The Role of Therapeutic Communities in the Process of Desistance: A Figurational Analysis

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The Role of Therapeutic Communities in the Process of Desistance: A Figurational Analysis

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Submitted to the School of Languages, Law and Social Sciences, Technological University of Dublin, in partial fulfilment of the requirements leading to the award of MA in Criminology.

October 2019
Declaration

I hereby declare that the material submitted in this thesis towards the award of Master (M.A.) of Criminology is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any other assessment other than part fulfilment of the award named above.

Signature of Candidate:___________________________

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Abstract

The therapeutic community (TC) is predominantly used for the treatment of substance users. Its approach, which focuses on a strong sense of community, relies on the peer group itself as an agent of change. In one Irish TC, desistance from crime appears to be an unintended outcome of the social processes and cultural forces existing there. The current study utilises qualitative data collected from a small cohort of seven male therapeutic community graduates. All participants had histories of involvement in serious crime and had desisted to varying degrees. Using a figurational approach, concerned with social processes, analysis of the data revealed that disruptions within family figurations played a significant role in the route into crime, and in some cases, the path to desistence. Crime and drugs seem to be entangled in such a way that desistance and recovery appear only to be attainable in tandem. Habitus is shown to have a considerable impact on an individual's ability to successfully navigate their way through a therapeutic community. For those with the required dispositions and skillsets, therapeutic communities provide a unique platform for the development of human interdependencies, which are shown to be predictors of routes out of crime. The implications of this study are significant for those entrapped in the drug-crime nexus, social care professionals working in drug treatment settings, and policymakers concerned with incarceration, reintegration, and desistance. The study emphasises the importance of understanding routes in and out of crime in terms of human interdependencies and the significant impact they have on these pathways.
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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Context: Phoenix Therapeutic Community

Located inconspicuously in suburban Dublin, Phoenix Therapeutic Community provides a participative, group-based programme for men experiencing problematic substance use. This long-standing residential drug treatment centre was founded upon Therapeutic Community values and beliefs, promoting responsibility at a group level where residents work together to overcome issues, and staff take a non-directive approach. Providing a therapeutic space where residents can achieve abstinence from drugs and alcohol is the overarching aim of Phoenix Therapeutic Community. Through community involvement, participation in educational activities, and engagement in group therapy, residents are encouraged to adopt a new and responsible way of life.

1.2 Rationale

The rationale for this study was to contribute to the research base pertaining to the use of therapeutic communities in the process of desistance. Globally, TCs commonly operate on this basis. However, in Ireland, this is not the case. For problematic drug users intending to desist from crime, therapeutic communities have the potential to facilitate the development of social capital in a space that exists after incarceration and before a complete return to the community. This may be achieved through relationship building and fostering interdependencies that facilitate the access of resources in the community. Individuals who engage actively with their family and communities are shown to have improved chances to desist from crime. This study seeks to examine the lives of individuals caught up in the drug-crime nexus, the interactions which shape their way of being, their routes into treatment, and how their engagement with the processes at a therapeutic community affects their propensity to commit crime. This study aims to contribute to existing knowledge through the provision of a figurational analysis of a significantly under-researched sphere. It is the first piece of research exploring an Irish TC and its role in promoting desistance from crime. This study responds to a need for enquiry into processes at TCs and how they facilitate the path to non-offending. The knowledge created will hopefully have implications for policy and practice, but most importantly, it will help to understand and support those caught between the cycle of addiction and the criminal justice system.
1.3 Research Questions

1. In what ways do family figurations mediate routes into crime and drug use?

2. How do processes at TC’s inform pathways to desistance and recidivism?

3. How does the drug-crime nexus impact desistance and recovery?

4. What role does habitus play in negotiating life at a TC?

1.4 Organisation of Chapters

Chapter one provides the context of the study, introduces the research question, and outlines the aims and objectives. Chapter two considers relevant literature pertaining to therapeutic communities, social capital, and desistance. Chapter three describes the methodology used in the study. Chapter four presents and discusses the findings of the research. Finally, chapter five provides a conclusion and offers recommendations based on the findings.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction
For Wacquant (2001), social exclusion is one of the more burdensome impediments faced by those who have endured incarceration. Deficits in social capital, which in many cases exist prior to imprisonment, are intensified during time spent in prison (IPRT, 2019). Upon their release, individuals experience difficulty accessing housing, welfare, and employment (Murray, 2007). For problematic drug users intending to desist from crime and find a new way of life, therapeutic communities offer a unique platform for growth and development based on a peer-led approach. This literature review begins by examining the origins of the TC and its functions. Then, sociological theory is used to shine a fresh light on the processes which exist there. Social capital is defined before relevant literature is used to hypothesise the nature of its formation and development at a TC. Finally, the process of desistance is examined, taking into account its primary, secondary, and tertiary phases.

2.2 Origins of The Therapeutic Community
According to Kennard (2004), a defining feature of the TC is its use of the environment as a teacher and therapist. Unlike other drug treatment options that employ a raft of professional helpers, the TC's social atmosphere and peer-led approach guide residents along their path to recovery. For De Leon (2010), the TC for addiction paved the way for recovery-centred drug and alcohol treatment options. He states that the TC model differs from previous "self-help" (p.70) groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), which appeared in the 1930s, as they offer treatment rather than support. The primary goal of the TC, he contends, is to facilitate new ways of thinking and being. Notwithstanding this, Glasser (1977) argues that the TC has its origins firmly rooted in AA tradition. He states that the TC's lineage can be traced back to Synanon, a drug rehabilitation program founded by Charles Dederich in 1958 in California, which in turn evolved out of AA. He goes on to note that the Oxford Group, a Christian organisation founded by Frank Buchman in 1921, was the forerunner to AA and, as such played a pivotal role in developing many of its concepts. Despite these contrasting arguments regarding its genealogy, Both Glasser (1977) and De Leon (2010) agree that the TC is an evolving entity that plays a vital role in improving the lives of people experiencing drug and alcohol problems along with a diverse array of other issues. The transformative quality of the TC has seen it take many forms since its conception.
2.2.1 The Therapeutic Community as a Field of Power

In Bourdieusian terms, the TC can be viewed as a field of power where residents attach themselves to cultural forces and occupy social positions (Bowden, 2014). In a TC, this cultural force is the ethos or mission statement which guides residents in a specific direction along their journey to desistance and recovery. The social positions are the jobs which residents work towards achieving. Beginning with crew member, moving on to department head, and possibly on to more powerful positions, a resident's habitus guides their journey. For Bourdieu (1990), habitus refers to "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures." (p.53). Habitus, therefore, describes dispositions produced by the social world which inform behaviour in different social contexts. These characteristics, of both thought and action, guide cognition, inform beliefs and are reinforced through the acceptance of norms and values across social contexts. Habitus, as such, shapes how the individual navigates social environments, such as the TC. The TC exists with its own set of rules, knowledges, and capital, and it is relatively autonomous from mainstream society. For Bourdieu (1990), a field has a distinct set of social positions and practices. He argues that struggles for power occur in social domains such as TCs, where individuals use different forms of capital to assert power, gain access to resources, and achieve social positions. Bourdieu's (1990) field theory provides an appropriate framework because of the TC's hierarchical format and multiple layers of social positions. The abundance of rules and regulations at the TC also makes it particularly applicable to Bourdieusian theory. As Preiur (2017) notes, Bourdieu was concerned with why people adhere to established systems and maintain social order rather than why they deviate. Cinnéide, Peillon, and Cinnéide (2003) describe the welfare field in which members of the public interact with government agents in a struggle for resources. This field is comprised of macro-level agents competing to control structural forces, and micro-level actors engaging with each other on the ground. In a TC, the macro-level agents take the form of management and their efforts to operate with budgetary constraints and legislation, the micro-level actors manifest themselves as staff members and clients in dynamic configurations battling for power.

2.2.2 Therapeutic Communities as Figurations

Burke (2012) notes similarities between Bourdieu's theory of field and Elias's (1978) concept of figuration. These resemblances are pertinent to the power struggles within the TC. Elias (1978) describes interlocking sets of individuals as figurations. Within these social groups, which individuals may or may not self-identify as members, actions are shaped by the
behaviour of others as well as their expectations. Elias's (1978) theory includes aspects of both conflict and cooperation, two critical components of life at a TC. His emphasis on interdependency also lends itself well to descriptions of TC life. A precursor to Bourdieu's (1990) field, Elias's (1978) figuration is a structure of individuals but cannot be explained in terms of any single member and how they think or act. In the TC as a figuration, each resident has a proposed strategy for the cessation of drug use, the termination of offending behaviour, or getting through the day. Their strategy is based around knowledge of their dispositions and the dispositions of others, their habitus. Daily life at a TC, however, does not always go according to plan. As individuals navigate their day, their actions and experiences interlock in often unintended ways, and as such, the path of a resident can only be understood in consideration of the individuals they come into contact with, particularly staff members as a separate and possibly antagonistic group. Despite being made relatively fashionable by Bourdieu, the concept of habitus was used by Elias long before him, and indeed had been used by others prior to this. Similar to the struggle for power between staff and residents in Bourdieu's (1990) field, the actions of staff members at a TC would be difficult to ascertain without being considered in tandem with residents. Although groups of staff and groups of residents can be viewed as distinct entities, their interaction and interdependence form one figuration. In Eliasian terms, the TC can also be understood as a "multi-person game on several levels" (Elias, 1978, p. 84). The TC is always in flux with new residents arriving and older residents graduating, current residents are pressured to join new groups. As new residents arrive, the current residents struggle to control and understand their position within the TC. New groups are formed, creating chances for residents to move forward along their path to recovery and desistance or lag behind. Although Burke (2012) notes that Elias rarely used the term social capital, as he felt it implied the ownership of an object of desire, both he and Bourdieu place stock in the ability to negotiate access to resources and social networks, the former placing particular importance on relationships and processes.

