Violent offending, masculinity and age: Exploring the role of developmental processes in adulthood

by

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I am the author of the thesis entitled *Violent offending, masculinity and age: Exploring the role of developmental processes in adulthood*

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Abstract

Developmental criminologists argue that the relationship between age and violent crime is influenced by a complex range of interactions which occur at different stages of the life-course. To date however, there has been a dearth of research into the way violence is used and justified at different stages of adulthood. In this thesis, the construct of masculinity is identified as providing a possible avenue for understanding how changes that occur across adulthood can influence the way offenders think about and understand aggressive and violent behaviour. The research presented here employed a mixed-methods methodology. In Study 1, the scores of younger and older violent offenders on a widely used measure of criminal thinking, the Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (PICTS), were compared. Contrary to expectations, younger offenders did not significantly differ from older offenders on information processing biases or masculine beliefs as measured by the PICTS. Given the strong theoretical grounds to suggest that age, violence and masculinity are closely linked, a qualitative study was then conducted to explore younger and older adult offenders' beliefs about masculinity and violence. Results of an interpretative phenomenological analysis indicated that masculinity may be enacted through violence in subtly different ways at different stages of adulthood. In particular, for the younger men, beliefs about violence and masculinity were most salient in situations involving perceived challenges; in developing a reputation as a ‘mad fighter’, and in the desire to prove to the self and to others that one was strong, tough, able and willing to stand up for oneself. In contrast, beliefs about violence and masculinity for the older men emerged in contexts of intimidation and control. For these older men, actual or threatened violence was perceived as an important element of masculinity, tied to broader beliefs about power and status. These results indicate that masculinity underlies many of the violence supportive beliefs reported in the literature, but does so in a developmentally contextualised manner. These relationships are further contextualised by the environment, with prison emerging as a site where hypermasculinity was valued, encouraged and perceived as necessary for survival.
For younger participants, this represented a potential barrier to the development of alternative beliefs about masculinity less firmly grounded in violence. However, many of the younger men appeared to only superficially accept the ethos of hypermasculinity, highlighting the multifaceted nature of this construct. This work is then discussed in relation to the assessment, treatment, and evaluation of change in violent offenders.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The relationship between cognition and violent offending is an important area that requires further investigation, in large part due to the focus of most contemporary violence prevention and intervention programs on changing antisocial and violence-supportive beliefs. Although a substantial body of literature across multiple disciplines, including psychology, criminology, sociology and anthropology, has identified a wide range of factors associated with the use of violence, it is these beliefs that are thought to be most amenable to change through intervention. However, current understandings of how violent offenders think about their behaviour are somewhat limited and the existing research in this area is not well integrated. The result is that while much has been written on violence, this knowledge has not necessarily been translated into clinical practice or meaningful social policy. The aim of this thesis is to investigate further the ways in which particular sets of beliefs may be associated with violent offending.

The need to develop effective approaches to preventing violence is highlighted by statistics showing that approximately 1.6 million people worldwide died in the year 2000 as a result of self-directed, interpersonal and collective violence with young adult males being responsible for a disproportionally high level of interpersonal violence and violent offending (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002). The focus of the research presented in this thesis is on age related differences in beliefs about violence and, specifically, how masculinity is defined, justified, and internalised by men who have been convicted of violent offences. The research examines whether beliefs about violence differ between younger and older adult violent offenders in
meaningful and clinically relevant ways, and how beliefs about masculinity, in particular, influence violent behaviour at different stages of adult development.

Before considering the impact of age on violent offending and the role that specific beliefs play in the offending process, it is first important to define the term violence, and how those who work in this area understand this concept.

**Violence - Definitions and conceptual issues**

The ubiquitous nature of violence makes it a concept that is rarely explicitly defined. Moreover, while some types of violence are condemned and criminalised, others are regarded as more socially acceptable, making attempts to develop a comprehensive definition a challenging task (Jackman, 2002). Given much psychological and criminological research is concerned with *criminal* violence, existing definitions tend to draw on legal definitions which consider the intent and the outcome of violence. While important, these concepts only reflect those elements of violence that are relevant within a criminal justice context and, as such, do not provide a complete conceptual foundation for understanding, or defining, violence more broadly. For example, while *intent* is a cognitive construct it does not cover broader issues related to beliefs about violence as an effective means of conflict resolution, or as a self-enhancement technique.

