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NEGOTIATED ORDER: GENDER, YOUTH TRANSITIONS AND CRIME

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INTRODUCTION

According to Giddens (1984) social action is always the outcome of “knowledgeable human agency” and yet such action is never unconstrained. Any situated actor confronts the structural properties of social systems as objective or given, they cannot be changed by an act of will. While Giddens’ work has had particular resonance within penological inquiry, a number of feminist criminologists also see radical potential in his ideas as means of overcoming (in their view) the analytical limitations of mainstream criminological theory and, in particular, its perceived biological and sociological determinism (see Gelsthorpe 2002). Arguably, however, the epistemological foundations of Giddens’ account, find echoes within a broad tradition of theorising within criminology, spanning theories such as Matza’s account of delinquency and drift (1964) (in which delinquency is conceived as willed behaviour within the context of a social order characterised by ambiguity and constraint) as well as Messerschmidt’s more recent work on criminality as a mechanism for the accomplishment of gender identity (1994) (in which young people confront the structural properties of the gender order and actively create an identity corresponding with, or in opposition to, dominant cultural conceptions of masculinity or femininity).

The aim of this paper is to revisit the relationship between agency, structure and social action, in the light of findings from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data from sweep two of this research, the paper will make the following claims:

- (i) Young people are subject to a complex network of regulatory mechanism in various domains.
- (ii) This network has both a formal and informal dimension. The formal dimension includes school, the police and (sometimes) the youth justice system. The informal aspects include parents, peer group interactions and the dynamics of street-life.
- (iii) The network is fluid and changes over time and space. In the course of one day a child moves in and out of different domains (home, school, the street) and they require strategies for negotiating the sometimes competing demands and value systems of each of these domains. In the course of their lives new regulatory mechanisms come into play, for example the work place or the adult criminal justice system, and others diminish in significance as childhood and the tutelage of families and school are left behind.
- (iii) Offending in the early teenage years is for the most part a product of rational choice. It is facilitated by perceived weaknesses in regulation afforded by parents and schools. It is also facilitated when informal regulatory mechanisms are based on what Matza would term “subterranean” or deviant norms and beliefs.

(iv) The same processes appear to be at work for both girls and boys. However girls offend less as they perceive themselves to be under greater constraint from conventional regulatory mechanisms and, importantly, may be better at negotiating than boys.

As my point of departure I'm going to give an overview of the aims and methods of the Edinburgh study as well as some contextual information about patterns of offending amongst the cohort. Drawing from the *quantitative* research data, I will then highlight the ways in which perceptions of weakened regulation and peer groups interactions are linked to offending. This will be followed by evidence from the *qualitative* data on the situational context of offending and how young people negotiate the complex web of rules governing both illicit and more conventional forms of social order.

THE EDINBURGH STUDY

The Edinburgh Study is a longitudinal programme of research on pathways into and out of offending for a single cohort of around 4,300 young people who started secondary school in the City of Edinburgh, in 1998. One of the key aims of the study is to elaborate and test possible explanations for the striking contrast in criminal offending between males and females and to use the explanations to build a better theory of male as well as female offending. The design of the Study is "open", meaning that it is capable of testing a wide range of social and psychological explanations and it is based on the premise that new theories of offending are likely to be synthetic and multi-level in origin (see Smith and McVie 2003).

Methods

Information is collected from multiple sources about all members of the cohort once a year. These sources include: questionnaires completed by cohort members (normally in a classroom setting); school records and files on individual cohort members held by the local authority social work department, children's hearings systems (the formal youth justice system in Scotland) and the police. At each sweep the period covered is the previous twelve months, so that the study provides a continuous account of events in the lives of the cohort, and not just an account of selected time segments. The information from these sources has been supplemented by: semi structured interviews with a sub-sample of 30 young offenders during sweep two (twelve girls and eighteen boys, selected to include high and low volume offenders); and a survey of parents in sweep three. Closely integrated with the cohort study is a parallel study of social geography and crime patterns in Edinburgh, which primarily makes use of data from the 1991 census and police-recorded crime data. This makes it possible to analyse the findings for cohort members in the light of the characteristics of the neighbourhoods where they live.