2.3 Defining Social Capital
Throughout a vast body of literature defining social capital, its formation, and its function, three key theorists have developed distinctive perspectives. Coleman (1988), Putnam (1993) and Bourdieu (1977) provide explanations with similarities and divergences. For Coleman (1988), social capital takes the form of relationships and networks which play a role in reconciling some of the difficulties associated with poverty and inequality of opportunity. Like Coleman (1988), Putnam's (1993) description of social capital is concerned with networks.
However, Putnam's (1993) hypothesis differs in its focus on norms and trust and in particular, how people bond within and bridge across networks. For Putnam (1993), trustworthiness is both a requirement for, and a product of these networks. Putnam (2000) distinguishes between what he conceptualises as bonding social capital and bridging social capital. The former relates to networking, which occurs within groups, while the latter refers to the creation of links between groups. Bourdieu (1977) posits that social capital exists in relation to other forms of capital, such as cultural, economic, and symbolic capital. He describes social capital as a tool that can be used to negotiate successful access to resources. He argues that the family is the primary source of social capital and also where its transfer principally occurs. While Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1993) provide somewhat static definitions, Bourdieu (1986) provides a more dynamic description of how social capital can be used to explore networks of power. Portes (1998) notes that social capital is viewed as either an individual attribute or an element that exists among groups. Putnam's (1993) description, he argues, views it as a group asset, while Coleman (1988) and Bourdieu (1977) maintain that the individual possesses it. These interpretations, while similar in their view of social capital as the property of the individual, also have divergences. As Dika and Singh (2002) contend, Coleman (1988) emphasises the positive features of social capital in terms of educational attainment. Whereas Bourdieu's (1977) account of social capital demonstrates the role it plays in exclusion and social inequality.

2.3.1 Illegitimate Forms of Capital

For Deucher (2009), gang culture offers a specific form of illegitimate social capital to marginalised individuals. Disempowerment and lack of income, influence, and status are common characteristics of those who derive a sense of belonging from illegitimate forms of social capital, such as gang membership. In disadvantaged areas of Glasgow, he notes that gangs provide some young people with a chance to develop "compensatory social capital" (p. 144) in the form of identity and social bonding. For Ilan (2012), non-normative forms of social capital are often overlooked, particularly while attempting to figure out how social capital can work for marginalised groups. Approaches that prioritise social networks of trust and reciprocity, he argues, fail to include specific forms of capital which characterise life on the margins. Similar to Deucher (2009), he found that marginalised young people in Dublin's north inner city derived social capital from involvement in low-level criminality, such as the sale of contraband and stolen goods. The networks which facilitate the movement and sale of items such as illicit cigarettes not only provide solidarity but also a platform for individuals to gain credibility in a society that excludes them at every chance. Gowan (2010) has a more sceptical
view of illegitimate forms of capital. In contrast with Putnam's (1993) altruistic and egalitarian concept of social capital, he found an abundance of social ties existing between African-American men living in a ghetto community in southern states of the USA. Extended families, school friends, and a vast amount of acquaintances form a tight-knit network of social connections facilitating solidarity in the face of extreme marginalisation. The issue here, he contends, is the quality of the connections, rather than the quantity. Without links to those who control employment, in this case, the white community, African-American men were excluded from legitimate, well-paid employment. Despite its cohesive benefits, Gowan (2010) argues that illegitimate forms of social capital inevitably reproduce inequality. This is owing, he notes, to connections that provide solidarity and income but ultimately draw individuals towards crime and incarceration. Notwithstanding Gowan's (2010) argument and taking into account Ilan's (2012) input, an open mind should be kept when considering how social capital develops, how it is developed, and how it is utilised.

2.3.2 Mechanical Development of Networks

At therapeutic communities, there are specific processes whose function can be explicitly viewed as social capital development. The purpose of interventions such as Parents Under Pressure, commonly used at therapeutic communities around the world, is to improve family functioning by supporting parents experiencing difficulties related to drug and alcohol dependency. Fundamentally, this intervention aims to improve the parent's ability to form healthy, reciprocal connections with their children (Barlow et al., 2019). When examining how social capital is developed in these situations, Cross (2010) notes the importance of unpacking Putnam's (2000) distinction between bonding and bridging social capital. The development of social capital through interventions such as Parents Under Pressure focuses on bonding social capital, as its primary objective is to strengthen ties within a group, in this case, the family. Edwards (2004) states, however, that it is important not to view these two types of social capital as mutually exclusive. This, he argues, decreases the utility of the concept by creating blind spots. Social capital can be dynamic, oscillating between bonding and bridging. This might occur when members of different ethnic or socio-economic groups take part in an intervention such as Parents Under Pressure. Bonding social capital is being developed through education and training aimed at improving family ties while bridging social capital is advanced via interaction between different groups. Marshall and Stolle (2004) argue that interaction between diverse individuals builds more trust than the same interaction within homogenous groups. The tools to access family support in the community, such as communication skills and computer
literacy, can also be described as bridging social capital because it facilitates intergroup networking and support. Putnam (2000) describes bonding social capital in terms of "getting by" and bridging social capital as "getting ahead." This description could be construed here as limiting as it suggests that support from outside groups is necessary for families to flourish. Cross (2010) argues that a third form of social capital, linking capital, is vital for improving equality of opportunity among disadvantaged groups. This, she notes, refers to knowledge and cultural practices, which are crucial to accessing resources.

2.3.3 Organic Formation as a Blueprint
Therapeutic communities are working communities where residents have jobs, responsibilities, and constant interaction with each other. Distinct from forms of capital that are developed as a result of planned interventions, social capital also develops as a by-product of daily life within a therapeutic community. This organically occurring form of social capital is likely to become the blueprint for building informal relationships beyond the therapeutic community, and as such, is vital to sustained desistance and recovery. Scholars such as Granfield and Cloud (1999) suggest a concept of recovery capital which encompasses this type of organic social capital and also includes aspects of physical, cultural, and human capital. They hypothesise that recovery will be facilitated when the individual accrues capital in these forms. However, Bourdieu's (1986) description of social capital provides a more fitting explanation for sustained desistance and recovery. For Bourdieu (1986), the ability to procure assets and services, both individually and as part of a group, is at the crux of social capital. Although Bourdieu (1986) notes that economic, cultural, and symbolic capital may be used in tandem with social capital to obtain resources, social capital as a dynamic tool of negotiation underpins much of their utility. The ability to consult, bargain, and capitalise on group membership is a skill accumulated out of everyday interaction at a therapeutic community and one which will predict successful access to housing, education, and employment, all key variables associated with sustained desistance (Shapland & Bottoms, 2011). The four components of recovery capital, as noted by Granfield and Cloud (1999), all rely on successful access to resources. Therefore, Bourdieu's (1986) conception offers a more succinct framework for describing how social capital and its operation in this context.

2.4 The Process of Desistance
For Farrall and Calverley (2006), desistance is understood in its most refined form as the termination of a criminal career. It is, however, as Shapland and Bottoms (2011) note, much more than an event. They regard desistance as a dynamic process, a fluid interaction between
well-established modes of survival, and new ways of being. Rather than being understood merely as the cessation of offending behaviour, desistance is more accurately realised as a journey away from crime through unchartered territory. As Nugent & Schinkel (2016) note, this path is often precarious and fraught with potential opportunities to slip back into more familiar ways of solving problems. Both Nugent and Schinkel (2016) and Shapland and Bottoms (2011) agree on the prolonged and demanding nature of desistance, although they note different obstacles along the way. For Nugent and Schinkel (2016), impediments to a life without crime take the form of stressors associated with isolation and inability to achieve goals. These difficulties, they argue, are resultant of the transition to a new way of life away from criminal acquaintances where old forms of social capital are no longer appropriate. Whereas, Shapland and Bottoms (2011) contend that incongruence between plans to “go straight” (p. 568) and temporary descents back to crime, plays a pivotal role. Cid and Martí (2015) note that social relationships are vital to the process of desisting from crime. They argue that positive connections to friends, family, and community are vital in dissipating the challenges associated with desistance. Like Shapland and Bottoms (2011), they place significant stock in legitimate social capital as a protective factor for desistance. LeBel, Burnett, Maruna, and Bushway (2008) continue along this line of argument. They note the ability to activate meaningful social connections as fundamental to a life without crime. Despite these arguments, however, Nugent and Schinkel (2016) state that for many would-be desisters, the ability to foster connections with their family and community appears as a daunting task and one which requires a supportive environment.

2.4.1 Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Phases

To differentiate between the cessation of offending behaviour and the processes which underpin sustained desistance, Maruna and Farrall (2004) break the process of desistance into primary and secondary categories. They hypothesise that primary and secondary desistance emulate the characteristics of primary and secondary deviance. Similar to primary deviance, which refers to basic forms of deviation undertaken by most people, Maruna and Farrall (2004) argue that primary desistance refers to a lull in offending behaviour which does not involve any drastic identity change. They go on to argue that secondary deviance, conversely, involves a radical reconceptualization of the self. An individual who achieves secondary desistance has developed a new modus operandi. They identify as a non-offender, and as such, their old way of being is incongruent with their new lifestyle. King (2013) regards this categorisation as key in the advancement of theories on desistance as it brings much-needed lucidity to the concept
of desistance as a fluid process. However, he also criticises Maruna and Farrall’s (2004) conceptualisation. He argues that the theory views secondary desistance as a destination and fails to fully acknowledge that offenders may still vacillate between primary and secondary desistance. More recently, McNeill (2016) has argued the need for a move beyond secondary desistance. Drawing heavily on the work of Laub and Sampson (2003), McNeil (2016) posits that tertiary desistance is achieved when the individual’s identity change is reflected in how their community perceives them. Sustained desistance, therefore, can be achieved when society acknowledges the transformation of the individual. The concept of tertiary desistance may be of particular importance for this study as it is concerned with the community’s perception of those attempting to desist from crime.