Even within the narrow context of criminal violence, ambiguity exists as to how violence should be defined. A particular area of confusion pertains to the distinction between aggression and violence. According to Anderson and Bushman (2002) aggression is associated with milder forms of harm, while violence is associated with the *severe* physical and psychological consequences of aggressive and violent actions for victims. For these
authors, aggression and violence do not require independent definitions as they simply reflect differences in *degree* rather than kind. Consequently, violence is defined as:

Behavior directed toward another individual that is carried out with the *proximate* (immediate) intent to cause harm. In addition, the perpetrator must believe that the behavior will harm the target, and that the target is motivated to avoid the behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2002, p. 28, emphasis in original).

The view that aggression and violence can be considered to exist on a continuum, with violence the extreme expression of aggression, is widely endorsed (Sestir & Bartholow, 2007) and reflected in how these terms are often used interchangeably in both research and practice (e.g., Dewall, Anderson & Bushman, 2011; Flannery, Vazsonyi & Waldman, 2007). Conceptually, however, it remains unclear at what point aggression becomes violence.

Conceptualising violence as the extreme expression of aggression also implies that all violence is motivated by, or based in aggression. While there are undoubtedly many forms of violence that are triggered by aggressive impulses, there is also evidence that for some people, violence is associated with purely instrumental motives (Dodge, Price, Bachorowski & Newman, 1990; Merk, de Castro, Koops & Matthys, 2005). As such, for some individuals violence is grounded in aggressive impulses linked to hostile attributions and the heightened experience of anger in response to real or perceived provocation, while for others, aggression has been linked to acquisitive motives where violence is used in a goal directed manner to achieve a desired outcome (Dodge et al., 1990; Hubbard, McAuliffe, Morrow & Romano, 2010; Merk et al., 2005; Smithmyer, Hubbard & Simmons, 2000).

A more parsimonious approach may be to move away from a focus on the motivations and/or functions of violence, and instead emphasise *behavioural* aspects. In this respect, Howells and Hollin (1989, p. 4) provide the following definition of violence:
Aggression refers to the intention to hurt or gain advantage over other people, without necessarily involving physical injury; violence involves the use of strong physical force against another person, sometimes impelled by aggressive motivation.

This definition moves the focus away from the consequences of violence, as implied in the Anderson and Bushman definition, while also acknowledging that violence and aggression are different in degree and in kind. Moreover, it leaves open the possibility that violence can be motivated by a wide range of factors, including situational and contextual demands (e.g., Deibert & Miethe, 2003), cultural and sub-cultural norms (e.g., Brookman, Bennett, Hochstetler & Copes, 2011; Topalli, 2005a), as well as personal intentions and motivations. It is argued in this thesis that these issues are of particular importance because interpersonal violence is fundamentally influenced by the beliefs individuals bring to situations, as well as by the situational factors that promote or hinder violent behaviour. As such, the Howells and Hollin (1989) definition above will be applied throughout this thesis.

Although the distinction between violence and aggression is theoretically important, it provides few insights about how violence is used, and under which circumstances it is considered appropriate, necessary or justified. While there is some research showing that violence is perceived as normative, at least by criminal samples (e.g., Polaschek, Calvert & Gannon, 2008; Topalli, 2006), little attention has been devoted to explaining why violence is perceived as such. One possible explanation is that the meaning and function of violence changes throughout the life-course, and that these changes can be understood in relation to changes that occur in how issues of masculinity and identity impact upon behaviour.
Age and violent crime

Criminologists have long argued that criminal behaviour is a function of age, with research consistently showing that younger males in particular are at an increased risk of engaging in delinquent, antisocial and criminal behaviour (e.g., Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1983). The basic mechanisms underlying this relationship are presumed to reflect biological and psychosocial changes during the transition from childhood to adolescence that increase the appeal of risky behaviour (Farrington, 1986b; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1983; Moffitt, 1993). While different theorists emphasise different causal mechanisms for this relationship, there is a general consensus that the prevalence of offending varies as a function of age (Farrington, 1986a; Nagin & Land, 1993).

