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Nothing to lose?

A constructed grounded theory of loss in the lives of young people who offend



Vicky Butterby (nee Meaby) - Doctoral Thesis

Departments of Sociology and Geography - Durham University

December 2018

Abstract

Links between young people's exposure to adversity and their offending behaviour have been widely researched within academia, but investigation into loss in the lives of young people who offend is extremely limited, particularly within community youth justice. Little is known about the impact of loss upon offending behaviours, or how young people feel or respond to loss. Using O'Neill's (2002) ethno-mimesis (a fusion of art, storytelling and ethnography) and Charmaz's (2000) Constructivist Grounded Theory, my research begins to address these gaps in knowledge. I undertook fieldwork across two distinct areas of North East England, working with young people and practitioners at Youth Offending Teams, community arts venues and a Local Authority Study Programme. Findings revealed the pervasive, often disenfranchised nature of loss in young people's lives, with loss of childhood, loss of opportunity and loss of agency of particular concern. In these situations offending became a viable way to make meaning from loss. This was particularly apparent in the absence of a caring and trusted pro-social adult, and/ or where young people had communication or emotional literacy difficulties. Offending also enabled marginalised young people opportunity to form connections and construct meaningful identities during, and in the aftermath, of loss.

This research is unique. It discusses where connections with existing research, policy and practice might be made in relation to how loss is conceptualised and responded to within youth justice; offers fresh theoretical insight from a British perspective into marginalised young people's experiences of loss; shares how ethno-mimetic engagement has potential to enable fresh perspectives and encourage new ways of thinking about loss and emphasises the importance of understanding young lives from an intersectional perspective. Continuing to increase our understanding of loss in the lives of young people who offend is vital; for young people themselves, and for those who support them.



Image credit: *'Nobody should have to carry a coffin at 15 [years]'*

Sam, aged 17.

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Signed:

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Glossary of key terms

ASB	Anti-social behaviour. According to the Crime and Disorder Act (1998:1a), ASB involves acting in a manner that has 'caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household'.
Asset	Youth justice assessment tool developed in 2005 and used until 2012. From 2012 onwards, Asset has been gradually phased out by Asset Plus.
Asset Plus	Youth justice assessment tool developed in 2012. Asset Plus is presently used by most YOTs in England and Wales.
Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2000)	A methodological approach to research that focuses upon inductive, largely qualitative enquiry. Theory is constructed during time spent in the field and the researcher's presence and positionality is taken into account. 'Knowledge' is regarded as subjective and 'truth' as relative.
Early Intervention and Prevention/ Early Help	Teams tasked with providing early identification and support for families deemed to be at risk of poor outcomes. For example, these teams might work with young people displaying ASB or who are not attending school in the hope of preventing their future involvement with offending.
Electively Home Educated	A term used to describe a parent or carer's decision to educate their child at home instead of sending them to school. In these instances, learning may take place in a variety of environments (not just at home) but the child is not registered with any official educational establishment.
Emotional Literacy	The ability to understand and identify one's own emotions, express emotion and listen to and empathise with others.
ESBD	Emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. In E/W young people may be statemented with ESBD under statutory SEND guidelines.
Ethno-mimesis (O'Neill, 2002)	A methodological approach to research that combines ethnography, storytelling and creative practice as a way of understanding and (re)presenting lived experience.

LAC	Looked after child. There are two main ways young people become 'looked after', accommodation under section 20 of the Children's Act 1989 or being made subject to a Care Order under section 31 of the Children's Act 1989. Young people remanded into custody or who receive a Supervision Order and are placed in the care of the local authority are also deemed to be LAC.
Preventions	Interventions put in place by YOTs before a young person receives a criminal record. For example a young person receiving a caution may be referred to Preventions and work undertaken to support future desistance.
Scaled Approach	The scaled approach uses a scoring mechanism derived from youth justice assessment to determine the intensity of intervention for young people who offend.
SpLC difficulties	Speech, language and communication difficulties.
SEND	Special Educational Needs or Difficulties.
YJB	Youth Justice Board. An independent body responsible for the oversight of YOTs in England and Wales.
YOT	Youth Offending Team. YOTs are multi-agency organisations coordinated by the Local Authority and overseen by the YJB. YOTs primarily work with young people who offend. They may also work with young people at risk of offending, or those committing ASB.
YJS	Youth Justice System. Established in 1998 to respond to young people under 18 years of age who are deemed to have broken the law. The YJS includes youth courts and youth offending teams.
YOT Manager	Anyone working within the YOT with strategic oversight of case management and/ or other managerial responsibilities.
YOT Officer	Anyone working within the YOT with direct responsibility for individual case management.
YOT Practitioner	Anyone working within the YOT (with or without direct responsibility for case management)
YOT Worker ¹	Anyone working within the YOT who does not have direct responsibility for case management (e.g. reparation team; programmes coordinator; administrative team; health and wellbeing workers; education workers).

¹ This term is used within my thesis as a way of distinguishing between those with and without case management responsibility e.g. when direct quotes are shared. Generally I use the term YOT Practitioner.

Introduction



Image credit: 'Hang Tough'. Danny, aged 11.

Are you good at imagining?

Good. Then close your eyes and imagine.

You're in care, away from your family and your friends,

And you're in there,

And they just don't listen to you or take you seriously,

Wouldn't you go?

See when you imagine,

You know what it's like.

(Danny, aged 11).

The words above are what 11 year old Danny asked me to do as we were hanging upside down on the monkey bars together. I was trying to get to the bottom as to why he kept running away and why, at such a young age, he had become involved in offending. The research presented within this thesis explores loss in the lives of young people who offend, using O'Neill's (2002) ethno-mimesis (a fusion of art, storytelling and ethnography) to further our understanding of how loss operates within the everyday lives and practices of those known to Youth Offending Teams (YOT's) and, or Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) services.

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to provide context and background, including my research rationale, theoretical framing and the gaps in current knowledge and practice I have endeavoured to highlight and address within this work. I outline my working definition of loss, comparing this with how loss has traditionally been conceptualised within contemporary youth justice. In comparing these alternate understandings, I reveal how epistemological and terminological discrepancies create gaps in policy and practice, revealing an explicit need for critical enquiry regarding young people's experiences of loss. I conclude this chapter by looking ahead, outlining the structure and layout of my work and providing a brief overview of each chapter.

Research rationale

I have worked in the education sector under various guises since 2005. During this time I have been privileged to work with young people from all walks of life, including those on the receiving end of court orders or other youth justice interventions. Over the years many involved in offending have told me stories about their lives, from snippets shared at bus stops to detailed accounts of everyday lives and practices. The range and scope of stories shared have been as varied as the narrators themselves; some have made me laugh, others have been deeply moving. Despite these differences, I nevertheless began to notice a recurring undercurrent that swirled deep within young people's stories; an undercurrent of loss. Initially I noticed this in the context of bereavement, as young people time and again alluded to those close to them who had died. But upon further reflection I became attuned to other forms of loss as they percolated through young people's narratives; parental divorce and separation, estrangement from family and friends, school exclusion, loss of space and place, loss of innocence, loss of rights, loss of voice. I began to wonder

about the prevalence of loss in the lives of young people who offend, and whether young people's experiences of loss and their offending behaviours were intertwined or incidental. But considering loss in this way created a conundrum, as conceptually loss is afforded very little room in contemporary youth justice policy or practice. Accordingly, youth justice assessment does not foreground loss, leaving youth offending team officers (YOT Officers) little opportunity during assessment to extrapolate, explore or record potential connections between loss and young people's offending behaviour. I pondered this for a while, I brought it up in meetings. I wondered whether a better understanding of loss and its implications might help YOTs respond more effectively to young people's offending behaviour and support their desistance from crime. But was loss really all that prevalent in young people's lives and did the experiences of young people who offend differ in any way from the experiences of those who did not have contact with the YOT? If loss was important, what might loss informed youth justice look like and how might it be articulated in practice? It was my continual consideration of these issues, particularly during my time as a teacher for Peasetown YOT, that stimulated my initial proposal for this research.

A lot has changed within youth justice since I first proposed this research. There has been a renewed acknowledgement of the role of trauma in young people's lives (Chard, 2017; HMIP, 2017; Halsey, 2017; YJB, 2017; Liddle et al, 2016; Fox et al, 2015), with trauma informed initiatives and practices beginning to take hold within some YOTs (YJB, 2017). Youth justice has become increasingly devolved under austerity measures, with individualised YOT and policing practices replacing standardised approaches and YOT reporting against national standards relaxed in favour of localised accountability measures (Taylor, 2016:12; YJB, 2013). Youth justice assessment practices have also been updated, with Asset Plus (YJB, 2012) gradually replacing Asset (YJB, 2008)² across England and Wales. Whilst arguably more holistic than its predecessor, Asset Plus nevertheless remains prescriptive and largely positivist in its design. As such, proceeding youth justice practice and

²ASSET (YJB, 2008) was the standardised assessment framework for assessing young people in contact with the YJS in England and Wales and contained distinct sections against which young people were assessed, including: offending behaviour, living arrangements, family and personal relationships, education, training and employment, neighbourhood, lifestyle, substance use, physical health, emotional and mental health, perception of self and others, thinking and behaviour, attitudes to offending, motivation to change, positive factors, indicators of vulnerability and indicators of serious harm to others. ASSET has since been replaced by ASSET Plus (YJB, 2012). According to Baker, (2012), Asset Plus allow more room for professional discretion.

intervention continues to be driven by a 'risk reduction rhetoric' (Smith, 2011; Case and Haines, 2009) as opposed to an understanding of young people who offend as children in need of care and support. This approach has been deeply contested in recent years, with some areas moving towards 'child first, offender second' ideologies (Case and Haines, 2015). Despite these generally welcome changes, the use of loss as a theoretical lens through which to understand young people's everyday lives and practices (including their offending behaviour) does not seem to occur. Herein lies a gap in knowledge that I believe needs to be addressed if we are to holistically support young people who offend.

As I hope to have made clear within these introductory paragraphs, motivation for undertaking this research stemmed directly from my experiences in practice with young people who offend and the stories they shared with me; to pretend otherwise would be deeply misleading. My overarching hope for this research project however was not to 'prove' a hypothesis regarding potential relationships between loss and offending. Instead I aimed to ascertain and present new knowledge and fresh ways of thinking about young people's lives and circumstances that could potentially contribute towards shaping a Youth Justice System (YJS) that best serves those within it.

Gaps in knowledge; loss as a missing component of youth justice discourse

Loss is a tricky concept to slot within the current configurations of youth justice practice. This is the case for several reasons: Firstly, the medicalisation of loss and grief within both academic literature and popular culture situates loss within the realm of specialist intervention as opposed to more holistic, universal forms of support (Thompson and Cox, 2017; Weber, 2017; Ribbens McCarthy, 2006; Thompson, 2002). In this sense grief has largely been coupled with bereavement and considered as a negative state that must be 'treated' by specialists, particularly where grief responses are deemed to be prolonged or where grief does not conform to socio-cultural norms or socially accepted practices (Boelen, Smid and Geert, 2017; Rando, 1993). Secondly, there is a lack of coherence in language and terminology pertaining to loss so young people's experiences may be difficult to conceptualise this way. Finally, the segregation of welfare from risk in much youth justice practice (Smith, 2005) leaves loss awkwardly straddling the chasm between the two before ultimately falling between the cracks of predetermined assessment

protocol. I constructed the memo³ (Charmaz, 2014) below as a visual representation of this last point, drawing attention to the disconnect between risk and welfare within youth justice assessment and intervention and how subsequently the potential significance of loss in young people's lives may become lost within such a polarised system.



Image credit: *Memo exploring risk, welfare and loss .*

Linking what we already know with what we need to know

Links between young people's offending behaviour and adverse life situations have been widely researched within criminology (Farrington, 2003, 1997; Campbell and Harrington, 2000; Sampson and Laub, 1994; Agnew, 1992; Kolvin et al, 1988; Bowlby, 1944; Merton, 1938). However as Judith Murray (2001) pointed out nearly twenty years ago, explicit investigation into young people's experiences of loss in relation to their offending behaviour was (and remains) extremely limited. As such, little is known about the impact of loss upon offending behaviours, or how young people who offend feel, think or respond to loss. Historically, loss research has largely been conducted within medical and psychological disciplines, generating a largely quantitative driven individualistic discourse that firstly pathologises grief and secondly pays scant attention to experiences of loss or expressions of grief as situated within their wider socio-cultural contexts (Thompson and Cox, 2017;

³ I used written and cartooned memos as suggested by constructivist grounded theorist (CGT) Charmaz (2014) throughout the research process, as a way of documenting emerging thought processes, as a way of asking questions in relation to existing literature and my own fieldwork and as an additional means of making my own meaning from the research process as a whole.

Thompson et al, 2016). From a British perspective, where loss is discussed within cross disciplinary, sociological or criminological literature, it tends to be presented as a subsidiary finding emerging from research focusing upon other areas of young people's lives (for example Sharpe's 2012 work on offending girls, Henderson and colleagues' 2007 work on transitions and MacDonald and Marsh's 2005 exploration of life in Britain's poor neighbourhoods).

On the rare occasion where loss and offending are explicitly addressed within academic research, focus tends to fall almost exclusively upon bereavement (Hester and Taylor, 2011; Vaswani, 2008; Finlay and Jones, 2000), with less consideration given to the deeper narratives of loss or to loss as a multi-faceted entity permeating multiple aspects of young people's lives, including (potentially) their engagement in offending behaviour (Vaswani's 2015 research into the multiple loss experiences of young men in custody is a notable exception). Existing research also almost exclusively comes from young people situated within custodial as opposed to community youth justice settings (Vaswani, 2018a; 2015; 2014; Gray, 2015; Murray, 1999; Boswell, 1996) or focus is upon adult offenders reflecting back on their lives (Halsey, 2017; Boswell, 1996).

With a couple of notable British exceptions, (Read, Santatzoglou and Wrigley, 2018; Vaswani 2018a, 2018b, 2015, 2014, 2008; Ribbens McCarthy, 2006, Thompson, 2002) and Murray's (2016) work within an Australian context, the vast majority of academic work on loss hails from North America. Whilst much of this work stems from psychological and medical disciplines, there is also a growing body of North American and British scholarship that recognises a need to shift from medicalised (thus largely positivist) perceptions of loss and grief towards relativist understandings (Thompson and Cox, 2017; Thompson et al, 2016; Thompson, 2002) that: foster inter-disciplinary knowledge (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006); move away from narrow, bereavement driven definitions of loss to more nuanced considerations (Henley, 2018; Read and Santatzoglou, 2018; McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016; Murray, 2016; Doka 2002; Thompson, 2002); encourage a shift from positivist, pathological explanations of loss and grief towards constructivist understandings (Thompson et al, 2016; Charmaz, 2014) and situated knowledge's (Haraway, 1998); seek to understand loss within in relation to socio-cultural context (Thompson et al, 2016; Ribbens McCarthy, 2006). It is within these relatively contemporary, social

constructivist understandings of loss that I situate my own research. As such, the contributions to knowledge I offer pertaining to young people's experiences of loss, YOT responses to loss and potential implications for youth justice policy and practice have each been constructed with this particular research ethos in mind.

But what of methodology? Whilst the shift towards relativist understandings of loss and grief feels welcome and timely, methodologically, research in this area still tends to be heavily interview focused (see for example Vaswani, 2015; MacDonald and Shildrick, 2012; Ribbens McCarthy, 2006) with less focus on ethno-mimetic practices as a way of generating understanding and insight. Where creative approaches have been used with young people who offend, especially in custodial settings, loss once again tends to emerge as a subsidiary theme (User Voice, 2011; Bilby, Caulfield and Ridley, 2013). This suggests creative process and production may serve as powerful exploratory tools, particularly when researching areas of young people's lives that may be painful and difficult to discuss verbally (Gray, 2015). Such approaches may also support those with speech, language and communication (SpLC) difficulties, emotional literacy difficulties or special educational needs and difficulties (SEND), prevalent concerns for many young people who offend (Gregory and Bryan, 2011; Bryan, Freer and Furlong, 2007). Finally, creative work may ease some of the power differentials between 'researcher' and 'researched' (Rose, 2016; O'Neill, 2012; Thompson, 2008; Liamputtong, 2007), differentials that may leave young people wary of engaging in taped interview processes.

Research aims

As discussed above, loss and its potential impact upon offending behaviour is a vastly under researched area of study. Filling these significant gaps in knowledge in relation to young people's experiences of loss is vital; for young people who offend and for those who support them. The overarching aim of this research therefore is to address gaps in current knowledge regarding how experiences of loss manifest and operate within the everyday lives and practices of young people who offend. In particular I explore three core concerns: the nature, extent and impact of loss in the lives of young people who offend; practitioner conceptualisations and responses to loss; the potential implications of young people's experiences of loss and practitioner responses for youth justice policy and practice. In addition to my overarching aim and three core concerns, my research also aims to: discuss where connections with

existing research, policy and practice might be made in relation to how loss is conceptualised and responded to within youth justice; offer fresh theoretical insight from a British perspective into marginalised young people's experiences of loss; share how ethno-mimetic engagement has potential to enable fresh perspectives and encourage new ways of thinking about loss; reveal how engagement in innovative and creative methodologies like ethno-mimesis has potential to support young people to make meaning from experience more generally, in research and in practice.

In order to achieve each of these aims, it was essential to spend time developing my understanding of young people's experiences from their own perspectives; a 'snatch and grab' approach to this research would have been unethical and ultimately fruitless. I also spent considerable amounts of time with youth justice practitioners, learning how they approached and addressed loss with young people on their caseloads. Working this way took time and patience, both imperative aspects of the research process in order to authentically and holistically understand how loss manifests within and affects young people's lives.

Impact

When I was teaching at Peasetown YOT an old poster stained yellow with age and peeling at its edges was stuck haphazardly on our office wall. The poster read *'if you do what you always do, you'll get what you always get'*. Whilst simply put, it was a message that resonated - my desire to create impact and affect change for young people who offend has continually driven this work. Impact and routes to impact within this study are therefore multi-faceted, with potential to influence policy, alter practice and most importantly, support young people who offend more effectively. Firstly, this work contributes much needed qualitative research and knowledge exchange between youth justice and academia. Secondly, my methodology centres the voices of marginalised young people, supporting them to tell their own stories, engage in creative processes and shape conversations with key stakeholders and wider audiences through the exhibition of their creative work and presentation of the stories they wanted to tell. Ethno-mimesis has not been utilised within community youth justice research before, and this different way of working may enable young people to 'recreate the complexity of lived relations in contemporary society' (O'Neill, 2002: 69) in more effective ways than more conventional research methods are able

to. Thirdly, my work enables YOT practitioners to reflect upon and share their own accounts of practice, considering how they conceptualise loss and how their own approaches to support are shaped by current policy, localised YOT practices and their own individualised understandings of loss. In this sense, my aim to connect young people's stories with practitioner reflections was to help initiate a symbiotic relationship between expression and action, where the generation of deeper insight into loss and emerging outcomes from young people's stories and practitioner reflections could in turn inform practitioners regarding appropriate interventions and approaches. The diagram below represents how this process might work in practice to generate impact and affect change.

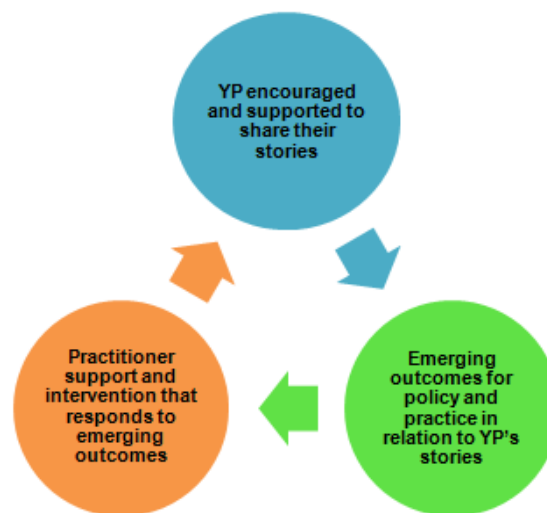


Figure 1.1: Using young people's stories as a way of generating impact and affecting change

This research therefore has potential to create impact for young people, YOT practitioners and anyone else invested in supporting young people who offend. I hope that my work will also have an impact upon policy makers, not only in relation to the development of desistance strategies but also in relation to how young people who offend are conceptualised and responded to in the first place, both within youth justice and within children's services more broadly. Adopting a loss informed model of youth justice practice as I propose within my conclusion might also lead to the creation and development of new interventions, or the generation of a 'best practice' toolkit for practitioners working with young people affected by loss. Ideas for best

practice could then be disseminated across YOTs and adapted to suit local context and individual need. In this way practitioners may feel better supported to acknowledge, validate and respond effectively to the specific needs of young people on their caseloads who are experiencing or affected by loss.

My research was funded by the Ustinov Foundation, and my work, like theirs, aims to champion young people's rights and support socially just practice. My work was funded as an anti-prejudice scholarship and I hope that the knowledge generated in relation to young people's experiences of loss may also help (through better understanding of the issues young people may be facing) alleviate prejudice against a marginalised group. On a practical level, my use of ethno-mimesis as a creative and participatory method may also help inform future working practices within the Ustinov Foundation and also within other services dedicated to supporting marginalised and stigmatised groups.

Deciding where to carry out my research

I conducted fieldwork within two local authority areas in the North East of England, Peasetown and Adlerville. Whilst similar at first glance, each area was demographically different (particularly in size and geographical makeup). Services for young people, including the YOT and ASB teams, were also organised and run in completely different ways (as evidenced by Peasetown and Adlerville's strategic YOT plans, 2016-2017). According to 2011 census data, Peasetown's population is estimated at 105,564. The mean age of residents is 40 years old, with 91.6% born in England and 97.4% speaking English as their first language. The majority of residents identify as Christian, with no religion and Islam second and third most popular religious affiliations. Adlerville has nearly double the population of Peasetown, at 200,214. The mean population age is also 40, with 93.1% born in England and 97.1% speaking English as their first language. Like Peasetown, Christian and no religion were most commonly cited religious affiliations, although a large percentage of Britain's Orthodox Jewish population also live close to Adlerville's town centre. Peasetown is a relatively small, unitary local authority, with most residents living in urban areas. Adlerville in contrast is a large local authority, covering 55 square miles of land, two thirds of which is rural. Some areas of Adlerville are prosperous, although fifteen areas fall within the 10% most deprived areas of England and life expectancy is lower than the national average (Adlerville

Council, 2018). Peasetown also contains wards within the 10% most deprived areas of England and life expectancy is also lower than the national average, although a sharp contrast exists between Peasetown's most and least affluent wards (Public Health England, 2017).

Peasetown and Adlerville's YOT strategic plans (2016-17) reveal similarities and differences between each setting. In accordance with national trends, both YOTs reported decreases in first time entrants and reoffending rates, with fewer young people making and sustaining contact with the YJS over the past five years. There are noticeable differences in relation to each YOTs approach to diversion however, with Peasetown focusing heavily upon YOT intervention via restorative justice and pre-court disposals and Adlerville more closely aligned with family support and early intervention teams. As such, staff at Peasetown YOT were more likely to work with young people across the offending/ ASB spectrum whereas Adlerville staff tended to specialise in either post-court (including Referral Orders) or preventions cases. In both areas, the relatively small proportions of young people receiving post-court intervention were viewed as an increasingly complex group, with Adlerville reporting 'the current cohort are complex young people who have a range of needs which in most cases extends beyond the criminal justice system' (Adlerville youth justice strategic plan, 2016-17:9). Consistent with Smith and Gray's (2018) review of YOT strategic planning documents, Peasetown and Adlerville also set different visions and goals for their YOT services, with Peasetown's core aim centring around preventing offending and reoffending and the delivery of 'high quality, effective and safe youth justice services' (Peasetown Youth Justice Plan 2016-17:7) and Adlerville focusing more upon 'safeguarding and strengthening families' (Adlerville youth justice strategic plan, 2016-17:4).

The demographic and organisational differences between Adlerville and Peasetown made for interesting comparisons, and although this was not a comparative study, I felt it was important to explore young people's experiences in relation to the different contexts each location was able to offer. But why the North East of England? And why Peasetown and Adlerville specifically?

Although not originally from the North East, I have lived, worked and studied here for nearly fifteen years. As such, I feel a strong connection to the area, and having

worked in education settings here for over a decade, to its young people. I was previously employed at Peasetown YOT and remain employed by Peasetown local authority on a casual basis as a community learning tutor. I selected Peasetown as a research site because I believe that context is critical, and it was young people from Peasetown YOT whose stories inspired this research in the first place! Researching at Peasetown was also a highly practical option, travel was straightforward, and my employment within the local authority aided my access to young people, practitioners, data and systems. I decided upon Adlerville because at the time, it was the only local authority in the North East still running a bespoke arts programme for young people who offend. I was keen to utilise opportunities like this to work alongside young people as a fellow participant in a creative process, observing as well as facilitating sessions. Selecting two sites within the North East also meant I was able to immerse myself in the fieldwork process. Peasetown and Adlerville's relative proximity provided opportunity to work simultaneously in each area and make 'constant comparisons' (Charmaz, 2014) between and within each setting as fieldwork progressed. This would not have been viable had I decided to conduct research further afield or in research settings located in different areas of the country. Researching in the North East therefore felt both authentic and appropriate for the nature and style of research I wished to embark upon.

A final but important consideration in relation to my choice of fieldwork settings was that of my own positionality, particularly at Peasetown. My teacher status and former connections with the YOT afforded my entry for fieldwork, but returning as a researcher was very different from my teacher role. I began this research by attempting to separate my 'teacher' and 'researcher' identities. I end this research with an understanding and acceptance that for me this was an impossible task. I am one person, and although my teacher and researcher identities have asked questions of one another throughout the research process, ultimately each remains entwined around the other. Accordingly, I could not authentically contextualise this work or discuss my choice of settings without also highlighting my ever shifting 'teacher', 'researcher' positionality and my fluctuating 'outsider', 'insider' status (Stockdale, 2015; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Peshkin, 1988; Adler and Adler, 1987) as I worked with young people and practitioners across and between settings. These concepts are explored fully within my methodology chapter but warrant

acknowledgement from the offset if I am to effectively (and honestly) set the scene of this research.

Ontological beliefs, epistemological understandings and finding a methodological fit for my research

As discussed, the core aim of this research has been to explore the nature and extent of loss in the lives of young people who offend, including how young people define and make sense of loss in their lives, how youth justice practitioners frame and address loss within the context of their role, and the implications of each for youth justice policy and practice. It was important therefore to adopt a methodological approach that would be able to successfully explore this core aim, whilst also ensuring a fit with my own values about the nature and purpose of research with marginalised young people: that research is conducted *with* and not *on* young people; that the purpose of building knowledge is to help us better support, advocate for and meet young people's needs; that research must not further compound existing systems of prejudice and inequality; that research is a two way process between myself and those I am working with. With this in mind, it was important to give careful consideration to my methodological approach and the underpinning values of the research methods I selected. Linking my values with my research therefore meant embracing a methodology that fit within a relativist ontological paradigm where notions of truth and reality are subjective and open to interpretation (Braun and Clarke, 2013), alongside a constructivist epistemological understanding that our lived lives and society's responses to them are socially constructed (Charmaz, 2000; 2014; Berger and Luckmann, 1991) and knowledge is situated within the unique context of its construction. I believe therefore that research exploring young people's lived experiences should be undertaken in the knowledge that our ways of being and telling are affected by time, space, culture and society as they unfold around us. How we interpret past events also changes and evolves over time, depending upon the opinions we have been exposed to and how our stories have been shaped to fit the social constructions of life as we know it. As Picoult suggests:

'It is remarkable how events and truths can be reshaped, like wax that's sat too long in the sun. There is no such thing as a fact. There is only how you saw the fact in a given moment. How you reported the fact. How your brain

processed the fact. There is no extrication of the storyteller from the story.' (Picoult, 2017:368).

Holding these beliefs about the nature of knowledge and what indeed is knowable or unknowable lent itself to using a research methodology that championed inductive, qualitative approaches and adopting a theoretical framework that valued research conducted in this ethos. Approaching research this way also allowed space for me to be reflexive and adapt my work to the unique context and experiences of each young person, valuing and respecting the individual choices young people made regarding how they wished to share and represent their stories, (as opposed to adopting a standardised set of tests, tasks or control groups to be repeated verbatim with each research 'subject').

The methodology that felt the best fit for my work was Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) (Charmaz, 2000; 2014). Stemming from Grounded Theory (GT) (Glaser and Strauss, 2008/1967), CGT is a flexible methodological approach that enabled me to work holistically with young people, compare multiple data sets and construct findings in relation to my 'constant comparison' (Glaser and Strauss, 2008:101) of data. CGT has been instrumental in shifting GT methodologies from critical realism (Gorski, 2013; Bhaskar and Hartwig, 2010) to relativism, enabling multiple voices to be heard and valued and fully acknowledging the influence of the researcher upon every aspect of the research process. CGT's relativist underpinnings also fit well with the ethno-mimetic approaches I used to engage and support young people to tell and '(re)present' their stories (O'Neill, 2012) and as a way of constructing meaning from the multiple forms of data that were generated, collected, compared and analysed during fieldwork.

Adopting creative approaches to research

It was imperative that I found ways for young people to explore their experiences that felt safe, engaging and accessible. I was also painfully aware of the potential distress taped interviews might cause young people who had been interviewed by the police or by social services or for those with SpLC, emotional literacy or other SEND difficulties. The Criminal Justice System is no stranger to arts based intervention, especially at the more intense end of the spectrum, with several high profile organisations such as the National Alliance for Arts in the Criminal Justice System

(write to be heard, 2013), Arts Council England (the arts and young people at risk of offending, 2005) and the Koestler Trust (arts by offenders, 1962-present) undertaking work with young people in custodial settings, hosting art competitions and exhibiting art and drama by offenders in local and national galleries and theatres. Creative interventions, especially creative writing programmes, are also widely used within custodial settings and have been found to have a positive impact in relation to desistance from crime (Write to be heard, 2013). In order to demonstrate the impact of their work, arts based organisations are increasingly engaging with universities and independent researchers, embarking upon their own research into the benefits of engagement in the arts for offenders (e.g. Good Vibrations, 2015; National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance, 2013; Scottish Prison Arts, 2011).

Community YOTs are largely driven by assessment and intervention processes (HMIP et al, 2011). Nevertheless, creative work does occur, particularly at the point of intensive supervision and surveillance (ISS) where the YOT is obliged to utilise up to twenty five hours per week of a young person's time (YJB, 2013:31). Although there is little research to date in relation to the specific impact of arts based work with young people who offend in community settings, it is widely accepted that engagement in the arts encourages development of self-expression and reflection, (Albertson, 2015; Stuckey and Nobel, 2010; Hartz and Thick, 2005), which may in turn allow marginalised young people to make connections between their offending behaviours and other events within their lives, including loss. Arts work in community youth justice settings also provides young people with exposure to arts based practice and the opportunity to work creatively. This is particularly pertinent for young people who offend because:

When young people disconnect from mainstream society, not only do they often have a low level of literacy and numeracy skills, but they are denied opportunities to participate in the arts (Arts Council England, 2005:11).

Creative interventions therefore have the potential to become deeply impactful for young people who offend, helping them 'to make sense of what is and what has been happening in their lives' (O'Neill, Roberts and Sparkes, 2014:1). What is available however is highly dependent upon each individual YOT, including the

funding they have available for arts engagement, the extent to which such work is valued (as a holistic tool for creative exploration and as a strategy to support desistance), what is available locally and what is recommended by YOT Officers following assessment. Recent austerity measures have also resulted in funding cuts for many arts organisations (Knell and Taylor, 2011; Harvey, 2016), including YOT arts programmes. Adlerville for example was the only North East YOT still contracting a community artist to work with young people on a regular basis; funding cuts had restricted engagement for all other YOTs I approached. By the end of fieldwork Adlerville YOT's arts engagement programme had also been disbanded.

I hoped that by adopting creative approaches for research, I would not only be able to support the generation of some insightful (re)presentations of young people's experiences but also, in a small way, support and enable young people's access to and engagement in creative practice. It is important to note that my creative work with young people was not intended as a therapeutic intervention; I am not a qualified therapist and I was clear with young people, practitioners, parents and carers about the nature and purpose of creative work. I was aware however that engaging in creative work and storytelling practices with young people might act as a catalyst for them to make new or different meaning from their experiences, a process encouraged within social constructivist therapeutic approaches to exploring, understanding and living with loss (Thompson and Neimeyer, 2014). I was also aware that asking young people to open up about their lives through art and storytelling would be a new experience for many, with potential to compound vulnerability if not approached with care. It was vitally important therefore that young people were emotionally and practically supported throughout and beyond the research processes, by myself, by YOT staff and by other trusted practitioners, friends or family members.⁴

The importance of intersectionality in relation to young people who offend

Intersectional approaches were first developed by bell hooks (1982) and Crenshaw (1989) to highlight how racism and sexism combine to doubly oppress black and minority ethnic (BAME) women. Intersectionality has since been expanded to consider how other inequalities intersect and impact upon people's lives, including for example, the impact of heteronormativity and the patriarchy upon LGBTQ

⁴ I discuss this in detail alongside other ethical considerations arising from my work within my methodological chapter.

communities (Butler, 1990; Donovan & Hester, 2015). The Equality Act (2010) outlines nine specific protected characteristics upon the basis of which it is illegal to discriminate. Coming to this research from a practitioner background, I was already painfully aware of how inequalities intersect and compound to stigmatise and marginalise young people who offend; not just in relation to protected characteristics (including age, gender, disability, sexuality and race), but also in relation to socio-economic status, academic attainment, a young person's status as a looked after child (LAC), or their (recognised or unrecognised) status as a young carer. During research, in addition to these often intersecting inequalities, there were other power imbalances to address, including the power of the youth justice system (YJS) to monitor and control young people's behaviour via threats of court and custody (Smith, 2011; Case and Haines, 2013) and my own position of power as an adult working with young people (Liamputtong, 2007:3). It must also be acknowledged that I elected to undertake my research within a system that could be described as oppressive and prejudiced by design, particularly in relation to young people of lower socio-economic status (Barnardo's, 2017), LAC young people (Laming, 2016, Staines, 2016), young people with caring responsibilities (James, 2017) and (BAME) young people (Lammy, 2017). Taking an intersectional approach and becoming mindful in relation to the layers of oppression that mould and shape the everyday lives and experiences of young people who offend helped me to remember and explicitly acknowledge the time, energy and risks young people took by engaging in the research process with me. Working intersectionally also provided me with a better understanding of wider structural and societal constrictions that affect everyday experiences, restrict agency (Maynard and Stewart, 2018; Evans, 2007) and reduce opportunity for self efficacy (Bandura, 1994). Taking an intersectional approach also reminded me to treat people as individuals, rather than as homogenous groups who all experience phenomena in the same way (Butterworth, 2017) as well as giving equal credence to the multiple oppressions young people face (as opposed to focusing only on more overt oppressions) and understanding how these oppressions might intertwine and manifest within the context of young people's offending behaviours. With this in mind, taking an intersectional approach to research meant considering both pre-existing and potential power imbalances at each stage of the research process, particularly when working with those who held

less power and less privilege than me. It also meant taking action wherever possible to reduce the impact of inequality upon participants as we worked together.

Exposing the underbrush: understanding my positionality from an intersectional perspective

As well as working to understand the complex ways that various oppressive systems came together to affect the lives and circumstances of young people who offend, it was also important for me to reflect upon how I am affected by prejudice and privilege, referred to by Peshkin (1988:18) as 'situational subjectivity'. This shifted and changed according to who I was working with and in what context, although there were three reoccurring elements I continually considered. Firstly, whether or not to reveal my identity as a teacher, as many young people had been rejected by an education system of which I am part. Secondly, whether or not to reveal my sexuality, including when young people and practitioners asked questions about my home circumstances, or where they made assumptions about my partner's gender. Thirdly, how being a female researcher not privy to male privilege (Pini and Pease, 2013) affected the nature and scope of my research and the data I collected. There was potential for example that male participants might attempt to exert their masculinity over me, behaviour I was aware many would have witnessed men in their lives perpetrating over women of a similar age to me (Torbenfeldt Bengtsson, 2016). Conversely, I was also aware that male participants might want to shield me from the full extent of violence and abuse within their stories because of my gender (Barnes, 2013) and because in many cases, I was a similar age to their mothers.

The reflections above undoubtedly reveal that this research is unequivocally bounded and shaped by the unique context of my own life as well as by the lives and experiences of the young people and practitioners I worked with. I am fully in this research and therefore I affected its outcomes. Seeking out my own subjectivity and privilege at every stage of the research process thus became a crucial aspect of my work, particularly during work with marginalised young people. To this end I kept a research journal for the duration of this research, enabling me to critically reflect upon my own positionality and better understand and challenge my own biases as I developed, undertook, analysed and wrote up my research findings. Peshkin (1988:17) describes subjectivity as being 'like a garment that cannot be removed'. Being aware of this made it easier for me to find myself 'in the underbrush of my own prose' (Peshkin, 1988:20) and to scrutinise my own assumptions and interpretations

as well as check back with young people and practitioners as often as possible (Pain, Whitman and Milledge, 2012) to ensure I was representing their voices and not pushing my own agenda, misinterpreting what I had been told or observed or missing vital elements of the stories that were shared because of my own positionality or implicit bias' (Banaji and Greenwald, 2013).

Research practicalities, utilising the qualitative researcher's toolkit

To explore young people's experiences and practitioner responses to loss I utilised a range of research methods, including ethnographic work, engagement in creative practices, semi-structured interviews and document analysis⁵. During fieldwork I took a reflexive approach (Braun and Clarke, 2013), adapting and amending methods, sources and timescales in relation to what was available and what felt most authentic and comfortable for those sharing their stories and expertise. Vast amounts of data were generated from each of these sources, including detailed fieldnotes, critical reflection on the research process, visual and written 'memos' (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser and Straus, 1967), numerical data, assessment data, young people's creative work, young people's stories and transcribed practitioner interviews. I was able to manage this large and varied data set by following GCT processes of constant comparison (Charmaz, 2014), initially coding for action and process and then coding again for key themes pertaining to loss. From here I was able to adjust my data collection to explore particular themes and interesting ideas or questions as they arose until reaching a point of 'saturation' (Charmaz, 2014:213). At this point I was able to construct, explore and revise theory. This thesis represents a culmination of this work and presents my own, contextually unique constructed grounded theory; a constructed grounded theory grown from fieldwork and continually informed by young people and practitioners from Peasetown and Adlerville, from its inception to the final write up presented here.

Terminological trouble? Exploring loss in the lives of young people who offend through a socio-constructivist lens.

Loss as a concept comes with some complex philosophical underpinnings, which speak to the complexity of experiences that manifest within the lives of young people who offend. Here I attempt to highlight some of the questions that exploring loss in the lives of young people unearths, as well as explaining loss in relation to three

⁵ The methods I used to undertake this research are described in detail within my methodological chapter.

increasingly commonly cited terms within youth justice discourse, trauma, adversity and attachment. I then outline how I defined loss during my research and how I explored young people's stories in relation to this definition. I also explain how my use of loss as a theoretical framework for understanding both experience and action opened up space for rich and nuanced understandings of young people's lives and their offending behaviour.

As my research progressed, a series of questions about loss continually turned over in my head. I was not able to answer them all, but they each posed important theoretical and terminological considerations: Can you lose something you've never had? Does loss mean the same thing to different people? How does the intersectionality of young people's lives affect how they experience and frame loss within their own lives? Is loss an individual incident, a single moment in time that may or may not become a critical moment (Henderson et al, 2007; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005), or is loss more of a process, a continuation of experiences, reactions and sense making that is defined and redefined as young people move through space and time? What do notions of trauma, adversity and attachment have in common with loss? What happens if trauma signifies loss, yet loss does not always signify trauma? Can adversity be framed as a loss if this is all a young person has ever known? Is attachment a form of loss, or does attachment define our response to loss?

As previously explained, loss is not fore-grounded in youth justice policy or practice and where discussion does occur, it tends to fall within the realm of bereavement rather than in relation to loss as a multi-faceted entity or as a theoretical framework through which to explore young people's lives. Notions of trauma, adversity and attachment are however increasingly common within youth justice (and wider children's services) discourse. I'm regularly asked therefore why I decided to centre my research around young people's experiences of loss as opposed to using terminology more familiar to youth justice practice. Can loss not be defined in relation to trauma, adversity or attachment, and if so, would it not be sensible to focus my work around these existent frameworks for practice? Below I make the case for why I structured my research around loss as opposed to around attachment, adversity or trauma.

Current youth justice discourse: attachment, adversity and trauma informed practice

Despite loss rarely taking centre stage in youth justice policy or practice, the work of two influential individuals interested in loss and separation has nevertheless permeated contemporary youth justice practice. Bowlby and Ainsworth's development of attachment theory (Ainsworth and Bowlby, 1991; Ainsworth, 1969; Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980) has been especially well regarded within youth justice, social care and education policy, with settings encouraged to become 'attachment informed' (Shemmings, 2016; NICE, 2015; Furnivall, 2011) and young people referred to in relation to their 'attachment styles' (National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2014). Research exploring links between attachment and offending are prevalent (see for example Moran et al, 2017; Ogilvie et al, 2014; Hoeve et al, 2012; Ansbro, 2008). Bowlby also emphasises models of attachment as blueprints for understanding how individuals might behave and react to other forms of loss (Bowlby, 1980). Loss and attachment therefore at times become conflated within youth justice and social work practice, with practitioners and policy makers seeking to transform prevailing discourse into 'evidence based' interventions (Smith, 2008:77). Aside from epistemological differences, I argue that theorising loss in terms of attachment alone is too narrow. It is also somewhat ironic that loss has been interpreted this way within attachment theory, for it was Bowlby himself who warned against putting too rigid a definition of loss for fear of 'straight-jacketing' research (1980:17). Attachment theory also places emphasis too heavily upon the individual, with less consideration given to the wider socio-cultural contexts of young people's lives and circumstances (Smith, Cameron and Reimer, 2017) or the impact of socio-structural inequality as both a generator and sustainer of loss (Harris and Bordere, 2017). Whilst not denying Bowlby's important contribution to loss theory, in my study I aim to explore understandings of loss that move beyond the individual and their attachment style.

Another prevalent idea within youth justice discourse is the concept of 'adversity', including 'adverse childhood experiences' (ACEs), a term first coined by Felitti et al (1998) during an American research project into early death. For ACEs theorists, adversity is deemed to be quantifiable, with ACEs added up and strategies put in place to respond to differing levels of (supposed) need. Like attachment, numerous studies relating to offending and ACEs are already in existence (Vaswani, 2018b;

Barrett and Katsiyannis, 2016; Bellis et al, 2014; Fox et al, 2015), yet ACEs research rarely theorises young people's experiences as losses, nor does it draw upon loss literature as its theoretical frame. Whilst I believe that ACEs may lead to and in some instances may even be directly related to loss, work in this area continues to situate difficulties within the young person and their immediate families. Not only this, as Edwards et al (2017:1) caution:

'The notion of Adverse Child Experiences is the latest in a long line of diagnoses of, and simple solutions to, complex social issues in the search for interventions that 'work'... The ACEs approach, as with other attempts to diagnose and label sections of the population as deficient, has the potential for damaging consequences for the children and adults who are said to possess such deficiencies. Further, viewing social issues through the prism of ACEs may well inhibit our ability to identify and respond to human needs.'

As Edwards et al allude to, there are ethical issues surrounding ACEs practice, especially where ACEs are potentially being used as a predictor of crime (Wilson, 2018; Casey, 2012) or where early interventions are put into place for young people as pre-emptive, precautionary measures (Crossley, 2018, 2016; McAra and McVie, 2010). ACEs as losses are also rarely explored as emphasis tends to fall upon quick fix solutions and measurable outcomes (for example around school attendance or parental employment).

The final emerging theme within youth justice discourse presently pertaining to loss is that of 'trauma informed practice' (YJB, 2018), with recent high profile reports and academic research alluding to potential connections between young people's experiences of trauma and their offending behaviour (Chard, 2017; HMIP, 2017; YJB, 2017, Grimshaw, 2011). There are clear parallels between loss and trauma and admittedly similar themes might arise during research. However, trauma and loss are not the same. I was interested in how young people defined, determined and explained loss in their lives from their own perspectives, including whether they viewed their losses in a positive or negative light. Trauma as a concept leaves little room for this and would usually be described as having a negative, damaging or harmful impact upon a young person's life that they must 'recover from' (Bloom, 2002; Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Loss on the other hand can be viewed as either a

positive or a negative entity, or as a mixture of both. Structuring the research in this way allowed young people to share both the good and the bad about the losses they had experienced in their lives; and consider how experiencing their loss had challenged them to reflect, and in some instances, grow in maturity or reconsider their engagement in offending behaviour.

Whilst there are many similarities between attachment, trauma and adversity in young people's lives and the experiences and accounts of loss that are documented within this study, there are also important distinctions between and within stories shared, including how young people and practitioners made sense of and responded to loss. These distinctions act as core components of my research rationale, and strengthen my stipulation that loss, as opposed to attachment, adversity or trauma needs to be situated as the focal point of my study. Loss therefore can be described both as a turning point and as an unfolding realisation; an opportunity to make sense and meaning of one's life and circumstance, to re-evaluate, to make decisions about who you are and how you situate yourself in the world. Conveyed this way, loss provides a space for meaning making (Neimeyer, Klass and Dennis, 2014) and a place to pause in ways that trauma, adversity or attachment cannot (as one may be seen to be paralysed by trauma, stifled by adversity or defined by attachment). But how to define loss in a way that allowed and enabled the multiple truths of young people's stories? It is here that I turn to social constructivist framings of loss in order to support this aim.

Defining loss from a socio-constructivist perspective

For the purposes of this research project, I wanted to consider loss as an overarching concept rather than as a singularly defined term. I also wanted young people to be able to share whatever felt relevant and meaningful for them, using the process of our work together to make meaning and explore their experiences 'in loco' as well as focusing on the content of stories told or discussing 'finished' pieces of creative work. Thinking about loss in such a broad way allowed young people's unique stories to emerge, free from the imposition of clinical definitions and explicit selection criteria. Indeed, I did not ask young people to talk about loss explicitly, instead I asked them to share stories about their lives and to tell me what these stories meant to them. As a result, meaning was made from individual stories and collective themes were constructed and documented in this thesis that I could not

have predicted had I imposed a more prescriptive methodology or placed predefined parameters around loss. In this sense, crossing disciplinary borders and thinking differently has supported fresh understanding that subsequently enables space for action and opportunity for change, each with the hope of bettering our responses to young people who offend.

But surely the only true loss is bereavement?

Of all that we experience, ideas of loss are most heavily linked with bereavement. The permanence of death renders bereavement constructed (particularly within western society) as the ultimate form of loss (Thompson, 2002), a loss from which there can be no hope of restoration (in this life at least). Whilst this may be the case, a core element of loss in all of its forms that makes the concept important in the stories and lives of young people who offend is that loss signifies change (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006:15). To lose something is to understand that something is different, that something has changed. This may be literal, an event or critical moment that turns the tide of a young person's life course (Henderson et al, 2007), or metaphorical, a realisation of difference or an understanding of the impact of past events and circumstances upon present and future conceptions of self. As such, I argue against the notion that the only true loss is bereavement. Instead I contend that any loss, even if restored or reversed, affects and impacts upon those experiencing the event. If nothing else time has passed; we do not exist in stasis and the world keeps on turning. Thus loss creates space, a place where action may be taken and where sense and meaning must be generated, both in the immediacy of the loss itself, and as young people develop and grow in maturity (McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016). The stories shared within this thesis attest to these points and reveal that loss and grief in young people's lives moves far beyond the narrow confines of bereavement; lack of access to high quality support, making sense of past events, enduring violence at home and within your local community, mourning the mother you never had or feeling the pain of inequality and prejudice because of your race, your sexuality or your perceived disability can all, as many young people did within this study, be constructed and experienced as loss.

Navigating this thesis - chapter structure and layout

The final task of this chapter is to outline the structure and layout of my thesis. This introductory chapter outlines my research rationale and ethos, sets the scene for my

research and provides an important contextual backdrop for my work. Chapter two covers key literature and youth justice policy as it relates to my overarching focus, loss in the lives of young people who offend. Selecting literature to include when working across disciplines was not an easy task. Nevertheless, I have aimed to incorporate literature and policy that broadly attests to the following three key areas: theoretical framings of young people who offend; young people and loss; young people, loss and crime. Within each of these three key areas, I cover core debates within existing research and policy as they relate to my own research, with a particular focus upon social constructivist understandings of young people's experiences. I focus particularly on social constructivism because work produced within this epistemological frame most closely aligns with my own philosophical disposition. Paying close attention to these works therefore enabled me to identify current gaps in knowledge *and* consider whether my ideas for research were epistemologically and methodologically viable. As well as socio-constructivist literature, I also paid close attention to work that has been particularly influential within contemporary youth justice policy and practice. Understanding these debates and how youth justice has been framed in relation to them is important. Such exploration also reveals the practical and theoretical marginalisation of loss within current understandings and responses to young people who offend. I end my literature review by sharing my research questions, devised to explicitly address some of the gaps in current knowledge exposed throughout this chapter.

My third chapter provides a detailed account of the methodological approach I took in order to deepen current knowledge in relation to the questions posed at the end of my literature review. Within this chapter I explain how I approached and conducted fieldwork, including how I utilised CGT (Charmaz, 2014) and ethno-mimesis (O'Neill, 2002) to explore and analyse young people's stories and practitioner accounts of, and responses to, loss. I also explore the limitations of my work, including how my own positionality and ever shifting insider-outsider status, affected and shaped every aspect of this research, from its conception to my research findings and final write up. A critical consideration during research has been how to maintain ethical integrity; working with marginalised young people to explore loss exacerbates power differentials in ways that are not easily addressed. I explain in this chapter how through developing an intersectional understanding of young people's experiences

and working reflexively in relation to this, I felt able to produce research that felt ethically sound and afforded the stories young people shared with me the justice they deserved.

The following five chapters document my core findings. Throughout each of these chapters I use a combination of individual stories and collective themes to explore how loss affects the lives of young people who offend. Nearly fifty young people and over twenty practitioners gave their time and energy to support the development of this work; some stories are represented more fully than others but all were instrumental in shaping my understanding of loss as a pervasive force in young people's lives.

Chapter four explores loss of childhood. Using Sam's story alongside other young people's experiences, I discover how exposure to domestic and community violence robbed young people of their childhoods and elicited their radical rejection of vulnerability. I also explore how the 'adulthoodification' (Smith, 2010) of those with undocumented or unrecognised caring responsibilities led to a 'disenfranchised loss' (Doka, 1989, 2002) of childhood. In each of these cases, when coupled with a lack of pro-social support from a caring and trusted adult, young people were left to make meaning from their experiences in other ways, including through engagement in offending, ASB and violent behaviour.

Chapter five documents how loss of opportunity affects young people who offend, using Brianna's and other young people's stories to understand how exclusion both from and within education can leave young people isolated, bored and unfulfilled. I explore how young people I met who were experiencing pervasive loss appeared particularly vulnerable to educational exclusion, and how lost opportunities to identify, address and support SEND, SpLC or emotional literacy difficulties left young people educationally marginalised and open to engagement in offending. I reveal through young people's stories and practitioner reflections how offending as a 'performed identity' (Goffman, 1990/1956) was used to generate a sense of belonging and purpose, and how older peers and adults involved in criminal activity were often quick to manipulate and exploit the vulnerabilities of educationally marginalised young people. Within this chapter I also explore how austerity measures have restricted employment, support and social opportunities for young

people, losses that have disproportionately affected those with the lowest socio-economic status and least cultural capital (UN, 2016; Shildrick, and MacDonald, 2008; Barry 2006; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005). I share young people's stories of resistance in relation to austerity measures, and how engagement in offending produced for some an opportunity for work and financial gain where pro-social opportunities for employment felt unobtainable and scarce.

In chapter six I consider how loss of agency operated to deny young people voice or a sense of control over their lives. In particular I draw upon Danny's story, exploring how becoming a looked after child (LAC) restricted choice and created a form of 'bounded agency' (Evans 2007) where pro-social options for expression were limited. Danny, alongside other LAC young people I consulted, felt as though the loss they had experienced through being taken into care was unrecognised or disenfranchised (Doka, 2002). Offending and ASB therefore became accessible ways of generating voice and conveying emotional distress, a 'learned helpless' (Seligman, 1975) response to feeling that 'nobody listens'. As other research has also found (Brereton, 2018; Shaw, 2017, 2016; Laming, 2016; Staines, 2016), several young people I met during the course of this research told me they had either not engaged in or had limited involvement in offending before becoming LAC. This chapter reveals how for some LAC young people, offending was utilised as a means to an end, occurring as a by-product of their desperate attempts to return home and reconnect with family, friends and familiar places.

My final thematic finding, chapter seven, details how loss affected young people's sense of identity and belonging, urging them to search for connections and make meaning from their experiences in accessible and viable ways, including through engagement in offending behaviour. Unlike my previous findings chapters, this chapter does not begin with one particular young person's story, as searching for connections manifested in different ways, shaped by the unique socio-cultural context of individual young people's circumstances. Instead this chapter draws upon multiple stories, exploring how reoccurring feelings of injustice, marginality, abandonment and mistrust punctuated individual narratives and supported and enabled young people's offending behaviour. I explore how young people's accounts revealed the importance of meaning making both during and following loss, and where wanted, how establishing 'continuing bonds' (Klass, Silverman and Nickman,

1996) may help young people feel as though their losses are acknowledged, validated and remembered.

Chapter eight brings each of my proceeding findings chapters together, using Michael's story to explore the pervasive nature of loss in the lives of young people who offend. I discuss how young people's losses are compounded by additional factors, including SpLC and emotional literacy difficulties, SEND and, or a lack of support from a caring and trusted pro-social adult. This chapter draws upon findings from youth justice data as well as from young people themselves. It also analyses how youth justice practitioners conceptualise and respond to loss, and how framing loss in different ways potentially leads to different outcomes for young people known to YOTs. I conclude this chapter by exploring how different losses and the levels of support afforded to young people potentially affect their trajectory through the YJS. I argue that for those experiencing 'one off losses', providing they are well supported, contact with the YOT is often fleeting and desistance processes are usually linear. However, where young people suffer pervasive loss, contact with the YOT tends to be more intense, and desistance becomes more of a cyclical model, as YOT practitioners 'fire fight' to address what tend to be conceptualised as young people's 'welfare issues'.

At no point has my research exploring loss in the lives of young people who offend ever really felt complete! My final chapter serves therefore less as a conclusion and more as an indication of 'what and where next?' I begin by summarising the journey this work has taken myself and my participants on so far, detailing how constructed findings highlight the importance of 'loss informed' youth justice. I then return to existing literature, using this alongside my own findings to explore what loss informed youth justice might look like, as well as considering potential implications of loss informed approaches for future youth justice policy and practice. I conclude my thesis with a reminder of the limitations of my own work and advise against the blind extrapolation and application of my research findings devoid of their socio-cultural, economic and geographical context. Instead I suggest next steps for research in this field, including a contextualised approach to youth justice services that fully understands and effectively responds to young people's experiences of loss, not as a blanket approach, but as a holistic service that incorporates the unique contexts within which such losses occurred.

Literature Review



Image credit: *Learning between interdisciplinary lines* (Meaby, 2017).

Introduction

This section of the thesis covers literature relevant to my research with young people. I have drawn upon work from a wide range of disciplines, my aim being to weave it together to help enable new understandings of how loss affects young people who offend and how we might begin to construct loss based practice within community youth justice settings. I begin with an introduction to the key debates surrounding young people and crime, outlining current theory, policy and legislation regarding young people's involvement with crime and their contact with English and Welsh (E/W) YJSs. Next, I explore core issues and debates within loss theory and literature, paying particular attention to postmodern theory and the social constructivist turn towards understanding loss and grief; theories that emerged during fieldwork as pertinent tools of enquiry and subsequently framed my understanding of loss during work with young people. I use this literature as it relates to young people, considering its practical application within the context of young people's lives and experiences. Finally, I explore the small pocket of literature connecting young people, loss and crime (drawn predominantly from custodial settings due to the dearth of literature relating to young people's experiences of loss

within community youth justice) as well as the emerging literature relating to trauma informed youth justice practice in England and Wales (E&W). I conclude by attempting to pull each strand of literature together, revealing gaps in current knowledge, outlining my research questions, and setting the scene for my own work with young people.

Due to the multi-disciplinary nature of this work, and the broad range of literature it spans, there are other pertinent areas of enquiry that require acknowledgement yet are unable to be fully explored within the context of this thesis. Much for example has been written on child development (Keenan, Evans and Crowley, 2016; Boyd and Bee, 2014; Garhart Mooney, 2000), including social constructions of childhood (Smith, 2010), and what it means to be defined as a 'young person' in E&W today (Blackman and Rogers, 2017; Hollingworth, 2015; Furlong, 2009; Henderson et al, 2007). For the purposes of my research, I drew upon the United Nation's (UN) definition of childhood, which states that 'every human being below the age of eighteen' is a child (UN convention on the rights of the child, 1989: article 1). Eighteen also tends to be the age that YOTs cease their work with young people, with transference to probation services usually occurring at this time (YJB, 2018:6). This of course raises interesting questions in relation to young people who offend with SEND or those who are also looked after children, as other young people's services in these cases often extend support until twenty five in recognition of the young person's cognitive (dis)abilities or additional needs (UK Government, 2018; Children and Social Work Act, 2017; DfE and DH, 2015).

There is also much useful literature relating to criminological theory and the political history and development of the E/W YJS that is comprehensively covered elsewhere (Smith and Gray, 2018; Case et al, 2017; Smith, 2014b; Muncie, 2009) yet nevertheless important to mention as this work helped me situate my research within the current climate of youth justice legislation, policy and procedure. There are also many quantitative and mixed methods studies from health and psychology pertaining to young people's exposure to trauma (Fox et al, 2015; Kimonis et al, 2011; Maschi, 2006; Tomlinson, 2004), including the prevalence and impact of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) upon offending populations (Wojciechowski, 2017; Ardino, 2012), much of which I have been unable to explore within the scope of this thesis. Instead I focus primarily upon qualitative studies outlining trauma informed practice

with young people, or literature where loss, trauma and young people's offending have been explicitly connected.

Part 1: Public protection or children in need? Understanding how young people's offending is theorised and framed in England and Wales.

This first section of the literature review focuses upon young people's involvement in crime from an E/W perspective, as well as considering current responses to young people's offending as depicted by youth justice legislation, policy and practice guidance. I also consider the problematisation of youth crime and youth justice within academia, reflecting upon how these debates have informed and shaped current youth justice policy and practice.

Young people and offending - the prevalence and nature of youth crime

The majority of young people in E&W never come into contact with the criminal justice system (CJS). This does not necessarily mean that they have never broken the law, with the percentage of young people self-disclosing offending behaviour far outstripping numbers of young people officially convicted of crime and, or, involved with youth justice services (Nacro, 2009; Paton, Crouch and Camic, 2009). As such, when we explore the nature and characteristics of young people involved in crime as determined by their involvement in youth justice services, we must do so with the caveat that we are working within a particular context, a context where young people have been officially sanctioned and are being held to account for their actions.

In the year ending April 2017 there were 73,000 proven offences committed in E&W by children (YJB and MoJ, 2018:17). Violence against the person was the most common offence (accounting for 28% of proven offences), followed by other crime (at 12%, a third of which included taking a vehicle without consent), criminal damage (11%) and theft and handling stolen goods (11%). In terms of prevalence and typology of youth crime, tentative comparisons can be made against all incidents of recorded crime. According to the latest crime survey for E&W (ending December 2016), 6.1 million incidents of crime were recorded, including 1,117,969 incidents of violence against the person, 1,820,079 incidents of theft and 556,077 incidents of criminal damage and arson. (OFNS, 2017). Whilst not all reported crime becomes a proven offence, it can still be suggested that crime committed by children makes up a relatively small percentage of all crime committed. This is often in stark contrast to public perceptions of crime, with media 'portrayals of hooded teenagers terrifying

communities' (Halsey and White, 2008:vi). To this effect, young people who offend are often portrayed as 'folk devils' (Cohen, 2011/1972) and a disconnect occurs in society between narratives of children as innocent and in need of protection and portrayals of young people who offend as a risk to societal safety and wellbeing (D'Cruze, Pegg and Walklate, 2006). Negative public and media perceptions of young people and criminality may be compounded by the visibility of youth crime compared with other forms of crime generally committed by adults (e.g. credit card fraud), which typically takes place behind closed doors (Muncie, 2009). Young people from marginalised communities also tend to be more visible within local communities than their privileged peers, with crimes such as drug dealing or handling stolen goods occurring on the street as opposed to in the home (Macdonald and Marsh, 2005; Sibley, 1995). Societal prejudice and judgement of young people who offend tends to intensify in these instances, resulting in further isolation, stigma and othering, as young people are categorised as good or bad; in need of support and guidance or as feral, dangerous, a lost cause (D'Cruze, Pegg and Walklate, 2006).

Problematising youth crime; understanding why young people offend

But why do young people become involved in crime in the first place? In many regards this question is the cornerstone of criminological study. Theories regarding why people commit crime are wide ranging and highly contested; biological and psychologically orientated studies tend focus on individual factors or learnt behaviours that predispose particular people towards offending (e.g. O'Riordan and O'Connell, 2014; Hughes et al, 2012; Lombroso, 2006/1876; Eysenck and Eysenck, 1971; Bandura, Ross and Ross 1961), whereas sociologically orientated theories tend to focus more heavily upon structural factors, indicating that societal makeup constrains pro-social choices for particular groups and draws them towards offending (e.g. Durkheim, 2014/1895; Cohen, 2011/1972; Matza, 2009/1964; Murray, 1990; Merton, 1938). Other theories combine structural and individual factors as a way of understanding why young people offend (McAra and McVie, 2010; Farrington, 2003, 1997; Sampson and Laub, 1993; Glueck and Glueck, 1934). Presdee (2004) also highlights how engagement in offending generates a sense of excitement and fun for young people, as well as creating a sense of belonging for those in the 'liminal phase' of adolescence (Barry, 2006:24), where 'storm and stress' are viewed as

inherent aspects of teenage life (Hall, 1904), particularly as 'globalization increases individualisation' (Arnett, 1999).

Of particular interest for my study are theories that move away from the cause and effect positivism that has dominated criminological study, been endorsed by public funding bodies and impacted heavily upon E/W systems of youth justice (Case and Williams, 2017:529). In contrast, interpretative criminology considers young people's offending as it relates to time, space and socio-cultural context. Subjectivity is valued and qualitative methods of enquiry are foregrounded as ways of generating 'situated knowledges' (Haraway, 1998) and understandings of why young people engage in criminal activity (see for example Macdonald and Marsh's 2005 and Webster et al's 2004 longitudinal studies of young people living in 'the poorest neighbourhoods of the poorest town in E&W' (Webster et al, 2004:v) or Henderson et al's (2007) longitudinal study of young people's transitions across the UK). Theorising from this perspective views society, including youth offending and our responses to young people who offend, as socially constructed. From this perspective, theories of crime can only ever be theories, because what constitutes a crime and what constitutes an offender is continually defined and redefined in relation to place, space and time. As Case et al (2017:528) explain:

'The concept of crime, which is the foundation and centrepiece of the study of criminology, should be permanently consigned to inverted commas - indicating that it is dynamic, contested, ambiguous and contingent on the historical period, culture, country, or demographic characteristics of those people socially-constructing the concept of crime. The implication here is that searching for and pinning down the causes of this free-floating, shape shifting and highly subjective behaviour/s that sits within these inverted commas is like herding cats or nailing jelly to a wall.'

Intersectionality and youth crime

With Case et al's comments on crime firmly in mind, who exactly are young people who offend, or perhaps more poignantly, who are the young people who become known to YOTs? Between April 2016 and March 2017, 28,400 young people aged between 10 and 17 were convicted or cautioned, 16,500 of whom were first time entrants into the Criminal Justice System (CJS) (YJB and MoJ, 2018). Numbers of young people convicted or cautioned have fallen dramatically over the past ten

years, although large numbers of young people also have contact with YJSs that is not captured within these statistics, through early intervention programmes, restorative interventions or other pre-court or diversionary disposals (HMIP and HMICFRS, 2018; Smith, 2014a).

Males are disproportionately represented at all levels of youth justice, accounting for 84% of all young people arrested and 83% of all young people convicted or cautioned, yet only making up 51% of the current population of 10-17 year olds (YJB and MoJ, 2018:7). The over representation of males within offending populations is hotly disputed within criminology, even differences between the resting heart rates of males and females has been suggested as a reason why males may have a greater propensity towards crime (Choy et al, 2017). Another explanation for male overrepresentation centres upon social constructions of hegemonic masculinities and femininities (Haslanger, 2016), with gender roles interpreted, performed and reproduced according to social norms (Butler, 1990; Goffman, 1990; Bandura, 1971). With this frame of reference, it can be argued that our conceptualisation of young people's actions as offences and our responses to them are also gendered, with young women potentially more likely to be constructed and managed as 'vulnerable' and young men potentially more likely constructed and managed in relation to 'risk'. Such constructions generate polarised representations 'of young people as either 'vulnerable victims' or 'dangerous wrong-doers' (Brown, 2014:1). Offending may therefore become a gendered performance of masculinity. In addition to this, gendered interpretations of young people's actions, gendered sentencing recommendations and gendered CJS and YOT management of young people who offend may also offer explanation for discrepancies in offending rates between young men and young women (Baumgartner, 2014).

As well as young men, black and minority ethnic (BAME) young people continue to be over represented within YJSs. According to Lammy in his 2017 independent review of BAME involvement with the CJS, only 18% of young people in E&W define as BAME yet 28% of police arrests of young people and 45% of young people in custody define as BAME. BAME overrepresentation has been highlighted as a serious, systemic issue across all aspects of the CJS, both in E&W and internationally. Within E&W however, Lammy regarded youth offending as his

'biggest concern' as recent declines in white young people's criminalisation and custodial sentencing is not reflected for BAME young people (Lammy, 2017:4).

In terms of the socio-economic backgrounds of young people 'It is the most disadvantaged and structurally vulnerable young people who tend to receive the most attention from youth justice officials at all points of the system' (White and Cunneen, 2006:18-19). From the disproportionate number of BAME young people stopped and searched (UK Government, 2018; Keeling, 2017), to the high numbers of young people eligible for free school meals who are targeted for 'intervention' (Crossley, 2018, 2016; Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012), marginalised young people's lives are more likely to be scrutinised (and found wanting) by the state, regardless of their involvement in crime. These 'net-widening' processes keep particular groups of young people under continual surveillance, leaving offending or ASB unlikely to go under the radar (Smith, 2011; Prichard, 2010). Inequality therefore cannot be removed from any debate on youth crime; marginality both intensifies attention from police and ASB teams and prolongs involvement within the CJS. It is crucial therefore that young people's experiences are explored through an intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991), and that we remain mindful of the dominant powers of the patriarchy, of institutional racism, and of deep rooted societal prejudices against those living in poverty.

Responding to young people who offend; the role of the Youth Offending Team

So how do we respond to young people who offend? In England and Wales, multi-agency YOTs, (first established in 2000 via the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act) have a statutory responsibility to work with any child who comes into contact with the CJS. The primary aim of YOTs as stipulated in the Act is to 'prevent offending' (Section 37:1) and YOTs across England and Wales work in different ways to achieve this aim (Smith and Gray, 2018). Age of criminal responsibility varies across the world (Muncie, 2009), with a median age of 12 (Penal Reform International, 2013). In the UK, criminal responsibility begins at 8 years of age in Scotland, rising to 10 years of age in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, significantly lower ages of criminal responsibility than in many other European countries.⁶

⁶ Age of criminal responsibility varies from aged eight to eighteen across Europe, with many countries setting criminal responsibility at a higher age than the UK.

As already mentioned, recent trends (YJB, 2018) have seen a decline in young people entering the CJS and accessing statutory YOT services. The reoffending rates of this smaller cohort remain high however, suggesting that YOTs are dealing with smaller numbers of young people who are presenting with increasingly complex needs (Taylor, 2016).

Complex needs are often framed within youth justice in relation to a young person's risk to themselves and their risk to others. When considering the theoretical underpinnings of current youth justice assessment in E&W, it is clear that risk has been the dominant discourse, with crime framed in relation to a series of criminogenic risk factors (Farrington, 1997; Baker et al, 2005; YJB, 2005; Baker, 2012), and young people's behaviour 'risk managed' in accordance with these. Framing youth justice in relation to risk is problematic (Case and Haines, 2009; Case, 2007) because this approach adultifies young people (Smith, 2010; Muncie, 2009), construing them as offenders in need of punishment rather than as young people conveying need through action. As Smith (2010:19) explains, adultification can be clearly witnessed in policy and legislative responses to young people who offend, with the segregation of welfare and justice services, the removal of 'doliincapax' and the increase in adult based community sentencing options such as electronic tagging and curfew monitoring.

But surely any service working with young people must be focused on welfare too? Within youth justice in E&W, the justice verses welfare debate is well established (Muncie, 2009), with approaches to youth offending in England and Wales over recent decades aptly described as a pendulum swinging between one and the other (Smith, 2005). High profile cases where young people have committed crime, (particularly the murder of toddler James Bulger by two young boys in 1993), emblazoned public outcry and set a political precedence for zero tolerance approaches to youth crime, situating responses to young people who offend heavily within the domains of justice. In recent years however there has been an increasingly loud call from young people's advocates and from pockets of academia to buck punitive approaches to youth crime and to recognise and respond instead to the deep rooted welfare needs of many young people who offend (Liddle et al, 2016; Byrne and Brooks, 2015; Wright and Liddle, 2014; Case and Haines, 2015; Haines et al, 2013), including through a recognition of the power of participatory youth

justice practices (Manchester Centre for Youth Studies, 2018). Despite some progress towards more welfare focused responses, including the revision of youth justice assessment tools to create Asset Plus (YJB, 2012), recent investigations into young people's experiences of trauma (HMIP, 2017; Chard, 2016, Grimshaw, 2011), and YJB practice guidelines pertaining to trauma informed youth justice (YJB, 2017), focus still remains around risk management, with Case and Haines referring to the YJB's scoring mechanisms and scaled approach (2010) as the 'risk factor prevention paradigm' (Case and Haines, 2012). Assessing young people this way is highly criticised (Case et al, 2017; Case and Haines, 2012; Bateman, 2011; Smith, 2011, 2005), reducing opportunity for practitioners to work creatively and intuitively with young people to explore and address on-going issues in their lives. Working within the realm of risk also has the capacity to intensify supervisory contact with the YOT for marginalised young people, predominantly as a result of factors within their lives that are beyond their power to change. Increased contact also increases the probability of non-compliance; leading (potentially) to further criminalisation and escalation within the system (McAra and McVie, 2010). Conversely, the rigidity of the assessment process also poses problems for young people whose needs do not adequately translate into specified areas of assessment, including those who score insufficiently for multiple contacts yet require further support to access welfare intervention and address welfare needs, processes that are regularly (and increasingly) facilitated by YOTs (Byrne and Brooks, 2015; Smith, 2014b), particularly in the aftermath of recently imposed austerity measures (Atkinson, Roberts and Savage, 2012).

Despite continued reliance on risk based approaches to managing offending behaviour, the shape of youth justice is nevertheless changing across E&W. As powers have been devolved from government to local authority areas, YOTs are now responding to the needs of young people in very different ways (Smith, 2016). One such development has been the increased use of diversionary schemes to address young people's offending behaviours, which may account somewhat for the steep drop in first time entrants recorded by the YJB over the past ten years (YJB, 2017). The use and intensity of diversionary schemes varies from area to area, although broadly speaking, they tend to occur at the preliminary stages of a young person's criminal career, and still ultimately carry consequences for non-compliance

(generally an escalation to court proceedings). Some YOTs have broadened the scope of restorative justice practices within their response to youth crime (Restorative Justice Council, 2015), whereas others have focused more strongly on the rights of the child (e.g. the Swansea Bureau). Some YOTs are working on the basis of minimal contact, with others increasingly involved in the day to day lives of children and young people on their caseloads as other services have shrunk away. These are just some of the many approaches currently being adopted by YOTs, resulting in a postcode lottery approach to youth justice practice and sentencing protocol (Prison Reform Trust, 2010). For those young people who are subject to statutory court or community orders, YOTs are under increasing pressure to find creative and innovative ways to work with young people, and at times, fill the boots of pre-existent youth or community services (Taylor, 2015). In this sense, YOT responsibilities tend to span well beyond that of 'preventing offending', with many teams working in silo to provide an eclectic range of services for young people who offend; an approach that does not always fit too well with the scaled approach and its ascribed number of contacts. It might be argued therefore that although official numbers of young people known to YOTs are dropping, young people may actually be in more intense contact with their YOT than ever before, especially those who are marginalised and potentially those most poignantly affected by loss.