2.4.2 Protective Factors

For Sampson and Laub (1993), the prosocial connections developed through marriage and employment serve as protective factors for desistance. They argue that committing to new roles is crucial for sustained non-offending. Cid and Marti (2015) provide a similar argument, suggesting that traditional roles achieved through employment and marriage facilitate desistance. This appears to be a perspective held throughout the literature (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009; Blokland & Nieuwbeerta, 2005; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Despite the stock placed in these predictors, marriage and employment may not be immediate options for those progressing from a therapeutic community with plans for desistance and recovery. However, the ability to develop family connections is vital in this early stage (Mills & Codd, 2008; Best, Musgrove & Hall, 2018). Positive links to family members, particularly those who model behaviour consistent with desistance, are noted as a source of practical support with issues such as housing and emotional support through the provision of a sense of belonging. For Best, Musgrove, and Hall (2018), difficulties accessing social networks, employment, and housing are common among those attempting to desist from crime. These problems can be viewed as deficits in social capital as they describe an inability to exert the power of those who mobilise resources such as jobs and accommodation (Bourdieu, 1986). Singh, Cale, and Armstrong (2018) agree with Best, Musgrove, and Hall (2018) concerning the importance of family. However, they add that links to the community also play a vital role. This argument ties in well with McNeill's (2016) development of tertiary desistance as a distinct phase. Community links may be of particular value to those who experience diminished family relationships resulting from time spent in prison. Singh, Cale, and Armstrong (2018) suggest that membership of pro-social groups within the community, such as football teams, choirs,
and neighborhood committees, promote social connections which are difficult to achieve during incarceration. The Irish Association For Social Inclusion Opportunities (2018) regard the ability to create connections to community organisations as critical for desistance. They argue that these groups play a vital role in assisting individuals to access training, education, and employment.

2.4.3 The Entanglement of Desistance and Recovery

Existing literature on offending and addiction shows a strong link between the processes of desistance and recovery (Best, Irving & Albertson, 2016; Bennett & Holloway, 2004). In a review of studies from Irish prisons, Gulati et al. (2018) found that 60 percent of incarcerated individuals were experiencing drug dependency while 28 percent were struggling with alcohol problems at the time of their committal. Van Roeyen et al. (2016) note that despite a vast body of existing literature on desistance, knowledge on the relationship between desistance and recovery is limited. They note that this deficit is unexpected, given the multifaceted relationship between crime and drugs and the substantial amount of studies examining this nexus. As Best, Irving, and Albertson (2016) note, theories of desistance are informed by recovery models found in twelve-step fellowships and therapeutic communities. However, they appear to underplay the role that recovery evidence, particularly Alcoholics Anonymous' literature, has played in the development of key theories of desistance. The concept of spiritual experience and its relationship with identity change appears to be wholly overlooked within the desistance literature. A spiritual experience, as described by Alcoholics Anonymous (2001), is a "personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism" (p. 399). Despite its transcendent connotations, a spiritual experience in Alcoholics Anonymous relates to a rearrangement of emotions and thought processes, as Chamberlain (1986) puts it, "a new pair of glasses." Identity change is described within the desistance literature as a cognitive change that facilitates a new way of being (Maruna, 2001; Farrall, 2005). Both Alcoholics Anonymous (2001) and these key desistance theorists describe the changes as vital to their respective processes. The similarities appear to be glaringly obvious, but perhaps some academics are spooked by notions of spirituality. Best, Irving & Albertson (2016) pose the question of what the emerging recovery movement can learn from theories of desistance. However, it appears that desistance, as a relatively contemporary field of study, might have much more to acknowledge and learn from recovery literature originally published in the late 1930s.
2.5 Conclusion

The ability of TCs to develop social capital is well-documented within the academic literature, and the role that social capital plays in desistance is also widely acknowledged. However, there is a dearth in the literature examining the nexus of these well-researched areas. Based on this review of the existing literature, a bespoke theoretical framework is utilised for the current study. Aspects of Elias's (1978) sociology guide the way in which the study examines the participants' lives. Individuals are considered in terms of the social figurations they make up in their early lives, their periods of incarceration, and their time at a TC. This feature of the theoretical framework facilitates processual thinking, an approach which Linklater (2011) notes, views change as a continuous, disordered process. In this way, the structures and processes guiding the participants throughout their lives are given significant consideration. Furthermore, it allows the change that occurs in a TC to be analysed and correlated with changes occurring throughout the participants' life courses. Bourdieu's (1977) conception of social capital informs how the current study views the processes of negotiation that exist in a TC. Particular attention is given to the participant's ability to access social positions as well as resources and how this relates to their habitus. This allows the study to examine particular traits and characteristics which help or hinder an individual's route through a TC and beyond. Regarding desistance, McNeill's (2016) concept of tertiary desistance is used to guide the study's consideration of the participants upon returning to their respective communities. Views held by both the participants and the people surrounding them are explored in terms of the impact these perspectives have on the process of desistance. This feature of the theoretical framework facilitates a nuanced approach to the topic of desistance, taking into account more than just the cessation of offending and the adoption of a new way of problem-solving.
Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction
The aims of the current study are to understand the ways in which family figurations mediate routes into crime and drug use, how processes at TC's inform pathways to desistance and recidivism, how the drug-crime nexus impacts desistance and recovery, and the role of habitus in negotiating life at a TC. In light of the literature review, it appears that the effects of incarceration might also be mediating factors of successful routes through TC's, and the entanglement of drugs and crime might be more acute than originally hypothesised. Based on the research questions, a number of different research methods were considered. For Vogt (2018), the design phase of the research process is critical because the decisions made at this point will often determine how data is sampled, collected, and analysed. At the beginning of the process, approaches involving the integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches were considered. Although this approach would facilitate data triangulation and also assist the study to be replicated in the future, a decision was made that a statistical aspect, while useful, might also prove to be a limitation, as numerical descriptions might not provide the detailed narrative required for a nuanced understanding of participants' lives. The current study intends to understand how individuals experience life at a TC, and as such, a qualitative method appeared to be the best fit. As noted by Creswell (1994) qualitative research provides a well-grounded starting point for the process of investigation.

Noaks and Wincup (2004) note that qualitative research in criminology seeks to gain a better perspective of how interview participants understand their world. One aim of this study was to understand how figurational changes which took place in the lives of the participants before, during, and after their time at a TC, mediate processes such as desistance. With this in mind, it was felt that an approach which gives credence to the experience of the research participant would be best suited to this study. At this point, consideration was also given to a phenomenological approach. Jasper (1994) notes that this type of approach pays particular attention to the lived experience of the research participant. At first, this paradigm appeared to be a good fit. However, as Probert (2006) argues, other approaches facilitate the inclusion of self to a greater degree, an important aspect for this researcher. Following further analysis of Probert's (2006) article, it was decided that a feminist element would be added to the qualitative approach. The rationale for this decision is provided in the following section.
3.2 Research Design

For Westmarland (2011), interviewing forms the basis of much qualitative inquiry. Its uncomplicated approach, she contends, facilitated the collection of ideas and thoughts in an efficient and timely manner. Bell and Waters (2014) too note the straightforward approach of interviewing within qualitative research. They argue that robust interview processes are often determined by the researcher’s ability to read body language and take an empathic approach to understanding feelings. Taking this information into account, and given the researchers experience working with clients at various social care settings, qualitative interviews were deemed most appropriate for use in this study. Through the use of this design, participants are given an opportunity to express their experiences and thoughts in a language familiar to them. For Bachman and Schutt (2015), successful interviews are often determined by the researcher’s ability to establish rapport with the interviewee. The researcher’s work experience, as set out in the preceding section, helped facilitate a harmonious relationship with the participants in this study.

McIntosh and Morse (2015) describe the semi-structured interview as a design that uses a detailed guide to discover subjective knowledge regarding a situation or phenomena. The design uses open-ended questions that provide a topic but yet remain responsive to the research participant. They note that the researcher's ability to probe the participant creates a degree of flexibility that does not exist in highly structured interviews. This style of interview is best suited to this particular study because it allowed the researcher to gather data pertaining to the participant's experience of being in a therapeutic community as well as their experience of returning to the community. The researcher's experience of life in a therapeutic community again provided the knowledge required to probe specific responses yielding rich data.

3.2.1 Feminist Research

According to Cotterill and Letherby (1993), methodology within the feminist research paradigm involves a high degree of reflexivity, asking the researcher to take into account the lives of the participants in terms of their own experience and life trajectory. They argue that feminist research pays particular attention to the discovery of connections between researcher and the participant. They place considerable stock in data that emerges as the result of shared experiences between the researcher and the researched. For Noble and Smith (2015), credible research is ensured through the acknowledgement of the researcher’s personal biases, and with this in mind, and guided by feminist epistemology, the researcher made a decision to share some of his life experiences as they relate to the current study:
In 2013, following many years of problematic drug use and attempts to recover, I attended an intensive 20-week community stabilisation program at Phoenix House in Dublin’s city centre. Following this, I took part in a six-week detox at Cuan Dara in Cherry Orchard Hospital, and progressed from there to Phoenix Lodge, a therapeutic community on the north side of Dublin, for six months of residential treatment. Upon completion of phase one at Phoenix Lodge, I engaged in a step-down program aimed at community reintegration. Following step down, I completed a BA in Social Care, and I am currently undertaking an MA in Criminology. I feel that my experience as a resident in a therapeutic community provides me with a unique research perspective. Rather than shy away from my personal history, I have decided to use it as a tool of discovery. I hope that my life experience will allow me to attune to the research participants in this study and encourage them to share their stories without reservation.

