not until her most recent prison sentence that Bettan decided to make a change. She spent the majority of her sentence in treatment. At this point her daughter had turned 18 and got involved with drugs herself and also been in mental health care. When I met Bettan she has been out from her sentence about 6 months.
In terms of employment, Bettan has hardly had any legit jobs since her early 20s, but she feels that finding a job that she enjoys would be a major factor for turning things. She is currently doing paid work experience in a manual labouring role, which she describes as amazing. Both of them recently out from sentence and on their first year of being clean, Bettan and Simon have decided to live separately for a while to avoid triggering re-lapses for each other. Looking ahead, Bettan looks forward to getting her driving licence back, get her own housing contract in a permanent residence and provide support to primarily her daughter, but also, to her husband, to stay on a drug-free path. She also looks forward to being a part of society once again.

**CAROLINA (33)**

Carolina grew up with her parents and a younger brother until the age of 11, when her parents split. After a difficult divorce, she and her brother primarily lived with their mother. Carolina disliked school and struggled with learning and concentration, though she settled in a bit more after a few years. Growing up Carolina remembers always preferring to spend time with boys, and she started having boyfriends around 12. Carolina started drinking occasionally in her early teens and at 16 she began dabbling with ephedrine-pills and prescription drugs, mainly benzos. Looking back, Carolina describes her teenage years as the best time in her life; careless, free and a lot of fun. She continued using benzos and ephedrine-pills sporadically for a few years, but this changed at 23 when she met a new boyfriend who was a more regular drug user, and Caroline then started using amphetamines on a daily basis, leading to a 10 year period of amphetamine abuse.

It was not until her late 20s that Carolina had her first proper contact with the police, when a flat she shared with her boyfriend was raided. Her partner was arrested for illegal weapon possession and giving a positive drug sample, Carolina was charged and fined for minor narcotics offences. Though she struggles to remember timescales during these years, she believes she was arrested a few times following this, though her next major charge was about a year later, when she was living with a new boyfriend and the police once again raided their flat. She was convicted for larceny, sentenced to a fine and conditionally released. Carolina has never been to prison, but has had two more convictions for larceny, which she received fines and probation for.

Carolina has come into contact with more organised criminality primarily through drug-using partners, though she views herself as having a natural attraction to crime, risk-taking and fast money. She describes living 'life in the fast lane' as exciting and fun. Carolina has had a number of relationships during her active years, mainly with heroin-users, and has primarily offended together with partners, though she has done minor stuff by herself. After 10 active years, she found herself having lost all her independence, staying in a boyfriend's flat, and had also lost a lot of contact with her family, and she felt she had run out of options. In 2011 Carolina decided to enter an open residential drug treatment program. When I met Carolina she has recently come out of this treatment.
In terms of employment, Carolina kept working on and off for the first few years of her drug abuse. During the end of her treatment, via a back-to-work program, Carolina got into full-time employment. However she was fired after about 7 months, which she believes was due to her manager finding out about her offending history. Carolina views it as essential for her to work, boredom being her biggest risk factor. It is possible that she has ADHD, but she has chosen not to do a formal assessment. Looking ahead, Carolina wants to get back into education, with the aim of going into midwifery, and when she is more stable, she would like to have children. She is currently in a stable relationship, has re-gained a contact with her family, and looks forward to developing more close relationships in her life in the coming years, as well as be able to fill a positive function in society.

**EMMA (27)**

Emma is quite reluctant to speak about too many details in her life. She describes herself as having a good, happy childhood, living with her mother and siblings. In school Emma had an easy time making friends, though she struggled to concentrate. Things changed dramatically for Emma when she met her first proper boyfriend at 13, who was a few years older than her and introduced her to drugs. Emma moved in with her boyfriend at 14 and she then completely stopped going to school. Around this time Emma started getting into trouble with the police and she tested positive for drugs at a number of times. Due to her age she was dealt with by the social services for the first year, and she remembers attending some counselling sessions through this.

Emma fell pregnant at 16 with her boyfriend. When her daughter was 3 months old Emma separated from her boyfriend and moved into her own flat, where she stayed with her daughter for less than a year, before she gave over her daughter to her mother. At this point Emma had picked up drugs again and felt she could no longer care for her daughter. At 18 Emma was properly arrested for the first time, possibly for a robbery and some drug charges, and she received probation. From this point onwards Emma was repeatedly arrested and received a range of sanctions, including probation and ‘contract care’. In her early 20s she received her first prison sentence on 6 months, for she believes is a mix of thefts and drug offences. Having no interest in giving up drugs, Emma returned to her chaotic lifestyle after prison, still enjoying the drugs and the excitement of the lifestyle.

In the years that followed, Emma was arrested a few times, typically for theft and/or drug offences, and she did another short prison sentence in her mid-20s. More recently, in 2011, she received her longest sentence to date; an 18 month prison sentence. During this prison term she opted to enter drug treatment, and she went straight to community rehab from prison, where she stayed for about a year. When I met Emma, she has been out from rehab for 3 months, and has so far not had any relapses. She now lives in a residential collective, which is linked in to her treatment centre. Emma feels motivated to keep clean and straight now, in part for her daughter, who she has started re-gaining contact with her in the last year, but also for herself. She has also re-gained contact with her family, including her two siblings. In addition, Emma has had some contact with her daughter’s father, but he is
currently serving a life sentence for murder, so the contact is very minimal. Over her active years Emma has had a few co-addictive relationships and although she is not willing to discuss any of these in any detail, she hints at a presence of both violence and excessive levels of control.

In terms of employment, Emma has never really had a job but she is currently doing work experience with a building firm; an experience she finds fun and rewarding. In 2011 Emma was diagnosed with ADHD, and she feels this makes it extra important for her to have a physical job. Looking forward, Emma is hopeful to get her own flat, and then she wants to start an apprenticeship doing carpentry. She also wants to take her driving licence and when she is at a point of having more stability in her life, re-gain custody of her daughter, who is now close to 10 years old.

**EVA (46)**

Eva grew up on the country-side, with both her parents and 2 younger sisters. Her dad was an alcoholic and was always very controlling with Eva’s mum. When Eva was about 10 her parents divorced and she recalls moving around a lot around this time. After some time apart, Eva’s father became sober and her parents re-married and, when Eva was 15, they had her youngest sister. With both of her parents working, Eva took the main responsibility for her younger sister. She started drinking alcohol with friends from around 12, and she remembers being driven home by the police at a few occasions. At 17 Eva graduated from high school, moved out from home and she then met a guy involved in MC-clubs. Through him she came in contact with amphetamines and organised criminality, both of which she describes enjoying from day one.

Eva’s first proper contact with the police was around 18, when she was arrested for a string of fraud offences and car thefts, resulting in 2 years’ probation. Eva decided to re-locate, and she started a new relationship with a man, also involved in MC-gangs, who she stayed with for 5 years. During this period she kept working and only took drugs now and then, though she also dealt a bit of drugs on the side. Linked to this, she was caught smuggling cannabis and she was sentenced to further probation and fines. Overall, Eva estimates she received about 11 probation sentences before her first prison sentence. Following a period of stability, she describes herself getting bored with 'Svensson-life', and she quit her job, moved out from her partner, and started using amphetamines daily. She soon met a more heavily criminal man, and they entered a 5 year period of co-offending. Eva recalls this time as quite exciting, with a lot of car chases and a healthy economy. Having a strong physique, Eva would often rob people for cash, and she has numerous convictions for assaults. Her partner being a known criminal, they were in constant contact with the police and their flats were repeatedly raided. However, Eva kept getting away with minor offences.

Following a larger trial, Eva and her partner lost their house and this initiated a period of rough living on the streets, mainly surviving on car break-ins, burglaries and shoplifting. Eva would regularly get caught for shoplifting during these years and would go into prison now and then on shorter sentences. It was not until her 30s that Eva sat a longer sentence. At
this time, the drug lifestyle had started tearing on her and she went into treatment. She managed to stay sober for a time following this and started working part-time; however, she relapsed to alcohol, and this initiated a 10 year period of chaotic street-life. Losing all her routines, Eva found herself living in a tent in a park. Here she met a new partner, who she has been with ever since. After what she describes as hitting rock bottom, during her last prison sentence, Eva and her partner decided to go into treatment. When I met Eva they have been out from this treatment for 1 year. She is currently eating Antabuse, which she believes she will stay on for the rest of her life, and is involved in a back-to-work program. Looking ahead, Eva looks forward to getting married in the end of the year, get her driving licence, gaining employment and economic independence, and one day she would like to go on a skiing holiday.