Young people's increased, unofficial, postcode lottery contact with their YOT is concerning, particularly in light of the paradoxical nature of youth justice where practitioners must simultaneously: address young people's welfare needs and their offending behaviour; advocate and regulate; provide opportunity and manage risk; build trust and issue sanction. The role of the YOT as both young people's champion and purveyor of justice is hard to navigate and at times difficult for practitioners and young people to conceptualise, particularly when it seems as though young people are both victim and offender, or where offending has potentially occurred as a result of unmet need (Porteous, Adler and Davidson, 2015).

Understanding youth crime and responding to it are not straightforward tasks. As such, this literature review only has capacity to scratch the surface of contemporary debate. How we define, code and respond to crime is continually changing, and those who commit crime (as it is defined within that present moment) are a transient

group, moving in and out of the YJS with varying degrees of contact over varying periods of time. Taking into account McAra and McVie's (2010) assertion that YOT intervention may actually intensify offending due to the stigmatising effect of being labelled as a 'young offender', whether we should respond to youth crime through formal mechanisms such as YOTs is itself questionable. As Becker (1963:9) warned in his seminal text *Outsiders*, 'deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label' and as Goffman (1963) theorised, identities are performed in relation to the labels we are attributed. Framing young people who offend as children whose behaviour conveys an unmet need and responding to them with compassion rather than as criminals may therefore be a more successful method of enacting public protection.

Part 2: Young people and loss

It appears therefore that young people who become known to YJSs are likely to be from some of E&W's most stigmatised and marginalised communities. But is this the same for loss? How are young people affected by loss, and how are their experiences theorised? In this second part of the literature review, I begin with a consideration of how loss might be defined as well as exploring the estimated prevalence of different forms of loss in young people's lives in E&W today. From here I provide a whistle-stop tour of loss theory more broadly, from its classical underpinnings through to postmodern understandings of loss and grief, including the small pockets of literature that explicitly explore young people's experiences and how differing constructions of childhood (via bio-psycho study and via youth theory) affect how loss is conceptualised and responded to in practice. I conclude this section by echoing the calls of others before me (McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016; Thompson et al, 2016; Ribbens McCarthy, 2006; Thompson, 2002) to better understand young people's experiences of loss by embracing inter-disciplinary enquiry, particularly in relation to how loss is experienced and expressed in relation to the broader socio-cultural context of young people's lives.

Defining loss and outlining its prevalence in young people's lives

So how might loss be defined and understood? Bowlby (1980:17) warns against searching for a definitive definition of loss: 'Once a definition is laid down, it tends to straightjacket thought and to control what the worker permits himself to observe'. Without becoming too prescriptive therefore, loss might be described as 'the state of being deprived of, or being without, something one has had' (Humphrey and Zimpfer,

2008:3). In this sense, loss can be viewed as universal, 'life is characterised by movement, change and development - and therefore by transitions, losses and grief' (Thompson, 2002:1). As Murray explains, studying loss may be a case of 'catching up with the general population who live each day with loss, as well as the clinicians who work each day with loss' (Murray, 2016:3). Some losses may appear more significant than others, a bereavement for example may be perceived to affect young people more intensely than their transition between educational phases. Where change occurs however, there is always potential for loss (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006), thus always potential for grief: 'it is the interpretation of change as a threat, and the attempt to endure that change, that constitutes loss... (and) necessitates the process of grief and transition' (Murray, 2016:4).

The variety of losses young people may be affected by are too vast to do justice to here; the very purpose of this research was to explore how young people who offend perceive and manage loss (however they envision it) within their daily lives and practices. However, it is worth noting a few specific forms of loss and the estimated prevalence of each in young people's lives. This will help set the scene for the rich detail of young people's loss stories that were shared over the course of my research project; stories that are sparsely captured within existing literature.

Firstly, bereavement. Most young people in the UK will have lost someone special to them through death (a family member, a peer or a pet) by the time they are 16 (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006:16). The likelihood a young person will experience bereavement before the age of 16 varies significantly according to geographical location and social class, and widening health and social inequalities dramatically increase the likelihood a young person will experience multiple bereavements (Shaw et al, 2008; Shaw, 1999).

Second, exposure to violence. It is estimated that one fifth of young people will experience domestic violence, with a third of these young people also suffering other forms of abuse, including neglect and physical assault (Radford et al, 2011b). Additionally, at least one fifth of young people have been assaulted by their boyfriend or girlfriend (Barter et al, 2009). Many young people are also affected by community violence, levels of which alter dramatically according to geographic location, socio-

economic status and whether the young person lives in a rural or urban area (Kersten et al, 2017; Valentine, 2001; Sibley, 1995).

Third, divorce or parental separation. It is difficult to estimate how many children in the UK are affected by parental divorce or separation, although official divorce statistics in the UK are currently estimated at 42% (ONS, 2014). This does not account for young people whose parents have separated without filing for divorce, or those whom were never married in the first place. It also does not account for those young people who do not live with their parents, or those whose birth mother or father is unknown to them. It can be predicted therefore that loss in relation to parental divorce or separation is prevalent within the UK, and likely to affect many young people who reside here.

Fourth, becoming looked after (LAC). According to the Department for Education (2018) 70,450 young people were looked after in England in March 2017, including those living with foster parents; those at home with family members under the supervision of social services; those in residential children's homes and those in other residential settings including residential schools or secure units. (NSPCC, 2018). 2017 saw the biggest rise of children taken into care in seven years, with funding cuts to Children's Services and Early Intervention teams exacerbating deeper societal inequalities as families struggle to receive help and support in relation to poverty, poor quality housing and substance misuse (Bulman, 2017). Whilst the majority of young people in E&W do not become LAC, nor encounter any Social Services' involvement, such intervention is nevertheless a deeply life altering form of loss, affecting a significant minority of young people.

Fifth, caring responsibilities. In England and Wales, census data (ONS, 2011) estimates that 178,000 young people have caring responsibilities, with the average age of a young carer being 12 (James, 2017). Caring responsibilities may connote loss of childhood, loss of freedom and an escalation of responsibility beyond chronological age (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006).

Finally, young people are increasingly losing space and place, largely due to budget cuts and the closure of youth provision. Since 2012, an estimated 3360 youth workers have lost local authority employment, and over 600 youth centres have closed down (Unison, 2016, 2014). The role of detached youth work has almost

completely diminished in some areas of the UK, a service that used to be instrumental in meeting a wide range of young people in places that felt safe and familiar to them, identifying need early on, and providing on the spot guidance and ongoing support for vulnerable young people (Unison, 2016).

Loss through an intersectional lens

Loss therefore is not an uncommon experience, including for young people. However, how young people respond to loss, and how effectively they are supported through loss will depend upon many factors, shaped and defined most readily perhaps by their experience of the world and how equipped and willing society is to meet their needs. As with youth crime, understanding loss from an intersectional perspective is imperative, as whilst loss may be universal, how it is understood and responded to remains both classed and racialised (Harris and Bordere, 2016). Marginalised young people are also more likely to experience pervasive and multiple losses, whilst systemic inequalities simultaneously decrease their likelihood of access to high quality support and guidance (Bhopal and Myers, 2018; Deuchar and Bhopal, 2017). In this sense social inequality both generates and sustains loss (Thompson and Cox, 2017; Macdonald and Shildrik, 2013; Atkinson, Roberts and Savage, 2012; Burton and Kagan, 2010). This is a particularly pertinent consideration in relation to young people who offend, many of whom are already marginalised, and whose labelling as an offender only serves to compound their existing marginality (Sibly, 1995; Goffman, 1963).

Understanding loss through an intersectional lens in relation to this particular study is critically important for three reasons: Firstly, because I am interested in young people's experiences, and young people are regularly marginalised by wider society on the basis of age and experience (UN, 2014). Secondly, because young people who offend predominantly come from marginalised communities (discussed in the first section of this literature review). Thirdly, because inequality may be reproduced through the YJS and involvement with youth justice services may further stigmatise already marginalised young people (Lanskey, 2014; White and Cunneen, 2006).

Loss theory and development

So how is loss theorised, and what impact do academic theories of loss have upon professional practice with young people who are grieving? It is at this juncture that

we must consider the development of loss theory to understand how loss and grief have been conceptualised within academia and responded to in practice.

In a similar vein to McCoyd and Ambler Walter (2016), I have organised loss theory into four broad categories; task based, stage based, task and stage based and postmodern theories of loss. Generally this organisational pattern follows loss theory as it has developed chronologically and as I visit each category I consider the gradual transition in thinking from loss and grief as something that must be healed or resolved, to something that must be validated, acknowledged and adapted to as life continues on. From here, I situate loss theory more specifically within the context of young people's experiences, with a particular focus upon how dominant discourse influences current practice with young people experiencing loss. I complete this section with an emphasis on social constructivist understandings of loss in young people's lives as an alternative perspective and viable alternative to current psychological approaches to understanding loss and grief.

Task based theories of loss

Up until the twenty first century loss theory has largely been, and largely remains, situated within the realms of health and psychology, with a particular focus upon pathological responses to loss and its implications for ill health. Early theories began with Freud's (1917) 'melancholia and mourning', which emphasised our detachment from and search for 'lost objects' as the core source of grief. Freud argued that mourning constitutes a task based process of rebuilding one's world after loss and the process is complete when the ego is able to assimilate the loss, allowing new attachments to be formed (1917/2001). Other task based theories of loss include Lindemann's (1944) premise that bereaved individuals must complete 'grief work' to emancipate oneself from their bondage to the deceased, to readjust to a world where the deceased is no longer living and to formulate new relationships following bereavement (McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016:10). Whilst much of Lindemann's work focused on grief as a result of bereavement, he also acknowledged the impact of other forms of loss, suggesting:

'Grief is only one form of severe loss, Others are disillusionment about another person in whom one has had faith, and losing another person

through being rejected by him. Our loss is equally severe and may lead to equally severe reactions.' (Foster, Lindemann and Fairbanks, 1950:30).

Regarded as one of the early purveyors of trauma theory, Lindemann's work with those affected by the 1942 Coconut Grove tragedy paved the way for future trauma informed work (e.g. Halsey, 2018; Bloom, 2002; Kauffman, 2002; Janoff-Bulman, 1992) and longitudinal studies of grief (Charmaz, 2011; Middleton et al, 2009; Glaser and Straus, 1968, 1965).

Worden's (2010) theory of grief is also task based. First developed in 1983, Worden urged those facing loss to complete grief work in order to acknowledge, process, adjust and finally, find an enduring connection after loss; describing this process as the 'four tasks of mourning'. Worden has reworked his theory over the years, particularly in relation to the final task in light of fresh theory that emphasises the importance of continuing bonds (Klass, Silverman and Nickman, 1996). Worden also concedes each task of mourning may need revisiting as the mourner moves through grief. Nevertheless, task based theories like Worden's, Lindemann's and Freud's can have a rigid feel to them; they also fail to take into account cultural differences or individual responses to grief.

Stage based theories of loss

Like Freud, Bowlby's seminal (1980) work on loss, sadness and depression also centralised severed attachment as the underpinning cause of grief. Bowlby's theory of attachment has had a significant impact upon working practices within Children's Services in the UK, from the organisation of early years provision to the nature of support offered for LAC young people (Shemmings, 2016; Furnivall, 2011). Bowlby viewed grief as a reaction to lost attachments, as well as theorising that the attachment styles we develop in infancy affect and impact how we respond to loss throughout our lives. With this in mind, Bowlby proposed we must move through specific stages before we can make peace with grief, including numbness, separation anxiety, despair or disorganisation and finally acquisition to new roles or reorganisation (Bowlby, 1998). Pathological grief was described by Bowlby as being 'stuck in yearning or anger' (1998:91), with anger acting as both 'a barrier to grief' (McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016:14) and an expression of futile hope for reattachment (Bowlby, 1998:91). Attachment theory has been further developed and

modernised since Bowlby's initial writings, not least by Mary Ainsworth (1989) and Colin Murray Parkes (Parkes, 2006; Parkes and Prigerson, 2010), both of whom worked closely with Bowlby at his research unit (Bretherton, 1992).

Whilst attachment theory is widely used within Children's Services, Kübler-Ross' (1969) stage based theory of loss is perhaps the best known and most widely cited (though much misunderstood) model of grief. Originally developed to capture the experiences of those dying in hospice care, her work never intended to be presented as a model for grief (Kellehear, 2009:viii). Nevertheless, Kübler-Ross' five stages of grief - 'denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance' are well known, regularly cited within practice and often discussed on bereavement support sites (Aiger, 2017; Basset, 2017; Smith, 2017). Less emphasis however is given to Kübler-Ross' notion of hope (Kübler-Ross, 2009:112;236), which she regarded as an underpinning feature of many of the dying whom she met and worked with.

Despite the popular misunderstandings that accompany much of the literature in this field, stage based theories of loss have been subject to justifiable criticism (Stroebe, Schut and Boerner, 2017; Strobe and Schut, 1999), particularly when viewed in relation to loss in its broader sense. Attachment theory for example leaves little room for personal growth and development, and Shaver and Tancready (2001) argue that its abstract nature can make research attempting to dovetail attachment and bereavement difficult to conceptualise. The linear nature of stage based theories of loss also assume little room for deviation (McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016), leaving those who do not experience the same emotions or feelings unsure whether they are grieving correctly (Stroebe, Schut and Boerner, 2017). Another issue is that like task based theories, stage based theories do not account for cultural or contextual differences and how each affects individual and collective responses to loss (Neimeyer, Klass and Dennis, 2014). Finally there is a risk that both stage and task based theories are taken too literally by practitioners and worked up into intervention plans for those suffering loss, pushing people to work through stages of grief they may neither feel nor experience (Stroebe, Schut and Boerner, 2017; McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016). In this sense, people experiencing loss may feel as though their grief is being policed and medicalised (Granek, 2016; Walter, 2000), as they are told what to do and how they should be feeling, by both professionals

working with them and by friends and family familiar with stage based theories of loss.

Task and stage based theories of loss

Some theorists have attempted to blend task and stage based theories of loss in order to create workable process models of grief. Rando (1993) for example developed a blended model known as the 6 R's, 'recognise, react, recollect, relinquish, readjust and reinvest', which describe three distinct stages of grief; 'avoidance, confrontation and accommodation' (1993:45). Again the presupposition of Rando's model is that work needs to be done to overcome loss, and that mourners must go through a series of emotional reactions and processes (usually in a distinct order) before they can be said to have moved on from loss. Whilst attempting to assimilate much prior research into one comprehensive package, theories such as this are subject to similar criticism due to its prescriptive nature and lack of recognition for socio-cultural deviation (Balk and Klass, 1993).

Postmodern theories of loss

It is only relatively recently that loss has been viewed as something a person moves on with as opposed to moving on from (Neimeyer, Klass and Dennis, 2014; Klass, Silverman and Nickman, 1996; Klass, 2009). Here, postmodern theories of loss have much to offer, particularly in their recognition of social context as a determiner, supporter or rejecter of individual responses to loss. Concepts of 'pathological' or 'complex' grief are also largely rejected, ideas that continue to resonate through psychological and medical literature (e.g. Boelen and Smid, 2017; Papa et al, 2013; Vanderwerker et al, 2006; Rando, 1993) as explanation for those whose reactions following loss do not conform to pre-prescribed expectations, timescales or grieving models. This section of the literature review explores postmodern theories of loss, from Strobe and Schut's fusion of past and present understandings of loss through the dual process model, to contemporary understandings of loss that emphasise meaning making (Neimeyer and Thompson, 2014; Gillies and Neimeyer, 2006; Kauffman, 2002; Klass, Silverman and Nickman, 1996). I also explore Doka's theory of disenfranchised grief (Doka, 1989, 2002) and Boss' concept of ambiguous loss (Boss, 2010, 1999), ways of understanding loss that became particularly evident during my work with young people who offend.

Fusing past and present understandings of loss

Whilst the epistemological turn of postmodern theory towards social constructivist understandings of loss feels timely and welcome, this is not to say we cannot learn from previous theorists, nor that nothing is to be gained from research conducted with a psychological or medical focus. Rather than an outright rejection of previous thinking, much postmodern theory builds upon and develops previous work, advocating instead for inter-disciplinary understandings of loss (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006). Strobe and Schut's (1999) dual process model is an interesting example of a postmodern approach infused with past thinking. The dual process model highlights the oscillation of individuals between 'loss orientation' and 'loss restoration', emphasising the dynamic nature of grief as those experiencing loss move between loss orientated grief work and reorientation into a new world following loss. Despite Strobe and Schut's formulation of the dual process model as a direct challenge to existing task and stage theories of grief, comparisons can nevertheless be made with attachment theory. Similar to Bowlby's (1980) concept of being stuck in yearning or anger, Strobe and Schut highlight rumination as a way of avoiding both loss orientation and loss restoration work (McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016:18). Strobe and Schut also assert that children tend to more readily stay within the realm of restoration, using distraction as a way of managing difficult emotions. Much like stage based theories of loss, the dual process model (as evident in its name) frames loss as a phenomenon that can be processed and overcome. This has been disputed by others (Gillies and Neimeyer, 2006; Kauffman, 2002) who argue loss may never be completely overcome or processed. Instead, engagement in meaning making can help people adjust to life after loss.

Making meaning from loss

But what is meant by meaning making, and why is it regarded within postmodern grief theory as an important support mechanism for those experiencing loss? Broadly speaking, meaning making can be explored in relation to three core ideas: the reconstitution of one's assumptive world (Kauffman, 2002; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Parkes, 1988); the exploration and interpretation of one's feelings through storytelling or creative practice (Neimeyer and Thompson, 2014); and as an establishment of continuing bonds with those people, places or things we have lost (Klass, Silverman and Nickman, 1996).

Meaning making following loss of the assumptive world

The term 'assumptive world' was first used by Parkes in 1971 (Parkes, 2009:31) as a way of explaining how experiences of loss have the capacity to undermine everything we thought we knew about the world. Meaning making becomes an important way of understanding our lives post loss, helping us create a new assumptive world and assimilate back into society. Parkes' work has been developed over the past thirty years, most notably by Janoff-Bulman in her 1992 work 'Shattered Assumptions'. With a specific focus upon traumatic loss, Janoff-Bulman theorised that traumatic experiences challenge three inherent human perceptions; that the world is good, that life has meaning and that we have self worth (1992:6). When these three assumptions are systematically dismantled through traumatic loss, an individual is likely to question things about themselves and about the world around them that were previously taken for granted. Recovery from trauma therefore entails a process of meaning making, so individuals can rebuild and reconfigure their assumptive worlds. In this sense, loss is not something to overcome (as within task and stage based theories of grief). Instead loss becomes an assimilated aspect of a reconstituted assumptive world.

As previously mentioned, much loss theory originates from America. Following the World Trade Centre attacks in 2001, there was a return in scholarship to assumptive world theory, underpinned perhaps by the realisation that large scale tragedy cannot be rendered obsolete within western, (first world) society. Kauffman's (2002) edited collection extends assumptive world theory across a variety of domains, including the impact of traumatic loss upon young people (Goldman, 2002). Butler also constructed loss theory in the aftermath of the World Trade Centre attacks. In a similar vein to Bowlby's (1998:91) connection between pathological grief and anger, Butler suggests that anger is a cloak for grief (2014; 2004). She also suggests that grief results from broken relationships and that meaning is made when relationships are repaired:

'Let's face it, we're undone by each other, and if we're not, we're missing something' (Butler, 2004:23).

Assumptive world theories emphasise the need to make peace with oneself, draw new meaning, and renew our assumptions in light of loss; a process described by Attig (2011:99) as 'relearning the world'.

Meaning making through art and through storytelling

How we go about relearning the world may come in various guises. In line with the social constructivist turn towards loss theory however, attention has been increasingly paid to meaning making from loss via processes of narrative enquiry (Charmaz, 2014; Gillies and Neimeyer, 2006; Clandinin and Connelly 2000; Neimeyer and Stewart, 1998), including through storytelling and creative practice (Neimeyer and Thompson, 2014). Over the past three decades Neimeyer has spearheaded this approach, linking storytelling and meaning making via narrative therapy⁷. Neimeyer argues that we live our lives through stories, and our stories are formed and reformed according to the socio-cultural context of our existence. Loss therefore, whether of a beloved 'person, place, project or possession', can challenge the narrative coherence of our lives, threatening our very identity because we validate ourselves through the stories we tell (Neimeyer and Stewart, 1998). In order to make meaning from loss, Neimeyer explains we must tell and retell stories, assimilating that which is meaningful and sense making into the wider context of our lives. Professionals, family members and peers can all help with this process, by being available to listen and ask questions, by offering and encouraging fresh perspectives in relation to loss and by encouraging reflection. Individuals can then decide what is helpful and less helpful when making meaning, accepting or rejecting information as they eventually construct their own coherent narratives of loss (Neimeyer, Klass and Dennis, 2014; Gillies and Neimeyer, 2006). For Neimeyer, narrative coherence is crucial, as this helps people make sense from the chaos that loss can leave in its wake and support acclimatisation to life after loss (Neimeyer, Herrero and Botella, 2006; Neimeyer and Levitt, 2001). Telling stories also validates loss, and encourages remembrance rather than revocation of our losses.

Remembering the lost other

The importance of remembering the lost other is also emphasised within continuing bonds theory (Klass, Silverman and Nickman, 1996), a theory of loss that challenged

⁷ See <https://www.robertneimeyerphd.com/home.html> for further details.

previous notions that the best way to overcome grief was to sever ties with those or that which was lost. Drawing upon research conducted with bereaved populations and with adoptees, Klass, Silverman and Nickman generated a compelling argument for the importance and healing power of staying connected with those we are grieving for, as opposed to viewing such connections as symptomatic of unhealthy or pathological grief (Silverman and Klass, 1996:5). Although it must be recognised that not everyone will find comfort in remaining connected to those whom they have lost (McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016:20), much like narrative theory, an emphasis on continuing bonds enables people to remember loss in ways that feel significant and meaningful for them, as opposed to feeling as though they should be working through generic stages of grief or completing pre-determined tasks to overcome it. McCoyd and Ambler Walter (2016:20) also remind us that approaching loss with a view towards maintaining continuing bonds recognises and remembers the broader contextual implications of grief, including specific cultural or religious practices associated with loss, such as Mexico's Day of the Dead (Carmichael and Sayer, 1991), Japanese ancestral worship (Shiramizu, 1982) or Buddhist practices of creating shrines in the home to remember those lost (Choedak, 2017). Marking where the dead lie with gravestones (Suhail et al, 2011) or scattering their ashes in a specific, meaningful place to which the bereaved return to remember their loved ones, or creating a memory box or life story to which one can return (Rose and Philpot, 2005; Usher, 1993) also embody continuing bonds.

Disenfranchised grief and ambiguous loss

But what of loss that is not recognised or validated by society? Doka's (1989) notion of disenfranchised grief encapsulates those experiences where grief is not 'recognised, supported or validated in the mourner's social world' (McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016:21). Such losses may be wide ranging, with disenfranchised grief occurring when a person's loss 'cannot be openly acknowledged', 'is not socially sanctioned' or is not 'publically mourned' (Thompson and Doka, 2017:178). In this sense, loss and grief are conceptualised as social processes, constructed in relation to the specific socio-cultural norms of our communities. Doka argued the paradox of disenfranchised grief is that feelings of loss are compounded by social isolation, stemming from a lack of support or empathy from society at the loss endured. This in turn makes griever more likely to require specialist support, and less likely to be

able to access it. Such losses can take many forms, including: where the relationship is not recognised (e.g. closeted LGBT relationships; the end of an extra-marital affair). Where loss is not acknowledged (e.g. continual managed moves or placement changes for LAC young people). Where the griever is excluded (e.g. because they are deemed too old, too young or too cognitively impaired to fully understand or grieve for the loss). Where the circumstances of the loss lead to societal rejection of grief (e.g. the death of a loved one through overdose or as a result of reckless driving) When how an individual grieves contests social norms (e.g. through the perpetration of risk taking or abusive behaviour, through expressions of relief or through refusal to attend funerals or other services of remembrance). McCoyd and Ambler Walter (2016) extend Doka's definition of disenfranchised grief to include those experiencing 'off time losses', where loss has occurred out of sync with expected timeframes (e.g. a child dying before their parent or a young person acting as a carer for a family member). McCoyd and Ambler Walter argue that off time losses are likely to also incur disenfranchised grief, as society may struggle to respond to loss when it contests, questions or brings into jeopardy common social structures, orders or norms.

Another form of loss that is often disenfranchised is that which is ambiguous or non-finite (Boss, 2010; 1999). Such loss may occur when someone is 'physically present but psychologically absent', as in the case of degenerative brain diseases such as Alzheimer's, or when they are 'psychologically present but physically absent', such as when a person goes missing or they have fled their home country. Boss (2010:138) describes this grief as 'frozen', as life is 'put on hold' and loss is 'confusing, without closure'. For young people, ambiguous loss may be present when they are made subject to multiple care placements, where a family member is absent, where there is a continual threat of safety as a result of exposure to community or domestic violence, where families have to continually move home due to economic deprivation or where parental substance misuse or mental ill-health renders them physically present but psychologically absent.

Attig (2004: 200) describes disenfranchised grief as 'a serious social failure' but also critiques such theories for failing to fully recognise the role of hope and love in grief. An issue in Attig's criticism arises however when loss is considered in relation to ambiguous grief, as people struggle to grieve for their loss for fear that their grief will

be construed as loss of hope. In this sense, hope can be viewed as a blocker to grief, leaving those affected by ambiguous grief stuck in time so as not to lose hope of restoration. LAC young people for example may refuse to grieve for the loss of life with their birth family, as doing so might suggest that hope of returning home is lost. Young people who have never met family members may feel a similar way, as grieving their loss means accepting they may never come to know those currently absent from their lives. In addition to hope, love may also prevent young people from opening up and discussing grief. Fear of triggering traumatic memories or of upsetting friends or family members may render silence amongst those affected by loss (Davidson, 2010), lessening opportunity for their grief to be validated, normalised or addressed (Doka, 2002; 2017). Loyalty towards family members or friends may also make it difficult for young people to accept the losses those whom they love have caused them.

A psychological match or room for something else? Connecting theories of loss with theories of childhood

Ribbens McCarthy (2006:21) discusses two dominant theoretical approaches to childhood: adolescence as a biological and psychological stage of development and youth theory, which views young people in relation to the institutional settings in which they are placed. In relation to loss specifically, bio-psycho theories of child development have been at the forefront of literature, with 'age and stage' based interventions devised from this perspective for young people who are grieving (Cruse Bereavement Care, 2016; McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016; NHS Choices, 2016; Barnardo's, 2006; Vanderwerker et al, 2006; Bowlby, 1980). This dominance of bio-psycho approaches over interventions devised from youth theory is unsurprising, as research into loss is largely undertaken within health or psychology departments, as opposed to social sciences or human geography departments (Thompson and Cox, 2017:1). Framed developmentally, young people in adolescence are ultimately viewed as 'unfinished adults' who must be 'kept apart from some of the more difficult or risky experiences of adult lives' (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006:7). This can mean societal attempts to shield young people from loss in all its forms, or decisions made by adults on behalf of young people regarding how much exposure to loss feels age appropriate. Such secrecy or shielding around loss can prevent young people from developing coherent narratives around what happened and why (Neimeyer, Klass

and Dennis, 2014), leaving them vulnerable to filling in the blanks of unanswered questions and blaming themselves (Barnardo's, 2006:6).

In contrast to dominant discourse, youth studies tends to view childhood as socially constructed rather than as a set of ages and stages of development (Smith, 2010). Loss therefore has the power to construct and reconstruct childhood; the death of a parent for example could see a child stepping into the role of provider for their family or a move into care may entail a reconstitution of identity in relation to family. In this sense, exposure and experience can override chronological age (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006:22) as the very notion of childhood is reframed according to the events that unfold along each young person's life course (King, 2016; Henderson et al, 2007) and society's response to them. Accordingly, youth theory tends to frame childhood as a 'distinctive life stage, rather than merely as a rehearsal for adulthood' (Smith, 2010:11). This perspective has been bolstered by an increased focus upon young people's rights (United Nations, 1989), the encouragement of young people's voices in politics (Youth Parliament, 1999-2016) and the recognition of young people as valued citizens of the UK (National Citizenship Service, 2001-2016). With loss specifically in mind, social media has also arguably enabled and encouraged young people's active engagement in discussion, with various high profile campaigns (e.g. Black Lives Matter, 2018; Young Minds' Mental Health Activism programme, 2018; Everyday Sexism, 2012) providing a forum for young people to share their stories, raise awareness and offer peer support.

Although youth theory has to date had little input into loss theory, we can nevertheless hypothesise how youth theorists might respond to young people experiencing loss. From this perspective, young people are usually deemed both capable and worthy of agency. Process driven assessment and intervention recommended within psychological and medical literature is therefore likely to be replaced by participatory (Groundwater-Smith, Dockett and Bottrell, 2015; West, 1999) and rights based (Crimmens and Whalen, 1999) approaches to supporting young people through loss. Exploring loss in this way would likely entail keeping young people fully briefed in relation to what is happening to them, helping them explore their experiences from their own perspectives whilst simultaneously respecting and supporting each individual's capabilities and understanding.

The construction of childhood as understood through youth theory seems to have great potential to challenge dominant psychological discourse and reconsider how young people are supported through loss. Nevertheless, young people's voices continue to be marginalised and repressed within society at large (Åkerström, 2014; Alderson, 2012). As such, little consultation has been undertaken with young people about how loss affects them or about what might help young people to manage, understand or make meaning from their experiences. In this sense, the nature, extent and impact of loss within and upon young lives remains chronically under-researched (Vaswani, 2018a, 2014), especially from a multi-disciplinary approach where young people's experiences are explored from their own perspectives (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006).

Part 3: Young people, loss and crime

So how do loss and crime become intertwined within young people's lives? Despite the serious lack of literature exploring loss in the lives of young people who offend, an emerging evidence base has stemmed from custodial settings in particular that suggests unresolved grief may be a significant risk factor for young people who offend (Vaswani, 2014; Wright and Liddle, 2014; Hart, 2013). Vaswani (2018a, 2014) and others (Glover and Hibbet, 2009; Allen, Kyng and Spinnings, 2008, cited in Hart, 2013) also emphasise the overrepresentation of bereaved young people in custodial and secure settings, suggesting potential links between grief and crime.

Bereavement is not the only form of loss thought to disproportionately affect young people in custody. They are more likely to be living in single parent households, lose contact with significant people in their lives, become looked after by the local authority, suffer abuse or trauma or be excluded from education (Halsey, 2017; Liddle et al, 2016; Gray, 2015; Liddle and Solanki, 2002). They are also more likely to have speech, language and communication needs (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, 2012; Bryan, Freer and Furlong, 2007) meaning they may lack appropriate means of expressing emotion, including remorse or regret (Chan and McGonigley, 2003, cited in Hart, 2013). Consequently, young people who have experienced loss and become involved in crime may be particularly ill equipped to discuss their feelings or articulate their needs pro-socially.

Community studies that specifically focus upon young people's experiences of loss are few and far between, although those in existence appear to echo custodial findings in relation to the disproportionate numbers of young people affected by loss and grief. Framed under trauma, a recent review into the effectiveness of youth justice as an agent of public protection (HMIP, 2017) found potential links between young people's experiences of and exposure to trauma and their offending behaviour. Chard's (2017) thematic review of serious offending in the London borough of Tower Hamlets also highlighted the prevalence of trauma and loss in young people's lives. Vaswani's (2008) study of persistent young offenders found little difference in bereavement rates between her cohort and young people more generally. However, the nature of bereavements Vaswani's persistent offenders experienced were 'markedly different' (2008:5), with persistent offenders far more likely to experience parental death or lose someone special through 'traumatic circumstances', including murder or suicide. Young people in Vaswani's study were also more likely to have experienced other forms of loss than other young people, including through witnessing or experiencing domestic abuse or community violence (ibid).

Another important consideration in relation to loss is that young people who offend are also more likely to be victims of crime (Porteous, Adler and Davidson, 2015). Other studies also reveal young people known to community YOTs are disproportionately excluded from school (Berridge et al, 2001), are more likely to be LAC than their non-offending peers (Laming, 2016) and are more likely to have SEND, emotional literacy or SpLC difficulties (Gregory and Bryan, 2011). Such considerations blur conceptual lines between vulnerability and risk, questioning popular discourse that victims and offenders lie 'at two polarised ends of the crime spectrum' (Arnull and Fox, 2013:3). Presdee (2004:45) frames crime in relation to 'lived loss' and social inequality, describing offending as a reaction to 'what we thought we could have, could be, could experience'. Crime therefore becomes an 'alternative career' (Muncie, 2009; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005); a way of gaining agency, autonomy and self-respect (Maruna and Toch, 2005, cited in Vaswani, 2018a), as well as a reaction to the guilt and shame felt through loss (Presdee, 2004:47). Constructed this way, loss becomes a significant indicator of social inequality. Criminalisation may therefore serve to compound existing inequalities and

generate further loss, with young people stigmatised and labelled (McAra and McVie, 2010) resulting (potentially) in further losses, such as the removal of educational or employment opportunities (Vaswani, 2018a) or a breakdown in family relationships.

Despite the vulnerabilities of those who offend, once criminalised, the major events in young people's lives are often overshadowed by the crimes they have committed (Prison Reform Trust, 2008). This does not mean that loss should become an excuse for crime; young people's agency (however restricted) must also be acknowledged in relation to their actions. Nonetheless, it is important that offending is explored in accordance with the broader context of young people's lives. As Murray (1999:2) explains:

'Ultimate responsibility for change does indeed lie with the offender. However, it is our responsibility as a community to make sure that the child has the skills to change and where possible, ensure we have a society that prevents the child becoming an offender. And this is where an understanding of loss can help us'.

Murray's emphasis on community engagement and the collective support of young people who offend offers an interesting alternative to current neoliberal assertions that individuals must take sole responsibility for their fate in the world (Crossley, 2016). The latter has certainly been the underlying ethos of much public health, early intervention and recidivism work in England, with families singled out and problematised through initiatives such as Troubled Families (Crossley, 2018) or held accountable should they not take it upon themselves to alter deeply entrenched behaviours (e.g. smoking, substance misuse, over eating) that affect their health or wellbeing (Sharkey and Gillam, 2010).

YOT responses to loss

But how exactly are YOTs responding to loss within this neoliberal landscape of government policy and legislation? As Smith (2011:128) explains, 'attempts to develop and articulate 'grand narratives' of youth justice and its history are fraught with difficulty'. To attempt to hypothesise about YOT responses in general therefore runs the risk of 'deterministic over simplification which neither does justice to the complexities of the practice nor acknowledges the possibilities for change' (ibid).

Nevertheless, the youth justice board (YJB)⁸ seems to be promoting a shift towards trauma informed practice within community YOTs, with guidance released during the course of this research project (September 2017) and trauma informed interventions and assessment practices added via the YJB's effective practice hub (available at: <https://yjresourcehub.uk>). Additionally, there has been a renewed interest in identifying and supporting young people with SEND, including those with SpLC needs, via the YJB and Achievement for All's high profile work on the Youth Justice SEND Bubble and development of the YOT SEND quality mark (available at: https://afaeducation.org/programme_youth_justice_send_project). These initiatives have been largely developed as a response to calls for penal reform and advocacy from the charitable sector, whose work has highlighted potential connections between youth offending and exposure to trauma, abuse and loss (Howard League for Penal Reform, 2018; Beyond Youth Custody, 2016), as well as the prevalence of unmet SEND within offending populations (Achievement for All, 2017).

Despite this welcome shift towards trauma informed practice, issues within youth justice assessment (and the policy and legislation that underpin it) are readily observed when loss is brought into consideration. Hester and Taylor's (2011) examination of case management for example discovered a propensity for practitioners to neglect bereavement and loss as criminogenic issues because they did not fit explicitly into ASSET scoring criteria.⁹ Hester and Taylor also found that practitioners felt ill-equipped to deal with bereavement, regarding the work of specialist agencies more appropriate (ibid). If practitioners avoid discussing loss, young people are also unlikely to openly offer up such accounts, particularly where relationships have not yet been established (HMIP, 2016), where young people have been let down by adults in the past (Samuels and Pryce, 2008), or where a young person has SpLC or emotional literacy difficulties that further compound difficulties with disclosure (Gregory and Bryan, 2011; Bryan, Freer and Furlong, 2007). Herein lies a conundrum; if practitioners avoid asking about loss and young people avoid

⁸ The YJB is a governing body within youth justice, responsible for the oversight and development of YOT practice and the generation and dissemination of youth justice resource.

⁹ Prior to 2012, there was only one question in Asset (YJB, 2008) relating to whether a young person had suffered a significant bereavement, as opposed to a full section addressing substance misuse. Asset Plus (YJB, 2012) focuses less upon set areas of concern and provides greater opportunity for practitioners to explore a range of issues in young people's lives, including loss. Nevertheless, assessment questions remain predetermined and levels of intervention and contact generated from scores derived from a risk based approach.

talking about it, potential links between loss and offending may never be fully explored.

Even in situations where loss is discussed, framing young people's losses within youth justice assessment and intervention may still prove difficult. Baker et al's (2005) analysis of ASSET disputes this, stating young people do make links between experiences in their lives and their offending behaviours. Asset Plus' self assessment questionnaire also provides young people and their parents or carers with an opportunity to create a timeline of significant events, and space is provided to add free text in relation to why young people feel they have offended and how significant events have impacted upon their lives. This approach may render ineffective however, particularly if practitioner prescribed intervention plans do not take sufficient notice of young people's self-assessment. The high prevalence of SpLC, SEND and low literacy levels amongst young people who offend (Achievement for All, 2017; Communication Trust, 2014) may also compound difficulties in completing self-assessment. The length and intensity of the assessment itself may also be unappealing to young people, who may rush or skip over questions in order to complete the process as quickly as possible. Finally, due to society's continued emphasis on bereavement as the only genuine form of loss (Thompson, 2002), young people may be unsure whether their experiences are losses to begin with. In each of these ways, explicit discussions of loss and its perceived impact upon young people's offending behaviour are unlikely to arise during assessment.

Young people loss and crime; some practical and theoretical tensions

In my introductory chapter I outline some of the terminological difficulties relating to how loss and grief are conceptualised within youth justice, including how attachment, adversity, loss and trauma are used interchangeably at times. I also discuss how loss and grief tend to be theorised and understood in relation to bereavement at the expense of other losses young people might experience. Further tensions also arise in literature that may affect how YOTs respond to young people experiencing loss. These include: troubles with assessing loss; the tension between the normalisation of loss and the medicalisation of grief; the structure/agency debate as it relates to choice, action and response to loss; understandings of loss as personal, individual

events or as a tool of social inequality that disproportionately affects marginalised groups. Each of these tensions are discussed in detail below.

Tension 1 - troubles assessing loss

Presently youth justice is dominated by standardised assessment procedures based upon specific 'criminogenic risk factors' (Case et al, 2017:512). Interventions are usually suggested in relation to assessment with emphasis upon measuring progress against set criteria. To request assessment (externally or internally) where concern is raised is therefore usual practice in YOTs, from assessing young people's mental health or housing needs to assessing their substance misuse or educational ability. The problem with loss however is that it is not easily assessed. As already discussed, loss does not have one set definition, nor is it fore-grounded within current YOT assessment. There are no scales for YOT practitioners to determine the extent of loss in young people's lives, and no obvious pathways to refer young people into. Arguably, exploring loss with young people does not fit well with conventional YOT practice. An additional complication is that loss tends to be normalised as something everyone experiences, from the first time we lose physical contact with our caregiver (Bowlby, 1980) until the day we die. This presents YOTs with a dilemma: if loss is 'integrated' into the basic psychological functioning of the person, even from the earliest age' (Murray, 2000:99) then surely experiences of loss cannot be viewed as criminogenic. If loss is not criminogenic, YOTs may feel that responding to loss does not fall within their remit. But if YOTs do not respond and other services are either unavailable or reject referrals, young people who open up about loss may be left unsupported and disenfranchised, a state of being that may potentially fuel further offending behaviour (Vaswani, 2014).

Tension 2 - the normalisation of loss and the medicalisation of grief.

As well as deciding how to respond to loss within the confines of predetermined YOT assessment and intervention practice, an additional tension arises between how loss and grief are understood and responded to. Whilst loss is normalised as a universal human experience, grief, which is best understood as our response to loss, often becomes pathologised, particularly where it does not fit conventional (stage based) constructions or where grief is viewed as prolonged (Granek, 2016:112; Walter, 2000). This phenomena, often referred to as the 'medicalisation of grief' (Thompson and Cox, 2017; Granek, 2016) may further compound YOT reluctance to support

young people affected by loss. If specialist interventions can be put in place to aid young people's 'recovery' then surely referral to an 'expert' (i.e. those with a medical or counselling background) is the best course of action? Referrals into such services may be rejected however, as experiences of loss are not usually deemed to require mental health intervention. Hester and Taylor (2011) focus specifically on this issue, as they chart 'the troubled history between (loss) research and practice' (2011:191) in YOTs. The paradox of this troubled history is that YOT practitioners may feel ill-equipped to support young people because they do not see themselves as experts in grief management, yet expert services may emphasise the universality of loss, thus reject referrals from YOTs because they do not believe that young people require specialist support. Where such paradoxes exist, young people may find that however loss and grief are framed within youth justice (as a universal phenomena or as a pathological issue requiring specialist intervention), their needs remain unmet because they are 'neglected as welfare issues... beyond the remit of those engaged in offender rehabilitation' (Hester and Taylor, 2011:191).

Tension 3 - exploring structure and agency in relation to young people's experiences of loss and crime.

Discussions relating to structure and agency are prominent within academia, particularly in relation to making sense of lived experience. How structure and agency are perceived as influencing factors in young people's lives is particularly important for youth justice research, as each determines how responsible young people are felt to be for the crimes they commit. Where loss is brought into the equation, how legislators, policy makers, youth courts and YOT practitioners feel in relation to structure and agency may also determine how young people's offending is understood and managed within (or outside) of the CJS. The structure/agency debate is often conceived to be polarised, with those viewing young people as agentic individuals, responsible for their own choices and actions (Bandura, 2006; Beck, 1992) positioned in diametric opposition to those viewing young people's offending behaviour as a product of systemic failure and structural inequality (Durkheim, 2014/1895; White and Cunneen, 2006). Both perspectives come into criticism, the former for failing to take into consideration the wider socio-cultural context within which choices and actions are made (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997), the latter for its deterministic understanding of how young people construct their lives (Case et al, 2017:379). Contemporary youth justice policy and practice tends to

frame young people as active agents and comprehensive decision makers, emphasis lies therefore upon the responsabilisation of young people for both their offending behaviour and their future desistance (Phoenix and Kelly, 2013).

There is however a middle ground when it comes to the structure/agency debate, with some theorists accepting young people's ability to make choices about their lives, with the caveat that such choices can only ever be made within the specific socio-cultural context within which each young person is socialised (Stewart and Maynard, 2018; Evans, 2007; Bourdieu, 1990). Understandings of structure and agency from this middle ground perspective may therefore accept that young people make a choice to offend, but that such choices are constrained by both environmental circumstances and personal capacity. In this sense, young people who experience loss may actively chose to become involved in offending because other choices are either obscured by personal or social factors or are not freely available to be made. Bourdieu (cited in Barry, 2006:38) refers to this in terms of 'habitus', 'field' and 'practice', with habitus being our subjective internalisation of what is happening in the field (the world around us) and our response to the unequal distribution of economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital within capitalist societies. Social practice, including engagement in offending, is dependant therefore upon both habitus and field, and upon our ability to acquire and utilise capital across economic, cultural, social and symbolic domains. As Barry explains:

'There is a constant interplay between structural constraints and individual choice, and the importance of time, space, agency and the individual's capacity to change are all implicated in the construction and reconstruction of the social world' (2006:35).

Bourdieu's consideration of both structure and agency as a way of making sense of action has been built upon by others interested in understanding how young people navigate their social worlds. MacDonald and Marsh (2005:170) for example explored how young people pursued economic capital in the form of 'criminal careers' and how desistance from crime was hampered by the social capital young people had built up through engaging in offending and substance misuse with peers. These forms of social and economic capital felt very difficult for MacDonald and Marsh's young people to give up, particularly where alternative means of generating capital

were in scarce supply (2005:183). Evans (2007) explored the concept of 'bounded agency' in relation to young people's actions, with choice regarded as constrained but not determined by overarching structural factors. Evans described bounded agency as 'socially situated', emphasising young people's 'internalized frames of reference as well as (their) external actions' (Evans, 2007:93). The social situation of agency is further explored by France and Haddon (2014), as they considered Furlong and Cartmel's (1997) rejection of personal agency and reflexive biographies as 'epistemological fallacies'. France and Haddon discuss how within their work with marginalised young people, both agency and reflexivity were classed (2014:310) because our very understanding of choice is affected by that which is constructed as being available to us. This is not dissimilar to Willis' proposal back in 1977 that 'working class kids get working class jobs' because aspiration is bounded by experience.

Finally, Stewart and Maynard's (2018) practice model for the empowerment of young people constructs young people's agency in relation to 'structural encouragement'. For young people who offend, being labelled as a criminal and placed with other young people labelled as criminals makes the choice to be 'pro-social and law abiding' particularly difficult to make. In this sense structural inequality enables but does not predetermine 'bad choices'. Stewart and Maynard emphasise the intrinsic link between 'empowerment, agency and wellbeing' and the 'reciprocal link between social justice and wellbeing' when understanding how young people make choices and take action. Marginalised young people affected by loss may therefore be particularly vulnerable to restricted agency and 'bad choices' (such as offending) in relation to this. Raising young people's awareness, supporting them to make pro-social choices and helping them engage in positive action must therefore be understood in relation to structure and agency, but also in relation to wellbeing and social justice. This is evidenced within Stewart and Maynard's practice model for young people's empowerment (portrayed below), helping alleviate previous critique that preoccupation with structure and agency comes at the expense of power, citizenship and rights (Barry, 2006).

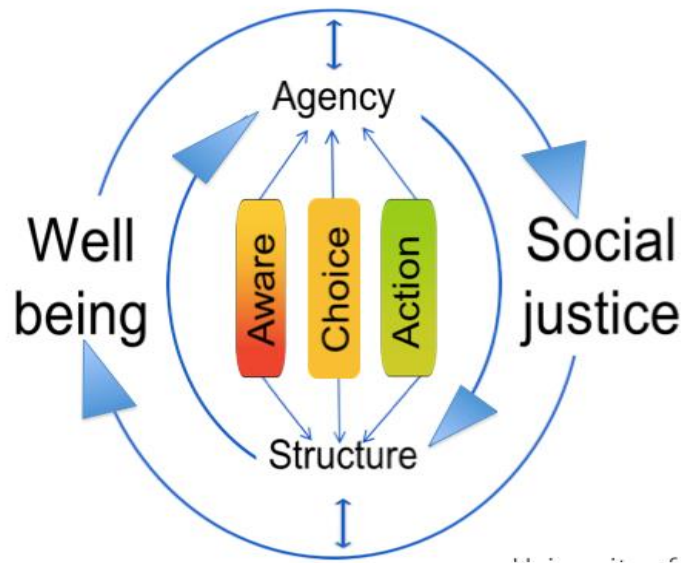


Figure 2.1 Stewart and Maynard's (2018) practice model for the empowerment of young people

Understanding the complex interplay between structure and agency has been an integral aspect of this research project. As such, discussions relating to structure and agency permeate right through this thesis. A major finding from my work with young people centred upon their loss of agency (discussed fully in my third findings chapter). In these instances, young people used offending as an available mechanism through which they could voice and embody their frustrations and express and reclaim a sense of control over their lives and circumstances. Stewart and Maynard's practice model helps foreground issues of wellbeing and social justice, helping us understand loss in relation to structural inequality in addition to loss as an individualised, personal experience.

Tension 4 - loss as individualised personal experience and loss as a reflection of social inequality

Loss and grief often feel incredibly personal. It is not surprising therefore that focus has predominately been upon understanding loss from a psychological perspective and about supporting individuals through their grief. Nevertheless, many forms of loss disproportionately affect specific communities, especially those with lower socio-economic status (Shaw et al, 2008; Shaw, 1999). Taking loss through ill health and bereavement as examples, according to Public Health England (2017a) 'there is a social gradient in lifespan' with those from the least deprived areas of England expected to live nine (males) and seven (females) years longer than those living in the most deprived areas. There are also discrepancies in how long people from

different socio-economic backgrounds can expect to be in good health, with a nearly twenty year difference between those from England's most and least deprived communities. Because there is greater deprivation in the north of England, poor health and higher mortality rates disproportionately affect northern communities. This effectively creates a 'north-south divide' in relation to both life expectancy and healthy life expectancy. A young person living in a deprived area in North East England (where fieldwork for this project took place) is therefore statistically more likely to experience loss through the deteriorating health or premature death of adults in their lives than a young person growing up in an affluent area in the south of England.

England benefits from a National Health Service, the aim of which is to provide free healthcare to all, regardless of social background or economic circumstance. Nevertheless, acquisition of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, cited in Barry, 2006:42) affects people's access to and engagement with healthcare and support services, their treatment options and the quality of their aftercare (Doka, 2017:xv). As such:

'Almost half of the gap in life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas in England is due to excess deaths from heart disease, stroke, and cancer... there is a higher prevalence of many behavioural risk factors among the more deprived areas compared with the less deprived areas. These health inequalities are underpinned by inequalities in the broad social and economic circumstances which influence health' (Public Health England, 2017a).

Experiences of loss and grief should be viewed therefore as classed, with those marginalised from mainstream society having to negotiate medical and psychological discourses that in the Foucauldian sense 'both reflect and reinforce existing power relations' (Thompson and Owen, 2017:112). The accessibility of health and support services are therefore as crucial as their availability for marginalised communities (Bordere, 2016:14); failure to understand the support needs of diverse communities or to situate individual experiences of loss within their broader socio-cultural context effectively locks people out of early intervention, limits opportunity for support and facilitates the reproduction of inequality for those already unduly affected by loss.

Understanding loss as a multi-faceted entity within the lives of young people who offend: a serious gap in current knowledge

Whatever form loss takes, it can be described as a disruption to the normal routine (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006), which in turn necessitates processes of 'meaning making' (Davis, Harasymchuk and Wohl, 2012; Neimeyer et al, 2008). Such disruptions have been referred to as 'critical moments' (Macdonald and Shildrick, 2013; King, 2016; Henderson et al, 2007; Macdonald and Marsh, 2005; Sampson and Laub, 2003), where young people's experiences, reactions and decisions have potential to alter their 'life course'. Whilst it seems clear that loss is a prevalent feature of many young people's lives, research with a direct focus upon young people's experiences of loss remains extremely limited, especially from an E/W perspective. In 2006, Ribbens McCarthy stated that an interdisciplinary approach to loss and bereavement was required in order to add 'contours' to existing maps of knowledge on the subject of loss (2006:10). Now over a decade old, Ribbens McCarthy's qualitative study of E/W young people's losses did indeed add contours of understanding, particularly in relation to how bereavement affects young people's identities and their life course. However, the study itself is not without issue and gaps in knowledge still remain. Firstly, Ribbens McCarthy's five case studies (analysed by Sue Sharpe) were derived from a wider longitudinal biographical study of young people's everyday lives and transitions (Henderson et al, 2007), selected due to the bereavement(s) young people disclosed during a series of interviews. In this sense, bereavement became the key form of loss under scrutiny, and only those who explicitly disclosed loss were included. Secondly, Ribbens McCarthy's study focused upon young people whom she described as 'non problematic', including those who had not accessed any particular bereavement services or interventions (2006:60). Her rationale for selecting case studies according to these criteria was that she wished to capture the everyday experiences of 'ordinary' young people, exploring how issues of bereavement entered into young people's narratives and affected and impacted upon everyday lives and identities (2006:61). Whilst McCarthy stresses the 'ordinary', it must also be recognised that loss disproportionately tends to affect those whose lives are extraordinary, largely as a result of the social and health inequalities marginalised young people face on a daily basis and the restriction of opportunity for high quality guidance and support. This is a pertinent concern for many marginalised young people, including those who offend (Vaswani, 2018a).

With this in mind, it can be argued that issues of intersectionality were neglected in Ribbens McCarthy's study, and that marginalised young people's stories (including the loss stories of those who offend) were neither explored nor validated.

Despite its shortcomings, Ribbens McCarthy's work remains an important contribution to knowledge; her work opened the door for further exploration of E/W young people's experiences of loss, particularly from a qualitative, interdisciplinary perspective. Nevertheless, very few academics have passed through since, with less still considering loss in a broader sense than bereavement alone. As such, dominant interventions and practices with young people experiencing loss remain firmly situated within the realm of psychological discourse; bereavement remains centre stage and grief largely remains understood and responded to through stage based perspectives (e.g. Kübler-Ross' five stages of grief model). Because of this, little emphasis has been placed upon the wider sociological context of loss, or upon the power of family, peer or community based support (Harris and Bordere, 2016; Thompson et al, 2016). Within small pockets of academia and practice, there have been pleas for a sociology of loss (Thompson et al, 2016) and for social constructivist enquiry as a way of complementing and challenging existent medical and psychological literature (Bevan and Thompson, 2003; Thompson, 2002). In E&W however, such pleas remain largely unmet.

Considering the above, it is unsurprising that studies explicitly exploring loss in the lives of young people who offend from a social constructivist perspective are seemingly absent from academia. To my knowledge, there are also no studies that explore young people's experiences of loss ethnographically, although loss often emerges as a subsidiary theme in other studies, especially those investigating the lives of marginalised communities (Macdonald and Shildrik, 2012; Sharpe, 2012; Macdonald and Marsh, 2005). It is in light of these absences that we must take Ribbens McCarthy's advice and look to 'join disciplinary dots' as a way of generating more nuanced understandings of loss.

Research questions

My research aims to both join disciplinary dots and fill some of the current gaps in knowledge revealed through this literature review. The research questions I constructed in order to do so are split into three broad categories: young people's experiences of loss; practitioner interpretations and responses to young people's

experiences of loss; the implications of each for youth justice policy and practice. Although the overarching theme of my research was clear from the offset, each specific question became set during time spent in the field. This enabled me to be open to events as they unfolded, and helped me listen and respond to what was actually happening during fieldwork as opposed to searching for answers to predetermined questions. The questions I explore within this thesis are listed below¹⁰:

1. What is the nature, extent and impact of loss in the lives of young people who offend?
 - What role does loss play in the stories young people who offend are telling about their lives?
 - How do young people who offend interpret issues of loss in relation to:
 - a. their daily lives and practices?
 - b. their offending behaviours?
 - Are there any differences regarding the nature, extent and impact of loss in the lives of young people who offend and the nature, extent and impact of loss in the lives of other marginalised young people?
2. How are youth justice practitioners interpreting and responding to young people's experiences of loss?
 - Are youth justice practitioners viewing issues of loss as criminogenic factors, welfare issues or a mixture of both?
 - How does YOT practitioners' interpretations of loss impact upon their daily work and practice with young people who offend?
3. What are the implications of young people's loss stories for youth justice policy and practice?
 - What can be learnt from the stories that young people who offend are telling us?

¹⁰ Appendix 1 details how I answered each research question and the specific data generated in relation to each.

- Do young people who offend have specific support needs in relation to their experiences of loss?
- What do young people say would help them to address issues of loss in their lives?
- What support and guidance do youth justice practitioners feel they need to work effectively with young people who have experienced, or who are experiencing, loss?

Conclusion

Within this literature review I have explored three core themes; young people and crime, young people and loss and young people, loss and crime. I began with a consideration of how youth crime is theorised and framed within academia and within contemporary youth justice policy and practice. From here I discussed key issues relating to why young people offend, including the importance of understanding young people's behaviour and actions from an intersectional perspective. I then considered the role of the YOT and how constructions of youth justice in relation to polarised notions of 'welfare' or 'justice' impact upon and affect practice.

The second section of my literature review discussed the nature and prevalence of loss in young people's lives. I considered loss theory and development, from the early psychological theories of Freud, to postmodern loss theory and in particular, the contribution of social constructivist theorists to loss theory and professional practice. I brought this section to a close by linking theories of loss with theories of childhood as a way of understanding how loss in young people's lives is conceptualised and responded to.

The third section of my literature review aimed to tie together research about young people who offend with research exploring young people's experiences of loss. I discussed the small body of literature that investigates loss in the lives of young people who offend, as well as emergent youth justice policy concerning trauma informed practice. I unpicked some of the underlying theoretical and practical tensions that arise when exploring offending in relation to loss, including how understandings of structure, agency and marginality affect conceptualisations and responses to loss within youth justice policy and practice.

I brought my literature review to a close by making explicit the gaps in knowledge that presently exist in relation to our understanding of loss in the lives of young people who offend. I then shared my research questions, each constructed to help fill gaps in current knowledge, join disciplinary dots and explore some of the prevailing questions this literature review has left me with. How I went about investigating my research questions is discussed in the next chapter of this thesis.

Methodology



Image credit: *Ethno-mimesis as meaning making*, shot by Peter, aged 17

Introduction

The following chapter explains the methodological approach I took in order to explore loss in the lives of young people who offend. Here I consider key aspects of my research design and approach to fieldwork in relation to wider theoretical and methodological frameworks, as well as reflecting upon the multi-disciplinary nature of this work and how working across disciplines has contributed to both research design and analysis. I discuss the important role of critical reflection (Kemmis, 1985; Fook and Gardner, 2007; Morley, 2008) and reflexivity (Lumsden and Winter, 2014) within my work, and how this helped me refine my approach in response to feedback from young people and practitioners as the project progressed. This section also examines the ethical frameworks I worked within, including the importance of continually revisiting and reflecting upon the ethical implications of my research for both young people and practitioners. I begin however by outlining my rationale for

selecting each of the settings I worked within in order to conduct this research, briefly discussing the core ethos and makeup of each in conjunction with the wider context and demographics of each local authority area and the shifting dynamics of my own insider-outsider positionality as I moved between and within settings. I then move on to consider how I utilised Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) (Charmaz, 2000; 2014) as a methodological framework and ethno-mimesis (O'Neill, 2002) as a methodological toolkit to structure my work; drawing upon inductive qualitative methods to gain insight into how loss permeated the lives of young people who offend. Next, I focus specifically upon the core aspects of my research design and implementation, including recruitment, participation, safeguarding and ethical issues. Finally I consider the limitations and challenges of conducting research in this way, as well as offering recommendations for future enquiry.

(Re)finding areas for fieldwork: Peasetown and Adlerville

I was keen to conduct this research in the North East of England for several reasons. Firstly, this is the area where I live and work and although I did not grow up in the North East, I feel a deep affiliation with this part of the country. I am fascinated by the contrasts the North East brings; in terms of its landscape, communities, heritage and dialect. The North East is often referred to as one place, with generalisations made about people's characteristics, their socio-economic status, their health and wellbeing or their hopes, dreams and aspirations (Hudson, 2005; Chapman and Jackson, 2007; Beckett, 2014). Although I was fundamentally interested in individual stories and how they might educate youth justice policy and practice in relation to young people's experiences of loss, for the reasons above, I did not want to confine myself to one North East YOT setting. I was interested in the role of place and the socio-cultural context of young people's stories, told by young people from different areas of the region. I was also interested in whether differences in internal structures, processes and access to resources would affect YOT interpretations and responses to young people's stories. Equally important, I was aware that I would need focused time for fieldwork where I could build relationships with young people and practitioners, as well as gain a comprehensive understanding of the inner workings of each YOT. For this reason I decided to conduct in depth fieldwork simultaneously across two areas, rather than attempting to visit all of the region's YOTs.

There were similarities and differences between each of the areas I selected for fieldwork. Socio-economic inequalities between individual wards were stark, (Public Health England, 2017) as were health outcomes and life expectancies. In both areas, young people from socio-economically deprived wards were disproportionately represented at the YOT, tying broadly with McAra and McVie's (2010, 2016) assertion that young people from poorer communities are subject to greater levels of surveillance and therefore more likely to become entrenched in 'prevention', 'early intervention' and youth justice services than their more affluent peers. Although both areas were predominantly populated by white, working class people, there were patent demographic differences relating to population size, geographical area, landscape and infrastructure. There were also marked differences between minority communities residing within each area, including the prevalence of refugees, religious minority groups and those with English as a second language (Peasetown Statistics and Census, 2011; Adlerville Statistics and Census, 2011; Office for National Statistics, 2012). Local authority governance, the structuring of Children's Services' and the impact of austerity measures also differed immensely between areas.

YOT Area 1: Peasetown

The first setting I approached was the YOT in Peasetown where I was formally employed. Ease of access was appealing, although it also felt important to return to the place that inspired this research and give something of myself to young people and practitioners there, whether that be advocacy, practical support or merely a space and place for young people to tell their stories. Having undergone extensive cuts to local authority services, the YOT, although significantly smaller than it had been in previous years, seemed to be in a period of relative stability as I began fieldwork with no further redundancies planned. The YOT Manager had however recently received a wider managerial remit, responsible for the management of Early Help and Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) services as well as the YOT. Peasetown's YOT was situated close to the town centre, in buildings shared with other Children's Services staff and the Neighbourhood Policing Team. The YOT had their own office accommodation, with two adjoining offices for YOT staff and a separate office for

YOT management. During fieldwork, I worked on a one to one basis with five young people at the YOT, and interviewed ten YOT practitioners.¹¹

The summer arts sessions

In addition to working with young people at the YOT, I also attended a summer arts project in a local craft shop. This was a new addition to the usual programme of YOT activities and was open to any young person involved in any capacity with the YOT or ASB team. Approximately ten young people attended these sessions, although there were small changes in personnel from week to week. Most attendees were under fourteen years old and they were generally involved in low level offending or ASB. Several had SEND including autism and ADHD. In stark contrast to the majority of young people I met at the YOT or through the SP, most from this group were still accessing full time education¹². Most also resided with parents or carers as opposed to residing in local authority care.

The Study Programme

In addition to meeting young people at the YOT and on the summer arts programme, I spent an academic year (September - July) working with young people at the local authority's SP. Young people enrolled on the SP for a variety of reasons, and whilst some had previous or current involvement in offending, others had no involvement at all. Working with young people at the SP enabled me to make important distinctions between the loss accounts of those who offended and those who did not, distinctions that may have gone amiss had I only worked with young people known to YOTs. The majority of alternative education provision for young people in Peasetown had been dismantled due to funding cuts, meaning young people attended the SP from all over the borough. It was also situated in the town centre, making access fairly straightforward for most young people. During my time at the SP I worked with 28 young people split across two groups. I also spent time with the course manager, mentor, teaching staff, teaching assistant and the two community volunteers who supported young people with their learning. It is important to note that the SP staff were also my colleagues, as I remained employed as a casual tutor by the same learning provider that ran the SP. I had also taught on the SP two years prior to beginning my fieldwork. This familiarity allowed me many perks and privileges, and I was granted full access to the setting almost immediately. Such familiarity also had

¹¹ Appendices 5 and 6 provide a comprehensive breakdown of participant demographics in each setting.

¹² Most were in mainstream school and some in specialist SEND provision.

its pitfalls, discussed later in this chapter as I reflect upon my own positionality within the research process.

YOT Area 2: Adlerville

I was keen to find another North East area that would both complement and add contrast to my fieldwork in Peasetown. Adlerville provided a suitable mix of each, enabling me to generate common themes across young people's stories as well as explore contextual differences between the two. I was also able to explore how operational cultures and structural differences within each YOT affected practitioner's assessment of and response to loss. During my time at Adlerville YOT, issues with recruitment meant I worked with just two young people on a one to one basis. Additionally, I interviewed six YOT practitioners as well as spending time in the setting observing everyday YOT process and practice.

The main YOT building in Adlerville was situated in the town centre within a large local authority building, at the area's northernmost point. Adlerville covered a greater geographical area than Peasetown, meaning young people attended appointments from further afield and staff travelled longer distances in order to complete home visits. The YOT team in Adlerville was also far larger than that of Peasetown; more staff were employed and there were bespoke teams for 'preventions' and 'statutory orders' (Adlerville Youth Justice Plan, 2016-2017). The YOT team sat within a large open plan office, which also held staff from Social Services and the Domestic Violence and Abuse team. Unlike Peasetown, Adlerville's YOT had thus far avoided redundancies brought on by austerity measures. Whilst I was completing fieldwork however, the YOT began to enter a period of structural and managerial change, as it became more closely aligned with Early Help and Family Intervention Services (FIT) (YOT Team briefing, June 2017). This involved a likely move from the large open plan office for the preventions team, and a closer alignment with colleagues from Early Help and Family Intervention (FIT) who were situated within local area teams across Adlerville. This caused some concern amongst YOT staff, who worried that preventions and statutory teams would become 'disjointed' if they were not situated together as a YOT. Others viewed this move as a point of opportunity, where changes could be made for the benefit of young people and their families and collaborative work between the YOT and other services could flourish.

Another reason I was keen to undertake fieldwork at Adlerville YOT was because it differed in strategic approach from Peasetown YOT. Whilst Peasetown's YOT had a strong focus upon restorative justice, and was situated within a police force area that prided itself upon its restorative approaches (Peasetown Youth Justice Plan, 2016-2017), Adlerville appeared to focus more firmly on family work, children's rights and participatory practice (Adlerville Youth Justice Plan, 2016-2017). The structure and governance of each team therefore was set up according to its 'typology of practice' (Smith and Gray, 2018) and I was interested to see how this would translate in relation to the each area's loss work. Adlerville was also the only YOT in the North East still undertaking regular arts engagement work with young people. As I intended creative practice to be an integral element of my research, Adlerville's emphasis on arts engagement therefore seemed an excellent fit with my own ethos and epistemological leanings.

The Arts Programme

In Adlerville, the YOT arts programme was long established and a local artist had been working closely with the YOT in different guises for approximately ten years. The current focus was on provision for young people who were subject to intensive supervision and surveillance (ISS) and two young people had the art sessions mandated on their timetables. The arts sessions ran on a fortnightly basis and I attended these over a period of approximately four months, until the sessions were ended following funding cuts that were made to the YOT. Each arts session consisted of different activities, from screen printing to graffiti art, with an overarching vision of creating a booklet of young people's art work that represented life for young people in the area. During my time at the arts programme, both young people shared their stories with me and participated in the research process. I also interviewed the community artist who facilitated the sessions as well as the YOT practitioner who was in charge of coordinating ISS activities.

Insider – outsider dilemmas

As I moved between and within different research sites, my insider-outsider status, and subsequently, my positionality, operated in a state of flux. Peasetown was very well known to me; I had lived and worked in the area for several years. I knew Adlerville less well however and despite living in the town centre several years ago, I had never worked there, nor had I come into meaningful contact with young people

or practitioners from Adlerville YOT. The different positionalities I assumed during fieldwork each had benefits and drawbacks, and whilst assumptions might be made that being an insider is the most advantageous position, as Stockdale reflects in relation to her research as an 'insider' within the police service, this was not always the case:

'Conversely, some of the perceived advantages of an „insider“ research position could prove to be disadvantageous – familiarity with language might mean key terms are overlooked, social structures may be too familiar to be noticed, patterns may be missed when analysing data due to taken-for-granted-assumptions (Aguilar, 1981). As much as I was aware of these potential disadvantages before embarking on the fieldwork I still experienced some lapses' (Stockdale, 2015:96).

Below I consider my own insider, outsider status in relation to each of the settings I carried out my research, considering the implications of my positionality upon the research process in relation to: The governance and structure of my work; gate keeping; work with young people and work with professionals.

Within the YOTs

I had very different levels of prior knowledge before entering each of the youth justice settings. Because I was still employed by the local authority in Peasetown, and had worked previously within the YOT, access in this instance was incredibly straightforward. I already had an identity card asserting my insider status, as well as access to internal systems and networks as part of Children's Services. A desk and telephone in the YOT office were provided for me within a week of receiving ethical clearance from university and I was provided with a swipe card that gave me twenty four hour access to the building. Prior to beginning fieldwork, I was given a two hour slot to discuss my ideas for research with the YOT and ASB teams. Time was also set aside during team briefings each week to discuss the progress of my research. After only a couple of weeks back at Peasetown YOT, my former colleagues remarked it felt as though I had never been away; for me the feeling was largely mutual as I assimilated myself back into the team, all be it with a different remit. I created a referral form for practitioners, and they either used this to refer young

people to me or brought me downstairs to meet young people 'off the back' of their own appointments. Meeting young people was therefore relatively straightforward at Peasetown. My pre-existing relationships across Peasetown's Local Authority also enabled me to quickly find the right people to talk to as different themes and queries emerged during fieldwork, as well as providing me with a multiagency audience to disseminate my research findings to.¹³

Fieldwork at Adlerville YOT was an entirely different process. Whilst YOT managers were very interested in the research and happy for me to spend time in their setting, there were a number of processes both they and I had to go through before I was able to gain access, including applying for a full disclosure and barring services check and attending a series of management meetings to discuss the suitability of my project for young people accessing the YOT. I wrote a full guide for practitioners¹⁴, attended team meetings and met with the YOT manager several times before I was able to begin approaching practitioners to ask for their support in accessing young people who might be willing to work with me. I did not have a swipe card (a luxury I had taken for granted in Peasetown) and was therefore reliant upon being let into the YOT office by members of staff. The layout and size of the room where the team was based was also completely different from Peasetown's YOT (where most of the team sat together in two adjoining offices). Instead, the room was a vast, open plan office, which made it harder for me to get to know YOT staff on a personal level. Desk space was limited, so I only had access to a desk or ICT systems when they were available to borrow. Aside from meeting young people through the arts intervention sessions, I did not receive a referral to work with a young person at Adlerville YOT until nearly eight months after I had received ethical approval. Waiting this length of time caused me periods of great frustration and anxiety, as I worried I would not be able to collect sufficient stories from young people at Adlerville to do the research, or Adlerville's innovative approaches to YOT work, justice. I had desperately wanted to work with young people before interviewing practitioners, so young people's stories could lead and shape the research process. The barriers I faced in relation to access however were far trickier

¹³ One such example included opportunities to link up and share my research findings with the local authority SEND team and school SENCOs, arranged for me by a colleague in education with whom I had a close working relationship. I also pitched and received feedback regarding initial research design and methodology to Peasetown's Education Psychology Team, as well as YOT and ASB practitioners.

¹⁴ The practitioner's guide is appendix 9.

to traverse than I had anticipated, and after limited contact with young people I began to interview practitioners. Through this process, relationships were built and I felt more of an insider, as practitioners got to know me better and understand my approach. I also felt following the interview process that I had a better understanding of how the team worked with young people. Interviewing practitioners also helped me understand a little better why gaining access to work with young people had been particularly difficult in this instance, as worries about imminent service restructure and the threat of redundancy affected the team (and perhaps encouraged practitioners to keep their cards and their cases closer to their chest than they might have done in the past). Following practitioner interviews, I received further opportunities to work with young people. The issue then became time and I needed to bring my fieldwork to an end. Eventually, I had to turn referrals down. In hindsight, I would have been better off to interview practitioners at an earlier stage, and not worry so much about the order in which I completed my fieldwork. Working with young people before interviewing practitioners was perhaps therefore more of an insider's privilege than I had previously realised.

Within the Study Programme

As with Peasetown's YOT, the set up of the SP was very well known to me as I had previously taught there. Access was straightforward, and my staff pass ensured I was considered an insider in relation to building entry, systems admittance and SP pedagogy. The manager and mentor also freely shared multi-agency information with me, I was granted free and easy access to work with young people and I was included in staff emails. I was keen however to differentiate myself from teaching staff and situate myself as a researcher during fieldwork. I wore casual clothes, and negotiated keeping my staff lanyard in my pocket rather than wearing it around my neck (as was customary for SP practitioners).

Despite my insider benefits, working as a researcher where I had previously taught was complicated, particularly when stories shared by young people highlighted inequalities in behaviour management and discrepancies between SP policy and practice. Nevertheless, my experiences on the SP were immensely valuable, helping me highlight subtle differences between young people's stories and enabling me to meet young people in a different space from the YOT. The SP also enabled me to

observe the transient nature of YOT involvement, exploring how young people moved in and out of YJSs over time, and learning from their experiences.

Within arts based settings

Both the summer holiday arts programme in Peasetown and the established arts programme in Adlerville were run by external practitioners, taking place in local settings away from the YOT buildings. Coming into an already established programme as a novice artist at Adlerville allowed me to slot fairly easily into a participant role, whilst also being able to draw upon my dual researcher, practitioner identities to ask questions in relation to the wider aims and objectives of arts based practices with young people who offend. This felt a useful balance, enabling me to build relationships with practitioners without any expectations placed upon me to 'manage' young people. Peasetown was much the same and although I was known, I had worked less closely in the past with practitioners supporting the arts programme than with other members of the YOT team.