All 23 state secondary schools in Edinburgh are participating along with eight out of fourteen independent sector schools and nine out of twelve special schools (catering for children with specific physical, behavioural or learning needs). A range of strategies has been used to achieve very high response rates in the study (96 per cent of the target population at sweep two). Children who have difficulty with reading or writing are given an appropriate level of help in completing the questionnaire, or are interviewed where necessary. Children not present at school after several visits are seen elsewhere (normally at home). It is likely that non-response bias is minimal (see Smith and McVie 2003).

This paper is based on data generated from sweep two of the research when the young people were aged around thirteen years. It draws principally on self-report questionnaire data and on the findings from the semi-structured interviews.

PATTERNS OF OFFENDING AMONGST THE COHORT

In keeping with other research (see for example Graham and Bowling 1995, Flood-Page et al. 2000), the findings indicate that offending is fairly common amongst the cohort, with three-quarters of the young people at sweep two, admitting to one or more of the fifteen items included in the questionnaire. These items range from fairly petty offences, such as fare dodging, to more serious offences such as fire-raising and assault.

Table 1: Prevalence of fifteen self-reported offending items at sweep two

	Boys n=2185 (percent)	Girls n=2114 (percent)	Cohort n=4299 (percent)
Offended at least once in past year	80	70	75
Fare dodging	28	24	26
Theft from home	17	22	19
Theft from school	10	9	9
Graffiti	29	40	34
Vandalism*	22	10	16
Breach of peace	43	37	40
Truancy	25	23	24
Shoplifting	30	23	27
Joyride*	7	2	5
Theft from motor vehicle*	3	0.4	2
Housebreaking*	5	1	3
Fire-raising*	19	8	3
Assault	59	33	46
Carry weapon*	24	7	16
Robbery*	2	1	1

Significant difference between girls and boys for each item (Pearson chi-square test: $p < 0.001$)

*Items included in the measure of 'serious delinquency'.

Although most of the cohort admitted to offending, the prevalence of offending amongst boys is nonetheless significantly higher than amongst girls. As indicated in the above table, 80 per cent of boys admitted to at least one of the fifteen items as compared with 70 per cent of girls. Similarly for all but two of the individual items (theft from home and graffiti – indicated in the shaded boxes) prevalence amongst boys significantly outstrips that for girls.

These sex differences in prevalence of offending are also mirrored with regard to volume of offending. Two measures of volume of offending have been used: a broad measure which includes all fifteen of the items in table one; and a serious measure which includes only 7 of these items. (These are the items rated most serious by respondents at sweep two: starred in table one above.)

As indicated in table two, the mean volume of both broad and serious offending is significantly higher for boys than for girls. At sweep two the mean volume of *broad*

offending for boys was just over eleven incidents as compared with just under eight for girls. For *serious* offending the mean volume was 0.7 incidents for boys as compared with 0.2 for girls.

Table 2: Mean volume of self reported offending at sweep two

	Boys	Girls	Cohort
Broad	11.3	7.6	9.5
Serious	0.7	0.2	0.5

Significant difference between boys and girls for both measures (t-test: $p < 0.001$)

TOWARDS AN EXPLANATORY FRAMEWORK: QUANTITATIVE DATA

In spite of the *sex differences* in patterns of offending, the evidence from analysis of questionnaire data suggests that the *processes* linked to broad offending in both boys and girls are very *similar*. Consequently the same explanatory framework is likely to apply to both.

Correlates of offending in boys and girls

Table three shows the relationship between the broad measure of offending and a range of explanatory variables relating to seven key domains included in the questionnaire: neighbourhood; school; parenting; peer group interactions; moral beliefs; victimisation; and personality. The table is confined to continuous variables which have mostly been constructed by adding scores across groups of related questions (see Annex 1 for further details of variables). The statistic quoted is a correlation coefficient which indicates the strength of association between each explanatory variable and the measure of offending. A coefficient of zero would indicate no relationship, whereas a coefficient of one would indicate a perfect correlation.¹ All of the correlation coefficients are significant at the 99 per cent level of confidence or better.