3.3 Sampling

For Marshall and Rossman (2016), solid, credible research is determined by considerate decision making at every stage. Early on in the process, this involves understanding the context that inspired your research question, and providing a sound rationale. This study analysed the role of therapeutic communities in the process of desistance, as such, there was a requirement for research participants with a certain track record. As Abrams (2010) notes, purposive sampling as an appropriate method for this type of research. He states that the approach allows participants to be selected based on their unique attributes. For the purpose of this study, contact was made with prospective respondents through Phoenix Therapeutic Communities graduate network. In partnership with Phoenix’s graduate coordinator, the researcher contacted former residents and generated a sample for the study. This method did not produce a representation of a larger population, but rather a clearly defined group of individuals with some common attributes, but also, with enough differences for effective comparison. Bachman and Schutt (2015) argue that quality in sampling may be ensured by a clear definition of population and definitive account of the method used to select participants. The participants in this study were seven male graduates of Phoenix TC between the ages of 34 and 57. All the men grew up in urban Irish settings, became involved in deviance at an early age, and served custodial sentences for serious crime. The men had desisted from crime in varying degrees. Sampling involved liaison between the researcher, Phoenix’s graduate coordinator, and Phoenix’s clinical advisory group. All processes and decisions are clearly documented to aid transparency and future reproduction of the study.
3.4 Data Collection

Deanscombe (2012) regards data collection techniques as a predominant aspect of any research proposal. He contends that a study’s viability can often be measured in terms of its method of data collection. The current study involved seven semi-structured interviews carried out face to face. Before each interview, informed consent was received from each participant. The interviews lasted approximately thirty minutes, the shortest was 26 minutes, and the longest was 42. Data were collected during the summer months of 2019. The interviews took place in safe, public settings, which were agreeable to both participant and researcher and which took the anonymity of the research participant into account. Bryman (2012) notes reflexivity as a key feature of robust data collection. In this study, a reflexive approach allowed the researcher to rephrase some of the questions based on previous responses, rather than always sticking to the original interview schedule. During the process of interviewing, the researcher's deportment has the potential to affect data collection. Taking this into account, the researcher ensured his demeanor, tone and body language, were conducive to a relaxed environment. In terms of qualitative data collection, particularly interviewing, Patenaude (2004) notes the importance of building rapport. He suggests that mutual respect and understanding between the researcher and the participant, facilitated by a therapeutic connection, provide the situation for valuable data collection. Again, the researcher's personal experience facilitated a non-judgmental and sensitive data collection experience.

3.5 Ethics

In order to achieve informed consent within research, the responsibility is on the researcher to the participant understands the study’s aims, how they will be achieved, and to inform the participant of any associated risks. Gelling & Munn-Giddings (2011) note that it is vital to communicate this information, as it is only on this basis that a participant can make in informed, voluntary decision. Consent forms were issued to the participants in this study and detailed information pertaining to the study’s aims and methodology were also communicated. All information was provided using understandable language and provided a clear picture of any possible risks and benefits associated with involvement. Participants were informed of the study’s confidentiality measures and there right to leave the study at any point was also made clear. The study adhered to the Codes of Ethics laid out by the British Criminology Society. Given the nature of this study, sensitive topics were raised during the interview process. One ethical implication was that the participant might become distressed during or after the
interview. To reduce any possible distress, the interviews began with light-hearted discussion followed by some factual non-intrusive questions. Rubin and Rubin (1995) note that beginning an interview with a relaxed style will help alleviate feelings of discomfort and prepare the participant for the possible discussion of more sensitive issues. As mentioned before, the participants were fully aware of their right to leave the study at any point. Plans were in place to support the participant, should they have become in any way distressed during the interview process. On an individual basis, plans were made to be implemented if this occurred. For Thomkins, Sheard, and Neale (2008) the final stage of an interview is important to consider in terms of the well-being of interviewees, particularly when sensitive topics have arisen. They argue that the interviewee should be steered away from such topics towards the end in order to achieve a comfortable end to the process. The participant’s well-being was of paramount importance in this study. Interviews were brought to a close by returning to the informal and relaxed style taken at the outset.

3.5 Data Analysis and Coding
According to Noble and Smith (2015), utilising consistent methods of data analysis can be used to overcome common arguments pertaining to the subjective nature of qualitative research. They argue that reliable research is predicted by standardised processes. During the analytical stage of this study, data was prepared by first getting a sense of it before any coding began. Data preparation continued with the transcriptions of the interviews. Accurate and sensitive transcriptions of the recordings we carried out. Any remembered observations were noted at this stage, and participants were assigned fictitious names. In order to become familiar with the data, the researcher read and reread the transcriptions. Sandelowski (1995) suggests that this allows the researcher to immerse themselves in the data and get an overall sense of it. Saldaña’s (2016) approach to coding qualitative data was employed. The data was initially swept for patterns which were then converted to codes. These codes, such as "family difficulty," "restricted peer group," and "success in deviancy" were applied and reapplied to the data, which helped to organize it and develop explanations. Using these codes, categories, and subcategories such as "conforming to deviant expectations," "the entanglement of drugs and crime," and "struggling to group" were synthesized. Recoding and recategorizing then took place, which allowed for refinement. Themes such as "family and community" and "life at a therapeutic community" emerged as a result of coding, categorizing, and analytical reflection. The researcher’s life experience also played a part in the analytical stage of the study.
Reflexivity in qualitative research is noted by Richards (2009) as a critical element. This, she argues, is due to the collaborative nature of the qualitative processes. Both the interviewer and the interviewee have roles in the research process which ultimately affect outcomes. If a researcher wishes to be reflexive, they must take into account their own biases and consider how they might shape findings. In the case of this study, the researchers work experience and life trajectory helped develop an understanding of the data through familiarity.
Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Findings

Following data collection and analysis, a number of findings emerged from the data:

1. Reduced intimacy and diffuse boundaries within family figurations play meaningful roles in routes into crime, and in some cases, the path to desistance.
2. Crime and drugs are entangled in such a way that, for some, desistance and recovery appear only to be attainable in tandem. A return to drugs leads to a return to crime, and inversely, criminal involvement is often associated with the reoccurrence of drug use.
3. Despite the TC's peer-led function, the keyworker-client therapeutic relationship appears to be of paramount importance for the successful negotiation of a TC and desistance from crime.
4. Habitus plays a significant role in an individual's ability to navigate their way through a therapeutic community successfully.
5. The social processes at therapeutic communities appear to mediate the process of desistance. Adhering to cultural forces, building relationships, and forming interdependencies within groups all appear as protective factors for a life without crime.

In the following sections, a detailed discussion and analysis of this study are presented and located in relation to the academic literature. The following headings, which emerged as themes, will be discussed: Family and Community; Crime, Drugs, and Incarceration; Life at a Therapeutic Community; and The Process of Desistance.

4.2 Family and Community

4.2.1 Family Figurations: Pathways in And Out of Crime

From the outset of each interview, it became abundantly clear that most of the participants experienced difficulties in early family life. All participants reported growing up in what they described as socially excluded communities on the margins of society. Parental alcohol and drug issues appeared as a common characteristic of their formative years. Memories of interactions within families, peer groups, school, and community seem to be tainted by uncomfortable feelings associated with a parent's inability to provide care. Most participants
described their early life as a chaotic experience where crime, drugs, and unstable familial relationships were commonplace. One participant spoke about the difficulties he experienced as a result of his father's incarceration and his mother's alcoholism.

“My family life before Phoenix, it was a bit of a crazy one, you know? I suppose your typical dysfunction, do you know what I mean? Alcohol abuse and there was addiction in the household and my father was in and out of jail the whole time and it was... that's kind of how it was. The Christmases were fairly shitty for the most part” (Michael, 34, Limerick)

For Michael, and most of the others, challenges faced by their parents in the provision of care were a defining feature of their route into deviance and future contact with the criminal justice system. There are no surprises here. Structural inequality and parental involvement in drug and alcohol use have been noted as salient predictors of pathways into crime by many commentators (Wolff & Baglivio, 2016; Kennedy, Edmonds, Millen & Detullio, 2018; Redmond 2015). Notwithstanding Bowlby’s (1982) interest in maternal deprivation and delinquency, the role that intimacy plays within family figurations and its impact on criminal involvement does not receive the same recognition within contemporary criminological literature. As noted by one of the participants, intimate relationships were non-existent in early family life.

“Eh, well I suppose I hadn’t really got much of a family, although I came from a big family there was never any intimacy in the family because from the age of five I was in a home so I never really felt that family, that family experience that people talk about you know?” (Damien, 49, Dublin)

The inability to achieve intimacy in the family figuration is important in this context for two reasons. Firstly, it begins to explain delinquency: the individual deviates when channels within the family figuration are restricted. Secondly, it appears to account for the enhanced feelings of acceptance and solidarity experienced later on by the participants upon entering a therapeutic community. In most cases, the interdependencies existing in the family figuration play a role in the pathways both in and out of crime and addiction. For Michael, his father’s criminal activity facilitated an unplanned process involving deviancy as an acceptable way of solving problems. His father's incarceration, also presumably unplanned, placed an immense strain on their relationship and reinforced feelings of isolation and lack of support experienced by Michael. He could not depend on his father for the fulfilment of various needs in the same way most children can. For Damien, being placed in state care in the UK completely severed
connections with his mother and father. Despite the intervention taking place for his protection, it led to an unplanned process of interweaving with practices and processes inherent in state care in the 1970s. The consequences for Damien were that that the intimate, meaningful relationships needed to flourish were not present. Although the changes experienced within Michael and Damien's family figurations differed, the outcomes were relatively similar. Restricted access to care and protection, coupled with exposure to deviancy, appears to assist in the formation of a habitus suited to criminal activity.