JASMIN (24)

Jasmin came to Sweden when she was 4 months old, her family fleeing a war-torn country. She describes her father as very violent, and she struggles with PTSD from the violence she has experienced and witnessed in her home environment. When Jasmin is about 6 years old her mother left her father, though she soon got into another violent relationship. Jasmin describes her mother as very unstable, being on a lot of medication and, at times, very violent. Jasmin found it hard to fit in in school and was bullied from an early age. As her learning suffered, she was placed in special schools with smaller classes. In her teenage years Jasmin describes herself as becoming increasingly angry, and at 13 she burned down her school. This initiated a period of social service involvement, with Jasmin being placed at various institutions and foster families. In high school Jasmin got involved with drugs, primarily amphetamines, and in her second year she was thrown out for dealing drugs. This also led her to be thrown out of her foster family.

Though having been in contact with the police at repeated occasions previously, Jasmin's first proper arrest was at 16, for a mix of drunken disorderly and forgery. She soon became known to the police as a drug user and recalls constantly going in and out of the police station, typically getting done for minor drug offences and receiving probation. At 18 Jasmin met a heavily criminal man, whereby her life takes a turn for the worse. The man becomes increasingly controlling of her and she describes him abusing her both physically and sexually. During this period Jasmin's mental health deteriorates and she has extreme panic attacks and takes several overdoses. She starts to consume a broader variety of drugs. To fund her habit, she would typically commit robberies. Accumulating arrests, when Jasmin is 20 she sits her first prison sentence on a month. Coming out from this sentence, Jasmin manages to leave her abusive partner, which initiates a period of homelessness and chaotic drug use.

The majority of Jasmin's criminal record is for violence, though she also has convictions for narcotics, driving offences, violence against officials and a few thefts. Jasmin's first lengthier prison sentence was about a year after coming out from her first one, for an aggravated assault following a stabbing. For this she received a 15 month prison sentence. Her first
clean period since aged 16, Jasmin describes this sentence as a turning point and she enters into drug treatment. During her time inside she is convicted of a string of additional offences and, in total, she spends 2 years inside. Jasmin spent the last 4 months of her sentence in an open drug treatment in the community, living in a supported housing cooperative.

When I met Jasmin she has been out for about a year, though she has had one tag related to an assault since. She recently moved into her own flat, in a different part of Sweden, and she is now training as a carpenter. Jasmin has also just passed her driving licence and is starting to build more positive relations in her life, including with her mother. Looking ahead, Jasmin looks forward to one day finding a partner with whom she can have a healthy relationship with, maybe one day have children, and in the long-term, she would like to work with young people.

**JENNY (36)**

Jenny cannot recall much from her childhood. Things were ok at home, but that she disliked school, was overweight and struggled with bullying. Moving out from home at 19, Jenny got in contact with amphetamines and started using them to lose weight. She was soon a daily user. Jenny met a drug-using partner and they moved in together; however, he became violent with her and, interlinked to him trying to put an overdose of heroin in her, she pricks him with a knife and they are both convicted for assault. After this Jenny re-linked with an ex-partner who she moves in with. However, this man also became increasingly controlling and violent towards her and during a fight, though Jenny has memory gaps of the precise event; a knife goes through his chest. Her partner dies before the ambulance arrived and Jenny is accordingly arrested for murder.

The prosecution appeals the original verdict of manslaughter and, with the case being linked to her previous knife assault conviction, Jenny’s conviction is changed and she receives a 6 year prison sentence. At the time Jenny arrives to prison, she finds out that she is pregnant. She decides to keep the child, and she stays together with her son at a mother-baby unit for one year. During her prison time Jenny studied a lot and after 50% of her sentence she is released to community supervision. Coming out, Jenny moves in with her son and started working and studying part-time. However, Jenny struggled to settle into her new life. At this point she has gained a lot of weight and wanting to lose it, she starts using amphetamines again. Jenny accordingly loses custody of her son, and she enters into a 5 years period of heavy drug use and offending.

Jenny describes herself as very independent in her drug use, never wanting to rely on men for her drugs. She has been homeless on and off during her active years. Most of Jenny’s later convictions are for burglaries, thefts and driving without licence, though she admits also selling a lot of drugs over the years. Having received a range of community sentences, in her early 30s Jenny received a 4 month prison sentence and during this she enters into treatment. Jenny has been completely drug free since, and she has gradually re-gained contact with her son, who is today 14 years old. Her son struggles with mental health problems. In the year after coming out from sentence, Jenny falls pregnant again and she
has a daughter. The father to Jenny's daughter has been a major part of her life for the last 10 years, though they are currently split up. She describes their relationships as codependent and very chaotic and often violent.

Jenny is currently studying to become a property caretaker. She has never really had a job, except from a very short experience of care work after her first prison release. Jenny is currently undergoing an assessment for ADHD, which she feels is highly likely she has. Being off amphetamines, Jenny struggles with her weight in periods, and she can sometimes miss the excitement of living life in the fast line. She remains motivated to stay clean and straight for her children however. Looking ahead, Jenny is hopeful that she will be able to take her driving licence and, following completing her training, find a permanent position as a property care taker.

**JOHANNA (37)**

Growing up in a country town with both parents and 2 siblings, Johanna describes herself as having a good childhood and a very supportive family. She enjoyed school and made friends easily. When Johanna was around 20 she was involved in a car accident, from which she suffered whip-lash. She never received appropriate treatment for her injuries and describes herself as being in constant pain following the accident. Linked to this, Johanna started experimenting with amphetamines, which she found helped with her pain. Struggling to work due to her injuries, she developed depression a couple of years later, and this is when she started using amphetamines daily.

The vast majority of Johanna's convictions relate to drug offences. She has primarily received fines and probation for minor drug offences over the years. Johanna has, though, been in contact with heavier criminality through partners, and many of the flats she has shared with partners have been raided by the police. However, Johanna would typically just get minor drug related convictions from this. She admits to having shoplifted in periods, but never got caught for it. The most serious conviction Johanna has is for a car accident, which led to her receiving a month prison sentence. Due to her remand period; however, she only spent a week in prison and did the rest on a tag.

Johanna has been in treatment on and off over the years. However, being part-time retired due to her injuries, she has not been able to work and has struggled to stay clean after treatment. She also suffers from periods of depression, which makes her relapse into drug use. A few years into her drug use she lost a partner to an overdose, which exacerbated her depression further, and she started combining her amphetamine use with heroin. Being in an unstable mental health condition, she was supported into and a halfway house, where she was also assessed for and diagnosed with ADHD.

At 33 Johanna fell pregnant with her long-term partner, but she chose to have an abortion as she had used drugs and alcohol during the pregnancy and feared for the child’s well-being. She struggled with the aftermath of this, which exacerbated her drug use. However, Johanna fell pregnant soon again and this time she was given the opportunity to enter a
subutex program, which she found not only helped with her drug use, but also with her physical pain. Johanna has been clean ever since starting the subutex programme. Johanna describes the father to her daughter as violent and chaotic, and she ended their relationship after their daughter was born.

When I met Johanna she has just finished a back-to-work program and has done some work experience in a cafe, which she really enjoyed. Although she can miss the excitement of life in the fast lane, Johanna is completely focussed on her daughter now and is starting to enjoy a more quiet life. Johanna continues to fight depression in periods and is currently receiving treatment for seasonal affective disorder. Looking ahead, Johanna looks forward to finding stable part-time employment, developing more hobbies, and she would also like to see her ex-partner get clean, so that he can re-gain more regular contact with their daughter. On the long-term, she would like to meet someone again, and maybe even have another child.

**LINDA (31)**

Linda grew up in a small remote village in what she describes as a stable and loving home with her mother, 2 siblings and step-father. Linda started drinking with friends at around 12 and this soon became a common pastime. She describes herself as always being very impulsive and attracted to risk. Thinking about her school years, Linda struggled to concentrate, which she retrospectively links to her ADHD; a diagnosis she received in her mid-20s. Linda has always had a big social life and makes friends very easily. Skipping school, at 14 Linda came into contact with older criminal groups, including a man in his mid-40s, who she runs away with. Linked to this, Linda received her first LVU. During her LVU home assessment she escapes and goes back to live with the older man, and at this time Linda gets into contact with amphetamine for the first time, which she starts using sporadically. After a few chaotic years, partly spent in residential care homes, Linda moves to a large city at 19, where she recalls taking her first ecstasy tablet. She subsequently leaves college, quits her part-time job, and 3 months later she is a daily intravenous amphetamine user. A couple of years into her substance misusing years Linda got married to a short-term, drug-using partner, who turns out to be a very violent and controlling man. A couple of days into their marriage; however, he dies in their bed in an overdose, which brings Linda into a fragile mental state and she enters into temporary psychiatric care. Linda has had a number of abusive and co-addictive relationships since.