¹ The statistics in table three are non-parametric coefficients, which are appropriate because the distribution of the broad delinquency variable is highly skewed.

Table 3: Correlation between broad measure of offending and a range of variables

Domain	Variables	Boys	Girls	Cohort
Neighbourhood	Deprivation	.130	.138	.136
School	Relationships with teachers	-.467	-.485	-.481
	Commitment to school	-.332	-.373	-.356
	Parents involvement in school	-.252	-.346	-.290
Parents	Parental supervision	-.464	-.475	-.476
	Conflict with parents	.376	.413	.398
	Activities with families	-.258	-.371	-.313
	Autonomy/trust	-.159	-.138	-.152
Peers/Routine Activities	Evenings out with friends	.346	.416	.384
	Hanging around	.351	.398	.380
	Activities with friends	.369	.430	.396
Moral beliefs	Not Ok to lie, fight, steal	-.448	-.440	-.456
Victimisation	Victim of 5 offences	.385	.369	.390
	Adult harassment	.330	.407	.348
Personality	Impulsivity	.347	.376	.373
	Self-esteem	-.124	-.179	-.119
	Alienation	.118	.124	.122

All coefficients significant at the 99 per cent level of confidence or better

The table indicates that the *strongest* correlates of offending (in the shaded areas of the table) are perceptions of poor relationships with teachers and low levels of parental supervision, together with weak moral beliefs. This is the same for both boys and girls.

Other variables relating to weakened tutelage are also moderately correlated with offending namely: poor commitment to school (feeling school is a waste of time); perception of low level of parental involvement in school; high volume of conflict with parents; and low levels of activities with families. Similarly both peer group involvement and interactions (time spent in the evenings with friends, high volume of activities undertaken with friends, and hanging around the local streets and parks) have a moderate association with offending as do high volume of victimisation (in the form of both adult harassment and victimisation from specific offences such as theft and assault) and impulsivity (weakened self-control). By far the weakest correlates of offending are neighbourhood deprivation, and two of the three personality variables, namely self-esteem and alienation.

Predicting offending amongst boys and girls: regression analysis

Correlation analysis only take us so far in understanding offending. While it does show how the explanatory variables are individually associated with offending, it tells us nothing about the relative *predictive* power of each of these variables, after taking into account the effect of all of the others. In order to do this a series of ordinal regression models were fitted, after converting the broad offending measure into a variable with five ordered categories (from high to zero).² The continuous variables were standardised before fitting the models so that the estimates produced would be directly comparable. A number of categorical variables were also added: sex; social class; family structure; having a girl/friend or boyfriend; and friends of the opposite sex (all binary variables, the latter four were added as, individually, they were also found to be significantly linked to offending, see Annex 1).

In the first stage of the regression analysis all of the variables mentioned above were included in the analysis. Non-significant variables were then removed in a backwards stepwise procedure until the final model was produced (set out in table four³).

² Because the measure of offending used as the response variable is irretrievably skewed, the assumptions underlying multiple regression are seriously violated. The option of simplifying the outcome variable to a binary opposition between offenders and non-offenders was rejected, on the ground that this would mean throwing away much of the available information. Rather than multiple regression or binary logistic regression, it was decided to use ordinal regression for the analysis. In ordinal regression the outcome (dependent) variable is a set of categories from high to low.

³ Table four shows the figures relating to the estimate, standard error and significance from the final model. The estimate represents the amount of shift in the thresholds between the response categories that is associated with one standard deviation of the explanatory variable. An estimate of 1 indicates that one standard deviation of the explanatory variable would shift a case by one whole category of the ordinal response variables.