4.2.2 Diminished Structures and a Desire for Rules

Participants revealed practices within their family figurations, which differ significantly from "normal" family procedure. Issues stemming from parental alcohol and drug use and incarceration appear to have created a more open playing field without the full implementation of the rules which typically regulate family life. This diminished structure seems to have led to a reduction in accountability within the family. Participants described situations where they were not held accountable for their actions inside and outside the family. One participant spoke about how the decision to attend school or not was one he had to make for himself.

“I didn't want to be in school, and I didn't really have to be there if I didn't want to, do you know what I mean? That's for the most part. There was no-one telling me to get up out of bed and go to school, for the most part, you know what I mean? Do you know what I'm saying? (Michael, 34, Limerick)

This short account gives a sense of the dynamics within the participants’ families. As well as diminished structure, there appears to be ambiguity concerning family roles. Throughout the interviews, participants gave accounts of confusing situations that emerged when family boundaries and responsibilities were not clearly defined. In some instances, both the participants and their primary caregivers appeared to be unaware of their role. This uncertainty concerning roles appears to have led to a reduction in accountability within the family figuration. These findings are in line with a body of literature highlighting connections between parental accountability and youth involvement in crime (Condry and Miles, 2014; Holt, 2010; Warner and Cannon, 2004). One participant explained that, as an adolescent, he was aware of the lack of accountability and structure in his family life. He spoke about seeing members of his peer group being disciplined by their parents and wondering why his family lacked the governance visible in those around him.
“I wanted a normal fucking family life, I wanted what every other person wants I think, I wanted a ma and da, I wanted to know the difference between right and wrong” (Participant Damien, 49, Dublin)

Damien communicated an explicit desire for guidance, a desire which could not be met. Not all participants spoke about growing up within a family which faced additional challenges. One participant, Declan, described growing up in a stable family where both his parents lived with him at home, had jobs, and were in a position to provide adequate care. Although he did not speak about the nature of his relationship with either of his parents, Declan described his stable childhood experience as being directly linked to a love of horses. He described the relationship as an interdependent one, where the horses depended on him to provide them with shelter and food, and in turn, he depended on them for the cultural capital gained through being an "urban cowboy" in Tallaght in the 1990s. He spoke about how laws introduced at that time brought about changes making it difficult to own a horse in an urban setting. These changes, he argued, paved the way for his route into crime.

“I kept horses up in Tallaght and I had up to six horses and that law came in where you had to have your horse microchipped and you’d to have an acre of land per horse, all that craic. And when that came in, I had to put the horses off on land and when I wasn’t around them every day then, my kind of friends, kind of changed then. I started being idle and hanging around places more that I wouldn’t have hung around if I was up in fields with the horses all the time” (Declan, 37, Dublin)

For this participant, a connection to horses and the land was a protective factor for criminal involvement. He spoke about the therapeutic nature of his relationships with his horses and how it provided him with an exciting alternative to the crime he witnessed other young men in the community of his age becoming involved in. Declan's experience aligns with many views held within the academic literature recognising the therapeutic value of human-equine relationships (Burgon, 2011; Fine, 2000; Laurie & Noble, 2015). As mentioned, Declan did not elaborate on his relationship with his parents; he did, however, speak at length about the responsibilities associated with his relationships with horses. In this case, unlike others, the family structure appeared stable. Neither of Declan's parents was involved in crime or had issues with drug or alcohol dependence. His route into crime seems to have been instigated by an interruption to the structure provided by the horses and the resultant decrease in cultural capital, rather than a breakdown in family relationships, as reported by other participants.
4.2.3 Existing Outside of Mainstream Community

When asked about how they felt their community viewed them in the height of their criminal activity, participants were fairly unanimous with their replies. The majority felt that they were located outside the mainstream, on the margins, and without a meaningful stake. Their pathway into criminal involvement, expediated by structural inequality, and extremely challenging family circumstances, located them as social pariahs in their respective communities. For the most part, their existence appears to be characterised by lack of cohesion, lack of economic power, and subject to the blame of other, more established members of their communities, this finding aligns well with Norbert Elias’s views on similar matters (Swann and Hughes, 2016).

One participant recalled how his involvement in crime predicted his position within the community.

“My place in the community was, that was, what’s the word I’m looking for, that was framed by my behaviour…. So I felt I was an outcast. Coz we were the bold ones. So, I didn’t really, now when I look at it, we had our place in society, in the community, we were the bold ones” (Jerry, 41, Cork)

Views echoing those held by this participant are widely noted, particularly by scholars such as McNeill (2016), who comment on tertiary desistance. He notes the perpetuating effects of views such as these on both desistance and recidivism. However, not all participants were viewed through a negative lens by members of their communities. For one participant, staying away from drug dealing and concentrating on other types of crime, such as bank robberies, allowed him to retain a position of acceptance in his area.

“Back then my community would have viewed me as being alright because I wasn’t selling drugs. I wasn’t a drug dealer, I was more… I turned into robbing banks and all other stuff and that. So, they would have viewed that as you’re alright, you don’t sell drugs. You know? And the community I was in would have been Dolphin’s Barn, then Lower Crumlin. It was actually sociably acceptable” (Thomas, 55, Dublin)

In this case, ideas and actions regarding crimes such as robberies were viewed as typical in this participant's community. As such, as long as individuals refrained from criminal activity seen as harmful to the community, they remained respected. Conventional criminological explanations, such as those posited by strain theory, which suggest that deviation is one possible response when structural inequalities prevent people from reaching their goals through legitimate means (Siegel, 2017), feel like a constraint when used to try and describe some of
the experiences revealed in this study. Here, once more, theory associated with cultural criminology enables the construction of a more nuanced understanding. As Ferrell, Young, and Hayward (2008) argue, the meaning of crime is located within its cultural context. It follows that some criminal actions, rather than occurring as a result of an inability to achieve culturally prescribed goals, as posited by strain theory, is, in fact, subcultural behaviour. Furthermore, and as suggested by the responses of participants in this study, communities in Dublin are often associated with their own distinct set of subcultural criminal norms. For Thomas, it is possible that desistance occurred later in life because of his community’s acceptance of particular types of crime and deviancy.

4.4 Crime, Drugs, and Incarceration

4.4.1 Acceptance and Success Through Deviance

The data collected during the interviews provided a rich insight into the early lives of the participants and placed an unwavering focus on inequality of opportunity as a determinant factor in their pathways towards criminal involvement. Systematic inequalities rooted in dominant social institutions, restricted access to intimate family relationships, embeddedness in deviant subculture, and the experience of life on the margins of society, in varying degrees and combinations, mediated their respective routes into crime. At every level, it appears that the men involved in this study experienced exclusion. It is not surprising then, that when opportunities for acceptance and success presented themselves, the participants in this study embraced them wholeheartedly. It appears their habitus was well suited to these particular types of social networks. One participant recalled developing the first meaningful relationship in his life with a member of a well-known criminal family in his neighbourhood.

“Then came along, there was this family who had a generation of crime and one of their sons I got close to, and he was the first person I was ever close to, and the two of us split from that group and we were robbing our own, and by our own thoughts we were quite successful at that” (Jerry, 41, Cork)

For this participant, criminal activity brought with it friendship, belonging, and a sense of achievement otherwise unavailable to him. This was a common theme among the participants. Intimacy, though unattainable within the family figuration, was achieved through friendships underpinned by criminal involvement. The criminal figuration, much like the family figuration, however, was in constant flux. Once based on feelings of belonging, interdependencies took on a criminal element. These findings are in line with those of Deucher (2009), who notes disempowerment and a sense of marginality as typical traits of those who seek acceptance
within criminal networks. The findings also resonate with Ilan (2012) and his description of how non-normative forms of social capital can work for marginalised groups through the provision of both solidarity and credibility. Once having found their way, albeit considered illegitimate, participants noted a fast progression from petty offences such as shoplifting to involvement in serious organised crime.

“Then I went from robbing cars to tying people up, doing burglaries, doing jump overs, doing anything, robbing banks, robbing cars to sell, do you know, anything basically just to get a few quid. My thing was burglaries, do you know what I mean. I travelled the length and breadth of Ireland committing burglaries, do you know. If I’d have shown as much commitment in a job, I’d be the CEO of some company. Do you know what I mean?” (Declan, 37, Dublin)

Declan openly discussed his involvement in serious organised crime. For him, committing robberies was a part of everyday life, something which proved useful to him over time, and an area in which he apparently showed great enthusiasm and talent. Had legitimate opportunities to advance been available to this participant, he felt he would have accepted them and proceeded along the legal route to success.

4.4.2 Entangled Progression of Drugs and Crime

Given that the participants in this study were all graduates of a therapeutic community providing services to men with problematic substance use, the entanglement of crime and drugs use, as well as desistance and recovery, arose throughout the interview process. Although it was difficult to ascertain which came first, as criminal involvement progressed, so too drug use and the issues which inevitably follow. One participant noted how his drug use predicted a change from crime as a recreational activity to a pursuit of necessity.

“And I wanted to impress, and the older fellas that I was talking about, and they were joyriders, they were the kind of main people on the scene. At the time like they were the main joyriders and things, so like I would have got involved in that from a very young age and it kind of, with drug use, then it progressed into shoplifting and just anything, anything opportunistic. But with drug use it got desperate, do you know what I mean? Do you know what I’m saying? .... Burglary and all that shit” (Michael, 34, Limerick).