This ubiquitous relationship has been termed the age-crime curve, and is reflected by a large body of evidence showing that at the aggregate level, the prevalence of criminal activity increases steadily from late childhood to middle and late adolescence, then sharply and steadily declines during early adulthood (e.g., Farrington, Loeber & Jolliffe, 2008; Moffitt, 1993; Nagin & Land, 1993). This same age-crime curve can be seen in Australian data relating to prisoners charged and convicted of violent offences [Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2011]). For example, the annual Australian national prisoner census provides an age-graded profile of homicide, assault and robbery offenders in Australian prisons on the night of June 30 2011. Figure 1 shows there are slight, but potentially meaningful variations in the age-graded profiles of different types of violent crimes. For example, the age profile of prisoners charged and convicted of acts intended to cause injury peaked at ages 20 to 24 and 25 to 30, but steadily declined from the mid-30s onwards. The age profile of offenders involved in robbery followed a similar pattern but peaked and

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1 Although the national prisoner census provides information regarding the age of prisoners by the most serious offence, these data have not been disaggregated by gender. However, at the last census 93% of the prisoner population was male. Therefore it can be postulated that the profiles in Figure 1 (below) would not be significantly different if female data had been excluded.
diminished earlier. In contrast, the age profile of homicide offenders peaked and diminished later than the assault and robbery offenders.

Figure 1
An age-graded profile of incarcerated violent offenders in Australia

While there are a number of possible interpretations for these data, there are also methodological considerations that limit their reliability. For example, the prisoner census data records the age of prisoners on the night of the census, not at the time of the actual offence, and by definition only represents crimes that have progressed through the justice system. Therefore, it is not possible to determine whether the different profiles in Figure 1 reflect true age-related differences in the type of violence that is used, or whether they are an artefact of the criminal justice process. However, the overall consistency of these figures raises the possibility that different stages of adulthood are associated with different types of violence.

In this respect, masculinity and masculine identity emerge as possible explanations for age-graded differences in violent offending throughout the life-course. For example, various authors have argued that younger men are more likely to engage in confrontational violence
based on what have been termed ‘honour contests’ (e.g., Messerschmidt, 1993; Polk, 1994; Toch, 1992). In contrast, older offenders may engage in more severe forms of violence (i.e., homicide) that reflect a different type of masculinity based on beliefs about dominance and honour based on sexual ownership (Polk, 1994). Specifically, the victims of homicides committed by males are disproportionately females who have some romantic or intimate attachment to the perpetrator. In contrast, male-on-male confrontational violence, which is the focus of this thesis, may reflect a different type of honour-contest grounded in a desire for social dominance. Unlike the confrontational violence of younger men, the relationship between masculinity and violence during middle adulthood has not been extensively investigated. Therefore, there is a strong argument that further research attention is warranted to better understand the relationship between beliefs about violence and masculinity at different stages of adult development.

Stages of human development

There is a large body of research confirming the intuitive belief that in the face of continuity, there is also a large degree of change in a person’s identity and self-concept throughout the life-course (McAdams, 1996; McAdams & Bowman, 2001; Tanti, Stukas, Halloran & Foddy, 2008; Spiteri, 2009). This research is primarily grounded in staged models of identity development, particularly Erik Erikson’s work on psychosocial development throughout the life course (Erikson, 1963). Briefly, Erikson proposed that identity development proceeds in a sequential eight stage process, starting at birth and ending at death. Each stage involves a particular psychological conflict, the resolution of which is important for healthy identity development. The eight stages include:

- Trust versus mistrust (infancy to 18 months of age);
- Autonomy versus shame/doubt (2-3 years);
- Initiative versus guilt (3-5 years);
- Industry versus inferiority (6-11 years);
- Identity versus role confusion (12-18 years);
- Intimacy versus isolation (19-40 years);
- Generativity versus stagnation (40-65 years); and
- Ego integrity versus despair (65 years to death)

Although Erikson originally proposed that the stages are sequential and discreet, subsequent research has challenged such a static view of development. Instead, it is now widely recognised that not only is there overlap between the stages, especially from adolescence onwards, but gender, culture and overarching societal demands influence the progression through these stages (Stewart & Vandewater, 1998).

The importance of Erikson's contribution lies in the explicit acknowledgement that at different stages throughout the life course, humans are driven by different needs, motivations, goals and aspirations (Hoare, 2002). These needs are expressed through identity, or more specifically, the way an individual constructs a coherent sense of self that integrates who they were, who they are, and who they would like to be (McAdams, 2004). These complex linkages between the past, present and future selves are intimately tied to behaviour, because it is through action that values and beliefs are enacted (McAdams, Hart & Maruna, 1998).