Linda describes herself as being very good at crime, and she has been involved in a range of organised crime. She has gone in and out of rehab numerous times, and been hospitalised for several overdoses. At one of her first treatment centres she met 'S', who became her long-term partner. They have had some periods of settled life, but Linda describes herself getting bored with the Svensson-life and they relapsed into drug use and re-enter a period of heavy criminality. They got caught after a couple of years. However, 'S' takes on all the responsibility and Linda goes free. Struggling to keep up with their ‘reputation’, Linda describes her life once again becoming very chaotic.
Although she cannot recall all of her convictions, Linda thinks the majority of them are for larceny, handling stolen goods and drug offences. Almost all of her sentences have involved 'contract care' and probation. and she has never spent time in prison. She has had numerous periods of staying clean during treatments, and has been on and off with 'Sam' since he came out from prison. In later years; however, he has become increasingly violent with her.

About 2 years ago Linda decides to go back into treatment, and she has been clean ever since. She is today on prescriptions for her ADHD and takes methylphenidate daily. She is currently working at a restaurant and is enjoying getting into a routine. Though Linda is scared of getting bored and re-lapsing to drug use again, she is more determined than ever to stay on track. Looking ahead, Linda would like to one day have children, though she feels that she would need more stability in her life before she can consider this and importantly, she needs to be able to trust herself.

MALIN (47)

Malin describes her childhood as a very happy time in her life, growing up in the countryside with her parents, 4 siblings and a lot of animals. She enjoyed school and had an easy time making friends. In the year before High School Malin went to spend a year in France as an exchange student, which she found to be a great experience. Upon her return she started partying and drinking quite regularly. Malin also came in contact with drugs during this time, but she never felt it was her thing. She kept drinking socially, and her first proper contact with the police was in her mid-20, when she was arrested for drunk driving. She accordingly lost her driving licence and received a one month prison sentence in an open institution.

Just before getting arrested, Malin met her first long-term partner; a relationship she describes as very equal and positive. In the later parts of her 20s, they have 3 children together and they also start a catering-firm. Malin recalls this period as a very intense time, and it is around this period that her alcohol habits starts to escalate. This came to a peak when, in her mid-30s, Malin decided to return to college and with a very flexible routine, she starts drinking daily. Meanwhile her relationship is deteriorating and they decide to go separate ways. Only having the children every second week, Malin enters a very heavy period of drinking, consuming about a litre of spirits a day, and she starts to neglect her parenting responsibilities. This was noticed by her ex-husband and he gets social services involved. Malin is accordingly linked in with an alcohol support agency and tries to cut down her drinking. Describing herself as becoming quite verbally aggressive when she drinks, she has been involved in numerous aggressive situations in bars, though she was never arrested for these.

In the years that follow, Malin tries to manage her drinking and eats Antabuse regularly. However, she keeps drinking now and then and is arrested for drunk driving at a couple of occasions and loses her driving licence again. After a period of 6 month of sobriety, Malin has a severe relapse. At this point she is living with a new partner and in a very dazed state; she leaves their flat after lighting some candles, which results in the block of flats being set
Malin is arrested for arson. After a challenging trial, Malin receives a 2 and a half year prison sentence. During her sentence she enters an alcohol treatment program, in which she describes herself as reaching a point where she, for the first time, is ready to start to tackle her alcoholism.

Recently coming out from her prison sentence, Malin is currently living in a halfway house and has just completed a back-to-work program. Though Malin kept her job as a chef during her sentence, she has decided to leave the hospitality industry, to better be able to deal with her drinking problem. Malin has decided to return to higher education and re-train as a baker. A major motivating factor for Malin to stay sober now is to re-gain trust from the people around her, especially her children. Looking ahead, Malin looks forward to moving back out to the country-side with her partner and set up her own bakery in the local village, and maybe one day, have a few grandchildren.

**MIA (30)**

Mia's first contact with the police was when she was 6 years old when her father, via an alarm raised by her school, was arrested for sexual abuse of Mia. Living with her parents and an older brother, Mia describes a home environment which was nice on the surface, but filled with violence and abuse underneath it. Her father she describes as a violent and criminal alcoholic and drug user. The rest of the family, however, denied the existence of violence in the home and her father was never convicted. Mia remembers receiving a string of diagnoses as a child, including ADHD and Asperger syndrome, and she describes herself as always being very impulsive, angry and in need of constant attention. From the age of 8, Mia spent time in and out of different care institutions and foster families. In terms of school, Mia cannot recall much from it, other than she had a hard time concentrating and kept being moved to different schools. From the age of 14 Mia started self-harming and she was institutionalised several times during her teenage years for suicide-attempts.

Mia stole her first car when she was 13, started using alcohol and drugs at 14 and became an intravenous daily amphetamine user at 18. Although being involved in minor offending as long as she can remember, Mia's first proper arrest was when she was 16, linked to ID-card fraud. At this time Mia had got in contact with MC-gangs and had started dating older MC-guys, through whom she got in contact with more organised criminality. Mia describes witnessing a lot of sexual violence on the MC-gang scene. At 18 years of age Mia had about 23 indictments on her record, for a mix of offences. Overall Mia estimates she has done about 6 prison terms, adding up to about 4 years in total, along with numerous probations and community service sentences.

Finding a new freedom in being over 18 and not forced to stay in care, Mia began a 10 year period of heavy drug use and criminality. To fund her habit she would often rob people, describing herself as very violent. She has a large range of convictions behind her, including for assaults, driving offences, unlawful threats, theft, narcotics and weapon charges. Though having been surrounded by weapons and being convicted for possessing them, Mia describes avoiding personal use of weapons after she was herself shot by a MC-gang.
member, linked to a drug deal gone wrong. In 2009, after driving a car packed with stolen goods, drugs, weapons and money into a rock wall, Mia felt, for the first time in her life, that she wanted to make a change and she started attending NA meetings in prison. She has by and large stayed clean since, though struggling with mental health, she has had a couple of suicide attempts which has landed her back in hospital. The last one of these brought her back into treatment. When I met Mia, she has been out a few months from this treatment.

In terms of working, Mia has done a few jobs as security guard when she was active, but nothing consistent. Mia is currently doing work experience in a charity shop, via a wage subsidy scheme. Looking ahead, Mia would like to find an honest and safe relationship and one day, when she has more stability in her life, have children, and use her experiences to work with young people. Mia has recently come off her ADHD medications as well as her anti-depressants, although she still eats Antabuse for her alcohol problems.

NINNI (28)

Ninni grew up in a chaotic drug-using and criminal home environment. Her first memories of the police were when her father was removed from the house after beating up her mum. When Ninni is 10 her mum became ill with cancer; however, she recovered and subsequently fell pregnant. Only a few months later, Ninni’s father dies from an overdose. When her younger sister is born about 6 months later, Ninni, at the age of 11, becomes her main career. Her mother was repeatedly reported to the social services throughout her childhood. Ninni was about 13 when she smoked weed for the first time, and she would increasingly experiment with different drugs and skip school through her teenage years. Having started shoplifting around 8, as a teenager this became more of a regular habit.

At 16 Ninni was prescribed medications for anxiety problems, which she started taking in combination with amphetamines on a daily basis. Ninni remembers being offered various voluntary interventions around this time, but as she always rejected them, she was forced into coercive care at 16. Constantly escaping from care, after 9 months Ninni was moved to a high security youth facility on an island. She stayed stable in this facility for a couple of years, and then at 18 Ninni was allowed to go home. At 19, after a year of relative stability, Ninni met a drug using partner and within weeks, she had picked up a heroin habit. To fund their drug habits she and her partner mainly committed commercial break-ins together. She has vague memories of a few trials around this time, and believes she received a lot of fines and possibly some probation. Her partner, having a more extensive record, received heavier sentences and soon went into prison. Being used to offend together with her partner, Ninni then ends up turning to prostitution to feed her habit.