It is important to note here that the entanglement of drugs and crime may have arisen as a prominent theme due to the sample, as noted, all of the participants in this study were chosen because they spent time drug treatment and prison. As noted by Muncie (2015), the vast majority of illicit drug users do not engage in crime. He adds that just a small portion of drug
users experience the chaotic lifestyles revealed in this study, and just an extreme minority finance their drug use through crime. The inverse, however, reveals a very different story. The findings here replicate those of Best, Irving, and Albertson (2016) who note the widespread evidence of drug use in the offending population. It appears that, in some cases, the two spheres appear inseparable, and this is most certainly true of the participants in this piece of research. The use of heroin and the reported associated stigma appeared to be a crucial juncture in the life trajectory of the participants in this study. The use of other more culturally acceptable drugs, such as cannabis and cocaine, did not seem to have the same impact on their lives or the choices they made. As they spoke about the progression of their drug use, feelings of shame and disgrace crept in alongside the mention of heroin use. For these men, labels such as addict and junkie were reserved solely for users of this particular drug.

"I had started taking heroin, and got addicted to heroin, so my drugs for a long time would have been codeine-based tablets, painkillers, weed, hash, eh, benzodiazepines, and I would have seen no problem with that, and people that took heroin were addicts in my head" (Jerry, 41, Cork)

Although there appears to be little in the way of current Irish research examining the serious crime and opiate use nexus, these findings, to some extent, reiterate those of Comiskey, Saris and Pugh (2007), as well as noting a complex relationship between crime and heroin use in Ireland, they argue for criminality and opiate use to be understood in terms of a longitudinal phenomenon. Although beyond the scope of this study, future research examining the additional challenges faced by opiate-addicted criminals over time might help to shed light on new pathways in and out of crime.

4.4.3 Incarceration and Interconnectedness

With crime and drug use, for the participants in this study, along too came incarceration and the opportunity to expand their criminal networks. All the men who partook in this study served lengthy sentences in adult prisons, and the majority spent time in juvenile detention centres also. Confinement appeared as a normal part of life for these men and again was discussed as such. Participants described their route from Trinity House, to St Patrick's and on to Mountjoy and other adult prisons without conceit, but it was clear that time spent in these places earned them a certain credibility within their fraternity at that time. For one participant, an early experience of life in juvenile detention provided a platform to create new bonds rather than deterrence from a life of crime.
“Oh, the older I got the worse I got. Do you know, the different people I met then, through things. You know you end up in prison and you meet people. You’re swapping war stories and you get to know them then. Then you hang around with them outside, you meet them then outside of prison then you know what I mean. You wouldn’t have known until you went in. For me, I met people in prison, I met people in Saint Patrick’s Institution” (Declan, 37, Dublin)

Despite being supposedly used to build positive relationships, provide education, and prepare for reintegration (Oberstown, 2019), for the participants in this study, juvenile detention enabled the enhanced development of criminal contacts, which in turn facilitated a smoother return to offending upon completion. Another participant noted, however, that his first stint in juvenile detention, six months in St Patrick's, was a terrifying experience. He described being alone and intimidated, factors which he felt contributed to his use of sleeping tablets and Valium while inside. Despite regarding himself as an up and coming gangster, he noted the experience as a frightening eye-opener and one which, under other circumstances, might have proved a successful deterrent.

"But shortly after that I started taking tablets and I reckon that experience would have been enough for me not to, that experience and something else positive to come along in my life, like a job... but tablets started becoming a factor and I was in jail for most of my life after that. More in than out of it from 16 to 29. I'm 34 now, do you know? And I have been more in than out of it, and it can be all put down to, for the most part, drug use, do you know what I mean?" (Michael, 34, Limerick)

From the data, it appears that incarceration, for those without the opportunities to progress through legitimate avenues, serves to solidify connections in the entanglement of crime and drugs. Rather than acting as a deterrent, juvenile detention provides a disturbing space where vulnerable young men can easily access drugs to negate the adverse effects of their new environment. Given the family and community backgrounds of the men in this study, it appears they were primed for drug use before entering these facilities. Abandoned by their families, rejected by their communities and failed by the state, these young men's incarceration served only to exacerbate their issues. The findings support those within the international literature, particularly a number of large-scale studies in America. Aizer and Doyle (2015) found too that juvenile incarceration, caused acute disruption to the lives of young people, affecting their education and employment prospects as well as encouraging the accumulation of criminal capital. Given these findings, it is unclear why incarceration continues to be used as an
intervention with young people in Ireland and around the world. Hopkins (2016) argues that restorative justice provides a much-needed alternative to custodial sentencing. She states that the approach, which addresses criminal acts through reconciliation with victims of crime, is beneficial to all parties involved. She goes on to note that safe communities are those which place emphasis on reparation rather than stigmatisation and punishment. Concerning the participants in this study, it seems that restorative justice might have been of greater benefit to them, their families, and their communities.

4.4.4 Transitions Away from Drugs

A key characteristic of transitions in the direction of desistance, for these participants, was an inability to flourish within certain figurations. As has been noted, these men desired to do well through deviance, became involved in organised networks, and worked hard. However, and for differing reasons, the inextricable links between crime, drugs, and incarceration, served to prohibit more than they facilitated. For some, the views their family members held of them deteriorated over time spent in prison. The detrimental effects that incarceration has on familial relationships are well documented within the literature and supported by these findings (Michalsen, 2017; McIvor, Trotter, & Sheehan, 2009). Participants in this study described how incarceration created a divergence for their families, one which proved extremely harmful and tremendously challenging to re-negotiate. Family members were required to spend time away from the participants, and in many instances, appeared to develop new ways of living and coping. One participant, Damien, provided an emotional account of how the relationship between him and his daughters deteriorated during his criminal career, particularly during his time spent in prison.

“I was on the phone, the prison phone, talking to one of me young ones, I’ve three daughters, em and she was passing the phone over to one of me other daughters and she said, here, the waster wants you…. And that hit me like a thunderbolt, that hit me hard like. That was it for me you know, I just thought, I was gutted, I was gutted, I never seen meself as a waster, I always thought I was a good Da but I wasn’t, she was right. I’d wasted my life” (Damien, 49, Dublin)

His daughters' view of him as a degenerate, reinforced the restrictions within his family figuration and provided the impetus for change. His daughters were no longer dependant on him for care, protection, or economic security, and he could no longer depend on them for respect. As such, changes to the relational structure within the family figuration, both physical and emotional, dictated change elsewhere. Other participants recalled similar experiences where restrictions placed on family connections, such as their children being taken into care,
acted as a motivator. However, for one participant, Declan, the incentive to move away from crime and towards treatment took a different form.

“My body couldn’t take it, I could barely take the drugs that I loved, do you know. You’d try have a smoke and you’d be coughing your lungs up in the middle of it like. So, I think that was the decision I made then when I physically couldn’t actually take the drug I wanted to take. I physically couldn’t take it because, I was trying to sit on my couch at home and have a tray and tooter in my mouth trying to smoke it and half way through a line I’d be nearly getting sick into a bucket” (Declan, 37, Dublin)

Contrary to findings reported by Singh, Cale, and Armstrong (2018), noting the mediating effects of family relationships at the beginning of the process of desistance, and those of Best, Musgrove, and Hall (2018), contending the critical role of familial connections in decisions to change, this participant's motivation for change was born entirely out of health issues which seriously impeded his ability to commit crime. For this participant, issues relating to familial embeddedness did not appear as a factor for his route into deviance or his decision to seek treatment and move away from criminal activity. Notwithstanding a large body of literature to the contrary, according to the data, it appears that, for some individuals, family as a structure plays a relatively minor role in their route into contact with the criminal justice system. However, for Declan, as will discussed later, family interconnectedness may well have played a part in his inability to achieve desistance upon graduating from a TC.

4.5 Life at a Therapeutic Community

4.5.1 Drastic Upheavals and Massive Change

Despite being at the crux of this research, the participants' experience in a TC cannot be described adequately without examining the processes which brought them there. As such, a large section of this discussion has been already devoted to those developments. Given that this study is concerned with figuralional sociology (or process sociology), it is also imperative to examine the development of TCs, and the processes at play there, as has been set out in the literature review. In this way, the participants' time at a TC can be understood in terms of the social figuration formed by their evolving interdependencies and how they intertwine with those of the TC. A point in space and time can only be understood in terms of the complex social processes existing in its development and the forces guiding its arrival at that given configuration. In much the same way that the figurations shaped the participant's lives in their early lives, their experience in a TC as a social figuration, and the variety of interdependencies
existing there, had a significant impact on their life trajectories. When asked about their experience of entering a TC for the first time, almost all participants agreed that it was a bizarre event. This sense of peculiarity was evident in what Jerry said:

"Very, very strange at first. It felt cult-like, it felt cult-like. The first thing I was aware of, or became aware of, was that the clients run most of the programme" (Jerry, 41, Cork)

For Jerry, and most of the other participants, the peer-led approach at Phoenix was a welcome departure from life in prison where much of the day's activities were scheduled and monitored by staff. However, one participant, Peter, had an issue with the collective approach:

"I thought Phoenix was way too big and sometimes it was the blind leading the blind, I felt, you know, that they put all this emphasis on peer-led and you get a lot of people that were driven by ego, they were telling other people what to do and I found it very confusing at times" (Peter, 42, Dublin)

Peter described being anxious upon entering Phoenix. He felt that, due to the large number of residents, his individual needs might be overlooked. Another participant, Patrick, despite noting some unexpected features, described a sense of ease and comfort upon entering a TC.