Being away from the formality of the YOT supported my participation and enabled casual conversation as we learnt and worked together. Whilst not denying the power my adult status inevitably afforded me, working this way nevertheless helped address power imbalances (Rose, 2016; O'Neill, 2012; Thompson, 2008), with young people able to teach me if they picked up a skill first, sharing their expertise in ways they may not have felt able to had I been positioned as the expert. Engaging in arts practices also helped create distraction from the intensity of conversation, providing an alternative focus and allowing young people to dip in and out of storytelling as we worked. This butterfly like approach to storytelling supported young people to lead conversations, sharing only what they felt comfortable sharing at a time and pace that felt right for them. This would have been much harder to achieve had I met young people during a typical, 'one off' interview process (Leitch, 2008).

The specific focus of Adlerville's arts sessions was upon life in Adlerville, and as young people's stories were (re)presented through art (O'Neill et al, 2002) we were able to generate talking points. My outsider status also awarded both young people and practitioners opportunity to explain specific elements of Adlerville life as they experienced it. Such explanations provided backdrop and context in relation to the

art young people produced, enriching my understanding of how young people interpreted their communities and their experiences within them.

With young people

Most young people I met during fieldwork had very different backgrounds and upbringings to my own. Differences in our present circumstances were particularly stark, situating me as an outsider from the offset. My southern accent set me immediately apart from most young people I worked with, geographically, but also in terms of perceived class differences (Cauldwell, 2014) as I was regarded 'posh' by some young people. I am a mature student, and it was unlikely young people would mistake me for one of their peers. Some told me I was the same age as their parents and were surprised to learn I did not have children and had never been married. Working for a university also placed me in a completely different socio-economic and political world not only from young people themselves, but from their families too, most of whom were either unemployed, on health benefits or in low paid, precarious work. I have never had contact with youth or adult criminal justice services as either offender or victim. I have also never been LAC and my family has never been 'known' to social care or early intervention services. I have neither witnessed domestic violence nor cared for a family member due to their substance misuse or mental ill health. My parents are not divorced and I am on good terms with family members. I accessed full time mainstream education and I do not have any communication, mental health or learning needs. I have never been abused on the basis of my religious beliefs, my cultural heritage or my ethnicity. I spent quality time with my family, where social interaction was encouraged and high expectations were set, particularly in relation to educational achievement. In each of these ways, I am markedly different from many of those who were sharing their stories with me. Understanding and highlighting these differences is crucial, as my own positionality undoubtedly affected how young people interacted with me, what they chose to share and what they hoped not to disclose (Barnes, 2013:238).

As well as my positionality, the nature of my research also aroused suspicion at times. Some young people assumed I would share their stories with YOT workers, social workers or tutors. Most also knew (before I explained) if they told me 'safeguarding stuff' I would have to pass it on. Others, particularly those who had been exposed to multiple agencies and workers, were not especially phased about

telling me their stories, perhaps viewing me as yet another adult who would be a fleeting and ultimately insignificant presence in their lives. In this way, I was largely regarded as being another worker, despite reminding young people throughout the process that I was a student and their participation in the research was, from my perspective, entirely voluntary.

There were also times during research where I had to decide which parts of myself I should share with young people. Should I reveal for example that I was a teacher, and in doing so, admit to being part of a system that had rejected and marginalised those with whom I was now trying to build a relationship? Should I be open about my sexuality, and how being ostracised from heteronormative society affected my own perception of the world around me? In most instances I decided to be as open as possible with young people; providing their questions were respectful, I answered honestly. There were occasions where this felt uncomfortable, but out of respect for young people's openness with me, I felt our conversations should be a two way process. I encouraged young people to ask questions during fieldwork, and asked their opinions in relation to emerging findings. As an outsider I felt this was particularly important, as there were elements of fieldwork I may have misunderstood or misinterpreted had I not checked back with those whose experiences I was directly exploring. As such, young people were able to offer alternative interpretations or clarify from their own perspectives what they felt was happening in the field. I was then able to assimilate multiple explanations from multiple perspectives, helping me gain a holistic understanding of how young people were managing and responding to loss.

As described above, my outsider status allowed young people to educate me about their lives and circumstances. LAC young people explained to me what it was like from their perspective to be growing up in care, including how their experiences affected and impacted upon their sense of agency and belonging. Traveller young people explained how they operated within a society that continued to oppress and marginalise their heritage and culture. Being southern enabled young people to share what it was like for them growing up in their north-eastern localities, educating me as a newcomer to their town. Young people who were educationally excluded were able to explain to me how exclusion affected multiple aspects of their lives and how I as a teacher, should affect change. Those who had suffered bereavements or

could tell me how it felt like to lose someone special at such a young age, without worrying they were telling me something I already knew. In each of these ways, being an outsider affected the research process, my positionality both supporting and detracting from what young people felt able to share and how I explored, interpreted and explained the nature, extent and impact of loss in their lives.

With practitioners

As discussed above, my insider, outsider status with practitioners fluctuated in relation to my relative knowledge and prior experience within each setting. Familiarity with processes of youth justice and knowing what it is like to work in a YOT team granted me a degree of insider status with practitioners at both YOTs, epitomised by Adlerville's YOT manager when she remarked 'I know you know youth justice, what do you want to know about us?' Differences between settings were therefore largely in relation to my pre-existing relationships, or lack thereof. This was particularly noticeable in relation to language, acronyms and inside jokes, most of which I understood in Peasetown, some of which I understood in Adlerville. I also found it easier to approach practitioners in Peasetown, knowing when was appropriate to interrupt their workflow, when to offer cups of tea and who to make contact with in relation to specific queries or questions.

Where my insider status in Peasetown became tricky was in relation to being asked to undertake extra duties and responsibilities. The team were aware of my former role as a teacher within the service, so would ask for guidance in relation to school provision, as well as asking me to complete CV work with young people on their caseload. I was also asked to help escort the mother of a young person to a custodial setting as she could only be taken by the YOT to visit her son if two members of staff were present. In each case I was happy to support the team, although I was also aware that there were points where my role as a researcher was beginning to merge with my former YOT practitioner role. Another insider issue came in relation to not knowing what to say when colleagues asked me how the PhD was going. In a similar vein to Stockdale, (2015:97) I often played my work down, laughing about 'not really knowing anything' or 'people thinking I know what I'm talking about now'. Upon reflection I realised I was worried about altering relationship dynamics; if I spoke with authority about my work my former colleagues might feel as

though I was criticising their practice or telling them how to do their jobs. Speaking with authority had always felt acceptable in relation to my former role, I was able to guide colleagues because education was not their area of expertise. When talking more broadly about offending behaviour and the work practitioners were undertaking with young people on their caseloads however, sharing my findings and making recommendations felt more comfortable in Adlerville, where practitioners had only ever known me as a researcher, thus to some degree, an expert in youth justice *per se*.

As at Peasetown YOT, I had pre-existing professional relationships with SP practitioners. Mostly this was incredibly advantageous, as information was shared freely and individual staff tended to open up to me as one of their own. The hardest issue to manage and a real drawback of my insider status however were the times during fieldwork where there was an expectation that I would automatically back decisions made about young people on the SP. There was also an expectation I would step in to manage behaviour or look after the class if tutors were unavailable. On one particular occasion I felt compelled to advocate on behalf of a young person who was excluded from the SP.¹⁵ As a researcher, I had been observing interactions between this young person and others in the group, witnessing how he was targeted, bullied and abused by his peers. I had also observed occasions where abusive behaviour towards the young person had been glossed over by some teaching staff, who would tell everyone to be quiet and get on with their work rather than enacting anti bullying policy and protocol. When I shared my observations with the manager, they were quickly dismissed. This was closely followed by much whispering in the office, and remarks from some of the SP tutors that I should be 'sticking up for my own'. Had I not been an insider, my observations may have been better respected, as an insider however, I was expected to tow the party line.

Of all the settings I attended, I felt my positionality during arts based practice was most advantageous. In Adlerville, both the artist and YOT practitioner were aware I was previously part of another local YOT and had worked in education as opposed to within arts based practice. Coming into an already established programme as a

¹⁵ Tyrone's exclusion is described in my second findings chapter, loss of opportunity.

novice artist allowed me to slot fairly easily into a participant role, whilst also being able to draw upon my dual researcher, practitioner identities to ask questions in relation to the wider aims and objectives of arts based practices with young people who offend. This felt a useful balance, enabling me to build relationships with practitioners without any expectations placed upon me to 'manage' young people. Peasetown was much the same, and although I was known by practitioners supporting the sessions I had never met or worked with the artists leading the sessions in a professional capacity prior to research.

Once a practitioner always a practitioner?

During fieldwork, I found it increasingly difficult to conceptualise myself as either 'researcher' or 'practitioner' as each identity became more tightly woven together. Engaging in critical reflection (Kemmis, 1985; Fook and Gardner, 2007; Morley, 2008) during research supported me to become more aware of how my practitioner and researcher identities entwined, shaping what I noticed in the field and how I heard and interpreted young people's stories. Understanding the connotations of my own positionality (Adler and Adler, 1987), working reflexively in relation to this (Lumsden and Winter, 2014) and 'finding the space between' (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009) helped me unpick my suppositions, making the familiar strange and the strange familiar (Miner, 1956). My practitioner identity nevertheless shaped every facet of this research; it would be misleading to pretend otherwise. As Freire (1998:22) states in relation to the 'pretension of impartiality':

'I am not impartial, or objective... [this] does not prevent me from holding always a rigorously ethical position.'

Like Freire, I have a deeply emotional connection to my work and an underlying passion to help better the lives of young people who offend; subjective qualities I regard as beneficial rather than detrimental to my research. By continually questioning my subjective I's (Peshkin, 1988) and by allowing myself to listen and engage with alternative understandings as I researched, analysed and wrote, I was able to ensure my own subjectivity did not overshadow other perspectives, or prevent the construction of alternative understandings of how loss affects young people who offend.

Allowing the data to speak for itself - Constructivist Grounded Theory as a methodological framework

I decided to use Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) (Charmaz, 2000; 2014) as an overriding methodological framework for my research. I chose CGT because its ethos and application seemed well aligned with my ontological outlook and epistemological leanings. To fully understand CGT however, it is important to consider this approach against the wider backdrop and evolutionary context of Grounded Theory (GT) (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), examining how Charmaz's approach differs from other forms of GT practice.

Underpinned by critical realist ontology (Bhaskar and Hartwig, 2010; Gorski, 2013) and heavily influenced by Mead's concept of symbolic interactionism (Cox, 2017; Milliken and Schreiber, 2012; Charmaz, 2008), GT was created by Glaser and Strauss as a response to the positivist approaches favoured by social and medical research at the time. Instead of attempting to prove or disprove existing hypotheses, GT emphasised the importance of inductive, immersive research. The researcher was also encouraged to remain open and responsive to what they observed in the field, and not become enslaved by existing theoretical frameworks or prescriptive modes of data collection. The original focus of GT was 'to allow researchers in the social sciences to study and theorize localized social processes' (Willig, 2013:77), with the researcher viewed as a detached observer rather than intrinsically involved in the process.

On the surface, GT as a methodology appears to have capacity to transcend epistemological boundaries. Its application in research has been hotly disputed however, not least between those who originated the approach. Subsequently there are various factions of GT, each subscribing to different epistemologies and with different methods of data collection and analysis. Fernandez, 2012 (cited by Evans, 2013) identifies four distinct versions of GT: Classic GT (Glaser and Strauss, 1967); Straussian GT (Strauss and Corbin, 1990); Feminist GT (Weust, 1995) and Constructivist GT (Charmaz, 2000). Additionally, Willig (2013:76) identifies three ongoing debates between each version of GT: 'the role of induction... discovery versus construction, and social process versus individual experience.'

In its original form, classic GT is inductive by nature, with theory regarded as 'emerging' through the constant process of comparative analysis and open coding of data. Limited emphasis is placed upon how data should be collected or the specificities of coding. Glaser remains subscribed to this position, urging researchers not to over think the process: 'jump in and by doing it, you'll learn how to do it' (Glaser, 1998:19). Later versions of GT, including Straussian GT (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) detracted somewhat from Glaser's openness, devising a more prescriptive methodological framework for GT, including specific coding practices for the researcher to follow (Willig, 2013:77). This created a more deductive feel to Straussian GT than Classic GT, and it can be argued that such prescription stifles the creativity and openness of Classic GT.

Classic GT inherently pledges no allegiance to any specific philosophical position, theoretical framework or method of data collection (Birks and Mills, 2015). Researchers are instead urged to refrain from engaging with theory until after fieldwork has been undertaken, helping them to 'stray out of traditional research areas into the multitude of substantive unknowns of social life that have never been touched.' (Glaser and Strauss, 2008:38). Nevertheless, GT has since been developed to reflect specific theoretical frameworks, including its development by feminist theorists such as Wuest (1995) who extrapolated commonalities between GT and feminist epistemologies, presenting the potential for feminist GT to address 'androcentric bias' within nursing research.

As already discussed, understanding the impact of my positionality was a key consideration throughout the research process. Classic GT discusses theory as 'discovered' by the researcher, whose presence is considered detached from the social processes they explore. This has been heavily contested by constructivist grounded theorist Charmaz (2000), who asserts 'neither observer nor observed can come to a scene untouched by the world' (Charmaz, 2014:27). The overarching difference between CGT and other forms of GT therefore is that CGT recognises the impact of the researcher upon each and every aspect of the research process. Accordingly, CGT takes a relativist rather than a critical realist stance:

'(If) we start with the assumption that social reality is multiple, processual, and constructed then we must take the researcher's position, privileges,

perspective and interactions into account as an inherent part of the research reality' (Charmaz, 2014:13).

Subsequently, theory in CGT is regarded as 'constructed' rather than 'discovered', representing one truth in a plethora of other viable truths. The exploration of multiple realities as they are depicted in the lives and stories of participants can therefore generate nuanced understandings of social phenomena. How the researcher synthesises individual accounts to offer more generalised explanations of what is happening therefore becomes one of many plausible interpretations of the issue at hand. Here an important difference is highlighted between Classic and Straussian GT and Constructivist and feminist GT, with the former remaining firmly focused on process and the latter championing GT as a way of studying both process and individual experience. This shift from process to process plus individual experience has altered data collection and analysis somewhat, with constructivist and feminist researchers continually moving between collaboratively constructed 'situated knowledge' (Haraway, 1988) and macro analysis of systems and process.

The mechanics of Constructivist Grounded Theory

So what exactly is CGT, and how is it employed in research? According to Charmaz (2014:7), CGT offers 'a systematic strategy for qualitative research practice'. People are considered active agents within their social world, who 'think about their lives and actions rather than respond mechanically to stimuli' (Charmaz, 2014:8). Charmaz explains 'we construct our grounded theories through our past and our present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives and research practices' (2014:17), thus CGT allows multiple interpretations of events and encourages researchers to: watch and listen carefully to what is unfolding around us; talk with others about what we see and hear; use the processes of watching, listening and talking to continually inform the research trajectory and refine our focus accordingly. Following this methodological process champions 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) as a contribution to knowledge in itself, as well as supporting the development of a clear focus in relation to 'what is happening in your data, without sacrificing the detail of enacted scenes' (Charmaz, 2014:26). In this sense both individual lives and social processes can be explored, as each are viewed as entangled within the other.

The key focus of this research was upon young people who offend and their experiences of loss. CGT encourages reflection upon both macro and micro processes, as well as exploration of how individual stories and actions provide insight into systems and processes. This enabled me to explore young people's individual narratives against the wider contextual background of their lives, as well as interrogate the broader sociological processes, structures and systems within which they were operating. I was also able to reflect upon my own positionality, and how this affected each aspect of the research process, including my interpretation and analysis of data and my theory construction. CGT's advocacy of multiple modes of data collection also enabled me to co-construct ways of working with young people that best suited them, as opposed to repeatedly following a set of predetermined, circumscribed research methods.

Constructing grounded theory with young people

All forms of GT advocate a process of constant comparison between data and settings to help inform the research focus as work progresses. In order to undergo the process of constant comparison, I spent time with young people in different settings, all of whom brought with them a unique mixture of experiences as they spoke about past and present events in their lives or shared stories of imagined futures (Henderson et al, 2007). Constant comparison enabled me to look at these stories side by side, searching for similarities and differences and allowing my interpretation of young people's words and actions to shape: the questions I asked practitioners in interview; how I read and interpreted YOT documentation and assessment data; how I worked with new participants; my scrutiny of existing and emerging youth justice policy and theory. In this way, CGT enabled me to centralise young people; their stories and experiences of loss informing every other aspect of the research process. The diagram below represents how I interpreted CGT within my work:

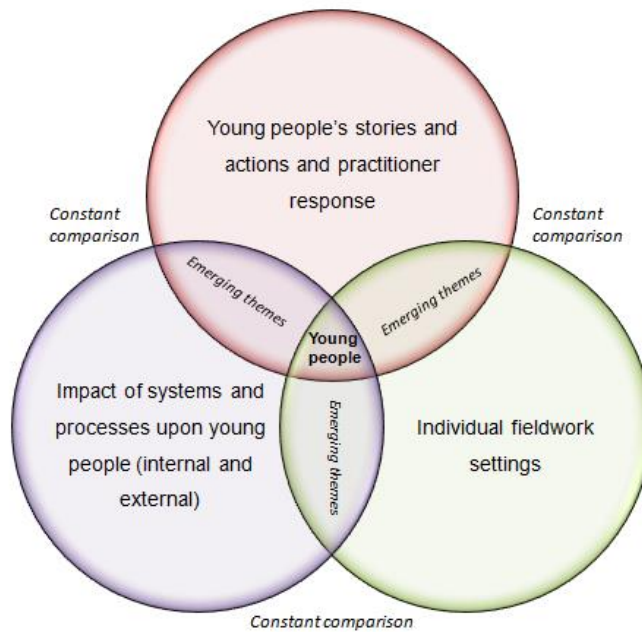


Figure 3.1: Conceptualisation of CGT as a methodological approach.

Constructing grounded theory from an intersectional perspective

It is impossible to unlearn theory and be completely unaffected by what we already know (Charmaz; 2014). Nevertheless, I did not want to be subservient to any particular theoretical perspective before engaging in fieldwork, not least because of the lack of research conducted thus far in relation to young people who offend and their experiences of loss. It was important for me to embrace opportunities to construct theory as it emerged from data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2014), connecting back to existing research where applicable. As my research progressed for example, I turned with intent to social-constructivist perspectives of loss (Thompson and Doka, 2017; Neimeyer, Klass and Dennis, 2014; Bevan and Thompson, 2003; Doka, 2002) as these theories helped me make sense of what I was observing in the field. My reliance upon intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) as a theoretical framework also emerged during fieldwork; as stories were shared, the importance of understanding and responding to loss from an intersectional perspective became increasingly apparent. Most young people I worked with were subject to multiple, intersecting inequalities that impacted upon their agency and wellbeing. Examples were wide ranging, from LGBTQ young people made subject to the demands of heteronormative society, to traveller young people made subject to racist and ethnic abuse. Many had been belittled and judged in relation to their

learning needs, their socio-economic status, their family name or their looked after status. Many labelled themselves as 'thick', 'stupid' 'mental' or 'bad' or as 'chavs', 'criminals' or 'unwanted'. Identities were often performed (Goffman, 1990/1959) in relation to these labels, particularly when young people were subjected to adult led authoritarian regimes. It was important for me to recognise the wider contextual backdrop of young people's lives as I heard their stories and understand how intersectionality operated as a creator and compounder of loss. It was also important I considered how young people's oppression affected their interaction with me, a white, well educated, well-spoken woman. Charmaz (2014:74) reminds us this is especially the case when 'the interview topic alone could discredit the research participant'. I had to be aware by talking about loss and framing young people's experiences this way, my research might not only cause discomfort but also contest protective forms of identity construction shaped by young people's previous experiences, including their oppression and marginality. Simultaneously, I became aware of how marginality operates to disenfranchise loss and grief and how important it is therefore to create space to listen to young people and validate their losses. In recognition of the complex and sometimes contesting issues that intersectional awareness highlighted, I did not initiate conversations about loss with young people during fieldwork. Instead I was led by them, asking questions stemming from the stories they elected to share. I was also able to draw upon CGT's emphasis on reflection and methodological reflexivity (Charmaz, 2017; Mills, Bonner and Francis, 2006) as a way of checking my own assumptions and biases, as well as exploring through an intersectional lens 'what our research participants take for granted or do not state, as well as what they say or do' (Charmaz, 2014:30). Working this way helped me develop a more sensitive, reflexive approach, fore-fronting power differentials as fundamental ethical and theoretical considerations at every stage of my research.

Creative approaches - Ethno-mimesis as a participatory and methodological tool for intersectional, constructivist research

Marginalised and stigmatised communities are often denied opportunity and voice, young people who offend are no exception (User Voice, 2014). When considering issues of loss, young people's lack of voice is evident (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006; McCarthy and Jessop, 2005), especially marginalised young people, including those

who offend (Beyond Youth Custody, 2017). Generating opportunity for young people to explore loss is crucial therefore because 'children, just as much as adults, need to develop coherent narratives... while this can be a difficult and complex process it is an essential one' (Vaughan, 2003:160, cited in Rose and Philpot, 2005:15). Talking openly about loss however may be particularly difficult for young people who offend. In addition to the implicit complexities of loss as a topic of discussion in itself, the following considerations are particularly pertinent: expressing opinions and sharing information with adults means both taking a risk and establishing trust (Wild & Street, 2013:36), which some young people may not feel able or inclined to do; Young people who offend are more likely to have speech and language difficulties (Bryan, Freer and Furlong, 2007) or special educational needs (Achievement for all, 2017; Hughes et al, 2012; Talbot, 2010) than their non-offending peers, rendering considered articulation of emotional experiences especially difficult; The majority of young people known to youth justice services are male, and talking about feelings may be deemed by some males as a threat to masculine identity (Pini and Pease, 2013); Young people tend to developmentally live very much in the present (McCoy and Walter, 2016) so asking them to reflect on their past, or link together narratives of past, present and future, may be particularly challenging for this age group.

To help overcome some of these obstacles and aid young people's participation, I utilised ethno-mimesis (O'Neill, 2002) as a methodological tool. Broadly speaking, ethno-mimesis can be described as a fusion of ethnography and arts based work. Ethno-mimesis enables meaningful ethnographic immersion in relation to culture, identity and structure 'to explore and (re)present (via art) the complexity of lived relations in contemporary society' (O'Neill, 2002:69). Taking an ethno-mimetic approach therefore offered me multiple opportunities to gain insight into the lives of young people, through words, through action and through art. In the first instance, young people's experiences were explored through their own narratives of personhood, place and space. This was enabled during one to one work by a series of story book cards depicting key themes that had emerged from young people as the research progressed, captured in the image below:



Image credit: *Using story cards to support narration during fieldwork.*

Where the young person wanted to, narratives were then collaboratively (re)presented via art, photography or creative writing. This also worked in reverse, with stories emerging from young people's creative work. Additionally, I was also able to observe the process of art making, as well as exploring young people's rationales for the stories they shared and the creative work produced. Ethno-mimesis therefore, in its synthesis of creative methodology and ethnographic work, helped me to engage and build relationships with participants, illustrate quantitative data (King and Roberts, 2014) and break down hierarchical structures of researcher and researched (O'Neill, Roberts and Sparks, 2014).

As well as using ethno-mimesis as a research method, I also drew upon ethno-mimetic techniques as a way of meaning making during the research process. GCT encourages memo writing (Charmaz, 2014) and during every stage of my work I constructed memos in both written and cartoon form as a series of reflective aids, some of which are depicted in the image below:



Image credit: *Ethno-mimetic memo construction as a process of meaning making.*

(re)presenting both my own reflections and the words of others through art helped me foreground important themes; as Lury (1997:218) encapsulates in relation to photography in research work, working creatively 'more than merely representing... contributed to the emergence of a way of seeing... (that) informs contemporary understandings.'

Kowalski and Western, (2005:38) allude to the power of creative methodologies as an enabler, allowing participants to tell their stories and researchers to 'attempt to describe phenomena as they exist rather than to manipulate variables'. Ethno-mimesis encouraged active participation in the research, helping ensure research authenticity and the direct representation of young people's voices through their own creative work and via their own stories. Not only did this enable a deeper connection between myself and those I worked with, it also enriched the research process as a whole, allowing multiple opportunities for me to check meaning and clarify understanding with young people, (via their narrative accounts, via their creative work and later, during my own analysis of research findings and recommendations for practice). Working within an ethno-mimetic framework and presenting my findings creatively as well as via written accounts also helped my research to become more accessible, especially in terms of its wider dissemination to young people and their families, and to practitioners at the YOT.

Both CGT and ethno-mimesis embody relativist, constructivist principles that value the contextual underpinnings of both researchers' and participants' lives. CGT does not prescribe specific research methods, but values the richness of ethnographic work and qualitative approaches for generating insight. Ethno-mimesis and CGT therefore have a lot to offer one another; CGT contributes structure and an analytical framework through which to explore mixed data and ethno-mimesis adds richness through its (re)production of stories through art. Both can be utilised to promote social justice and each enable collaborative practice. Drawing from these complementary approaches helped me engage in flexible, reflective, reflexive and reactive research work, which in turn enriched my collection, interpretation and presentation of young people's stories and practitioner accounts.

Exploring loss; a constellation of qualitative methods

Throughout the research process, I drew upon a variety of data to understand young people's experiences of loss and its impact upon their lives. I was not interested in taking a standardised approach, preferring to find ways of working with young people that suited them best. Some young people liked to sit and talk, others were keen to engage in creative processes, whether that was through photography, collage, imaginative play or clay modelling. I drew upon and analysed documentation where it was available to me, including young people's ASSET Plus assessments, system contacts and records of case discussions that took place during team meetings. Exploring different data sets enabled me to explore loss in young people's lives from multiple vantage points, although deciding which methods fit best and what data to collect was admittedly a deeply subjective process. Below I discuss four key methods I used to learn about young people's experiences of loss: storytelling; creative work; participant observation and qualitative interviewing. I also discuss how I triangulated data generated from young people and practitioners by analysing young people's assessment data, YOT and SP documentation alongside broader youth justice legislation and policy.

Storytelling with young people

I was keen throughout the research process to listen to young people's stories, whatever they might be and wherever they might take me. Young people are often frustrated because they feel that adults do not listen to them (Cooper, 2015) and this is amplified when marginality is added to the equation (Navarro, 2013). Whilst I was

open and honest about my research focus, I wanted to start from where young people were, with the stories that mattered to them and those they felt willing and able to tell. I hoped by working this way, young people would feel more in control of their participation as well as help alleviate some of the power imbalances between us. This was not a time efficient way of working; I met with some young people on multiple occasions before they spoke of loss in any capacity. However, working this way allowed me to take young peoples' lead. By listening and asking open ended, non-judgemental questions about what I heard, stories emerged that gave me a clearer understanding of the wider socio-cultural context of young people's experiences. Stories were also shared that may not have come to light had I questioned young people directly about loss.

Working creatively with young people to explore their stories

I adopted a similar approach to creative work with young people as I did to listening to their stories and aimed to be a facilitator rather than director of their creativity. I brought a range of arts materials and my camera to each session so young people could use the materials they felt most connected to, either to (re)present their spoken stories or to use as a distraction when talking about difficult things or when the intensity of one to one time with an adult felt too much. Adapting and amending my approach in accordance with young people's needs and wishes allowed sessions to become exploratory, with no pressure to 'finish' a piece. Being flexible about how creative work was utilised allowed us to work without rigidity, as well as enabling insight into the different ways each young person engaged with the materials available to them. I was able to ask about the choices young people made, their thought process in relation to their art work, and their rationale for the content, nature and style of work produced. Young people were also able to ask me to help them with aspects of their work, teach me themselves, or direct me to co-create with them. In this way the creative process became a research method, a distraction technique and an exploratory tool, depending upon the needs and wishes of each young person I worked with.

What's happening here?

Observation was a key component of my fieldwork. I observed young people at Peasetown and Adlerville's YOTs, in group settings at Peasetown's SP, during arts sessions in Adlerville and on the summer arts programme in Peasetown. Attention to

action is a crucial aspect of CGT and Charmaz (2014) emphasises the importance of gerunds and language so researchers can compare the two. Goffman's work on performed identities (1990/1959) also reminds us to read between behavioural lines and ask the why's as well as the what's of fieldwork. I was keen therefore to take note of words and actions, looking for commonalities and disparities between what was said and what happened during fieldwork.

Spending time as an observer afforded me time and opportunity to learn about young people, watching their interactions with others and their navigation through youth justice and educational systems. My observations were not conducted covertly, although there were times when young people were surprised I knew something about them and I had to remind them of my presence when a discussion or event occurred. I checked and rechecked with young people I was observing that they were happy for me to be there and assured them I would not use specific stories that emerged during the observational process without their consent. Observation was also rarely a passive activity; I sat with young people, helped them with their work, engaged in conversation, laughed when things were funny and (at times) intervened when challenging behaviours escalated. I used my observations of young people not just to watch, but as a means of building connections and developing relationships. Mostly these relationships felt positive, although one young person at the SP remained suspicious of my presence for the duration of my time there and I had to carefully manage my observational practice in order to respect her right to privacy.

Although the primary focus of my research was to explore young people's stories of loss, I was also interested in how practitioners interpreted and responded to young people's accounts and how loss work manifested (if at all) in their practice. I spent substantive time in YOT offices in both areas; although Peasetown's small bespoke YOT offices were more conducive to observational practice than Adlerville's large, open plan office. I took field notes after team meetings and I observed the day to day work and interactions of YOT practitioners. Again I did not observe covertly and I discussed my observations with practitioners, asking for their insight and reflections both informally and during practitioner interviews. I also observed colleagues on the SP to help me better understand how their perception of young people affected teaching practices and behaviour management. Finally, I observed arts practitioners

during the YOT arts sessions in each area, watching how they worked with young people's stories, helping them (re)present their ideas or express themselves through art. Observing practitioners from different agencies in their work with young people who offend allowed me opportunities to notice systemic differences as well as differences between settings and personal approaches to practice.

Interviewing practitioners - Using semi-structured interviews to learn about working practices within the YOT

I completed a series of semi-structured, recorded interviews at each YOT as I was keen to gauge practitioner understandings and responses to loss within varying contexts of youth justice delivery and service design. Semi-structured interviews are described by Loafland and Loafland (1995) as 'a directed conversation' and by Charmaz (2006:26) as 'permitting an in-depth exploration of a particular topic with a person who has had the relative experiences'. Conducting recorded interviews allowed me to focus my attention upon the practitioner as they spoke, noticing facial expressions and body language as well as words. I was also able to fully listen to what was being said, without worrying about capturing verbatim phrases in my field notes. Although I had a prior idea of questions I might ask practitioners during each interview, I did not rigidly stick to these, instead taking a reflexive approach throughout (Charmaz, 2014:63). By working reflexively, I was able to ask further questions to clarify or elaborate upon individual responses. Practitioners were also able to engage in reflexive dialogue as they reflected upon my reflections (Riach, 2009). Transcribing the interviews as soon as possible allowed me to revisit and reflect, helping shape the interview process for the next participant by adding, altering or removing question prompts as new themes and fresh insight emerged. During interview, I ensured I kept questions open ended so practitioners could interpret and elaborate according to their own values and practice. Interviews conducted this way generated a wealth of information, helping me gain insight and understanding of individual and collective practices and processes as I compared accounts. The process of interviewing and its use as a research method is not without its disadvantages however, including 'projection of self' (Charmaz, 2014:47), where practitioners (and researchers) may feel a requirement to embody a particular identity. This may have been especially prominent for practitioners in Adlerville, who did not know me, or for YOT managers who may have felt pressure to align their responses with official youth justice policy or local authority values. Hollway and

Jefferson (2000; 2009) discuss the importance of getting beyond an interview participant's 'defended' self, reading between the lines in relation to what is described and exploring how 'unconscious defences' (2009:305) affect interviewed accounts. Whilst this could be interpreted as lacking respect for the integrity of research participants, developing a consideration of my participants' 'projection of self' and 'unconscious defences' made sense, aligning with Goffman's (1990/1959) 'dramaturgical approach' and constructivist epistemology. This was an important consideration for myself as well, as I also exhibited a 'defended self' during interview, performing various identities in accordance with how I was feeling at the time and how I perceived myself in relation to those I was interviewing. In this sense, it was not just practitioners' accounts that required scrutiny when I analysed each interview, but my own responses, questions and reflections too.

Triangulating the data

I collected data in several different ways so I could explore my research questions from different angles, using CGT's process of constant comparison to look for similarities and differences in data sets. I captured my observations in each setting via a series of detailed field notes, photography and reflective cartoons. I was then able to compare my observations during fieldwork with the stories and creative work young people shared with me and with recorded practitioner accounts, looking for common themes as well as discrepancies between actions and words. Working with young people on the SP who did not offend allowed me another point of comparison, helping me better understand the complex interplay between young people's loss accounts and their offending behaviours. Conducting fieldwork at the SP also enabled me to explore how young people previously known to YOT conceptualised themselves in relation to their offending; was being an 'offender' a transient identity or a label that stuck long after their case was closed? Finally I met young people on the SP who self disclosed offending behaviours yet had no official contact with the YOT or ASB team. In these instances I was again able to explore similarities and differences between these young people and those formally involved with the YOT.

In order to make links between practitioner responses, their assessment of young people and the practical application of this in relation to intervention planning, signposting and support I also reviewed ASSET Plus assessments and other YOT documentation including meeting minutes and case contacts. This was completed

differently in each YOT. At Peasetown I had access to all YOT assessment documentation and my own login details for the database. In Adlerville I did not have access to YOT databases, but was able to make requests for data and also work with an analyst to identify patterns and trends. There were positives and negatives to each approach; whilst ease of access was highly useful in Peasetown, I did not have access to the skills and expertise of a data analyst to help process and interpret large amounts of data as I did in Adlerville. Looking at assessment documentation alongside practitioner accounts and young people's stories helped me understand the relationship between process (document writing) and action (practical application of intervention plans and recommendations). I was also able to consider practitioner interpretations and presentations of young people's loss experiences within YOT documentation, including what was left out as well as what was included (Charmaz, 2014:46). During fieldwork I attended team meetings at both settings, observing discussions of young people's cases and other YOT business in a semi-formal arena. I also observed practitioners in their roles, and informally discussed elements of their day-to-day practice. I took detailed field notes and completed a reflective journal throughout the fieldwork process, enabling me to compare young people's experiences and YOT practice both across and within settings.

Table 1a on the following page details how I worked with young people's assessment data:

Table 1a: Working with young people's YOT assessment data.

Area	Assessment Data	Number of cases	Nature of work undertaken	Notes
1	Asset Plus	30	Assessment documentation read and themed in relation to loss (themes drawn in accordance with young people's stories and creative work as opposed to practitioners' specifically documenting young people's experiences as losses)	<p>The cases I analysed were all active YOT cases during the period of data collection. Some young people whose Asset Plus documentation I explored and themed within my fifth findings chapter, (the extent of loss in the lives of young people who offend), were not active participants within this research. Although ethical approval had been granted to explore all active cases, I engaged in continual consideration and critical reflection throughout the process in relation to how I worked with young people's data where explicit permission from young people themselves had not been granted (a process I detail fully within the introduction to my fifth findings chapter).</p> <p>Due to the way I worked with this data, demographic information relating to gender, age and ethnicity was not collected.</p>
1	Asset Plus Self Assessment (SA)	30	Young person's self assessment documentation read and themed in relation to loss (themes drawn specifically from young people's answers to specific questions as well as their 'free text' within the SA)	
1	Asset	1	Assessment documentation read and themed in relation to loss. This was a care taken case where Asset had been used by the young person's former YOT as opposed to Asset Plus.	
1	Police Reprimand	1	Assessment documentation read and themed in relation to loss.	
2	Asset Plus	103	With support from the YOT's data analyst, Asset Plus documentation was split and analysed in relation to cases where practitioners documented young people as having experienced significant loss and bereavement (n=31) and those not documented as having experienced significant loss and bereavement (n=72).	<p>Please refer to the considerations listed above in relation to my use of assessment data where young people had not explicitly given their permission for me to access.</p> <p>Due to the way I worked with this data, demographic information relating to gender, age and ethnicity was not collected.</p>

The combination of ethno-mimetic work with young people, alongside semi-structured interviews with professionals, observation of day-to-day practice and YOT data and assessment scrutiny enabled me to interact with my research questions on multiple levels, helping triangulate the data (Hussein, 2009; Maruna, 2009), enrich and contextualise my findings and identify and explore key themes as they emerged.

Research design and participation

The following section outlines specific details relating to research design and participation, including inclusion criteria, data sampling, recruitment and participant demographics.

Inclusion criteria for research:

Any young person known to Peasetown's SP, or Adlerville or Peasetown's YOT or ASB team was eligible to take part in the research,¹⁶ regardless of whether or not they were perceived to have experienced loss. My rationale for this was twofold. Firstly, I did not want to predefine young people's losses, excluding participation if their stories or experiences did not align with my own constructions. Instead, I wanted to provide time and space for young people to conceptualise loss in their own way; to place restrictions upon participation may have resulted in important elements of loss remaining unexplored (including young people's own interpretations of what loss meant for them). Secondly, as discussed earlier in this chapter, young people who offend are already marginalised; in education, in employment and within wider society. Many who took part in this research were subject to multiple inequalities, each of which compounded marginality, restricted opportunities and repressed voice, excluding anyone who wished to participate therefore felt ethically inappropriate. Working this way paid dividends, as rich and varied accounts were shared from multiple perspectives that far outweighed my own imaginative capacity for how loss might manifest within young people's lives. Differences in young people's circumstances and experiences also helped me identify subtle nuances, between young people known and unknown to youth justice services and between those entrenched in offending and those with fleeting involvement.

Although the primary focus of my research was with young people, I was keen to understand how practitioners from each setting conceptualised and responded to

¹⁶ I did have to turn down some very late referrals from Adlerville YOT as fieldwork ended.

loss. As such, practitioners working with young people who offend were also eligible to participate.

Recruiting young people

I recruited young people via referrals from YOT practitioners, through the YOT arts sessions and via Peasetown's SP.¹⁷ Due to the importance of relationship building with marginalised young people (McGregor and Mills, 2012) who may have attachment issues (Bowlby, 1980), communication and language difficulties (Bryan, Freer and Furlong, 2007) or find it hard to trust adults because of the nature and circumstances of their lives (Hill, 1999), support from trusted adults was also a crucial aspect of recruitment. At the YOTs, I often met young people for the first time alongside the practitioner who had referred them. I followed a similar process as I undertook ethnographic work at the SP and YOT arts sessions, focusing on relationship building first and foremost. I did not approach young people to take part in one-to-one work until I felt relationships had been developed sufficiently and young people were comfortable enough with me to say if they did not wish to take part or engage in conversation.

Recruiting young people was not always an easy process. I was ethically and morally obliged to reiterate the voluntary nature of participation so many opted out, particularly in relation to longer term one-to-one work. There were also other barriers to overcome, including those set up (intentionally or unintentionally) by YOT practitioners, care home staff or parents and carers. Barriers included: worries young people were unable or ineligible to take part; fear young people might become emotionally unstable if they participated; decisions made on behalf of younger participants that taking part in the research would not be in their best interests; retrospectively remembering young people who could have taken part; young people moving out of area before I was able to work with them; parents, carers and care home staff forgetting to sign and return parental consent forms; practitioner subjectivity in referrals, including misunderstandings of what I meant by loss.¹⁸ These barriers to recruitment were not surprising. YOT practitioners, parents, carers

¹⁷ One young person from Peasetown was referred to me after taking part in another PhD student's research.

¹⁸ I created practitioner's guides and referral forms explaining any young person known to YOT or ASB was eligible to take part in the research, regardless of their experiences of loss. Nevertheless some practitioners only referred young people to me who had experienced particular forms of loss, especially bereavement. I discuss my use of terminology and the conceptualisation of loss within youth justice in detail in both my introductory and findings chapters.

and care home staff were understandably protective of the young people in their care, especially when they did not know me. There were times however when it was deeply frustrating that particular young people were unable to take part or share their stories, especially those who were willing to take part but prevented from doing so by their corporate parents. In cases where it was felt the young person was not emotionally stable enough to take part in the research, or where young people had already left the YOT, I was able to ask practitioners to speak retrospectively, encapsulating these important loss stories as practitioner reflections and accounts of practice.

Table 1b on the following page details the nature and extent of my work with young people who participated in the research at each setting:

Table 1b: Participant demographics (Young People).

Practicalities			Demographic information			Nature of work undertaken	Level of contact with the YOT	Level of engagement within the research
Area	Setting	Number of YP	Male (M) / Female (F)	Mean age (yrs)	Ethnicity			
1	YOT	5	1F, 4M	13.6 yrs	White British: 5	1:1 storytelling and/ or arts based work.	1 YRO 3 RO 1 Police Reprimand	4 YP attended at least 6 1:1 sessions lasting between 45 minutes and 2 hours. 1 YP relocated after 2 sessions and 1 was withdrawn after 4 sessions by corporate parents.
1	SP Group 1	10	4F, 6M	16.3 yrs	White British: 10	Participant observation and ethnographic work. A small amount of ethno-mimetic work was also completed with 5 group members.	1 YRO 3RO 2 preventions/ ASB 1 previously known to YOT 2 never known to YOT	Most YP attended the SP for a full academic year (September - July). One YP was removed and another stopped attending towards the end of the year. I worked with the group 1 day per week.
1	SP Group 2	18	8F, 10M	16.6 yrs	White British: 12 Traveller heritage: 4 Mixed Race: 1 Mixed British/ Chinese: 1	Participant observation and ethnographic work. Ethno-mimetic work was also completed with 2 group members.	2 RO 2 preventions/ ASB 2 previously known to YOT 13 never known to YOT	Most YP attended the SP for a full academic year (September - July). I worked with the group 1 day per week.
1	Summer arts	10	2F, 8M	12.8 yrs	White British: 7 Traveller heritage: 2 Black British: 1	Participant observation, ethnographic work and arts based work.	3 RO 7 preventions/ ASB	All YP attended at least 5 one hour sessions.
1	Alternative education	1	1F, 0M	17 yrs	White British: 1	1:1 storytelling and ethno-mimetic work. YP referred to me by another PhD researcher.	Not known to YOT	YP attended six sessions lasting between 50 minutes and 1.5 hours.

Practicalities			Demographic information			Nature of work undertaken	Level of contact with the YOT	Level of engagement within the research
Area	Setting	Number of YP	Male (M) / Female (F)	Mean age (yrs)	Ethnicity			
2	YOT	2	2M, 0F	13 yrs	White British: 1 Asian British: 1	1:1 storytelling and/ or arts based work	2 YRO with ISS	1 YP attended six sessions lasting 2 hours each time. 1 YP attended 3 sessions lasting 2 hours each time.
2	Arts Session	2	2M, 0F	16.5 yrs	White British: 2	Participant observation, ethnographic work and arts based work	1 RO 1 preventions/ ASB	1 YP attended 4 sessions lasting between 40 minutes and 1 hour. 1 YP attended 2 sessions each lasting 45 minutes.
Total number of young people			48					
Age range of young people			10 years - 18 years					
Mean age of young people			15.1 years					
Gender split			20F, 28M					
Ethnicity			White British: 38; Black British:1; Mixed Race: 1; Traveller Heritage: 6; Asian: 1; Mixed British/ Chinese:1					
Young people ever known to youth justice or antisocial behaviour services			32 (11F, 21M)					
Young people never known to youth justice or antisocial behaviour services			16 (9F, 7M)					
Young people with YOT contact whilst fieldwork was undertaken			29 (9F, 20M)					

Recruiting practitioners

I recruited YOT practitioners via a series of emails to each YOT team to which willing participants were able to respond. I also recruited participants via my attendance at staff development meetings within each setting where I spoke about my work and asked for practitioner input. Practitioners who were interviewed also recommended other colleagues to contact. This was a particularly straightforward process in Peasetown, where I was well known. Recruitment was more difficult in Adlerville, and I made several unsuccessful attempts at recruitment before generating interest from practitioners. Once interest was generated however, interviews were fairly straightforward to arrange with most taking place within the YOT building. Gentle perseverance was incredibly worthwhile, as interviewing practitioners from both settings gave me deep and detailed insight into similarities and differences in working practices within both YOTs.

Sampling the data

As previously discussed, data was collected in several different ways and from a variety of sources. CGT advocates data sampling from multiple sources until a point of 'saturation' is reached (Charmaz, 2014). Saturation in relation to my overarching theme, loss in the lives of young people who offend, occurred towards the end of fieldwork, as similar themes began to arise within practitioner accounts, within young people's stories and across assessment data and YOT documentation. This is not to say exploration of the topic was exhausted; my research had its limitations (discussed below) and my concluding chapter details where and how knowledge might be furthered in this area of study.

Data analysis

Data was analysed through the process of coding first outlined by Glaser and Strauss (2008/1967) and further developed by Charmaz (2000). A benefit of constantly comparing and coding data as I went along was that I could continually use emerging findings to inform future data collection, including revising my interview structure, observational focus and one to one work with young people. I was also able to critically reflect upon my own interpretation of young people's stories and practitioner accounts, and check back with participants in relation to this. Simultaneously conducting fieldwork and comparing data as it was generated also

allowed me to notice and explore subtleties that may have been missed had I worked in a more linear fashion. Coding whilst conducting fieldwork helped me manage the vast quantities of data generated during fieldwork, streamlining it in relation to my overarching aim of exploring young people's experiences of loss, practitioner responses and the implications of each for youth justice practice and policy. A key difference between GT and other forms of qualitative coding is that GT emphasises coding for action as opposed coding for themes. According to Charmaz (2014:125) 'your research participants' actions and statements teach you about their worlds, albeit sometimes in ways they might not anticipate.' In this sense, when exploring loss with young people, I was able to code according to the actions (or inaction) young people took in order to make sense of their situation. I then used these action codes to construct the key themes explored within my findings chapters. Constantly comparing and contrasting raw data and the action codes generated from it helped me look for patterns, think more analytically and advance the 'theoretical direction' of my work (Charmaz, 2014:138) without losing sight of the value of individual stories as important sources of insight into young people's experiences of loss. As Charmaz (2014) and others (Butterworth, 2017; King, 2011, 2016; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000) have done throughout their work, I used young people's stories as illustrative vignettes within my findings chapters, firstly as important contributions to knowledge in their own right and secondly as a way of providing contextual backdrop to the themes being explored. It was also ethically important to me that I represented young people's voices as fully as possible, and avoided using disjointed comments that colluded with my constructed themes. Working with young people's stories this way also helped maintain an intersectional focus, illuminating multiple marginalities and revealing how structural inequalities generate and compound loss.

Limitations, challenges and methodological considerations:

No research project is without its challenges and limitations. Below I consider the specific challenges and limitations of my research, including methodological considerations, data limitations and geographical restrictions.

Methodological considerations

Young people's engagement and participation was absolutely key to this research; without them my findings and recommendations would hold little value (James, 2013; Conolly, 2008). Utilising creative, ethno-mimetic approaches (O'Neill, 2014; 2012;

2002) in tandem with CGT's reflexive methodological framework therefore felt the best way to encourage, facilitate and sustain young people's active engagement in the research process. There were however limitations with this approach, detailed in table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1. Limitations and acknowledgements of limitations regarding methodology.

Methodological approach	Limitations	Ways of acknowledging limitations
Ethno-mimesis (O'Neill, 2002)	Young people may struggle to articulate themselves through creative-narrative methods, especially those who have difficulties with speech and language acquisition or special educational needs (a particular consideration for research conducted with young people who offend).	I gave young people a variety of options to convey their stories. This was achieved via: engagement in creative activity alone; a mixture of creative work and conversation; 1:1 discussion; group discussion; participant observation. I worked in partnership with YOT practitioners and young people to determine the most effective and enabling modes of storytelling. Where needed, I sought specific advice from special educational needs or speech and language specialists.
	Interpretation of creative work is subjective.	I clarified meaning with young people as far as possible when analysing their creative work. I compared work produced against my observational field notes, my discussions with practitioners and my discussions with young people.
	Young people may feel exposed, and may not wish to share personal stories of loss.	Whilst young people were aware of my research focus, I took time building relationships and was led by young people rather than directly asking them about loss. I reassured young people they need only share what they felt comfortable and happy to share and that they could withdraw from the research process at any point during field work. I explained all accounts would be anonymised, and that young people could choose whether or not to add their name to their original creative work.

<p>Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2000; 2014)</p>	<p>The process of GT can be 'bafflingly complex' (Braun and Clarke, 2013:186).</p> <p>GT was originally developed to study sociological processes not individual experiences.</p> <p>CGT is time consuming and demanding.</p> <p>There may not be opportunity or time to follow every lead the data provides.</p>	<p>I read up on GT as widely as possible in order to develop as clear an understanding as possible of the processes of data collection and analysis. I also sought support from colleagues with expertise in GT to help inform my own research practice.</p> <p>I acknowledged the limitations of GT in relation to the exploration of individual experience, drawing upon CGT conventions regarding the study of individual experience and accepting one's own positioning in the research. I used ethno-mimesis in tandem with CGT as it values individual experience as a valid form of knowledge construction.</p> <p>I began fieldwork as soon as possible after ethical clearance in order to maximise opportunity to undertake the research. I set aside time to undertake theoretical sampling, memo writing, coding and reflective writing in order to generate a clear focus as the research developed, thus saving time later on in the process.</p> <p>Where there was little time or opportunity to follow new leads, I returned to the literature of others, using this as comparative data alongside fieldwork.</p>
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Limitations in data

In accordance with CGT, I collected a wide range of data including: observational fieldnotes; youth justice assessment documentation; transcribed practitioner interviews and creative work developed by young people. Each method of data collection presented its own challenges, listed in table 1.2 below:

Table 1.2. Limitations and acknowledgements of limitations regarding data collection.

Method of data collection	Limitations	Ways of acknowledging limitations
Fieldnotes	It can be difficult to capture all observations and conversations in field notes, and hard to know what will be relevant as the research project develops.	<p>I practised creating field notes and undertaking observational work prior to beginning fieldwork. During fieldwork I aimed to capture as much information as possible, through sketches as well as through words. I purchased a Dictaphone and used this to record my thoughts and feelings as they arose both during and immediately after fieldwork.</p> <p>I added reflections to field notes at the end of each day and used these to create memos (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2000). This helped me to undertake constant comparative work between settings and to explore emerging themes during fieldwork.</p> <p>Ethically, I did not want to tape record young people taking part in the research. As such, I had to accept that quotations might not always be completely verbatim as I wrote whilst they spoke or immediately after. Checking back with young people was therefore an important aspect of quality control and research integrity.</p>
	Observations may come across as intrusive for participants and for the wider YOT. (Creswell, 1994:150).	I was very clear with young people and staff throughout the research that they were under no obligation to take part in any element of the research process, including observational work. I engaged in critical reflection throughout the process, helping me become self aware during observational work and removing myself from situations where observing felt ethically inappropriate.

	Issues with conducting research in settings where young people may feel pressured to give consent due to court orders or other impositions of the YOT.	I stressed the voluntary nature of participation for young people and practitioners. I initially met young people at the YOT or at the SP and thereafter met them at places they chose. Whilst most elected to stay at the YOT and SP, I worked with some young people in local venues across Adlerville and Peasetown including arts centres, community centres, coffee shops and parks. If young people stopped attending, I attempted to make contact twice and then refrained, respecting their right to disengage or withdraw consent at any time during fieldwork.
	Difficulties may arise in relation to confidentiality and safeguarding.	I ensured young people and practitioners within the YOT were aware of my presence and of the purpose of my research. I reassured young people that any data collected would be anonymised, and that they could request that specific information shared was not recorded in my field notes (this occurred on several occasions). Young people were also able to view any fieldnotes and sketches during fieldwork relating to them. I clearly explained my duty of care and safeguarding obligations should disclosures be made where there was a serious risk of harm to young people themselves or to others.
YJ documents, including ASSET Plus	YJ assessment can be highly subjective, dependent upon what the young person and their family are willing to share, the YOT officer's pre-existing knowledge of the young person and the YOT officer's own values, beliefs and biases in relation to how a young person's offence should be interpreted and managed.	CGT acknowledges the subjective nature of research, including the subjectivity of those participating or constructing documentation. Where possible, I aimed to analyse assessment and speak with the YOT officer who completed it in order to gain some contextual knowledge. On some occasions, I had also worked with the young person upon whom the assessment was based so was able to cross reference each source and 'triangulate the data.' (Braun and Clarke, 2013: 285-286).

	Information in ASSET forms are interpretations of young people's narratives, framed within a very specific context of risk and protective factors.	When analysing data, I remained clear in regards to the original source and took into account its limitations.
Transcribed practitioner interviews	Especially in a time of austerity, YOT officers and practitioners may be very aware of their 'professional' remit, and find it difficult to speak openly about their own interpretations of young people's experiences of loss and how they manage these in practice.	I reassured participants their responses would be anonymised, that interviews could be terminated at any point and that they need only share what they felt comfortable discussing.
	Interviews can feel artificial and not everybody feels comfortable talking 'on tape'.	I aimed to create a pleasant atmosphere for interviews to take place where practitioners did not need to worry about being overheard or disturbed. Practitioners were given opportunity to opt out of being recorded.
	Interviews are time consuming, for both researcher and practitioners.	I ensured the time participants had given up undertaking the interview was acknowledged. I also understood practitioners may be liable to professional distraction and reassured them that breaks were ok.
	Lack of breadth compared to qualitative surveys due to smaller sample size of interviews. (Braun and Clarke, 2013:80	I used interviews alongside other methods of data collection to gain a broader perspective of YOT practitioners' responses to young people's experiences of loss.
Creative work developed by young people	Creative work may be difficult to interpret (Creswell, 1994:150).	I discussed creative work produced with young people to gain further insight than would be gained through analysing creative work in isolation.

	Problems with ownership and rights of the participant over use of their own work.	Young people had full ownership of work produced. They could elect whether to keep their work, leave it at the YOT/ SP or give it to me. Young people signed consent forms allowing my use of their creative work during research. Where agreed, I also photographed young people's work so they could keep their original.
	Issues with anonymity; young people may wish to have their creative work acknowledged as theirs.	I sought advice from colleagues with experience in arts based research in relation to participant anonymity and ownership of creative work. I explained to young people they could decide whether to sign their work, but anything used within my own research would be anonymised to help safeguard their identity.
	Creative work has potential to bring traumatic or sensitive issues to the forefront, which may increase vulnerability of participants.	Research suggests creating space to talk about loss is beneficial for young people, particularly where loss is unresolved or disenfranchised (Neimeyer, Klass and Dennis, 2014; Doka, 2002; Kauffman, 2002; Janoff-Bulman, 1992) I ensured safeguarding procedures were adhered to, and that young people and practitioners were fully aware of my role as a researcher (as opposed to a therapist). I also ensured young people had access to further support should they require it from their YOT worker or SP tutor.
	There is potential for confusion between art used as a tool to explore issues and art therapy.	I clearly explained to young people and to practitioners my rationale for working creatively and offering creative opportunities for young people. I also aimed to ensure the process of working creatively was as meaningful for young people (and my research) as the end product.
	Young people who do not define themselves as 'creative' may be put off from taking part.	I explained no skills or expertise in art were required to take part and young people could produce as little or as much creative work as they wished to. Those who would rather come along and talk, or discuss the art, music or writing of others (e.g. lyrics that were important to them) were also welcomed as valid and valuable research participants.

Geographical limitations

I spent substantive time in Peasetown and Adlerville, working between each area to explore young people's stories and understand how different YOTs interpreted and

responded to loss. The immersive nature of my fieldwork meant I was unable to travel to other areas, or hear stories from young people outside of Peasetown or Adlerville. Given more time, I would have liked to work with young people from other YOTs in North East England, as well as explore stories from young people and practitioners from other parts of the UK. Youth justice practices are organised very differently across E&W (Smith and Gray, 2018), and despite adhering to the same standards (YJB, 2013) and assessment processes (YJB, 2014), interpretation and implementation vary significantly between YOTs. My research reflects life for young people therefore within a particular context of youth justice provision that may not be reflected in other areas.

Conducting ethnographic research within community youth justice settings and SP's also had limitations in terms of space and place, as young people were already operating in an artificial arena, with restrictions placed upon their freedom and how they conducted themselves. This was especially pertinent for young people attending the YOT in accordance with court or community imposed orders, as failure to attend or conform could have serious implications for young people, including breached orders and a return to court. To a lesser extent this also affected young people accessing the SP, as non-conformity or poor attendance resulted in disciplinary procedures and on some occasions, educational exclusion. Working in these settings, whilst beneficial for me as a way of meeting young people who offend, was not always conducive to open, honest and free flowing conversations in the way that meeting young people in a more open, social space might have been. The YOT and SP settings themselves must therefore be viewed as a limitation of my work.

Ethical Considerations

I was granted ethical clearance from Durham University before beginning fieldwork. I also ensured my research was conducted in line with the British Society of Criminology Code of Ethics (2015), Durham University guidelines (2012) and localised policy and procedure regarding work with young people. I had already been subject to a full disclosures and barring check in Peasetown, and the process was repeated in Adlerville before I began any work with young people there. As with any work involving sentient beings, it was important for me to keep ethical considerations at the forefront of my work. This was especially important with young people, as ethical issues arose during fieldwork that were tough to pre-empt, thus demanding

an individualised, ethically flexible approach to research (Russell, 2013:47). Below I discuss ethics in relation to informed consent; participant anonymity; right to withdraw; safeguarding and disclosures; risk and vulnerability and my decision not to tape record young people's voices.

Informed consent

Young people and practitioners were given information about the research and its purpose before agreeing to take part, and were fully informed regarding the use of their data. I used different consent forms for adults and young people¹⁹ and made sure young people's informed consent forms in particular were accessible, containing images as well as words. I let young people read their forms through first, and then spent time checking understanding and reiterating key points in accordance with SpLC guidance (Communication Trust, 2014). Where I was aware a young person had SpLC, cognitive or processing difficulties, I took time to read consent forms aloud with them so I was as confident as I could be that they were fully aware of the nature and purpose of my research and how I was intending to use their stories and creative work. I ensured all participants had opportunity to ask questions before agreeing to take part and encouraged them to continue to ask questions throughout the process.

Completing written forms, especially where power differentials are apparent, can be problematic and 'it takes some reassurance and some interactional work to undo the damage that the informed consent form creates.' (Charmaz, 2014:62). I endeavoured to make this aspect of the research as painless and participatory as possible and asked young people for their feedback in relation to the layout, design and language of research paperwork, explaining their input would help me improve how I worked with young people in the future.

Accessing young people's records

Where I worked with young people directly I was able to explicitly secure their permission to access their YOT records. When viewing YOT data more generally in relation to the nature and extent of loss in young people's lives (as presented within findings chapter 5), I secured ethical approval from Durham University as well as permission from service heads at both Peasetown and Adlerville YOTs. During my

¹⁹ Consent forms are provided as appendices 7 and 8.

time at Peasetown SP, individual young people gave permission for me to view their records. In each of these cases I also sought permission from both the SP's manager and the SP's safeguarding lead. In every case I endeavoured to respect young people's right to privacy, only using aspects of young people's records and case histories that directly linked to my research questions.²⁰

Anonymity

To protect participants, all data collected during research was anonymised. Peasetown and Adlerville are both pseudonyms, and participants were also given pseudonyms. During the interview process with practitioners and during all aspects of my work with young people, I explained that research participants always had the right to refuse permission for their data to be used in particular ways, whether that be the inclusion of their art work in an exhibition or the use of particular quotes. Protecting participants' identity was not always straightforward, particularly in settings where staff knew one another well and were aware of who had taken part in interviews. It was also difficult where practitioners had unique roles within the YOT. I felt the best way of protecting identities in these cases was to refer to those without case management or managerial responsibility as YOT workers, those with case management responsibility as YOT Officers and those with managerial roles as YOT managers. When speaking collectively or more generally about those employed by the YOT, I used the term YOT practitioners. Despite these efforts to protect practitioner anonymity, there were times when colleagues could potentially identify one another as they were aware of individualised working practices or particular young people on their caseloads. This was similar for young people taking part in the research, whose stories could be identified by those who know them well, including their YOT practitioners.

A particular consideration I had to make with young people was in relation to their creative work, especially where creative processes were utilised as a way of telling stories about loss (e.g. places young people lived or family members who were important to them). I wanted young people to have a choice over whether or not they added their name to creative work, and how their work was displayed. In this sense, it was not always possible to fully protect young people's identities, especially within the confines of the settings where I was working. Where I was photographing young

²⁰ For example I did not search for or read about the specific offences young people had committed.

people's art work, using it in presentations or illustrating my own writings, I elected to use pseudonyms to protect young people's identities outside of their immediate settings.

Right to withdraw

All participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from any aspect of the research process at any time during fieldwork. If participants (including parents or carers of young people under the age of sixteen) wished to withdraw their consent, I reiterated that this was their prerogative. On several occasions young people I was talking with during my time at the SP asked me not to include or take notes about particular conversations we were having and I explained I had an ethical duty to respect their wishes in relation to this. As a researcher there were times when this was frustrating, as these conversations often felt like 'gold dust', enhancing my understanding of loss in young people's lives. It was crucial however that as far as possible I made a distinction between what young people were telling me as a researcher and what they were sharing in confidence with me as a trusted adult (Watts, 2010:5). Sharing in confidence also occurred during practitioner interviews, with disclosures made 'off the record' or after I had stopped recording. Whilst not being able to include or allude to these conversations explicitly in my research, hearing the stories young people or practitioners wanted to keep 'between us' gave me insight into what young people and practitioners felt ok to say on the record, and what they wanted me to know yet felt unable or unwilling to officially share.

Safeguarding and disclosures

During fieldwork I met many young people who were known to social services, including those under child protection orders. I also worked with young people who made disclosures to me. As part of the process of informed consent, I explained to young people that I was required to tell their YOT Officer or SP manager if I was worried for either their own or others' immediate safety. Where this occurred, I was able to gain consent from young people to share safeguarding information. As a researcher, there were times where it felt difficult to step back from safeguarding processes, especially where I felt I would have taken a different course of action. On one occasion I felt the wider implications of a young person's disclosure was not being fully realised. In this instance I was able to draw upon the local area's safeguarding policy and procedures as well as situate my concerns within the

context of my own ethical obligations under Durham University's safeguarding policy (Durham University, 2013).

Risk and Vulnerability

Young people who offend are often deeply vulnerable (Brown, 2014) and those experiencing loss may be especially so. As such stories needed to be collected and presented in ways that ensured their safety and security. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject explored, I was also aware young people might become distressed and risk of harm or vulnerability might increase (Swartz, 2011) and worked collaboratively with young people and their practitioners to help safeguard all involved. Whilst I did not reiterate specific content young people shared with me during our one-to-one work, I did add contacts or email YOT Officers in relation to the young person's attendance, engagement and emotional presentation. With young people's permission, I also spoke with relevant practitioners following one-to-one work if I felt that aspects of our work had been triggering or had the potential to cause further distress or rumination.

Whilst working with practitioners had fewer connotations around risk and vulnerability than my work with young people, it was also important to remember that loss is universal, and discussing young people's losses might also be triggering for practitioners. I continually reminded practitioners and young people that they need only share what they wanted to, and that they were free to stop speaking or working with me at any point. I also explained we could take breaks if participation was feeling difficult or abandon work completely if required.

Deciding not to record young people

Recorded interviews carried negative connotations for many young people I met, including police interrogation, court hearings or social services intervention. I decided therefore not to record young people during fieldwork, taking detailed field notes instead. This was not without its difficulties; remembering young people's accounts verbatim was not always possible and I needed to check back at times to ensure I was accurately representing their stories. I also had to accept I would inevitably lose important elements of young people's accounts, miss specific language patterns, or place too much focus on particular aspects of young people's stories as I wrote up without the luxury of rewinding and re-listening to their words. Nevertheless, what I lost by not recording young people was replaced by what I gained from building trust

and developing relationships over time. Individual and collective stories were often retold during fieldwork, with details added, omitted or amended each time. I was able to ask young people to elaborate on specific aspects of their narratives, generating numerous opportunities for dialogue and fostering the emergence of 'unanticipated statements and stories' (Charmaz, 2014:65). Working creatively with young people also offered alternative, accessible ways of sharing stories, particularly for those with SpLC, SEND or emotional literacy difficulties. In this sense, ethno-mimetic approaches were very effective in helping alleviate barriers to participation, as well as acting as a useful alternative for those who may have felt uncomfortable in traditional taped interview settings (Albertson, 2015; Parkes and Bilby, 2010).

An ethical tightrope?

During fieldwork, it was important to provide space for young people to share their stories of loss and ensure their emotional welfare. It was also important to work within the confines of safeguarding policy and procedure, whilst also encouraging young people speak freely about their everyday lives and practices. This was a delicate balancing act and at times I felt as though I was walking an ethical tightrope. I resolved this as best I could be revisiting notions of informed consent on a regular basis with young people. I also reminded young people that whilst I had a specific duty to report immediate concerns for their own or others safety, I was able to listen to other disclosures without being duty bound to pass this information on. Such examples included stories of past criminality where no names were provided or disclosures about family life where nobody was at serious or immediate risk of harm.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an account of how I designed, developed and conducted my research exploring loss with young people who offend. I began with a rationale for why I conducted this research in Adlerville and Peasetown, and how each of the settings I visited enriched my understanding of how loss manifested within young people's everyday lives and practices and how practitioners conceptualised and responded to loss. I then considered crucial issues of positionality, subjectivity and bias, including how my fluctuating insider-outsider status affected the research process and how engaging in critically reflective, reflexive practice supported the emergence of intersectionality as an important theoretical framework. Next I focused on methodology, exploring how I utilised CGT as a methodological framework and

ethno-mimesis as a participatory and methodological tool. I then explored four specific methods I drew upon during research: storytelling, creative work, observation and qualitative interviewing, and how I used other YOT data for triangulation. Next I turned to the specific mechanics of the research process, including research design, recruitment, data analysis and research limitations. I finished this chapter by exploring ethical considerations, and how walking an ethical tightrope ensured I was able to both safeguard and promote young people's active participation.

The following five chapters present the core thematic findings I constructed following fieldwork. As I hope is clear from this chapter, learning about loss in young people's lives was often a deeply moving and emotional process that required active engagement with methodology and continual ethical reflection. My findings are therefore intrinsically intertwined with the specific methodological context described in this chapter; care must be taken not to detach one from the other.

Findings



Image credit: *'Peeling back the layers'* (Meaby, 2017).

Introduction

The core aim of this research project was to explore young people's everyday lives and practices as holistically as possible in order to better understand the prevalence, nature and impact of loss in relation to young people's offending behaviour. Having spent a considerable amount of time with young people and practitioners across different settings and within different environments, a rich and varied data set emerged from which I was continually able to analyse and theme via CGT's process of 'constant comparison' (Charmaz, 2014). In these following chapters, I detail the substantive themes that emerged from young people's stories, art work, case histories and assessment data, as well as from my own observations and reflections as I met and worked with young people. My first three findings chapters provide a detailed analytical account of the core losses that arose for young people during the course of this research: loss of childhood, loss of opportunity and loss of agency. Each chapter begins with a diagram, centring the loss and building out to connect it with its subsidiary themes. Within these first three chapters I also explore one young person's story in detail, providing important narrative and situational context for each constructed theme. As each chapter progresses, I build in other young people's

stories, reflections and creative work, helping illustrate how each theme was conceptualised and took form. My fourth findings chapter shifts in focus from young people's losses to their search for connection, exploring how engagement in offending supported marginalised young people to make meaning from loss, especially loss that was disenfranchised (Doka, 2002) and where young people did not have ready access to pro-social avenues of support. Within this chapter I share the voices of several different young people, each of whom illuminate the complex relationship between young people's experiences of loss and their offending behaviour.

Although I have constructed each findings chapter to explore a specific theme, loss of childhood, opportunity, agency and young people's search for connections, links should also be made between chapters too. Subsidiary themes often crossed between the four core themes, generating a constellation of thematic understanding in relation to how loss operates in the lives of young people who offend (detailed in figure 4.1 below).

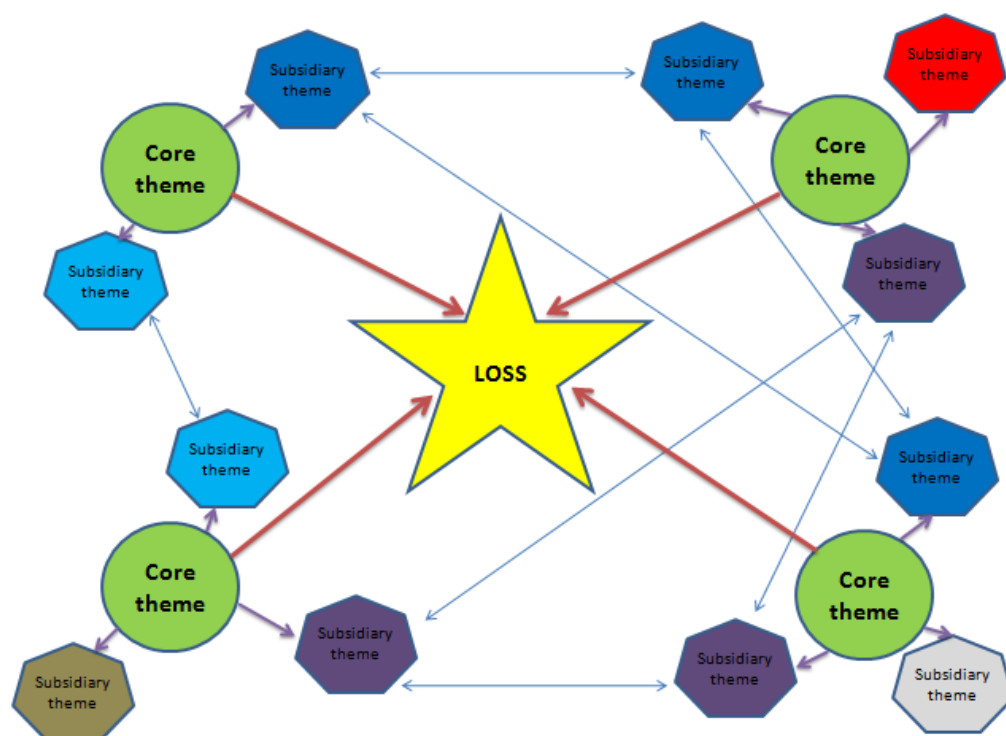


Figure 4.1. Creating constellations of thematic understanding in relation to young people who offend and loss.

During research, I met and worked with nearly fifty young people, all of whom had unique stories to share. My first four findings chapters aim to understand young people's experiences collectively, and therefore can be regarded as broadly representative of young people's experiences within each of the settings I visited, whilst also indicative of the (often) subtle differences between young people who were 'known' to their YOT and those who were not. Individual stories, quotes or creative work were chosen and shared during each findings chapter to detail how loss of childhood, opportunity and agency affected specific young people and how their search for connection at times manifested as engagement in offending or ASB. Whilst the stories I have chosen to share provide particularly powerful illustrations of each constructed theme, it is important to keep in mind that many other young people also told and (re)presented stories that supported these findings; stories I have been unable to include within the confines of this thesis. Nevertheless, the stories that are not presented here were (and remain) equally important, as they helped me conceptualise, theorise and construct the findings that are presented within this thesis.

My final findings chapter considers loss more broadly in relation to what became my fifth substantive theme, pervasive loss. Within this chapter I consider the extent of loss as it was documented within youth justice assessment and case histories, revealing how pervasive loss operated to deplete young people's 'capital' (Barry, 2006) across educational, social and emotional domains. Those experiencing pervasive loss also appeared to elicit different levels of contact and greater entanglement within YJSs than those who experienced less pervasive forms of loss, as the combination of youth justice assessment measures and the systematic disbandment of support services via austerity measures kept some young people 'welfare hostages of the YOT' as they were held to account for aspects of their lives that were vastly beyond their control.

Within each chapter, I use individual vignettes as a way of grounding each aspect of loss within the unique socio-cultural context of my research. As the chapter progresses, I build in other young people's stories and practitioner accounts. Moving between individual and collective narratives in this way enabled me to deconstruct and theme young people's experiences, whilst not losing sight of the context within which they unfolded. In this sense, individual context remained crucial to

understanding how loss manifested and affected young people's involvement with youth justice services, whilst a collective understanding of young people's experiences shed light upon critical issues of loss in relation to structural and social inequality, prejudice and discrimination, stigma, and the systematic denial of young people's rights.