Table 4: Regression analysis final model

Threshold, broad del.	Final Model		
	Standardised Estimate	Standard Error	Significance
0	-.1261	.088	.000
1	1.446	.092	.000
2	4.018	.128	.000
3	5.209	.166	.000
Sex			
Male* (1=male)	-	-	NS
Structural factors			
Neighbourhood deprivation	-	-	NS
SEG non-manual* (1=manual/unemployed)	-	-	NS
Two birth parents* (1=broken family)	-	-	NS
Parenting			
Parental supervision	-.382	.047	.000
Conflict with parents	.208	.046	.000
Activities with family	-.100	.047	.032
School			
Rel. With teachers	-.462	.049	.000
Parents' involvement with school	-	-	NS
Attachment to school	-	-	NS
Peer relationships/Routine Activities			
Had boy/girlfriend* (1=yes)	.700	.099	.000
Friends of opp. sex* (1= none)	-.355	.108	.001
Evenings with friends	.318	.050	.000
Activities with friends	.112	.053	.034
Hanging about	-	-	NS
Personality			
Impulsivity	.181	.049	.000
Self-esteem	-	-	NS
Alienation	-	-	NS
Moral beliefs			
Not OK to lie/steal/fight	-.382	.049	.000
Victimisation			
Victim of five offences	.545	.045	.000
Adult harassment	.138	.045	.002

*Categorical variable: estimate applies to the named category

Taken together the final model confirms that after controlling for factors such as social class, neighbourhood deprivation and family structure, offending is best predicted by:

(i) Perceived weaknesses in regulation in respect of family (low level of parental supervision), poor attachments to school (poor relationships with teachers) and also, what may be termed, the ideational order in respect of conventional moral beliefs, plus weakened self control (although the latter is only a very weak predictor);

(ii) Situational opportunities possibly arising out of weak regulation but reinforced by routine activities (evenings out with friends) and the social circles in which young

people move (having a girlfriend/boy friend, friends of the opposite sex – indicating the importance of status friendships and their potential for negative effects);

(iii) Victimization (one of the strongest predictors overall).

Importantly sex is not independently significant within the final model, again confirming that the differences between boys and girls in respect of volume of offending are largely accounted for by the variables in the model. Lower offending rates amongst girls may therefore be explained by the fact that girls are less likely to have the experiences or histories that lead to offending. Indeed analysis confirms that girls in the cohort are significantly more likely to report high levels of parental supervision, stronger moral beliefs, better relationships with teachers and lower levels of crime victimisation – see Annex 1.

Quantitative data only takes us so far in developing an explanatory model for offending. While it does show factors that render some young people more likely to offend than others, it tells us little about the dynamics of the crime event nor does it tell us much about the actual lived experience of peer group interaction and victimisation. For this we need to turn to the interview data.

INTERVIEW DATA

During interview, the young people were asked to describe their general history of offending and victimisation and to give detailed accounts about the last time they had offended and/or had been the victim of crime. Other interview topics included: extent of peer pressure; the dynamics of street life and experience of police contact; and perceptions of popularity and maturity amongst girls and boys and their links to offending (a full list of topics is included in the paper at Annex 1).

Taken together the interview data suggest that, despite perceptions of choice and being in control in respect of the crime event, a young person's scope for autonomy is considerably constrained by a complex network of formal and informal regulation which can be classified as: the rules of engagement; rules governing territory including informal and formal street controls; and finally gender order rules.

The dynamics of the crime event

Interviewee responses indicate that offending amongst both boys and girls is (for the most part) highly opportunistic rather than carefully pre-meditated and it is generally done in groups. In accordance with routine activities theories of offending (see Clarke 1980), it would appear that suitably motivated offenders respond to criminal opportunities which arise in the course of their day to day activities, as illustrated in the following two quotations:

‘I was with a few pals and we were going past the Commy (Commonwealth Pool) on the bus and we saw this really nice motorbike, and it wasn't chained up or nothing.We just took it and went up to Moredun, then mucked about on it and then sold it.’ (Boy)

‘Some of us broke up a bus shelter.. We just threw a stone at it and it shattered. We were coming back from playing football. We shouldn't have done it because there was no point, we were just on our way back from football.’ (Boy)

Key motivations for becoming involved in offending, cited by almost all interviewees, were to counteract boredom or for entertainment. A high proportion of interviewees commented that there were very few facilities for young people in the areas in which they lived and, as a consequence, much of their spare time was spent hanging around the streets with friends (see below). Offending in this context functioned as a means of manufacturing excitement or giving the young people something to do, as typified by the following quotations:

‘There’s nothing better to do.’ (Boy: Graffiti and Vandalism)

‘There’s nothing else to do.’ (Girl: Vandalism)

‘I wouldn’t really do it that much by myself... It’s for fun.’ (Girl: Shoplifting)

‘Just for the fun of it.’ (Boy: Housebreaking)

Although most offending was undertaken with friends, all of the young people claimed in interview that they were not pressured into offending by others: it was their own choice.