Although Ninni describes their relationship as very violent and abusive relationship, she stayed with her partner for 6 years. Over the years they got increasingly involved in heavier crime. A drug deal gone wrong led her partner to being subjected to extensive torture and following this, they decide to make a change. However, about 1 year into a ‘clean’ lifestyle, her partner dies and Ninni describes her world collapsing. This led her into a very destructive period, with numerous overdoses. Ninni soon gets into a new relationship,
similarly violent and drug-using, and one day when her partner is beating her up, Ninni retaliates and stabs him. She is accordingly arrested for attempted murder, but as her partner survives her charge is dropped to aggravated assault. She receives a 5 year prison sentence but following a re-trial, her sentence is reduced to 2.5 years. This sentence is then put together with outstanding offences and she is convicted to 3 years in prison. When I meet Ninni, she has been out from prison for about 11 weeks.

Ninni spent her last 9 months of her sentence in a treatment facility, and there she got in touch with a back-to-work program. After 28 years of never being employed, Ninni is now enjoying learning about her options for the future. Looking ahead, Ninni would like to study and, in the long-term, use her experiences to work within social services. Ninni also looks forward to finding permanent housing and then, when she is more stable, get off the subutex and maybe even one day, have children with someone who she loves.
Appendix 11.2

Research instruments

The following research instruments are appended:

- **11.2.1 Consent forms**
  - p. 313: English
  - p. 314: Swedish

- **11.2.2 Participant information sheets**
  - p. 315: English
  - p. 317: Swedish

- **11.2.3 Interview topic guides**
  - p. 319: English
  - p. 323: Swedish

- **11.2.4 Recruitment flyers (un-folded)**
  - p. 327: English
  - p. 328: Swedish
Consent Form

Please read through the following carefully and tick the box if you agree with the statement

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet provided and I am clear about the purpose and nature of my involvement in this study
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss all aspect of the study with Linnéa, and have had these queries satisfactorily answered
- I understand that everything that I say will be made anonymous and kept strictly confidential in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Linnéa has explained to me the rare exceptions to this rule
- I agree that my interview may be digitally recorded and that the information may be transcribed by Linnéa
- I agree to that any views, words or personal data that I choose to share with Linnéa in the interview may be discussed with her supervisors and used for this study and other research undertaken by Linnéa, including in published or orally presented material. This is on the strict condition that my identity, along with any other potential identifiers, is kept completely anonymous
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to give a reason for doing so, and that I can ask for any recorded material to be deleted if so
- I acknowledge that as a thank you for completing the study I will receive a High Street voucher to the value of £10
- I confirm that I have read and understood the above statements and that I freely consent to participating in this study

Name of participant (BLOCK CAPITALS): ........................................................................................................

Signed: ............................................................................................................................................................

Date: ........................................

Name of researcher (BLOCK CAPITALS): ........................................................................................................

Signed: ............................................................................................................................................................

Date: ........................................
Blankett för samtycke till deltagande i forskning

Vänligen läs igenom följande påståenden och kryssa i rutan till höger om du samtycker

- Jag har läst igenom informationsbladet för forskningsdeltagare och jag förstår både syftet med mitt deltagande och vad det innebär för mig
- Jag har haft möjlighet att ställa frågor och diskutera alla aspekter av mitt deltagande med Linnéa och har fått tillfredsställande svar på eventuella funderingar
- Jag förstår att allt jag säger i intervjun kommer att anonymiseras och förvaras konfidentiellt i strikt överstämme med alla regler och föreskrifter. Linnéa har förklarat de mycket få rättsliga undantagen till dessa sekretessregler
- Jag ger samtycke till att intervjun spelas in på en digital bandspelare och att den informationen sedan transkriberas av Linnéa
- Jag ger tillstånd till att alla äsikter, yttranden och information som jag väljer att dela med Linnéa under intervjuens gång kan diskuteras med hennes handledare och användas för denna och annan forskning som genomförs av Linnéa, inklusive i skriftliga och mundliga presentationer. Detta sker under den strikta förutsättningen att min identitet, och alla andra eventuella identifieringsuppgifter, hålls fullständigt anonyma
- Jag förstår att min medverkan i denna studie är frivillig och att jag kan ta tillbaka mitt samtycke till deltagande när som helst, utan att behöva ge någon anledning. Jag kan i sådana fall också be Linnéa att radera hela eller delar av min intervju från bandspelaren
- Jag är medveten om att som ett tack för mitt deltagande i denna studie så kommer jag att få ett Rikspresentkort värt 100kr
- Jag bekräftar härmed att jag har läst och förstått ovanstående påståenden och att jag frivilligt väljer att delta in Linnéas studie

Forskningsdeltagare namn (VERASER): ..........................................................................................................................

Signatur: ..........................................................................................................................................................

Datum: .................................................................................................................................

Forskare namn (VERASER): ..........................................................................................................................

Signatur: ..........................................................................................................................................................

Datum: .................................................................................................................................
Participant Information Sheet

Stories Across Borders: How female ex-offenders make sense of their journey through crime and criminal justice in cross-national contexts

My name is Linnéa Osterman and I am a PhD student studying criminology at the University of Surrey. I would like to invite you to take part in my research project, which is looking at women's experiences of crime and criminal justice in Sweden and England. Before you decide if you would like to take part in my study it is important that you understand why I am doing this research and what it would involve for you as a participant. Please take the time to read through the following information and feel free to ask me any questions that you may have. You are also welcome to talk about this study with any other person, if you feel that would help you make the right decision.

What is this study aiming to do?
The aim of this study is to compare how and why some women get involved with crime and how they experience criminal justice in Sweden and England. I am also interested in learning more about what it is like for women trying to go straight in these two different countries. Hopefully this can make an important contribution to understanding why some women commit crimes at certain times in their lives, and also what could be done to help more women break away from crime if they would like to do so.

Why have I been invited to take part in this study?
You have been invited to take part in this study because you have been identified as someone who may have some form of personal experience of crime and criminal justice.

Do I have to take part?
No, participation in this study is completely voluntary and any contact you may have with support services will not be affected in any way, whether or not you decide to take part. You should only take part if you feel that it is something that you yourself want to do!

If I decide to take part what will I be asked to do?
If you decide to take part we will arrange a time to meet up and talk about your life and experiences of crime and justice. The interview is likely to take between 1.5 to 2 hours, depending on how much of your life-story that you like to share. My focus is entirely on your own experiences and views, so there are no right or wrong answers. During the interview we will talk about lots of different life-experiences, both good and bad. It is therefore possible that we come across things in your life that may be a bit upsetting to think and talk about. If this happens you can simply say that you do not want to talk about a certain part of your life and I will just move on to the next question. We can also take a break whenever you like.

Will I get anything in return for doing the interview?
Yes. As a thank you for your time you will receive a £10 High Street voucher.

Can I change my mind about taking part?
Yes. You can change your mind at any point and decide that you no longer want to take part in the study, and you do not need to give a reason for doing this. If you choose to do so you can also ask for the interview data to be deleted and I will remove it from the recorder.
What will happen with the information after the interview?
With your permission the interview will be recorded on a digital recorder, which will allow me to type up everything that you have said accurately. The stories that you choose to share with me will make a very important contribution to my study and it is therefore important that I get it right. Everything in the interview will at this stage be anonymised, which means that no real names will be used, so no one will ever know who took part in the study. I will then analyse the interviews and look for patterns and differences between women in the two countries. In order to do this I may need to discuss the interviews with other people, such as with my supervisors at the University of Surrey, but no names will ever be used in such conversations. The findings from the research will be presented in my final thesis but may also be presented in academic journals or at conferences. I will almost certainly use quotes from the interviews in these presentations, but again these will ALWAYS be anonymous.

Will my participation be kept confidential?
Yes. Confidentiality is guaranteed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. This means that everything that is said in the interview will be made anonymous and pseudonyms will be used for names, places and anything else that could possibly identify you. There are some rare but important exceptions to this rule that you need to be aware of though. For example, if you would tell me about a situation in which it is likely that a child could be at risk of serious harm then I might need to talk to someone about this out of a duty of care. If that happened I would always talk to you first about the best thing to do. The other legal exception to this rule is about criminal evidence. If you would give me precise details that could help the police prevent or detect a serious crime for example, then they could ask me for that information and I would have to give it to them.

How will the data be stored and for how long?
All data will be kept confidential and securely stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. All the material will be anonymised before stored and copies will be kept in a locked file cabinet or on a password protected computer file. In accordance with University of Surrey policy, the data will be kept for a minimum period of ten years after the study has been completed and will then be destroyed.