Findings 1 - loss of childhood

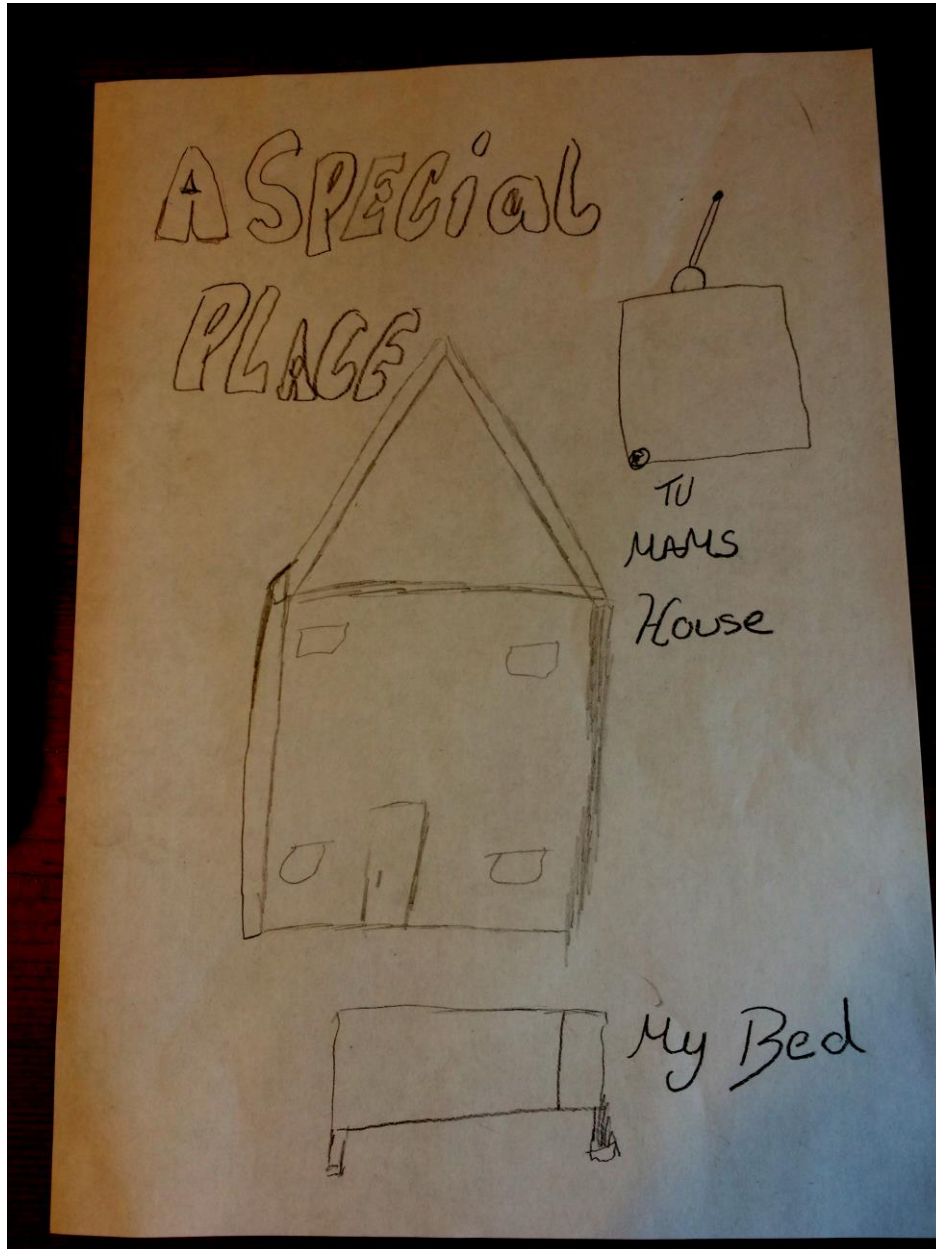


Image Credit: 'A special place'. Carly, aged 14.

Introduction

Loss of childhood was a key factor for many of the young people I worked with who were involved with youth justice services. This manifested in different ways, listed in figure 4.2 below:

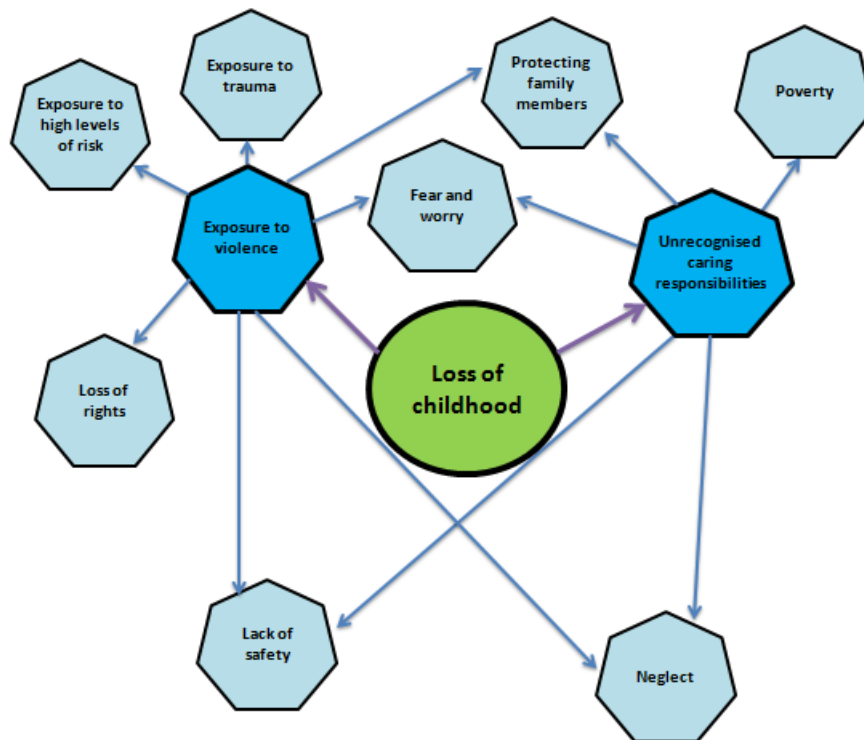


Figure 4.2: Manifestations of loss of childhood in the lives of young people who offend.

In this first thematic chapter, I explore how young people's everyday experiences equated to their loss of childhood. Drawing upon Sam's story as the prevailing narrative through which loss of childhood is theorised, I begin by exploring how exposure to domestic and other forms of violence served as a violation of young people's right to a safe and happy childhood. In particular, I pay attention to how exposure to violence enhanced 'fight or flight' reactions, leading to difficulty coping with typical educational expectations, as well as increasing the likelihood of their engagement in 'high risk' activities, including offending. Next, I explore unrecognised caring responsibilities as a loss of childhood. I consider how young people engaged in unrecognised and undocumented caring practices and the impact this had upon their everyday lives and practices, including engagement in offending. I explore how caring responsibilities adultified young people (Aldridge and TNS BMRB, 2016; Aldridge and Becker, 2002, cited in Smith, 2010) and prevented their participation in everyday childhood practices, including their full and active engagement in education. Throughout the chapter, I consider young people's experiences alongside practitioner insights and my own observations and analysis, connecting back to previous literature where applicable as a way of furthering understanding in relation

to what loss of childhood means for young people, and how such experiences of loss may relate to, or result in, offending behaviour.

Sam's Story

Sam was 17 years old when I met him and subject to a 9 month Referral Order for drug related offences. Originally from a large town approximately forty miles from central London, Sam had moved to the North East to be with his aunty and to escape his former life of drug dealing and crime. Having fallen out with his aunty soon after arriving, Sam moved out and began living independently at the YMCA. Sam had a fiancée and a baby, but they had moved to the south coast with her family and he rarely had opportunity to see them. Instead they kept in touch by sending letters and emails and exchanging photographs. Sam said that his biggest hope was to move to the south coast to live with his fiancée and his daughter. He told me he hoped to make a life with them that was different to his own upbringing.

Sam had grown up with a violent and abusive father where both he and his mother had been subject to physical and emotional abuse. Sam had a difficult time at school, and he struggled with 'all the shouting and all the rules'. When Sam was 10, he was excluded from mainstream primary school for 'challenging behaviour'. By 13, Sam had been statemented and attended a specialist school for young people with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties (ESBD). Sam was also diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactive disorder ADHD. His attendance at school was poor.

Sam's mother became ill when Sam was 14. Her illness was long and drawn out, and Sam took on a caring role. Sam's father became increasingly violent and abusive during this time, and when Sam's mother was in hospital, his father would regularly lock him out of the house. Sam spent a lot of time 'wandering the streets'. He met older young people who introduced him to a local gang leader who 'took [Sam] under his wing because he felt sorry for me'. Sam stopped attending school completely and began transporting and dealing drugs with the gang. He made a lot of money during this time and 'had a lot of friends in the industry.'

Sam's mother died when he was 15. Her death affected him deeply and he was left alone with his abusive father. The day after Sam's mother's funeral, Sam's father told him that he was no longer welcome in the home. Sam slept rough and sofa surfed and became increasingly embroiled in gang culture, working his way up selling and arranging drug deals until he was 'the right hand man, looking after all the younger boys'. Sam was asked by the gang leader to look after 'something that goes bang and the main [drugs] phone'. When it was discovered by rival gang members that Sam was in possession of these items 'a price was put on [me] and I had to get out'.

Since arriving in the North East, Sam had been supported by the YOT to attend a local SP course. He had been excluded from this course after a matter of weeks because 'the tutor was shouting and got in my face so I trashed the room and told him to go fuck himself'. Shortly after meeting Sam, he was transferred to the South West so that he could be closer to his fiancée and his baby. I did not see or hear from him again.

Part 1: Exposure to violence as a loss of childhood

Sam's story reflects several of the key losses listed above that brought together, epitomise a loss of childhood. Sam grew up in a neglectful and abusive household, where he witnessed and experienced domestic violence perpetrated by his father. Exposure to domestic violence is widely recognised in literature as having an adverse effect upon young people, including an 'increased risk of experiencing emotional, physical and sexual abuse, of developing emotional and behavioural problems and of increased exposure to the presence of other adversities in their lives' (Holt, Buckley and Whelan, 2008: 797), generating in many a state of hypervigilance (Tsavoussis et al, 2014) as a survival mechanism, akin to those experiencing other forms of trauma (NHS, 2015; Australian Childhood Foundation, 2010). During our work together, Sam reflected upon the violence he was exposed to at home, explaining it was not uncommon for 'dad to knock my mum around, big hard man that he thinks he is'. In this sense, violence or fear of violence was an unremarkable aspect of life for Sam and his mother, and subsequently living with violence became a normalised aspect of his childhood. Sam's accounts of living with violence, and the normalisation of his experiences were not uncommon; several young people spoke candidly about violent episodes that had occurred within their homes, mainly as a result of domestic violence perpetrated by adult males towards either themselves or their mothers.

'He was a nasty bastard when he used to live with us; he was a nasty, nasty man... bad to my mam, bad to my brother, an absolute dickhead to me.' Ross, (male, 16 years).

Young people's accounts were ratified by youth justice practitioners, who regularly cited during interview that they felt exposure to domestic violence was 'the biggest issue affecting young people who offend'.

'Domestic violence is a huge part, not just what young people have experienced which is significant in itself, but also what they go on to perpetrate or their views around violence.' Wendy, (YOT Manager).

As well as violence enacted against them, some young people also spoke about violence inflicted by family members towards others, recounting times where they had either taken the blame for another family member's violent actions or engaged in violence on behalf of a family member:

'It was outside my house. He [name of known offender approximately 4 years older] was at the door offering to sell something and my dad punched him out and they [the police] thought it was me. My mum went divvy. She said he shouldn't have punched him and I got locked up (laughs).'

Tyrone, (male, 16 years).

'My auntie was screaming, covered in blood. And someone tried to push me down the stairs and I fought her.' Natalie, (female, 17 years).

Tyrone and Natalie's accounts point to the prevalence of violence in young people's lives as well as the expectation that young people may engage in or assume responsibility for violence if it was deemed to be 'for family'. In Tyrone's case, because he was under 18, his family felt the police would 'go easy' on him compared to his father who was an adult and already 'known' to services. In Natalie's case, there was an unspoken expectation that 'if it's family, you get involved'. In each case, Natalie and Tyrone took on protective roles, each viewing their response to the violence they witnessed as 'something that had to be done'. Sam viewed his role in the gang in a similar vein, explaining 'you don't do it because you want to, you do it because you have to'. This sense of obligation to adults or older peers to engage in criminal and anti-social behaviour can also be construed as a loss of childhood, with young people exposed to rather than protected from harm (Widom and Wilson, 2009).

Fight or flight? Violence, hypervigilance and educational instability

Sam's experiences of domestic and community violence violated multiple aspects of his childhood, including his understandings of safety as it related to life at home with his mother and life as it was enacted on the streets around him. Feelings of fear and anger spilled out across other areas of Sam's life, becoming particularly apparent in his educational experience where he continually struggled with notions of authority and the disciplinary methods of staff whose job it was, in Sam's eyes, 'to control' him.

In the excerpt below, Sam reflects upon being removed from a local education placement that was set up for him by the YOT when he moved to the North East. Sam did not attribute his difficulties with educational conformity to the violence he had experienced both at home and as a gang member. Instead he focused on his immediate surroundings (the teacher) as well as focusing inwardly, attributing his difficulties in education to his ADHD diagnosis, which Sam felt made it difficult for him to cope with aggression from others:

'I'm not going to lie. I've got kicked off [education]. He [the tutor] thought he'd be a clever man and get up in my face, so I went, I went... I trashed the room so I got kicked out. I go from zero to a hundred in a nano second. It's my ADHD. He got in my face so I got in his.' Sam, (male, 17 years).

Other young people also blamed themselves for their tumultuous relationship with education, particularly with mainstream schooling. Both Katie and Tyrone (quoted below) for example, failed to make connections between the violence they had experienced within their own families, their learning needs and their perceived 'behavioural' difficulties in education:

'I need to take a seat. I'm nearly 17 and I can't do fractions. It's embarrassing. I used to be okay and then I went to secondary school and became a little shithead.' Katie, (female, 16 years).

'I got kicked out and went to [a local Pupil Referral Unit]... I was naughty, didn't go to lessons, didn't do the work.' Tyrone, (male, 16 years).

The tendency for young people to blame themselves for educational difficulties is mirrored in existing literature (Chard, 2017; King, 2016). This is not especially surprising, as educational structures and behaviour policies also tend to hold young people to account for their actions, with little recognition of the impact of adverse sociological factors, including young people's exposure to violence and how this may affect educational relationships or engagement with learning. There is also a tendency in education to situate social, emotional and behavioural issues within the individual through 'statementing' processes as opposed to viewing young people's presentations in relation to the external circumstances they experience, circumstances that are often vastly beyond individual control (DfE, 2014; Norwich

and Eaton, 2014). As such, educational inequalities are produced and reproduced, as young people caught up in violence are systematically rejected by mainstream education; through educational exclusion or through labelling and removal into alternative education.

Carly was another young person who had been exposed to multiple forms of violence; firstly within her own family home and secondly as a victim of rape following her move into 'care'. During our work together Carly drew the picture below in response to the talking card, 'something that makes you angry':

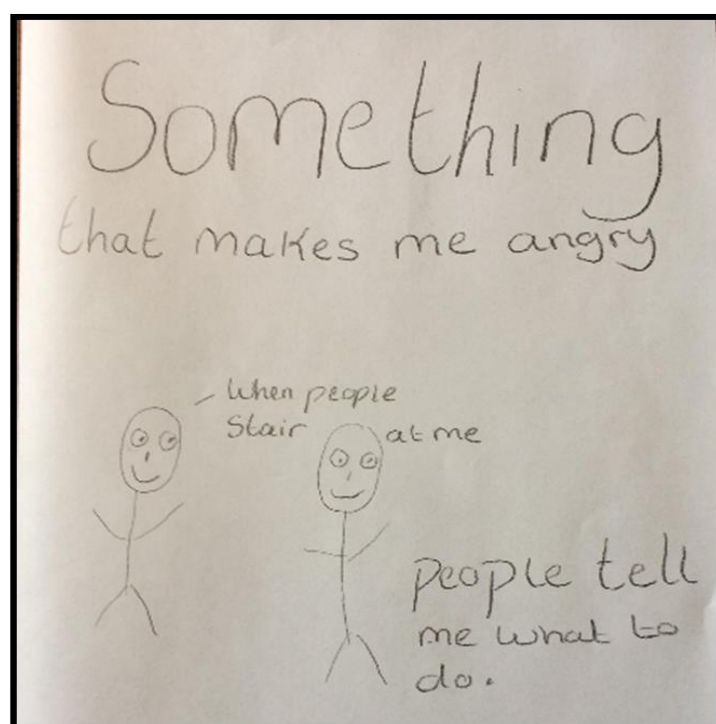


Image credit: 'Something that makes me angry' Carly, aged 14.

When I asked Carly about her drawing she told me that she 'drew the eyes massive to show staring' and that she 'hates people staring because it makes me paranoid.' This response suggested to me that Carly was existing in a state of hypervigilance, thus at risk of interpreting everyday interactions as threats to her safety, much as existing literature details the hypervigilant state and reactions of those suffering from post traumatic stress disorder following exposure to trauma (Young Minds, 2018; Kolaitis, 2017; Donnelly and Amaya-Jackson, 2002). Carly had also struggled in mainstream education, and was intermittently accessing a restricted vocational timetable nearly forty miles away after 'tipping tables' and 'shouting at teachers

[because] they shout at me' and 'won't let me out the room'. Carly also told me she had been reprimanded by her former school for not wearing the correct uniform, explaining she liked to wear her baggy tracksuit bottoms and sweatshirts as they helped her feel 'comfortable' as the uniform was 'too tight and I can't breathe'. As a survivor of rape, feelings of discomfort and restriction may induce flashbacks and feelings of terror (Scott et al, 2018). It seems unsurprising therefore that Carly needed to exercise a degree of control over the clothes she wore and her movement in and around school. Unfortunately, Carly's behaviour in school was not viewed in relation to the violence she had experienced; instead she was labelled 'defiant' and placed out of sight at an alternative provision so far away that failure was almost inevitable. Carly's experience was mirrored in other young people's stories, with survivors of domestic and sexual violence removed from mainstream education and placed in alternative provision, allegedly for their own wellbeing. This was the case for 17 year old Harriet, who was removed from mainstream school after she was raped and placed in a local home and hospital teaching service. Harriet conceptualised the piece of word art below during our time together, reflecting upon her need to 'walk around school with [her] earphones in' to 'pace out bad feelings about what happened.' Harriet conveyed her frustration about being construed as 'one of the naughty ones' and the lack of understanding she received until she was removed from mainstream school and placed in alternative education:

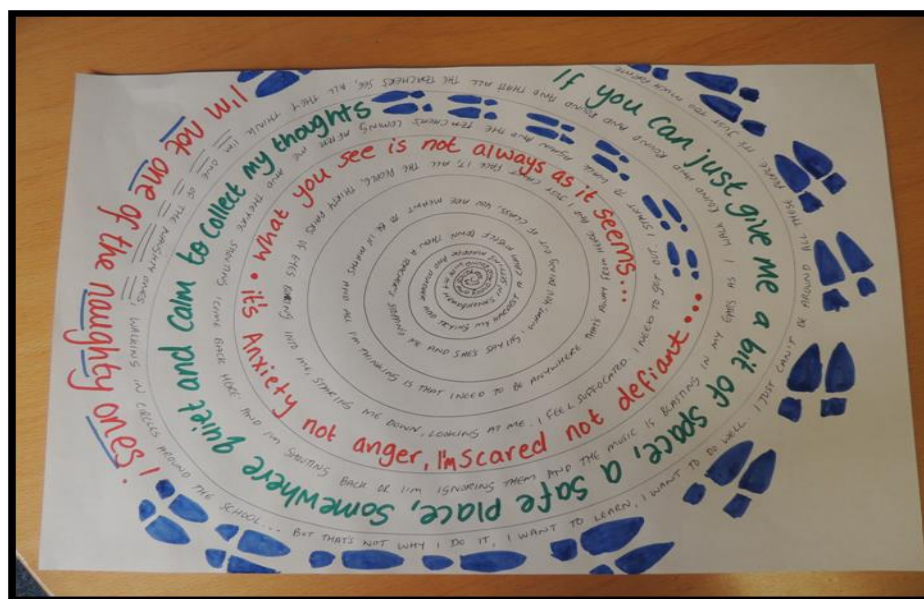


Image credit: *'Not one of the naughty ones'* Harriet, aged 17.

Unlike Carly, Harriet was unknown to the YOT. A striking difference between them came in relation to their access to pro-social sources of support, including contact with trusted adults. Carly felt the only adult she could trust was her mother, whose care she had been removed from. Harriet had a degree of support from her family, but attributed 'not going off the rails' to the support she received from her teachers at home and hospital and from her girlfriend, who had been through a similar experience. Harriet was also very articulate, introspective and creative, and was able to reflect upon and talk about her feelings in relation to the violence she had experienced, as well as explore, escape and (re)present through art. As such, Harriet felt that she had an emotional outlet, and was able to share her story with people who both listened to and validated her feelings. Carly had neither the emotional literacy nor the established relationships to talk through what had happened to her or articulate her support needs. Instead, she was left largely alone to process what had happened to her as best she could, which for Carly meant a heightened awareness of escape routes and a need for clothing she felt comfortable in. When these coping strategies were challenged, and Carly felt trapped, hypervigilance kicked in and survival mechanisms of anger and aggression were released. For young people who have experienced violence, acting with aggression when threatened is a common response (Flood and Fergus, 2008; Unicef, 2006; Bloom, 2002; Boswell, 1996), and therefore an incredibly important consideration for youth justice services when young people are arrested for violent offences.

Fight not flight

In addition to educational difficulties arising from exposure to violence, fighting peers was another mechanism used by many of the young people I worked with, particularly if it was felt that another young person had shown 'disrespect'. Fights could begin in relation to what might be perceived as the slightest provocation, although tension tended to be mounting between young people on social media before fights broke out. Some young people also talked about 'blacking out' during a fight or not remembering it afterwards:

'Got stuck into a fight, but hardly remembered it after.' Logan (female, 16 years).

'I don't know. I blackout when I'm fighting. I go crazy. I don't really know

what happens. I blackout.' Jade (female, 16 years).

Other young people discussed targeting vulnerable adults in the town centre:

'He's the local baghead you know you can bully.' Riley (male, 16 years)

'It was funny as fuck, I swiped his legs and he chased [me] down the street throwing bottles at me. He hit me on the head once [with the bottle] and I had a big dent in me head' (laughs). Tyrone (male, 16 years).

Several young people also made explicit references to the role of violence in their romantic relationships. Sometimes this was violence enacted against them, and at other times this was violent or coercive and controlling behaviours enacted by young people towards their partners:

'I hate it when he does it, stays out. He was out until 5am. I checked to make sure he wasn't with any lasses. They put photos up [on the pub website] and I went through every single one of them to check he wasn't with a lass.' Jade, (female, 16 years).

Amy, a young person of traveller descent who had grown up witnessing and experiencing extreme violence perpetrated towards herself and her mother by both her father and her brother, reflected upon being in trouble with the police for fighting in the town centre and how she was now trying to curb such behaviours. Unlike other young people I spoke with (including Sam and Jade), Amy was able to understand and explain her actions within the context of the violence she had witnessed and experienced both at home and within her community. Nevertheless, like Natalie and Tyrone, she remained incredibly protective of her family, including those who had hurt her:

'I don't want to take it out on the people I love so I overreact to smaller things and I go crazy. When I was younger [I'd] just go absolutely mad but now I try to walk away and settle down, calm down. But what's happened in my family definitely has made me how I am now.' Amy (female, 17 yrs).

Each of the examples above illustrate different ways that disempowered young people used violence as a way of reclaiming an element of control over their lives.

With the exception of Amy, young people rarely connected their own violence and bullying behaviours with the violence they had witnessed and experienced themselves. In this sense young people's enactment of violence could be viewed as a distancing tool from the violence of their own lives. For Riley and Tyrone, feelings of fear were replaced with humour and entertainment as they targeted and tormented vulnerable individuals in the town. For Logan, fighting provided an escape from difficulties at home. For Jade, engaging in violence and other controlling behaviours helped her construct an identity that was far removed from public stories of victimhood (Donovan and Hester, 2014) and the vulnerability and innocence of young women as prescribed by patriarchal constructs of hegemonic femininity (Sharpe, 2012; Ringrose and Renold, 2011).

In each of these examples, engaging in violence also served as a radical rejection of young people's own vulnerability; a vulnerability forged as a result of the violence they had experienced and witnessed within their own families and communities. Whilst exposure to violence does not mean young people will inevitably go on to perpetrate violence themselves (Widom and Wilson, 2009; Flood and Fergus, 2008), for those I worked with who had little other resource available to them to make sense of their situation, engaging in violence became a way of making meaning, a visual and physical denial of victimhood.

Exposure to violence and increased prevalence of risk taking behaviours

Both Sam and other young people who had grown up in violent and abusive households spoke about their engagement in risk taking behaviours, which, at times, had directly contributed to their involvement with youth offending services. As things got increasingly difficult at home, Sam spent more and more time wandering the streets where he became drawn into gang culture and began drug running for older gang members. Involvement in the gang brought many benefits for Sam, providing a sense of community and family bonding that was lacking within his own family setting. Sam told me he enjoyed the adrenaline rush he received from engaging in high risk (and often illegal) activities with the gang: 'I can't lie, the buzz you get off it, it's like nothing else'. Other young people also recounted the thrill they received from engaging in risky behaviours, for example being carried or driving at speed, taking unknown substances, drinking alcohol until the point of passing out, or climbing on top of high rise or derelict buildings:

'I love getting chased, when you wait to feel that tap on your shoulder. I love it!' Michael, (male, 12years).

'That point when you know you're going over the edge, when your eyes start to go heavy and go all blurry like after 12 cans. And everyone around you is pure passed out, flat out from the tunes and the drink, and you're the last one [conscious].' Peter, (male, 17 years).

Some youth justice practitioners also spoke about young people's engagement in high risk activities, making a link between these behaviours and previous or ongoing exposure to violence and abuse in the home.

'In terms of every case where you've seen them explain [engagement in high risk activities], I would hasten to say that most of them or the majority of them will have grown up probably in violent or very unsafe living conditions... if you're sitting in the home... from the age of say 2 to 8, and at any point in time dad could, or you know, a fight could break out between brother and dad or dad and mum... your baseline will be far higher than other people's... When you go and look over a ledge or something and you get a bit of a flutter of your tummy as your adrenaline kicks in and your body starts thinking you might die. That kid won't, won't get that unless they're 200 metres higher, probably dancing on the edge of it because their baseline, it's just, it's just different, different to normal folk.' Brad, (YOT Worker).

In this sense, it could be asserted that exposure to domestic and, or, other forms of violence, increases fight or flight responses (Jaffe and Wolfe, 2013; Sterne and Poole, 2010; Graham-Bermann, 1998), thus increasing the likelihood of some young people's engagement in high risk activities, including engagement in criminal activity. This constitutes a loss of childhood, as engagement in everyday childhood activities and hobbies that encourage a degree of risk, (bike riding, team sports or outdoor activities for example) may not carry the same levels of exhilaration for those whose cortisol levels have become elevated in response to continual threats of community violence or violence within their homes.

Exposure to violence as a violation of young people's rights

Living with a continual threat of violence prevented many of the young people I met from fully embodying the unequivocal rights ascribed to them as children by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), signed by the United Kingdom in 1990.

Save the Children (2018) describe the UNCRC (1989) as a:

'Legally-binding international agreement setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities. The UNCRC consists of 54 articles that set out children's rights and how governments should work together to make them available to all children.'

Included in the convention is a commitment from all 194 countries who have signed the UNCRC to 'meet children's basic needs and help them reach their full potential'. This includes the right to:

'Life, survival and development; protection from violence, abuse or neglect; an education that enables children to fulfil their potential; to be raised by, or have a relationship with their parents²¹ and to express their opinions and be listened to' (UNCRC article 6).

Sam's story reveals multiple occasions during his childhood where his rights under the UNCRC were denied. He was not protected from violence, abuse or neglect, nor was he provided with an education that enabled him to fulfil his potential. Sam's father's violence prevented any hope of a relationship between them, and when his mother died, he lost his home as well as his connection to someone who loved and cared for him as best she could.

It is arguable that for several of the young people I worked with on this research project, their rights under UNCRC legislation had been violated (or were at risk of violation). This is an important consideration, linking stories of loss to wider socio-political debate in relation to the support and care of marginalised young people.

²¹ The UNCRC does have a clause in respect to living with parents: 'except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child' (UNCRC, article 9.1). However, it is also made clear in the UNCRC that 'all interested parties shall be given an opportunity to participate in the proceedings and make their views known' (UNCRC 9.2) and that 'States Parties shall respect the right of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except if it is contrary to the child's best interests' (UNCRC 9.3).

'I've been walked over all my life, not anymore!' Engagement in offending as a radical rejection of vulnerability

In each of the ways detailed above, it can be seen that violence contributed significantly to the loss of childhood (and associated rights of children as documented by the UNCRC) for many of the young people I worked with. Violence manifested as a loss of childhood in several ways, from young people living in fear within their own homes and communities, to a loss of ability to engage with typical educational settings and expectations. Young people's coping mechanisms regularly included fight or flight responses and engagement in high risk activities, which in turn sometimes led to further loss, specifically in relation to education (via exclusion or via labelling and removal into alternative education) but also via young people's involvement with youth justice services as a result of violent behaviour or engagement in risky behaviours.

It seems there may be links therefore between exposure to violence and difficulty conforming to traditional (authoritarian) educational practices for some young people. It is also widely agreed that disengagement from mainstream school increases the likelihood of engagement in offending behaviour, or consolidates engagement where it is already taking place (McAra and McVie, 2010; Berridge et al, 2001) and this was reflected in many of the stories young people shared with me. It is worth exploring in more detail therefore how exposure to violence, educational difficulties and offending behaviour became entwined in young people's lives. Here we return to Jade, whose story, amongst others, casts further light on the insidious nature of violence and how continued exposure systematically robs young people of their childhood.

Jade was known to the YOT for public order offences and common assault; she was also a member of the SP where I conducted my fieldwork. Jade had grown up in a violent and abusive household, where she had been a victim of sexual and domestic violence, perpetrated against her by her birth father. Jade was diagnosed with ADHD and had found mainstream school very difficult; she was excluded for violent and aggressive behaviour in year eight (aged 13) and spent the rest of her schooling at the local PRU. Jade had a poor relationship with her mother, who was described by social service professionals as 'domineering and cold'. During my time at the SP, Jade was incredibly wary around me, accusing me of 'staring at her' and telling me that if I came near her she would 'fucking lay me out, same as anyone else who

comes near me'. Jade rarely engaged in any aspect of learning, and when challenged by staff in any capacity she would quickly become argumentative and aggressive. This was often followed by periods of upset and time out working one to one with the SP Manager or course mentor:

'She was taken out of maths this morning because she was accusing the tutor of 'fucking looking' saying 'what are you fucking looking at.' SP Manager, discussing Jade, (female, 16yrs).

Some young people on the SP told staff that Jade had been threatening and intimidating towards them, and were moved into other groups as a result. Jade regularly controlled remaining members of the group, who tended to do what she asked of them:

'Press the buzzer, press it and if the police go past shout 'you fucking pigs' (laughs)... just do it, press it now you fucking little pansy cunt.' Jade (female, 16 years).

All children have a right to education, regardless of their social, emotional or behavioural presentation (Education Act, 1996; Human Rights Act, 1998). For young people affected by violence and the subsequent loss of safety and security that has occurred in their lives as a result of such violence, further losses also tended to occur in relation to education, as they found it difficult to engage with their learning or with the authoritarian construction of educational settings. This often resulted in periods of exclusion or isolation, causing both a loss of learning and a loss of opportunity for young people to meet and form pro-social relationships with peers at mainstream school. In relation to Jade's presentation on the SP, the course mentor reflected:

'She's been through some awful things, horrific violence between her parents. And it's left her so angry, it's so hard to engage with her, have a conversation. Her hypervigilance, she thinks the whole world is against her.' Course mentor, discussing Jade, (female, 16 yrs).

For young people like Jade, constructing an identity around violence and offending served as a protective strategy from the violence and abuse they were made subject to by family members or other adults in their lives. For Jade, this involved stories that

showcased her absolute rejection of vulnerability and victimhood, stories for example of fights with older girls that she knew she was unlikely to win:

'If she gave me a bat I'd give her a bat back and I probably get done in but you have to give them a bat don't you.' Jade, (female, 16 years).

Jade's insistence that she would fight regardless of being 'done in' speaks perhaps to the importance of maintaining an image of not backing down. Due to the lack of support and nurturing Jade received at home, she also valued her independence and was deeply suspicious of anyone who tried to help her:

'I'm independent. I solve my own problems, I wipe my own tears.' Jade, (female, 16 years).

On rare occasions, and usually following an incident in class, Jade would let her guard down. After a particularly intense argument with one of the SP tutors, Jade was escorted downstairs by the SP Manager. Whilst downstairs she made a series of further disclosures relating to childhood sexual abuse; as she left the office she wiped her face and told me:

'I've been walked over all my life. Not anymore!'

In this sense it could be conceived that Jade's identification with violence served as a protective factor from the violence and abuse she had been made subject to in her own life. As such, her identity conveyed an image that said 'I don't care' and 'you can't hurt me anymore.'

Adopting a criminal identity as a protective measure against the pain of loss and abuse was adopted by other young people too. As YOT Worker Brad reflects in relation to a young person on his caseload:

'This was an antisocial behaviour referral... he was on the fringe, appearing on things, he was on the fringe of things, and there was a bit of concern because he's never been involved, he'd never been through before... prior to maybe six months ago he was massively into his football and different sort of activities... football was the crux of everything he did, he'd grown up in a certain team and then, now when you speak to him football was the last thing that he ever

thinks about, he hates it, dislikes it completely, he wants to, he just wants to do something different, unfortunately that something different is something that's getting him to the attention of antisocial behaviour teams and police. Um, looking into it I found out that his, he was um, sort of a named victim of um... a football coach at the football team had attempted to groom him and successfully sort of groomed some of the other young people in the team. Um, and the impact that that's had on him I would say that's almost like a loss of identity, he's grown up thinking he is a footballer, that's what he spends his weekends doing, his time at school doing sport. And it's everything.' Brad, (YOT Practitioner).

The loss and destruction caused to young people in cases such as these clearly and understandably had a profound and lasting impact upon them. For each of these young people, the losses they suffered resulted in a reconstitution of their identities and subsequently, initiated their engagement in violent offending and ASB. Theorised this way, aspects of some young people's offending might be understood as a socially constructed reaction to a childhood marred by violence. In this sense, by embodying Goffman's (1990/1959) notion of 'performed identity', young people are able to use 'toughness' and offending as a way of masking and distancing themselves from undesired status' of vulnerability or victimhood. Adopting personas of toughness, whether as part of a gang like Sam or through fighting peers like Jade and Amy was a way for them to make meaning (Gillies and Neimeyer, 2006) from their lost childhood, setting a precedence that 'what doesn't kill you makes you stronger' and that nobody could hurt them (emotionally) again.

Part 2: Unrecognised caring responsibilities as a loss of childhood

In addition to exposure to and enactment of violence, unrecognised caring responsibilities also served as a loss of childhood for some young people I met. Caring responsibilities took different forms, including caring for younger siblings or for parents with substance abuse and, or, mental health difficulties. The number of young people acting as young carers is likely to be significantly underestimated (Hounsell, 2013) as young people and their families may fear the repercussions of disclosing such caring responsibilities to their local authority. Such repercussions include the potential for Social Service involvement, assessments made by external bodies that the family 'can't cope' or an unwelcome light being shone upon the family

and their home life (Aldridge and TNS BMRB, 2016; Hounsell, 2013). Each of these concerns were felt by those I met in unrecognised or undocumented caring roles.

Sam acted in a caring role for his mother during and after each episode of violent behaviour perpetrated by his father. His caring responsibilities intensified when she became ill, as his father 'did nothing' to help. Sam described his caring responsibilities as 'doing what you have to do' and he told me that his sole aim in life was not to be anything like his father:

'I refuse to be a shit dad. My dad was fucking diabolical. I refuse to be like him. I'm just sick of being the one who does bad things. I want to do good and to be a good dad.' Sam (male, 17 years).

Other young people also mentioned 'looking after' family members, including child care responsibilities that at times affected their engagement and attendance in education as well as their engagement and attendance at the YOT:

'I've got to leave early this afternoon, I've got the kids to pick up. It's better when I'm there to watch them.' Natalie (female, 17 yrs).

'He [the SP Manager] knows why I'm late. I've got to take the kids haven't I.' Tommy (male, 16 years).

Where young people were caring for younger siblings this tended to be either due to parents working long hours in several jobs to make ends meet or as a result of parental incapacitation due to mental ill-health or substance misuse, rendering them 'physically present but psychologically absent' (Boss, 199:9). Whilst young people felt generally at ease talking about their caring responsibilities in relation to their siblings, they were less likely to talk explicitly about their parent's mental ill-health or substance misuse, even where this had been identified as an issue by the young person's YOT Officer. Instead young people alluded to difficulties with phrases like 'mam gets tired' or by making light of substance misuse problems in the family:

'They'll be sessioning, on it. They'll be down the pub. Any excuse and it's down [the] pub. 10am 'til chuck out. That's my lot for you. (laughs)' Wesley (male, 18 years).

That some young people make light of family mental health or substance misuse problems is not surprising, as stigma attached to those with mental ill-health or substance misuse problems remains rife (Thornicroft et al, 2016; van Boekel et al, 2013; Sartorius; 2007). Young people may also feel anxious and fearful in relation to telling family secrets or bringing their family to the attention of Social Services, as YOT Officer Barry discusses:

'You see them taking care of their like siblings if they're the eldest because you just see from your observations when you like gan in the house how they interact with them, who does kiddie, who does the younger ones gan to? You're just sitting talking and there's kids running all over and stuff like that and the parents are sitting [saying] 'I've telt the little bastard that's the last fucking time you're getting into trouble, I'll knock his fucking head off'. You know [when] you've got a parent saying that to the kid in front of you, you know, they're just not interested, if they're not interested in him, they're not interested in the other ones, the younger ones either so, no, you come across that now and again. Um, and it's kids not gannin to school, why not? He's looking after the young ones because they've got no mother, because the mother's sitting up there in the house with somebody else, some cannabis or whatever they're doing or their house is all full of people using cannabis or who've all got their health problems, you do come across it. You don't see a lot of it, but I mean obviously again, your gut feelings tell you and that's when you delve into something more. Um, because obviously the parents want to keep all that hidden from you. It, it takes your assessment skills sort of like to bring it out, to find it, to move yourself in that direction, to see it.' Barry, (YOT Officer).

Barry's recollections highlight links between young people's unrecognised caring responsibilities and broader issues of neglect and violence, as young people who are neglected themselves take on adult responsibilities as a way of protecting younger family members. Natalie, who lived with her grandfather, was regularly called upon to care for his partner's young children. Despite not being an adult herself, Natalie was also shoehorned into the role of 'responsible adult' by family members, acting as a protective mask for those who were only allowed supervised contact with children:

'I hate her. Those kids might as well be mine I look after them so much. And every time social are there I have to be there because she's not allowed to be on her own with them, she only has them by herself for like twenty minutes... I pick them up all the time. I've got to go and get them from school now. I know it sounds horrible but I really don't like the woman. She's not family. She's nothing to me.' Natalie (female, 17 yrs)

Entangled in Natalie's narrative was a combination of frustration and anger at being made responsible for the care of children belonging to a woman whom she regarded as 'nothing' to her. Getting to know Natalie I was also aware of her deep sense of fear and worry, for the children themselves, but also for her grandfather, whom she thought would get into trouble if he was found to be enabling unsupervised contacts. 'Performing care' as a way of protecting adult family members was therefore as significant for some young people as the care itself.

For Tommy, caring for his younger siblings enabled adults in his family to work. Tommy's mother and grandfather were each in precarious employment, and when they were 'given hours', often with little notice, they would call Tommy to 'collect the kids'. Tommy's story was not unusual; many young people I met were either living in poverty or had family members working in precarious employment in a desperate effort to remain above the breadline. Professional childcare was a luxury Tommy's family could not afford, so Tommy had to fit his education around family responsibilities.

Unrecognised caring responsibilities place a particular burden upon young people because it means that they are less likely to have the support and understanding from their place of education, from their peers, or from specialist services for young carers. In this sense, the losses undocumented young carers experience in relation to their caring responsibilities are disenfranchised (Doka, 2002; 2017a). That their experiences are disenfranchised compounds young people's loss of childhood, as their caring responsibilities place them in an adult role, but often without the infrastructure that other young people with recognised caring responsibilities are able to draw upon for support:

'And that's undue pressure on them. You know their whole world is changing, you know they're not living a childhood you know that's, that's the thing.

They're not doing the simple things in life that they should be doing. Um, they've got these too many adult pressures upon them. Which again affects them, it affects how they interact with everybody else as well and how they see themselves with everybody else.' Barry, (YOT Officer).

Young people who offend with caring responsibilities often did not have the benefit of a supportive adult able to motivate them to attend appointments or engage in education. This increased the likelihood of missed appointments or educational sanctions, including educational exclusion on the basis of poor attendance or returns to court for non-compliance. There was also concern expressed from some YOT practitioners that parental mental ill-health could increase the likelihood of a young person reoffending due to the lack of support from home to reinforce and reiterate pro-social messages:

'If there is a significant other who has a mental health issue, that can really impact on the young person, with their attendance you know their attitude to things as well... [if parents or carers] struggle to motivate themselves, you know, get out, speak to people, see the world as it were, how does that young person, how do they motivate that young person to do, to get along to YOT appointments, to make sense of why they're coming and to reinforce what we're trying to do?' James (YOT Officer).

YOT Officer Gina aired additional concerns, regarding unofficial caring responsibilities as an issue of neglect that required greater support and recognition from Social Services. During interview, Gina also explained how the voluntary nature of some adult care services may impact negatively upon young people who are left to manage their parents' mental ill health if they decide not to engage with support:

'We've got some big issues at the minute with parental mental-health where, and this overlaps with the social care side of things you know where we are saying this young person is suffering because of this, or this young person is, is more at risk of reoffending and neglect and in one case I can think of at the minute, sexual exploitation. And it's all linked in with parental mental health but because the parent won't engage with social care the case is closed which doesn't solve any issues.' Gina, (YOT Officer).

Placing young people in caring roles not only adultifies them (Smith, 2010), it is also likely to render them dubious of adult intervention or support, including support from the YOT. As Sam reflected in relation to his housing application:

I've done everything on my own; I've done it on my own. Nobody helped me, only these last few months. And it's fallen through before so I've gone out [and applied] for housing by myself because then if it falls through I've got it covered.' Sam, (male, 17 years).

Difficulties accepting help may leave young people further isolated, and difficulties in disclosing caring responsibilities may leave their actions, including offending, misunderstood. Coleman (2014) argues that young people, by the nature of the age and stage of development, need adults in their lives who can support and guide them. When young people are operating as 'mini adults' by nature of their caring responsibilities, they suffer a loss of childhood in the sense that they are not able to access the same freedom from responsibility as their peers. Where caring responsibilities are unrecognised or unofficial, the losses young people experience may be further compounded, as they struggle to keep the family going without support from external agencies or with the additional burden of keeping family secrets. Young people may also place themselves in the role of family protector, in the fear that outside knowledge of their situation could lead to family breakup, including the removal of the young person and, or their siblings from their parents care.

Letting off steam? Offending behaviour as an emotional articulation of unmet need.

For young people with unrecognised caring responsibilities, loss of childhood occurred in both similar and different ways compared with those who had been exposed to violence and abuse.²² A noticeable aspect of those with caring responsibilities who came to the attention of the YOT was in relation to immature behaviours both in education and within their local communities. 16 year old Logan for example, who regularly cared for her four younger siblings due to her mother's depression and agoraphobia, would often become loud and silly during lessons, responding with rudeness when challenged:

²² It was not unusual for those with unrecognised caring responsibilities to have also been exposed to violence and abuse.

'Watching Logan I notice she's often first to instigate silly behaviours during lessons, whether singing loudly, throwing sweets around the room or incessantly tapping others. The rest of the group find it funny for a while and then drift away, Logan doesn't seem to pick up social cues from the rest of the group and some even mumble that she's 'immature' and 'takes things too far'. I was upstairs at the YOT the other day and I heard music blasting. Logan [was] downstairs dancing around and telling the receptionist to 'fuck off'. Everyone else [was] sat waiting for their appointments, barely reacting. Logan presents much younger than 16, possibly [a] coping mechanism for all the stress of grown up life at home?' Fieldnotes, (October 2016).

Logan was also well known for drinking heavily and fighting peers, behaviour that had brought her to the attention of the YOT. Initially links were made by education staff between her caring responsibilities and her presentation in education:

'She has a lot of responsibility at home. I think she looks after her sisters and she is doing a lot so it's like there's a juxtaposition between her responsibilities and her rudeness.' SP Practitioner (reflecting on Logan, female, 16 years)

As time went on however, patience and understanding wore thin and Logan was eventually excluded from the SP 'because she's rude and she's never in' (SP Manager). This left Logan isolated from pro-social avenues of support, thus potentially less likely to desist from offending. That Logan was excluded also highlights the potentially limited understanding of education providers in relation to young people's caring responsibilities. This is consistent with other research regarding young carers (including those with recognised and unrecognised caring responsibilities), where agencies were found to be lacking in understanding regarding the impact of care giving upon young people's lives. This included young people's 'bounded agency' (Evans, 2007) in relation to educational decision making and behavioural presentation (Scottish government, 2017; Hamilton and Adamson, 2013), a concept discussed at length in my third findings chapter, loss of agency.

Other young people also used offending and substance misuse as a way to let off steam, Natalie for example spoke animatedly about 'getting out and getting on it' when she had time for herself and Tommy disclosed he had 'destroyed some stuff

[a]round town to let off steam'. It was common however for young people with unrecognised caring responsibilities to compartmentalise various aspects of their lives, with offending, substance misuse or ASB kept hidden and separate from their caring roles:

'I mean I don't take drugs no more but even before, if I had the kids, never ever. You just don't.' Tommy, (male, 16 years).

'I didn't want my mum to know what I was doing. I kept a lot hidden to look after her you know. Don't ask, don't tell. After she died it all fell apart... nobody should have to carry a coffin at 15.' Sam, (male, 17 years).

Conclusion

There were particular trigger points or critical moments (Henderson et al, 2007) for young people where loss of childhood and offending became entangled within their narratives. For Sam, his mother's illness and death, coupled with his father's violence and rejection, supported his entry into gang culture and embroilment in offending. For Jade, offending served as a violent rejection of vulnerability in the aftermath of familial abuse. For Logan, offending helped her let off steam and regain some of the immaturity of childhood that had been denied to her at home as a result of her unrecognised and undocumented caring responsibilities. Loss of childhood due to exposure to violence and, or, as a result of unrecognised caring responsibilities each therefore served to disempower young people, violating their rights under the UNCRC to a safe and happy childhood. The 'adultification' of young people who are forced to confront and make meaning from domestic and community violence, or obliged to manage intense responsibility at home, can leave them isolated, trapped in a constant state of hypervigilance and mistrust that when enacted, fails to endear them to professionals or their peers. In this sense space is created for offending to become a way of making meaning from lost childhoods, as avenues of support, emotional outlets and opportunities to engage in risk taking behaviours are enabled through offending in ways that were lacking elsewhere in young people's lives.

Findings 2 - Loss of opportunity



Image Credit: *'There's nothing to do in this town.'* Riley, aged 16.

Introduction

Just as loss of childhood featured heavily in the accounts and experiences of young people who offend, loss of opportunity was also prevalent, aspects of which are documented in figure 4.3 below:

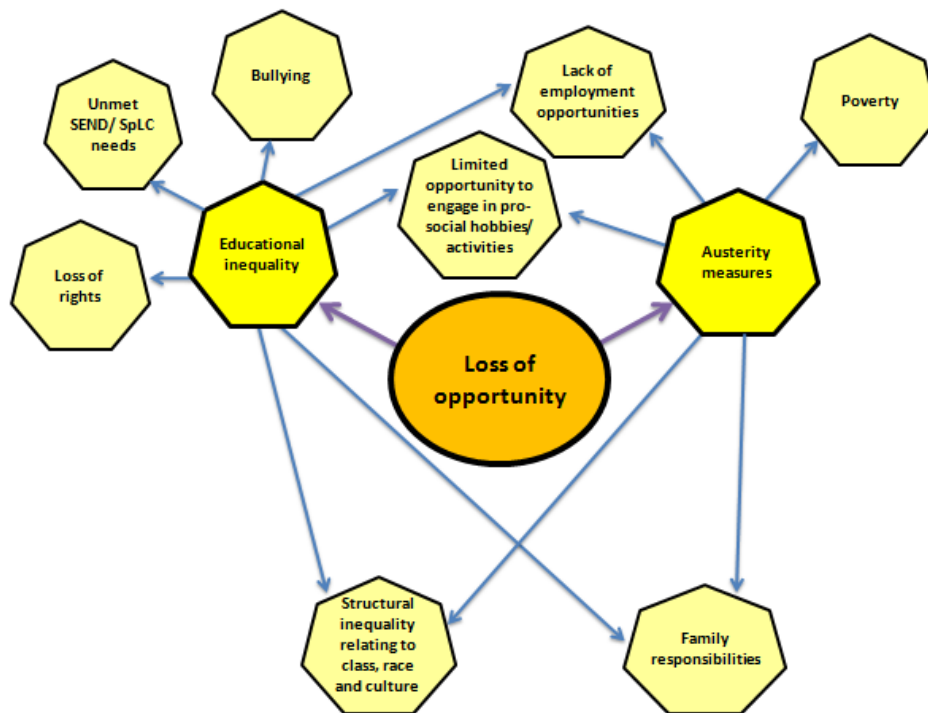


Figure 4.3: Loss of opportunity in the lives of young people who offend

Below I discuss how loss of opportunity manifested in young people's lives during this study, paying particular attention in the first part of this chapter to loss of educational opportunity, especially for those with unidentified or unmet SEND and for young people affected by other forms of disenfranchised (Doka, 2002; 2017a) or ambiguous (Boss, 1999) loss. The second part of this chapter explores loss of opportunity as a result of austerity measures, including the loss of meaningful and secure employment opportunities for young people and the seemingly disproportionate impact this had upon those living in poverty. Throughout this chapter I draw particularly upon Brianna's story alongside other young people's accounts to explore how loss of opportunity through educational inequality and through austerity affected the everyday lives and practices of young people who offend.

Brianna's story

Brianna was 16 years old when I first met her and she was subject to a 3 month Referral Order for violence against the person and public order. Brianna had lived in Peasetown all her life and although she had been well known to the local ASB team from the age of 13, this was the first time she had come to the attention of the YOT. Brianna's family were 'known' to local services; there had been a long history of domestic abuse perpetration within the home, her mother's substance abuse and alcohol issues were well documented and referrals had been made to social care on numerous occasions in relation to concerns for Brianna's and her older sister's safety and wellbeing. At the age of 10, Brianna was reported to have been a victim of child abduction and by the age of 13, concerns had been raised in relation to Brianna being a victim of childhood sexual exploitation (CSE). Brianna went through periods of time being open and closed to various support services, including social care, family support, young people's substance misuse team, CAMHS and Barnardo's. Brianna's mother was described by one of her social workers as showing Brianna and her older sister very little love, care or attention, and Brianna would often spend days away from the family home before being reported missing by her family. Brianna told me her mum was 'a bitch' and that she had 'better relationships with her friends' mam's than [her] own'. During fieldwork, further concerns were raised in relation to CSE, and Brianna was also a victim of assault by an older male. Despite this, Brianna maintained anything was better than living with her family, stating, 'I don't care if it's not the best; at least it's not being at home'.

Brianna completed mainstream school but her attendance was poor and she was often placed in isolation for challenging behaviour. Leading up to her GCSE exams, Brianna was isolated for a three month period as an alternative to permanent exclusion, due to 'ongoing incidents and increasingly violent outbursts' (YOT case notes). Brianna missed her school work experience as a result of her isolation, something she told me 'was the only thing I was looking forward to, because I was meant to be working with horses'.

Brianna did not achieve the GCSE grades she was hoping for to attend her college course of choice. Instead she began her post 16 education at the local SP, which she described as 'shit and boring'. During this time, Brianna's involvement in ASB escalated and she was picked up by the police and taken home on several occasions. Whilst at the SP, Brianna disclosed she had been diagnosed with ADHD and prescribed medication in the past, but she was no longer able to take medication due to her substance misuse. Brianna also worried she might be dyslexic but had not taken any tests in relation to this. Initial screenings for dyslexia conducted by SP staff suggested Brianna was borderline for dyslexia and further support was recommended (support which, during her time at the SP, did not materialise). Staff also expressed concerns that Brianna appeared seriously underweight and that she sought attention from staff 'at any cost'.

Towards the end of the academic year, Brianna almost completely disengaged from the SP. Her ASB and offending behaviours intensified, and following professional challenge and intervention from the YOT, Brianna was eventually removed from her family home and placed out of area on a residential educational placement working with horses.

Part 1: Loss of opportunity through educational and social inequality - two sides of the same coin?

Brianna's story reflects a multitude of losses, including her loss of family relationships and her loss of high quality, meaningful education. Brianna's story also highlights lost opportunities for educational (and other agency) support, support that may have steered her away from engagement in offending and ASB. Here I examine Brianna's educational experiences in relation to loss of opportunity, including how neoliberal responsibilising tendencies (Kulz, 2017; Phoenix and Kelly, 2013) served to systematically disenfranchise Brianna's feelings of loss (Doka, 2002) and remove pro-social, supported opportunities for Brianna to make meaning from the ongoing events of her life (Gillies and Neimeyer, 2006), including her feelings of ambiguous loss (Boss, 1999) in relation to her mother.

Taking her story at face value, Brianna's official involvement with the YOT did not begin until after she had completed statutory schooling. It is arguable therefore that Brianna's completion of mainstream school served as a protective measure against offending. Young people's retention in mainstream education is, after all, well documented in both research and policy as a protective factor against offending (Lösel and Bender, 2017; Ttofi et al, 2016; Allen, 2014; Berridge et al, 2001; Farrington and West, 1993). However, understanding Brianna's experience of mainstream education this way feels over simplistic, failing to take into account the poor quality of her schooling, her extensive involvement with ASB during her time in mainstream education or the systematic failure of those working with Brianna to fully acknowledge and proactively address her needs before she began offending. As such, it could be argued that whilst Brianna did not offend during her time at school, her treatment there paved a golden path to offending as a way of demanding attention and voicing unmet need.

In Brianna's case, it was not difficult for me to peel back the layers and peer beneath the stories she chose to share with me. Unlike other young people I met who struggled to discuss their experiences, Brianna spoke clearly and openly about her losses. She was also painfully aware that nothing seemed to change no matter how many times she recounted her stories or how many agencies she was referred to:

'Social, drug and alcohol, what's it [called] again, family support, CAMHS, Barnardo's. [I've] done them all. Nothing changes and the teachers just think I'm a little bitch around school. They hated me.' Brianna, (female, 16 years).

Brianna's perception that her teachers 'hated' her meant she felt singled out and stigmatised 'ever since [she] got to secondary' and that her problems 'got passed on' rather than dealt with. As such, Brianna became caught in a continual cycle of referral, moving in and out of services as her case was 'stepped up' or 'stepped down'. During her final two years of school, Brianna told me she was almost continually in isolation, deemed too disruptive to be around her peers yet retained in school due to the 'zero permanent exclusions' policy in place across the local authority at the time, and lack of space for her at the local pupil referral unit (PRU).

Understanding Brianna's background and previous experiences provides an important contextual backdrop to her involvement in ASB, and by the time I met her, her involvement in offending. Already emotionally isolated from her family, Brianna's mother's substance misuse often rendered her 'physically present but psychologically absent' (Boss, 1999:9). Being placed in isolation at school therefore likely compounded existing feelings of abandonment and detachment from her family, rendering her emotionally and physically alone at a time where compassion and validation from caring and trusted adults and pro-social peers was desperately required.²³

Like Jade, (whose story is discussed in my first findings chapter), Brianna had been continually exposed to domestic violence and neglect. Brianna's radical rejection of her own vulnerability sometimes arose at the SP via her performance of loud and disruptive behaviour during lessons. Following such performances, Brianna would often engage in self-deprecating discourse, explaining she was 'a bitch', 'insane', 'naughty' or 'gone in the head'. As time passed, staff became increasingly fatigued by Brianna's behaviour, leading either to her removal from learning or to staff ignoring her and leaving her to her own devices during lessons. Over time, Brianna's behaviour became increasingly construed as 'attention seeking' or 'rude', with little attempt made to understand or respond to the underlying motivations for her presentation in class:

²³ The damaging impact of Brianna's isolation is discussed in further detail later on in this chapter.

'It's attention seeking, no more to it than that. We've been through it a million times with her and we've made referrals. She's had involvement with every agency under the sun. I feel heartfelt sorry for her but a time does come when we have to say 'enough is enough' and we're getting close to that' (SP Manager).

Largely underpinned by attachment theory (Ainsworth and Bowlby, 1991; Ainsworth, 1969; Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980) trauma informed approaches to education stress the importance of looking beyond 'attention seeking behaviour' to understand the specific needs each young person is trying to convey (Beacon House, 2015; Australian Childhood Foundation, 2010:61). However much like the YJS, understandings of trauma have only recently begun to permeate pockets of E/W educational practice. Considerations of young people's experiences as losses and their behavioural presentations as communications of 'grief in action' (Butler, 2014) also remain largely obsolete within education. Instead, Kultz (2017:166-168) argues that education systems remain underpinned by neoliberal government policy that favours a particular kind of student; ultimately a polite, self-motivated, academically able, white, middle class student. Where young people do not fit such prescribed ideals, notions of meritocracy are harnessed by educational settings, and mythical tales of social mobility ('if you try hard enough you can be anything you want to be') are unleashed. Raey (2012), in her Bourdieusian analysis of working class experiences of education in the 21st century uncovered similar issues, arguing that students who fail to get on board with prevailing, neoliberal, meritocracal ideals are likely to find themselves systematically removed from their educationally conforming peers, shifted instead towards the fringes of their settings where their 'undesirable' influence over others is reduced. This pattern of educational marginalisation was evident in Brianna's case, as she was increasingly isolated during her time at mainstream school from pro-social peers, subject specialist teaching, and the everyday happenings of school life. Such crippling marginalisation led to further lost educational and social opportunities for Brianna; loss of school friends, loss of high quality, meaningful learning, lost opportunities to develop social skills through group work, lost opportunities to develop employability skills through engaging in work experience and a lost opportunity for educational achievement and progression to her college of choice. Perhaps most crucially, Brianna's experiences of schooling

reveal numerous lost opportunities for connection with caring and trusted adults who may well have been able to help and support her had her behaviour been better understood as a reaction to loss. During her time at the SP, similar attempts to responsabilise Brianna for her behaviour and for her learning occurred; reverberations of Phoenix and Kelly's (2013) 'you have to do it for yourself' clearly apparent in Brianna's understanding of herself as failing to rise against the odds like Jacqueline Wilson's fictional LAC heroine Tracy Beaker:

'That's me. Growing up a bitch but wanting to be like Tracy Beaker.' Brianna, (female, 16 years).

That Brianna strived to be like LAC heroine Tracey Beaker, a fictional character removed from her family home due to her step-father's abuse and her mother's neglect, could well be understood as a harrowing glimpse into Brianna's everyday life. Messages of salvation through education were nevertheless conveyed through the SP, with inspirational speakers brought in to show young people that 'achievement against the odds is possible' (SP Lead).

The idea that social inequality can be alleviated by educational achievement was prevalent within the SP. However, when these great promises of change failed to materialise for Brianna, she became increasingly disengaged and returned to tried and tested mechanisms of gaining adult attention through ASB and offending behaviour. In each of these instances, Brianna made absolutely sure that adults at the SP, including myself, were well aware of her actions. In this sense, her performance of deviance and self construction as 'naughty' and 'wrong in the head' suggested her utter desperation to be heard and understood rather than any particular desire to be naughty or to break the law.

Brianna's story illuminates the impact of educational inequality as both a creator and sustainer of loss. Her story also reveals how social and educational inequality might ultimately be described as two sides of the same coin when expressions of unmet need are construed as a lack of educational conformity. This notion is explored in further detail below, as I investigate young people's experiences of the 'educational loss lottery', where social status, academic ability and the differing ethos of individual school settings each affected the educational trajectories of young people in the aftermath of their offending behaviour.

An educational loss lottery; exploring educational inequality through differential responses to young people's offending behaviour

As previously alluded to, it is well documented that engagement in high quality, meaningful education serves as a protective factor for young people, including their desistance from crime (HMI Probation, 2016; Wilkinson, 2009). It is equally well documented in policy and academia that those who do offend tend to have a poor relationship with education. Rates of exclusion are higher for young people involved with youth justice services (Bacon, 2015; HMIP, 2015)²⁴, and those on the fringes are more likely to become ingrained in offending following exclusion from mainstream education (Daniels et al, 2003; Berridge et al, 2001). Young people who offend are also more likely to be placed in isolation or alternative education settings (Daniels et al, 2003), become subject to unofficial, illegal exclusions (Gill et al, 2017; Longfield, 2017; Berridge et al, 2001), or become 'electively'²⁵ home educated (Longfield, 2017). Educational exclusion may occur prior to the young person's involvement with offending behaviour, or as an additional consequence following their involvement with the YOT. When the latter applies, young people are arguably doubly punished, by the YJS and by the education system. This was a common occurrence for young people I met during fieldwork:

'I got kicked out, got kicked out of that school because of what I done [the offence] and then I went round with them because I was bored and there was nothing to do.' Craig (male, 13 years).

'I got took out [of school] even though it was nothing to do with them... I don't get why I had to leave [school], miss my exams and leavers when I was already doing probation for what I done.' Peter, (male, 17 years).

For young people like Craig and Peter, their educational exclusion from mainstream school was a direct response to their offending behaviour. In Peter's case, his offence was high profile and had occurred in his local community. His exclusion from school took place amidst safeguarding concerns for other pupils, thus became a secondary, disenfranchised form of loss for Peter as his risk to others was viewed by

²⁴ It is important to note that the relationship between school exclusion and engagement in offending behaviour is complex. Some young people engage in crime before being excluded (Hodgson and Webb, 2005) and others, (as I discovered during the course of this research project) were excluded from school as a result of offending behaviour.

²⁵ I use the word 'elective' here with caution. This is the official terminology used for young people who are educated at home as opposed to within a school setting. For many of the young people I worked with however, neither they, nor their families, elected for home education, rather being educated at home was *suggested* by school as an appropriate course of action or as an alternative to permanent exclusion, which would appear on the young person's educational records.

school as outweighing his right to complete his education and sit his GCSE exams. Craig's damage to school property saw him simultaneously excluded from his school and charged with criminal damage. Whilst awaiting a 'managed move' to another mainstream school Craig was provided with an hour's tutoring per day. During this period Craig found himself with a lot of free time; time he put to use on the streets with other excluded young people, including those already deeply ingrained in substance misuse and offending behaviour.

Like Brianna, neither Craig nor Peter had family who were in a position to navigate exclusions policies and mount an appeal on their behalf. Exclusion from school (or in Brianna's case, her isolation within it) are therefore likely to go unchallenged if young people and their families do not have the social or cultural capital to argue their case or access advocacy services (Lareau and Horvat, 1999). Many young people I met who had been excluded were incredibly angry about their exclusion, feeling as though they had been treated unfairly by their excluders. This is echoed in other research with young people who offend, which urges those working with young people to 'always unpick why' and to 'acknowledge limited life chances' (GMYJUP Participatory Youth Practice, 2018).

As well as loss of education as a double punishment for young people who offend, concerns regarding inconsistent responses from educational settings regarding young people's offending were also brought up by YOT practitioners, a process described below by Brad as 'unfair and unjust':

'[Young person] has been excluded from school in response to the offence. This decision has been taken despite there not being a conviction and despite offers from us to support [the young person] to remain in their place of education. A young person actually convicted of a similar offence a few months ago was not removed from school. Instead we worked collaboratively with school to address his behaviour. Different schools have different approaches which is unfair and unjust for young people involved ' Brad, (YOT Worker) Minutes from YOT meeting.

The lack of parity between (and on some occasions within) educational settings that Brad describes reveals the educational losses that young people who offend experience are more likely to be determined by the individual approach of each

school and their relationship with the young person and their family than the nature of the offence itself. During my time in the field, it became increasingly clear that the 'educational loss lottery' was heavily rigged according to social class and academic ability, with those holding greater social and cultural capital better able to negotiate their child's continued presence in mainstream education. Of particular interest was the way that white, middle class, academically able young people seemed more likely to be retained in school, compared with young people from working class backgrounds who were already struggling academically, captured in the memos below:

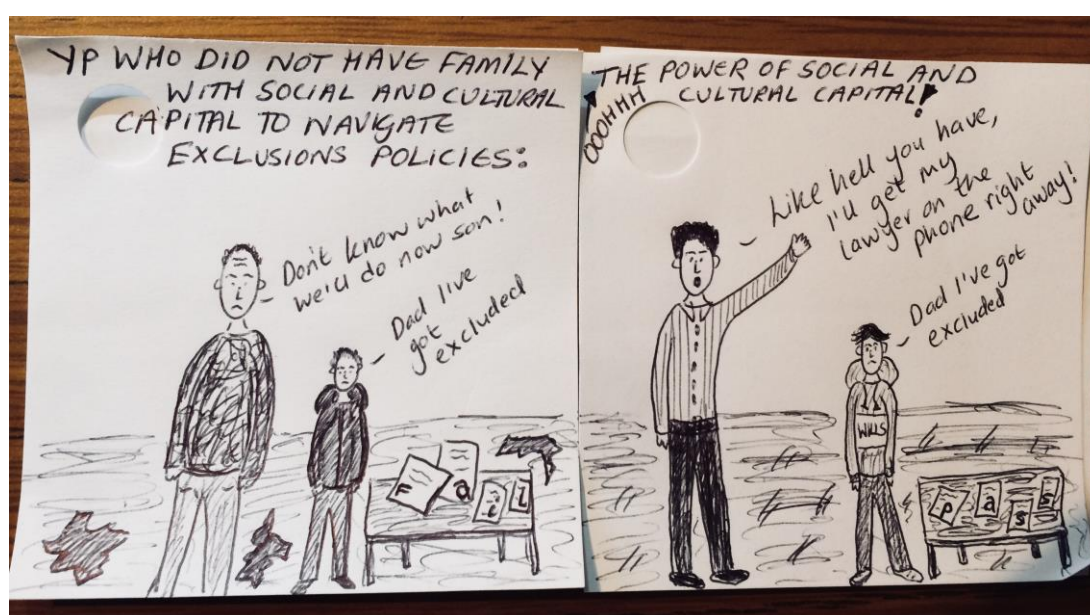


Image credit: 'Unfair and Unjust: understanding how access to social and cultural capital affects educational responses to young people's offending'. Memo constructed during fieldwork: June 2017.

This was the case for Adam, an academically able, white, middle class young person. Adam firmly believed he had 'escaped exclusion' for bringing a knife into school because his parents had 'talked school out of it':

'I was lucky because they were going to exclude me. Then mam and dad went in and had it out with them and they decided to keep me in after all.' Adam, (male, 15 years).

Whilst Adam was able to continue on in mainstream education relatively unscathed, as Brianna's story painstakingly revealed, retention in mainstream education can also serve to restrict opportunities for young people if such retention fails to embrace

young people's full and active participation in everyday life and learning. With a similar socio-economic background to Adam, Lewis also remained in mainstream education following an out of court disposal for sharing indecent images of a minor. Lewis was a talented athlete and a high achiever, predicted A*- C grades in his forthcoming GCSE exams. As such, school were keen to retain Lewis, and his parents were also keen for him to remain in school. For Lewis however, he felt as though staying in school meant that he could not move on and that because the offence had happened in school, he was 'reminded of it every day'. Lewis explained that 'for his protection', school no longer allowed him to spend break or lunchtimes with his peers:

'I don't really have friends anymore, because of what's happened. I get an early lunch and then I do jobs for her [teacher], help her out. I don't feel safe in school... I want to transfer but mam won't let me and probablies nobody would take me anyway after what's happened. So I have to stick it out, stick it out for another year and then I'm getting away, as far away from this town as possible.' Lewis, (male, 15yrs).

Instead of reintegrating into everyday life following his offence, Lewis was effectively held captive within school, escorted around the building by staff and isolated from his wider school community, including his beloved athletics as he was banned from attending after school clubs (although interestingly, he was allowed to compete against other schools). A cynical reading of Lewis' experiences might assume that Lewis was not retained in school as a valued member of the community whom staff felt they could support. Instead Lewis felt that he had been retained with different intentions in mind, as someone able to 'achieve the top GCSE grades' and perhaps bring home a few sporting trophies along the way.

The stories shared within this thesis are by no means unique. Other young people I met who had remained in mainstream school following their involvement with the YOT or ASB teams were denied freedoms that other young people enjoyed, including freedom of movement and opportunity to socialise with peers during breaks and lunch. Examples of other discriminatory educational practices were rife, with YOT assessment data revealing young people: being placed on a restricted or reduced timetable; spending lengthy periods of time in isolation; not being allowed to

enter the main school building; being taught 1:1; being educated after school hours; being sent work to complete at home. Young people I met who had experienced disruption to their schooling in these ways were generally accepting of the sanctions placed upon them, stating they were 'naughty' or 'bad' or that 'it's better than getting excluded'. Many were also aware that they should be 'grateful' for not being permanently excluded:

'I hate it but I know that I'm lucky I didn't get excluded for what happened. At least that's not on my record as well as this [offence]. Lewis, (male, 15 years).

Other young people stated that they 'stopped going' or 'hardly went' following the sanctions placed upon them, deciding that school was 'boring' or 'pointless'. It could be argued that the labels young people placed upon themselves (or felt others had placed upon them) in relation to their conduct in education affected their opportunities moving forwards, with many believing they were too 'thick' or 'naughty' to learn. These presentations are consistent with labelling theory (Becker, 1973) and Goffman's (1963) work on stigma, with young people's feelings about learning (and their subsequent performance in the classroom) underpinned by the notion that they were viewed as educational failures:

'[I] used to be in top sets until year 11 and then I failed. I don't know what happened. I was in top sets... There was this teacher, this citizenship teacher and she was saying 'you'll be in prison by the time you're 21, you'll be inside, [you're] the worst class' so [I] didn't do the work and I got a U.' Scott, (male, 16 yrs).

'I don't know. I'm just not used to all this. I barely went to school in my last year. I sat my exams but I fucked off after 20 minutes. I think, I don't think I'm all there in the head. I can't sit still.' Katie, (female, 16 years).

A lost opportunity to assess and support young people with SEND?

Most young people I met during fieldwork had experienced loss of educational opportunity in one guise or another. Of particular concern however were those who presented at the YOT with undiagnosed or unaddressed educational needs or difficulties. Brianna for instance was concerned that she may have been dyslexic, and when screened at the SP (BKSB, 2012) was found to be in need of additional

support. There is much research, including emerging research in youth justice specifically (YJB, 2017; Achievement for All, 2016) regarding the impact of unrecognised learning needs upon people who offend. A particular finding that resonated with my own observations and discussions during fieldwork was the prevalence of young people with unrecognised or unaddressed SpLC difficulties. There are different rationales in literature as to why SpLC difficulties are so pervasive within offending populations, possible explanations include a lack of, or gaps in, schooling (Communication Trust, 2014; 2013), early childhood experiences where young people were not spoken to or encouraged to speak (Harmer, 2012) or SpLC difficulties as an indication of other diagnosable learning needs or difficulties - outlined in the SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015). Regardless of where such problems stem from, unrecognised learning needs clearly have an impact upon young people's ability to engage with and enjoy education, including understanding the content and purpose of class work, retaining information and synthesising and recalling learning (Communication Trust, 2014; 2013; Bryan et al, 2007). Problems such as these may also be linked to behavioural needs and difficulties (Communication Trust, 2014; 2013) and difficulties with emotional literacy (EL), potentially resulting in a young person's loss of education when expressions of learning needs and difficulties are misconstrued as poor behaviour. Unaddressed SpLC needs may also mean young people lose opportunity to access additional support in examinations, potentially preventing them from performing to the best of their ability.

'Basically [I] failed everything, didn't get the work, didn't know what we was doing in most of them' Luca, (male, 17 years).