‘Nobody forces me to do stuff.’ (Boy)

‘It’s my choice.’ (Girl)

‘There’s nobody really to pressure me. If they ask me then it depends if I want to.’ (Boy)

This perception of choice is also reflected in interviewee comments about the future, with almost all youngsters firmly of the belief that they were in control of their own destiny. It was their own responsibility to work hard and “get on”; a typical comment being “its up to me”. In spite of this perception of control, however, interview responses also show that young people’s behaviour is severely constrained in practice by the series of rules described below.

The rules of engagement: victimisation and offending

Turning first to the rules of engagement, these rules shed light on the strong association between victimisation and offending found by the quantitative data analysis.

The interview data indicates that victimisation and offending are often part of the same set of interactions and processes. “Hanging out”, in particular, renders a young person vulnerable to victimisation by both adults and other young people. A common theme amongst interviewee responses, was that experience of victimisation leads to reprisals, instigated either by the victim him or herself or their close friends or family. Interviewees (both girls and boys) felt it was legitimate to “get even” or to mete out illicit punishment with the aim of saving face and protecting oneself or one’s friends.

‘It was an older guy and he started calling me names so I went to hit him ...everyman for his-self, right...and he dodged and he took out a knife and slashed my ankle. I was sure I hit him hard... his mouth was all bloody and you could see wee white bits.’ (Boy)

'People have taken jewellery and stuff...its usually people who don't care much and you really really want to hurt them a lot...then the whole threatening people with knives and stuff comes out...if they deliberately destroyed it or anything then I would get back at them.' (Girl)

'There was one incident where these girls that were friends of my friends ... had taken a knife to my friend's throat, so I went down there to see what they were playing at, and they brought out a knife on me, and cut my arms and stuff, then I started to retaliate, didn't bring out any knives or anything, just used my fists and stuff, and put them off me, and they ran away.' (Girl)

As the above quotations illustrate, such honour contests often result in extreme forms of violence in the early teenage years.

Rules governing territory

Informal street controls

As was noted, a high proportion of the cohort and all of the young people interviewed spend a considerable part of their spare time hanging around the streets and parks in the areas where they live. Street-life however appears to be a fairly risky affair and requires careful understanding of territory. Battle-lines are drawn around particular streets, with graffiti being used to mark out particular boundaries or to show where the youngsters had invaded enemy territory ('to show I'd been there'). Almost all interviewees highlighted areas of the city which were no go areas for them.

'I go quite far, well not that far. Just up to Wardie and the shops. Pilton Park I go there sometimes (Do you ever go into Pilton) No cos you get battered. People find out where you're fromand they come looking for you... if you can run fast enough you'll get away from them.' (Boy)

'I hang about quite local.. I'd be a bit wary of going.... like to the Fort (Why?) Because I'm from Leith so it would not be a good idea.' (Boy)

While young people carefully monitor the behaviour of interlopers who come into their territory, interviewee responses also indicate that street-life is informally policed by older brothers and sisters, cousins and other extended family members. It is crucially important for a young person to know about an interloper's connections before taking them on, otherwise they risk reprisals.

'Some people called another person a Paki and after school they were fighting and somebody else was standing at the side shouting "kill the black bastard". So her sister got the other one down at the bus stop and fought with her. So she phoned her big brother, and her big brother came down and started fighting in the middle of the road with their big brother.' (Girl)

'He battered me. I couldn't get any of my cousins because I ken he's got relations. Every time he comes up to me I just keep quiet. He's probably full of drugs and everything I could probably batter him, but see if I was to touch him, he could get boys the size of this house to stand up for him.' (Boy)

Formal street controls

In addition to informal controls, street-life is also subject to the formal control of the police. Youngsters who hang out experience a disproportionately high volume of police contact. Almost all of the interviewees had been questioned, moved on or searched in the previous year (whether or not they had been involved in a high volume of offending). However girls and boys appear to respond to police contact in different ways.