Who is funding this research and who has reviewed it?
This research is funded through a student scholarship with the Economic and Social Research Council in the UK, via the University of Surrey. The University of Surrey Ethics Committee has reviewed the study and given it a favourable ethical opinion.

Contact details
If you would like some more information about the study please do not hesitate to contact me either via phone or email: Telephone (UK): 0744-917 2865
Email: L.A.Osterman@surrey.ac.uk

If you would you like some further information from someone else, or if you are unhappy about anything to do with the study, you can also contact my supervisors at the University of Surrey: Jo Moran-Ellis: j.moran-ellis@surrey.ac.uk or 01483 68 9365
Karen Bullock: k.bullock@surrey.ac.uk or 01483 68 6979

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet!
Informationsblad för forskningsdeltagare

Stories Across Borders: How female ex-offenders make sense of their journey through crime and criminal justice in cross-national contexts


Vad är syftet med den här studien?
Syftet med den här studien är att jämforma hur och varför vissa kvinnor blir involverade i brott och hur de upplever det straffrättsliga systemet i Sverige och England. Jag är också intresserad av att veta mer om hur vägen ut från criminalitet kan se ut för kvinnor i dessa två länder. Förhoppningsvis kan resultaten från denna studie bidra till en ökad förståelse av varför vissa kvinnor blir involverade i brott under vissa perioder av deras liv, och även hur vi bäst kan hjälpa fler kvinnor att hitta en väg ut, om det är vad de skulle vilja.

Varför har jag blivit inbjuden att delta?
Du har blivit inbjuden till den här studien eftersom du har identifierats som någon som eventuellt kan ha personliga erfarenheter av brottslighet och det svenska rättssystemet.

Måste jag delta?
Nej. Deltagande i den här studien är helt frivilligt och din samverkan med KvinnoKram kommer inte att påverkas på något sätt, oavsett om du väljer att delta eller inte. Du ska bara ta del i den här studien om du själv vill!

Vad skulle det innebära för mig om jag skulle välja att delta?
Om du bestämmer dig för att du skulle vilja medverka i min studie så hittar vi en lämplig tidpunkt för en intervju då vi kommer att prata om ditt liv och dina upplevelser av brott och straff. Intervjun kommer troligen att ta cirka 1.5 till 2 timmar, beroende på hur mycket av din story som du vill dela med dig av. Fokus är helt och hållet på ditt eget perspektiv, så det finns inga rätt eller fel svar. Under intervjuns gång kommer vi att prata om många olika livserfarenheter, både positiva och negativa. Det är därför möjligt att vi kommer att stöta på upplevelser i ditt liv som kan vara lite jobbiga att tänka på och prata om. Om detta skulle hända så kan du alltid säga att du inte vill prata om en viss del av ditt liv och då går jag bara vidare till nästa fråga. Vi kan också ta en paus när som helst du vill.

Får jag någon ersättning för mitt deltagande?
Ja. Som ett tack för din tid så får du ett Rikspresentkort värt 100kr.

Kan jag ändra mig?
Absolut. Du kan välja att ta tillbaka ditt samtycke till deltagande i studien när som helst under studiens gång, utan att behöva ge någon anledning. Om detta skulle hända så kan du även be mig att radera delar eller hela din intervju från den digitala bandspelaren.
Vad händer med informationen efter intervjun?
Med din tillstånd så kommer jag att spela in intervjun så att jag sen kan skriva ut vad du har sagt på ett korrekt sätt. De berättelser och erfarenheter som du väljer att dela med dig av kommer att göra ett otroligt viktigt bidrag till min studie, så det är därför viktigt att det blir rätt. Samtidigt som jag gör detta så kommer jag även att avidentifiera all information, vilket betyder att inga riktiga namn kommer att användas. Ingen kommer alltså att veta vem det var som deltog i studien. Jag kommer sedan att analysera alla intervjuer och leta efter skillnader och likheter mellan kvinnors upplevelser i de två länderna. För att göra detta kan jag behöva diskutera intervjuerna med andra forskare, till exempel med mina handledare på Surrey Universitet, men inga namn kommer att användas i sånt fall. Resultaten från forskningen kommer att presenteras i min doktorsavhandling, men kan även förekomma i akademiska tidsskrifter eller vid konferenser. Jag kommer troligen att använda citat från intervjuerna i dessa presentationer, men återigen så kommer dessa ALLTID att vara anonyma.

Kommer mitt deltagande i denna studie vara helt konfidentiellt?

Hur kommer informationen att förvaras och under hur lång tid?

Vem är det som finansierar och granskar den här studien?

Kontaktpupgifter
Om du skulle vilja ha mer information eller har frågor om studien så kontakta gärna mig antingen via telefon eller e-post:  
Mobil: 0721-054452
Email: L.A.Osterman@surrey.ac.uk

Om du skulle vilja ha information från någon annan, eller om du är missnöjd med någon del av studien, så kan även kontakta mina handledare vid Surrey Universitetet:
Jo Moran-Ellis: j.moran-ellis@surrey.ac.uk eller +44 1483 68 9365
Karen Bullock: k.bullock@surrey.ac.uk eller +44 1483 68 6979

Tack för att du tog dig tid att läsa det här informationsbladet! 😊
Interview Topic Guide

Introduction

- Thank you for time
- PhD student Surrey, doing a doctorate in Criminology
  - Comparative study between Sweden and England about female experiences of crime and criminal justice.
  - I am also interested in gender, so if and how the fact that you are a woman have impacted on your life-choices and opportunities
- Probably bit different from other interviews, if done some before
  - This is about your experiences and view, from your own perspective
  - No right or wrong, just as honest as can and want to be

3 parts:

1) Introduction (this bit) and then some paperwork
   To ensure I have explained everything to you, understand why I am doing this etc.

2) Main part
   Take the longest, we'll talk about your life, your experiences and views etc. With your permission I will record this part

3) After interview
   Quick form with some more demographic data - This is to be able to categorise and compare people falling into different groups.

Part 1: Paperwork

- Ok read?
- Please have a read
- 2 key points: confidentiality exceptions
- Questions?
- Consent form
- Remind: We can take a break whenever you want to
- If there is anything you prefer not to talk about that's absolutely fine as well
- Ask something 'off the record' just let me know and I can switch it off
- Paper with some questions, glance at now and then, poor memory - to make sure I haven't forgot anything. Hope ok?
Part 2: Interview

- Introduce TIMELINE:
  - to get a bit of an overview of key events in your life, so things that you feel have had a big impact on your life and your life-choices
  - use as little or much as we like
  - Colour paper + pens + make line
  - To get us started: as a first reference point, if you could mark out for me, if you remember, the first time you ever got in contact with the police?

- **Background and routes into crime**
  - 'So if we could maybe start with if you could tell me, in your own words, what your life was like up to this point, so up to about [YEAR/DATE FROM TIMELINE]?
    - Childhood, upbringing and general home environment
      - Could you tell me what growing up was like for you?
    - Experience of schooling
      - What do you remember most from your school years?
    - Peer groups
      - Tell me a bit about friends or other people that you spent time with around this time?
    - If relevant: contact with statutory services (only if participant volunteer information)
    - General happiness: Thinking back to those early parts of your life, do you think of those as a happy time in your life?

- **Experiences/views of criminal activities and contact with the CJ**
  - So moving on now from those early parts of your life, could you tell me a bit more in detail what happened that first time, around [YEAR FROM TIMELINE], when you first got caught, why you think it happened as it did and the impact that had, as you see it, on your life?
    - Key areas to cover/probe about:
      - Experience of police contact and the criminal justice process
        - Can you remember anything about how you felt about the way that the police behaved towards you that time?
      - Experience of sentencing and impacts of such
        - Can you tell me a bit about what happened after that, if you can remember, so what, if any, the consequences were of that initial contact?
        - How did you experience the sentence, did you think it was fair?
      - Wider consequences of involvement with crime and CJ
        - So what happened after all of this, what direction did your life take after that?
      - Personal views on influencing factors and level of choice
        - In your own view, what do you think, if anything, could have made you take different choices at that time in your life?
• Personal life
  - Thinking now more about your personal life, could you tell me how that has been for you through all of this?
    o Key areas to cover/probe about:
      ▪ Relationships and significant others
        - Do you feel that/those relationship(s) impacted on your life and your life-choices?
        - How about contact with your family through all of this?
      ▪ Children
      ▪ Drugs and alcohol
        - Do you consider drugs and/or alcohol to ever have impacted on your life-choices in any significant way?