'I'm spending a lot of time completing education health plans for young people so we can get them additional support, extra time in exams... I can't fathom why they haven't got picked up until now that they've got special needs.' (SP Mentor).

In both Peasetown and Adlerville, I met young people unable to tell the time; unable to read and write; unable to tie their own shoelaces. Despite their difficulties with tasks that most primary school children would easily be able to accomplish, the majority of those who were still connected (however loosely) to mainstream provision

were successfully masking their difficulties via disengagement or poor behaviour. As Carlos reflects:

'If you sit there and don't say nothing then they don't care as long as you're quiet.' Carlos, (male, 15 years).

For young people whose learning needs were officially recognised, this did not automatically mean they were effectively supported within their educational setting. Brianna was diagnosed with ADHD, taking medication for her condition until her substance misuse prevented her from doing so. Despite a clear body of evidence based best practice guidance regarding the support of young people with ADHD (Ontario Centre for Excellence, 2015; DuPaul et al, 2011; Kos et al, 2006), Brianna spent lengthy periods of time in isolation whilst at school, a practice harmful to all young people, but especially harmful for young people with SEND.

The Children's Act (1989) states any practice or measure, such as 'time out' or seclusion that prevents a child from leaving a room or building of their own free will, may be deemed a 'restriction of liberty'. The most recent non statutory advice (DfE, 2014) suggests schools may adopt a policy that allows disruptive pupils to be placed in an area (an isolation room) away from other pupils for a limited period. The advice adds that only in exceptional circumstances should any use of isolation that prevents a child from leaving of their own free will be considered. However, it is not clear what constitutes an exceptional circumstance and there is no clear guidance as to how isolation should be managed by education staff. Some students (with and without learning disabilities) are likely to feel secluded even if they are not locked in, especially those affected by loss or trauma (Murray, 2016; Beacon House, 2015). The presence of staff outside the door may also be sufficient to keep a young person from leaving of their own free will. Accordingly, 'there is a clear risk in some circumstances within schools that isolation can become seclusion and schools must act lawfully' (Centre of Advancement for Positive Behaviour Support, 2015:3-4).

In Brianna's case, it could be argued that three months spent in isolation amounted to seclusion. It could also be argued that seclusion had a detrimental effect upon Brianna's social and emotional health and wellbeing as well as upon her learning. Withdrawal of access to subject specialist teachers, work experience, peer groups and usual school routines each served as a loss of opportunity for Brianna. Her

experiences also epitomise lost opportunity in relation to the identification and implementation of appropriate educational care and support for a vulnerable young person.

The SEND Code of Practice (2015:25) advocates for inclusive practice where 'reasonable adjustments' are made for young people with SEND to attend mainstream school. The code also states that young people with SEND but without an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) 'must be educated in mainstream school except in exceptional circumstances.' This was not the case for many young people I encountered who were known to the YOT. Instead young people were: excluded from mainstream school; working 1:1; in isolation on a restricted or reduced timetable; shoehorned into 'elective' home education as a preventative measure against permanent exclusion. These lost opportunities to identify, address and support young people with SEND generated further losses for those involved, restricting current and future opportunities for educational participation and success. In some cases, young people were even removed from their SEND specialist provision to be 'electively' home educated, a practice that simultaneously heightened vulnerability and fuelled offending and ASB. As Michael²⁶ explains:

'I used to go to the naughty [ESBD specialist] school before. But then I got kicked out and it was good because I went in cars with the older ones round the estate, driving really fast, we went really fast... and nobody came out looking 'cus I wasn't meant to be in school no more.' Michael (male, 12 years).

That 'nobody came out looking' for Michael speaks to crucial gaps in the safeguarding of 'electively' home educated young people, a concern long held by YOT staff (and others) that has now become the subject of a major government enquiry with a call for evidence ongoing at the time of writing (DfE, 2018). Exactly how Michael's mother became aware of elective home education is also questionable. The only certainty following Michael's exclusion was that he spent a full year without access to any form of education at all, nominally his transition year from primary to secondary education:

It is not just in the educational domain that unaddressed SEND, SpLC or EL difficulties may hamper young people's progress. Issues with comprehension,

²⁶ Michael's story is explored in detail in my fifth findings chapter, the extent of loss in the lives of young people who offend.

processing and understanding may also affect young people's engagement with the YOT, as they struggle to understand the implications of their order or comply with set requirements (Communication Trust, 2014). Best practice in youth justice is beginning to address some of these issues with young people: via collaboration with speech and language or learning disability specialists; by 'screening out' as opposed to 'screening in' for SpLC needs; through the amendment of existing youth justice documentation to include child friendly language; by using imagery and symbols to explain common YOT processes such as attending court (YJB, 2018). Whilst not perhaps typically thought of as a loss of opportunity, if young people are not able to engage fully in their YOT work, or if they struggle to keep appointments or speak up for themselves in court due to unrecognised learning needs, they may face a greater likelihood of harsher sentencing in court (because SpLC and EL needs may come across as a lack of remorse or flippancy) or being returned to court for failure to comply with their order.

The stories young people shared throughout this research concur with previous work suggesting that young people's learning needs are often not fully recognised or effectively addressed until their contact with a YOT (The Communication Trust, 2014; I CAN, 2009). This suggests a major shortfall in current educational practice, especially in relation to the early identification and support of young people whose behavioural presentations mask learning needs.

The damaging impact of lost educational opportunities

Research consistently shows that being educated anywhere other than mainstream school affects future opportunities for young people (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018; Ofsted, 2016; Taylor, 2012; WHO, 2011:226). This was largely the case for young people in this study too, with the detrimental impact of educational exclusion clear in the stories young people shared. However, there were also stories shared that revealed remaining in mainstream education did not always signify young people's full and active participation in everyday life and learning. Discriminatory practices under the guise of 'zero permanent exclusion' policies or 'off-rolling' young people into 'elective' home education or poor quality alternative provision (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018:12) may therefore require as careful consideration as officially recorded exclusions when exploring loss of opportunity in the lives of young people who offend.

The loss of stable, high quality education provision as described above not only affects young people in the immediacy of the event, it continues to restrict opportunities in the future, including difficulties with post sixteen transition. Young people denied high quality education are more likely to be offered a restricted version of the curriculum, with less opportunity to engage in a broad range of academic and vocational subjects than their peers (Daniels et al, 2003). Removal from education means removal from friends and removal from routine; removal from education may also mean a loss of support and pro-social guidance, particularly for young people with difficult and disruptive home lives. Exclusion from school, long periods in isolation, time spent in alternative education or an advised move towards 'elective' home education were each utilised by education providers as a response to young people's YOT involvement, even when the young person had not yet been convicted of a crime or where their behaviour had been dealt with as an out of court disposal. A lack of parity between educational settings was also observed, with settings reacting in different ways to similar accounts of offending or ASB. In this sense, existing inequalities were amplified throughout neoliberal education systems and practices (Kulz, 2017), with young people whose behaviour challenged meritocratic ideals framed in terms of their 'risk' to others and systematically removed from the everyday happenings of school life. Educational marginalisation occurred both before and after young people became involved with youth justice services, and an intensification of offending behaviour following educational exclusion was common. Educationally inclusive practices must therefore be regarded as an incredibly important source of support for both crime prevention and desistance. As McAra and McVie (2010: 201) poignantly conclude following their Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime, 'there is an urgent need to develop more imaginative ways of retaining challenging children within mainstream educational provision.' Conducting this research with young people eight years later, the 'urgent need' McAra and McVie refer to appears to remain unmet.

Part 2: There's nothing to do in this town! Austerity measures and the disproportionate loss of opportunity for marginalised young people

Loss of high quality, meaningful educational opportunity was not the only way that loss of opportunity affected young people in Peasetown and Adlerville. Austerity measures also took their toll, especially upon those without the social or cultural

capital (Shildrick, and MacDonald, 2008; Barry 2006; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005) to engage in pro-social hobbies and activities or access high quality and timely support, guidance or intervention when difficulties arose. In this sense, whilst austerity measures have undeniably affected opportunities for all young people, socio-economically marginalised young people have been disproportionately affected by government cuts (Hastings et al, 2015), particularly in the North East of England where fieldwork took place (CQC, 2018:30). In Peasetown and Adlerville, loss of opportunity as a result of austerity measures operated in different ways for different young people. However, the enforced closure of non-statutory and third sector services for young people were acutely felt, as such services had historically played a key role in supporting vulnerable and marginalised young people and preventing or reducing their contact with statutory services. In Peasetown, both universal and targeted youth services had been completely dismantled. Many youth workers had been made redundant and those who remained employed had been subjugated into new 'family support' roles as part of the 'Troubled Families' agenda (UK Government, 2012). In both Adlerville and Peasetown, the erosion of other youth orientated services such as CAMHS, YOTs and Children's Social Work teams was also occurring, with many teams down to their statutory bones at a time where they were simultaneously working under increasing demand to fill the void left by discontinued services (Thomas, 2018):

'Where we might have referred before, we do it now. Most of the supporting roles have gone, here [at the YOT] and in the authority more generally. There isn't the multi-agency support we used to have.' Paige, (YOT Officer).

Paige's concerns are depicted in the memo below, constructed following discussions with YOT Officers across both settings who felt they were increasingly taking on roles that would have previously been performed by youth workers or by other members of the YOT:



Image credit: 'Down to our statutory bones' Memo constructed during fieldwork: August 2017

The systematic dismantling of voluntary and third sector organisations resulted in lost opportunities for young people to access support and guidance before reaching crisis point. The reduction of universal services also resulted in fewer opportunities for young people to build meaningful relationships with pro-social adults (a crucial support avenue for young people experiencing loss, discussed in detail in my fourth findings chapter, searching for connections) or reach out for help and support with ongoing issues as and when they feel ready or able to do so. As such, opportunity for early intervention was reduced and young people were less likely to come to the attention of support services until they had formal contact with statutory services, including the YOT. The impact of the loss of support services for young people was alluded to several times during interviews with YOT practitioners:

'There's less and less services available. They're just all gone; austerity measures. I think maybes people like yourselves doing your research and you'll look maybes in ten years time and see a generation of kiddies who you know [have] not had opportunities because of austerity. And then that will perpetuate itself again as they get into adults, that's the way it works unfortunately.' Barry, (YOT Officer).

'There's a group of kids we've got at the moment, hanging around, causing chaos in town... it's a visual of austerity, the impact of like, austerity. They're not going to school, causing chaos, anti-social behaviour in the town, shoplifting. Before the cuts, they'd be picked up by like youth workers, school attendance officers, but that's all gone now so they're roaming like, end up

with us because it gets to that point where it's gone too far and they get picked up rather than dealt with at an earlier stage.' Becky, (YOT Officer).

Barry and Becky each focus upon different ways that austerity measures resulted in lost opportunities for young people in Peasetown and Adlerville. Whilst Barry talks about the physical loss of opportunities, with young people unable to access activities or support from youth and community workers or third sector organisations, Becky alludes to young people's lost opportunity to avoid contact with statutory services such as the YOT. The lost opportunity Becky highlights is particularly important, as it reveals the inevitability of net-widening (Smith, 2011; Prichard, 2010) during times of austerity, especially for educationally marginalised young people whose presence in public spaces during school hours results in heightened surveillance from police in the absence of support from detached youth workers or school attendance officers.

But how do young people view the impact of austerity measures and did they feel as though opportunity to engage in pro-social activities had been reduced? The image below captures young people's statements about their hobbies and interests in and around Peasetown. The sheets were completed as part of the SP's Personal Development module. Jade, Natalie and Brianna collated the forms, arranged them and took pictures for me on my phone (collaged below), to capture, as they put it, 'we've put nothing 'cus there's nothing to do and there's nothing we want to do'. Of all the young people within this particular class, Tyrone was the only person to suggest an activity he would like to do. When I asked the group why they had not suggested ideas, the resounding opinion was that to list activities would be pointless, as 'they never happen' (Tommy, 17 years).

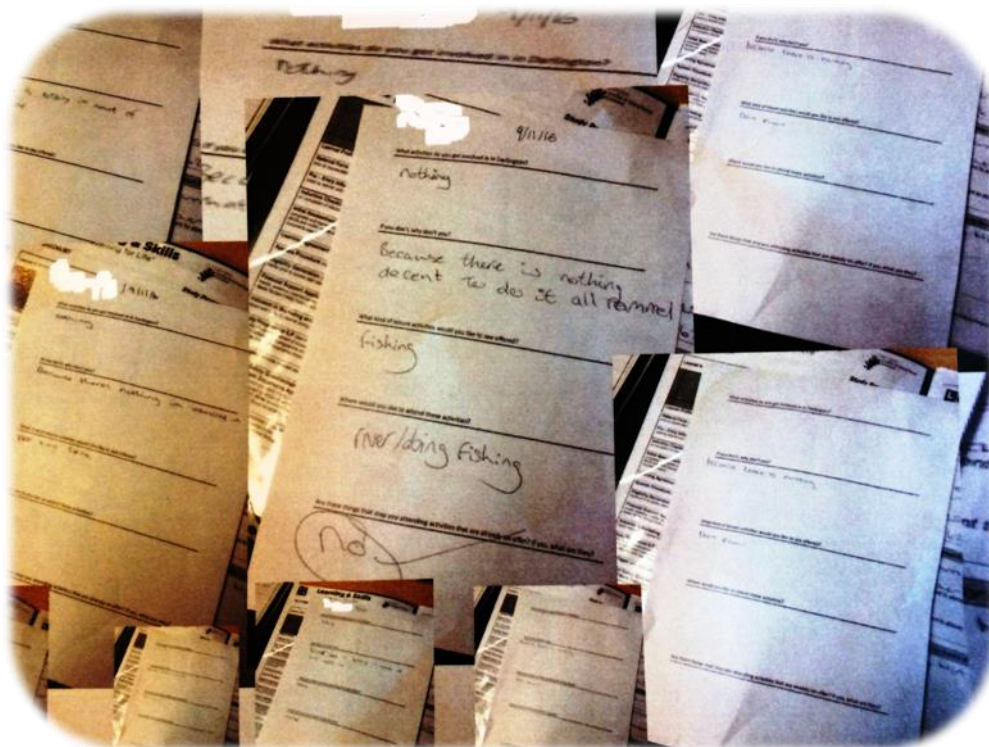


Image credit: 'Nothing for us' Captured by Jade, Natalie and Brianna

Following the arrest of a previous SP attendee²⁷ for public order offences, I asked Riley, Tommy and Tyrone for their opinions on young people's behaviour around the town:

Riley: 'There's nothing to do in this town. Fuck all to do. Kids hang about, throw shit. We're kids, what else [are] we going to do?'

Vicky: 'What would you like to do? If you had the choice?'

Tyrone: 'Fuck knows.'

Tommy: 'It's like fucking Beirut these days.'

Vicky: 'Beirut?'

Tommy: 'I dunno, like [there's] fuck all to do.'

²⁷ The young person in question had been removed from the SP for poor attendance.

Tommy's comparison of Peasetown to a war zone speaks to the loss of opportunities for economically marginalised young people to engage in pro-social hobbies and activities, particularly in the evenings. As Riley's photo at the beginning of this chapter depicts, for young people like him there was 'nothing to do' in the town. Riley's suggestion that 'kids hang about, throw shit' because there was nothing better to do suggests a rationale for engaging in ASB and offending based around boredom and age. Riley's emphasis on being a 'kid' with 'nothing to do' links with Matza's theory of delinquency and drift (2009/1964), where young people move in and out of crime as a way to fill time. Maruna's (1999) desistance theory of 'going straight' also emphasises that young people largely grown out of crime, particularly if they find something productive to do that enables them to 'restructure his or her understanding of self' (1999:9) (entering into employment, becoming a parent or giving back to society for example). For those with economic means, plenty of activities continued to run across the town. But activities designed to engage and support vulnerable young people had typically been facilitated by youth services thus no longer ran. A particular loss felt by young people across the town was the closure of the Friday night youth club that ran at the local leisure centre. Although the service had been universal, attracting young people from all over Peasetown, detached youth workers particularly encouraged economically marginalised young people to attend, providing transport from the most deprived estates to the town centre. At the youth club, young people had full access to sporting facilities, including the swimming pool. Youth workers were also on hand to talk to and support young people:

'Like I wouldn't go now but I was pure devastated when it shut down. It was the best thing all week because you got to go swimming. It cost £1 but they [youth workers] always used to say 'just go in' so I went in for free.' Brianna, (female, 16 years).

'If you got kicked out they always let you back. Let you back in [and] say 'sit down and have a hot chocolate' (laughs). I'd be bouncing and you got let back... It was good in there. We did five aside and swimming with that big float, you got to jump all over, going divvy round the sports hall (laughs)' Tyrone (male, 16 years).

'I loved that youth club. You wouldn't think now but I was proper good at sport when I was younger. I used to beat the youth workers and everything in there. They did five hoop challenge and badminton competitions and I was always in the final.' Natalie, (female, 17 years).

For young people like Brianna, Tyrone and Natalie, all of whom were involved in ASB and offending, the Friday night youth club provided a point of contact with pro-social adults as well as opportunity to engage in sporting activities and feel part of the broader youth community in Peasetown. At 16 and 17 years old, whether Brianna, Tyrone and Natalie would have continued to attend the youth club is debatable. Nevertheless, their contact with caring and supportive youth workers and the opportunity to participate in leisure activities clearly continued to hold meaning for young people typically constructed as 'hard to reach' (Hendry and Polson, 2007):

'I don't do nothing now. No one comes round the estate no more to get you into footie or boxing or ought or to talk to you about school or your life and that.' Tommy, (male, 16 years).

'I used to go fishing with Davey (youth worker). He did sandwiches and took me fishing at the river.' Tyrone, (male, 16 years).

For young people at both Adlerville and Peasetown, opportunities to engage in pro-social activities through the YOT still occurred. However, these were generally only open to young people on YOT caseloads meaning when young people completed YOT contact, opportunity to engage in activities also ceased. The closure of universal youth services also reduced opportunity for young people who offend (many of whom were already educationally marginalised) to meet and interact with non-offending peers. 'Changing the narrative' (Maruna, 1999) and desisting from crime where pro-social opportunities were in such short supply was therefore a difficult ask.

Broken bridges; austerity measures and the decline of health services for young people who offend

Whilst several members of Peasetown YOT had recently been made redundant, the loss of the YOT nursing post was felt to be particularly problematic by the remaining staff team. Staff continually worried about the detrimental impact lack of immediate access to a health specialist might have upon young people on their caseloads. The

loss of the nursing role was also viewed as a broken bridge between YOT and health services, and as a diminishing of expertise within the team, as Gina explains:

'I keep harping back to this but we did have our nurse which was really good. We are supposed to be getting a mental health worker so that, that will just help just for conversations 'cus sometimes they don't want to talk to a me as a case holder... they don't want to talk to us about it. But our nurses have always been the type of people that are very approachable and that young people seem to open up to. That was a really, really good thing to have.' Gina, (YOT Officer).

For young people experiencing loss, having somebody to open up to and help construct a coherent story about their experience is crucial (McCoyd and Ambler-Walter, 2016). Research shows this is also the case for young people who have experienced or whom are experiencing trauma (Watson et al, 2015; Adshead, 2012; Pennebaker and Seagal, 1999). The deconstruction of support services and loss of personnel who can support young people to understand and manage their experiences restricts opportunities for those who do reach out to find appropriate, timely avenues of support. The loss of multi-agency expertise within statutory staff teams as a result of austerity measures may also prevent the identification and care of young people struggling with grief. For young people who offend, the loss of service roles, particularly in relation to nursing roles, was of particular concern. Nurses are not only trained in providing support and nurturance to young people dealing with loss, they also act as a connection from the YOT to other health and wellbeing services, bridging the access gap for young people who may not have the support networks or confidence to attend such services of their own accord. Again this was a particular issue for young people who did not have support from family members to take them to hospital appointments or remember health or dental checkups:

'Before when I cut my hand the nurse took me [to the walk in clinic]. I didn't want to go by myself.' Charlie, (male, 14 years).

'She was the nicest one there [the YOT nurse] when I done probation. I didn't like her at first, she made me go dentists to get me teeth fixed and everything because me gums were bleeding and I had this geet [big] abscess on me

tooth. I don't think I was even registered [at the dentist] so I couldn't get it sorted before.' Lottie, (female, 15 years).

Where are all the jobs?

Another difficulty facing many young people I worked with, including marginalised young people who had not been in contact with youth justice services, was a loss of opportunity to secure legal employment. Difficulty in securing work was a source of great stress for many, creating anxiety and feelings of failure. Educational marginalisation (including young people's disengagement from education altogether) compounded difficulties securing employment, as these young people usually held fewer meaningful qualifications than their peers (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018:32). Young people with SEND, including those with SpLC difficulties, were also marginalised within the job market. Tim, a young person with autism, was incredibly frustrated about the lack of employment opportunities for young people with SEND. In particular, Tim felt employers struggled to see beyond disability, as he describes below:

'Yes I've got autism. Yes I have difficulties with some things. Does that mean I can't work? Of course I can work. I'm a hard worker. Employers don't see that. All they see is a sign above my head that says 'he's the autistic guy'. You say you want to help us. We need employment, that's what we need.' Tim, (male, 18 years).

For young people who had offended, having a criminal record further compounded difficulties securing employment. The high prevalence of SEND and the educational marginalisation of many young people who are known to YOTs (Achievement for All, 2017) secured what could be described as a 'triple padlock' on access to legitimate employment, depicted in the memo below:



Image credit: Memo: *'Loss of opportunity and the triple padlock'* (February, 2017).

Wesley, a young man with SEND (induced by a brain tumour), had returned to the SP following failed attempts to secure work:

'Eighteen years old and I'm still down here. I should be working, not down here. I'm not clever like (laughs) it's not like I'm getting myself all my GCSE's I didn't get at school being down here. 100 CV's handed out, and I'm just like please, please, please'. Wesley, (male, 18 years).

Well known to ASB, and with instances of low level offending behaviour, Wesley felt strongly that employment would help him to desist from criminality in the future.

'My family's known, you know that (laughs). But I want a job, want to do good. I've applied to so many places and you hear nowt back, or if you do they tell you that you don't have experience, how do you get experience without the job? It's, do you know what I mean, what I'm trying to say to you, like if I had a job I wouldn't be bored and I wouldn't get into trouble or hang around with those people. I'd be a changed man (laughs).' Wesley, (male, 18 years).

In Brianna's case, both college and paid work felt firmly out of reach. Ideally, Brianna had hoped to gain qualifications at college in animal care so she could go on to secure an apprenticeship as a veterinary assistant. Instead, Brianna was left languishing in alternative education provision that felt neither meaningful nor paid her a wage:

'This has got nothing to do with what I want to do. Fuck all to do with animals. I don't know, what's the point, why am I even here?' Brianna, (female, 16 years).

Restriction from starting apprenticeships and 'making money' due to not meeting English and Maths requirements (at the time of fieldwork this was usually a Grade C) also caused great frustration for young people, many of whom felt they were highly capable at practical skills and felt they would be better off 'learning on the job':

'How am I going to pass Maths and English when I spent five years at school and failed and [I'm] only doing a year here?' Scott, (male, 16 years).

'I've smashed the hell out of my practical's, I'm the best in the class, not like in a big headed way or ought, everyone says I'm the best with the cars, even the tutor says it. But I can't move up to do my apprenticeship until I've got my English passed. It's stupid. I know what I'm doing so why do I need a GCSE in English to fix cars?' Lenny, (male, 17 years).

'The little ones need clothes and shoes'

The need to progress through education as quickly as possible in order to access employment was a particular concern for economically marginalised young people, many of whom felt responsible for making money to support their families:

'My mam works three jobs at the moment so I don't get chance to see her. I should be working, helping her out.' Craig, (male, 16 years).

'The little ones need clothes, shoes. My dad says I get one year here and then I need to get a job, contribute.' Rosella, (female, 16 years).

Those I met during fieldwork were often acutely aware of their need to contribute, particularly in times of austerity where resources for families living in poverty are scarce. Contributions were made financially by young people, as they sought to acquire employment (legally or illegally) and money in any way they could. Contributions were also made in terms of time, where young people would give up leisure time or time spent in education in order to care for their younger siblings so that family members were able to go to work. In each of these instances, a loss of opportunity occurred for these young people, further restricting their chances of

acquiring well paid employment in the future or engaging in pro-social activities with their peers, free from worry or concerns about making ends meet.

'It's obscene what I was making' Offending and the production of opportunity

Change in job markets in the North East (Hodgson and Charles, 2008), an increased demand for qualifications at the point of entry into work (Coughlan, 2013) and the recent raised age of educational participation (DfE, 2016) have each served to restrict job opportunities for young people. The stories young people shared with me pay testimony to these changes, particularly for those who historically would likely have gained employment in fields requiring limited academic accreditation such as manual or industrial work (Hodgson and Charles, 2008; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005). For young people living in poverty or with limited means, offending provided both financial opportunity and for some, a sense of purpose and a feeling of 'being in work' (regardless of its legality). This was the case for 15 year old Jon, who made 'cash in hand' collecting scrap metal:

'I don't need school 'cus I do the scrap now for the travellers. I like it... I like getting a wage and having a job' Jon, (male, 15 years).

For Sam, payment for drug dealing far outweighed any financial gain to be made from engaging in legal forms of employment:

'I wasn't just a little street dealer, I was dealing to the whole of the town. I was earning £600 and dealing to the town. Then one day he wanted out and he passed me his phone and said 'there you go' and it rang off the hook... you don't understand. It's unreal to make that much money. I was making so much money. Why would you even want to [get a job], like I was so young, it's obscene what I was making.' Sam, (male, 17 years).

For Tyrone, Riley and Tommy, aspirations of a criminal career were viewed as an antidote to the lost opportunities they experienced as young people growing up in poverty. They discussed this with me during an employability lesson at the SP:

Tommy: 'I want to be a bin man. Work my way up and then take all the council's money and go on the run. Scout out people's houses when I'm on the wagon, break in, rob their house. And then I'll be a pimp, with the cars and the ho's and the mint shades, and I'll live in a fucking massive mansion house

in Spain or America... and I'll have loads of people around doing my dirty work (laughs), I won't even get my own hands dirty 'cus I'll have done that already on the bins.'

Riley: (Laughs). 'You're going to chor off the council?'

Tommy: 'Too fucking right I am. They've given me fuck all in my life so I'm just taking back what's mine.'

Tyrone: 'When I'm a drug dealer or a pimp I'll make loads of money and I can buy anything I want, get a gold watch, get gold teeth, knock people's teeth out their head if they get in my way.'

Vicky: 'So the money's attractive because you can do what you want, buy what you want?'

Tommy: 'Go on holiday where you want.'

Tyrone: 'Take drugs that you want (laughs).'

Tommy: 'How many times, I don't fucking take drugs! But yeah, I want to go to America, I've never even been out this country.'

Riley: 'Who the fuck has?'

For young people like Jon and Sam, engaging in criminality or illegal work became the most plausible way of creating opportunity, especially in times of austerity where employment opportunities for even the most highly educated young people are scarce. For Riley, Tommy and Tyrone, criminality was regarded as a viable career choice and as a way of 'taking back' what they felt was owed to them from a system that had let them down. Stories such as these are not new, criminality as an alternative career where pro-social opportunities are limited, work is precarious and education feels meaningless are reflected in other works, most notably perhaps in

MacDonald and Marsh's Teesside studies, where young people's engagement in 'street corner society' (2005:68) and their 'pin-balling about the estates' (2005:72) created conditions where for some, offending became a way of generating both social and financial opportunity.

Conclusion

Loss of opportunity through educational discrimination, through social inequality and as a result of austerity measures each had a profound impact upon the majority of young people who took part in this study. For young people who offend, lost opportunities to access and engage in high quality, meaningful educational or legal forms of employment were further compounded by a series of 'secondary losses' (McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016) resulting from their contact with youth justice services and for some, their acquisition of a criminal record. Secondary losses took various guises depending upon young people's age and circumstances. For some, secondary loss occurred due to further educational marginalisation; Michael was removed from specialist education to be 'electively' home educated, Brianna was isolated within mainstream school and Lewis was prevented access to his peers and removed from the everyday happenings of his school. For others, secondary losses included increased difficulties securing employment or apprenticeship opportunities (Stacey, 2017; Carr and Dwyer, 2015), as young people with YOT contact were labelled, stigmatised (McAra and McVie, 2010) and denied the opportunity to earn an honest wage. Such losses were particularly reflected in stories shared by young people like Sam, Wesley and Brianna, each of whom were involved in offending, were educationally marginalised and had SEND. This problematic combination 'triple padlocked' young people's access to legal forms of employment and to meaningful educational opportunities, reducing meritocratic notions of 'education and jobs for all' to neoliberal fallacies (or as Brianna put it, to 'a shit load of fucking lies').

Both educational inequality and austerity measures appeared to disproportionately affect young people who were already socially and economically marginalised, leading to an increased loss of opportunity for those who arguably needed it the most. As Adam's story reveals, familial access to social and cultural capital increases the likelihood of pro-social opportunities remaining open in the aftermath of offending. In this sense, those fortunate enough to have a parent who could 'talk them out' of educational exclusion or support their entry into legal forms of

employment were rescued from the secondary losses many others known to the YOT were facing. Loss of opportunity can therefore be constructed as both a reason why young people offend and a reason why young people continue to offend. For marginalised young people, offending produced opportunities for financial and social gain where alternative means of gaining social and economic capital were few and far between. In this sense, offending enabled young people to reclaim a sense of control over their own destiny as they supported themselves, assisted their families and 'made meaning' in the absence of legal opportunities for work.

Young people facing losses of opportunity such as these have recently been described as 'forgotten children' (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018). In my next findings chapter I explore how loss of agency affected the everyday lives and practices of young people who offend, revealing how feelings of 'forgotten' or 'disenfranchised loss' (Doka, 1989, 2002) created conditions where offending became a way of generating voice and meeting need.

Findings 3 - Loss of agency



Image credit: 'Up High' Danny, aged 11.

Introduction

This findings chapter considers how loss of agency operated in the lives of young people who offend. Of each of the three losses that have formed my first three findings chapters, (loss of childhood, loss of opportunity and loss of agency), it was loss of agency that young people seemed most acutely aware of within their everyday lives and practices. Loss of agency was a source of great anger for many of those I worked with, affecting relationships with staff and at times, contributing towards offending behaviour. Examples of how loss of agency manifested in young people's lives are listed in figure 4.4 below:

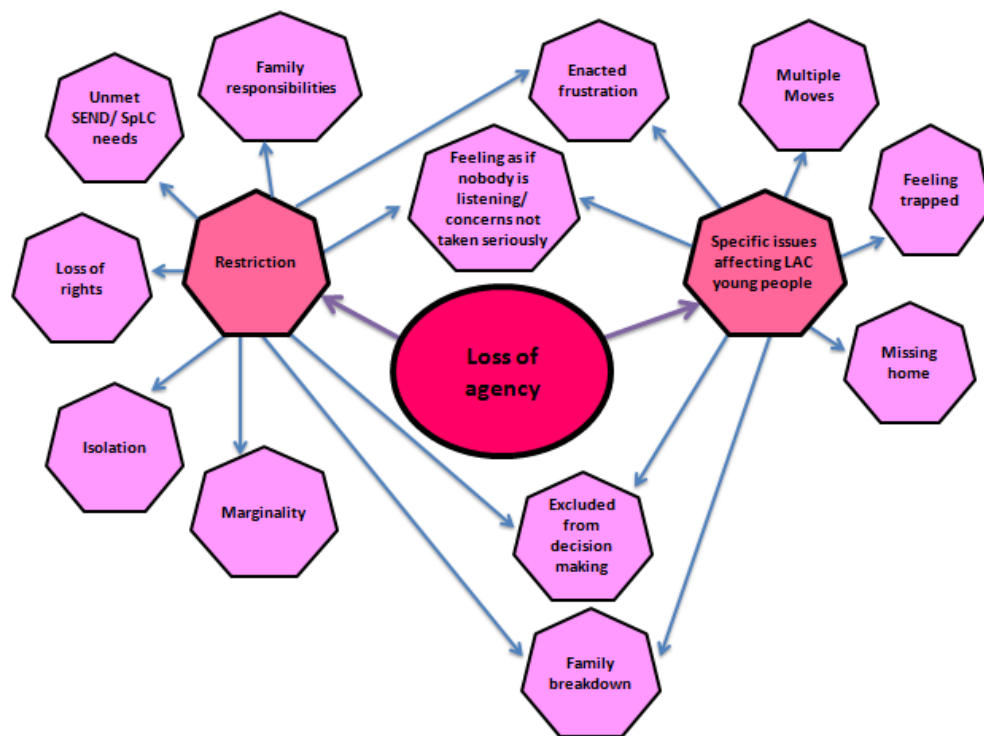


Figure 4.4: Manifestations of loss of agency in the lives of young people who offend.

In this chapter I discuss how loss of agency was experienced by young people I met, with a particular consideration of how lost agency particularly affected the looked after children (LAC) who took part in this research. To illustrate how loss of agency operated in young people's day-to-day lives, and impacted upon their offending behaviour(s), I turn primarily to Danny's story, a LAC young person who was painfully aware of the multiple ways his agency had been restricted since his move into care. I explore how Danny and other young people's offending was sometimes less about 'committing crime' and more an unfortunate consequence of attempts to reclaim lost agency, as young people drew upon the limited resources they had in order to exert some degree of control over their lives.

Danny's story...

Danny was 11 years old when I met him and he was subject to an out of court disposal for criminal damage. Danny was a looked after young person, and he had recently been moved from his home city (approximately 50 miles away) and placed in a private residential children's home in a very rural area. Danny had no contact with his birth father, and information in relation to Danny's past and the circumstances that had brought him into local authority care were largely unknown by the YOT. Danny spoke very warmly of his mother, telling me that she 'came up every two weeks to visit' and that she 'always brings me money and sweets'. Danny was well spoken and articulate; interested in art and nature and particularly keen on sport, especially rugby. Danny told me that he used to train with a local team back in his home city but he wasn't interested in training here because the training the care home had arranged was 'union not league'. Danny had previously attended primary school in his home city, and now attended the specialist school for statemented young people affected by emotional, social and behavioural difficulties (ESBD) that was attached to his residential placement.

Danny had committed his first offence of criminal damage at the care home, breaking a door following a disagreement with a member of staff. Following this incident, Danny had run away from his care worker during a trip into town and climbed onto the top of a multi-story car park, where he threw stones at passing cars. Danny told me he had run away because 'nobody listens' and that he had 'gone up high to think'. Another time, following a disagreement between Danny and another young person, Danny ran away from his care worker during a trip to the local leisure centre. Danny talked his way through the train barriers (telling staff his mother was on the other side and he was to meet her from the train). Danny then took the train to his home city and was found later that evening at his mother's house. Danny told me 'mum was asleep when I got there but she was pleased to see me when she came in my room and saw that I was there.' Danny explained the young person he had argued with had been 'saying bad things about my mum and so I wanted to see her because I missed her.' Danny absconded again a couple of months following, this time to meet up with an older female friend in his home city whom he described as 'my best friend'. Danny told me that following the excitement of running away he felt 'sad afterwards', Danny showed me a series of scars on his arm and told me that 'it's too late not to hurt [himself], but [he] tries not to do that now.'

Danny told me that he would like to be like David Walliams (children's author) and write books about children in care. He also told me that he had started vlogging (making video diaries) about his experiences as a young person in care and that he would 'keep talking until someone took [him] seriously'.

'Nobody listens to me anyway'

Not feeling listened to was a key concern for many of the young people I worked with. In Danny's case, he was feeling a great sense of loss following his move into care and the pain of this loss was compounded with feelings that he had no sense of control over his own destiny.

During a photography session together in a local park, Danny took the following picture (below).



Image credit: '*Trapped*'. Danny, aged 11.

When I asked Danny to tell me about his picture he said:

'I want it to show feeling trapped, the way the branches cross over and you can't wriggle through. So you're trapped and you can't get away, you have no choice. [You're] screaming, 'help me, help me' and nobody can hear you'.
Danny, (male, 11 years).

Many of Danny's photographs followed a similar theme of being trapped or 'going up high' to 'escape' and to 'think'. He composed photographs of himself climbing up trees²⁸ and standing at the top of a large children's climbing frame, telling me to make sure I 'get it all in, it's so beautiful up here.' Danny's excitement in taking part in the project and 'using the special camera' were punctuated with moments of deep

²⁸ One of Danny's photographs in this series is depicted on the front cover of this thesis.

sadness as he related what we were doing to his life back home. For instance, Danny told me about his home city and his favourite park there, and how he used to spend time there playing with his friends:

'The park at home, it's amazing, pure beautiful with trees and squirrels and the best playground, like this playground here is so small compared... Me and my friends went there a lot. I spent so much time [there] and now I never get to see them because I'm not allowed back [home].' Danny, (male, 11 years).

Danny also spoke regularly of his family, particularly about his relationship with his mother:

'Mum won't say but I'm her favourite. She gets me loads of presents. For my birthday a couple of years ago she got me a snowboard, all the gear. And then we went on holiday. We got up so high I couldn't breathe. My heart was like (thumps chest and breathes heavily).' Danny, (male, 11 years).

Due to the limited information on Danny's case file, it is difficult to know if this snowboarding holiday took place or whether Danny constructed the story as a representation of how he would have liked family life to be. This is perhaps indicative of young people who are grieving for their birth families, and therefore only remember an idealised version of their lives before (Bowlby, 1980), forgetting the bad so as not to do injustice to the good or feel disloyal to their families. For young people subject to statutory care orders like Danny, it is likely they were brought into care for their own protection (HM Government, 2015). The sense of loss a young person feels may therefore become subsumed by professional rationales of 'safety' and 'child protection'. In this sense, whilst a move into care is sadly sometimes the only viable option, there is a risk that the loss young people may feel in relation to separation from their birth families becomes disenfranchised (Doka, 2017; 2002), due to professional and public assumptions that the child is in a better place (Thompson, 2002). Framing removal into care in such a way leaves young people with very limited control over their destiny, and fails to fully acknowledge or validate their sense of loss. Without such validation, it can be difficult for young people to understand and make meaning from decisions made by others about their lives, processes deemed crucial to managing grief by constructivist loss theorists (Neimeyer et al, 2010; Gillies and Neimeyer, 2006).

Danny's first offence took place in his care home, and shortly after Danny explained he 'made his escape' from care and 'ended up on top of a multi-storey car park'. As Danny's YOT Officer reflected:

'He has this MO of getting up on roofs... he gets up on roofs and throws things. I think it's just his way of being heard, everybody looking up at him. His way of ascertaining some kind of control over his life when he can't, doesn't have any.' Gina, (YOT Officer).

Gaining attention through risk taking and, or, offending behaviours when they felt that nobody was listening to them was not unique to LAC young people; other marginalised young people also deployed similar strategies. For both Brianna and Tyrone, these strategies were tried and tested ways of ascertaining adult attention, although 'attention' tended to result in practitioners 'dealing with risk taking behaviour' and completing referrals rather than explicitly exploring the meaning behind young people's actions:

'How many years have I told them. Get me out this fucking house, my dad's a prick, get me out... if I hang myself over that [multi-storey] car park they'll get me out then.' Brianna, (female, 16 years).

'He never listens. Nobody that's a grown up listens, when I say I feel sick off it [Ritalin] they just say 'sit down, be quiet.' I'll go divvy, smash the college up. Then I'll get sent home (laughs)' Tyrone, (male, 16 years).

'We're making referrals left, right and centre. [There's a] new safeguarding referral going in everyday at the moment. These kids are out of control' (SP Manager).

Both Brianna and Tyrone were able to provide clear, coherent explanations for their behaviour when asked why and what they were hoping to achieve. Brianna hoped that 'hanging over' the multi-storey car park would aid her removal from her family home. Tyrone constantly felt sick due to the Ritalin he took for his ADHD, and had decided that by engaging in acts of violence and criminal damage around 'college', he could get himself sent home, even if his actions also meant further involvement with the YOT or periods of exclusion from the SP. In each case, both young people felt their deeper needs and concerns were not validated by adults around them. In

Tyrone's case, tensions between young people's current attendance in education and their future access were also evident, as SP's are mandated by government to complete a prescribed number of engagement hours with young people each year (Gov.UK, 2018) before funding can be claimed:

'I cannot send him [home] sick again. His attendance is already poor and he won't meet his hours the rate he's going which means signing him off and we don't want to do that. We're trying all that we can to give the lad a chance' (SP Manager).

On the contrary, some young people felt that adults listened *too* much, interfering in their lives and joining in with private conversations. This was often the case for Jade, who regularly accused tutors at the SP of 'listening in':

Jade: 'Why are you listening in, it's a private conversation, not for your ears.'

Tutor: 'If you don't want to be listened in on don't talk so loudly.'

Other young people felt that adults only listened when they had an agenda, not because they really cared about hearing what the young person had to say:

'The last woman that I spoke to down there. She got me arrested... she said talk to me about your life and how you're feeling so I told her and next thing I know I was getting cuffed.' Sam (male, 17 yrs).

Authentic and meaningful relationships with a trusted adult have been found to be a key aspect of support for desistance (HMIP, 2016). Such relationships are also crucial for young people dealing with loss (Ambler-Walter and McCoyd, 2016), helping build resiliency (Laurson and Birmingham, 2003; Rutter, 1999) and protecting against violence and aggression as enacted expression of 'unresolved loss' (Vaswani et al, 2016; Vaswani, 2014). For Sam, a young person who had experienced multiple and profound loss, being arrested after sharing his story felt like a huge betrayal, reinforcing the notion that adults were not to be trusted. In Jade's case, her deep mistrust of adults and her hypervigilance in relation to adults overhearing private conversations likely stemmed from the trauma she had experienced within her family home. For Jade, keeping her conversations private

may also have been a way of maintaining a degree of agency in relation to who knew what about her life. This may have felt particularly pertinent at a time where Jade's disclosure of sexual abuse was slowly working its way through the CJS, with Jade having to tell her most personal and traumatic stories to different adults on multiple occasions (Hackett and Butterworth, 2018). In this sense, Jade's fierce protection of her right to a 'private conversation' may have felt especially important as Jade's loss of childhood shifted from private (family) knowledge to multi-agency involvement.

As well as issues with trust, other young people (and practitioners) worried about the authenticity of the relationships they were developing. For instance, some young people were acutely aware that YOT staff (and other helping professionals) were being paid to listen to them. Such conversations therefore could not be viewed as a truly authentic exchange:

'None of you's would be here if you didn't have to be. I know I wouldn't be. At the end of the day it's true.' Peter, (male, 17 years).

'You're only talking to me because you have to.' Owen, (male, 17 years).

YOT Manager Beth also discussed this during interview, explaining that the relational work of practitioners can never truly act as a substitute for authentic exchange:

'Young people know that ultimately people are paid for this work and therefore it's never a replacement or never a substitute for someone who genuinely has that attachment to you and just wants to care for you for no other reason than they're your person.' Beth, (YOT Manager).

In each of the ways listed above, young people felt as though various aspects of their lives were not under their own control. Many felt that their attempts at communicating need went continually unheard or ignored. As such, young people drew upon the limited resources available to them in desperate attempts to demand attention, orchestrate proactive responses and in doing so, reclaim a degree of agency and sense of control that was largely missing from their lives.

Marginality and loss of agency; a particular consideration

There is plentiful research in youth studies to suggest that feelings of lost agency are a key frustration for many young people (Smith, 2009; Cashmore, 2002), including those who come to the attention of the YOT (User Voice, 2011). Suppressed agency may be further compounded by marginality, where young people's feelings and concerns are either viewed through a prejudiced lens and discarded (Kultz, 2017), or subsumed into collective, decontextualised narratives that supposedly represent the everyday lives and practices of all those belonging to particular marginalised groups (e.g. 'BAME young people feel' or 'LGBTQ+ young people believe') (Eddo-Lodge, 2017; Baukje, 2006). Such practices result in loss of voice for marginalised young people, as stories filtered through societal stereotypes may not be heard as clearly or distinctively as those of their more privileged peers (Bhopal, 2018). They may also leave those whose experiences differ from 'public stories' (Jamieson, 1998) of marginality unsure of where or how their own stories fit and feeling judged according to prejudicial portrayals of specific groups; as Amy succinctly explained:

'They think we travellers are all the same. We're not all the same.' Amy, (female, 17 years).

As well as marginality itself, feelings of isolation (often as a result of marginality) led to further loss of agency for young people who offend. Many I worked with had little opportunity to have their voices and opinions heard and respected; within their family networks, within their communities or within wider society. The interplay between young people's marginality, their isolation and their loss of agency was enacted in various ways, from the silencing of young people subjected to violence in their homes and communities (as discussed in my first findings chapter), to the marginalisation of those who failed to adhere to neoliberal modes of educational compliance (Kultz, 2017; Reay, 2012) or engage with meritocratic ideologies of 'employment for all' (discussed in my second findings chapter). Young carers, especially those with unrecognised and undocumented caring responsibilities, also became isolated and marginalised, as home responsibilities kept them from engaging in both educational and social practices. For those whose caring responsibilities were unofficial, as was the case for several young people known to Adlerville and Peasetown YOTs (discussed in detail within my first findings chapter pertaining to loss of childhood), access to specialist services whose support 'plays a

vital role in alleviating constraints on their agency' (Hamilton and Adamson, 2013:102) was not available. As such, unrecognised or undocumented young carers' agency could be described as doubly 'bounded' (Evans, 2007), through their caring responsibilities and through their lack of access to specialist support. This is reflected in Natalie's experiences, as the demands of her undocumented caring responsibilities offered little respite or opportunity for Natalie to focus upon her own needs and make 'unbounded choices' in relation to her educational progression:

'I went [to college] before here but [I] couldn't stay on because I've got the kids and to go up to the next level you needed to be there more hours.' Natalie, (female, 17 years).

On the rare occasions when relieved from her caring duties, Natalie admitted to 'going off it' as a way of catching up with friends and exercising a degree of control over her life:

'I suppose I do go a bit... I go off it when I'm out because I hardly ever, like everyone's always inboxing me and I'm like 'I can't I've got the kids'. So when I get out I want to go mad, sessioning... my aunty gets me in [the] clubs and [I] go off it because I don't know when I'll next get chance to.' Natalie, (female, 17 years).

For Natalie, 'going off it' constituted drinking excessive amounts of alcohol and fighting people; it was this behaviour that had resulted in several arrests and Natalie's ongoing contact with the YOT. In this sense, 'going off it' can be constructed less as a rational choice to engage in offending behaviour, and more as a way of finding temporary emotional and psychological relief from the heavy burden of adult responsibility that being a young carer brings. Viewed this way, Natalie's 'bounded agency' became apparent, as without the 'structural encouragement' (Stewart and Maynard, 2018) to manage her situation pro-socially, Natalie found alternative ways to find her voice and reclaim feelings of agency and control.

Loss of agency and looked after young people, a particular consideration

Of all the young people I met and worked with during fieldwork, lost agency was perhaps most starkly evident in the stories shared by LAC young people. Despite recent calls to prevent their criminalisation (Laming, 2016) LAC young people remain

vastly overrepresented in offending populations across E&W (Brereton, 2018; Staines, 2016; Laming, 2016) and this was also the case in both Peasetown and Adlerville. During fieldwork, it became increasingly clear that there were often rationales for offending that were very specific to LAC young people as they navigated acute, often disenfranchised forms of loss in relation to their looked after status. Indeed, similarities between the stories young people shared with me and Stein's (2005) work with LAC young people still remain, with young people:

'seemingly controlled by others: *abandoned* by family, *excluded* from school, *put* into care, *sent* to a children's home, *assessed* by social workers, *placed* with foster carers' (Stein, 2005:12, original emphasis).

Below I discuss loss of agency with particular reference to young people in care, focusing once again on Danny's story, as well as stories from other LAC young people and practitioner reflections in relation to the losses experienced by LAC young people on their caseloads.

'They're not my mam!' Multiple moves and multiple losses

The first thing that Danny told me when I met him was that he had been subject to multiple moves since being taken into care:

'I've had two care homes, six temporary foster placements, I've moved to a new area.' Danny, (male, 11 years).

He also told me he was hopeful he would like his new placement:

'It's so much better than before. I feel like I've finally got somewhere to call home.' Danny, (male, 11 years).

However, as time passed, Danny felt less and less happy in his placement and increasingly frustrated that his 'fresh start' was not working out for him in the way that he had hoped. In Danny's mind, the key reason for this was the lack of consultation about the nature of his placement, the rules he was expected to conform to and the frequency of contact with his family:

'Everyone I know is there. My mum, my family; they're there and I'm here.'
Danny, (male, 11 years).

Similar reasons for not settling into placements were given by other young people too:

'When the staff tell me what to do. I don't like it at all, they're not my mam so why are they telling me what to do?' Carly, (female, 14 years).

'Rules, rules. Too many rules. Before [being taken into care] I could do what I want[ed]. I didn't even go to school before. I missed basically a whole year of school; I'm just getting back into it.' Michael, (male, 12 years).

Lack of contact with birth families, and feelings of anger or resentment towards those whom young people viewed as preventing contact were common. At times it was clear to me that it was not for lack of trying that contact was either not arranged or that it did not occur; often it was the failure of the young person's family members to engage with practitioners or attend scheduled contacts. This information however was not always disclosed to young people, perhaps with the intention of protecting them from upset, or in the hope that the situation would change. Whilst perhaps an understandable course of action, lack of clarity for the reasons why contact was not occurring left young people with a lot of unanswered questions, thus making it difficult for them to make any sense of what was happening to them:

Michael: 'I was meant to be seeing my mam and my sister, but they stopped it happening.'

Vicky: 'Who stopped it happening?'

Michael: 'Social.'

Unanswered questions for LAC young people meant that invariably they filled in the gaps themselves. For Danny, Michael and others, filling in the gaps included the demonization of social services, a lack of trust in service motive and motivation and defiance in relation to rules and regulations set down by their looked after or educational placements:

'They don't have the right to stop me seeing my mam, I don't listen to them.'
Carly, (female, 14 years).

'Dad gets mum in trouble, will say she's got knives and they [social workers and police] just believe him.' Danny, (male, 11 years).

Research shows that being left out of decision making, or being shielded from the truth makes it especially difficult for young people to come to terms with loss (Murray, 2016). Instead young people are left with unanswered questions, questions they endeavour to make sense of for themselves. According to Neimeyer et al, (2002:39):

'Efforts to preserve a coherent self-narrative are disrupted by the loss of significant others upon whom our life stories depend.'

For LAC young people, there was often a sense that the person they would talk to about their problems had been 'taken away' from them as a result of their move into care. As such, the likelihood of LAC young people making meaning from loss when their removal from home also meant their removal from those whom they may have previously spoken to about their problems, was seriously affected:

'I used to talk to her [best friend] when I was sad and now I never get to see her... I know I'm not meant to have Facebook because I'm too young and you're meant to be 12 to get it but I keep it on my phone so I can speak to people at home' Danny, (male, 11 years).

'I talk to my mam about everything. Climb in bed with her and talk.' Carly, (female, 14 years).

In this sense, LAC young people like Danny and Carly not only suffered multiple losses as a result of being brought into care, they also felt the additional loss of those whom they felt they could trust and share their problems with (regardless of how 'suitable' agencies might deem these individuals to be).

'I never even got in trouble before'

Prior to being placed in care, Danny had not been involved with youth justice services (although, by his admission, he was 'known' to the police in his home city). Danny's first chargeable offence was the criminal damage he caused in his care home, as he broke a door following an argument with another young person and a further disagreement with a member of staff:

'I cracked the door, next thing I knew, police were round and I was in big trouble.' Danny, (male, 11 years).

Danny's arrest reveals that young people in care are still likely to be criminalised for acts that had they committed in the family home, would be unlikely to ever come to the attention of the police:

'If they'd done this in the family home, there is no way, well it's highly unlikely, they'd have come to our attention.' Gina, (YOT Officer).

Another act that disproportionately seemed to bring LAC young people to the attention of the police was their resistance of restraint. This was also the case for young people attending SEND specialist provision, where police were called when young people were said to have assaulted staff during the process of restraint. The use of restraint is a highly contentious issue, arguably affecting young people's rights under the 1989 UNCRC and restricting opportunity for young people to operate as agentic individuals. Both Brad and Barry, YOT practitioners from each of the two areas I visited, alluded to issues of restraint in care and in special educational settings, and how these practices disproportionately affected the offending trajectories of LAC and SEND young people:

'So hang on a minute, you've got a young person in care, most likely in care because they've suffered physical violence, abuse, neglect, some form of traumatic experience, and then you do your 'team teach' and you think, 'right they're being disrespectful, they're kicking off' so you restrain them, get physical with a kid that's experienced all that harm done to them by adults, and they react to that in a bad way so then it's 'they've assaulted me, I'll call the police.' What kind of world are we living in where that's deemed to be the best course of action?' Brad, (YOT Worker).

'So you're criminalising young kiddies with special needs because you're restraining them for whatever reason... and you're, you've gotten hit in some way, you call the police and now we've got a kid coming into the criminal justice system.' Barry, (YOT Officer).

12 year old Michael was a LAC young person who had attended two different SEND specialist schools. During our time together, Michael spoke about being restrained at school as though it were a normal, everyday experience:

'If you kick off they get your arm and twist it, hold round your back until you go calm.' Michael, (male, aged 12).

Michael also recounted an event that occurred not long after he became LAC, where he had been threatened with violence by a member of staff in his children's home. At the time of writing, this incident was still under investigation, and had resulted in Michael being temporarily placed with several different foster carers:

'I was kicking off and he [care worker] said he'd have me out, he said he'd break every bone in my body.' Michael, (male, 12 years).

Recent exposes of secure training providers (STC) such as Medway STC (BBC, 2016) revealed violent practices enacted against young people in their care. Even restraining practices that are deemed legal, such as those taught to educational and social care practitioners via initiatives such as 'Team Teach' (2016) may have a disproportionately negative effect upon LAC young people, whose loss of safety as a result of physical, emotional and, or sexual abuse, may well have been the reason for their placement in care in the first place. Similar findings were reported by Shenton, (2015) as she and young people explored the use of physical restraint in custodial settings and the detrimental effect this had upon vulnerable young people:

'These daily acts of violence inflicted on children were not considered unusual given children's experiences of everyday violence within their families, communities and other institutions' (Shenton, 2015:5).

In one of the YOT settings, suggestions were made by senior managers within the local authority that the YOT be trained in restraint techniques via Team Teach. The response to this request during a team meeting overwhelmingly revealed that practitioners did not wish to engage in such practices:

'I don't want to learn how to beat up kids.' Brad, (YOT Worker).

'I came into this to help people, steer people away from the physical, you can't meet violence with violence or all you're doing is showing them that it pays to be the big man.' James, (YOT Officer).

'It's not our ethos, not what we're trying to achieve here. Defend yourself, yes of course, but restraining young people is not something I like to do.' Gina, (YOT Officer).

'Can you imagine me trying to restrain some six foot lad (laughs). It's not going to happen. We're not paid for that, it's the police's job, not ours.' Becky, (YOT Officer).

For young people like Michael, who was both LAC and had SEND, the threat of violence, including restraint, had become a normal aspect of everyday life both at school and at home. For several YOT staff, engagement in restraint was considered a threat to the overarching ethos of YOT practice, including gaining young people's trust, building meaningful relationships and modelling pro-social behaviour. Michael's story is explored in detail in my fifth findings chapter, which investigates the nature, extent and impact of pervasive loss in the lives of young people who offend. At this point however we must return to Danny, as we continue to understand how loss of agency and offending behaviour became increasingly entangled within his (and other LAC young people's) lives.

'On the run back to me mam's'... offending 'on route'

For Danny, offending would often occur as he attempted to escape his care placement and return home. On one occasion, Danny had scaled a high wall at the train station with the intention of 'jumping on a train back to mum's'. This incident resulted in severe disruptions to main line train services as trains were halted whilst police attempted to retrieve Danny from the wall. I witnessed this incident first hand, having arrived at the station to catch my train home from fieldwork. When I met Danny later that week he was deeply apologetic, telling me he 'hadn't meant for all the problems' and that he was 'sorry [I] had to see [him] that way.' I reassured Danny I was not there to judge him, but that his safety and wellbeing were important to me. Yet again Danny emphasised that all he wanted to do was see his mum, and that 'nobody listened'. It must be emphasised therefore that the lost agency Danny felt in relation to returning home was deeply tied to the actions he took, including engaging in risk taking or offending behaviours. My thesis begins with Danny's plea to 'imagine' how it would feel to lose all sense of agency, to spend a moment in his shoes. Being asked to 'imagine' what life was like for Danny will serve as one of the

most powerful and heart wrenching moments of this entire research process. At just 11 years old, Danny was begging to be listened to and for the losses he endured to be taken seriously. Unlike Brianna and Tyrone, who used risk taking and offending behaviours as a way of gaining attention from adults, Danny was adamant he had no intention of 'doing bad things', rather his actions were a consequence of his need to 'get away'. Danny told me that after 'being up high' on the railway walls, he felt 'sad' and that sometimes, he did not fully remember what had happened:

'It's not to be naughty. I don't remember sometimes. I just want to get away from them. I don't want people to be worried about me I just want to be home. I feel sad [afterwards]. Danny, (male, 11 years).

Like Danny, Carly was another young person who had not come to the attention of the YOT until her move into care. Her offending behaviours were also intrinsically tied to her attempts to return home to see her mother:

'I never even got in trouble before. But if they think I'm not seeing my mam. They can't stop me seeing her.' Carly, (female, 14 years).

Carly explained her favourite place was her 'bed at me mam's house' and that she would do anything to get back there. Like Danny, Carly was also adamant that she did not offend with the intention of hurting people:

'I always get in trouble when I'm on the run back to me mam's house. They can't stop me, when they try and stop me I'll lash out and then it's assault because I've lashed out. But I'm just trying to get back to me mam's, I'm not trying to hurt people. And another time I was on the run and I was hungry but I had no [money] so I stole out the shop and that. I know it's wrong and I got in trouble for that as well.' Carly, (female, 14 years).

Carly's YOT Officer explained Carly's offending in terms of attention seeking, behaviour generated as a response to being taken into care against her will:

'There'd be loads of like missing from homes episodes or as I say she, she'd offend or when she was missing from home she'd get into trouble, um, and then go back to the care setting, so yeah attention, quite a lot of it was like

attention seeking but as I say circumstances as well and wanting to be back home.' Becky, (YOT Officer).

For Carly, acclimatising to life in care was difficult as she always held onto hope that she would be returned home in the near future. As such, Carly had no desire to construct a revised narrative of her new life (McCoyd and Ambler-Walter, 2016) or learn how to function in a world without her mother. To do so would signify a loss of hope and an acceptance of the way things were, neither of which Carly was prepared to do. Instead, Carly was plagued by ambiguous loss (Boss, 1999), as although she was subject to a full care order with little likelihood of returning home, in Carly's mind, being without her mother was nothing more than a temporary blip:

'It will get sorted soon and then I'll be back home with me mam and things will be like they were before.' Carly, (female, 14 years).

LAC young people and disenfranchised loss

The stories shared with me over the course of this research project reveal that loss operates in specific ways for LAC young people, leading to further marginalisation and intensifying feelings of disenfranchised loss (Doka, 1989, 2002) within this group. The love many LAC young people feel for their birth families and their sadness at their enforced separation from them may become disenfranchised for instance, as professionals and caregivers struggle to understand why young people retain such loyalty to those who failed to care for them (Crenshaw, 2002:296). Loss of agency in relation to care proceedings and decision making is at particular risk of becoming disenfranchised, as young people's voices become marginalised and safeguarding takes precedence. When LAC young people are not consulted in relation to their placements, or where they are shielded from the realities of home circumstances, (often with good intentions from those doing the shielding), they may be left with unanswered questions about their lives and futures that can feel impossible to make sense of. Accordingly (as Danny and Carly each did with their mothers), young people may idolise those left behind, filling gaps in understanding with their own blissful narratives and worrying that any mention of past unhappiness may dishonour happy memories or affect their chances of returning home.

'I do what I want.' Offending and the generation of agency

As the stories shared by young people reveal, reasons for engaging in offending are often more complex than they seem. For some, offending enabled a sense of agency and control over a life diminished by loss. Not feeling listened to or understood was another common concern shared by young people; offending thus became a mechanism of communication, a public display of dissatisfaction about decisions made by others about their lives. In YOTs however, as in all public systems, particular discourses prevail (Thompson and Owen, 2017:106). Accordingly, practitioners tended to rationalise young people's offending behaviour in relation to control and attention:

'I think that, that her behaviours are her way of trying to get that attention because she, she doesn't really know how to get... the attention from her parents unless she's going out and doing stuff.' Paige, YOT Officer, (discussing Brianna, female, 16 years).

'Would that person then go and commit crime to seek attention? Perhaps. Perhaps they would. We know of young people who have gone into a shop and stole an item out a shop just to get attention. They're not criminals, they're not really wanting to steal things, but they need attention. Because they're feeling isolated, they feel as if people don't care.' Harry, (YOT Manager).

Offending as a means of gaining control and attention is much aligned with attachment theory (Bowlby, 1980, 1997), which stipulates that insecure and ambivalent attachment styles developed in early childhood may manifest as an incessant need for control in later life. Grief theory concerned with attachment also suggests those with ambivalent and anxious attachment styles are at greater risk of developing 'complicated grief' following loss than those with secure attachments (Vaswani, 2018a; Lobb et al, 2010: 676; Vanderwerker et al, 2006). For young people who offend, the likelihood of exposure to adverse childhood experiences is elevated (Vaswani, 2018b), which in turn may increase their likelihood of developing insecure or ambivalent attachment styles thus leading to a greater need for control, especially when agency is perceived to be lost. This creates a cyclical problem, where young people's early losses increase the likelihood of further loss in the future,

leading potentially to engagement in offending as a way of gaining attention and control.

Whilst the theoretical framing of young people's offending in relation to attachment theory and exposure to adversity aids our understanding in some respects, my work with young people reveals that such a portrayal fails to tell the full story. When offending is understood only in relation to desire for attention and control, responsibility remains firmly situated within the individual and 'their reaction' to loss; the onus being on the young person change. For me this reading is problematic, as it holds young people accountable for events in their lives that are often well beyond their individual power to change. Issues of structural and systematic inequality (Stewart and Maynard, 2018), young people's marginality and their 'bounded agency' (Evans, 2007) are also largely neglected when offending is construed in this way. A more sociologically orientated way of viewing the manifestation of offending as a result of lost agency recognises the role of structural inequality and (re)productions of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1990, cited in Reay, 2012:36) that simultaneously deny agency and 'responsibilise' young people (Phoenix and Kelly, 2013), rendering them pawns in a game that is ultimately rigged against them.

Nowhere is this more clearly revealed than in Carly's words below:

'I do what I want. They can't stop me. They're not my mam.' Carly, (female, 14 years).

Carly viewed her offending behaviour as a means to an ends, as a way of exercising agency when decisions about where and who she lived with had been taken out of her hands. The irony within Carly's words was that she was unable to do what she wanted (live with her mother) and she was stopped (and criminalised) at every turn. That those she lived with were not her 'mam' was a source of tremendous loss for Carly, a loss she felt had been completely disenfranchised by those responsible for her care. Carly's feelings of disenfranchised loss and the marginalisation of her voice were mirrored in other young people's stories too, Danny repeatedly told me that nobody listened and that 'unless you've been in it, you'll never understand.'

The loss of agency young people experienced through becoming LAC therefore served as a trigger point for offending for some young people I worked with. Some

were criminalised for behaviours that would have unlikely merited police attention had the act taken place within their family homes (Shaw, 2017, 2016; Brereton, 2016; Staines, 2016). Others were criminalised for what could be framed as a physical response to emotional need, as young people endured multiple disenfranchised and ambiguous (Boss, 1999) losses as a result of being in care (Brereton, 2018). For some this involved committing violent acts or damaging property in their care homes, for others, the physical repercussions of lost agency and unheard voices spilled out into their local communities. Being restrained also brought some young people into the realm of the YOT, as they fought against those who exerted power over them. In each of these ways, LAC young people were more likely to come to the attention of the YOT. Firstly because they were more likely to experience and potentially enact feelings of grief as a result of the violence, neglect, abuse and separation they had been made subject to. Secondly, because offending provided a means to an ends (e.g. returning home) or a way of generating voice and kicking back against imposed decisions. Finally, the high surveillance and professional monitoring of LAC young people (especially those residing in care homes) created conditions where offending behaviour, however minor, was unlikely to go unrecognised or unreported.

For young people who offend, and for LAC young people who offend in particular, connections between loss of agency and offending behaviour rarely seem to be made. In my previous chapter on loss of opportunity, I discussed how neoliberal governance has created a culture where marginalised young people are made responsible for their failure to conform to prescribed notions of educational success or meritocratic ideals of 'jobs for all who want them'. For young people whose offending became inherently tied up with feelings of lost agency and disenfranchised loss, understandings of how pro-social choice became bounded by societal inequality were limited (Stewart and Maynard, 2018). Instead, young people were expected to have the capacity to choose change. As Evans (2007:93) reflects:

'Societies need to ensure that the greatest demands to "take control of their lives" do not fall on those who are the least powerfully placed in the social landscape they inhabit.'

As young people's experiences consistently revealed, understanding young people's offending as a rational choice is like leaving a parcel wrapped up and guessing its contents. Viewing young people's offending merely in relation to individual attempts to seek attention or gain control is equally problematic. If we want to fully understand young people's offending it is important therefore to look beyond the 'regimes of truth' (Thompson and Evans, 2017:106) that dominate youth justice discourse. In doing so, we are able to unwrap and unpack young people's stories, exploring loss of agency in relation to structural inequality and the systematic suppression of young people's voices. It is in these moments that young people's rationales for their offending behaviours begins to take multi-dimensional shape.

Conclusion

As my literature review explains, the interplay between structure and agency is highly contested within academia. Agency itself is also 'a complex and contested term' (Coffey and Farrugia 2013:461), and this chapter has highlighted the complex and contested ways that agency was exhibited, restricted or removed completely as individual circumstances, structural inequalities and social marginalisation manifested within young people's everyday lives and practices. For some young people, 'structural encouragement' (Stewart and Maynard, 2018) and 'bounded agency' (Evans, 2007) created conditions where criminality became a viable form of expression, particularly for those who already felt their losses had been disenfranchised or forgotten by those around them.

Feeling as though nobody was listening was a pertinent, reoccurring theme in the stories young people told, resulting in attention seeking strategies or disengagement from services because 'nobody listens' and 'nothing changes'. In addition to not feeling heard, LAC young people were made subject to other, specific forms of loss that when explored in relation to their offending behaviour(s), may shed new light on the offending rationales of individuals within this particular group. Through Danny's story, the tension between practitioner attempts to 'safeguard' and the anger, frustration and sense of loss young people may feel in relation to their safeguarding, became painstakingly apparent. This was heightened further still when decisions were poorly explained, or where young people were excluded from the reality of their situations. In cases such as these, young people were left with unanswered questions about why they were in care and whether or not they would be likely to

return home. This ambiguous loss (Boss, 1999) left young people to fill in the blanks for themselves in ways that protected (often idolised) memories of those whom they had been taken from and a refusal to learn a new world (Attig, 2011) as a young person in care. LAC young people's offending was thus at times an unintended consequence of lost agency, as they attempted to return home or escape the confines of those who, as Carly put it, 'are not my mam'. LAC young people (as well as SEND young people) were also at risk of criminalisation for resisting restraint, as well as for acts of violence and criminal damage committed in care that would be highly unlikely to attract police attention had they occurred within a family home.

As well as criminalisation, young people's attempts to reclaim lost agency also tended to result in their increased vulnerability, as offending behaviour(s) and other forms of risk taking intensified and escalated in response to feeling ignored and unheard. Sometimes this was intentional, as Brianna and Tyrone each alluded to. But for other young people like Danny and Carly, their heightened emotional state left them confused and unaware of the extent of their actions or the danger they (and sometimes others) were in when they were 'up high' or resisting those whom they felt lacked the appropriate (parental) authority to impose rules and restrictions upon them.

With the above in mind, my research highlights the importance of building respectful relationships with caring and trusted adults who can advocate for young people as well as supporting them to rebuild agency and make meaning from loss in pro-social ways. This is an important consideration for all young people experiencing loss (McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016; Murray, 2016; Munford and Sanders, 2015a, 2015b), but for LAC and other marginalised young people persistently exposed to structural and systematic inequality, this may be especially important (Crenshaw, 2002). It seems fitting therefore to end this chapter with Danny's words rather than my own, as he reminds us that if we hope to support young people's desistance from crime, the relationships we build must be authentic, caring and respectful of young people's right to be heard:

'They say [you have to] listen and show respect. But they don't [show respect] or even listen to me so why do I have to [respect them]?' Danny, (male, 11 years).

Findings 4 - Searching for connections



Image credit: '*Flying Love*' Wesley, aged 18.

Introduction

In addition to loss of childhood, opportunity and agency, searching for connections also arose as a common theme in young people's stories and practitioner accounts. Young people's search for connections often manifested from unresolved loss (Vaswani 2018a, 2016, 2014), including at times, a sense of loss for those they had never had²⁹ (for example young people like Michael who had never met his grandparents, or Riley whose father had always been absent from his life). Regardless of where loss stemmed from, when it felt unresolved young people were inevitably left with unanswered questions that they tried to make sense of as best they could with the information and resources available to them. Making sense of loss often came in the form of identity (re)construction (Charmaz, 2014), which some of the time also included young people's engagement in offending behaviour. Some of the ways young people's stories and artwork signified their search for connection,

²⁹ Loss in relation to something or someone young people have never had is discussed in the introduction to this thesis.

alongside practitioner recollections and my own observations during fieldwork, are listed below:

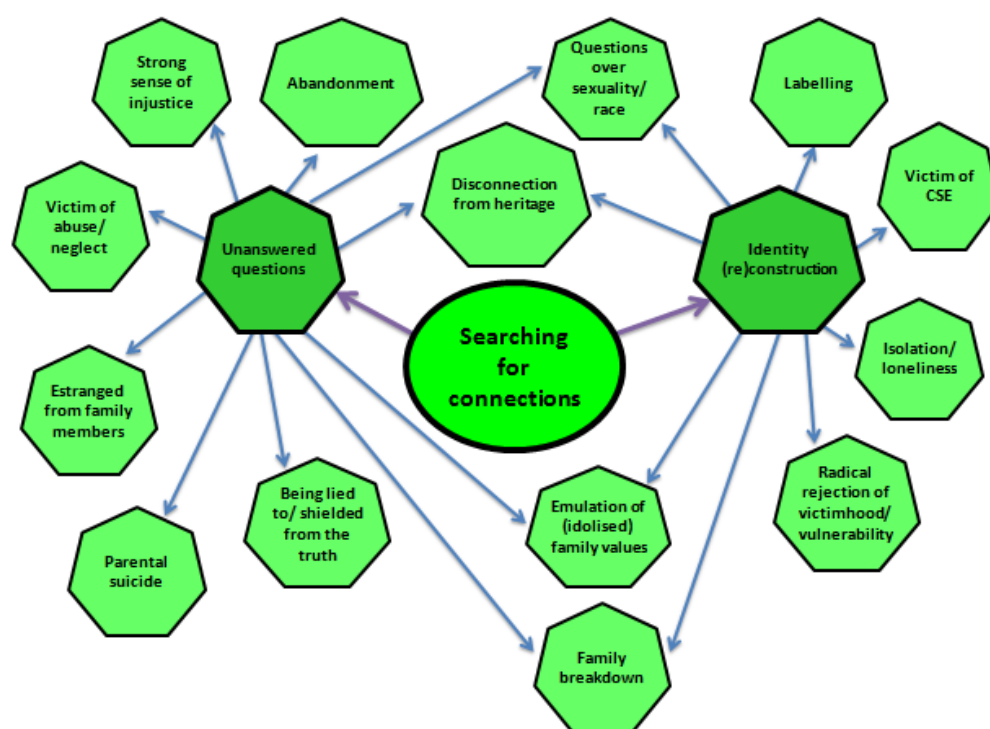


Figure 4.5: The manifestations of young people's search for connections.

Unlike my three previous findings chapters, introduced by Sam, Brianna and Danny's stories, and my final findings chapter, introduced by Michael's story, I decided not to use one specific young person's story to introduce this particular chapter. This is because of the complex and multiple ways that searching for connections manifested in each individual's life, according to their own positionality, experiences and access to varying degrees of pro-social support. With this in mind, I felt using one person's story might detract from the stories of others and render them 'less heard'. Instead I draw upon several young people's stories throughout this chapter, exploring how feelings of abandonment, injustice, marginality and mistrust supported and enabled young people's involvement in offending. This chapter is split into two parts, the first focuses upon young people's search for connections with others, the second focuses upon young people's search for a sense of self. I conclude by bringing each of these sub-themes together, to understand how offending, identity and connection each became woven throughout young people's narratives.