During interview, the girls tended to express shame at being caught and constantly worried about the potential repercussions.

‘Embarrassed, really bad ...’ (Girl)

‘I’d just sit there and be like “I’ve never done it before, it was awful”...’. (Girl)

‘...ashamed and disgusted.’ (Girl)

The majority of boys interviewed, however, adopted a much more confrontational approach to the police. Some reported making a break for it and consequently being chased by the police. Others deliberately provoked the police – making it into a game of cat and mouse.

‘They were just jumping out the cars with the batons...and the first thing that comes to us is to jump on the bike and go away. They’ll never catch us because we’ve got motor crosses so it’s easy.’ (Boy)

‘One time we were phoning the police and saying “my grandbairns are trying to get to sleep” or something “can you send down a car to get the people away” and then we just used to get a chase.’ (Boy)

One of the consequences is that, once caught, boys experience far more serious forms of adversarial police contact. Girls, by adopting the appropriate demeanour, seem more able to negotiate their way out of the encounter. This is confirmed by the questionnaire data. At sweep two, around 44 per cent of boys in the cohort reported experience of at least one form of adversarial police contact,⁴ of whom a third were warned or charged. By contrast only 25 per cent of girls in the cohort reported adversarial police contact, of whom 23 per cent were warned or charged. Moreover being male was found to be a strong predictor of adversarial police contact at sweep two, even when controlling for volume and seriousness of offending, frequency of hanging around streets or public places and a range of demographic variables (see McAra and McVie 2002).

The gender order rules: status, identity and offending

Turning finally to gender order rules, the responses indicate that boys and girls operate with very conventional conceptions of masculinity and femininity, which have a key role to play in shaping their views on popularity and maturity and function as a measuring rod for their own sense of self.

Both boys and girls commented that to be popular, girls are required to be good-looking. Wearing designer labels, short skirts and high heels adds to popularity as does heavy use of

⁴ Seven types of adversarial police contact were included in the questionnaire. These ranged from relatively minor forms of contact such as being told off or told to move on by the police, to more serious forms such as being warned or charged.

make-up. Being blonde and thin are also key attributes. As with girls, boys are required to be good-looking and wear designer gear to be popular. However, unlike girls, 'reputation' ('being hard') appears to be a core element of male popularity.

'[Popular Girls] They are wearing all the stylish clothes, they've got all brand new clothes and long hair, long blonde hair and no spots or anything, just perfect.' (Boy)

'[Popular Boys] Because if they are strong, if they're hard, then they can be popular because everyone has to like them and they wear all the right clothes and everything The girls fancy them.' (Boy)

The relationship between popularity and offending is a slightly ambivalent one. Offending can be a strategy for the less attractive to increase their popularity (either through enhanced reputation or through access to ill-gotten but desirable goods). However the youngsters again have to gauge this very carefully. Aggressive behaviour amongst girls, might increase their popularity with girls, but a number of interviewees agreed that being hard would make a girl unpopular in the eyes of boys.

'[What about hard girls, are they popular] Yeah, probably but not with the boys. For the girls they'd probably get more respect.' (Boy)

'[What about fighting?] There's three girls in our school who are popular for fighting – they are the hardest in the school. They are not as popular with the boys. Some girls are scared of them, but others suck up to them.' (Girl)

Boys also need to ensure that they take on the 'right' people (neither too tough nor too soft), that they are involved in just enough violence to keep their names in the headlines, but not involved in too much trouble which can lead to boys being shunned by others.