In the area of violent offending, developmental changes during adulthood have not received much attention. With the exception of the well-established age-crime curve, there has been little acknowledgement that younger and older adult offenders may in fact represent qualitatively distinct groups, with possibly distinct violence trajectories and treatment needs. Despite the dearth of research into this important issue, Erikson's seventh stage (i.e., generativity versus stagnation) has recently been investigated, especially in relation to desistance. Generativity refers to the desire to leave something of oneself behind for future
generations. The driving motivation behind generativity is a concern for one's legacy – that which will be left behind after death. This can include raising and caring for children and making a meaningful and lasting contribution to society (McAdams et al., 1998).

In his seminal study of active and desisting ex-prisoners, Maruna (2000) invoked the concept of generativity to explain the way desisting ex-prisoners construct non-criminal identities that facilitated their transition away from a criminal lifestyle. In particular, Maruna identified a difference in the way ex-prisoners, compared to active prisoners, narrated their life-stories. Whereas active prisoners positioned themselves as passive victims in a fatalistic narrative, where past mistakes had an indelible and irrevocably negative impact on their future lives, ex-prisoners constructed redemption scripts, whereby past mistakes were reconstructed as turning points that facilitated a shift back towards the always inherently decent self (Maruna, 2000). Redemption is made possible (and perhaps even plausible) through generativity. Specifically, embedded in the redemption scripts of ex-prisoners were countless examples of generative acts – giving back to society for example by mentoring younger, active offenders. According to Maruna, generativity is an important component of desistance because it enables the ex-prisoner to achieve a sense of personal fulfilment, exoneration for previous behaviour, and legitimacy by showing that he/ she has indeed changed and is willing to help others change.

That developmental processes are important in desistance is self-evident given the age-crime curve, according to which desistance is the natural result of aging. The insight in Maruna’s study is that desistance is not simply a function of age, especially given that both the active and the desisting offenders were on average 30 years old. Instead, desistance is facilitated by a change in self-concept, which is itself associated with a move towards generativity. If processes associated with normal human development, rather than merely aging, are at work in desistance, it is reasonable to argue that they are also at work in the process of persistence, beyond the simple acknowledgement that adolescents and young
adults are disproportionately more likely to engage in criminal and antisocial behaviour. Specifically, between young and middle adulthood there are likely to be both quantitative and qualitative differences in the way violence is used and justified.

**Developmental processes and criminal behaviour**

While the aggregate age-crime curve provides a useful heuristic for understanding developmental changes in the prevalence of crime, it does not provide information about the differences that exist between younger and older offenders. That is, the age-crime curve is not invariant but is dependent on individual and offence-specific characteristic (e.g., Farrington, 2007; Farrington et al., 2008; Farrington, Loeber, Yin & Anderson, 2002). Despite these nuances, age is commonly identified as one of the most important risk factors for re-offending. For example, individuals who commence offending at a younger age tend to commit more crimes, and show a pattern of escalation from non-violent to violent offending (Farrington, Ttofi & Coid, 2009; Liu, Francis & Soothill, 2011; McCluskey, McCluskey & Bynum, 2006; Moffitt, 2007; Piquero, 2000; Wiesner, Capaldi & Kim, 2007). The early onset of offending has also been linked to persistence in offending throughout the life-course (e.g., Moffitt, 1993, 2007; Stouthamer-Loeber, Loeber, Stallings & Lacourse, 2008). A young age at the time of index offence has also been identified as amongst the most powerful static predictors of risk. Specifically, early onset is associated with an increased number of risk factors across multiple domains (Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, Smith & Medina-Ariza, 2007; Farrington, 2005a). These risk factors may then be exacerbated by early and continued exposure to the criminal justice system (Halsey, 2008) that further increases an individual’s risk of re-offending.

Although biological age is a robust and reliable predictor of violent and general recidivism (Gendreau, Little & Goggin, 1996; Mulder, Brand, Bullens & van Marle, 2011), it does not necessarily reflect the complex maturational processes that are part of ageing. Specifically,
biological age alone may mask important differences in the way modifiable risk factors, such as antisocial attitudes, may change throughout the life-course. In fact, there is evidence that the impact of risk factors change as a result of maturation, with some risk factors losing salience while others take on more prominence (Stouthamer-Loeber, Loeber, Wei, Farrington & Wikstrom, 2002). For example, associating with antisocial peers is an important risk factor during middle adolescence, but appears to lose its salience as an individual matures. Similarly, dysfunctional or problematic familial relationships may exert the greatest impact during childhood and early adolescence, but wane thereafter (e.g., Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2002).