Part 1: A relationship at any cost?

Feeling connected is deemed to be a pillar of positive mental health (NHS, 2015), and the impact of loss for many young people I worked with could be framed in terms of a deprivation of connection, whether that be literally, 'I'm isolated and dealing with this alone' or metaphorically, 'nobody understands what I am going through'. On the contrary, involvement in offending offered young people opportunities to build friendships; escape reality; temporarily forget their losses; feel alive, and perhaps most importantly, feel part of something. As such, powerful friendships could develop quickly between young people who found themselves in similar situations, often resulting in misplaced loyalties:

'You do not grass on anyone and they don't grass on you. Only if it's, obviously if it's really bad but if you grass and there isn't a gun pointing to your baby's head then you don't do it.' Amy, (female, 17 years).

'I'd stick up for anyone in trouble, I'd get involved.' Michael, (male, 12 years).

'I'm loyal to my friends. I get arrested for my friends, I have plenty of times.' Natalie, (female, 17 years).

Friendships between young people who offend were also sometimes formed or intensified by time spent together at the YOT, an issue practitioners were well aware of:

'Sometimes I do worry we're creating a monster, like with like in the same groups... and you think, you'd never have met had we not introduced you.' Brad, (YOT Worker).

'Young people go to prison, meet other young people in there, share stories of offending... they come out better offenders than they went in.' Wendy, (YOT Worker).

'We do think really carefully about groupings, not all combinations of young people are good combinations.' Beth (YOT Manager).

For some young people, their longing to form relationships came (literally) at any cost. For some this was through their personal provision of finance, (acquired legally

or illegally), as young people used the money they had to effectively purchase friendship. In some cases, young people used their money to buy new clothes, phones or trainers for their 'friends'. Young people also paid for peers to engage in substance misuse, purchase alcohol or engage in other forms of risk taking activities, such as paying for fuel for cars or mopeds to drive illegally and at high speed. A longing for friendship at any cost was illustrated within 17 year old Peter's story, who was left an inheritance of £6000 following the death of his father. Peter was a prolific young offender with a turbulent family background, resulting in periods in and out of care. At the time of his father's death, Peter was in care, although he was also still in regular contact with his mother. Reflecting back, Peter discussed with me what had happened to his inheritance:

Peter: 'I spent it all, there's nowt left now, all gone. Stupid really, but at the time I just thought fuck it.'

Vicky: 'Where did it all go?'

Peter: 'Drink, drugs, more drink. I paid for everyone and it was pure good at the time because everyone was all partying round mine. Then we went out and got more and hoying it up and then going again. Honestly, it was pure good at the time.'

Vicky: 'So you literally drank [un]til you were sick, hoying it up.'

Peter: 'Yeah. Me inheritance spewed all over [the] floor like (laughs).'

Peter was desperately trying to move away from offending, and it was clear from the time we spent together that he was developing a positive relationship with his YOT worker Lucy and also with Billy, the community artist who delivered arts engagement sessions for the YOT. Both Lucy and Billy conceptualised Peter's behaviour as a search for connection:

'We've known him for a long time, we know him well. And, it's just sad really. When his dad died he left a bit of money, well quite a lot, £6,000, he's spent it all, all gone. People just took advantage of him. It was like he was just buying friends. I think he just feels lost. He comes out with all this bullshit about being

the hard man, the criminal, but he's just looking for friends, trying to fit in.' Lucy, YOT Practitioner (discussing Peter, male, 17 years)

'It's tragic really, what happened to his money, inheritance. He's not a bad lad at heart, he's just so desperate to please, wants to fit in with his peers. And they used him and bled him dry and then dropped him when the money ran out. He's doing well now, back in college, engaging here. But time will tell because the drawback [to offending peers] is so strong for him. It's the life he knows, where his connections are.' Billy, (Community Artist).

It is human nature to gravitate towards those who understand us (Bahns et al, 2016), and the idea that 'if you've not been in it you can never understand it' operated as a powerful tool to connect young people battling loss. Circumstance also brought young people together, with those living in neglectful and violent households often more visible on the streets than those living in pro-social households (White and Cunneen, 2015; McAra and McVie, 2010; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005). Young people in these situations were often vulnerable to exploitation from adults and older peers, firstly because of their lack of parental supervision, secondly because of their visibility in the community (heightened further still if young people were not attending full time, mainstream education), and thirdly because their search for connection and belonging was easily manipulated. As Sam's³⁰ account of being recruited into gang life attests:

'There was this man and he knew about my mum and my old man. So he kind of took me under his wing and put all the others to the side and I was involved with the big boys then.' Sam, (male, 17 years).

Being under somebody's wing usually signifies a relationship where one person shares their knowledge and expertise in an nurturing, caring manner with another, less experienced person. In Sam's case, 'being taken under [the] wing' of a high level drug dealer involved in organised crime had nothing to do with nurturing and everything to do with grooming and exploitation. Nevertheless, being chosen whilst the others were 'put... to the side' became an important point of connection in Sam's life at a time when he had nobody and nothing else to feel connected to. Becoming 'involved with the big boys' helped Sam feel special, a person of worth with

³⁰ Sam's story is explored in detail in the first finding chapter, loss of childhood.

something to offer. Sam's relationship with the gang also served to distance him from his father's victimisation, and as such he could reconfigure his identity around the hyper-masculine rhetoric of gang life and drug dealing (Armstrong and Thompson, 2017; Baird, 2017). In this way Sam was able to position himself as 'someone not to be messed with', as one of the 'big boys' as opposed to being regarded as weak, vulnerable, a victim of domestic abuse.

Putting adults to the test; appropriate adults and relationship development

Sam's involvement in the gang provided him with a sense of family that was missing from his life. The relationships he developed with adults higher up the chain were therefore as important to Sam as the relationships he developed with his street level peers. A longing to establish meaningful connections with adults was evident in other young people's stories too, implicit in their narratives, as well as within their everyday lives and practices. This was especially clear in 16 year old Brianna's case³¹, but was also found in the stories of other young people as they used the resources available to them to forge connections with adults. Brianna for example explained to me that one of her closest relationships with an adult was with her former ASB Officer:

Brianna: 'I loved her. She is left now to go to the police. She even brought me a present when she left. She was great, I loved working with her.'

Vicky: 'What was so great about working with her?'

Brianna: 'Don't know. Well I worked with her for a long time, ages.'

Vicky: 'Is that what was good because you'd known her for a long time?'

Brianna: 'I don't know yeah she was just really nice.'

Following our exchange, Brianna proceeded to show me a photo on her phone of her former ASB Officer:

³¹ Brianna's story is discussed in detail during the second findings chapter, loss of opportunity.

Brianna: 'Please don't tell her I've got it, I know it's weird having it, I got it off her Facebook. That's her husband there with her. I think he's in the police too.'

Later, I reflected about this situation, constructing a memo (Charmaz, 2014) within my fieldnotes after spending the day with Brianna at the SP:

'Brianna spoke today about her involvement in antisocial behaviour and how much she loved her work with a particular female officer there. The main reason she could cite for this was that she had time to develop a relationship over several years. 'She's worked with me for ages'. Brianna was also keen to know if I'd heard her name at the YOT, seeing herself as 'one of the naughty ones'. That she keeps a photo of this one consistent person in her life on her phone strikes me as a deep desire to build connections. Not working with this ASB Officer is clearly felt as a loss for Brianna and it feels that her behaviour now is a cry out for attention, nurture and support from a trusted adult.' Fieldnotes, (November 2016).

Brianna's offending behaviours were also construed by her YOT Officer as a need to make connections and generate acceptance from her peers. There was no mention however of the desire I felt Brianna exhibited in relation to making connections with adults as well:

'Her basic needs were not being met. Offending is a way of making connections, of reaching out to her peers and generating acceptance from them' (Asset+ for Brianna, female, 16yrs).

Other young people experiencing loss also seemed intent on making connections but struggled to maintain relationships, particularly with adults and especially when challenged about their behaviour. Below YOT Officer Becky reflects in relation to Carly and her multiple placements in care:

'From the point she was taken in care, that's when her offending escalated. Prior to her having involvement with services, being removed, her offending sort of like was minimal, like a massive impact on her life that she's been taken out of a familiar environment and although it was chaotic and not appropriate, um, and then placed in another setting, where her history was,

that she would get familiar with staff and (the) routine, everything would be ok, but then she'd unsettle that situation, go on to sort of like another care home, form more relationships, as though she sort of had loads of insecurities. So I'd say, I think that's one of the cases that will stick in my mind. And I've sort of kept in touch because obviously she moved out of area and moved onto another care home when relationships have broken down. And it's, that type of behaviour is continuing, it's been the same.' Becky, YOT Officer, (discussing Carly, female, 14 years).

For young people like Carly, getting to know adults became a continual process as she was moved from placement to placement. 'Unsettling the situation' was Carly's way of testing the staying power of those she had made a connection with (Staines, 2016:17) and unfortunately, more often than not, she was let down. Being let down only served to intensify Carly's belief that the only adult who truly cared about her was her mother, which for Carly, endorsed and justified her constant attempts to return home.³²

Forming and maintaining relationships was difficult for other young people too, particularly those with SpLC difficulties, other associated SEND or attachment difficulties (Bowlby, 1997/1969). Incidents of 'poor or defiant behaviour' dismissed as attention seeking may also mean that sustaining pro-social connections with adults and peers becomes even more difficult for young people affected by loss and SpLC or SEND. Young people's behaviours in these instances can be particularly draining for the practitioners who care for them, particularly when there is limited understanding and resource in relation to young people's emotional needs or difficulties:

'We aren't specialists and it's hard to know what to do. You feel so sorry for what's happening in their lives, but it's not really what we are here for.' Ally, (SP Practitioner).

'They are vulgar. That's the word I would use. Absolutely vulgar. They've got no manners and no boundaries at all. It's disgusting really.' Simone, (SP Tutor).

³² Carly's rationale for returning home and the impact of this upon her offending behaviour is discussed at length in findings chapter 3, loss of agency.

Lack of understanding in relation to young people's behavioural presentations was a recurring problem over the duration of this research, resulting too often in young people's severed connections with meaningful, high quality education provision. Sometimes this severance was literal, as young people were removed from or marginalised within their educational settings (discussed in detail in findings chapter 2, loss of opportunity). At other times, the severance was metaphorical, as young people became mentally disconnected from teaching and learning, as SEND specialist Molly attests:

'The problem now is that more than ever one size fits all. You go into all the schools and you look at the behaviour management, it's the same procedures wherever you go. It's a one size fits all curriculum and that's ok for six out of ten students and then you get the others who don't fit and it comes out in their behaviour because they're pushing against it. Or they'll be really quiet and slip by, draw no attention to themselves at all, slip under the radar' Molly, (SEND Practitioner).

During fieldwork, education staff repeatedly cited lack of resource (including the loss of teaching assistants and other specialist support due to funding cuts) as the main reason why support for young people exhibiting 'challenging' behaviour was limited. Accordingly, I found little evidence of trauma informed practice (Morgan et al, 2015) occurring in any of the educational settings I spent time in or spoke to young people about. Worryingly, this included specialist SEND and ESBP provisions as well as SPs, where it would be reasonable to expect a high proportion of young people who had experienced, or were experiencing, loss, trauma and adversity. Young people like Brianna, who did not have the emotional literacy to articulate her feelings in a pro-social way, instead conveyed her desire for connections by drawing attention to herself in the only way she really knew how to do, in her words, by 'being naughty and causing chaos'. This in turn awarded her one to one time with the SP Manager, sat in his office, 'talking about stuff', or referrals into other agencies, where again she was given one to one time with an adult.

Continuing bonds: offending as a way of reaffirming family connections

For some young people, offending was perceived not only as a way of making new connections, but also as a way of reaffirming connections with family members, including those in custody. As YOT practitioner Bryony reflects in relation to Jonny, a young person whose offending began soon after his older brother was sent to custody:

'You get young offenders who thrive to be in prison to be with their older brothers and sisters. Well the lad's in custody for, what was it, robbery. And this lad [Jonny], his brother, he's just, I don't know, we keep saying that he looks up to his brother and wants to be in prison... and he's not going to comply with anything with YOT, and then he can go to prison to be with his brother.' Bryony, (YOT Worker).

As discussed in my first findings chapter, young people who offend are also regularly operating as undocumented and unsupported carers within their families. In Jonny's case, it is likely his older brother was responsible for elements of his care and protection, operating as a trusted person in Jonny's life. In these instances, bonds between siblings can be extremely strong (Callaghan et al, 2016), as they cling to one another to manage difficulties and problems at home. In this sense, when his brother was sent to prison, Jonny lost his protector, his confidant, and the one person who could truly understand what he was going through. The one major loss Jonny experienced therefore, the loss of his brother, also resulted in a series of secondary losses (McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016), losses Jonny perhaps felt could be rectified if he was able to become reunited with his brother in custody.

Another young person whose escalation in offending seemed tied up with his desire to maintain continuing bonds with family members was Antony. Antony was from a family who were deeply ingrained in (mostly petty) criminal activity. Several were in custody, including his older brother who had been convicted of a serious offence and sent to a young offenders institution when Antony was just 10 years old. Males in Antony's family had a history of committing suicide in custody, two of his uncles and his grandfather had died this way. Antony had been known to the YOT from a young age, but his offending became violent as he reached his mid teens, something (when

he wasn't flat out denying his involvement in offending or telling me he had been set up) he attributed to needing to 'step up' and 'honour the family name':

'I keep my family [name], uncles' name and my granddad's name [because they're] not here no more. You know what my brother got done for. It's my turn to step up, give [people] a right good slap if they're cheeky to me, batter them. (punches fist into hand in animated fashion). Antony, (male, 15 years).

Unlike Jonny, Antony's offending was not imbued with a hope of reuniting with family members inside; instead he hoped to physically 'step up' and represent them on the outside. Nevertheless, Antony's transition from petty crime to violence was his way of establishing continuing bonds (Klass, 2009; Klass, Silverman and Nickman, 1996) with those he had lost to custody and he conceptualised his violence in the community as a way of maintaining his family's reputation in the absence of older family members. Drawing on Goffman's theory of performance (Goffman, 1990/1959), developing, verbalising and visually displaying his criminal identity had become an important way for Antony to feel connected with the men in his family. Such performances crossed multiple domains of Antony's life, including his future employment aspirations. Antony animatedly describes below how he intended to continue his family's (illegal) scrapping business:

'So you have the wagon and you go round and collect the metal, old washing machines, pipes, nick round the back if 'ought's left out, nick in the shed if it's open (laughs). Then you sell it on for trade. We've always done [scrapping] in mine, you should [have] seen my bedroom was full' (stands up and makes large gesture with his hands) Antony, (male, 15 years).

Engaging in offending in the hope of retaining a connection with siblings or other family members lost to custody as in the examples above is a particularly worrying illustration of young people's isolation from pro-social support and the desperation some may feel (as they see it) to make their family proud. These examples also highlight how young people's engagement or escalation in offending may be triggered when their primary source of support and guidance (regardless of whether or not that support and guidance is deemed to be 'good for them') is lost. In Antony's

case, he felt a responsibility to fill the shoes of those who had come before him. For Jonny, his offending might be perceived as a way of reconnecting (and ideally reuniting) with his brother. Indeed, Jonny's emulation of his brother's experiences 'inside' seemed to occur 'on the outside' too, perhaps as his way of remembering his 'lost other' (Klass et al, 1996) and maintaining continuing bonds:

'His brother got his shoes taken off him the other day [in custody] and then he [Jonny] came in yesterday with no shoes on. And I was thinking whether that, whether he's heard about that and he's trying to be like him on the outside as well?' Bryony, (YOT Worker).

When connections with those whom young people love and care about are lost, through care proceedings, as was the case for Michael, Carly and Danny, through custody, as was the case for Antony and Jonny, or through bereavement, as was the case for Peter, Michael, Antony and Sam, it is likely they may engage in processes of emulation and idolisation as a way of reminding themselves and the rest of the world of those who are no longer with them. This process is referred to in psychoanalytic literature as 'mourning the lost object' (Baker, 2001; Freud, 1917). Social constructivist theories of loss emphasise the importance of developing pro-social opportunities for young people to remember their losses, through the sharing of narratives and through the process of developing continuing bonds as a way of maintaining a meaningful connection without placing their 'lost object' on a pedestal (Thompson and Cox, 2017; Neimeyer, Klass and Dennis, 2014; Neimeyer, 2006; Gillies and Neimeyer, 2006). For young people who offend, there is often little opportunity or pro-social support available for them to establish continuing bonds or develop coherent narratives to help them make meaning from the losses they experience. Consequently they are left to make sense of their situations however they can, whether that be through the removal of shoes as Jonny did or a pledge of allegiance to upholding family values, as was the case for Antony.

Part 2: Finding a place in the world, offending and identity (re)construction

Experiences of loss also appeared to affect young people's sense of identity, causing them to reconstruct their idea of 'self' in light of the losses they had experienced. The second part of this chapter shifts in focus therefore from young people's search for

connections with others to their search for self. The reconsideration of one's identity following loss is not a novel concept (McCoyd and Ambler-Walter, 2016) and in work on loss and the 'assumptive world' (Parkes and Prigerson, 2010; Beder, 2005; Kaufmann et al, 2002; Janoff-Bulman, 1992) identity reconstruction is deemed an important aspect of recovery (as one reconfigures their existence without that which was lost). In order to readjust however, it is important to fully understand what has happened and be able to develop a coherent story in relation to this (Neimeyer et al, 2010). However, as many stories young people shared with me show, the losses they experienced were ambiguous (Boss, 1999) or disenfranchised (Doka, 2002), leaving them with uncertainty, unanswered questions, and limited resources to make meaning from their experiences. For many young people who offend therefore, developing a coherent story in relation to their losses may be particularly difficult. Sometimes this was because they literally did not have the words to conceptualise their experiences, due to SpLC difficulties, or because their loss had not been explained to them in an age and stage appropriate way (McCoyd and Ambler-Walter, 2016:92). At other times steps had been taken to shield young people from their losses, as in Michael's case where he was shielded from his family's routine failure to attend contact. This leaves young people to draw their own conclusions (e.g. that Social Services prevent access to family or that they have been 'taken away' because they are naughty, bad or unwanted). For young people dealing with loss, often with patchy or limited information about what has happened, creating a 'criminal' identity may therefore build resilience (Rutter, 1999, 1987), serving as protection from the complexity of grief.

Filling in the blanks? Loss, unanswered questions and young people's engagement in offending behaviour

But how did young people's offending link with issues of identity construction in the aftermath of loss? In this section I draw upon young people's stories and practitioner accounts to reveal how affiliation with 'criminal' identities supported some young people to make meaning from loss. It is not my intention to suggest that all young people experiencing loss are likely to construct a 'criminal' identity; many young people live with loss each day without engaging in offending (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006). However, it is important to keep in mind that most of the young people I met and worked with had limited pro-social support from adults within their families, as well as EBD, SEND or SpLC difficulties. This combination of factors left young

people not only with unanswered questions but also with little sense of control and limited understanding over what was happening in their lives. Without a supportive adult to help them, they also had little opportunity to develop a coherent narrative or map out a pro-social path to recovery in the wake of their loss. Accordingly, young people's offending might even be conceptualised as a constrained form of resilience, as criminality became a 'cloak for grief' (Butler, 2014), distancing young people in some respects from the emotional turmoil and difficult feelings that loss may provoke. Offending therefore seemed to serve an important protective role for some young people, as energy and emotion were concentrated upon the creation of offending identities as opposed to feeling victimised or consumed by loss. For some young people, creation of an offending identity was a conscious process, a deliberate act of self-removal from victimhood and a radical rejection of vulnerability. For others, engaging with an offending identity was more implicit, as young people internalised the labels accorded to them by society (Rotter, 1966), constructing themselves as 'naughty' or 'bad' because that is what they felt was expected of them (Goffman, 1963). Below I explore how young people (re)constructed their identities through loss³³, including the use of offending as an emulation of family values, as an alignment with hegemonic masculinity and as a self-protective response to systemic marginality and societal prejudice.

Offending as an emulation of family values

For some young people, particularly those who had become estranged from family members, offending identities were viewed as an emulation of family values and, as previously discussed, a way of establishing continuing bonds. This seemed to be the case for Jonny, whose offending was interpreted by YOT Worker Bryony as 'wanting to represent his brother on the outside'. It was also the case for Antony, whose offending behaviour was constructed around his interpretation of how his family expected him to behave. Other young people also described how either they or their family members had something to 'live up to' in light of the loss of a family member through death, ill health or incarceration:

'Most of my family are in prison (laughs). That's bad isn't it? My great granddad, before he died everybody knew him. His funeral was in the church

³³ Losses were experienced both in the present and the past, and consistent with other research (McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016; Murray, 2016; McCarthy and Jessop, 2005), when young people moved between ages and stages of development, or key transition points e.g. from primary to secondary education, old losses sometimes resurfaced and young people had to make sense of them in new ways, according to their present understanding.

over there and it was packed out. And now I'm the spit of him. People come up to me in town and they say 'you must be Archie's grandson, looking at you [is] like looking at a ghost' (laughs). We were really close you know, when I was little, like my art, he told me 'people draw what they know'. That's why I drew that heart and hands, 'Flying Love' I'm calling it, to remember him by. Like now I'm concentrating on my art and staying, trying to stay out of trouble if you know what I mean (laughs), but great granddad was hardly an angel so maybe I am just like him in more than my art.' Wesley, (male, 18 years).

Art was incredibly important to Wesley, and he regularly had an sketch pad or colouring book tucked inside his tracksuit. His image, 'Flying Love' (the cover image for this chapter) had been much admired by his peers, with several asking Wesley to teach them to draw or design tattoos for them. Developing an identity as an artist was an important (pro-social) way for Wesley to make meaning from Archie's death. Nevertheless, as Wesley's story reflects, police contact was not unusual in his family. Wesley was therefore also able to suggest the inherency of his own YOT contact, generating a 'negotiated identity' (Munford and Sanders, 2015a, 2015b; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005) and externalised locus of control (Rotter, 1966) as both an artist and an offender.

During another session together, Wesley disclosed that his cousins were a set of younger twins well known to both the YOT and ASB. He described their offending behaviour in relation to 'having it hard', much of which was linked to loss and the twins' (and his own) subsequent identity formation as an emulation of family values:

'They can be little shits but they've been through a lot, you probably know about their mum, my aunty. Well, put it this way, she had a bad start, she had a really bad life and then she just got on the wrong path, drugs and that and then when social services took the kids away that was it. Things just got really bad and she died. So they had that and my granddad and Martin, the lad whose memorial's at the skate park, well their dad was with his mum for a bit so they were really close and that was hard when he died... they're good kids really. Like they was front page of the paper a few years ago when an old lady fell and hurt herself badly and they looked after her. They were the first

there...My family has always got in trouble with the police so I guess they are just following that path, it's what we know.' Wesley, (male, 18 years).

Issues of identity and unanswered questions in relation to losses experienced by young people were also picked up by YOT practitioners:

'In the case of the two siblings who lost their mam, I think it's weaved all the way through, so that loss it's a, obviously it comes into family and personal relationships, but then it comes into like self identity, if your mother's died as a child, that's going to have a massive impact on your self-identity, 'who am I, where have I come from?' Rosie, (YOT Officer).

Each of these examples, especially when explored in tandem with Antony and Jonny's attempts to establish continuing bonds with those lost to custody, reveal the complex ways young people's offending became intertwined with notions of family values, belonging and self identity. Where loss had occurred, feelings in relation to family values seemed to intensify, with some feeling an increased responsibility to represent those who were no longer able to represent themselves. As Rosie alludes to, self-identity can be deeply affected by loss, particularly when the loss experienced is 'off time' (McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016) meaning young people are even less likely to find a point of connection or prescribed way of 'how to be' after loss.

Real boys don't cry - hegemonic masculinities, loss and offending behaviour

The majority of young people I worked with were white, working class young people. There is already much research on what it means to be a white, working class young man in the North East of England (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2008, Macdonald and Marsh, 2005; MacDonald, 1997) including research on white working class interpretations and presentations of hegemonic masculinity (Nayak, 2006; Skelton, 2006). For several young people I worked with, displays of emotion, other than anger, were construed as being 'weak' or linked to homosexuality. An example of this played out during a session at the SP when Tyrone (aged 16) became upset after persistent bullying from other members of the group in relation to his transgender sister:

Riley: 'You're fucking disgusting because you shag your own sister'

Tyrone: 'I don't have a sister.'

Brianna: 'Yeah you do, don't lie. You had a brother and now you've got a fucking sister (laughs).'

Tyrone: (Starting to get upset). 'Shut the fuck up.'

Riley: 'He's going to cry now, fucking pussy. Fucking bender.'

Tommy: 'Your sister, is she your sister or your brother? What do you call them, it? It must be fucking weird.'

Riley: 'Tyrone lost his virginity to a Hoover and then he fucked his sister 'cus he's gay.'

Tyrone: 'You're funny, big fat fucking funny man.'

Brianna: 'Tyrone's ADHD is kicking in. He can't help it.'

Jade: 'You'll be on the first floor when I knock you down the stairs.'

Brianna: (Yelling) 'Shut up! You're disturbing my fucking learning.'

Such incidents reveal very specific ways in which young people permit one another to come to terms with loss, especially loss that may be viewed as unconventional or that cross other young people's boundaries of acceptability (in Tyrone's case having a transgender family member). For Tyrone, showing any form of grief for his lost brother as he transitioned from male to female was construed by the group as an indication of Tyrone's homosexuality. Acceptable responses therefore were to find the group's comments funny, or to become violent and, as Brianna put it, allow his 'ADHD [to] kick in'. Speaking privately with Tyrone following the incident he told me 'it was personal' and that he did not want the bullying reported because 'it's funny'. Later on in the day Tyrone was sent home for turning over a chair and ripping up another young person's work. He then proceeded to commit ASB in the community (throwing stones and kicking fences), resulting in a police chase and further referral to the ASB team.

Of all the young people I met during fieldwork, Tyrone constructed his identity in terms of being a criminal most evidently, despite being less involved with the YOT

than other young people I worked with. He was from an incredibly deprived background, and there were regular concerns from practitioners that he was malnourished. Tyrone had quite pronounced SpLC difficulties, as well as ADHD. He had been excluded from mainstream school in year eight (aged 13) and spent the rest of his school career at the local PRU before transitioning to the SP. Tyrone wore the same dirty and holed tracksuit each day, but he had a number of different caps, telling me 'it's what dealers wear' and that he had 'chored [stolen] loads [of caps] out the shop'. During a session on work experience, Tyrone told me his ideal job was to be 'drug dealer' and he proceeded to draw a large cannabis leaf on his folder. Tyrone was keen to engage in any discussion about crime, and interested that I had worked in the YOT before beginning my research, wanting to know if I'd 'smacked anyone down for being cheeky' or 'taken money for chored ped [stolen bikes]'. He showed me his favourite videos on YouTube, many of which involved people fighting, taking drugs or engaging in crime. Towards the end of my time at the SP, Tyrone's attendance diminished. When I did see him, he was wearing a brand new tracksuit and cap and he looked clean. He told me he didn't need to be at the SP anymore, because he had a job. My assumption was that Tyrone had now made the connections he needed in order to fulfil his criminal identity, and his job involved drug running or dealing. Other young people at the SP were keen to confirm my suspicions when I asked them why they thought Tyrone no longer attended:

Brianna: 'He's dealing now you know'

Tommy: 'It was only a matter of time, he was basically involved anyway but someone's pegged on he'll do anything and he'll be getting used now but he won't care 'cus he gets a new tracksuit out of it.'

In Tyrone's case, it was clear that 'being a criminal' was inherently tied up with ideas of what it meant to be a man. Engaging in crime and aspiring to climb up criminal ranks helped Tyrone construct an identity where he felt significant. It also served to markedly differentiate him from his sibling, as their physical process of transition began. Time spent with Tyrone clearly revealed he was struggling to come to terms with his sibling's transition, and that the hurt and pain caused by the loss of their relationship was largely disenfranchised. Tyrone was also bullied at the SP, and tales of drug dealing and ASB served to distance him from a competing identity of

victimhood that contradicted and contravened Tyrone's identification with both hegemonic and hyper masculinities (Baird, 2017; Pini and Pease, 2013; Messerschmidt, 2009). None of the young people involved in bullying Tyrone felt they had contributed in any way to his departure from the SP, although Tommy did concede he felt 'a bit guilty, we did push it at times.' Staff also expressed their relief at Tyrone's departure, because they perceived him as 'winding the group up' as opposed to being a young person in crisis. Tyrone's story indicates how the vulnerability of young men in particular may be masked (deliberately and inherently) by their engagement in offending behaviour. This can leave services blinded to young people's support needs as they deal in gendered notions of risk and responsibilisation ahead of issues of vulnerability and marginality (Baumgartner, 2014). The construction of young people as a risk to themselves and others enabled by hegemonic discourse surrounding masculinity and femininity affects young women as well as young men, with young women perceived as vulnerable until their offending is seen to transgress gendered boundaries (Schaffner, 1999). Such transgression, which includes repeated incidents of violence or public order offences situates young women as non-female, as dangerous individuals who fail to conform to gendered norms. Such behaviour places young women at risk of being disproportionately criminalised and more harshly sentenced compared to their male counterparts (Sharpe, 2012).

Thinking intersectionally; marginality, offending and loss

Whilst the majority of young people I worked with were white, working class and socio-economically marginalised, it is nevertheless important to consider how other aspects of marginality played out in some young people's lives, attributing to, or further compounding, their experiences of loss. Due to the demographics of my participants, I am unable to provide a comprehensive analysis of how marginality due to race, culture, religious belief, sexuality or disability intersect with loss and affect young people who offend; there is much scope for further research in relation to this. I can however discuss the loss experiences of those I worked with, either as direct participants or whose stories YOT practitioners shared with me at interview. Below I consider YOT Officer Orla's reflections about Raza, a young person on her caseload whose confusion over his racial identity raised unanswered questions and generated a great sense of loss in relation to his sense of belonging in his family. I

also consider Shaun's story, a young person on the fringes of ASB, whose marginalisation on the basis of his sexuality resulted in permanent exclusion from mainstream school. Finally I consider Amy, a young person culturally marginalised due to her traveller heritage and the losses she experienced as a result of her father's disownment when she became romantically involved with a non-traveller, 'gorger' male. Each example reveals the importance of socio-cultural context when making sense of young people's offending, as loss experienced by young people in these examples was intrinsically tied to their marginality.

Here, YOT Officer Orla describes Raza, a thirteen year old young person on her caseload. Raza's offending was confined to his home environment, resulting in family members calling the police on several occasions:

'I've got one at the moment who I'm working with and um, I just think he's got absolutely no sense of his own identity and that's quite sad to see... He lives in a family with five other siblings and they all have different fathers and they all have different um, backgrounds, and um, two of his siblings um, are mixed um, ethnic backgrounds to him, and he is struggling with that massively. He's the only one that offends in the household and he pretty much has been kind of singled out and labelled. Relationships have broken down with his, with his mam. And it's just an awful place for him to be and amongst his siblings I think he's just very aware that he's different.' Orla, (YOT Officer).

For Raza, it could be argued that his destructive and violent behaviour in the home was an exhibition of the loss of place and belonging he felt within his own family. Unlike his siblings, who all had contact with their fathers, Raza was estranged from his Pakistani birth father. This intensified Raza's feelings of difference and othering, leading him to violently reject his Pakistani heritage:

'I think he's just very aware that he's different. He's also aware of their differences and again with him it comes out in negativity. He's said some quite hurtful um and harmful and racist comments to his siblings... mam keeps telling him that his dad was from Pakistan and she's kinda using that in a way of when 'you're racist you know you are also' there but he doesn't get it because he's um, in his head he's white, he's a white male. He doesn't

understand it; nothing's been explained to him about his family history.' Orla, (YOT Officer).

Raza's estrangement from his birth father and the lack of explanation given to him in relation to his background and heritage left Raza himself to fill in the gaps. In Raza's case, filling in the gaps resulted in expressions of internalised racism which in turn led to physical expressions of anger and unhappiness in the home. This then led to further labelling and stigmatisation as his mother compared Raza to abusive males from her previous relationships:

'He's sometimes compared to some of the males that's been in his life as father figures and it's in a negative way that he's compared to them and again it's just, he doesn't know who he is, he doesn't know how he's expected to be um, doesn't understand all of the different dynamics in the family, he doesn't understand their backgrounds... he's the only one who doesn't see his real dad and the rest of the siblings have some contact with theirs and I think he's massively suffering loss. Um, it's really sad to see. And all his offending's in the family home, it speaks volumes about the impact that this has had on him emotionally... ultimately you can see he's very sad, a very sad young man and very lost. And he absolutely doesn't know where he belongs.' Orla, (YOT Officer).

There is much research exploring young people's interpretations of cultural heritage, ethnic identity and how such interpretations are embodied and enacted in young people's everyday lives and practices (Deuchar and Bhopal, 2017; Kerswill, 2013; Siedler, 2010; Archer, 2001). In recent research undertaken in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, statistically one of the most ethnically diverse areas of Britain (ONS, 2011), young people who offend were described as being caught between cultures (Chard, 2017), affecting their sense of identity and for young men, their cultural perceptions and idealisations of manhood. The sense of loss generated for young people caught between cultures may leave them feeling frustrated and angry, which in turn, may pre-disposition them towards involvement in crime and ASB as a way of remoulding fractured or incoherent identities into something more tangible.

Some young people's sense of identity was also affected by their minority status as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered (LGBTQ+). I met Shaun, aged 16, at the SP.

Shaun was on the fringes of ASB, largely as a result of congregating in the local park and consuming alcohol with other young people. Shaun did not consider himself to be actively involved with any criminal activity. He did however, consider himself 'naughty' and 'stupid', and told me that he regularly felt guilty about the way he had behaved prior to his exclusion from mainstream school:

'I know I shouldn't have done it. I feel dead guilty all the time about what happened now because it's not me, fighting. I don't like fighting.' Shaun, (male, 16 years).

I asked Shaun what had led to him being excluded for fighting:

Shaun: 'He called me a gay cunt and I just went for him so I got took out of school for my anger.'

Vicky: 'Was that something that happened often at school?'

Shaun: 'Yeah, all the time. They never stopped saying stuff, making comments, saying stuff at me when I walked past, calling me names like and my anger just got the better of me and school said it was for the best I went [to] another place to do my exams.'

Vicky: 'Did school know what was happening? Did anything happen to the other boys? Did they get excluded as well?'

Shaun: 'School did nothing, they knew and my friends even told the teachers what was happening but they did nothing about it, just said 'ignore it'. But I wasn't the best; I was naughty at school so I got kicked out.'

Vicky: 'How were you naughty?'

Shaun: 'Didn't listen, messing around, listening to music.'

Vicky: 'But you'd never been in a fight before?'

Shaun: 'No, my anger just got too much.'

Shaun's experience and the poor response he received from his school is sadly not an isolated incident; LGBTQ+ young people are still regularly subjected to homophobic bullying (Stonewall, 2017), with varied responses from schools,

including at times, the removal of the LGBTQ+ young person, either because they reacted against those who had been homophobically abusing them or, in some cases, for their own protection (LGBT Youth Scotland, 2018; Snapp et al, 2015:69). For Shaun, exclusion from school caused feelings of shame and regret as he felt as though he had let his mother down. As such, he attributed full blame for what had happened upon himself:

‘The worst part was when school got me mam in, I couldn’t look at her because I knew I’d let her down.’ Shaun, (male, 16 years).

Having spent the best part of a year with Shaun on the SP, I never witnessed the enactment of his so called ‘anger issues’. What I did observe frequently however was his vulnerability, compounded by his loss of mainstream schooling:

‘I never really went out [drinking] before. But after I got kicked out I just thought... And I wanted to see my friends because I used to see them every day but then when I had to go to the other place [1:1 tuition] I didn’t get to see them so I just went to meet them down the park.’ Shaun, (male, 16 years).

In Shaun’s case, his involvement with ASB seems to have come as a direct result of his loss of mainstream schooling, as he was punished for reacting against those who had bullied him over a long period of time. There is limited research on LGBTQ+ youth and crime (Woods, 2017; Knight and Wilson, 2016: 90; Peterson and Panfil, 2014) or how the losses young people experience on the basis of their marginalised status may affect their engagement in offending or ASB. It is widely accepted however that LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to engage in substance misuse (Knight and Wilson, 2016; UKDPC, 2010; McDermott et al, 2008), are more likely to experience mental health problems (Stonewall, 2012; McDermott et al, 2008), and less likely to complete mainstream education (Knight and Wilson, 2016; Snapp et al, 2015) than their heterosexual peers. It is highly likely that this is due to the prejudice and discrimination still experienced by many LGBTQ+ young people, and the failure of educational and other services to fully realise and understand the damaging impact this can have upon them.

Several young people I encountered during my time on fieldwork had traveller heritage. For Amy, much of her offending behaviour was entangled in her traveller identity, especially in relation to notions of respect and the enactment of violence. Amy's parents were 'parted', which was unusual for the traveller community she was part of. Following her parent's 'parting', Amy's mother became increasingly disengaged from traveller culture, moving to a 'settled' house away from the traveller site and allowing Amy (without her father's knowledge) to attend mainstream school. Amy's father and older brother remained highly involved with traveller life and their reputation for upholding traveller values was well respected within their community. Much like dual heritage or mixed race young people described in other literature (Chard, 2017; Eddo-Lodge, 2017), Amy's parents parting left her straddling two very different cultures, the traveller culture she had grown up with, and the 'gorger' (non-traveller) culture she was increasingly exposed to as a result of her mother's move away from traveller site. This clash of cultures is epitomised in the following story, as Amy recounted falling out with a close friend whom she believed had been in contact with her fiancé behind her back via social media:

Amy: 'We don't do it. We believe that when you get married it's for life and when I'm engaged to Gary that's for life and that's where it hurts the most that she didn't understand that and was inboxing him. He came round and I knocked him straight out. He was on the floor with his nose bust open and I was screaming at him to get up. I didn't speak... I don't speak to my dad because of him and now this is happened and I've got nobody now.'

Vicky: What happened with your dad?

Amy: 'Well Gary isn't a traveller and we aren't supposed to court non-travellers. My dad is traditional; he doesn't even want me to speak to anyone who isn't a traveller. I'm not like that. I don't care if you're traveller, gorger, Muslim, if you can have a civil conversation I will be civil back but if you cross me I'll lay you out.'

Vicky: 'So what did your dad do?'

Amy: He laid me out, broke my nose. He won't talk to me. I see him on the street and he just says 'hi' and walks past. He won't say 'hi baby girl, want a lift home?' and it's really hard because I was a daddy's girl you know.'

Vicky: 'That must feel really difficult?'

Amy: 'It's really hard. And my brother, that hurts even more. We always used to look out for each other and he started laying into me when he found out. It really hurt. We live in the same house and we don't talk to each other and my mam is just stuck in the middle of it.'

For Amy, being engaged to a non-traveller resulted in both physical retribution and the emotional and psychological pain of her father and brother's disownment. When Amy discovered that her friend had been messaging her fiancé behind her back, she felt as though the loss of her father and brother's affections had been for nothing. This experience intensified Amy's attachment to what she determined as key family values, 'fighting, loyalty and never, ever grass':

'She doesn't have my loyalty now because I don't have hers.' Amy, (female, 17 years).

Another issue for Amy came in relation to attending mainstream school, something Amy and her mother had strived to keep from her father:

'Dad didn't even want me to go to school. My mam and dad are parted and they had this massive blow up over and so I went but then my dad thought I was getting bad habits like swearing so he took me out and I wanted back. Mam said 'you can go back, you will have to tell your dad you're at your gran's' and then school couldn't get hold of me mam so they rang me dad and I had to go [leave school] and then there was a war between them.' Amy, (female, 17 years).

This clash of cultural values, tied up with Amy's father's violent insistence upon what was right and proper for his daughter and the lack of forethought from school in relation to the sensitivities of traveller culture, resulted in a loss of mainstream

education for Amy. As previously discussed, loss of mainstream education is incredibly damaging for young people, increasing the likelihood of poor outcomes in the future, including engagement in offending and ASB (Berridge et al, 2001). Like Shaun, Amy also regularly referred to herself as 'thick' or 'stupid', despite losing her mainstream school placement through no fault of her own.

For Amy, the cultural clash and loss of place created by her father's disownment worked against her twice over, causing problems within both her traveller and non-traveller communities. For example, Amy had strict values around pre-marital relationships derived from her traveller heritage. On one occasion she physically assaulted another young person in the town centre who made comparisons between Amy and another young person who was 'known' for engaging in numerous sexual encounters. This resulted in further YOT involvement for Amy as well as a restraining order:

'You do not sleep [with someone] outside of marriage. He [Gary] knows that I'll never do that. So when there's people in the town comparing me to that girl [another young person known to YOT], saying I'm her, I look like her... saying I'm a whore, then you go against everything I believe in and I'm not having my name or my family's name dragged through the mud. I'm not having my family's honour put into question.' Amy, (female, 17 years).

Amy's longing to reconnect with her father and brother and reclaim her traveller heritage following her estrangement from the community resulted in several incidents of offending behaviour, largely centred around notions of honour and respect, values that Amy viewed as being intrinsically tied to traveller culture and therefore worth fighting to restore, even if this resulted in a criminal record:

'I know I'll end up in prison if I don't stop I'll end up in prison. If it was my family, if my dad said murder this person I'd do it in a heartbeat because it's family and I'd be happy to go to prison for him.' Amy, (female, 17 years).

Thinking intersectionally became increasingly important to me as my fieldwork progressed, as stories such as Raza's, Shaun's and Amy's revealed how prejudice and marginalisation both created and compounded young people's losses. As I reflected in my fieldnotes:

'It feels increasingly important to me... not to underestimate the structural and systematic inequalities young people in the YJS are facing and the ways in which these issues of race, class, sexuality, gender, as well as learning/ communication/ emotional difficulties intersect in relation to the nature, extent and impact of young people's losses and the ways in which society responds to them.' Fieldnotes, (October 2017).

Keeping marginal intersectionalities in mind and their importance for criminological enquiry (De Coster and Heimer, 2017; Paik, 2017; Burgess-Proctor, 2006:40) felt paramount therefore to understanding why young people like Amy, Shaun and Raza had become involved in crime. The stories of these particular young people provided insight into how particular forms of loss were both generated and sustained by structural and societal inequality, and how stigma, prejudice and internalised labelling became insidious aspects of young people's attachment to offending identities.

Conclusion

This chapter has revealed how young people's search for connections at times brought them into contact with youth justice services. Engagement in offending produced opportunity for young people to form relationships with peers and adults, seek adult attention or establish continuing bonds with estranged family members, including those in custody and those who had died. Young people's search for connection through offending helped them make sense of their lives, as they constructed their own narratives and used crime as a way of making meaning and building resilience in the aftermath of loss and in the absence of pro-social support. For some young people, competing stories or gaps in narratives left them juggling multiple identities or feeling unsure of who they were. In these instances, young people had to manage 'fragmented and incongruent identities' (Furlong and Cartmel, 2006:60) and engage in processes of constrained negotiation to assert themselves within their families, peer groups, schools and communities. Offending as part of a 'negotiated identity' under considerable structural constraint (Munford and Sanders, 2015a, 2015b; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005) helped young people recast themselves into something tangible and meaningful, as something that made sense to them when they were left with incoherent stories or unanswered questions about their family history or heritage. Finally, offending helped young people take control of

how they were conceptualised by those around them, enabling them to shed unwanted associations with victimhood or vulnerability and realign themselves with hegemonic (masculine and cultural) assertions of emotional hardness, physical strength and family loyalty.

Findings 5 - The extent of loss in the lives of young people who offend



Image credit: *'I don't live properly without pets'* Michael, aged 12.

Introduction

Having explored loss thematically, I now turn my attention to the extent of loss experienced by young people attending the two YOTs within which I conducted my fieldwork. In order to do this I draw primarily upon case analysis from each setting, undertaken by myself in Peasetown, and with support from the YOT's Performance Analyst in Adlerville. As I worked with each data set in slightly different ways, (largely due to varying restrictions regarding access), it is not my intention to present these findings as a direct comparison between the two settings. It is also outside of the parameters of this research to utilise 'big data' or engage in meaningful quantitative analysis or mixed methods triangulation (Hussein, 2015) in relation to the extent of loss experienced by young people in each of the YOTs. Instead I intend to use case data from both YOTs as an illustrative tool to explore the prevalence of loss in each setting, including examples of how different types and combinations of loss may interact and affect young people's offending trajectories.

It is important to remember that not all aspects of loss experienced by young people will have been recorded in assessment data; Firstly, because young people were not likely to explicitly connect their offending behaviours to feelings of loss and secondly, because offending is not usually theorised by YOT practitioners in relation to loss. For young people, it is not surprising that explicit connections between loss and offending behaviours were rarely made, particularly due to the complicated nature of

grief, which often presents as anger (Butler, 2014), or numbness (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2015), particularly when it is complicated (Meshot and Leitner, 1993; Rando, 1993a) or unresolved (Vaswani, 2014; Bowlby, 1980). As such, feelings of anger are far easier for young people to identify. Using examples from case data, including young people's self assessments (SA) and YOT Practitioner analysis via Asset Pus, I draw upon Judith Butler's theory of anger as grief in action (2014), positing that the anger young people identify may be a secondary rather than primary emotion, potentially stemming from a previous loss, hurt or injustice that may be more difficult to conceptualise or define. This is a particularly pertinent point when young people's learning needs are taken into account, including the well documented prevalence of SpLC difficulties within the offending population, including difficulties conceptualising and indentifying more abstract feelings and emotions (Gregory and Bryan, 2011). I use Michael's story to add contextual richness to the data here, exploring the pervasive loss Michael experienced, and how his losses and offending behaviours became physically, psychologically and emotionally entangled. In essence, Michael's story serves to pull each of the previous findings chapters together, as his story highlights how pervasive loss embodies lost childhood, opportunity and agency, and how offending enables a sense of connection and belonging when young people's lives are consumed by pervasive loss. Michael's story also illustrates the potential for young people to become trapped in a symbiotic cycle of loss, offending and YOT contact, as young people's criminalisation generated additional losses that further marginalised them thus intensified the likelihood of their future involvement in crime (McAra and McVie, 2010).

In addition to case data, I draw insight from YOT practitioners across each setting, as they considered their own perceptions regarding the extent of loss experienced by young people in the criminal justice system. I was interested in how YOT practitioners conceptualised loss (as a welfare issue, criminogenic need or a mixture of the two), and how they subsequently documented young people's loss experiences within youth justice assessment data.

I conclude this chapter with a suggested model for practice that seeks to illustrate different offending trajectories according to the nature and extent of loss in young people's lives. I hypothesise that young people who experience pervasive loss are more likely to have continued contact with youth justice services than those who

experience fewer losses, even if those fewer losses are deeply significant in a young person's life. This particular finding broadly resonates with current adversity research (Hughes et al, 2017; American Academy of Pediatrics, 2014; Bellis et al, 2014) that stipulates links between continued exposure to multiple adversities and diminished life chances (including increased likelihood of mental ill health, substance misuse and contact with offending services (Chard, 2017; Baglivio et al, 2015; Fox et al, 2015)). In addition, I contend that when young people do not have the skills, resources or support systems readily available to make meaning or construct coherent narratives in relation to their losses, either as a result of a lack of pro-social adult contact or as a result of their SEND, SpLC or emotional literacy difficulties, they become particularly at risk of persistent involvement with YJSs.

Loss in assessment documentation

Youth justice assessment has not historically been designed with issues of loss at the forefront. Instead, much focus is on risk (Smith, 2014b, 2011; Case and Haines, 2009), including analysis of criminogenic factors deemed to increase a young person's risk of harm (Farrington, 2014; 2003; 1997; YJB, 2005). At the point of fieldwork, both YOTs had moved from Asset (YJB, 2005) to Asset Plus (YJB, 2014; Baker, 2012) as an analytical tool to document and plan responses to young people's offending. Whilst the structure and content of Asset Plus definitely appears to enable greater opportunity for exploration of wider issues (including loss) than its predecessor, youth justice assessment nevertheless remains predominantly concerned with risk reduction, focusing most acutely upon a young person's current situation, as opposed to 'peeling back the layers' of a young person's life and circumstances that may have brought them into the offending arena in the first place. As such, to explore the extent of loss in the lives of young people who offend, it was important that I took the limitations of Asset Plus into account, whilst also respecting the analytical skills and professional judgement of those completing them.

In addition to the construction of youth justice assessment, there were other limitations of this particular research in relation to gaining a comprehensive understanding of the extent of loss in young people's lives. I did not explore specific crime types in relation to loss so I cannot say whether or not experiences of loss increase the likelihood of a particular type of offending. Some research has already been conducted in relation to unresolved grief and violent crime (Vaswani et al,

2016; Vaswani, 2014; Grimshaw et al, 2011; Boswell, 1996) although this has generally been undertaken within custodial settings as opposed to within community YOTs. I also did not explicitly investigate the extent of cumulative accounts of loss within young people's assessment data³⁴, although I did explore cumulative loss within individual young people's narratives and their corresponding case data.

In each YOT setting, I worked in different ways to explore the extent of loss in young people's lives. Working this way was not my initial intention (and largely ensued as a result of varying degrees of access to case data). However, this allowed me to approach my investigation into the extent of loss in different ways, bringing detail to the surface that may have been missed had I followed an identical analytical process within each YOT. In Peasetown, with access to the majority of YOT data, I was able to explore in depth the extent of loss within individual cases, connecting specific loss events with both the wider contextual backdrops of young people's lives and their offending behaviour. In Adlerville, with the support of the YOT's Data Analyst, I explored the extent of loss more broadly, comparing case data from young people flagged in Asset Plus as having experienced significant bereavement and loss, with those who had not been flagged. I do not intend to present these findings comparatively therefore, but rather as a way of illuminating how pervasive loss appears apparent in the lives of young people who become entangled within YJSs, particularly when such loss is paired with SpLC, SEND and emotional literacy difficulties, and, or a lack of pro-social support and guidance.

It is important to note at this point that I used case data within both Peasetown and Adlerville as a way of gaining a contextual overview and understanding of how loss was recorded and theorised within each YOT setting. Within Peasetown I was able to explore all active cases that merited completion of Asset Plus. In Adlerville, with the support of the YOT analyst, I was able to compare cases where young people had been flagged and not flagged as having experienced significant loss and bereavement. The documentation I explored therefore provided insight into the nature and extent of loss for young people whose offending merited completion of

³⁴Whilst research regarding cumulative losses and offending is scarce, there is existing research in relation to the accumulation of ACEs and offending behaviour (Reavis et al, 2013). I theorise that exposure to ACEs also likely constitutes experience of loss; therefore those with cumulative ACEs are also likely to have experienced pervasive loss.

Asset Plus documentation (nominally those with statutory YOT involvement, including young people with Referral Orders and in one case, a young person with an Individual Order)³⁵. During the course of this research project I worked with young people with varying degrees of YOT involvement; some were bound by statutory orders, some were preventions or ASB cases and some had no YOT contact at all. The case data presented within this chapter does not specifically reflect individual stories shared by young people therefore, rather it provides an overview of the types of losses young people with statutory YOT contact experienced and how frequently they arose. It is also important to note that not all young people whose case data I explored were active participants within this research. Although I had ethical approval to access YOT assessment data, it was imperative I respected and remembered that young people had not always given me their explicit permission to access their records. Accordingly, I did not extract quotes from assessment data where I did not have young people's permission to do so and I did not read or disclose specific details of their offending. In order to ensure I approached this aspect of the research with ethical integrity, I engaged in a continual process of critical self-reflection during data collection, analysis and 'write up'. I also made good use of my supervisory team during this time to help ensure the findings I have constructed and presented below share valuable insight from young people's case data in an ethically sensitive, ethically appropriate and ethically responsible manner.

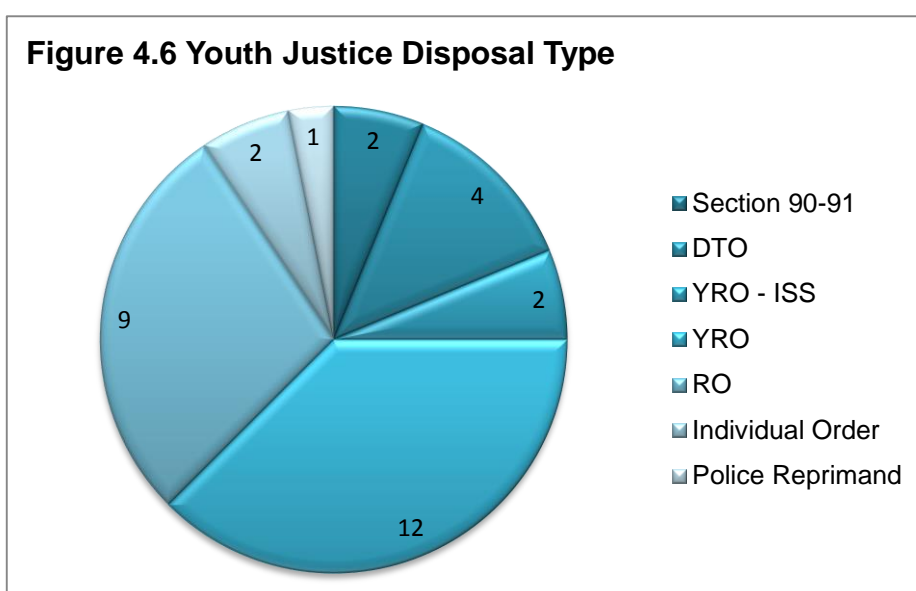
Digging deep, case analysis in Peasetown

As a former YOT employee, and as a current employee of Peasetown local authority, I had both ethical approval and insider knowledge that enabled me to explore young people's case data. In order to understand the extent of loss affecting young people who offend in Peasetown, I analysed thirty two live cases (including young people's SA data). The majority of these cases were Referral Orders (RO) or Youth Rehabilitation Orders (YRO), although young people subject to other types of youth justice disposal were also included, including those subject to Detention and Training Orders (DTO) and Section 90-91 orders³⁶. A full breakdown of disposals can be seen

³⁵ I also explored one preventions (Police Reprimand) case at the young person's request. This felt appropriate, both as a way of respecting the wishes of the young person and due to their heavy involvement with the research.

³⁶ Although I did not focus my research upon young people in custody, I decided to nevertheless include cases where young people had received DTO or Section 90-91 orders on the basis that they either already were or were soon to be released under YOT supervision in the community. The majority of young people on such orders were also already known to YOT prior to committing the offence which resulted in their custodial sentence.

below (figure 4.6). All but two of the cases analysed were recorded using Asset Plus (one care taken case was recorded using Asset and another was a police reprimand, recorded by the arresting officer and selected due to my one-to-one work with the young person involved). I also explored additional data in relation to a sub-set of these cases (selected according to young people's varying degrees of involvement with the YOT), including case discussions captured in meeting minutes, assessment documentation from other agencies, (including documentation from education, CAMHS, education psychology and social services), and young people's contacts (an aspect of the YOT recording system where each individual contact with a young person is detailed, from their attendance and engagement in interventions, to phone calls from parents, carers or other agencies, to court appearances).

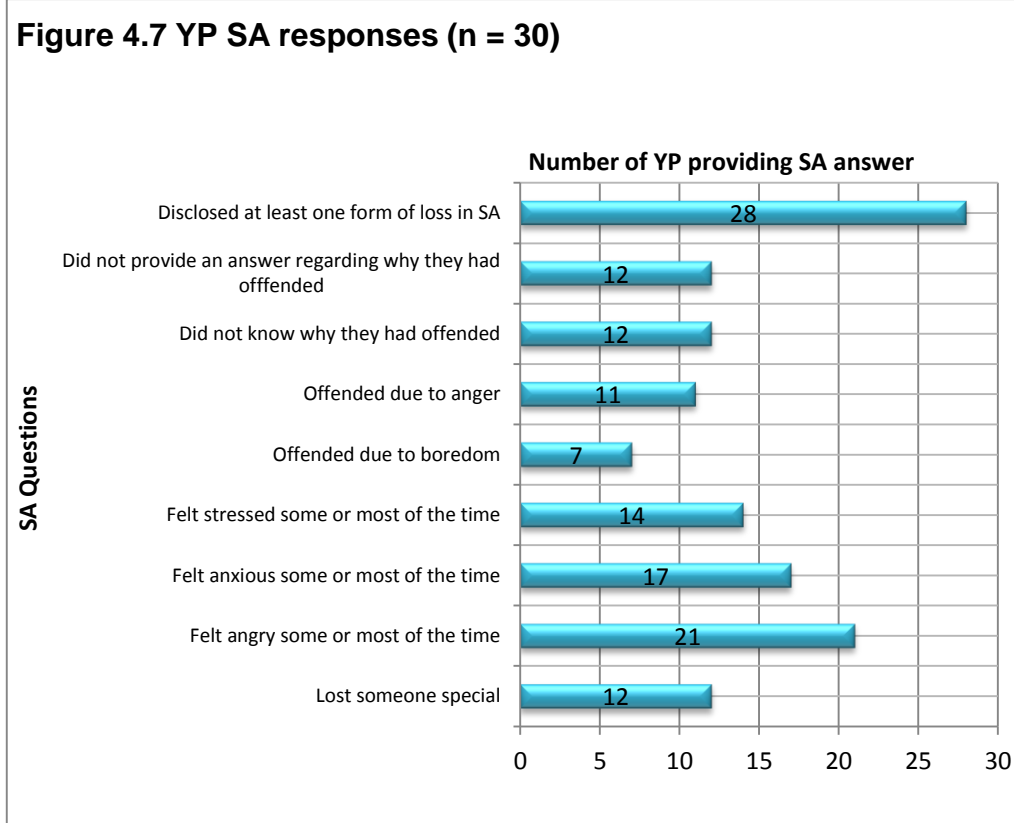


I began with an exploration of young people's SA's. These were available in 30 of the 32 cases analysed.³⁷ Within the SA, there is a specific question asking whether young people had lost someone special from their lives. Young people are also asked how often they feel angry, anxious, or stressed. For each closed question asked, there is also opportunity for free text, where young people can elaborate in relation to their answers. Largely young people chose not to elaborate, but on occasion further details were provided. The SA also has a section for parents and carers to comment in relation to their child's behaviours, although again, this was not

³⁷ Of the 32 live cases analysed, one care taken case used Asset rather than Asset Plus and no SA was attached. The other case was a Police Reprimand and therefore no SA was completed as Asset Plus was not used to assess this particular young person. This is why n=30 in figure 4.6.

always completed. Young people and their parents and carers are also asked in the SA why they think that they/ their child committed the offence, with a free text box to respond.

The majority of young people highlighted at least one form of loss within their SA, particularly in relation to loss of education or removal from the family home, but they were unlikely to connect these losses to their offending behaviours. Instead, young people tended to posit 'anger', 'boredom' or in some cases 'not knowing why' as a rationale for engaging in offending behaviour. Figure 4.7 (below) details young people's responses within their SA³⁸:



Although most young people highlighted at least one form of loss within their SA, the losses they identified largely centred around present (within the last year) issues, including school (excluded; withdrawn; moved) or family (parental divorce; family estrangement; taken into care). Where young people highlighted a specific bereavement, (particularly in relation to the death of a grandparent), this also tended

³⁸ Columns 2-5 relate to 'free text' answers young people gave (or did not give) as a reason for their offending behaviour. Columns 6-9 are prescribed SA questions to which young people can answer 'most of the time, some of the time, or none of the time'.

to have occurred within the last year. In contrast, where bereavements were 'off time' (McCoyd and Ambler-Walter, 2016), such as the death of a parent or sibling, these tended to be highlighted by young people regardless of how long ago they occurred. Some young people who were known to have experienced significant loss or bereavement also made no mention of their experiences within their SA. There are several reasons why this might be the case. Firstly, young people may not want to revisit painful or difficult memories; secondly, young people may not regard their past experiences as relevant or related to their offending behaviour; thirdly, young people may not have wanted or been able to provide a comprehensive account of their past experiences within their SA. Indeed, when comparing young people's SAs with their wider assessment documentation, YOT Practitioners were more likely than young people to allude to loss in young people's lives and subsequently connect issues of loss with offending behaviour. This was especially the case when losses had occurred in the past (a significant bereavement; neglect; exposure to domestic violence). Again this is not surprising, as a core aspect of a YOT Practitioner's role is to theorise why a young person might have offended and put meaningful provision in place to address offending behaviour and aid future desistance. The table (figure 4.8) below displays each aspect of loss identified by YOT Practitioners within the 32 active cases I analysed, highlighting both the prevalence and variety of losses recorded within young people's assessment data. It is important to be clear here that each experience I have theorised as loss was not always theorised in the same way by those completing young people's assessment data. Nevertheless, the experiences were recorded as important aspects of young people's backgrounds and circumstances; experiences practitioners' felt affected, impacted upon or helped explain young people's offending behaviour(s) and their contact with the YJS.

Figure 4.8 Prevalence of young people (setting one) where each aspect of loss is highlighted in assessment data.

Nature of loss	Number of cases where each aspect of loss is mentioned (n=32)	Percentage of cases where each aspect of loss is mentioned (%)
Not in full time mainstream education	28	87.5
Living away from family home	22	68.8
Parental divorce/ separation	22	68.8
Social Services involvement	20	62.5
Living away from siblings	20	62.5
Mental health concerns	20	62.5
Significant bereavement	18	56.3
Victim of violence	17	53.1
Witness DV	17	53.1
Recognised SEND/ SpLC difficulties	16	50.0
Neglect	16	50.0
LAC	15	46.9
No contact with father	13	40.6
Parental mental health concerns	13	40.6
Parental substance misuse	13	40.6
No contact with father	13	40.6
Parental criminality	12	37.5
Self harm	9	28.1
Experienced custodial sentence	9	28.1
Foster care (multiple moves)	9	28.1
Sibling criminality	8	25.0
Estranged from mother	8	25.0
Living in poverty	8	25.0
Physical health concerns	7	21.9
Been restrained	6	18.8
Children's Homes (multiple moves)	6	18.8
Sibling in custody	4	12.5
Estranged from own child	3	9.3
Parent in custody	3	9.3
CSE concerns	2	6.3
Bullied	2	6.3
Discovered father not biological father	2	6.3
Victim of sexual assault	1	3.1

The table above helps reveal the significant prevalence of multiple aspects of loss in the lives of young people who offend within Peasetown. A particular concern is the prevalence of young people experiencing educational losses (discussed in detail in findings chapter 2, loss of opportunity), with the majority of young people in this setting whose level of offending merited the completion of Asset Plus documentation (or equivalent) not in full time mainstream education. A minority of young people in this category were in full time specialist education, but most others were accessing

restricted opportunities for learning, whether that be in terms of reduced contact time within mainstream provision where young people were made subject to: part time timetables; time off site; periods spent in isolation; reduced breadth of study (some young people accessing alternative forms of education were only studying Maths and English); breakdowns in educational contact due to exclusion, 'elective' home education or school refusal. As previously discussed, attendance in high quality, meaningful, full time, mainstream education is a significant protective factor for young people (Berridge et al, 2001). The detrimental effect of disconnection from high quality, meaningful, full time, mainstream education is clearly reiterated within my own findings, through the stories young people shared and through the correspondingly high percentage of young people at Peasetown YOT who were marginalised within or from protective forms of educational engagement.

Another highly prevalent form of loss within this sample were those losses affecting young people's family dynamics. Over two thirds of young people had experienced parental divorce or separation, and the same number again were living away from their family home, the majority also living away from their siblings. Divorce statistics in the UK are currently estimated at 42% (ONS, 2014), and whilst specific data regarding the number of young people under 18 living away from their family home does not appear to be readily available, the percentage of young people aged 16 or under and living with both parents is estimated to be 67% (DWP, 2013), revealing young people whose assessment data I analysed were both more likely to have experienced parental divorce or separation and far more likely to be residing away from their family home than their peers.

Other commonly cited losses affecting young people whose cases I analysed included mental health concerns and significant bereavement. In both cases, YOT Practitioners were more likely to identify these issues than young people themselves. Statistics regarding the prevalence of mental health concerns regarding young people within the general population are felt to be unreliable and outdated (Mental Health Foundation, 2016:33), so it is difficult to compare the prevalence of mental ill-health between my sample and young people generally. However, a joint inspection review (Healthcare Commission and HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2009) reported that 43% of young people subject to community orders were flagged as having emotional and mental health needs. My sample again reveals a higher prominence

of mental health concerns, although this may be due to variance in samples, with a higher proportion of preventions cases analysed by the Healthcare Commission and HM Inspectorate of Probation compared to my sample, which included few preventions cases. Regarding exposure to a significant bereavement, prevalence appears not dissimilar to studies relating to the general population of young people in the UK, with most young people having reported experiencing a significant bereavement by the age of 16 (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006). However, a significant difference for young people who offend presents in relation to the higher prevalence of other forms of loss in their lives in addition to their experiences of bereavement, as well as the nature and circumstances of the bereavements themselves (Vaswani, 2014).

As discussed in my first findings chapter, loss of childhood, analysis of assessment data from Peasetown YOT also flagged exposure to violence, as a victim or witness of DV or as a victim or witness of community violence, as prominent losses in young people's lives. According to SafeLives (2017:11), 25% of young people in the UK are exposed to DV. In my sample, 53% young people were exposed to DV and, or, were victims of violence, potentially suggesting a far greater prevalence of loss associated with exposure to DV and other forms of violence than for general populations of young people.³⁹

Finally, half of the young people whose assessment data I analysed were flagged as having SEND and, or, SpLC difficulties. Whilst some of these young people were officially statemented and some form of educational support was in place for them, many were not statemented and as such, had limited access to any form of additional support. Emerson et al (2014) estimated that 3% (n=355,199) of children in England have a learning disability. This is significantly lower than the prevalence of SEND and, or SpLC difficulties for young people who offend, both within my own findings, and within other literature (Achievement For All; 2017; Bryan et al, 2007). SEND and SpLC difficulties can generate great loss in young people's lives; loss as a result of bullying (Institute of Education, 2014); loss as a result of illegal educational exclusion (Children's Commissioner, 2013a, 2013b) or loss as a result of

³⁹ It is also likely that figures in both the general population and in my sample are underrepresented, as DV often remains hidden within families.

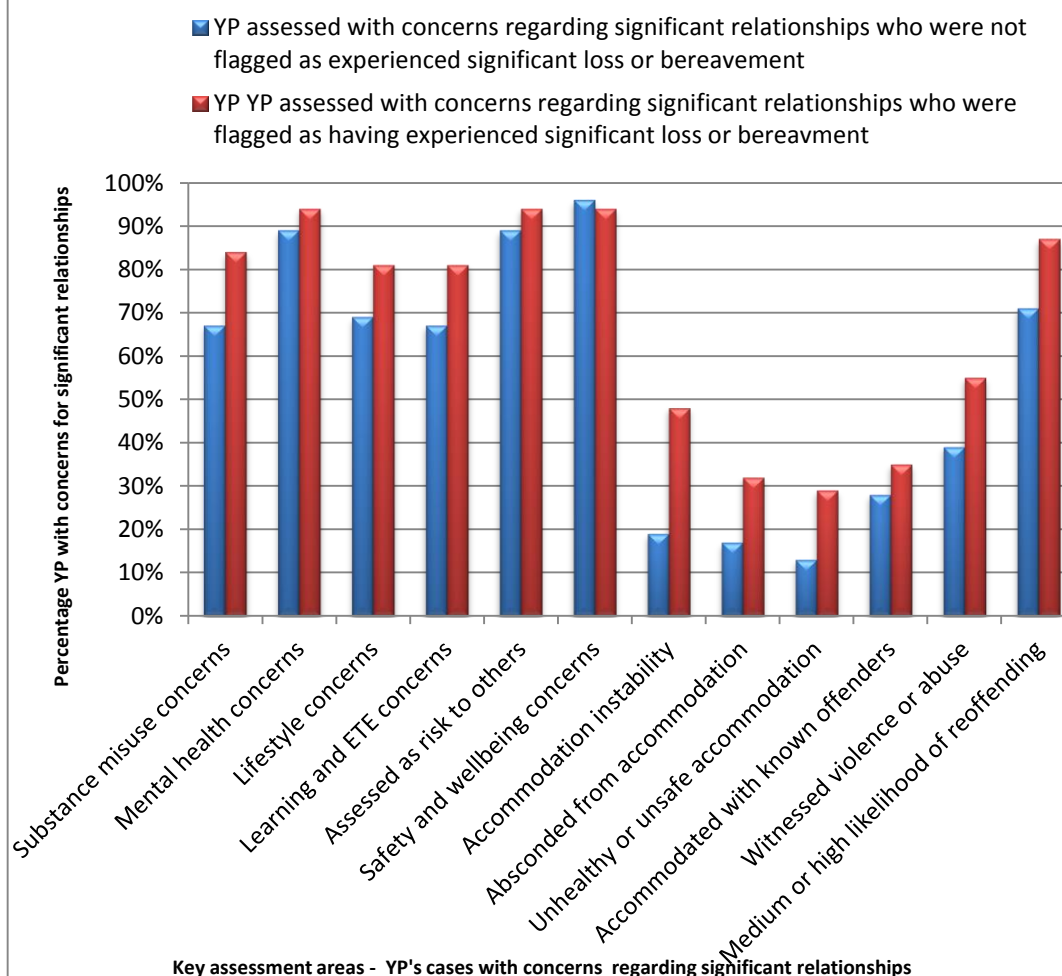
restricted ability to communicate need or resist peer pressure to engage in offending behaviour (Gregory and Bryan, 2011).

Exploring more broadly, case analysis in Adlerville

Adlerville covered both a greater geographical area and a greater population of young people subjected to YOT involvement than Peasetown. As such, I was keen to use case data in order to gain broad insight into the loss experiences of young people attending the YOT, helping enhance my understanding of the extent of loss in young people's lives. In order to achieve this I worked with the YOT's data analyst to consider the experiences of young people flagged as having experienced significant loss or bereavement against those who were not flagged. Of a total of 103 cases, 31 young people were flagged in assessment data from Asset Plus as having experienced significant loss or bereavement. I then compared case data from the 31 flagged young people against the remaining 72 young people who had not been flagged as having experienced significant loss or bereavement.

The graph below (figure 4.9) reveals that young people flagged as experiencing significant loss or bereavement within this particular YOT were more likely to experience a range of other adversities than those who were not flagged. In some cases the likelihood was marginal, but in other instances, there were clear differences between each cohort of young people. Loss and bereavement (as recognised by YOT practitioners as a specific factor in relation to concerns of significant relationships in assessment) therefore seemed to be connected with other potential 'risk factors' for offending, several of which I would also describe as loss imbuing experiences. As with the data analysed in Peasetown, subjectivity within the assessment process must be taken into account (what one YOT Practitioner deems to be a significant loss or bereavement may differ from another YOT Practitioner's interpretation of the same event), whilst simultaneously respecting professional judgement and expertise, practitioner knowledge of the young person, and practitioner understanding of the potential impact of young people's past and present experiences upon their offending behaviour.

Figure 4.9 Comparison between YP (n=103) flagged and not flagged via Asset Plus for significant loss and bereavement.



This graph demonstrates increased concerns for young people flagged as having experienced significant loss and bereavement across all areas except safety and wellbeing concerns where there is a marginal increase in recorded concern for those who have not experienced significant loss and bereavement. Particular differences arise in relation to accommodation difficulties for those who have experienced significant loss and bereavement, with a greater likelihood of young people being housed in, and absconding from, unhealthy, unsafe or unstable accommodation. Young people within this category were also more likely to be housed with known offenders, a factor which research consistently reveals works against desistance (Weaver and McNeill, 2015; Corr, 2014; Giordano et al, 2003). Young people flagged as having experienced significant loss and bereavement were also more likely to have learning and education, training and employment (ETE) difficulties, a particular

concern due to the dual protective nature of high quality, meaningful ETE as a tool for desistance (Maruna, 1999) and as a protective factor against unresolved grief (McCoyd and Ambler-Walter, 2016). This decreased likelihood of desistance is echoed in the assessment data, as young people who have experienced significant loss and bereavement are predicted more likely to reoffend than those who have not experienced significant loss and bereavement, suggesting a need for tailored intervention to better encourage and facilitate the process of desistance within this group.