'If I was to batter Peter that would be my popularity over the roof. But if I was to have a fight with someone unpopular it would be nothing.' (Boy)

'Well sometimes they're popular, but sometimes they're not. Like they get known for something then like they're not heard of again. [Known for one day when some fight or something happens, you mean?] Yea. Like everyone starts talking about it. [But they don't keep it up, so they're not heard of again?] Yes.' (Boy)

'If they were getting into trouble too much like with the police or drugs no one would hang about with them.' (Boy)

The above responses also highlight the potential for conflict between different elements of the regulatory framework. The rules of engagement may demand reprisals (where someone is subjected to insults or is the victim of crime), however informal street controls may inhibit an initial violent response (not battering someone because their elder brother is 'seriously scary') and yet the gender rules may dictate that greater popularity will ensue from risking such an encounter. Importantly it is the daily routines of the youngsters which play a key role

in reproducing this regulatory framework. By engaging with these rules, by negotiating a pathway through their competing demands (which gives the illusion of opportunity and control) the youngsters are reinforcing the very constraints to which they are subject. The dynamics of street-life are consequently manifested as structure in action.

CONCLUSION

The picture painted by the Edinburgh Study findings is of young people confronting a network of formal and informal regulatory mechanisms. This network provides a series of opportunities and constraints for young people. Importantly many aspects of the network are transient, fluid and unstable, particularly those linked to peer interactions and street life. Young people are both the object and subject of the network – their own behaviour serving to reinforce and reproduce its internal dynamics. It is in this way that structure and action can be regarded as mutually constitutive: the network of regulation forming the structural backdrop against and through which identity formation takes place; the very act of engagement with its various dimensions recreating and shoring up its tutelary function. Offending is facilitated when regulatory mechanisms are underpinned by deviant norms and beliefs but also when regulation itself is perceived to be weak. As such offending can be regarded as a rationally chosen, albeit risky, strategy for negotiating a pathway through a complex and challenging social milieu.

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ANNEX 1

CORE THEMES IN QUESTIONNAIRE

- Spare time activities
- Family: structure, relationships with parents and siblings
- Offending, smoking, drinking, drug-taking
- Friends: how many, age and sex, girl/boy friend, friends' involvement in offending, smoking, drinking, drug-taking
- Experience of bullying and being bullied
- Other school experience
- Personality measures
- Moral reasoning
- Experience of victimisation
- Contact with police, social work and children's hearings
- The future

CORE THEMES COVERED IN INTERVIEW

- Spare time activities including hanging out
- General experience of offending and details of the last time it happened
- General experience of victimisation and details of the last time it happened
- Views on drug and alcohol use
- Perceptions of and attitudes towards various dimensions of control (parents, friends, teachers, police)
- Moral reasoning
- What makes boys and girls popular and appear more mature, perception of own popularity and maturity
- Plans for the future.

VARIABLES USED IN ANALYSIS

Offending

Volume of broad offending: number of times in past year: travelling without paying correct fare; shop-lifting; noisy/cheeky in public; joy-riding; carrying a weapon; graffiti; vandalism; house-breaking; robbery; steal from school; steal from home; theft from a motor vehicle; fire raising; assault.

Volume of serious offending: number of times in past year: joy-riding; carrying a weapon; vandalism; house-breaking; robbery; theft from a motor vehicle; fire-raising. These items are those rated as most serious by respondents to the sweep two questionnaire.

Moral beliefs

Moral disengagement: scale (0-26) where 26 indicates a high level of moral *engagement*. Derived from responses to a series of statements on when you think it is OK to fight, lie or steal something from someone (e.g. It's OK to tell a lie if it doesn't hurt anybody).

School

Relationships with teachers: scale (0–10) (where 10 indicates a good relationship). Derived from: how many teachers in the past year: did you get on well with; helped you to learn; treated you fairly; you could ask for help if you had a problem with school work; you could ask for help about a personal problem; treated you like a troublemaker.

Attachment to school: scale (0-16) (where 16 indicates strong attachment). Derived from: how much agree/disagree with the following statements: school is a waste of time; school teaches me things will help me in later life; working hard at school is important; school will help me get a good job.

Parents involvement in school: scale (0-15) (where 15 indicates a high level of involvement). Derived from how often your parents do the following: check you have done your homework; go to parents evenings; help you if you have problem at school; reply to school letters when asked; ask you about things that happen at school.

Parenting

Parental supervision: scale (0-9) (where 9 indicates a high level of supervision). Derived from: when you went out during the past year how often did your parents know where you were going; who you were going with; what time you would be home; how often did you come home more than an hour late against your parents wishes; stay out overnight without your parents knowing where you were; run away from home for more than one night.