• Routes out and desistence
  - So this takes us to the last part of the interview, and in this section we’ll focus on more recent experiences in your life. Maybe you could start with telling me how it happened that you came into contact with [NAME OF ORGANISATION]?
    o Key areas to cover/probe about:
      ▪ Turning points
      ▪ Desistence from crime: Challenges and motivators
        Could you tell me a bit about what factors in your life that you think are affecting your chances to stay straight? Biggest challenges? Greatest motivating factors?
      ▪ Working mainstream job market
        - Would you say it’s important for you to work? Why?
      ▪ Statutory influences/impacts
        HYPOTHETICAL Q: if you would be a policy advisor for a day, what would you say would be the best way to help someone in a similar situation as yourself to make different choices and maybe avoid going through what you have?
        ▪ End open question-Anything else to share
          - Is there anything that you would like to add that you feel that has had an important impact on your life but that we have not talked about?

• Ending the interview: Timeline looking forward
  - Returning to the timeline: Could you possibly share some of your dreams and hopes for the future? Where would you like to see yourself in 5 years time?
Part 3: Quant sheet
- Turn off recorder - just before we finish...

Part 4: Debrief and conclusions
- Ask how the participant experienced the interview process
  - Invite comments and feedback
- Give out envelop and explain what is in it:
  - A **voucher** to a value of £10
  - Copy of info sheet and my contact details (welcome to make contact if any future questions about the research)
  - A note with some contact details to Women’s Support groups
    - If like to discuss anything that came up in the interview anonymously on the phone, it’s there (expand if deemed suitable)
  - Finally: Possible for the researcher to make contact again sometime in the future, only if something comes up that would be helpful to clarify?
  - TAKE DOWN PREFREED **PSEUDONYM**!

THANK YOU – END OF INTERVIEW PROCESS!
Intervjuguide och ämnesschema

Introduktion

- Tack för din tid
- Doktorandstudent på Surrey Universitet
  - Jämförande studie mellan Sverige och England och handlar om kvinnors erfarenheter av brott och straff.
  - Även intresserad av genus och jämställdhet, så en del av studien handlar om och hur det faktum att du är kvinna har haft en inverkan på dina erfarenheter och valmöjligheter
- Troligen vara lite annorlunda från intervjuer som du ev har gjort tidigare
  - Handlar helt om dina erfarenheter och åsikter, så från ditt eget perspektiv: varför du tror saker och ting blev som det blev
  - Inga rätt eller fel svar här, utan helt upp till dig vad du vill dela med dig av.

3 delar:
1. Först har vi den här delen som vi håller på med nu, så en introduktion och vi kommer även behöva fylla i lite pappersarbete - för att veta att jag har förklarat studien för dig, vad det innebär osv.
3. Innan vi rundar av så har jag även ett formulär med lite mer specifika, statistiska frågor - Information som jag behöver för att kunna jämföra erfarenheter av kvinnor som faller inom olika grupper i samhället.

Del 1: Pappersarbete

- Ok läsa själv?
- Ev har du sett den här infon tidigare, men om du skulle kunna kolla igenom igen så vore det väldigt uppskattat
- Frågor??
- Sekreteressinfo: 2 punkter
- Blankett för samtycke
- Rast när du känner för det, men annars nånstans i mitten
- Påminn: Om det är någon del av ditt liv som du föredrar att inte prata om så är det helt ok, bara säga till
- Om vill fråga något 'off the record' så är det bara att säga till
- Klotterpapper + påminnelse områden att prata om - minne är inte det bästa, OK?
Del 2: Intervjun (ca 1.5h) - TIMELINE
- Timeline/tidslinje: För att ge en översikt över viktiga händelser i ditt liv, så erfarenheter som du känner har haft en stor inverkan på ditt liv och gjorda val
- Vissa använder det som ett verktyg för att kunna minnas olika delar, vissa tycker om att rita och andra bara skriva, så helt upp till dig vad du föredrar.
- Inget ett rätt sätt! Kan bygga under intervjens gång
- MALLAR: Olika sätt att göra på - Föredrar någon av dessa?? Annars blankt
- Så om du skulle kunna börja med, som en första referenspunkt, att markera här, om du minns, den första gången du någonsin kom i kontakt med polisen?

- Bakgrund och vägen till criminalitet
  - OK, så om du skulle kunna berätta för mig, i dina egna ord, hur ditt liv såg ut fram till den här tiden, så ungefär upp till [ÅR/DATUM FRÅN TIDSLINJEN]?
    - Områden att täcka/prata om:
      - Barndom, upprostran och allmän hemmiljö
        Hur var det att växa upp för dig?
      - Erfarenheter av skolgång
        Vad minns du mest från din skoltid?
      - Kompisar
        Berätta lite om personer som du umgicks med runt den här tiden?
      - Om relevant: kontakt med socialen (enbart om deltagaren har nämnt kontakt)
        Hur var den erfarenheten för dig?
        Generellt: Minns du den tiden som en lycklig tid i ditt liv?

- Erfarenheter och åsikter om brottslighet och kontakt med rättssystemet
  - Så om vi nu går vidare från din barndom och de åren, kan du berätta lite mer i detalj vad som hände den där första gången omkring [ÅR/DATUM FRÅN TIDSLINJEN] när du först ökade fast?
    - Områden att täcka/prata om:
      - Erfarenhet av polis och den straffrättsliga processen
        - Om du kommer du ihåg den där första erfarenheten - hur tyckte du att polisen behandlade dig?
      - Erfarenhet av domstolsbeslut och påföljd
        - Kan du berätta lite om vad som hände efter att du hade åkt fast, vad var konsekvenserna?
        - Tycker du att påföljden var rättvis/rörlig?
      - Livsriktning efter den initiala erfarenheten av brott och straff
        - Hur, från ditt eget perspektiv, påverkade den här erfarenheten ditt liv?
      - Förtroende för rättvisväsendet
        - Hur skulle du beskriva din erfarenhet med polisen och rättvisväsendet?
        - Vilka ord skulle du använda att beskriva det svenska rättssystemet?
      - Personliga åsikter om faktorer som påverkade och valmöjligheter
        - Skulle du kunna beskriva för mig hur en typisk dag kunde se ut för dig runt den här tiden i ditt liv?
        - Varför du tror det hände just då?
          - I din egen åsikt, vad tror du, om något, kunde ha fått dig att göra andra val runt den här tiden i ditt liv?
• **Privatliv**
  - Om vi nu vänder oss mer till ditt privatliv, kan du berätta lite om hur det har sett ut för dig genom åren?
    - Områden att täcka/prata om:
      - Relationer med familj och partners
        - Anser du att någon av dessa relationer har haft en tydlig inverkan på dina valmöjligheter?
        - Skulle du beskriva dina relationer som jämställda?
      - Barn
      - Droger och alkohol
        - Anser du att droger och/eller alkohol har påverkat dina livsval på något betydande sätt?

• **Vägen ut**
  - Så detta tar oss nu till den sista delen av intervjun och här kommer vi att fokusera mer på senare erfarenheter i ditt liv. Om du kanske skulle kunna börja med att berätta hur det kom sig att du kom i kontakt med KvinnoKRAMI?
    - Områden att täcka/prata om:
      - Vändpunkter
      - Hålla sig borta från kriminalitet: Utmaningar och motiverande faktorer
        - Skulle du kunna berätta för mig vilka faktorer som du känner påverkar dina chanser att fortsätta uppehålla från brott? Utmaningar? Motivation?
      - Fria arbetsmarknaden
        - Tycker du att det känns viktigt för dig att arbeta? Varför?
      - Hypotetisk fråga:
        - Om du skulle vara politisk rådgivare för en dag, vad skulle du säga till dem skulle vara det bästa sättet att hjälpa någon som var i en liknande situation som dig själv att ta andra val och kanske undvika att gå igenom det som du har?
      - Något att tillägga som vi inte har pratat om?
        - Känner du att det vill något som vi inte har pratat om, men som du känner har varit en viktig del av ditt liv?

• **Avsluta intervjun: Framtidsutsikter**

**TIMELINE:**
- Skulle du kunna dela med dig av dina drömmar och förhopningar för framtiden?  
  Var ser du dig om 5 år från nu?