“I actually came from the kitchen in the midlands prison. I was in there and I got out then on bail and then I was brought straight into the kitchen when I got to Phoenix, which was alright because I was after being in a kitchen, you know what I mean. I enjoyed it" (Patrick, 56, Dublin)

For this participant, the daunting experience of entering a TC for the first time was somewhat overcome by a sense of familiarity. The findings here are in line with those of Halsey (2007) who reported that time spent in care of the state, juvenile detention centres, and adult prisons, facilitated a sense of security based on familiarity. This, he argues, allows for a smoother transition into new institutional settings. Peter’s experience, however, is at odds with Halsey’s (2007) argument. For some, it appears that their habitus prohibits the successful navigation of a TC. Peter’s set of skills and dispositions, while possibly useful in other social environments, were not as beneficial in a TC. This is in line with Bourdieu’s (1990) argument that an individual’s habitus has the potential to be both advantageous and detrimental, depending on the social scenario. Here, once more, it is apparent that adverse life experiences, despite being a factor in routes into crime, also play a significant role in an individuals’ ability to engage with life in a TC, and for some, to ultimately desist from criminal activity.
4.5.2  New Rules and New Relationships

Adhering to a new set of rules appeared as a common challenge faced by participants. Having spent significant portions of their lives in prison, the men in this study struggled at first to come to terms with life in a TC. A period of transition was described by many of the participants, which involved slowly letting go of old ways of solving problems and gradually beginning to accept a new way of being. As noted by the participants, the overarching guide to life at a TC is set out by what they refer to as "The Philosophy." Although there are other documents setting out rules, regulations, and procedures at the TC, this was regarded by many participants as the cultural force they needed to attach themselves to in order to progress. This short reading, used in many TCs around the world, outlines how residents came to be there and, ultimately, what they need to do to move on. The philosophy is underpinned by solidarity and honesty, characteristics easily adapted by some, and not so much by others. In order to become fully involved in a TC, participants noted the vital importance of lowering the defences typically used for protection in prison settings. Participants described how the TC provided them with a platform to be themselves, where nobody was trying to take from them, and where the people surrounding them had a genuine interest in their well-being. As discussed, many of the participants in this study endured adverse childhood experiences, which severely affected their opportunities to build intimate, meaningful relationships. Relationships with keyworkers, many of whom were also ex-residents, were often the starting point and blueprint for future relationships built in the TC. A sense of solidarity appeared to develop from these initial connections. Patrick described the importance of fostering positive connections with his keyworker during his time in a TC.

“Yeah, you're building relationships, it doesn't necessarily have to be your key worker, do you know. Now I had a great key worker and I had a great relationship with him but there was other key workers, other people's key workers that showed the same enthusiasm around me in groups and things as they would for their own clients like, you know” (Patrick, 56, Dublin)

Patrick, and other participants, noted the importance of enthusiastic keyworkers who showed a genuine interest in the lives of the residents. From the data, it appeared that many of the participants built lasting relationships with their keyworkers, which endured well past their time at the TC. However, not all participants reported building meaningful relationships with their keyworkers. Peter described how the dynamic within previous keyworker-client relationships made him wary of becoming involved in an interdependent relationship.
“Yeah, but sure look, that’s over the minute you leave there, you know? And then there’s all that stuff you deal with…. You get close to a keyworker and then you leave there and you find that they haven’t got as much time for you, and you’re wondering then what value was on that friendship in the first place” (Peter, 42, Dublin)

Like many of the other participants, Peter had experience of conflict and disrupted connections within his family figuration but this factor alone does not explain his position on the keyworker-client relationship. It is important to note here that Peter also described difficulties in building and maintaining relationships with other clients as well as staff members. When asked about how he got on with other residents, he replied that most of the time, the best he could do was to be tolerant of others.

“Tolerance, tolerance, tolerance, and more tolerance…. It’s more about yourself than the TC like, you know? I made connections, friendships, but it doesn’t really pan out outside of there, maybe I didn’t want them to” (Peter, 42, Dublin)

Unlike other participants, Peter appeared to view himself in isolation from other residents and staff members at Phoenix. This sense of exclusion revealed itself throughout the interview and was evident in some of his thoughts on the processes at Phoenix. Rather than viewing the TC as a group with a common purpose, Peter was more concerned with individual change and how that could be achieved.

“I don’t think TCs, on a big level, work all the time because you’ve too many people with too many needs that aren’t getting looked at” (Peter, 42, Dublin)

For clients, such as Peter, who struggled with the collective approach and found it difficult to build relationships, it seems the TC experience was not as useful as it was for others. Although, based on the data collected from the interview it is difficult to ascertain why Peter struggled so much to build relationships, it is possible that multiple breakdowns in keyworker-client relationships reinforced a sense of isolation experienced during family relationship breakdowns, guiding the development of a habitus best suited to fewer interdependencies. It seems that the initial keyworker-resident relationship is of paramount importance as it provides a much-needed introduction to the meaningful relationships required for both recovery and desistance. This finding is supported throughout the academic literature. As Taylor (2003) found, staff who make time to talk with, and listen to, their clients are held in high regard and far more likely to be in a position to communicate effectively and build meaningful relationships. This finding is of particular significance in the contemporary Irish social care
climate, which is placing increasing importance on categorisation, often at the expense of time taken to work directly with clients.

Some participants appeared to struggle in different ways with life at a TC, especially with the newfound requirement for honesty. Declan spoke about how, upon learning that two of his fellow residents had contraband mobile phones, he was faced with a moral dilemma. In the past, prison culture prohibited him from speaking about issues such as this, but here, in a TC, in order to progress through the programme, he had to adhere to a new set of rules.

“I said to myself right, I went and found Larry, and found David, another fella who had a phone, and I told them, look, I have to come clean if I want to do this right. They weren't too happy about it. Larry, he called me every name under the sun... and we called the group, and I grassed, and do you know what? Only good came of it. Do you know? That was the turning point for me with how I was going. Then I tried my best with it and gave everything and then I had a clean conscience and then nobody tried to give me anything after that or tried. Nobody took anything out in front of me or phones or anything because they would have thought I was a grass” (Declan, 37, Dublin)

This account lends itself well to the initial hypothesis of the TC as a field of power. Here, the participant's habitus, his disposition for honesty, guided his path through the TC. As noted by Bourdieu (1990), the field-specific nature of an individual's habitus becomes particularly apparent when they move into new fields. This was particularly true of this participant. Upon moving from a prison setting into a TC, with its own set of distinct social positions and practices, Declan's habitus, among other factors, shaped the way in which he attached himself to cultural forces and occupied a trusted social position. Interestingly, honesty and a desire to do the right thing appeared as socialised norms for Declan, given his criminal history. However, it is essential to note that, unlike the other men in this study, Declan came from a stable family background where tendencies for honesty may well have informed the formation of his habitus. It is possible that the lasting dispositions which guided his path through the TC were instilled in him at an early stage through family interactions.

4.5.3 Struggling to Group

For the men in this study, new rules and new relationships were accompanied by new groups and new struggles. As noted by Elias (1978), figurations are made up of intertwined sets of individuals whose behaviours are guided by expectations and interdependencies. In the TC as a new social figuration, the participants experienced both conflict and cooperation in the
struggle to find their position. For Jerry, a sense of incongruence emerged while moving between two groups, trying to figure out where he belonged. On one side, he felt allegiances to a group still caught up in prison culture, on the other, he was drawn to a group who were embracing a new way of life, the TC way.

“Two staff members called me into the office and pointed out to me that I’m in between the negative and the positive, in regards to there was a negative group of people in the TC at that time, and there was a positive, and I was in between the two, going back and forth, and that was pointed out to me” (Jerry, 41, Cork)

With some encouragement from members of staff, Jerry moved towards the positive group. This account of Jerry’s experience resonates with Elias’s (1978) conception of a multi-person game on several levels. Elias (1978) constructed theoretical models to illustrate how individuals interweave and the dynamics which come about as an unintended consequence. As has been noted, the multi-person game on several levels is one in constant flux where growth applies pressure on players to change how they organise and whom they associate with. Using this theoretical framework, an increased number of residents in the TC as a figuration, presented Jerry with a problem. In order to progress, he needed to align with a group or flounder alone. His decision must take into account the rules of the TC and which group is most likely do well. As Elias (1978, p.85) hypothesises:

“The figuration of interdependent players and of the game which they play together is the framework for each individual’s moves. He must be in a position to picture this figuration so that he may decide which move may give him the best chance of winning or of defending himself against his opponent’s attacks.”

Using Elias' game model to describe action at a TC provides an alternative perspective which does not appear in the academic literature. According to Elias (1978), there is a common belief that all things social can be understood in terms of the psychological characteristics of people. Furthermore, as noted by Stevens (2013), there is a considerable accumulation of international literature promoting the use of psychological interventions such as CBT in therapeutic communities. Using the theory of Elias to understand life at a TC offers a unique insight, separate from those posited by the methods and ontologies of psychology, biology, or physics. Rather than seeking to examine a TC in terms of its composite parts (the individual residents), an Eliasian explanation offers a view of the connections formed between residents, and the intricate interdependencies existing there. The TC, therefore, cannot be understood properly by
examining individual residents. A thorough explanation must take the clients into account as a figuration of interdependent human beings in constant flux.

4.6 The Process of Desistance

4.6.1 Desistance as an Unintended Outcome

For the participants in this study, desistance from crime occurred very much as an unintended process. Although the men desisted to varying degrees, which will be discussed, none of them entered the TC with a desire to stop committing crime, yet most of them experienced significant changes to this aspect of their lives. As has been discussed, the impetus for change was based on a variety of factors. The intentions of the participants displayed a similar diversity. For Michael, restrictions within his family figuration were the primary catalyst. After years of crime and drug use, Michael spoke about how his children were taken into state care due to his inability to provide them with the care they required. His intention was to get his children back and he felt this could be achieved through attending a TC.

“I went to Phoenix to get my kids back. I didn’t go to Phoenix to... I know I was fucked from drugs and I didn’t want to live like that, but I still... I still thought I could do it on my own, do you know what I mean? I still thought... I’d tried all the different... ‘I’ll just smoke weed. I’ll just take tablets once. I’m not smoking gear, I’m all right.’ Do you know what I mean? (Michael, 34, Limerick)

For Damien, drug addiction was the main reason for his journey into a TC, giving up crime, he contended, was not an option.