New risk factors may also emerge during adulthood. For example, a recent study by van der Put et al. (2011) investigated whether the prevalence and impact of risk factors would change throughout adolescence. Specifically, van der Put et al. investigated differences in the number and impact of static and dynamic factors in a group of young, middle and older adolescents who had been convicted of violent, property and sexual offences. Results showed that the prevalence and impact of static risk factors increased with age, such that older adolescents had been convicted of a greater number of more serious crimes, compared to the early and middle adolescence groups. In contrast, the impact, but not the prevalence of dynamic risk factors was found to decrease with age. That is, while the late adolescence group had more dynamic risk factors than the other two groups, the impact of these risk factors on recidivism was lowest for the late adolescence group (van de Put et al., 2011). This indicates that dynamic risk factors are influenced by developmental processes in a ways that warrant further investigation.

There is also some evidence that offence patterns show little stability throughout the life-course. While this body of research has not specifically investigated changes in risk factors, a few conclusions can be extrapolated. For example, Kazemin and LeBlanc (2004) conducted a longitudinal investigation on the variations of offence patterns throughout
adolescence and adulthood. Their sample consisted of 470 adjudicated male offenders who were followed from middle adolescence to their mid-30s. Two primary pathways – organised and disorganised - were identified that explained change and stability in offending patterns from mid-adolescence to late-middle adulthood. The organised pattern was characterised by a high level of planning, the use of weapons, predominantly utilitarian motives, the presence of co-offenders, the relative absence of drugs and alcohol, and anonymous victims. In contrast, the disorganised pattern involved predominantly hedonistic motives, opportunistic offending, limited use of weapons, limited substance abuse, the presence of co-offenders, and anonymous victims (Kazemian & Le Blanc, 2004). Despite the presence of two distinct patterns, there was a substantial degree of change in the characteristics of offending behaviour from adolescence to adulthood. In particular, the results of a cluster analysis showed that the majority of offenders followed a mixed trajectory characterised by multiple shifts between organised and disorganised patterns during the follow-up period.

To date, there has been dearth of research investigating whether specific risk factors change as a function of age. A study by Skelton and Vess (2008) did, however, examine the interaction between age and risk level at release in a sample of convicted sex offenders. Skelton and Vess examined the first cohort of a sample of 5,880 convicted sex offenders released from prison in New Zealand between January 1990 and December 2004, resulting in a follow-up period of 10 years. Offenders were classified based on their age into six categories ranging from under 20 years old to over 60 years old. For each group, Skelton and Vess (2008) calculated the rate of recidivism as a function of risk level and age.

Predictably, results showed that for the low-risk category, sexual recidivism remained relatively low regardless of age at release. The moderate risk category had an average 13% recidivism rate between early adulthood (under 20 years old) and middle adulthood (30 to 40 years old), but this rate decreased substantially thereafter. The high-risk category had considerably higher recidivism rates across all age categories, with the exception of men
over 60 years old, who had a recidivism rate that was comparable to the youngest group in the low-risk category. That is, the oldest high-risk offenders re-offended at the same rate as the youngest low-risk offenders. As a group, more individuals in the older age cohort survived for longer in the community without re-offending, compared to younger cohorts.

Finally, Skelton and Vess reported that for each age at release cohort, early onset of sexual and general offending was related to higher risk. That is, high-risk offenders in every age at release cohort had an early age of onset of general and sexual offending, compared to their moderate and low-risk counterparts (Skelton & Vess, 2008). This reflects the well-established finding from developmental criminology that early onset is associated with an enduring propensity towards antisocial and criminal behaviour.

The results of the studies reported by van der Put et al., Skelton and Vess and Kazemian and LeBlanc highlight that dynamic risk factors for criminal and violent behaviour are not invariant throughout the life-course. This implies that there are likely to be quantitative and qualitative differences in the way risk factors influence criminal and violent behaviour at different developmental stages. Specifically, the research by van der Put et al. (2011) suggests that the impact of risk factors change throughout adolescence, while the research by Skelton and Vess (2008) indicates that older high-risk sex offenders are qualitatively different from their younger counterparts.