Contextualising the data: Young people's stories and practitioner reflections on the prevalence of loss in the lives of young people who offend

My epistemological leanings champion the importance of contextualisation within theory construction. I also champion the exploration of young people's stories as a tool of knowledge production and as an important way of helping understand the challenges and issues faced by young people who offend. It feels important at this juncture therefore to consider young people's stories and practitioner views in conjunction with case data regarding the prevalence of loss in the lives of young people who offend. First I explore Michael's story, a young person affected by pervasive loss across structural and personal domains. I propose that when young people like Michael experience such unrelenting loss, especially when it is compounded by other issues, including a lack of pro-social relationships and SpLC, SEND and emotional literacy difficulties, (which in themselves can also be theorised as additional losses), their likelihood of offending increases. I then consider YOT Practitioner's views, including how they define and theorise loss in youth justice, and the implications of this for young people's assessment and the interventions they receive.

Michael's story...

Michael was 12 years old when I met him and was subject to a 12 month YRO for six offences including violence against the person, theft and affray. Michael's case was care taken, he was a LAC YP brought into care aged 11 under the category of neglect and placed in Peasetown after his offending on his home estate escalated. Michael's home town was approximately 20 miles away, and the estate he grew up on is listed as one of the 10% most deprived boroughs in the country (TVU Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2015). Michael's father died in 2012 from a suspected drugs overdose; prior to this there had been a long history of domestic abuse perpetration within the home. Michael's mother had substance abuse and alcohol issues, and was described by Michael's social worker as showing him 'very little love, care or attention'. Michael was aware that he had grandparents living on the estate, but he told me he had 'no idea who they were, I've never met them in my life'. Whilst living at home, Michael had long periods out of school, and spent a full year off role before being taken into care. Brad (YOT Practitioner) described Michael's previous experiences at school as 'he wanted to be in education, education didn't want him.' Michael also spent much of his time away from the family home, sleeping rough on the hills, or being 'carried' around the estate by older peers in stolen cars. Since becoming LAC, Michael had moved placements several times, often with little or no notice and with a rationale provided that 'if he knows what is happening he'll run' (social care case notes). Michael was incredibly protective of his family, and he was desperate to spend time with his mother and older siblings. His mother however often failed to attend the fortnightly contact sessions that were arranged and Michael's older siblings only attended sporadically. Following allegations from Michael that a member of staff at his latest care home had made threats 'to break every bone in his body', he was placed in foster care where he started to settle and make good progress on his court order. Michael had contact with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) both in his home area and in Peasetown. One of his CAMHS workers described Michael's offending as being 'a communication of the emotional distress he is under' and his CAMHS psychologist suggested Michael 'would benefit from a lengthy piece of work to support him with his emotional needs, however social services need to support him with a permanent placement before this can commence in order to reduce disruption' (CAMHS report). Following his move into foster care, Michael was placed in a specialist ESBD school where he was initially reported to be doing well and responding to the new routine. However, as time passed, Michael became increasingly disengaged, explaining that 'the teachers are always shouting and I have to work on my own.' Michael also complained of being restrained and explained he 'hates being grabbed'. As I was completing my fieldwork Michael was excluded from his specialist ESBD provision, as his behaviour was reported by teaching staff as 'too difficult to manage' (YOT contact). His foster placement also broke down and shortly after, Michael reoffended.

Pervasive loss in the lives of young people who offend

Michael's story reveals the prevalence of loss for some young people who offend. Figure 4.10 below details some of the structural and personal losses experienced by

Michael, further compounded by his SpLC, ESD and emotional literacy difficulties, as well as his lack of pro-social role models or family support:

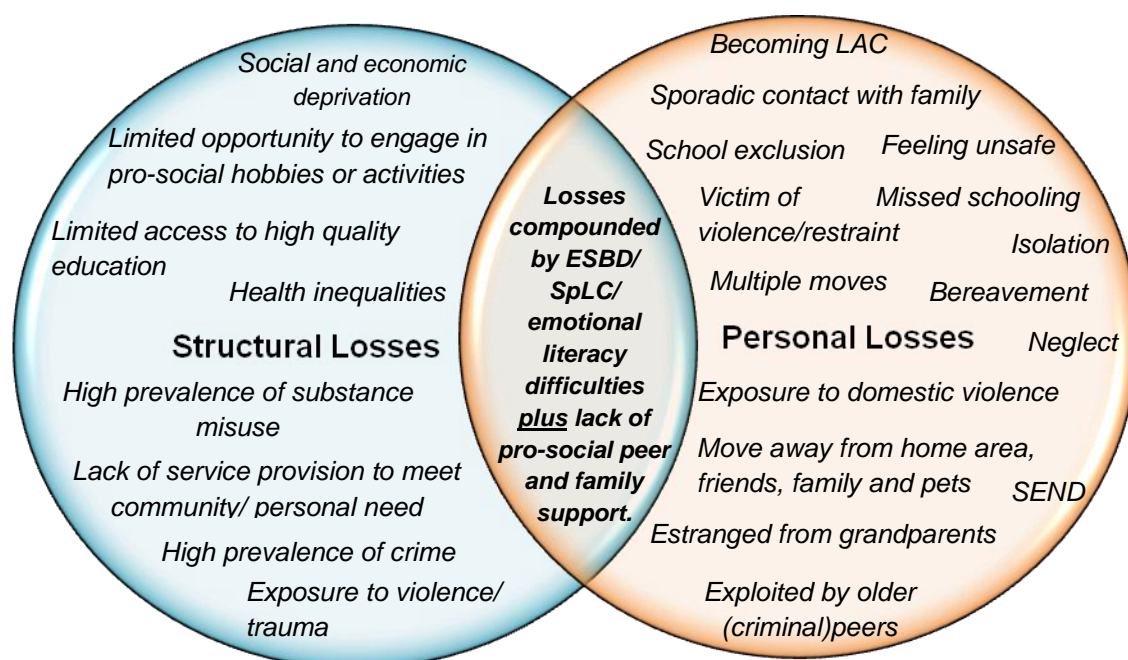


Figure 4.10 Mapping Michael's losses

During our time together, Michael alluded to several of the losses he had sustained, including the traumatic death of his father, his estrangement from his grandparents (particularly 'nanna'), and the full year he spent out of education. Michael also spoke about being locked in a shed that was set on fire by older boys and spending time away from home, 'stealing out of shops because [I] was hungry'. Michael's tales of loss however were often wrapped up in idolised accounts of life 'running wild on the estate' and engaging in high risk behaviours with his peers, including acts of criminality and ASB. In this sense, it felt clear to me that Michael was torn between establishing continuing bonds (Klass et al, 1996) with his lost, other life, and accepting that his move into care was probably in his best interests:

'It's better here (pause 2 seconds), I get to go to school here and I didn't get to go before, at home.' Michael, (male, 12 years).

Michael's story attests to each of the thematic losses described in the previous four findings chapters. Exposure to abuse, neglect and violence left him essentially 'adultified' (Smith, 2010; Burton, 2007), as Michael was denied his right as a child to protection from harm (UNCRC, 1989). Removal from education lost Michael the

opportunity to engage with learning, as well as denying him much needed support in relation to his SEND, SpLC and emotional literacy difficulties. Becoming LAC meant that Michael was removed from his family, friends and home town, losses that were disenfranchised because ultimately, they were deemed to be in his best interest. Being shielded from the truth about his mother's regular absence from contact both deprived Michael of agency and left him deeply suspicious of social care, intensifying existing difficulties building relationships with adults (Stein, 2005). Michael's estrangement from his grandparents and his father's death left him with unanswered questions about who he was and what had happened, and the lack of support he had received to 'make meaning' from his experiences (Gillies and Neimeyer, 2006) had left him to imagine what life with (particularly 'nanna') would have been like. Engaging in offending therefore became a way for Michael to harness the limited resources at his disposal to 'make meaning' and manage pervasive loss in his life; it helped him build resource, establish connections and feel a sense of belonging in a world that to all intents and purposes, had rejected him.

Admittedly, Michael's case is an extreme example, and the extent of loss in his life does not necessarily reflect the accumulative loss experiences of the majority of young people who offend (later in this chapter I explore a model for potential offending trajectories according to the nature, extent and pervasiveness of loss in young people's lives). Nevertheless, almost all the young people I worked with and whose cases I analysed had been subjected to at least one form of loss, and in many cases, young people were dealing with a plethora of losses in lieu of a trusted adult or any specialist intervention or support. Michael's loss experiences were multiple and sustained over time. He was also the youngest person at Peasetown YOT to be subject to a YRO, suggesting that pervasive loss may elevate offending trajectories. This finding once more resonates with recent work on adversity, where it is suggested that exposure to adversity over time, particularly when the young person involved does not have the care and support of a trusted adult, can lead to poor outcomes, including involvement in crime, substance misuse and mental ill health (HMIP 2017; Bellis et al, 2014).

The ripple effect of unresolved loss

Michael's losses not only intersected and intertwined with his offending and ASB, some of his losses also created a ripple effect, leading to further loss, which most of

the time remained unaddressed and unresolved as Michael had neither the communication skills, nor access to a trusted adult or specialist service to help him make any sense or meaning of the losses he was experiencing. As such, Michael sought his own sources of support, forming connections with older peers and engaging in high risk behaviours, including committing crime and ASB. This in turn led to further losses for Michael, as he became more deeply ingrained within the YJS and eventually, removed from his home area. As Michael's CAMHS worker suggests, his offending behaviour was likely 'a communication of the emotional distress he [was] under' and as Brad, Michael's YOT Worker reflected, 'he thinks that nobody's listening to him, he's probably right'. The ripple effect generated by loss was also evident in other young people's cases, particularly those of LAC young people whose move into care stimulated further loss on top of the losses they were already subject to within their family homes. Young people often felt that these losses were disenfranchised (Doka, 2017, 2002) because becoming LAC was deemed to be in their best interests (as reflected in Danny and Carly's stories in my previous findings chapter, loss of agency). Whilst this may be the case, it is important to remember that young people still felt a sense of loss, and that a move into care often created secondary losses for young people, including loss of pets, loss of friends, loss of school and loss of a familiar place. As Michael remembers:

'I had so many pets at home. I love animals, they're so cute. I love cats, they're so fluffy and cute. I had two cats and two dogs, I had two cats and two dogs when I lived at home, I have one dog now I live here which is good because I don't like live properly without pets. But when I first [became LAC] there was no pets where I lived.' Michael, (male, 12 years).

Young people also sometimes experienced further losses as a consequence of their offending behaviour; several young people whose cases I analysed had lost educational placements and one young person, who had committed a driving offence, lost his employment as a result of the driving ban he received. Other young people reoffended as a response to experiencing further losses, as was the case for Michael, whose reoffending immediately followed his exclusion from the ESBD specialist school and the breakdown of his foster care placement. In this sense, loss permeated multiple aspects of young people's lives, with one loss sometimes resulting in a series of further, secondary losses for young people.

Criminogenic, welfare or a mixture of the two? Theorising loss and offending with YOT Practitioners

Previous research charts a 'troubled history' between YOT practitioners and loss (Hester and Taylor, 2011). I was keen therefore to gather practitioner perspectives from my own fieldwork settings, particularly in light of revised assessment processes (YJB, 2014; Baker, 2012) and emerging emphasis on trauma informed practice (YJB, 2017). During interviews with YOT Practitioners, I was interested to ascertain an understanding of how they theorised loss in the lives of young people who offend; as a criminogenic factor, a welfare issue or a mixture of the two. I also wanted to understand whether practitioners considered loss to be a prevalent issue within youth justice, and if so, whether or not they felt that different loss experiences affected young people's offending trajectories. Here I discuss how YOT Practitioners conceptualised loss in the lives of young people they worked with, considering their use of language and terminology to explain young people's experiences as well as the credence practitioners' placed upon young people's loss experiences as a contributory factor towards their offending behaviours.

A word on terminology

As previously discussed, offending behaviours are not usually theorised within youth justice in relation to loss; terminology pertaining to 'risk' or 'risk factors' has instead been the dominant vocabulary of youth justice policy, practice and assessment to date. As such, I found that practitioners used a variety of different terms to describe loss during interview, including young people's exposure to 'multiple adversities', 'traumatic experiences', or their 'attachment issues'. One notable exception to this was bereavement, which practitioners predominantly framed as loss. This is unsurprising, as loss is most typically associated with death in British culture, whereas experiences such as divorce, exclusion or poverty are less readily theorised as loss (Kroll, 2002)⁴⁰. An important aspect of my research therefore was to tunnel under these different terminologies to understand how young people's experiences produced feelings of loss, as well as understanding how practitioners conceptualised loss themselves, and in light of this, how they interpreted and responded to young people's experiences.

⁴⁰ This is perhaps due to the permanence of death. When someone dies, there is no hope of return. For other losses, such as loss of education or loss through divorce or separation, hope of restoration may prevail. In this sense, theorising experiences other than death as losses may feel problematic. I argue however that even if restoration happens in the future, loss (and all the thoughts, feelings, actions and emotions that accompany it) has still occurred, and life therefore, is no longer the same.

'I never thought about it this way before but it's massive!' YOT practitioners' views on the extent of loss in the lives of young people who offend

Assessment data in youth justice is usually completed by YOT practitioners, and predominantly, by YOT Officers. In order to understand the prevalence of loss in youth justice therefore, it is equally important to understand how practitioners conceptualise and document young people's experiences. Here I discuss YOT practitioners' perspectives regarding the extent of loss in the lives of young people who offend, including how those with case management responsibility documented young people's experiences during assessment.

The extracts below show some of the different ways in which YOT Practitioners conceptualised loss:

'I think going back to sort of like the social factors, when you talk about loss it's not necessarily bereavement, it's sort of areas that are missing in their lives.' Becky, (YOT Officer).

'I think loss, you know, it's more than just bereavement you know isn't it. It's just kind of loss of the good old days... When everything was good, compared to now, when everything's kind of (pauses) not so good.' James, (YOT Officer).

'I've noticed recently a lot of pre-court cases that have had come through um, where the young people have experienced a death. It's been, there's been a common theme really. A loss in that respect has a massive impact on a young person um, you know, kind of everything that they've known kind of goes out of the window, that their life's I suppose, kind of turned upside down.' Paige, (YOT Officer).

'You're on a scale with young people from the most resilient young people to, to, to kids who can't cope at all.' Chris, (YOT Officer).

'There is no doubt that when there is assessments done, undertaken and you try to understand exactly what's been going on in a child's life, what significant events may have triggered certain behaviours, there's no doubt that when I've gone through some of the assessments there are life changes that then trigger offending behaviour. No doubt about it. It's as simple as seeing

someone's suffered a loss at a certain point in time and then very shortly thereafter, something significant has happened in terms of their offending behaviour.' Harry, (YOT Manager).

In each of these extracts, loss was theorised in different ways; as something missing; as yearning for times gone by; as change; as varying degrees of resilience. This speaks to a key issue in relation to loss in the lives of young people who offend; it is experienced in different ways by different young people according to a complex mesh of personal and social factors within their lives. Added to this, old losses may also surface and resurface over time as young people encounter critical moments and move through key transitions over their life course (King, 2016, 2015; MacDonald and Shildrick, 2013; Holland et al, 2007; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005). It is particularly difficult therefore to conceptualise loss within the set assessment measures and time bound intervention processes that currently dominate youth justice policy and practice, leaving many practitioners (somewhat ironically) at a loss with loss. Despite their differing theoretical framings however, most YOT Practitioners when directly asked about loss felt it was a prevalent aspect of young people's lives, particularly when loss was viewed more broadly than bereavement:

'I never thought about it this way before, but it's massive.' Wendy, (YOT Worker).

'When I hear the word loss I think of bereavement. It's wrong I suppose. It doesn't mean that I would have neglected to think of those other things as factors, but I suppose not, not labelling it as loss, I would have labelled it as something different. Almost so like a relationship breakdown rather than a death I would have called a relationship breakdown rather than a loss... but I think it's a, it's a better way of looking at it I suppose, it's a good way of framing it.' Brad, (YOT Worker).

'Young people can obviously, their emotions can come out through offending maybe because of that, but also there's the other side of it where it's like the attachments and stuff that probably also feels a bit like a loss.' Paige, (YOT Officer).

Most of the time, loss was viewed as negative, although there were some occasions where loss was deemed to be a positive experience for young people, as Rosie reflects:

'It can be positive, loss... I had one; this boy has never come back. It may resurface in months, as years go on but at present he is not displaying any negative by-products of the loss which he's suffered which is completely not what any of the practitioners around him thought would happen. He was at high risk of serious harm, high risk of reoffending, high risk of vulnerability. Gone into foster care, six months later when we've done another ASSET, it was almost low in every, in every arena, because of the, apart from his vulnerability. I mean there's still issues with his emotional wellbeing... but at present, he's presenting, he's coping extremely well with it, if not he's thriving, which is really unusual.' Rosie, (YOT Officer).

It is interesting that despite framing this young person's loss as a positive experience, Rosie was also aware that further, negative connotations may surface over time. This is consistent with other research on loss as a risk factor (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006), including Worden's (1996) study of bereaved children, where children displayed more adverse responses to loss two years after their loss than they did in the immediate aftermath.

Asset Plus (YJB, 2014, Baker, 2012) is a relatively new system of youth justice assessment, replacing Asset (YJB, 2005). In both settings, Asset Plus was praised for its ability to help practitioners dig deeper into young people's lives and experiences than its predecessor. Asset Plus is undoubtedly more forward facing and strengths based than Asset, and practitioners felt that its design facilitated opportunity to consider the important 'so what' questions in relation to young people's past experiences. Nevertheless, there is still little emphasis upon the effect of loss. There were varied responses regarding how practitioners recorded young people's experiences, although the general consensus was that stories could 'weave through' the assessment, and that this helped those assessing make connections between loss and offending behaviours:

'I find the assessments are good, the assessments are there to lead you in a direction and to bring the issues up. You know the indicators, the questions,

you don't ask them verbatim I mean but they are there as indicators. And Asset Plus has evolved.' Barry, (YOT Officer).

'What I love about Asset Plus actually, it's not my favourite thing (laughs), it's been a learning curve. But what I do like is the way that it incorporates significant events. You've got all of the incidents which are more linked to kind of offending type of behaviours, and actual offences that have happened and I like the way it maps it out. I like the way that you have to analyse all of that and how it all kind of links in together um and that's really, really helpful.' Orla, (YOT Officer).

'I think it's weaved all the way through, so that loss it's a, obviously it comes into family and personal relationships, but then it comes into like self-identity... It goes into the thinking and behaviour... So the whole loss issue is weaved right the way through... because it's weaved into all these areas, that probably is the key reason, one of the key things of why you're offending.' Rosie, (YOT Officer).

There was overwhelming agreement from YOT Practitioners that loss was prevalent in the lives of young people who offend, but did they regard these losses as welfare issues, potential criminogenic factors, or a mixture of the two? Almost every practitioner I spoke with said they felt loss was both a criminogenic factor and a welfare need:

'It's a bit of a mixture. It's like anything it's not got one meaning or one cause or factor. There's many different factors. Um, it might start off as a welfare issue but if it's unmet, it can develop into criminogenic factor because it, it hasn't been met so if the kid's experiencing loss, he needs to overcome that loss so he can go and find it in a different way. Um, and that might lead them into bad situations and then the criminogenic factors come in even more so you've added more factors into that initial loss. You've added more tiers which now need to be closed down etcetera.' Barry, (YOT Officer).

'Umm, both. I would view it as, well it's like the welfare, justice debate though, they, they go hand in hand. That's kind of where my job is, often it's a little bit

of, I mean I'm not a qualified social worker by any means, but they do go hand in hand.' Rosie, (YOT Officer).

'When you're looking at the theories of why young people offend you have to look at the relationship between like loss, bereavement or, or attachment. Anything like that there's a reason why they done it.' Chris, (YOT Officer).

Responding to loss however was almost always explained by practitioners in relation to addressing welfare needs as opposed to being conceptualised as a way of addressing an underlying cause of young people's offending behaviour. This reflects an interesting divergence between words and deeds, accentuating Charmaz's emphasis on finding the 'gerunds' and observing process and practice during fieldwork (Charmaz, 2014).

'It depends on the sort of relationship with the young person that you have, you know if someone just says I don't want to talk about me past, I don't want to talk about this bereavement, I don't want to talk about anything really. Um, it all depends on the young person.' James, (YOT Officer).

'He's never told me but I know from his notes; he's been through some terrible experiences, terrible losses. But he's not brought it up so I'm wondering how to approach that with him, or maybe just leave it be and deal with the [offending] behaviour until he feels ready, if he does, to talk more in depth about his past.' Gina, (YOT Officer).

'I think it's both (pause 1 second), I think, I couldn't say for example like, somebody who lost their father or mother two years ago, they commit an offence two years later. You can't say that there's a direct link between that loss and that offence being committed. Um, I'm sure there is some kind of, um, link, but I don't think, it's not a direct link, it's not direct because it was two years ago so you can't say that. Um, but I think for welfare it's huge.' Paige, (YOT Officer).

Some practitioners did however emphasise the importance of working on a case by case basis and not making assumptions about the effect of young people's loss experiences upon their offending behaviour:

'I think it's dependent on the individual. I think you've got to look at like the fuller picture and the history and the circumstances around, sort of, the offending really. I think it all depends on the individual.' Becky, (YOT Officer).

It appears therefore that although YOT Officers may theorise loss in different ways, using different terminology to describe similar experiences at times, most were nevertheless exploring young people's offending behaviours in relation to loss during assessment. This way of thinking appears to be supported and enabled by documentation such as Asset Plus, despite its continued emphasis on assessing risk, because Asset Plus encourages the weaving of significant stories throughout different aspects of the assessment process. Weaving stories in this way should allow important connections to be made between young people's experiences and their offending behaviours, enabling conclusions to be drawn in relation to why a young person may have begun offending in the first place, and crucially, what needs to happen to support their future desistance. However, a disconnect seemed to occur between assessment and intervention, as different aspects of young people's lives become segregated and responded to as either 'criminogenic' or 'welfare' needs, as opposed to being viewed and responded to holistically. It was here, as Hester and Taylor (2011) also found, that responding to loss became problematic for practitioners, as they either viewed themselves ill equipped to undertake loss work, or felt that loss and other 'welfare' work, detracted from work they saw as more orientated towards addressing offending:

'Obviously I'm not a social worker, counsellor. I'm not trained to do grief work.' Wendy, (YOT Worker).

'You have, with some young people you can barely scratch the surface with a lot of things, you feel as if you're chasing your tail a bit. You're just trying difficult work and then they're committing further offences and, or just giving you the run around, it's absolute chaos sometimes you know when you can't

(laughs) you can't even touch base with them sometimes because there's one thing after another that you're trying to deal with.' James, (YOT Officer).

Acknowledging the extent of loss in young people's lives, whilst simultaneously separating it from offending and deeming it best left in the hands of specialist social workers, CAMHS practitioners or grief counsellors, left YOT practitioners with a dilemma. Complex referral mechanisms, long waiting lists, high thresholds and difficulties engaging young people on YOT caseloads often meant young people's needs were insufficiently addressed by the services YOTs referred into. This left YOT practitioners relying on the power of relationships built with young people as a way of exploring loss on an ad hoc basis. In some instances practitioners feared they might make things worse because they did not have specialist expertise, although most felt that doing something was better than doing nothing, as YOT manager Hayley explains:

'We've got a culture here whereby if a need is identified and that need has to be met in order to make progress or move on or begin to make sense of kind of why a young person is behaving in the way that they are, we kind of take it on ourselves um if we're getting that kind of stop from other departments or services. I appreciate that there's a capacity issue, there's a fear factor, but I know that the culture here overtakes that because if we need something doing, and we think it's going to benefit someone then we will do it.' Hayley, (YOT Manager).

In constructivist loss literature, establishing positive relationships where meaning making can take place is deemed to be a crucial element of coming to terms with loss (Neimeyer, Klass and Dennis, 2014) and avoiding the 'complex' or 'unresolved' forms of grief that can lead to ongoing mental and emotional ill health. There is also a broad consensus within therapeutic communities that whilst adult care and support for young people experiencing loss is important, specialist intervention is not usually required because grief is a natural response to loss (Cruse Bereavement Care, 2018; Young Minds, 2018; Murray, 2016). Developing and nurturing supportive relationships may therefore be incredibly important mechanisms of support in themselves for young people who offend. The proactive approaches Hayley describes above are generally viewed as an important aspect of a YOT practitioner's

role and in both settings there was a clearly established ethos of not giving up on young people. Taking a clear and consistent approach, as well as following through on promises, are deemed key mechanisms of relationship building with all young people (Gray, 2015; Rose and Philpot, 2005), especially when supporting traumatised young people (YJB, 2017), approaches many of those I met also appreciated:

'I hated her at first [YOT Officer]. She went on and on at me, nagging in my ear hole. But now she's helping me and for the first time something's actually getting done.' Brianna, (female, 16 years).

'I didn't like [CAMHS], too much talking. In here I tell Brad and he helps me. Don't tell him 'cus he'll go all big head about it.' Michael, (male, 12 years).

Different losses, different trajectories?

During fieldwork my emergent hypothesis was:

'Young people subject to multiple forms of loss over time appeared to be a greater predictor of (sustained) offending behaviour than being subject to a single loss. Young people with ESBD, SEND and/ or communication difficulties were found to be particularly vulnerable to being drawn into offending behaviour when experiencing endemic loss. Young people who had a lack of pro-social, supportive adults in their lives in addition to SEND, ESBD and, or SpLC difficulties were even more at risk of sustained involvement in offending.' Fieldnotes, (April, 2017).

This can be illustrated by comparing two cases side by side, examining the extent of their contact with the YJS against their documented loss experiences. Below I compare Michael (a young person with a prolific record of offending whose story is discussed above), and Tanya, a young person with one isolated incident of violence that brought her briefly into the YOT.

Tanya's story...

Tanya was 14 when she came to the attention of the YOT as an out of court referral for assault. Tanya's mother was suffering from terminal cancer and with support from her older sister, Tanya was acting as a young carer for both her mother and her younger siblings. Shortly after Tanya's mother was taken into hospice care, Tanya got into an argument with another girl at her local park and assaulted her. When asked at assessment why she had committed the assault, Tanya said she was 'angry and upset about mam' and that she was 'really sorry for [her] actions'. Extra support was put in place for Tanya by the YOT and when her mother died, Tanya and her younger siblings moved in with their older sister and Tanya attended specialist bereavement counselling. To date, Tanya has not reoffended and her YOT Officer was confident that she would not come to their attention in the future.

Tanya's isolated incidence of offending came at a point of considerable stress and change as her mother was moved into hospice care. Tanya was a bright and articulate young woman, and well aware of the implications of her mother's move from home to the hospice. Up until this point, Tanya felt that she had been managing well but when her mother was taken to the hospice 'it all became real'. Aside from the immense pain of the imminent loss of her mother, Tanya had a lot of protective factors in place to support her desistance from crime. She had a loving and supportive older sister, with whom she felt able to 'talk things through', she attended mainstream school and she had a close circle of pro-social peers (although Tanya did explain that it had not always been easy to see them outside of school because of her caring responsibilities at home). With the aid of the YOT and her older sister, appropriate support was put in place for Tanya, including access to specialist bereavement counselling and support from key members of staff at school.

Michael and Tanya - a case comparison

It could be argued that Michael and Tanya both came into contact with the YOT because their offending articulated an emotional response to loss. For Tanya, assaulting a girl in the park whom she admitted she would usually 'ignore and walk away from' could be explained as an emotional reaction to her mother's move into hospice care and her acute awareness that this move signified her mother's pending death. For Michael, engaging in offending behaviours around his local estate provided relief from his neglectful home environment as well as opportunity to make connections with other young people. Despite both having lost a parent, comparisons between Michael's and Tanya's experiences reveal dramatic

differences in the prevalence of loss in their lives and crucially, stark differences in the protective factors available to them to draw upon to prevent their sustained contact with the YOT. Unlike Tanya, when Michael's father died, he did not have support from his family to deal with his loss, nor did he have access to specialist bereavement services. Tanya's mother died in hospice care with the love and support of her family and hospice staff; Michael's father died unexpectedly and alone of a suspected drugs overdose. In this sense, the death of Michael's father could be viewed as disenfranchised (Doka, 2002), as there tends to be little media or public sympathy for those who die as a result of an overdose. Michael was not attending school at the time of his father's death, so his avenues of pro-social support were restricted further still. Michael also had SEND difficulties, and limited emotional literacy skills. Tanya, in contrast, had well developed SpLC skills, no identified SEND issues and was generally performing well in mainstream school. It is likely that gender also supported Tanya's desistance, as despite recent high profile campaigns advocating young men's talking about worries and concerns (Movember, 2018; Time to Change, 2018), emotional displays such as crying or discussing feelings of sadness or hurt continue to be feminised, whereas displays of anger, aggression or emotional hardness continue to be associated with working class ideals of hegemonic masculinity (Pini and Pease, 2013; Messerschmidt, 2009)⁴¹. This was compounded for Michael by his SpLC and emotional literacy difficulties, as well as by his general lack of access to those who would listen to him and support him to communicate his needs pro-socially:

'His offending is a massive cry for help because he doesn't have the words. And he doesn't think anyone's listening even if he did. In some ways, he's probably right.' Brad, (YOT Practitioner: discussing Michael, male, 12yrs).

It appears there is a difference therefore in offending trajectories between young people who experience isolated losses and those who experience endemic loss, especially when those who have experienced an isolated loss have the support of a loving and trusted adult to help them and the communication skills to articulate their feelings and emotions in a pro-social manner, (whether that be through talking or

⁴¹ Performances of hegemonic masculinity and the radical rejection of vulnerability are discussed in findings chapter 1, loss of childhood and findings chapter 4, searching for connections.

through engagement in musical, sporting or artistic activities), helping release emotional pain and make meaning from loss. This assumption seems to be consolidated by YOT Practitioners, several of whom reflected at interview differences between young people with 'one time losses' and those experiencing pervasive loss:

'I can think of quite a few young people that I've had on my case load that have suffered a bereavement, and that has affected them, um, no doubt about it, but with the right sort of support and family support around them, the ones that I've had tend to be not reoffending because of it you know. Um, not saying they're not emotionally affected but there's support in place for that. But I think that when you look at loss in terms of maybe looked after children who are experiencing the loss of, of life as they know it if you like, like taken to another side of the country without their family, that's definitely, definitely impacting in terms of offending.' Gina, (YOT Officer).

'I don't think any of the young people who experience, who experience like loss or trauma, life events, will naturally go on to reoff[end], to, to offend. But I think when they're subjected to things like that over quite significant periods of time without any intervention or support then I think it will become more then, ultimately criminogenic factors, and I think that will continue on. I think that will lead them you know, even in custody and things like that. I think it's, it will ultimately lead that way. Um, is that where it starts, probably not? You know a loss can be, I suppose it can be more of a trigger to certain behaviours and over time if those behaviours are either accepted or left alone and not addressed it will, it will manifest I suppose and it will become more negative and those coping strategies will become more negative and it will ultimately lead to offending, um, especially in terms of kind of violent offences. I think they are, there's a massive link there, between loss.' Orla, (YOT Officer).

As Orla asserts, many young people who experience 'one off losses' do not ever come into contact with the YOT, and for those that do, as Gina reflects, their contact tends to be minor, providing appropriate support is put in place for the young person.

Modelling the trajectories of young people who offend in relation to loss

The two diagrams below (figures 4.11 and 4.12) attempt to detail differing offending trajectories according to young people's 'one off' and more endemic experiences of loss, illustrated by Tanya and Michael's cases above. These potential trajectories are ratified by other young people's case data, which reveals that those experiencing multiple and sustained instances of loss, especially when combined with SpLC, SEND and emotional literacy difficulties *and* a lack of supportive adult relationships, are more likely to remain ingrained in YJSs than those experiencing one devastating loss in isolation of other losses or difficulties, for example parental bereavement.⁴² In this sense young people's offending trajectories could tentatively be viewed as more of a linear process for young people experiencing 'one off losses' and more of a cyclical process for young people who experience pervasive loss throughout their life course. These findings broadly tie in with the work of Jane Ribbens McCarthy (2006), who despite deliberately not researching marginalised or 'at risk' young people (including young people who offend), nevertheless found that bereavement per se could not be construed as a risk factor for negative outcomes (such as offending), and that attention should be paid instead to the 'way in which bereavement features within the individual's life course more broadly' (2006:133).

⁴² This is not to discount the secondary losses that 'one off' losses such as parental bereavement inevitably invoke.

Figure 4.11 Linear offending trajectories for young people experiencing one time losses:

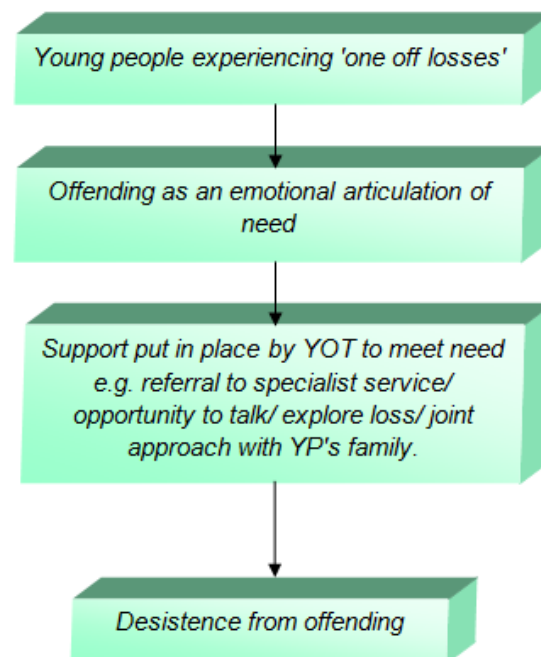
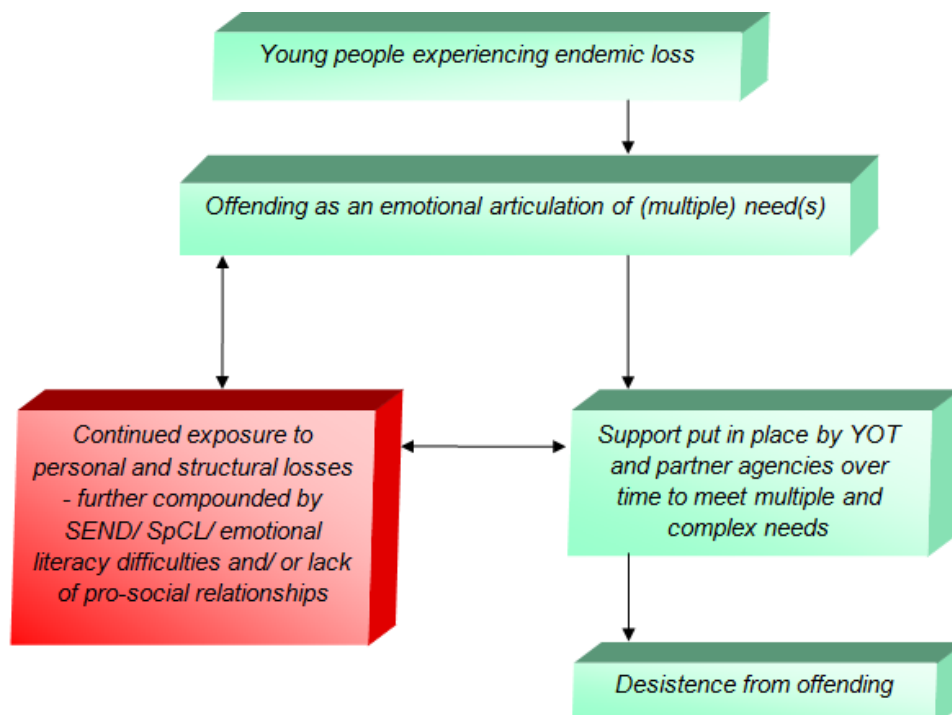


Figure 4.12 Cyclical offending trajectories for young people experiencing endemic loss:



In figure 4.11, young people's needs tended to be swiftly met via practical actions of support that helped facilitate their desistance. For young people in figure 4.12 however, the high prevalence of loss sustained over their life course made practical action more complex and also more difficult to implement. A common theme that arose during practitioner interviews was in relation to 'fire fighting' such cases, and frustration that young people's problems had not been identified and dealt with earlier:

'You see these things, missed opportunities we sometimes say.' Barry, (YOT Officer).

'There's less opportunity or less desire or almost will of the people doing the assessments at the YOT to start peeling back layers because they're, they're too busy working with what the problems that exist in that young person's life right now, in terms of maybe whether that's education, whether it's housing, whether it's their continuing reoffending or other vulnerabilities, self harming or health problems, they're continually trying to put out fires in those areas rather than actually you know what, in the past someone else would have dealt with this.' Brad, (YOT Worker).

'If there was something done at an earlier age, if there was support there at an earlier age, if the family were proactive in looking for support for their child or if the services were, schools were, any other services involved identified it at an earlier age then they wouldn't have offended... At times there isn't a role. You know, they do offend, but the underlying issues are more important than the crime that they commit a lot of the time, especially at low level.' Chris, (YOT Officer).

The image below was drawn as part of my fieldnotes, reflecting the role of YOT Officers as Fire Fighters in relation to the prevalence of loss in the lives of young people on their caseloads. The image also sought to represent the segregation of 'welfare' and 'offending' work in youth justice intervention and the subsequent perception of some practitioners that addressing welfare needs detracted from addressing offending behaviour.

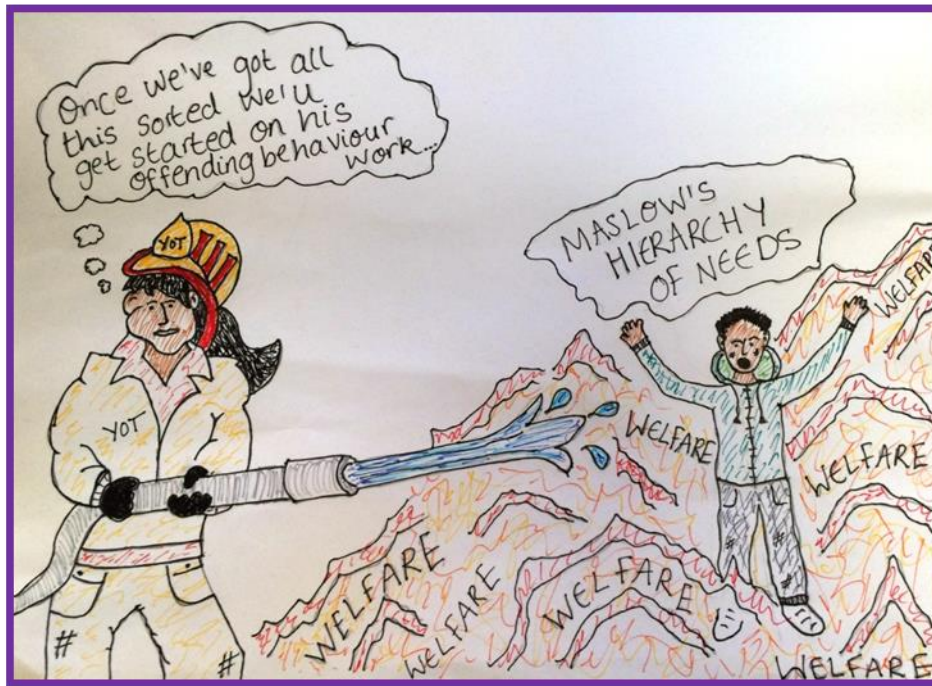


Image credit: *Fire fighting at the YOT* (Fieldnotes, June 2017).

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the extent of loss in the lives of young people who offend. I began by considering loss as it is recorded in youth justice assessment, conducting detailed case analysis regarding the prevalence of loss in Peasetown, and exploring patterns and trends more broadly regarding loss and offending in Adlerville. I then sought to contextualise the data, using Michael's story to illustrate the extent of loss in the lives of some young people who offend, as well as how experiences of loss can generate a ripple effect, with one loss affecting multiple areas of young people's lives that in turn may lead to further, secondary losses. I then turned my attention to YOT practitioners, interested in their opinions regarding the prevalence of loss in the lives of young people they have worked with. I was intrigued to understand how those with responsibility for case management and the completion of assessment documentation conceptualised, captured and responded to young people's experiences of loss, particularly within the relatively recently revised assessment documentation, Asset Plus. Whilst acknowledging the impact of loss in young people's lives and referring to loss experiences as both criminogenic and welfare during interview, practitioners nevertheless tended to segregate loss from offending when responding to young people, making referrals to outside agencies or attempting to explore loss with young people on their caseloads in addition to those

interventions perceived as addressing offending behaviour. I then returned to young people's stories, comparing Michael's endemic loss experiences with Tanya's 'one off loss' relating to her terminally ill mother's move into hospice care. Differences between Michael and Tanya's offending trajectories, consolidated by discussion with YOT Practitioners, seem to suggest there may be a differences in offending trajectories between young people experiencing 'one time losses' and those experiencing endemic loss, with the former tending to experience a more linear trajectory from offending to desistance and the latter experiencing a more cyclical route that makes desistance more difficult. SpLC, SEND and emotional literacy difficulties and, or, lack of access to pro-social relationships (ideally with a caring and trusted adult) seem to further ensnare young people within cyclical routes to desistance. Much as one might get caught in the rapids at a water park, young people like Michael had to fight against a strong undercurrent of loss and adversity to desist from offending. These cases tended to be referred to by YOT Practitioners as 'fire fighting' and much frustration was conveyed in relation to 'lost opportunities' to meet young people's needs. This raises interesting questions in relation to the role of atomised forms of intervention, and whether a more holistic, loss informed way of working may be more effective than multiple referrals to different, specialist services each working with one element of a young person's story.

My findings demonstrate that loss is deeply prevalent in the lives of many young people who offend, and that those experiencing pervasive loss are more likely to become embroiled in the criminal justice system than those experiencing 'one time losses'. This finding is consistent with other research regarding accumulation of adversity in childhood (Hughes et al, 2017; American Academy of Pediatrics, 2014; Bellis et al, 2014; Reavis et al, 2013), as well as research exploring bereavement as a potential 'risk factor' for offending (Vaswani, 2006, 2014), particularly when understood in relation to the broader contextualised circumstances of young people's lives (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006).

So what does this mean for youth justice policy and practice? And how might we better help young people affected by loss? In my final, concluding chapter I explore how YOTs and other services supporting young people might embrace 'loss informed' practice as a way of holistically meeting young people's needs and supporting their desistance from crime.

Conclusion



Image Credit: *'Escape from Planet Earth'* Michael, aged 12.

Introduction

The aim of this final chapter is to consider the both the primal scenes (Back, 2017) and overarching themes of this research, considering the implications of each for how we might work best to help young people affected by loss and support their

desistance from crime. I begin by returning to my original research questions, considering how young people's stories, their creative work and daily practices, alongside practitioner reflections and my own observations during fieldwork, provide valuable new insight into how loss affects young people who offend. I go on to consider the methodological contributions of my work, including the richness gained by opening up space for ethno-mimetic engagement with young people. I consider the core aspects of my findings in line with existing research, exploring points of convergence and discontent, thinking about the knowledge gains to be made when working across academic disciplines and between scholarly research and professional practice. From here I explore recommendations for policy and practice, including an imagining of what loss informed youth justice might look like and the practical steps YOTs might take in such a direction. I conclude this chapter by reflecting upon the research process as a whole, considering both the limitations of my work, and my own unanswered questions that have arisen along the way. I pose suggestions for future enquiry, and finish with some final thoughts about what we have learnt from young people about loss and how we might better help and support them, in practice, in policy and beyond.

Returning to my research questions, summery of key findings and implications for knowledge

As outlined in the methodological chapter, my research questions were split into three broad categories: Young people's experiences of loss, practitioner interpretation and response to loss and the implications of each for youth justice policy and practice. Here I revisit each of these questions, outlining my findings in relation to each.

1. What is the nature, extent and impact of loss in the lives of young people who offend?

During my work with young people, my discussions with practitioners, and my observations within each of the settings I spent time in, I discovered loss to be a pervasive issue in the lives of many marginalised young people, including young people who offend. The nature of loss in young people's lives was wide ranging, and using the process of constant comparison (Charmaz, 2014), I categorised these losses into three broad themes: loss of childhood; loss of opportunity; and loss of agency.

Loss of childhood was experienced by young people in different ways, although perhaps most acutely as a result of exposure to domestic and community violence. Such exposure placed some young people in a continual state of hypervigilance, a destructive state that permeated multiple aspects of their lives, and especially their relationships with others. Loss of childhood via exposure to violence was perhaps most acutely reflected in Jade, as growing up in a violent and abusive household affected multiple aspects of her life, from her relationships with peers and partners, to her schooling, substance misuse and eventually, her own performance of violence in her community. Sam too was exposed to violence and abuse from an early age, both at home and within his community. For Sam, growing up in a violent home meant violence became a normalised aspect of everyday life. The further abuse and rejection Sam suffered at the hands of his father both during his mother's illness and after her death left him vulnerable as he became further embroiled in gang culture; easy pickings for exploitative adults involved in organised crime as he was left 'wandering the streets' of his home town. Whilst many young people who experience domestic violence do not perpetrate violence themselves or become known to youth justice services (Women's Aid, 2015; Radford et al, 2011a), neither Sam nor Jade had pro-social relationships with an adult they could trust as a way of understanding the violence in their lives. As such they were left alone and isolated to draw their own conclusions. In Jade's case, her violent and abusive behaviour told the world she would no longer be walked over, in her words, she would 'solve her own problems, wipe her own tears'. In the gang, Sam was respected and valued, given responsibility and a sense of family, identity and belonging he neither had at home nor in school. The need for connection came through strongly in Sam's narrative, as he spoke of his past and also the changes he wished to make in life now that he had a fiancée and a baby to think about. It is perhaps worth reflecting further on this point, as Sam's determination not to be 'a shit dad' like his own father reconfigured his narrative of what it meant to be a man; from making money through selling drugs with the gang, to gaining legal employment and becoming a role model for his daughter.⁴³

As well as violence in the home, some young people described violence in their communities; a violence that was regularly normalised as an everyday, thus fairly

⁴³ A process of 'going straight' discussed in detail by Maruna, 1999.

unremarkable aspect of young people's lives. Tommy compared the violence he witnessed around his home estate to being in a war zone. For Tyrone, violence within his community provided a contextual backdrop to his own aspirations of becoming a drug dealer. Young people were also keen to tell me where I should and should not go, where was 'alright' and where was 'rough as fuck'. Some young people navigated community violence by becoming involved in it themselves, engaging in fighting with peers or by antagonising older, vulnerable members of the community, particularly those who were heroin addicts and the homeless. Despite their enactment of violence in these particular circumstances, most young people nevertheless operated within the realms of strictly regulated moral codes, policing one another in relation to whom it was acceptable to 'torture' and whom it was not (the elderly or young children for example).

Caring responsibilities, many of which were unrecognised and undocumented, also served as a loss of childhood for many young people I met. For Sam, caring for his mother during her terminal illness meant taking on adult responsibilities, including managing the everyday running of the house in his father's absence. Several young people, including Tommy, Natalie, Logan and Rosella, also missed vital time in education as they collected and cared for younger siblings in the absence of their parents or carers. Sometimes this absence was a result of engagement in (often precarious) employment. For others, parents and carers were 'presently absent' (Boss, 1999) due to substance misuse issues or mental health difficulties that rendered them unable to care adequately for their children. In Natalie's case, she was used by her family as a mask for social services, acting as an 'appropriate adult' so her grandfather's new partner could claim supervised contact with her children. Such adultification of young people places immense pressure upon them, with quasi parental duties not only affecting educational opportunities, but also restricting opportunities to participate in age appropriate hobbies and activities, including time spent with friends. Heavy responsibility is not intended to rest upon such young shoulders, and young people had to make sense of their loss of childhood in ways that felt meaningful for them. As a result, when relieved of their familial obligations, some let off steam in destructive ways, including via their own engagement in substance misuse or by fighting as a way of 'letting go' and temporarily 'forgetting' their responsibilities at home. Unlike those with recognised caring responsibilities,

who may find avenues of support through attendance at specialist youth groups, additional provision at school, or through support from other family members, (including support from those whom they are caring for), many young people I worked with did not have access to any avenue of support. Subsequently they were left alone to negotiate a wide range of adult responsibilities, from making money, paying bills and managing debt, to cooking meals, washing clothes and ensuring younger siblings were cared for.

The insidious ways that young people experienced loss via exposure to violence or as a consequence of their unrecognised caring responsibilities, robbed them of their childhood. Young people in these situations also suffered a violation of their right under the UNCRC to protection from harm (United Nations, 1989, articles 4 and 19). When young people live in fear, for themselves or for their family members, they lose the freedom to engage and explore, to be inquisitive about the world. Instead young people exposed to violence were continually living in a heightened state of hypervigilance, continually assessing safety, risk and their own positionality in relation to each. For those in caring roles, life was fraught with worry and concern; about money, about bills, about social service involvement and about the welfare of their families.

The second theme generated from young people's loss experiences was loss of opportunity. This manifested in several different ways, although none as poignantly as loss of education. In many ways, loss of opportunity can be conceptualised as a secondary form of loss, springing from former personal and systemic losses in young people's lives that rendered relationships with adults, peers and the wider community complex and challenging. Difficulties maintaining positive relationships impacted upon young people's ability to attend and engage in school, as adherence to traditional routines and the authoritarian nature of education became yet another way in which young people were systematically abused. Accordingly, many young people I worked with were no longer attending mainstream school and those who did tended to be accessing reduced or restricted timetables, accessing learning off site or spending considerable periods of time in isolation. Some young people had even been excluded from specialist educational provision, leaving little opportunity to access learning elsewhere. All young people have the right to attend high quality, meaningful education provision that meets individual needs and considers personal

circumstances and difficulties. To remove these opportunities from young people's lives seriously affects future opportunity, including the likelihood of securing meaningful employment. As well as loss of opportunity, opportunities were lost to identify and support young people with SEND, including those with SpLC difficulties. The prevalence of such difficulties within youth justice is no coincidence, as inability to communicate clearly and effectively renders young people little way of articulating need other than through action, including participation in offending or other high risk behaviours. Brianna remained in mainstream school, but was deeply unhappy there. Instead of understanding her presenting behaviours as deep and painful articulations of need as she attempted to navigate a world in which she felt continually rejected, Brianna was construed as attention seeking, held accountable for a lot in life that was vastly beyond her remit to control. The more Brianna was ignored, the louder and harder she cried, using words and actions as a way of gaining attention from adults and peers, regardless of the negative connotations they brought her. It took a criminal conviction for change to occur for Brianna, as finally, she was moved away from her violent and neglectful family home into a residential work experience placement.

The process of engaging in crime not only articulated need therefore, it also offered opportunity to young people. This production of opportunity via offending, whether for financial or emotional gain, also brought with it a sense of identity and belonging missing from young people's lives as they were increasingly excluded from mainstream society. This was felt strongly through Tyrone's narrative, whose tales of offending and aspirations to make it big in the criminal world belied a young person living in poverty who was routinely excluded from education and ostracised from his peers. Engaging in offending enabled Tyrone opportunity to acquire new clothes, eat the food he wanted and crucially, provided an identity that made sense to him. As he understood it, offending would make him 'rich' and help him solve his problems. Sam also alluded to the opportunities offending provided him when he had 'no other options', explaining the obscenity of the money he was making through drug dealing, and how as a young person with no formal educational qualifications, it was unlikely he would ever make the same amount again through legitimate work.

For each young person I worked with, austerity measures had clearly reduced the opportunities available to them, including in relation to acquiring support early on

from universal youth work services or the charitable sector. Instead, young people were processed through early intervention protocols, including the 'Troubled Families' initiative (UK Government, 2012), which ultimately identified, labelled, monitored and stigmatised families, many of whom were living in poverty (Crossley, 2017). Conversely, detached and universal youth work services aim to holistically support young people before they reach crisis point, including dissuasion from offending through relationship building and the provision of pro-social opportunities (Crimmens et al, 2004). In both areas where I conducted fieldwork, these services had been systematically dismantled via austerity measures. In Adlerville, pockets of youth work remained, although most was targeted rather than universal. In Peasetown, youth work provision was non-existent, with all but two former youth workers made redundant or repositioned in the role of 'family support' within the Troubled Families remit.⁴⁴ Somewhat ironically, this shift in focus left young people more vulnerable to identification and monitoring as purveyors of ASB or as school refusers, yet less likely to have their needs identified and met early on (as they tended to be placed on lists rather than proactively supported). Indeed, some young people stipulated their time 'on probation' with the YOT was where they received the most help for their problems. I contend that something is seriously wrong in the current set up of preventative services if young people are conceptualising offending as a viable mechanism to acquire support.

The final theme I explored in relation to the nature of loss in young people's lives was loss of agency. Young people I worked with overwhelmingly felt ignored, and at times used offending and other risk taking behaviours as ways of being heard. For LAC young people, this was a particularly pertinent issue. For Danny, desperation to return home involved frequent episodes of running away from care, and when he felt cornered by those looking after him, he would often place himself in dangerous situations in order to 'get away'. For Carly, returning home to see her mother meant acting out against anyone who stood in her way, using violence where necessary to escape what she regarded as the captivity of local authority care. Carly and Danny both felt trapped against their will and used processes of running as a way of reclaiming agency and returning home. In both cases, Carly and Danny's offending tended to be unplanned and incidental, enacted as a means to a hoped end of

⁴⁴ The two remaining youth workers were both specialist practitioners, working predominantly with autistic young people.

reuniting with their families as opposed to any real desire to cause hurt or harm to others. For Michael, not being told the truth about his mother and sibling's failure to attend contact, although well meaning, left him to fill in the blanks of unanswered questions in ways that made sense to him, encouraging him to fight against the system he believed was responsible for preventing him seeing his family and friends.

Within each of these three themes, young people's offending could be interpreted as a search for connection, with young people articulating their (often unmet) need for support in ways that felt accessible and meaningful for them. The dual disadvantage of having poorly developed SpLC skills and, or, unmet SEND coupled with a lack of pro-social support and guidance from a caring and trusted adult left offending a viable response to loss. Viewed through this lens, offending enabled young people to realise and achieve three distinct objectives: Firstly, to make connections to the world around them, supplying them with friends who had been through similar experiences and understood what it meant to feel angry, hurt and rejected. Secondly, offending created opportunity for identity construction where young people felt lost in a world that paid them little positive attention. Finally, offending offered opportunity and financial means for those whose legitimate avenues of support were in scant supply. My work with young people focused upon storytelling, and the communicative aspect of offending as detailed above must not be overlooked. Some stories are too painful to tell. Other stories have messy, disjointed narratives, as young people cannot (or do not wish to) remember the painful plotlines of loss that run through their lives. For others, SpLC, SEND or emotional literacy difficulties prevent or restrict stories of loss, as well as their ability to acknowledge difficult feelings or ask for help. Thus grief emerges in other ways, including through offending. In this sense, Butler's (2014) assertion of 'anger as a cloak for grief' makes sense, as young people physically enact their feelings in lieu of either the capacity or outlet to tell their stories. Offending of course also brings with it its own stories; of excitement, connection, identity, risk, humour and belonging. In this sense, offending gave those who were continually excluded, rejected and pushed to the margins of society both an emotional outlet for loss and different (less difficult) stories to tell.

2. How are youth justice practitioners interpreting and responding to young people's experiences of loss?

A lack of common language to define and discuss loss meant young people's experiences were discussed in different ways by YOT practitioners. Some referred to attachment issues, others to ACEs or trauma and some to loss more broadly. This lack of common language, coupled with limited guidance in current youth justice policy and practice, rendered practitioners out of their comfort zones when it came to defining and responding to loss, with many feeling loss issues were best dealt with outside the remit of youth justice practice. Nevertheless, practitioners tended to identify links between young people's offending behaviours and their experiences of loss, with most conceptualising loss as both a criminogenic and welfare issue. As previous research has also found (HMIP, 2017; Hester and Taylor, 2011), fear of 'getting it wrong' and 'not being qualified' often held practitioners back from exploring young people's loss experiences, with many feeling more comfortable leaving loss work to colleagues in mental health or counselling services. Referring young people into mental health or counselling services was not always a straightforward process however, with practitioners complaining of long waiting lists and worrying that specialist services were not always equipped to work with 'our [YOT] young people'. In Peasetown, the recent departure of the YOT nurse as a result of austerity measures was also felt as a great loss to the service, with practitioners lamenting this loss in three distinct ways; the loss of a 'better placed' colleague within the service to refer young people to; the loss of a colleague who was able to mediate between health and youth justice services; the loss of a qualified health professional with whom practitioners could 'talk things through' so they felt more confident in their own practice. This highlights the importance of access to health professionals for YOTs, situated either directly within the team or closely aligned.

When asked what they felt were the core issues affecting young people who offend, many practitioners spoke of 'welfare issues', including problems with housing, education, family and social care. These issues were generally regarded as detracting from young people's completion of offending behaviour programme (OBP) work, creating for YOT practitioners a continual feeling of 'fire fighting'. Despite generally considering loss as both a welfare and criminogenic issue when asked directly, most practitioners nevertheless failed to conceptualise their 'fire fighting' 'welfare work' as a means of addressing offending behaviour in its own right. In this

sense, practitioners still tended to subscribe to atomised programmes of behaviour change as their preferred way of supporting desistance. These interventions also tended to 'responsibilise' young people (Phoenix and Kelly, 2013), as opposed to considering the broader contextual impact of structural and social inequality, and the losses young people faced as a result of marginalisation, stigma and discrimination.

The different ways YOT practitioners conceptualised loss affected their daily work and practices with young people. Some separated loss from offending behaviour completely, opting to deal with what they determined as presenting issues rather than 'delving into young people's pasts'. Others felt it was up to young people to disclose feelings of loss and talk about their experiences if and when they were ready to do so. Some recognised the impact of loss in young people's lives, and spoke of making referrals to professional services for support. Approaching loss in these ways reinforces the detachment of loss from offending, with little consideration about how the former might affect the latter and how loss and offending were intertwined in young people's lives. This was particularly noticeable when offending was construed as 'attention seeking' or 'placing themselves at risk' with little exploration undertaken into why attention was being sought in the first place or how placement 'at risk' occurred for some as a result of lost voice and deeply 'bounded agency' (Evans, 2007). Despite Asset Plus' encouragement of deeper reflection, and managers within each setting describing working practices that were less risk focused, I found practitioners still largely centred their practice around risk reduction, with much offending behaviour construed in terms of risk rather than as an indication of vulnerability or as an emotional articulation of unmet need.

Regardless of their continued focus on risk reduction, some practitioners did recognise and respond to loss in young people's lives, understanding the power of relationships as a way of creating space for conversations and collaborative problem solving. Some worked in tandem with local counselling or CAMHS services, although more often, practitioners spoke of breakthrough moments with young people when 'walking in the community' or 'digging in the garden', as opposed to within the more formal setting of the YOT. Practitioners in Adlerville generally had greater access to specialist services than those in Peasetown, although long waiting lists and differences in working practices meant that some opted to complete work themselves with young people, with the caveat that 'help was on the end of the

phone' should they need it. One practitioner spoke about arts based work as a way of exploring and making meaning from loss. Another mentioned the importance of moving away from counselling in 'clinical spaces', instead emphasising the importance of 'child friendly' settings and 'open spaces' as useful ways of fostering meaningful conversations and completing effective loss work with young people.

Generally speaking, practitioners played down their relational skills and expertise at the expense of specialist knowledge in relation to loss which they deemed more important. Some felt they did not have time to 'peel back the layers' of young people's experiences, foregrounding instead the prevailing issues in young people's lives; issues they deemed specifically related to young people's offending behaviour and, or, specifically related to safeguarding. Some practitioners also worried 'welfare issues' affected their ability to effectively address young people's offending behaviour, as focus upon securing school, housing and LAC placements 'detracted from OBP work', work they felt more explicitly addressed offending behaviour than 'welfare work'. For practitioners, particularly in Peasetown, austerity measures had reconfigured much YOT work, as avenues of support previously drawn upon (both within and externally to the YOT) were disbanded. This left YOT practitioners juggling complex and multiple aspects of young people's lives, often with little support or guidance from other, more specialist services.

3. What are the implications of young people's loss stories for youth justice policy and practice?

The stories shared by young people and YOT practitioners attest to gaps in policy and practice in relation to loss. Firstly, the lack of common language to describe young people's experiences creates confusion, as similar experiences are described and framed according to different terminologies and working practices. Secondly, despite the YJB's recent focus upon trauma informed practice, the lack of guidance for YOTs in relation to responding to and working with loss causes confusion in relation to working responsibilities, with young people too often left bouncing between services in a continual cycle of referral. Thirdly, if practitioners struggle to define loss, then surely we should not expect young people to be readily able to reflect upon and define their own experiences in such a way. Waiting for young people to verbally articulate need neglects key issues pertinent to youth justice, not least young people's age and stage of development and the relative immaturity of their brains to be able to tap into the sophisticated cognitive ability required for

considered self expression and reflection. The extent of SpLC, SEND and emotional literacy difficulties is also neglected when practitioners wait for young people to be ready to talk; for many, actions speak louder than words. As such, practitioners need to recognise and interpret young people's offending according to the broader context of their lives, and ask themselves what young people's actions reveal about their social circumstances, vulnerabilities and emotional status. Many young people I met during the course of this research did not have a pro-social, consistent adult in their life with whom they could share their stories. This left them making sense of loss alone, drawing upon the limited resources available to them to make meaning from their situation. In this sense, offending had much to offer young people; a sense of agency, connection, independence, a physical release of emotional pain, a reprieve from problems at home. For many, crime filled in the blanks of unanswered questions that loss had left them with. Helping young people make new, prosocial connections within their own communities may therefore be a key aspect of desistance. Accordingly, energy and emotion needs to be channelled into fostering these prosocial relationships; with peers, with community mentors and with other trusted adults.

For all the reasons listed above, young people found it difficult to articulate what might help them make meaning from loss. Many had never been asked what helps, and therefore the questions felt alien to them. Some felt that nothing helped because nothing changed. Explicitly mapping what has, what can and what will change over time seems a potentially important element of loss work with young people therefore. Others felt that decisive action was important; they were sharing their story with an adult because they wanted something to happen, something to change. Brianna was crystal clear in relation to the change she felt was required to support her desistance from crime; a move away from her parents and home town. When eventually this occurred and Brianna was provided with a residential educational placement caring for horses, her offending and ASB reduced dramatically. For others, the change they so desperately wished for was unlikely to happen. This was the case for both Danny and Carly, who hoped to return home to their families. Michael also felt a deep sense of loss for his family and his friends as he was taken into care, and had to deal with the conflicting emotions he felt in relation to his 'different' (safer) life in foster care. For LAC young people, recognition from practitioners of the impact of loss in their

lives is often superseded by concerns for safeguarding. Because the young person is believed to be 'in a better place', they are encouraged to look forward rather than back. The lack of validation and acknowledgement some young people felt in relation to the losses they experienced by being taken into care caused them great pain and frustration. Lost agency was reclaimed as anger and turned towards those they deemed as preventing them from seeing their families, against those who 'don't get what it's like'. 'Being with someone who understands' was therefore very important to young people I worked with, as was someone who took a consistent approach and enabled change at points of crisis.

Some young people also spoke about being 'lost in art' and how engaging in creative processes helped them 'make sense' of or temporarily 'forget' their problems. For Wesley, art established a continuing bond with his great granddad. By focusing on art, Wesley also felt he was in greater control of his emotions, thus less likely to engage in offending or ASB, both at home or around the town. Harriet also used art as a way to reflect upon and manage her emotions, with the process of art making providing relief from emotional pain as well as a mechanism to (re)present her story (O'Neill, 2012, 2002) and 'make meaning' through grief (Neimeyer and Thompson, 2014).

Every young person I met during fieldwork had experienced some form of loss, often resulting from the intersecting inequalities they were exposed to. However, like Harriet, not everyone experiencing loss engaged in offending. A crucial difference between those who did and did not offend seemed to centre upon two vital elements; the support of a caring and trusted pro-social adult and well developed SpLC and emotional literacy skills. My research suggests therefore that supportive relationships and the ability to engage in effective, pro-social modes of communication (through spoken or written word or through engagement in creative practice) appears to prevent or reduce the likelihood of YOT contact for those affected by loss. In the instances where young people with supportive relationships and well developed communication skills did offend (such as Tanya), their YOT contact was often fleeting⁴⁵. This was because young people could reflect upon and articulate their

⁴⁵ As suggested through my linear models of offending trajectory for young people experiencing one off losses, detailed within my final findings chapter, the extent of loss in the lives of young people who offend.

needs, engage in YOT processes and, where necessary, reconnect with supportive adults in their lives.

For many young people I worked with, problems with communication and lack of support seemed to be exacerbated by growing up in poverty. For some, poverty increased the likelihood of family members being 'psychologically present but physically absent' (Boss, 1999) like Shaun's mother, who worked day and night to make ends meet. Others, like Natalie, Brianna and Wesley, had family members who were 'physically present but psychologically absent' (Boss, 1999), with absence occurring through substance misuse or mental health difficulties. Structural marginalisation and health inequalities also rendered those in poverty more likely to suffer 'off time losses' (McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016), to prison (as in Antony's and Jonny's case), through death, ill-health or suicide (as in Sam's, Antony's, Peter's and Michael's case) or through the care system (as in Carly's, Michael's, Danny's case). Such absence not only strains relationships, it also limits opportunity for young people to develop effective communication skills, particularly in their earliest years. When this occurs, young people start school not only socio-economically disadvantaged from their peers, but linguistically disadvantaged too. Frustration at not being able to keep up or join in with classmates may be enacted via 'challenging behaviour' (Bryan et al, 2015) and the young person's labelling as a 'problem child' begins. For those with caring responsibilities, there may often be a need to let off steam, to shake off the heavy weight of adult responsibility and to act as children. For those growing up in abusive and violent households, silence pays, as does behaviour that detracts from feelings of vulnerability or victimhood. For neglected children, needs go unheard and unmet, with children learning to shout louder or say nothing at all. Opportunity to develop SpLC skills may therefore be extremely limited for young people growing up in these circumstances (Sylvestre, Bussi res and Bouchard, 2015), restricting their ability to share their stories and make meaning in pro-social ways. As such, marginalised young people living in poverty may be both more likely to experience loss and less likely to possess the support networks or communicative skills to engage in pro-social methods of meaning making. Unfortunately, the behaviours young people display in lieu of pro-social meaning making are highly unlikely to endear them to their teachers, their peers or their wider community. This generates additional difficulties for young people, as offending or

challenging behaviour as an articulation of unmet need may serve to further ostracise them from the very places and people who are best positioned to support them, including mainstream schools, youth clubs or other community initiatives.

Connecting back to previous research

As I progressed through fieldwork and analysis, Charmaz's (2014) process of constant comparison enabled me to continually move back and forth between my own research and the work of others. In doing so, particular theories came to light that helped me contextualise my findings and construct my own understanding of loss in the lives of young people who offend. Moving between existing research and my own findings also helped me construct a vision for loss informed youth justice and outline the practical steps YOTs might take to engage in loss informed practices.⁴⁶

Social constructivist framings of loss

Social constructivist theories of loss, particularly those emphasising the multi-faceted nature of loss (Thompson and Cox, 2017; Thompson, 2002), the importance of constructing coherent narratives as a way of making meaning from loss (Neimeyer, Klass and Dennis, 2014; Neimeyer, 2008) and the importance of providing young people with the option of maintaining 'continuing bonds' (Klass, Silverman and Nickman, 1996) each became an important theoretical lens for my own work. Repeatedly during fieldwork, I met young people who did not have coherent narratives to draw upon, who were denied the opportunity to establish or maintain continuing bonds or who simply did not have the words to pro-socially articulate their feelings or express their needs. In each of these cases, offending became a viable mechanism for meaning making, or, in Carly and Danny's cases in particular, an unintended consequence of their need to maintain and continue family bonds after being taken into care. Doka's (1989, 2002, 2017) work on 'disenfranchised loss' and Boss' (1999) depiction of 'ambiguous loss' also resonated strongly within the stories young people told me and the creative work they produced. Young people often felt as though their losses were discounted, their grief was unrecognised and the experiences that led them towards offending were neither validated or understood. For other young people, living in a continual state of flux in relation to the ambiguous losses they experienced left them frustrated, angry and fearful of becoming upset

⁴⁶ My vision for loss informed youth justice and the practical steps YOTs might take to engage in loss informed practice are each outlined later on in this chapter.

should they be perceived as vulnerable or unable to cope (Crenshaw, 2002). In these instances Doka's emphasis on providing space to listen to and validate young people's losses, and acknowledge the grief they are experiencing, is a vitally important aspect of supporting young people make meaning and 'relearn their world' (Attig, 2011) after loss.

Understanding lived experience from an intersectional perspective

Increasingly during fieldwork, the importance of understanding young people's experiences through Crenshaw's (1989) intersectional lens became apparent. The marginality experienced by young people left them at risk of a pervasive 'catalogue' of unresolved losses (Vaswani, 2015), which, by nature of their marginalisation, were often disenfranchised. This left young people further isolated and with little, if any support to understand their experiences or manage their grief. Recent literature is beginning to emphasise the link between marginality and loss (Harris and Bordere, 2016), with loss reframed as a social justice issue as opposed to a personal, often pathological concern. My work with young people echoes the need for continued emphasis upon socio-cultural understandings of loss, and further inter-disciplinary understandings of loss and grief from a British, intersectional perspective.

Using storytelling and art to (re)present young people's feelings and experiences

Providing young people with the opportunity to (re)present their stories through creative engagement was a central methodological premise of this work. Accordingly, I drew upon O'Neill's concept of ethno-mimesis (2002, 2012) and other research that pioneered and championed creative approaches to work with young people (Neimeyer and Thompson, 2014; Bilby, Caulfield and Ridley, 2013; Pink, 2012; Leitch, 2008). However, as I became more heavily involved in fieldwork, the power of creative engagement and storytelling as a way of both meaning making and escapism became ever more important. In this sense, ethno-mimetic principles became both methodologically and theoretically important, with storytelling and creative work used and interpreted in multiple ways throughout the research process. Generating my own drawings in the form of visual 'memos' (Charmaz, 2014) also became an important aspect of both analysis and write up. I did not initially intend to include my own drawings within this thesis. However, I began to discover that working ethno-mimetically added further analytical depth, illustrated my written text and helped me portray connections within and between young people's

stories with a richness that may have gone amiss had I used words alone. In this sense creative engagement became evermore central to this research, for young people's participation and for myself as the researcher tasked with understanding young people's experiences of loss.

Emergence of new knowledge

The aim of this research was to explore loss in the lives of young people who offend. Over the course of this project, much new knowledge had emerged, both theoretically and methodologically. Links with existing knowledge have also been made, as different academic disciplines, youth justice policy, procedure and working practices have each been traversed and connections (as well as points of disjuncture) made between them. Below I detail the substantive contributions to knowledge this research has made; methodologically, theoretically, and as a source of cross-disciplinary enquiry.

Methodological contributions

In order to explore young people's experiences of loss and how such experiences affected and impacted offending behaviour, I opted to use CGT (Charmaz, 2014) as my overarching methodological approach. The appeal of CGT lay in its inductive nature, with learning from the field directly informing each stage of my research. As such, I was able to explore loss as it manifested within young people's stories, art work and actions, as well as within practitioner accounts, case notes and assessment data. I was also able to reflect upon my own observations and memo construction over time, free from the constraints of pre-imposed theoretical frameworks or specific loss theory. Keeping an open theoretical mind enabled me to write and draw things as I saw and heard them, rather than filtering young people's experiences through the confines of existing knowledge construed in different times, in different places and with different people. CGT also enabled me to continually reflect upon my own and others' positionality, the nature and impact of intersecting inequalities and the unique socio-cultural context that both framed and determined my work. To my knowledge, loss has not been explored with young people who offend in this way, particularly within community youth justice. Even in custodial settings, where some work on young people's loss experiences has been undertaken (Vaswani, 2018a; Vaswani, Paul and Papadodimitraki 2016, Gray, 2015; Vaswani, 2014, Boswell, 1996), this has generally taken the form of qualitative interviews, as

opposed to sustained presence in the field. Several of the 'primal scenes' (Back, 2017) of my research, including some of the stories young people shared with me and the insight they awarded me into their lives, came as a result of relationships built over time. This of course ties in well with one of my key findings, which emphasises the importance of pro-social relationship building with trusted adults who can validate and support the development of coherent narratives, help young people establish continuing bonds and support the process of meaning making in the aftermath of loss.