“I never wanted to give up crime, I just wanted to give up drugs, I wanted to know how to stay away from drugs.... How do I do this like, do you know what I mean? Don’t gimme any bullshit about giving up crime, now that was the first thing I said” (Damien, 49, Dublin)

The participants' age appears to be a determinant factor here. Both men became involved in crime at an early age and spent time in juvenile detention and adult prison. However, Damien's criminal career lasted around twenty years longer than Michael's. By the time Damien decided he had needed help, his family had already endured many years of separation due to incarceration, the relationships were severely damaged, and as such, family reunification did not appear for him as an incentive. Michael's family, however, had not experienced the same trauma. Despite his children being taken into state care, there was still ample opportunity to rebuild the relationships given their young age. Given that Michael grew up in his family home
and Damien spent much of his early years in State care, the importance placed by the former on rebuilding family bonds might be explained by distinctions in habitus resulting from differences in early years' family interactions.

Notwithstanding the primacy of Michael's intention to be reunited with his children and Damien's aim for recovery, desistance from crime also occurred as a result of the interactions within a TC. Like some of the other participants, having spent most of their lives in prison and suffering the pains of addiction, they found that desistance was a phenomenon that accompanied recovery. This speaks to the idea of quantum entanglement. Despite being a phenomenon traditionally restricted to the world of physics, quantum entanglement has recently been introduced to the social sciences by criminological commentators such as Hamilton (2017). The concept, which describes how entangled particles continue to share characteristics even when separated by large distances, lends itself well to the entanglement of crime and drugs.

As has been discussed, criminal activity and drug use guided the lives of these men for significant portions of their lives. This alloy of deviance and narcotics appears to have been forged at some point in the early teenage years of the participants and continued as a guiding force up until there time in a TC. Upon the conclusion of a defined period of separation from drug use at a TC, and a chance to flourish within a new social figuration, some of these men commenced upon a new life with a new purpose. The issue of crime appears, for some, to have dissipated in correlation with the drug problem. Inversely, the participants who, for differing reasons, returned to drug use, also re-entered the realm of crime.

4.6.2 Changing Dynamics in Family Figurations

Changes in family relationships appeared as a common theme among the participants. While some experienced rudimentary changes, others witnessed more subtle ones, but almost every participant noted variations of some description. The findings are in line with a broad section within the literature noting this relationship (Mills & Codd, 2008; Best, Musgrove & Hall, 2018). For Thomas, change within his family figuration was related to change that took place in the TC. Prior to spending time at a TC, he was relatively unaware of the extent to which his involvement in crime affected his daughter's life. Having negotiated his way through the programme, Thomas's newfound interest in developing meaningful relationships helped him to put back together some of the connections which were damaged as a result of his old way of
life. He spoke fervently about the changes which had occurred in the relationship with his daughter.

"I remember my daughter saying to me there after a few years when I went through Phoenix and being out. And she said 'It's great now that I'm able to tell people who you are.' I didn't realise how much I would have affected her. She'd be out with mates out of work and one would be talking about 'My da does this,' and she couldn't say anything. She couldn't say 'Yeah, my da's a bank robber.' You know what I mean? Little things like that I've learned that, Jesus I had a big effect on them but look, they don't hold it against me, they're happy that I've changed." (Thomas, 55, Dublin).

Other participants noted some improvement in family relationships but not to the same extent as Thomas. Jerry, for example, spoke about his relationship with his father and that while his time at a TC allowed him to accept his father, the relationship was not fully repaired and nor might it ever be.

"Em, things are different now you know? Eh, I get on with me Da, well I don't get on with him but we have a relationship that we can actually phone each other and talk to each other, rather than not, you know?" (Jerry, 41, Cork)

It appears that the degree of change occurring in family relations is dependent on their condition prior to the participants spending time at a TC. Jerry noted a strained relationship with his father subsequent to his TC experience. As such, his ability to develop meaningful relationships might have been jeopardised, resulting in an inability to partake in the processes at the TC fully. Peter was the only participant not to describe any changes in his family figuration. When asked how things were with his family upon leaving Phoenix, he said that:

"I didn't have much contact with them like it was the same level of contact I had them for the ten years before that which wasn't much so, it didn't make any difference" (Peter. 42, Dublin)

For Peter, it appears that struggle to attach himself to the cultural forces and processes at a TC predicted his inability, or unwillingness, to repair damaged connections in his family figuration. As noted previously, Peter’s habitus appears to have had a detrimental effect on his ability to negotiate his way through a TC successfully.

4.6.3 Experiencing Tertiary Desistance

As has been alluded to, the men in this study desisted from crime in varying degrees. For some, crime is no longer a part of their lives in any shape or form. They have found a new way of life
and a fresh way of solving problems since negotiating their way through the TC. For others, becoming involved in one or two criminal acts, and experiencing the possibility of reimprisonment, seems to have strengthened their resolve for desistance, and one participant, Declan, crime still plays an active role in his life. In line with McNeill’s (2016) findings, Thomas noted the value of living in a community that no longer views him as a criminal. Unlike previous lulls in criminal activity, characterised by continued interaction with the police due to his criminal history, this time, graduating from Phoenix, Thomas managed to build a new life. This new way of being, involved becoming increasingly useful to his family and community through awareness of their needs and a commitment to change. In line with Sampson and Laub’s (1993) findings, Thomas noted employment as an important aspect of his new life for two reasons. Firstly, it provided him with a sense of purpose, and secondly, it helped others, particularly members of the police, to see the changes he was making. For Declan, however, the experience of life at a TC, the processes and chances to build meaningful relationships, had a different, and very much unintended outcome. Upon graduating from Phoenix, Declan tried to steer clear of crime; however, his old way of solving problems soon crept back in. He spoke about difficulties associated with trying to survive on a normal working wage and the allure of crime as a way of facilitating his new life. Declan recalled how, having become dissatisfied with trying to support his family through legitimate means, he returned to deviancy in an effort to enhance his income. Declan spoke about becoming involved in the drug trade in order to achieve culturally prescribed goals, a finding which resonates with those of Nugent and Schinkel (2016). Before attending Phoenix, Declan was involved in burglaries and addicted to heroin. Upon graduating, Declan’s drug issues had been addressed, leaving him in a position to move into different areas of criminality, ones which would have previously been unavailable to him.

“So, I couldn’t sell drugs because, and drug dealers wouldn’t give you drugs to sell because they’d know well when they go to get paid, you’d have nothing left and you’d have no money. Whereas now I’ve steadied everything up and I don’t take heroin anymore. I can be trusted with things like that, do you know what I mean? So, now I do find that there’s no shortage of people seeing if I want to take this, or take that to sell” (Declan, 37, Dublin)

Declan’s successful navigation of a TC placed him in a position of trust within his criminal network, and new opportunities presented themselves as a result. Declan argued that, although he returned to crime and recreational drink and drug use, he no longer viewed himself as a criminal. In his rural community, those who were involved in drugs knew about his criminal
activity, whereas those who did not were oblivious to his continued deviance. In this way, Declan experienced his own context-specific version of tertiary desistance. Like Thomas and some of the other participants, Declan noted the benefits of being around people who understood him to have desisted from crime. This finding is a departure from arguments put forward by Shapland and Bottoms (2011) regarding the impact of incongruence on desistance. When views held in the community reflect the changes made by the individual, it creates a sense of achievement and reinforces the difficult decisions that have been made. However, unlike Thomas, Declan continued to be involved in criminal activity, albeit a different type of deviance. While he no longer identified as a criminal, from a legal perspective, and perhaps a moral one too, this was not the case. Notwithstanding this, Declan experienced tertiary desistance in certain contexts, much like the other participants who had fully desisted. For Declan, what he described as a stable family background, ultimately may have prohibited him from achieving distance in the same way as some of the other participants. His habitus, appearing to informed by honest family interaction, informed his direction through the TC and guided the decisions he made around taking an honest line on contraband items such as phones. Although he was attaching himself to the cultural structure, he became somewhat of a social pariah within the TC. This possibly led to a breakdown in peer relationships due to mistrust. Upon his graduation, Declan described feeling isolated, a feeling exacerbated by his move to rural Ireland. Ultimately, and in contrary to much of the literature, Declan's stable upbringing appears to have hindered his ability to flourish at a TC and as such his capacity to live a life free from crime.
Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

Routes into crime, drugs, and eventually through therapeutic communities are complex paths informed by family interactions and intertwined with broader issues of inequality and marginalisation. This journey can be viewed through many lenses; however, the figurational approach taken in this study provides an alternative perspective, and one which is sparse within the academic literature. Given the small sample size of this study, the findings of this cannot be applied to other drug treatment centres or therapeutic communities. This piece of research has sought to understand the role that therapeutic communities play in the process of desistance. Using data collected through semi-structured interviews, the study has highlighted and discussed social and cultural practices that inform an individual's habitus, and as such, their likelihood to become involved in criminal figurations, and also, their ability to attach themselves to cultural forces existing at therapeutic communities.

Based on the data collected and analysed in this study, the following recommendations are suggested in terms of routes into crime, therapeutic communities, and desistance.

- Foster links between figurational research in the areas of early childhood years and therapeutic communities.
- Promote an understanding of routes into crime and drugs based on a figurational approach.
- Develop research in the area of family as a figuration and its role in routes both in and out of contact with the criminal justice system.
- Improve processes in therapeutic communities by placing a greater emphasis on creating interdependent keyworker-client relationships.
- Explore the suitability of current concepts of desistance

The findings of this study have demonstrated the significant impact of family interdependencies on routes in and out of crime. For those with the habitus required to negotiate their way through a therapeutic community successfully, it provides a unique platform for the development of social networks which are shown to facilitate desistance. Therapeutic communities, however, are not suited to all, particularly those with the individualistic views appearing as commonplace in today’s neoliberal climate. It is hoped that future research might
take this into account and inform policy and practice to create a more inclusive paradigm of care.
References


Appendix A: Consent Form

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