---

**ETT VÄLDIGT STORT TACK FÖR ATT DU TOG DIG TID ATT DELA DINA LEVNADSBERÄTTELSELSER MED MIG — DET ÄR ETT OTROLIGT VÄRDEFULLT BIDRAG TILL MITT PROJEKT!**
Del 3: Demo formulär
   - Stäng av bandspeletaren. Innan vi runder av...

Del 4: Runda av
   - Fråga hur deltagaren upplevde intervjunprocessen
     ○ Uppmuntra kommentarer och feedback
   - Ge ut kuvert och förklara vad som finns i det:
     ○ Ett tackkort och ett presentkort till ett värde av 100kr
     ○ Kopia av informationsbladet - så där finns mina kontaktuppgifter (för gärna fyll in denna kort igen i framtiden om det skulle komma upp några frågor)
     ○ Ett informationsblad med kontaktpersoner som jobbar med kvinnor.
       Om något som vi har diskuterat i intervjun som du skulle vilja prata med någon om vid senare tillfälle, så finns det där.
   - Slutligen: Skulle det vara ok att ta kontakt med dig igen i så fall?? Verkligen inget krav, utan helt upp till dig! [OM OK – NOTERA EN EMAIL ADRESS ELLER ETT TELEFONNUMMER, BEROENDE PÅ VAD SOM FÖREDRAS AV DELTAGAREN]

TACK - INTERVJUN AVSLUTAD!
327


from your @
look forward to hearing
- to read this Information sheet
Thank you for taking the time

if you have any questions or comments, please contact me:
L.A. Osterman@surry.ac.uk

please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or comments regarding this study. please also ensure that you have read all of the information provided.

i would also encourage you to take part in my research by completing the attached questionnaire.

please let me know if you would like to participate in this study.

thank you for your time.

research information sheet

why do i want you to participate in this study?

i am interested in researching the impact of mental health on individuals and how this may affect their daily lives.

i am conducting this study in order to gain a better understanding of mental health and its effects on individuals.

this study is being conducted at surry university and is approved by the university's ethics committee.

i will be collecting data through questionnaires and interviews.

i will be paying participants for their time.

i would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

thank you for your time.
Vad händer med informationen efter intervjun?


Hur kommer informationen att förvaras och under hur länge?

All information kommer att förvaras under sekretess i enlighet med Data Protection Act 1998. Allt material kommer att avidentifieras innan arkivering och kopior kommer att förvaras i ett låst urvalskap eller i en lösenordsbegränsad databas. I enlighet med Surrey Universitetets regelverk så kommer all information att arkiveras under 10 års tid efter studiens avslutande och kommer sedan att förstöras.

Vem finansierar den här studien och har den genomgått etisk granskning?

Den här forskningen är finansierad av The Economic and Social Research Council i Storbritannien, via Surrey Universitet. Den etiska kommittén på Surrey Universitet har granskat studien och gett den en positiv etisk beslutsfattning.

HAR DU PERSONLIGA ERFARENHETER AV Brott och STRAFF?

- Är du kvinna och över 18 år?
- Har du blivit dömd för ett brott vid mer än ett tillfälle i ditt liv?
- Lever du nu ett liv utan kriminalitet?
- Skulle du kunna tänka dig att dela med dig av dina livserfarenheter på ett anonymt och tryggt sätt?

I SÅ FALL SKULLE JAG GÅRNA VILJA PRATA MED DIG!
Informationsblad för forskningsdeltagare

Stories Across Borders: How female ex-offenders make sense of their journey through crime and criminal justice in cross-national contexts


Vad är syftet med den här studien?
Syftet med den här studien är att jämföra hur och varför vissa kvinnor blir involverade i brott och hur de upplever det straffriktiga systemet i Sverige och England. Jag är också intresserad av att veta mer om hur vågen ut från kriminalhålet kan se ut för kvinnor i dessa två länder. Förhoppningsvis kan resultaten från denna studie bidra till en ökad förståelse av varför vissa kvinnor blir involverade i brott under vissa perioder av deras liv, och även hur vi kan hjälpa dem när de blir involverade.

Vad skulle det innebära för mig om jag skulle välja att delta?
Om du bestämmer dig för att delta i detta projekt kommer du att delta underomtiden med jämna intervjuer, vilka kommer att ta omkring två timmar per intervju. Intervjuerna kommer att omfatta olika frågor om dina erfarenheter och hur du tycker om det straffhålet. Det kommer att ta några timmar, men det är inte avsevärt."
Appendix 11.3

Ethical documents

The following ethics documents are appended:

- **11.3.1 Ethical approval**
  - p. 332: Confirmation favourable ethical opinion for project: EC/2012/92 FAHS, University of Surrey, Ethics Committee, Sep. 2012
  - p. 333: Confirmation favourable ethical opinion of amendments to ethics protocol for project: EC/2012/92 FAHS, University of Surrey, Ethics Committee, April 2013

- **11.3.2 Risk assessments**
  - p. 334: Copy of risk assessment for project (Sep. 2012):
    EC/2012/92 FAHS
    EC/2012/92 FAHS
Ethics Committee

Ma Linnéa Osterman
School of Sociology
FAHS

25 September 2012

Dear Ms Osterman

Stories Across Borders: How female ex-offenders make sense of their journey through crime and criminal justice in cross-national contexts EC/2012/62/FAHS

On behalf of the Ethics Committee, I am pleased to confirm a favourable ethical opinion for the above research on the basis described in the submitted protocol and supporting documentation.

Date of confirmation of ethical opinion: 25 September 2012

The final list of documents reviewed by the Committee is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed protocol for the project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information sheet for participants (with translation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consent form (with translation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Process and Topic Guide (with translation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment advert</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zurich Municipal confirmation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This opinion is given on the understanding that you will comply with the University’s Ethical Guidelines for Teaching and Research. If the project includes distribution of a survey or questionnaire to members of the University community, researchers are asked to include a statement advising that the project has been reviewed by the University’s Ethics Committee.

If you wish to make any amendments to your protocol please address your request to the Secretary of the Ethics Committee and attach any revised documentation.

The Committee will need to be notified of adverse reactions suffered by research participants, and if the study is terminated earlier than expected with reasons. Please be advised that the Ethics Committee is able to audit research to ensure that researchers are abiding by the University’s requirements and guidelines.

You are asked to note that a further submission to the Ethics Committee will be required in the event that the study is not completed within five years of the above date.

Please inform me when the research has been completed.

Yours sincerely

Alison Cummins
Secretary, University Ethics Committee
Academic Registry
30 April 2013

Dear Ms Ostasman

Stories Across Borders: How female ex-offenders make sense of their journey through crime and criminal justice in cross-national contexts EC/2012/92/FAHS

I am writing to inform you that the Chairman, on behalf of the Ethics Committee, has considered the Amendments requested to the above protocol and has approved them on the understanding that the Ethical Guidelines for Teaching and Research are observed. Please be advised that the Ethics Committee is able to audit research to ensure that researchers are abiding by the University requirements and guidelines.

If the project includes distribution of a survey or questionnaire to members of the University community, researchers are asked to include a statement advising that the project has been reviewed by the University’s Ethics Committee.

Date of confirmation of ethical opinion: 25 September 2012.

Date of favourable ethical opinion of amendment to protocol: 30 April 2013.