Conflict with parents: scale (0-18) (where 18 indicates as high level of conflict). Derived from six items on how often disagree or argue with parents about: homework; my friends; how tidy my room is; what time I get in; what I do when I go out; money.

Activities with families: Scale (0-9) (where 9 indicates a high volume of activities with family). Derived from how often they did things in their spare time with family (ranging from most days to hardly ever or never).

Autonomy/trust: scale (0-12) (where 12 indicates a high level of trust).

Derived from items describing the parents: they let you make your own decisions about what films and TV programmes you watch. do things I like doing; they trust me; they treat me like a baby; they try to control everything I do; they let me make my own decisions.

Peers/routine activities

Evening with friends: scale (0-6): how often spend time with friends in the evening at home or out.

Hanging out: scale (0-12) (where 12 indicates high volume of hanging out).

Activities with friends: Scale (0-9) where 9 indicates a high volume of activities with friends. Derived from how often they did things in their spare time with friends (ranging from most days to hardly ever or never).

Victimisation

Volume of victimisation: number of times in past year someone: threatened to hurt you; actually hurt you by hitting, kicking or punching you; actually hurt you with a weapon; stole something of yours; used threat or force to steal or try to steal something from you.

Adult harassment: number of times in past year an adult stared at you so that you felt uncomfortable or uneasy; followed you on foot; followed you by car; tried to get you to go somewhere with them; indecently exposed themselves to you.

Personality

Impulsivity: scale (0-24) (where 24 indicates a high level of impulsivity). Modified version of Eysenck Impulsivity Scale (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1984). The original scale was abbreviated to six items, and the response format was changed to a five-point verbal scale.

Self esteem: scale (0-24) (where 24 indicates a high level of self-esteem). Modified version of Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg 1965). The original scale was abbreviated to six items, and the response format was changed to a five-point verbal scale.

Alienation: scale (0-24) (where 24 indicates a high level of alienation). Derived from the Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire (Tellegen 1982) subscale that taps negative emotionality as it influences offending. The original scale was abbreviated to six items, and the response format was changed to a five-point verbal scale.

Other variables

Social class: binary measure classifying parental occupation into non-manual or manual/unemployed.

Family structure: binary measure indicating whether respondent resides with both birth parents or not.

Neighbourhood deprivation: index created using six measures of deprivation from the census according to home postcode.

Differences between offenders and non-offenders

At sweep two, offenders were significantly more likely than non-offenders to come from a lower socio-economic background and a broken family, to have had a girl or boy friend in the past year and to have friends of the opposite sex.

Table 5: Difference between offenders and non-offenders

		Offender (Per cent)	Non-Offender (Per cent)
Social Class	Manual/Unemployed	47	37
	Non-Manual	53	63
Family Structure	Broken Family	33	22
	2-birth Parent Family	67	78
Girl/Boy Friend in Past Year	Yes	71	32
	No	29	68
Friends of Opposite Sex	Most or All	84	61
	None or Some	16	39

Using Pearson chi-square test: differences between offenders and non-offenders significant at the 99.9 per cent level of confidence for all variables

Gender differences in patterns of regulation and victimisation

Girls were significantly more likely: to have good relationships with teachers; to perceive themselves to be under greater levels of parental supervision; to have less conflict with parents; to have fewer evenings out with friends; to have more conventional moral beliefs; to be less victimised and to be less impulsive.

Table 6: Gender differences in patterns of regulation and victimisation

	Boys (mean volume)	Girls (mean volume)	Cohort (mean volume)
Relationship with Teachers	7.6	8.0	7.8
Parental Supervision	6.5	6.9	6.7
Parental Conflict	5.3	4.9	
Evenings out with Friends	4.5	4.3	4.4
Moral beliefs	10.0	11.3	10.5
Victim of 5 offences	2.6	1.4	2.0
Impulsivity	14.0	12.5	13.3

Significance tests between mean volume of each variable for girls and boys using t-tests
All items significant at 99 per cent level of confidence or better