Time spent in the field also enabled me to get underneath the stories young people thought I wanted to hear, to those they could only begin to tell in time. For many, gaps in narratives or hints at feelings of loss through words, through art or through action, were as meaningful and illuminating as the stories openly shared. This was not dissimilar when working with YOT practitioners, who also made careful decisions regarding which parts of themselves and their practice they were willing to share 'officially' and how safe it felt to tell me. Indeed, many of the most insightful elements of YOT practitioner's stories were told 'off the record', particularly in Adlerville, where I was an outsider coming in, as opposed to a former insider returning to my old team. Had I entered this process with pre-defined questions and a set theory of loss, crucial stories may have gone amiss, including those stemming from exposure to domestic and sexual violence and how meaning was made from such experiences by young people like Jade, Sam and Carly through their radical (and sometimes violent) rejection of vulnerability. Even the notion of storytelling in its traditional sense became problematic at times, as I began to learn how SpLC, SEND and emotional literacy difficulties impeded and disempowered young people. Instead we were able to explore through play, through art and at times, through considering what was unsaid, the gaps in young people's memories, the questions they had and the assumptions they made (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). Here ethno-mimetic methods (O'Neill, 2012, 2002) aided understanding further still, as processes of (re)presentation through art helped elicit stories that young people may not have had the words to tell. Michael's alien (the introductory image for this chapter) created a way for him to talk about estrangement from home and explore his new life in foster care. It also enabled him to portray the tension created by 'seeing everything' as Michael oscillated between looking back and looking ahead. Like Carly, Michael's

exposure to violence had left him in a hypervigilant state. Michael's alien enabled him to explain how he felt when people stared at him, as though '1000 eyes [were] looking all at once'. Moments such as these generated a glimmer of insight I would have been unlikely to unearth had I not engaged in ethno-mimetic work. Danny's photographs also provided insight into his feelings about becoming looked after. The games he designed for us to play in the park undoubtedly taught me more about life in his home city than I would have ascertained had we just sat and talked. Whilst art work or ethnography have each been utilised within numerous research studies as a means of eliciting young people's stories (e.g. User Voice, 2014; Bilby, Caulfield and Ridley, 2013; Bagnoli, 2009; Arts Council England, 2005; Macdonald and Marsh, 2005; Willis, 1977), working ethno-mimetically with young people appears rare⁴⁷. Accordingly, using ethno-mimesis as a way of exploring loss with young people who offend has never (to my knowledge) occurred before.

This research therefore is the first of its kind to use ethno-mimesis with young people who offend within community youth justice, underpinned throughout by CGT as a way of ensuring that what emerged from fieldwork and the questions I asked were continually informed by one another. Methodological innovation in this sense naturally strays across disciplinary boundaries, from the origins of GT in health (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser and Strauss, 2008/1967), to ethnography's anthropological and geographical underpinnings (Boas, 2017/1932; Mead, 2001/1928; Becker, 1997; Sibly, 1995), to cultural studies' and sociology's employment of visual methodologies and storytelling (King and Roberts, 2014; Back, 2017; Rose, 2016; O'Neill, 2012; Pink, 2012; Presdee, 2003) as facets of qualitative enquiry. Working this way produced a rich and varied data set, from which I was able to tease out subtleties of understanding about young people's lives that may not be possible had I drawn upon a less diverse methodology. My work therefore provides a significant methodological contribution in relation to research practices with marginalised young people, in particular with those who have experienced loss.

The importance of cross-disciplinary enquiry; making links with existing knowledge

In a similar vein to the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act's preliminary vision for multiagency YOTs, in order to explore the connotations of this research, and to fully

⁴⁷ O'Neill and Hubbard's, 2010 article outlining their participatory work in the East Midlands is one notable example of ethno-mimetic engagement with young people.

understand its implications for youth justice policy and practice, I needed to gather knowledge from a wide range of disciplines, creating new constellations of multi-disciplinary knowledge for youth justice as I pooled together fresh combinations of research, policy and practice guidelines pertaining to young people, loss and youth justice. Bringing together such disparate work was not an easy task, hindered further by a lack of a common language through which to theorise loss across, or indeed within, disciplines. Having generated my own understanding of loss alongside young people and practitioners before attending heavily to existing theory, I was able to explore the work of others with a keen eye for that which resonated with my fieldwork and that which challenged my assumptions. I was also able to understand where learning generated from my research with young people constituted new knowledge and where it confirmed or moved away from previous enquiry. A key finding in itself is that criminologists and youth justice policy makers rarely write about loss. Instead, they write about adversity and with increasing frequency, they write about trauma. But literature on loss within this context remains scarce. As such, adversity and trauma are becoming increasingly reflected in youth justice policy and practice guidance, but loss remains, lost. It is telling perhaps that the most substantial body of UK literature on loss in the criminal justice system is written by colleagues predominantly situated in health, law and ethics (Read, Santatzoglou, and Wrigley, 2018), reinforcing the notion stemming from youth justice practitioners that loss work lies firmly in the lap of specialist mental health and counselling services. This feels somewhat ironic, given the first piece of advice provided within many more generic texts on this subject is that loss is universal, grief is normal and most people experiencing such phenomena do not require the assistance of specialist agencies (McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016; Murray, 2016). Indeed, the normalisation of loss has skewed much health and psychological literature towards exploration of the abnormal, including 'complex' or 'pathological' grief following bereavement, or studies in trauma, and particularly, PTSD (e.g. Boelen, Smid and Geert, 2017; Wojciechowski, 2017; Ardino, 2012; Rando, 1993). This in turn generates assumptions from those working in services like YOTs that they do not have the 'expert' skills or capabilities to support young people who are grieving.

The losses young people shared with me were often disenfranchised, with little opportunity to talk about or remember their loss. Despite research suggesting that

loss resonates and reverberates over time, becoming amplified at key points of transition and resurfacing up to two years following the initial loss (McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016; Worden, 1996), YOT practitioners tended to disregard past experiences as a means of explaining or understanding current behaviours. Young people's positionality was also rarely examined, including their marginalisation in society and the losses incurred as a result of structural and systematic inequalities. This was potentially due to a perceived lack of time to 'peel back the layers' of young people's lives, as well as a fear of 'pushing difficult conversations' or retraumatising young people. Because the current focus lies in different terminologies, working with loss takes YOT practitioners out of their comfort zone; 'attachment informed' or even 'trauma informed' youth justice practices felt more familiar in some instances. Those who did make reference to loss theory tended to draw upon outdated, task or stage based theories of (predominantly) bereavement. Whilst advised practices around attachment and trauma are relatively similar to advised practices around loss, my argument is that a focus on attachment or trauma alone is too narrow. The pervasive and multi-faceted nature of loss I encountered during time spent with young people urges youth justice practice to connect with loss more broadly. Consideration must also be given to the insidious nature of loss as it affects young people's daily lives and practices. As such, I argue that youth justice should draw upon socio-cultural theories of loss, including the importance of meaning making, of establishing continuing bonds (where young people wish to do so) and of recognising the destructive nature of disenfranchised grief, particularly in relation to offending (Vaswani, 2018a, 2014).

Whilst loss might be universal, many young people who offend do not have the support mechanisms available to others to make meaning from loss in pro-social ways. Additionally, young people's marginality tended to intensify and compound loss, creating secondary and tertiary losses that further impacted upon the support mechanisms available to them and their ability to access them. It was this pervasive layering of loss in young people's lives, coupled with a lack of support from a caring and trusted adult, that tended to draw young people towards offending. The literature I have brought together over the course of this research project includes theories of loss, intersectionality, youth offending and YOT legislation, policy and practice. Placing new combinations of literature alongside and in conversation with one

another as my research has done enables fresh thinking to emerge. Consequently, this provides us with new ways of understanding young people's offending and surfaces innovative ways of helping them. This has been my primary intention; to explore how we can better help young people affected by loss, and support their desistance from crime.

Theoretical contributions

The major theoretical contribution of this research has been in relation to how offending might be theorised in relation to loss. To my knowledge this has never explicitly been done before, and as such, a loss informed youth justice has never been conceptualised. Below I outline what a loss informed youth justice might look like, drawing upon key findings from my research, particularly in relation to the importance of considering young people's offending against the broader contexts of their lives. I also reemphasise my assertion that different losses require different responses from YOTs if we are to best support young people's desistance from crime.

Considering young people's offending within the broader contexts of their lives

Young people's offending is ultimately only one aspect of their lives. For some it is no more than a fleeting moment. For others, relationships with offending are more complex, more ingrained, and entangled with notions of identity, belonging, connection or escape. Wherever a young person might place themselves along this continuum of offending as meaning making, we cannot begin to understand their actions in isolation of the rest of their lives and the social worlds they inhabit. It is here that analysis through a constructivist lens helps us understand how offending fits within the broader context of young people's lives and the purpose it serves them. Throughout this project, I have endeavoured to explore young people's social worlds and their marginalisation within society in as much detail as I have explored their individual lives and practices. Much existing youth justice policy, assessment and practice fails to account for social and systematic inequality, either focusing upon the individual to the detriment of the social, or holding the individual to account for aspects of the social over which they have little to no control.⁴⁸ Accordingly, we must continue to build upon work that illustrates inequality in youth justice (Lammy, 2017; Sharpe, 2012; Bateman, 2011; Smith, 2011; Case and Haines, 2009), and

⁴⁸ The neighbourhood a young person resides in determining levels of YOT contact for example.

how marginalised young people are disproportionately affected by loss. By raising issues of inequality, systems and structures as well as young people can be challenged and changed.

Different losses need different responses

As described in detail within my chapter exploring the extent of loss in the lives of young people who offend, young people who remained entangled within the YJS were likely to have suffered pervasive loss, as opposed to experiencing one off losses, even when one off losses were serious and traumatic, such as losing a parent or in one case, surviving a natural disaster. Practitioners generally agreed that exposure to loss brought varying degrees of contact with the YJS, and when losses accumulated over time and young people's needs remained consistently unmet, they were more likely to become embroiled in the system. These findings broadly correlate with most adversity literature⁴⁹, which suggests exposure to multiple adversities compounds debilitation across the lifespan (Rutter, 1990, cited in Gilligan, 2000:38) and therefore by 'reducing even by one the number of problem areas in a child's life may have a disproportionate and decisive impact' (Gilligan, 2000:38). As such, different exposures to loss may well require different working practices and levels of practitioner support. Figure 5.1 below is a reminder of the differing trajectories that seemed to become apparent during fieldwork in relation to young people experiencing 'one off' and more endemic forms of loss:

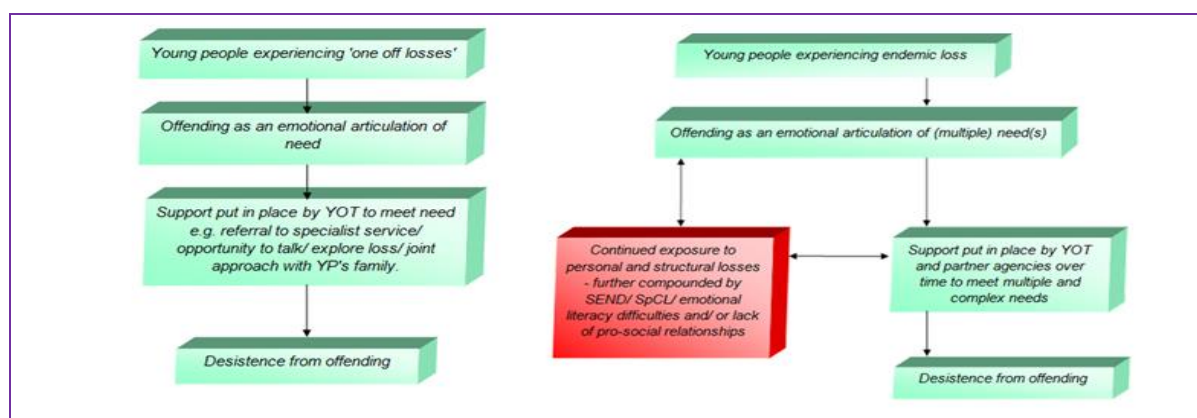


Figure 5.1: Comparison of linear and cyclical trajectories through the youth justice system

As figure 5.1 suggests, for young people experiencing one off losses, offending often occurred as an articulation of unmet need that tended to be met swiftly via direct

⁴⁹ One noteworthy exception is Rando (2002), who argues that 'too good a childhood' where young people have had little or no exposure to adversity can also exacerbate the likelihood of future 'pathological' grief.

actions of support from YOT practitioners. Sometimes this involved a practitioner taking control, supporting a young person to access services or facilitating a problem solving process in relation to their offending behaviour. In contrast, for young people suffering endemic loss, the swift action or problem solving approaches that seemed to help those facing one off losses tended to be less effective in enabling desistance. Firstly, because young people's emotional difficulties tended to be more deeply rooted due to their pervasive experiences of loss, and secondly, because loss had become such an ingrained part of everyday life that they found it difficult to understand or conceptualise their experiences as such, making help seeking and placing trust in practitioners more difficult (Bloom, 2002:139). Helping young people in these situations often took practitioners a long time, and relationship building and gaining trust became key priorities alongside practical action to remove (where necessary) young people from their current situation. In both cases, OBP work became secondary to what many practitioners framed as 'welfare work'.

Understanding loss and offending from an intersectional perspective

Loss and marginality are not the same. Everyone will be affected by loss at some point along their lifecourse whereas marginality affects specific individuals, groups and communities. Nevertheless, my research revealed an intense relationship between marginality and loss, with marginalised young people disproportionately affected by loss. Young people's marginality also generated additional losses and intensified those already in existence, leading at times, to their involvement in offending. In my fourth findings chapter I shared Amy, Shaun and Raza's stories. The stories of each of these young people revealed how particular marginalising factors (race, ethnicity, culture, gender and sexuality) left them to construct meaningful identities in a world where they had been rejected, bullied and belittled. Indeed in each and every story shared within this thesis, structural and societal inequality were revealed as both generators and sustainers of loss, with loss serving to connect these external, marginalising forces with young people's lived, subjective (and often deeply bound) personal experience. With this in mind, the importance of understanding loss in the lives of young people who offend from an intersectional perspective becomes paramount. In order to do so, emphasis must shift within youth justice from situating young people's offending within an individualistic, pathologising

discourse to a more holistic, contextualised understanding of the structural factors at play in young people's lives.

Loss informed youth justice - implications for policy and practice

So what might loss informed youth justice look like, and how would it be defined in youth justice policy and guidance? As Smith and Gray (2018:18) assert, 'contemporary youth justice in England is complex and contested', and as such, I believe there is space and scope not only to imagine but also to implement loss informed practices. At this juncture I outline suggested changes to youth justice policy so that it becomes loss informed. I follow this re-imagining of youth justice policy with a series of suggestions for the practical application of loss informed practice within YOTs.⁵⁰

Loss informed youth justice policy

Youth justice is not one, homogenous machine that operates across the UK (Smith and Gray, 2018). Instead, different typologies of youth justice are apparent (Smith, 2016), with each interpreting current policy and practice guidance in different ways, particularly under the shadow of austerity and via its subsequent processes of devolution and localised practice. At this time of change, where resources are stretched and YOT practitioners may become increasingly isolated in their practice, youth justice policy and strategic planning that enables person centred, flexible and contextual approaches to work with young people seems sensible. Here I outline key aspects of policy that following this research I feel would better enable loss informed youth justice across the sector.

A structural reconfiguration of youth justice, with greater emphasis upon addressing marginality and inequality

Every young person I met during the course of this research was marginalised in one way or another. Some were marginalised as LGBTQ young people living in a heteronormative society, others were marginalised according to race, culture or gender. Almost all were marginalised by class and socio-economic status and many were marginalised as a result of their SEND and, or, SpLC or emotional literacy difficulties. For some, marginalisation was enacted through offending behaviour; as a

⁵⁰ It is important when reading these recommendations to remember that my suggestions for policy and practice have arisen as a result of fieldwork undertaken within a specific and particular context and timeframe and therefore may not be applicable across all demographics of youth justice practice.

reaction to homophobia, as boredom stemming from educational exclusion, as frustration at being ignored, as a way of building connections and constructing identity in the face of familiar and societal rejection. The Lammy report (Lammy, 2017) powerfully demonstrates existing inequalities in youth justice, particularly according to race. The role of inequality in the labelling, production and reproduction of offending needs to be better recognised within youth justice policy, as do the losses experienced by young people as a result of their marginalisation. Criminalisation and attendance at the YOT may only serve to further label and stigmatise young people, and whilst mandatory attendance imposed by courts and panels may help get young people 'through the door' so they can 'receive appropriate support for their needs', real progress appeared more likely to come with trusted relationships are built over time (Crimmens et al, 2004). Youth justice policy must therefore have a greater emphasis upon 'justice for youth', with a reintroduction of community outreach and advocacy work as a way of connecting with disempowered young people, ideally before they become involved in crime. Young people's offending should also be conceptualised and addressed under one holistic, co-constructed, contextually situated plan, as opposed to different aspects of their lives being segregated into 'welfare' needs or 'YOT work' and referred out accordingly to whichever services are available to take them. This is not a novel concept, with some YOTs in E&W already establishing localised child centred policies that view offending as an indication of vulnerability rather than as a risk that must be managed (Case and Haines, 2015; Haines et al, 2013).

A greater understanding of socio-cultural loss theory and its application within youth justice

Loss theory, aside from attachment theory (Bowlby and Ainsworth, 1993; Bowlby, 1980) and limited understandings of Kübler-Ross' (2009/1969) 'five stages of grief', did not inform practice in the settings I visited. Practitioners nevertheless felt that loss affected young people, although they often felt ill-equipped and unqualified to explore such issues, even when young people brought them up. Loss informed youth justice policy would encourage training for YOT staff that draws upon the work of Doka (2017, 2002, 1989) and Boss (1999) who emphasises the damaging impact of disenfranchised and ambiguous loss and the importance of providing space and opportunity to acknowledge and validate young people's grief. Neimeyer and colleague's important work on meaning making would also be paramount, with

storytelling (through whichever medium best suited the young person) viewed not just as a tool for assessment or intervention but as an intervention in its own right, as practitioners empower and enable young people to construct and reconstruct stories as a way of generating meaning and finding hope after loss (Neimeyer, Klass and Dennis, 2014; Gillies and Neimeyer, 2006; Neimeyer and Stuart, 1998). Finally, training would support YOT practitioners to facilitate processes of continuing bonds (Dennis, Silverman and Nickman, 1996) for young people who wish to do so. From family member, to pet, to peer, to place, all can be remembered through art, words and action in ways that may help young people channel and make sense of their feelings in pro-social ways.

A reconceptualised understanding of loss so it sits within, rather than outside youth justice

Whilst the majority of YOT practitioners determined loss to be both a criminogenic and a welfare issue, there was little evidence within young people's assessment data, contacts or case notes, or indeed during my own observations of practice, to suggest that links were being made between young people's experiences and the manifestation of unresolved or disenfranchised loss in their offending behaviour(s). Clearer policy on the role of the YOT when supporting young people affected by loss would help bring what is currently conceptualised as a 'welfare' issue, from the periphery to the centre of YOT practice, with loss (and indeed other 'welfare work') regarded as a key aspect of desistance work as opposed to 'fire fighting' or a distraction from OBP work.

Further development of emerging trauma informed youth justice policy

Since beginning this research, there has been a welcome shift in youth justice towards trauma informed practice (YJB, 2017; Chard, 2017) and a consideration of the impact of trauma upon young people's offending trajectories. Changes in statutory reporting practices (YJB, 2013) have also helped enable YOTs to respond more effectively to young people's needs on an individualised, person centred basis, particularly with those whom relationship building and longer term work is a priority. Although some practitioners worried about 'net widening' (Prichard, 2010) and lack of parity in joint enterprise cases, the general feeling was that opportunities to either continue working with young people on a voluntary basis or to support their journey into non-statutory services was a positive, though difficult step forwards for youth justice. It can be argued therefore that despite continued leanings towards risk

reduction within youth justice policy and procedure, working practices are increasingly acknowledging the role of trauma within young people's offending trajectories. Allowing a more person centred, individualised approach and relaxing strict standards in relation to completion of set OBP work appeared to be aiding YOTs at both settings to better tailor support and intervention to individual need. YOTs must proceed with caution however, as differing layers of need should not determine a young person's statutory contact with the YJS. This is yet another balancing act for YOTs, as they strive to deliver welfare informed practices, whilst simultaneously working to respond to offending in a way that is just for all young people, regardless of their background or circumstance.

Further development of SEND informed youth justice policy

As with the recent emergence of trauma informed youth justice policy, SEND informed youth justice has also been strongly advocated by the YJB and partners (YJB and Achievement for All, 2016), with a recent series of practitioner road shows taking place across E&W highlighting the need for YOTs to develop a greater understanding of SEND, including SpLC and emotional literacy difficulties. As an educationalist at heart, this feels duly welcome and long overdue. SEND informed youth justice policy however also needs to be loss informed, due to the high prevalence of young people who lose out on vital aspects of their lives as a result of unrecognised or unmet need, (including via the criminalisation of their enacted emotional, social or learning difficulties). When such losses are made explicit to YOTs through SEND informed policy, practitioners become better equipped to recognise and support young people in relation to both SEND and loss; support that will likely aid compliance and desistance. Youth justice policy should therefore advocate screening all young people who offend for SEND, SpLC and emotional literacy difficulties. YOTs should also have access to specialist SEND support, whether within the YOT itself, or closely aligned through local working partnerships with local authority colleagues or school/college SEND Coordinators (SENCOs). Whether due to SEND, or as a result of missed schooling, the literacy levels of young people who offend are consistently lower than young people unknown to YOTs (Clark and Dugdale, 2008). Youth justice policy should therefore also recommend access to literacy specialists for young people and their families, through partnerships with local training providers or 'in house' as part of young

people's education, training and employment (ETE) work. YOT practitioners should also be provided with opportunities to learn from literacy and SEND specialists, so they can embed this knowledge within their own work with young people. As with the implementation of trauma informed practice, YOTs must find the balance between supporting young people and punishing need.

Greater opportunity for professional challenge

Different thresholds and service expectations meant that young people did not always receive the help and support from other agencies that YOT practitioners felt they required. Knock backs sometimes meant young people's needs went unmet, or that YOT practitioners were left in silo to support young people as best they could. Opportunities for collaborative work (detailed above) would enable YOT practitioners access to specialist insight and expertise, even where young people did not meet threshold for specialist intervention (following for example, a referral to social care or CAMHS). However, youth justice policy should also champion the right of YOTs to engage in professional challenge where they feel decisions made by other services are unjust or not in the best interests of young people on their caseloads. Encouraged opportunities for professional challenge between services would enable YOT practitioners to advocate for young people, scrutinising rather than accepting service rationales for referral rejections or disengagement. Professional challenge may also help prevent or at least redress the 'double punishment' of many young people who offend, for example in relation to mainstream education, where young people's offending becomes sanctioned with both a court order and educational exclusion.

Practical steps towards a loss informed youth justice practice

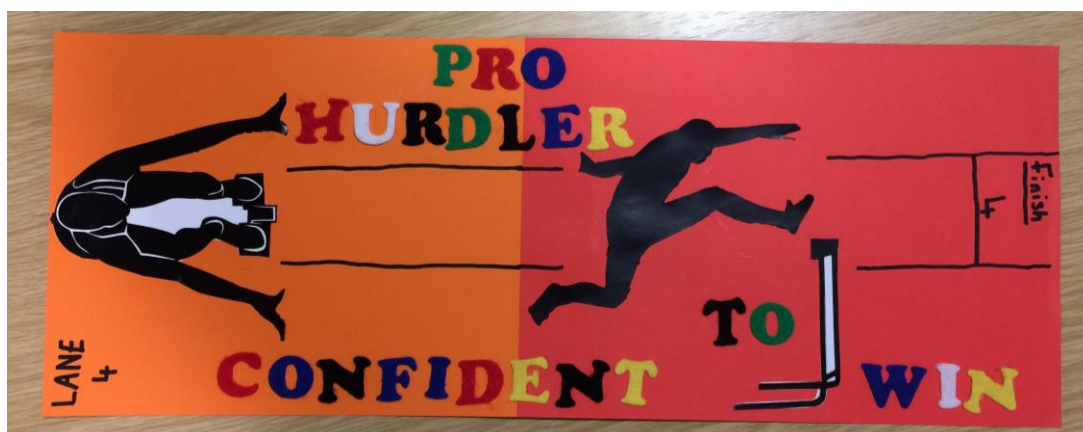


Image credit: 'Pro-hurdler, confident to win.' Lewis, aged 15.

So how might loss informed youth justice become articulated through YOT working practices? Below I briefly outline a series of practical suggestions, based upon findings generated from Peasetown and Adlerville YOTs:

Allowing opportunities for young people to tell and retell their loss stories to help them develop a coherent narrative that is age and stage appropriate

Loss informed youth justice practice understands that young people will need to tell and retell their loss stories over time as they come to understand their experiences and make meaning from them in new ways. This may be particularly pertinent during key moments of transition (King, 2016), or on special dates or anniversaries. Young people may not fully realise the impact of loss at the time (McCoyd and Ambler Walter, 2016; Murray, 2016) and small pieces of work may lead to bigger realisations. The more opportunity a young person has to tell their story, the more likely they are to begin to make sense of it. Making sense of what happened helps regulate emotional confusion as well as supporting young people to let go of unanswered questions that can eat away at them. Building in opportunity for reflection and storytelling, and providing space for young people to be heard and their experiences validated may help counteract disenfranchised grief (Doka, 2002; Doka, 2017), as well as begin to help young people regain a sense of agency and control over their lives. Practices such as these should be viewed as a central aspect of loss informed youth justice practice.

Enablement of opportunity for young people to (re)present their experiences through creative expression

Not all young people want to, or are able to verbalise their experiences. This does not mean that they do not need an outlet to explore (or in some cases) escape their feelings of loss. Opportunity for creative expression should therefore be regarded as another fundamental aspect of loss informed youth justice. Creative work allows young people to (re)present stories of loss without having to talk about it, as well as providing a space where they can live in the present and focus on the physical production of work. Creative work also opens up talking points between practitioners and young people, and conjures depth and meaning within young people that may not always be realised in conversation. Creativity also helps young people channel their feelings, pouring them onto a page or moulding them between their fingers as an alternative to smashing windows or hanging over multi-storey car parks. Access to creative opportunity may therefore serve as a core aspect of loss informed practice for all young people, although it may be especially important when SEND, SpLC and emotional literacy difficulties place barriers in the way of other forms of meaning making, including through narrative accounts (Gillies and Neimeyer, 2006; Neimeyer et al, 2002).

A renewed focus upon addressing structural inequality, marginality and pervasive loss

As identified by young people through Manchester Metropolitan University's (2017) Participatory Youth Practice framework, for youth justice practices to feel meaningful and effective, young people need to feel as though the struggles they face within their everyday lives are acknowledged and respected. This was also reflected in the stories young people told and the artwork they produced throughout the course of this research project. 'Peeling back the layers', 'asking why' and understanding young people's offending in relation to the broader context of their lives needs to be at the core of effective youth justice practice. In essence, if we wish to tackle offending, we must also challenge structural inequality, marginality and the pervasive losses that so readily stem from each.

Greater opportunities for collaborative practice and knowledge exchange between YOTs and specialist counselling and mental health services

A particular issue that arose during practitioner interviews came in relation to YOT relationships with other services, including specialist counselling and mental health services. In particular, frustration occurred over complex referral routes and long

waiting lists. Practitioners also felt when young people eventually 'got in', there was too much emphasis upon 'sitting around and talking' and an over-emphasis upon the voluntary nature of the service. Young people generally shared YOT frustrations, with Michael, Jade and Carly respectively describing their (fleeting) experiences with specialist mental health and counselling services as 'boring', 'pointless' and 'a waste of time'. It seems therefore that the set up of some specialist mental health and counselling services does not adequately meet the needs of young people who offend. A further concern is that if young people do not feel specialist services understand them, this may (inadvertently) compound existing grief and feelings of isolation, as young people struggle to complete loss work or talk about their experiences. Despite YOT practitioners' perceived shortcomings of specialist mental health and counselling services, they also readily relayed their own fears and concerns about engaging in loss related work with young people, fundamentally, in case they 'got it wrong'. YOT practitioners did however feel comfortable building positive relationships with the majority of young people on their caseloads, and most young people I met told me they got on well with at least someone from the YOT, even if this was not their dedicated YOT Officer. It seems there is scope here to promote opportunities for collaborative working between various specialist services. Whilst it is not always possible to place specialists within YOT teams, close working practices would enable opportunities for knowledge exchange. YOTs are specialists at engaging young people with a range of complex needs and specialist counselling and mental health services have a wealth of expertise in relation to guiding individuals through loss and grief; sharing knowledge could enhance and inform practice for both. Similar processes could also be established between YOTs and specialist SEND, SpLC and literacy practitioners. It is unrealistic to expect YOT practitioners to become experts in SEND, SpLC, literacy or mental health work and it is equally unrealistic to expect specialist services to become experts in youth justice. It is realistic however to encourage services to share their expertise and support one another in their support of young people who offend. This would help services work proactively together, rather than 'referring on' or shying away from particular aspects of work due to engagement issues or fear of failure. Assessment of young people could also become more streamlined across services, meaning young people would not have to go through similar processes each time they engage with a new service. Additionally, collaborative working would negate the need for lengthy referral forms,

freeing time for YOT practitioners to build relationships and engage proactively with young people, as opposed to spending their days 'office bound', completing arduous referral paperwork that in essence, repeats substantial amounts of information already documented within existing assessment.

Strengthened links between community health, community mental health and the YOT

Where young people require specialist support to address unresolved loss or manage complex grief, strengthened links between community health, community mental health and YOTs would help facilitate a swift and streamlined route to specialist provision. In previous years, Peasetown YOT had benefitted from having a nurse employed within the team. The recent removal of this nursing post as a result of NHS funding cuts (NHS England, 2017) was felt unanimously by YOT staff to be detrimental to young people's wellbeing; access to health services became increasingly difficult for young people as referral processes changed and waiting lists grew. Opportunities for consultation between the YOT and health also diminished without the nursing post, as well as opportunities for immediate intervention when young people were at crisis point or when disclosures of unresolved grief were made. Access to health data also became more difficult, as the YOT no longer had a health professional within their team who was cleared to access young people's NHS records, including records of mental health intervention and support. The addition of specialist health or mental health practitioners to YOTs where such staff are absent would therefore help facilitate loss informed practice, as health practitioners are not only able to offer immediate support and guidance, but may also act as intermediaries, navigating referral processes and supporting young people to access community health provision or mental health services in a timely and effective manner.

Closer working practices between YOT and Social Care

Gaps were identified by practitioners in both settings in relation to joint work between the YOT and Social Care. Closer working practices will help ensure that vital elements of young people's stories do not go amiss in either provision, and that young people involved in both services are not continually having to repeat themselves or complete similar work. As with specialist SEND, counselling and mental health services, collaborative work would also support young people to benefit from the specific knowledge and expertise held by practitioners within each

service; for example the insight social workers may bring around structural inequality and strengths based approaches (SCIE, 2015; Thompson, 2002) and the expertise YOT practitioners have in relation to legal processes and court procedure. Although some YOTs have been fully subsumed into wider Social Care or Early Intervention Teams, this was not the case in either setting I visited. Both teams were however moving towards closer working practices with Early Intervention and Family Support. This caused concern amongst some, who worried they would become 'a small voice in a huge team' and that being displaced from social work colleagues 'diluted the severity of young people's needs at the YOT'. If engagement in offending is viewed as being primarily underpinned by structural inequality and discrimination (as I observed time and again during fieldwork), then co-working cases with Social Care services seems sensible, as both teams can ultimately be viewed as working towards similar goals.

Continued development of trauma informed practice within YJ

There is much overlap between trauma informed practice (YJB, 2017) and loss informed practice. As such, continued development of trauma informed practices within YOTs will also support young people dealing with loss. In particular, strategies that emphasise a calm and consistent approach to work, where expectations are clear and an ethos of empathetic support is established (Beyond Youth Custody, 2018; Murray, 2016; Bloom, 2002) all help support young people affected by loss.

Emotional literacy and SpLC development work

A common issue for young people I worked with was their SpLC needs and their difficulties with emotional literacy. When young people struggle to articulate themselves, communication of loss and grief without resorting to physical action becomes incredibly difficult. Development of emotional literacy helps young people to identify and acknowledge their feelings (or lack of feeling); SpLC work helps equip young people with the words and ability to communicate their needs, tell their stories and make meaning from loss. It is estimated that up to sixty percent of young people known to YOT's have SpLC and, or emotional literacy difficulties (Gregory and Bryan, 2011), with many having needs that are unrecognised and unmet. It seems sensible therefore to screen out rather than screen in, so all young people who come into contact with the YOT are assessed for SpLC and emotional literacy difficulties.

Access to SEND support and screening processes

Similarly to SpLC and emotional literacy difficulties, young people who offend are disproportionately affected by SEND (Achievement for All, 2016), with many evading assessment and diagnosis due to school exclusion or poor attendance. For young people with SEND, conveying stories and making meaning from loss may be particularly difficult, as is presenting themselves in court or remembering details when giving statements to solicitors or police. Young people with SEND are often vulnerable, especially when they do not have the support of pro-social adults to support them through loss. Such vulnerability is easily exploited, by criminal peers or by existing adults in their lives. Loss informed youth justice must therefore be SEND informed too, so practitioners are able to recognise SEND difficulties and secure appropriate support and screening processes for young people. Resources can then be developed to support individual need, so young people can tell their stories and complete developmentally appropriate OBP work to help make meaning from loss and aid future desistance from crime.

Facilitation of close, sustainable relationships between young people and pro-social adults

Young people clearly valued opportunities to build pro-social relationships with trusted adults and practitioners largely felt that relationship building was the cornerstone of effective YOT practice. Enabling the facilitation of close, sustainable relationships between young people and pro-social adults arose therefore as a crucial element of both loss informed practice and of youth justice practice more broadly. Close relationships built on trust allow young people opportunity to develop emotional vulnerability, an important aspect of acknowledging and making meaning from loss (as opposed to holding feelings of sadness within) (Gillies and Neimeyer, 2006). In some cases, YOT practitioners became a young person's trusted adult, but ultimately, the aim of the YOT should be to help facilitate such relationships between young people and other trusted adults, potentially a family member or community mentor. Largely the success of such work focuses upon finding the right person; someone whom the young person respects and most importantly, someone they feel safe and secure with.

Reflections on the research process

I wanted to research loss in young people's lives because as a former youth justice practitioner, I was struck by loss in young people's stories. These stories of loss

affected me deeply, and I wanted to understand whether young people's offending was occurring as a result of, or despite their experiences. Although I felt sufficiently experienced in my work with young people, both at the YOT and within various educational settings, engaging in this research nevertheless became an all consuming experience. I have woken up in the middle of the night making connections between young people's stories. My walls are plastered with young people's art work. My shelves are home to plasticine models of pet dogs and aliens from distant lands. I have written over 100,000 words of fieldnotes and my desk remains scattered with memos as I continue to make meaning from those stories that leave me with my own unanswered questions about loss.

Methodologically, the combination of CGT and ethno-mimesis enabled me to explore young people's experiences in different ways; through art, through play, through storytelling, through observation and through everyday chat. I was also able to explore how YOT practitioners conceptualised and responded to young people's experiences of loss as I spent time with them across each setting. Whilst rewarding in terms of data and insight, working this way was incredibly time consuming and emotionally demanding. There were also plenty of ethical challenges along the way and I often felt as though I was 'walking an ethical tightrope' (fieldnotes, January 2017), as I weighed up observing action against safeguarding, of making space for stories against disclosures, of positioning myself as a researcher who passed on concerns rather than as a practitioner who dealt with them. At times this felt an impossible balance to achieve, particularly when I felt young people were being let down, or where decision making felt unjust. My own positionality became blurred as I moved between roles, sitting one day alongside my colleagues at staff training with a Community Learning Tutor's lanyard around my neck, the next day observing their practice with a notebook in my hand. At times I felt helpless, wanting to support young people but also being acutely aware that if I became too involved, I would become yet another adult who over promised, another adult who would let them down when I left. Supervision processes were integral to managing the methodological and ethical challenges this research presented. I also returned on many occasions to the forms I submitted for ethical approval, reminding myself that although opening up space for stories of loss felt risky at times, hearing and understanding these stories is crucial. If we do not listen, nothing will change.

Limitations of this research

This research has made an important contribution to furthering our understanding of how loss manifests and affects the lives of young people who offend. However, as with all research, this work has its limitations and as such, there are many ways it could be further developed. Exploring loss with young people who offend demands by its nature a multi-disciplinary approach; admittedly it would have been possible to produce a plethora of thesis' on this topic. Below I outline some of the limitations of this particular thesis, as well as considering potential next steps to further develop our understandings of loss in the lives of young people who offend.

My own positionality

I approached this research with ever shifting positionality. In Peasetown, I was generally regarded as an 'insider' with a new job. In Adlerville, I was both 'insider' and 'outsider', understood in some respects as belonging to a YOT and therefore 'getting what it's like' as a practitioner, yet never really feeling part of the team or becoming one of their own during fieldwork. For the young people I worked with, my age, class, accent and educational status each rendered me different, and my relative protection from marginality and structural inequality set my life and theirs firmly apart. Whilst I made every effort to 'check back' with young people and practitioners at each stage of the research process, my interpretation of young people's experiences remains nevertheless subjective, viewed through a lens ever tinted by my own positionality and experience. CGT recognises the role of 'self' in research, as an active agent engaged in social processes, whose very presence disrupts and interrupts everyday stories and practices (Charmaz, 2014). Indeed, the stories young people chose to share with me, those who decided to engage in the research and those who chose not to, the particular elements I paid attention to and the things that went amiss, must all be understood in terms of research limitation.

Demographics

I undertook this research within two distinct pockets of North East England and within settings that had their own unique cultural and contextual underpinnings. Whilst the intensity of this work helped me gain a rich and detailed understanding of how loss affected individual young people within these settings, to abstract the findings from this research from its distinctive contextual background and place them elsewhere as a blanket 'one size fits all' policy would be ill advised. Instead, my

findings and recommendations for youth justice policy and practice should be taken as a starting point, to be explored in further detail within the specific contexts of other settings before any grand claims of 'substantive theory' can be made (Glaser and Strauss, 2008/1967). Similarly, the core themes that emerged from this research were derived from the stories shared by young people, the majority of whom identified as white, heterosexual, able bodied, working class young people with no particular religious affiliation. It is likely that other aspects of loss may have emerged had I spent time with young people who identified in different ways, including BAME young people (a group heavily over represented within youth justice), LGBTQ young people, young people with physical disabilities or young people holding particular faiths or belonging to different social classes. Equally, young people's stories of loss were shaped by their locales, as was evident in the stories shared by LAC young people about their home towns and cities. This research was geographically limited, and it would be interesting to explore further how space and place as they are perceived in relation to notions of 'home' affect and compound loss within the everyday lives and practices of other young people who offend.

Recruitment processes

Recruiting young people, particularly from Adlerville, was difficult. At times there were misunderstandings that to take part, young people had to be good at or interested in art. YOT practitioners and in some instances parents, carers and corporate parents also acted as gatekeepers, meaning not all young people who wished to had the freedom to engage in the project; in one case a young person was withdrawn against their will by their care home manager, who worried taking part in the research would exacerbate the young person's 'emotional difficulties'. Occasionally, young people were 'recruited' as part of their statutory order, and I had to explain to practitioners that this was not ethically appropriate, whilst also acknowledging that young people's participation should count for something in terms of progress. Each of these instances must be viewed as limiting factors, as recruitment ultimately determined which stories were heard and represented throughout the research process. Engaging in ethno-mimetic methods, under the umbrella of CGT alleviated some of the limitations in this regard, as some young people who were initially wary of engaging with me became less guarded as they got

to know me, agreeing to take part in the research at various stages during my time spent with them at the SP, at the artistic venues, or at the YOT.

Like for like data comparison

Each YOT I spent time in had different working practices and engaged with data in different ways. My insider status in Peasetown afforded me access to the majority of YOT systems, including young people's case notes, contacts and assessment data. In Adlerville I only had supervised access to the case notes of young people I was directly working with, although I also had access to the skills and expertise of the YOT's data analyst, who was able to help me identify particular patterns and trends across Adlerville's broader YOT caseload. The differences in access and availability of data across each YOT meant that I was unable to compare data 'like for like' as was my original intention. Instead I looked at young people's assessment data in detail in Peasetown, and more broadly in Adlerville. Whilst the data for each setting sheds light upon assessment practices and interpretations of loss in relation to offending behaviour, each data set only does so within the unique context of the setting from which it was taken. Recognising and identifying trends in data across each setting was therefore not possible and must be noted as a limitation, particularly in relation to exploring the prevalence of loss.

Developing this research further: next steps

Because of the limitations described above, there is much scope for further research into the loss experiences of young people who offend. As I progressed with the research, further questions continually arose, some I was able to incorporate and feedback into the research process in accordance with CGT practices (Charmaz, 2014), others I had to leave aside for another time. Here I consider how this research could be expanded upon, drawing upon the limitations of my work, as well as some of the unanswered questions that remain as I conclude my thesis.

Repeating this research in different settings and with a diverse range of young people

In order to more fully understand loss in the lives of young people who offend, it would be pertinent to repeat this research in different settings and with diverse groups of young people to see whether similar stories of loss emerge within different socio-cultural and geographic contexts.

Exploring specific crime types through the theoretical lens of loss

I did not explore young people's experiences of loss (or their case histories and assessment data) in relation to particular crime types. Violent crime and unresolved loss and trauma have been linked in previous research undertaken with young adult offenders in custodial settings (Vaswani, 2018a, 2016, 2014; Boswell, 1996). It would be interesting to see whether similar patterns are evident across community youth justice settings too.

A more detailed exploration of 'one off' and pervasive loss, and young people's trajectories through the system

In my chapter detailing the extent of loss, I proposed two distinct models of offending trajectory based upon young people's experience of 'one off' or pervasive loss. For those experiencing 'one off' losses, I suggest their trajectory in and out of youth justice services tends to be linear; for young people affected by pervasive loss, I suggest their involvement with youth justice services is more cyclical, as meeting need and addressing deep rooted issues takes immense amounts of time and energy. Further research is required across different settings to test out the validity of each proposed model of trajectory, particularly as it relates to young people from diverse backgrounds who may be affected by specific, insidious forms of loss perpetuated by societal prejudice and structural inequality.

A detailed exploration of loss as it relates to systematic and societal inequality

I began this research with young people's stories and I end it with a degree of insight into how loss is generated and reproduced by marginalising systems of structural and societal inequality. Individual narrative is crucial therefore, because when brought together with the stories of others, there becomes both a nuanced and collective unveiling of the oppression and discrimination faced by vulnerable young people and (perhaps) the socially and politically constructed inevitability of their entry into youth justice services. The majority of young people I met during this work had experienced pervasive loss and were making meaning from their experiences in ways that made sense to them. Further research that interrogates pervasive loss as a product of structural and societal inequality and explores its impact upon marginalised communities would therefore be welcome.

Nothing to lose? Final thoughts

Bringing together multi-disciplinary thinking around loss to support and inform my own research practice with young people who offend has not been an easy task. It is

worth reiterating as we reflect back upon this research that there is a lack of common language within academia, and indeed within practice, to describe and define loss (Murray, 2016:7). The majority of loss studies have also tended to focus specifically upon bereavement, with limited attention given to other forms of loss or indeed, loss (rather than bereavement and grief) as an area of study in its own right (Murray, 2016:3). This lack of consensus regarding what constitutes loss is likely to permeate both individual understanding and professional practice, running the risk of important knowledge slipping between semantic cracks as different academic disciplines, practice areas or individuals frame and discuss similar experiences in different ways. It is clear therefore that room must be made within academia for a deeper, more coherent interdisciplinary understanding of loss in the lives of young people who offend. There is also an urgent need to better understand young people's lives from their own perspectives, and we must begin to listen more carefully to those voices that have been historically submerged because they are either too difficult or too inconvenient to listen to. As Murray explains, 'understanding the role of loss in the development of crime does not mean that we condone it' (Murray, 1999:5). From a E/W perspective, popular opinion still seems to assert that a welfare orientated YJS lets young people off the hook. Managing loss in the lives of young people who offend is a delicate balance for YOTs to achieve in a system that so readily separates victim from offender, good from bad, innocent from guilty. But as Vaswani (2018a:184) warns, 'the justice sector cannot afford to continue to ignore these childhood losses'.

Having the opportunity to carry out this research was an absolute privilege. The young people who gave up their time to bravely share their stories have each helped advance our understanding of how loss manifests and operates in the daily lives and practices of young people who offend. YOT practitioners too were incredibly generous with their time and expertise, helping me understand how they conceptualised loss and supported young people who came into the YOT. Time spent with young people in arts based provisions helped me explore young people's experiences in different ways; I learnt so much from my time in these settings, from the artists running the sessions and from young people themselves. Art will now be forever embedded in my practice, as both a researcher and as a teacher.

For some young people, loss had become such a common occurrence that it remained hidden in plain sight, written off as everyday experience by young people, their families, policymakers and practitioners alike. This research reveals that young people's experiences of loss require critical attention from all those defining children's services, including those defining youth justice policy and practice. Pervasive loss must be understood in relation to social and structural inequality, and as a tool of disempowerment that disproportionately affects our most marginalised and vulnerable young people. For many young people I worked with, offending became a physical articulation of unmet need, often caused by disenfranchised or unresolved loss. Young people need to be given space and opportunity to make meaning in pro-social ways; for practitioners, this means rethinking youth justice practice, with 'welfare' work and OBP work viewed as one and the same rather than as separate entities. For policy makers, loss informed youth justice demands greater recognition and more focused work to challenge and dismantle existing structural and social inequalities that produce, reproduce and compound loss in the lives of many young people who offend.

Appendices



Image credit: *'This is me'* (artwork produced by young people at Adlerville YOT)

Appendix 1: Research questions and how I answered them

Research question 1	Question type	How I answered the question	Data generated
What is the nature, extent and impact of loss in the lives of young people who offend?	Core	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ethnographic work in two youth justice settings, SP and 2 YOT arts programmes. 2. One to one narrative and creative work with young people who offend exploring the manifestations of loss in their lives. 3. Practitioner semi-structured interviews. 	Field notes, minutes from meetings, YOT documentation, creative work (including planning and preparatory work) produced by young people, transcribed interviews.
What role does loss play in the stories young people who offend are telling about their lives?	Subsidiary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ethnographic work in two youth justice settings, SP and 2 YOT arts programmes. 2. One to one narrative and creative work with young people who offend exploring the manifestations of loss in their lives. 3. Practitioner semi-structured interviews. 	Field notes, minutes from meetings, YOT documentation, creative work (including planning and preparatory work) produced by young people, transcribed interviews.
How do young people who offend interpret issues of loss in relation to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. their daily lives and practices? b. their offending behaviours? 	Subsidiary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ethnographic work in two youth justice settings, SP and 2 YOT arts programmes. 2. One to one narrative and creative work with young people who offend exploring the manifestations of loss in their lives. 3. Practitioner semi-structured interviews 	Field notes, minutes from meetings, YOT documentation, creative work (including planning and preparatory work) produced by young people, transcribed interviews.
Are there any differences regarding the nature, extent and impact of loss in the lives of young people who offend and the nature, extent and impact of loss in the lives of other marginalised young people?	Subsidiary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ethnographic work in two youth justice settings, SP and 2 YOT arts programmes. 2. One to one narrative and creative work with young people who offend exploring the manifestations of loss in their lives. 	Field notes, creative work (including planning and preparatory work) produced by young people.

Research question 2	Question type	How I answered the question	Data generated
How are youth justice practitioners interpreting and responding to young people's experiences of loss?	Core	1. Ethnographic work in two youth justice settings. 2. Semi-structured interviews with youth justice practitioners. 3. Analysis of ASSET Plus documentation in relation to loss.	Field notes, minutes from meetings, analysed ASSET Plus documentation in relation to loss, transcribed interviews with youth justice practitioners.
What do YOT practitioners feel to be the core issues in the lives of young people who offend?	Subsidiary	1. Semi-structured interviews with youth justice practitioners.	Transcribed interviews with youth justice practitioners.
Are youth justice practitioners viewing issues of loss as criminogenic factors, welfare issues or a mixture of both?	Subsidiary	1. Semi-structured interviews with youth justice practitioners. 2. Ethnographic work in two youth justice settings. 3. Analysis of ASSET Plus documentation in relation to loss.	Transcribed interviews with youth justice practitioners, Field notes, minutes from meetings, analysed ASSET Plus documentation in relation to loss.
How does YOT practitioners' interpretations of loss impact upon their daily work and practice with young people who offend?	Subsidiary	1. Semi-structured interviews with youth justice practitioners. 2. Ethnographic work in two youth justice settings. 3. Analysis of ASSET Plus documentation in relation to loss.	Transcribed interviews with youth justice practitioners, Field notes, minutes from meetings, analysed ASSET Plus documentation in relation to loss.

Research question 3	Question type	How I answered the question	Data generated
What are the implications of young people's loss stories for youth justice policy and practice?	Core	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Semi-structured interviews with youth justice practitioners. 2. Ethnographic work in two youth justice settings. 3. Analysis of ASSET Plus documentation in relation to loss. 4. Analysis of national YOT legislation and policy and localised interpretations of these in relation to policy and practice in each area. 	Transcribed interviews with youth justice practitioners, Field notes, minutes from meetings, analysed ASSET Plus documentation in relation to loss, analysed local policy documents including strategic planning documents for each setting.
What can be learnt from the stories that young people who offend are telling us?	Subsidiary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ethnographic work in two youth justice settings, SP and 2 YOT arts programmes. 2. One to one narrative and creative work with young people who offend exploring the manifestations of loss in their lives. 3. Practitioner semi-structured interviews. 	Field notes, minutes from meetings, YOT documentation, creative work (including planning and preparatory work) produced by young people, transcribed interviews.
Do young people who offend have specific support needs in relation to their experiences of loss?	Subsidiary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ethnographic work in two youth justice settings, SP and 2 YOT arts programmes. 2. One to one narrative and creative work with young people who offend exploring the manifestations of loss in their lives. 3. Practitioner semi-structured interviews. 	Field notes, minutes from meetings, YOT documentation, creative work (including planning and preparatory work) produced by young people, transcribed interviews.
What do young people say would help them to address issues of loss in their lives?	Subsidiary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ethnographic work in two youth justice settings, SP and 2 YOT arts programmes. 2. One to one narrative and creative work with young people who offend exploring the manifestations of loss in their lives. 	Field notes, creative work (including planning and preparatory work) produced by young people.
What support and guidance do youth justice practitioners feel they need to work effectively with young people who have experienced, or who are experiencing, loss.	Subsidiary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practitioner semi-structured interviews. 2. Ethnographic work in two youth justice settings. 	Transcribed interviews, field notes.

Appendix 2 - Interview questions - practitioners

As I spent time in each setting I visited, I had met most of the practitioners prior to the point of interview. As such, practitioners were generally familiar with my research interests and had therefore had some time to consider loss in relation to the lives and experiences of young people who offend before questions were asked of them at interview. Interviews with practitioners were semi-structured. I began with the questions below, but added or omitted questions as interviews progressed and as I embarked upon analysis. Working this way gave me an idea of questions to ask but also the scope to reflect upon what was being said in the interview and to act reflexively:

- 1. Can you tell me a little bit about your role in the service?*
- 2. What do you feel are the core issues affecting children and young people who offend?*
- 3. I'm interested in exploring issues of loss with young people who offend. To what extent do you feel loss plays a role in the lives of the young people you work with?*
- 4. Do you have any specific examples of loss in young people's lives? You do not need to mention the young person/ people's names; I'm just interested in the types of loss you've encountered in your work with young people.*
- 5. When you meet a young person who has experienced loss, how do you work with them to explore their experience?*
- 6. Do you predominantly view issues of loss as criminogenic factors or welfare issues?*
- 7. How might you record or capture young people's stories of loss when making assessments?*
- 8. Would you be likely to refer a young person into support services if they disclosed instances of loss in their lives?*
- 9. Do you feel that youth justice services work effectively with children and young people in relation to their experiences of loss?*
- 10. Are youth justice services best placed to carry out loss related work/ interventions or is this better addressed by other services?*
- 11. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?*

Appendix 3 - Questions for young people during 1:1 work

Although I do not hold formal interviews with young people, I asked exploratory questions during the process of storytelling and art making. My questioning was largely biographical in style, drawing upon narrative interviewing techniques (Wengraf, 2004; O'Neill, Roberts and Sparkes, 2015). What I asked young people was therefore largely shaped by their individual responses. This was the same for my observational and ethnographic work with young people as it was for my one to one work with young people. Considerable amount of time was spent getting to know many of the young people I worked with and building rapport to help enable them to talk as freely as they felt able to about the important events in their lives and the impact these had had upon them. Accordingly, the questions below were not used prescriptively, but were examples of some of the ways I began to talk to young people about their lives.

- 1. Can you please tell a bit about yourself and how you came to be where you are now?*
- 2. If you were to tell me a story about you, what story would you tell?*
- 3. Why did you decide to tell me that story, what was important about it?*
- 4. Can you tell me about your creative work? You could tell me about why you chose to create what you did, why you chose to use the materials that you did, the story behind your work or what your work represents?*
- 3. When I worked at the youth offending service lots of young people told me about loss in their lives; from deaths of family members and friends, to loss of school placements or loss of friendships. What does loss mean to you?*
- 4. What do you think youth offending services can do to help young people deal with the things in their lives which have been difficult for them?*
- 5. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?*

Appendix 4 - Fieldwork timetable

Before embarking upon fieldwork, I constructed a research timetable that I planned to adhere to. However, delays in access to Adlerville YOT meant I did not complete fieldwork within my prescribed timescale. The methodology and research methods I utilised were also incredibly time consuming! However, spending prolonged time in the field was deeply rewarding, and I believe I gained a far deeper insight into how loss affected the everyday lives and practices of young people who offend than had I conducted this research without fieldwork. Below I outline the rough timescales under which I completed each element of the research.

0-12 Months - Refine research proposal. Explore pertinent literature. Identify and make links with North East YOTs and other relevant practitioners working with children and young people who offend. Strengthen knowledge in participatory arts based practice in preparation for fieldwork. Complete 6 and 9 month reviews. Act upon suggestions. Seek ethical clearance, increase knowledge in relation to application of CGT in preparation for fieldwork.

12-24 Months - Undertake fieldwork within two North East YOTs. Begin analysis of young people's creative work and stories as they arise. Conduct interviews with YOT officers and other practitioners in the North East. Transcribe interviews and begin analysis. Analyse assessment planning in relation to loss. Prepare schedule for working with young people. Begin creative work with young people in each area. Complete practitioner interviews in each YOT.

24-36 Months - Complete fieldwork with young people in the North East of England. Consider means of displaying young people's contributions to the research (via an exhibition or presentation undertaken in collaboration with young people who have taken part in the research). Continue to conduct analysis and relate back to previous literature. Conclude research. Write thesis. Present findings at conferences; present findings to the Ustinov Foundation and interested youth justice services; submit journal articles to help inform future youth justice practice and social policy in relation to young people who offend and their experiences of loss.

Appendix 5 - Participant demographics (YP)


Area	Setting	Number of YP	Male (M) / Female (F)	Mean age	Nature of work undertaken	Notes
1	YOT	5	1F, 4M	13.6 years	1:1 storytelling and/ or arts based work	
1	SP Group 1	10	4F, 6M	16.3 years	Participant observation and ethnographic work.	
1	SP Group 2	18	8F, 10M	16.6 years	Participant observation and ethnographic work	Arts based work was also completed with 2 group members
1	Summer arts programme	10	2F, 8M	12.8 years	Participant observation, ethnographic work and arts based work	
1	Alternative education	1	1F, 0M	17 years	1:1 storytelling and arts based work	YP referred to me by another PhD researcher
2	YOT	2	2M, 0F	13 years	1:1 storytelling and/ or arts based work	
2	Arts Programme	2	2M, 0F	16.5 years	Participant observation, ethnographic work and arts based work	
Total number of young people			48			
Age range of young people			10 years - 18 years			
Mean age of young people			15.1 years			
Gender split			20F, 28M			
Young people ever known to youth justice or antisocial behaviour services			32 (11F, 21M)			
Young people never known to youth justice or antisocial behaviour services			16 (9F, 7M)			
Young people subject to community youth justice or anti-social behaviour orders whilst fieldwork was undertaken			29 (9F, 20M)			

Appendix 6 - Participant demographics (Practitioners)

Area	Setting	Number of practitioners	Male (M) / Female (F)	Nature of work undertaken	Notes
1	YOT	10	7F, 3M	Recorded interview	
2	YOT	6	4F, 2M	Recorded interview	
2	Arts Programme	1	0F, 1M,	Unrecorded Interview	Interview took place in a local coffee shop shortly after the arts practitioner's contract with the YOT ceased. Practitioner had no objections to being recorded but the environment was too noisy to record so I took detailed fieldnotes immediately after the interview instead.
1	SP	4	3F, 1M	Ethnographic	Conversations with and observations of staff interactions with young people recorded within fieldnotes with permission of practitioners (1 course lead, 1 course mentor and 2 course tutors)
Total number of practitioners interviewed			21		
Gender split			11F, 6M		

Appendix 7 - Informed consent form - young people

This is me: exploring loss with young people
Snapshot participant information sheet



Who am I?
Vicky Meaby. I'm a research student at Durham University

What do I want to do?
Explore your views on the things that happened that brought you into the youth offending service and to talk to you about the things or people you feel can help you in your life. I want to do this through drawing, writing, painting, song or whatever else you are interested in.


Why am I interested in this?
When I used to work for Darlington YOT, many young people shared their stories with me. A lot of people talked about loss in their lives. It made me wonder whether loss and offending might be linked in some way? I'd love to hear your views on this. Researchers have not really spoken to young people about their experiences of loss in this way before and we need to better understand this if we are to create youth offending services that better meet young people's needs.

What will happen to the things you tell me?
All of the information collected and stories shared will form part of a research project. I will never use your real name in the work so nobody can identify you or anyone else that you speak about. If you decide that you do not want me to use all or some of the things you have told me, please tell your YOT officer to tell me or contact me yourself at Victoria.meaby@durham.ac.uk. This can be done at any point until September 2017 when I will be writing up the project.

What will happen to your creative work?
At the end of the research project, I would like to give you the chance to display your creative work and share it with family, friends and people who are working with you. You can choose whether to display your creative work, leave it at the YOT or take it home with you. You can also choose whether or not you would like your own name on your work.




What if I tell you about things I don't want others to know about?
During our work together, what you tell me will be confidential. This means that unless you ask me to, I will not share anything you tell me with your YOT officer, the police or anyone else who is working with you. The only time I would need to break confidence would be if I was extremely worried for your safety or for the safety of someone else. If this happened, I would talk to you about it first and wherever possible we would decide together what needs to be done and who we need to share the information with.

If I want to take part what do I do next?
If you wish to take part, please complete the form on the next page to confirm that:
 • you have had enough information about the research to decide whether or not to take part.
 • you are aware of your rights as a participant.
 • you have permission from your parent or carer (if you are under 16)



How do I get in touch with you?
If you have any questions about the research project, you or your parent or carer are free to contact me, by email or face to face. I will also be spending a lot of time at the YOT and you are welcome to come and speak to me at any time about the project. If you cannot get in touch with me, please ask your YOT officer to make contact with me for you.

Vicky Meaby
Durham University, School of Applied Social Sciences, 32 Old Elvet, Durham, DH1 3HN.
Email: Victoria.meaby@durham.ac.uk
Phone: 0191 3341401

Young person consent form	YES	NO
I have read the information sheet and had a chance to ask Vicky questions and receive answers that I am happy with		
I agree to take part in this research project with Vicky Meaby from Durham University		
I understand that I have the right to refuse to talk about anything which I am uncomfortable with		
I agree that quotations from this interview can be used in Vicky's research project and in future publications. I understand that these and other information I give will be used anonymously which means my name will never appear and I cannot be identified by others.		
I understand that what I talk about with Vicky will be kept confidential, however if Vicky feels that I or someone who I mention is at risk of serious harm, Vicky may need to share this information.		
I understand that it is my choice to take part. I also know that even if I agree to take part now, I can change my mind and withdraw my information at any point during or after the meeting with Vicky until the data is analysed in September 2017.		
I understand that I can keep a copy of this informed consent form for my records		
If I am under 16, a parent or carer has agreed that I can take part in this project.		

Participant _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Parent or carer (YP under 16) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Would you or your parent/ carer like a copy of the informed consent form?
(please circle) Yes No

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project!

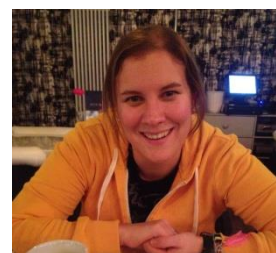
Appendix 8 - Informed consent form - practitioners

Participant Information sheet 1 (Practitioners)

Exploring loss with young people working with youth justice services

About this research project

This research project is being carried out by Vicky Meaby, a PhD student at Durham University. The aim of the research is to explore issues of **loss*** with young people who offend. I would like to find out more about the range and scope of losses experienced by young people who offend, ways in which young people respond to loss and whether young people and the professionals who work with them feel there are any links between experiences of loss and the manifestation of offending behaviour. I am interested in gaining views from a wide range of young people, at different points within the criminal justice system, as well as hearing the views of YOT officers and other professionals who work closely with children and young people who offend. I would like to do this by getting to know young people via observations within and around the YOT, through 1:1 or small group discussions with young people and via a range of creative activities exploring young people's lives. I would also like to speak to YOT officers and other related professionals.



*What do I mean by loss?

In many cases, *loss* is associated with bereavement. For this research project I am interested in a broader idea of loss, including (but by no means exhaustive of) loss through parental divorce or separation, loss of space, place or education, loss of identity, loss of friends, loss of pets, loss of freedom or loss through bereavement. I am sure there will be many elements of loss I have not considered that affect children and young people who offend: I would therefore like to gain both young people's and your ideas about what loss means and how losses are negotiated within young people's lives.



**Before you decide whether you wish to take part in this research project, please read this information sheet on overleaf and ask me for further explanation if anything is not clear.*

What your participation in the research will involve

I would like to interview you about your experiences of working with children and young people who offend, with a particular focus upon issues of loss in young people's lives and practitioner responses to this. The interview will last approximately one hour, and you are welcome to have a break during the interview, or to end it altogether at any point.

What kinds of questions will I be asked?

I am interested in finding out about your experiences working with children and young people who offend. I will ask you about young people you have worked with, and explore

with you the nature and extent of losses experienced by young people. I will ask you whether you feel issues of loss impact upon young people's offending behaviour and if so, how you respond to this within your professional practice and assessment of young people.

Do I have to answer every question?

No. You do not have to answer all of the questions. If you are uncomfortable or do not want to answer any of the questions just let me know and the question can be skipped. You will not have to give a reason for not wanting to answer any of the questions.

Are you tape-recording the interview?



With your permission it would be helpful for me to tape-record the interview. The tape will be used to produce a transcript (written document) of the interview, and will then be destroyed. Only I will have access to the tape and it will be stored securely when not in use. Your name will not be written anywhere on the tape. When the interview is transcribed I will change any information which may identify you or any of the young people you work with (such as names, locations or specific offences), and you are free to request a copy of the transcript to be sent to you to check. During the interview, the tape can be stopped at any time if you wish to do so.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

All of the information collected from interviews will form part of my PhD thesis. Within the thesis and any future publications all attempts will be made to make you anonymous, including, as mentioned, changing or removing any information which may identify you. If I use any of the direct words you have spoken your name will not be attached to these. If, after the interview, you would like to withdraw your data from the research, please contact me at Victoria.meaby@durham.ac.uk. This can be done at any point until analysis in September 2017.

What are the possible problems or risks of taking part?



We may be speaking about some difficult and upsetting topics, both in relation to loss in the lives of young people you work with, and your own understanding of, reactions to and experiences of loss. Although you do not have to talk about anything you may not wish to, please do not feel that you have to hide these feelings if they occur. You are free to take a break or end the interview at anytime if you do not wish to continue. Whatever you say in this interview is confidential unless you tell me that you or someone else is in immediate danger of serious harm. If that happens, I will raise this with you during or after the interview and explore how you would prefer to deal with the situation. In some circumstances it may be necessary to inform my supervisor in order to ensure that you and others are safe, but I will always attempt to discuss this with you first.

What are the possible benefits of taking part in this research?



By speaking to you about your experiences, you are helping to contribute to research about loss in the lives of young people who offend, an area has been largely neglected

in research so far. Your contributions are very valuable and may help inform future practice and provision within youth justice services. You are also helping to share invaluable knowledge about your work with young people and the ways in which you support them to address difficult issues in their lives. Any findings which come from the research may be used to help improve our understanding of the needs of young people who offend and best ways practitioners can respond to these needs; ultimately helping inform and improve youth justice services for the young people who access them.

If I want to take part what do I do next?

If you wish to take part, please complete the form below to confirm that:

- you have had enough information about the research to decide whether or not to take part.
- you are aware of your rights as a participant.
- you agree to be interviewed for the research.

Participant consent form (practitioners)

	YES	NO
I have read the information sheet and had a chance to ask questions and receive answers that I am happy with		
I agree to take part in an interview with Vicky Meaby from Durham University		
I understand that I have the right to refuse to talk about anything which I am uncomfortable with		
I agree that quotations from this interview can be used in the thesis and future publications. I understand that these and other information I give will be used anonymously.		
I understand that what I talk about in the interview will be kept confidential, however if Vicky (the researcher) feels that I or someone who I mention is at risk of harm, they may need to disclose this to relevant agencies.		
I understand that it is my choice whether to take part. I also know that even if I agree to take part now, I can withdraw my information at any point during or after the meeting up until the data is analysed in September 2017.		
I understand that I can keep a copy of this informed consent form for my records		

Participant _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Does participant require a copy of the informed consent form? (please circle)

Yes No

Vicky Meaby

PhD Student, School of Applied Social Sciences,

Address: Durham University, School of Applied Social Sciences, 32 Old Elvet, Durham, DH1 3HN.

Email: Victoria.meaby@durham.ac.uk

Thank you for taking part in my research project

Appendix 9 - Practitioner's guide

Nothing to lose? Exploring issues of loss with young people who offend.



Image Credit: Column F (2014)

An overview of PhD research for youth justice practitioners

Vicky Meaby - September 2016

About the research:

The inspiration for this research stems directly from practice. I have worked with children and young people since 2005, as a secondary school teacher, and most recently as an education practitioner within youth justice services. Throughout this time, I have been privileged to work with children and young people from all walks of life, including those who have found themselves on the receiving end of court orders and youth justice interventions. When working with young people who offend, storytelling has been an important part of my practice, as young people recount the important events in their lives and their own rationales for offending behaviour. Of all that young people have shared with me about their lives, loss appears to be a dominant theme: Loss through bereavement, divorce or separation; loss of identity; loss of space and place; loss of innocence; loss of rights or loss of childhood. I wanted to explore this further, to understand the nature and extent of loss in young people's lives, the different ways in which young people negotiate and interpret loss, and whether or not loss is linked in any way to young people's offending behaviours.

The fundamental aim of this research therefore is to address gaps in current knowledge relating to young people's experiences of loss, and how these experiences affect and operate within the everyday lives of young people who offend. The research will explore issues and impacts of loss directly with young people, using a mixture of creative work and storytelling as a methodology to develop a deeper understanding of young people's experiences from their own perspectives. I would also like to talk to practitioners, to discuss with them their own experiences of working with young people who offend, how they interpret the stories young people share with them, and the interventions they recommend to help young people to move forwards with their lives.

Why this research is important:

Despite young people seeming to talk a lot about loss in their lives, space to record issues and instances of loss within youth justice assessment is limited. Practitioners can do their best to capture young people's stories on the recording systems available, or YOT officers can squeeze issues of loss into various sections of the assessment framework. How to translate these accounts into anything meaningful for practice so that young people can receive appropriate intervention or support if they need it is a more difficult task. Despite the standardisation of youth justice assessment via ASSET and more recently via ASSET Plus across England and Wales, there is no blueprint for youth justice intervention; different YOTs have different approaches, working in different ways to help young people address the ongoing issues in their lives.

Conducting research with young people and practitioners across a range of settings can help establish what young people feel can help them as well as bringing together multiple instances of good practice. Practitioners will have opportunity to share their accounts of

practice, and through the generation of deeper narratives with young people, emerging outcomes may help better inform practitioners regarding appropriate interventions and approaches to practice. Policy makers will also benefit from listening to young people's accounts of loss and the perceived impacts of loss in their lives, particularly in relation to young people's offending behaviours and the development of desistance strategies. Hearing young people's stories helps provide context, a sociological backdrop to their offending behaviour and a guide from which we can create interventions within youth justice which really make a difference to young people's lives. My hope for this research project is that as far as possible, young people and I can explore these things together, and that through the process of young people's storytelling and creative work, distinct and new knowledge will emerge which will support practitioners in their work with young people and help shape a YJS which best serves those within it.

Why now?

We are working in challenging times. Austerity measures have seen the demise of many universal services for young people, especially services previously provided by youth work. The nature of contact with youth justice services has also changed dramatically over the last few years, with out of court disposals dominating, and less opportunity available for long term intervention. YOT officers are increasingly under pressure to process young people quickly, and to systematically address multiple issues affecting young people's lives, often with limited or reduced support from other services.

How will the research be carried out?

As this research is being carried out as part of a PhD project, I have approximately a year to dedicate to exploring young people's stories. I want to visit YOTs which take different approaches to intervention work, to see what can be learnt and to aid the dissemination of good practice across services. I plan to do this by meeting and working with young people across different settings and within different youth offending teams in the north east. Initially I will focus on building relationships with young people, through volunteering within pre-planned arts intervention programmes or through the facilitation of creative work with young people (depending upon the context of the setting and the extent of creative programmes already in place for young people). As creative work is produced and stories are told, themes will emerge. I will discuss these themes with young people, and ask for their opinions on what they feel they need from services and what might help them move forwards with their lives. In addition to working with young people, I would also like to talk to practitioners, so they can share their own accounts of young people's circumstances and the ways in which they work with young people to meet their needs.

Whilst my research interest is in loss and offending, I am not planning on conducting formal interviews or questioning young people directly about loss in their lives. Instead I want to get to know young people more holistically and talk about their lives in general to see what

is important for them. At the end of the process I would like to support young people to exhibit and share their creative work or to select specific art works which they feel reflect their own stories. This will occur in different ways depending upon the dynamics of each setting.

What will happen to the work produced?

Young people will be able to choose what happens to their creative work and who they share it with. Young people's stories will be anonymised, and the themes generated from these will be used to further our knowledge regarding the extent and impact of loss in their lives. A guide for practitioners will be produced, linking research and practice to help develop evidence based interventions which really make a difference to young people's lives.

What are the benefits of taking part?

Young people who offend are often stigmatised by society and their voices discounted. They are also rarely afforded the opportunity to contribute to professional discussion regarding specific ways and styles of working to help meet their needs. This research emphasises the importance of listening to young people's stories for developing policy and practice, enabling them to reflect upon their own needs and the things they feel that could help them address the issues in their lives. By taking part in this research young people will also have increased access to creative opportunities, opportunity to openly share their stories and the chance to contribute to gaps in knowledge regarding their experiences of loss.

When considering benefits for YOTs, this opportunity will bring together academic research and professional practice, further developing evidence based interventions for young people. By taking part in this research, YOTs will also be able to showcase their own good practice, as well as increase their understanding of the role of loss in young people's lives and ways in which issues of loss may contribute towards offending behaviours.

For further information:

Please feel free to contact me for any further information, or to explore ways in which we can work together to learn from young people's stories. The best way to contact me is via email, at: victoria.meaby@durham.ac.uk.

Appendix 10 - Practitioner referral form

This is me: Arts work referral form

Please complete this form and return to: Victoria.meaby@durham.gov.uk

1. Young person contact details

Name:	
Age:	
Address:	
Contact telephone number:	
Parent/ guardian name:	
Parent/ guardian contact telephone number:	

2. Referral information (please mark all applicable statements)

Referral information	Yes/ No
Young person is currently known to YOS	
Young person is currently known to anti-social behaviour	
Young person is formally known to YOS	
Young person is formally known to anti-social behaviour	
Young person has assessment details on Careworks	

Young person has assessment details on Uniform	
Young person does not have assessment details recorded on Careworks or Uniform	

3. Risk and vulnerability (please mark all applicable statements and provide brief details)

Risk/ vulnerability	Yes/ No	Brief details (if yes)
Young person has an active risk assessment		
Young person has previously been subject to risk assessment		
Young person is deemed to be vulnerable		
Young person is currently working with other agencies		

4. Further details

Please use this space to add any further information about the young person which may aid their participation in the project e.g. particular strengths, hobbies, difficulties or learning needs...

5. Updates (please mark all applicable statements)

Updates	Yes/ No
Contact with young person to be recorded on Careworks	
Contact with young person to be recorded on Uniform	
Contact with young person to be confirmed via email	
No contact information or updates are required for this young person	

6. Referrer's details:

Name:	
Role:	
Contact email:	

Thank you for your referral.



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Image credit: 'Sharing our work' Peter, aged 17.

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