The list of amended documents reviewed and approved by the Chairman is as follows:

- Revised Detailed Project Protocol
- Risk assessment
- Recruitment adverts

Yours sincerely

Alison Cummings
Secretary, University Ethics Committee
Risk Assessment

**Project Title:** Stories Across Borders: How female ex-offenders make sense of their journey through crime and criminal justice in cross-national contexts

**Researcher:** Linnéa Osterman

This research project is not deemed to present a high risk overall. However, careful precautions will be adopted in order to ensure that all potential ethical and safety risks have been considered and measures and procedures put in place to limit any impact of such to both participants and the researcher. It is important to note that the female participants in this study are not deemed to be vulnerable adults, though it is highly likely that the interviews will include some sensitive topics (as defined by the ESRC's Framework for Research Ethics, 1.2.3). The interviews will furthermore be conducted within an organisational context that provides support to the participating women and direct referral routes to a variety of support are available if this would be needed. All of the ethical considerations are underpinned by a critical humanistic value framework founded on respect, human dignity, honesty, sympathy, and social justice.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical Consideration</th>
<th>Person at Risk</th>
<th>Scale of Risk</th>
<th>Existing Protocols</th>
<th>Additional Mechanisms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Right to choice and self-determination | Participant   | Low           | ▪ Valid consent to participation by non-vulnerable adult  
▪ Participant has the right to withdraw at any stage of the research without explanation or justification | ▪ Researcher will emphasise that participant’s involvement in the research is completely separate from her engagement with the service provider through which contact was facilitated |
| Informed consent                   | Participant   | Low           | ▪ Informed consent by non-vulnerable adult based on full explanation of what participation entails  
▪ The researcher will encourage questions from the participant to ensure consent is informed in all possible aspects  
▪ Proficient linguistic abilities in Swedish or English to provide independent and informed consent by the participant is an inclusion requirement | ▪ Consent will be regarded as an ongoing process and the researcher will ask for the participant’s consent to continue at a number of points during the interview, especially if sensitive topics arise  
▪ The organisations that will facilitate contact with participants are closely familiar with their life situations and will uphold some control over which women are |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional distress to the participant during and/or after the interview</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Medium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The participant will be reminded that the interview can be stopped whenever they wish, either temporarily for a comfort break or on a permanent basis&lt;br&gt;• The participant will also be reminded, on an ongoing basis, that they uphold the right not to discuss/share any aspect of their life without penalty</td>
<td>• The interviews will be conducted within an organisational context that provides support to the participating women and direct referral routes to emotional support are available if this would be needed&lt;br&gt;• Contact details to local Women’s Support Networks will in addition be provided and participant initiative to make contact will be encouraged if so</td>
<td>• approached for the study. This is to provide additional safety protections of potential participant that they would consider not to currently be in a stable enough life-situation to provide independent valid consent for participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional distress to the researcher during and/or after the interview in connection with participant’s disclosures of severe harm/victimisation</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The researcher will have continuous contact with supervisors and discuss any potentially distressing emotions either via traditional phone line or alternatively, through online communication mediums such as Skype, whilst abroad.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The researcher will take part in ongoing debriefing sessions with other researchers working within similar settings. Participant anonymity and confidentiality would always be upheld in this context and the discussion will exclusively on the emotions personally experienced by the researcher.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- If the researcher would experience overwhelming emotion in the interview setting, deemed to impact on the quality of the data collection, she upholds the right to also ask for a short break before continuing the interview.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deletion of data from electronic equipment</th>
<th>Participant/Researcher</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The researcher is trained in the use of electronic equipment.</td>
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<td>- Copies of data will backed up on external, securely protected, USB.</td>
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<th>Low</th>
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| - The external USB with backed up data will be protected by fingerprint recognition and is
| Anonymity at all stages of the research project | Participant | Low | All data will be stored at a secure computer location accessible via a personal password only known to the researcher |
| Misrepresentation of views/experiences | Participant | Low | The only research tool that will contain the name of the respondent is the consent form. These forms will be stored in a separate location from the rest of the data in a securely locked filing cabinet |
| Maintenance of confidentiality | Participant/Researcher | Low | The participant maintains the right to review personal data, including transcripts, throughout the study and can ask to have all or parts of their interview data deleted if so wish. Reviews of transcripts will not automatically be offered but will be made available if the participant requests for this. |
| Maintenance of confidentiality | Participant/Researcher | Low | Valid informed consent will be obtained. |
| Maintenance of confidentiality | Participant/Researcher | Low | Maintenance of right to confidentiality |
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| Maintenance of confidentiality | Participant/Researcher | Low | The researcher will clearly explain the rare exceptions to the rule of confidentiality (as
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<th>Impact</th>
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<td>If the participant would make the request to see the interview transcript this will be emailed to her upon completion. The participant thus upholds the right to ask for a part or parts of the interview data to be deleted if she so wishes.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Participant/Researcher</th>
<th>Risk Level</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Publication/dissemination will harm the researcher/research participant  | Participant/Researcher | Low        | - All data will be anonymised and pseudonyms used for any identifiable features, including individuals, places and/or names of associated organisations  
- A summary of the findings will be made available to the participants upon completion of the project and comments welcomed | - For the researcher experience, only material suitable for the public domain will be included in any material for potential dissemination |
<p>| Provision of the researcher's personal mobile number to participants      | Researcher             | Low        | - The researcher will give out a mobile number to the participants (one in Sweden and one in England) in case of further contact would be sought, including questions about participant's involvement in the study that may arise after the interview | - A pay-as-you-go mobile number will be obtained in both Sweden and in England which will explicitly be used for contact with participants. If either of these numbers would be abused by a participant, the researcher would discard the number and obtain a new one |</p>
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<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Low</th>
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<td><strong>In these situations the researcher will follow the safe practice guidance issued by the University of Surrey</strong></td>
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<td><strong>The interviews will take place in staffed premises</strong></td>
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<td><strong>The researcher will ensure to always sit at a position closest to the door during the interviews and will terminate the interview and leave the room if feeling under any type of threat</strong></td>
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Risk Assessment

Project Title: Stories Across Borders: How female ex-offenders make sense of their journey through crime and criminal justice in cross-national contexts

Researcher: Linnéa Osterman

This research project is not deemed to present a high risk overall. However, careful precautions will be adopted in order to ensure that all potential ethical and safety risks have been considered and measures and procedures put in place to limit any impact of such to both participants and the researcher. It is important to note that the female participants in this study are not deemed to be vulnerable adults, though it is highly likely that the interviews will include some sensitive topics (as defined by the ESRC’s Framework for Research Ethics, s.1.2.3). All of the ethical considerations are underpinned by a critical humanistic value framework founded on respect, human dignity, honesty, sympathy, and social justice.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical Consideration</th>
<th>Person at Risk</th>
<th>Scale of Risk</th>
<th>Existing Protocols</th>
<th>Additional Mechanisms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right to choice and self-</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>▪ Valid consent to participation by non-vulnerable adult</td>
<td>▪ Researcher will emphasise that participant’s involvement in the research is</td>
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<td>determination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Participant has the right to withdraw at any stage of the research without</td>
<td>completely separate from her engagement with any service organisation that she may</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>explanation or justification</td>
<td>have contact with</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informed consent</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>▪ Informed consent by non-vulnerable adult based on full explanation of what</td>
<td>▪ Consent will be regarded as an ongoing process and the researcher will ask</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>participation entails</td>
<td>for the participant’s consent to continue at a number of points during the interview,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ The researcher will encourage questions from the participant to ensure consent</td>
<td>especially if sensitive topics arise</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>is informed in all possible aspects</td>
<td>▪ In the case of access being sought via ex-offending organisations, the ‘gatekeepers’</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Proficient linguistic abilities in Swedish or English to provide independent and</td>
<td>will uphold some control over which women are approached for the</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>informed consent by the participant is an inclusion requirement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional distress to the participant during and/or after the interview</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>The majority of interviews will be conducted within an organisational context that provides support to the participating women and direct referral routes to emotional support are available if this would be needed. The participant will be reminded that the interview can be stopped whenever they wish, either temporarily for a comfort break or on a permanent basis. The participant will also be reminded, on an ongoing basis, that they uphold the right not to discuss/share any aspect of their life without penalty. Contact details to local Women’s Support Networks will in addition be provided and participant initiative to make contact will be encouraged if so. In the case of...</td>
<td>study. This is to provide additional safety protections of potential participant that they would consider not to currently be in a stable enough life-situation to provide independent valid consent for participation.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Emotional distress to the researcher during and/or after the interview in connection with participant’s disclosures of severe harm/victimisation</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>• The researcher will have continuous contact with supervisors and discuss any potentially distressing emotions either via traditional phone line or alternatively, through online communication mediums such as Skype, whilst abroad. The researcher will take part in ongoing debriefing sessions with other researchers working within similar settings. Participant anonymity and confidentiality would always be upheld in this context and the discussion will exclusively be on the emotions personally experienced by the researcher.</td>
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<td>Deletion of data from electronic equipment</td>
<td>Participant/Researcher</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>- If the researcher would experience overwhelming emotion in the interview setting, deemed to impact on the quality of the data collection, she upholds the right to also ask for a short break before continuing the interview</td>
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<td>Valid informed consent will be obtained. Maintenance of right to confidentiality. Make clear throughout the research process that personal data, which is given in an individual setting, cannot be discussed or shared with others in or out of the field. Any discussion of participant data, including with project supervisors, will with be held on an absolute anonymous basis. The researcher will clearly explain the rare exceptions to the rule of confidentiality (as laid out under s.55 of the Data Protection Act 1998) in detail before obtaining consent.</td>
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