While none of these studies investigated the specific role of cognition on violent offending, it can nevertheless be postulated that as individuals mature there will be a concomitant change in the way they define, justify and use violence. One particularly important area that has not received much research attention is the way beliefs about violence are effected by developmental processes. In this respect, masculinity emerges as a salient construct. Specifically, violence between males has been linked to masculine contests that are influenced by beliefs about what it means to be a man. Moreover, these beliefs are linked to
a broader male identity. As an individual’s identity changes throughout the life-course (McAdams, 1997; 2001), so too are his beliefs about masculinity likely to change.

**Masculinity and violence**

Although it is important to document age-related changes in both violence and the risk factors that are likely to predict future violence, the above body of work does little to explain why these changes occur. From the perspective of violence prevention and intervention this is an important task, and it is in this context that consideration of the construct of masculinity may be useful.

The relationship between gender and violence is well-established. The majority of interpersonal violence in Australia is committed by males against other males, with the exception of intimate partner violence and sexual violence against adults [ABS, 2011; 2012; Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), 2011]. A similar pattern is found in other Western jurisdictions, including New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2010; Department of Corrections, 2012), the United Kingdom (Home Office, 2011), and Canada (Statistics Canada, n.d.; Vaillancourt, 2010). The exception is the United States, where males and females are equally likely to be victims of violent crime (Truman, 2011). However, based on incarceration rates alone males are still over-represented as perpetrators of violence (Guerino, Harrison & Sabol, 2011). Despite methodological differences in how data has been collected in different studies, and important differences in the socio-political and demographic make-up of these countries, serious violence, including homicide, robbery and acts intended to cause serious injury, is overwhelmingly committed by males.

With the exception of biological and evolutionary explanations (Ainsworth & Maner, 2012; McAndrew, 2009; McCall & Shields, 2008) surprisingly little effort has been devoted to
explaining the relationship between gender and violence. The important insights made by evolutionary psychologists have contributed to masculinity often being discussed in reference to the process of sexual selection to the exclusion of other more socially oriented explanations. However, these social components help to explain how masculinity is constructed and what it is about being male that increases the likelihood of violence (Messerschmidt, 1993). Masculinity may thus provide a useful framework for explicating the over-representation of males in violence statistics.

Masculinity is a broad construct grounded in dominant cultural beliefs about the essential nature of man (Cohen & Nisbett, 1997; Messerschmidt, 1993). Cultural norms and expectations provide a template for defining ‘man’ and ‘woman’, typically in relation to each other. That is, masculinity is defined, constructed and enacted against its polar opposite – femininity. This is typically referred to as the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which represents the idealised, dominant version of what it means to be a man (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Moreover, there is no single type masculinity but rather a multiplicity of characteristics that an individual man can draw on, depending on his social status and the context in which masculinity is enacted.

Masculinity is also performative (Jewkes, 2005) as it allows men to create dominance hierarchies in relation to other men. Although masculinity is often considered to contrast with femininity, hegemonic masculinity includes an implicit assumption that men in general are superior to women, but also that some men are more manly (i.e., superior) than others (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In this respect, men are able to define their own masculinity in relation to subordinate males, who do not possess the qualities of the idealised masculinity. This becomes important for understanding male confrontational violence (Polk, 1994) involving younger male perpetrators. As will be discussed below, this type of violence is often based on character contests where masculine integrity is perceived to be at stake.
The culturally grounded and socially enacted nature of masculinity means it is not a static construct (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Instead, definitions of masculinity are influenced by broader cultural shifts and are therefore subject to change. Importantly, the fluidity of masculinity means that more micro-level changes occurring within an individual’s lifespan can also influence the way masculinity is defined. That is, definitions of masculinity are likely to change throughout the life-course, in line with changes in an individual’s roles, priorities and experiences. According to Messerschmidt (1993) some of these changes are influenced by access to resources at different stages of life that allow men to define themselves as masculine. For example, younger men may not be able to construct a masculine identity grounded in status through employment and wealth. In order to achieve status, younger men may turn to other sources, including violence, to fulfil their masculine ideals.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue that the socially constructed nature of masculinity is not consistent with trait approaches. This is important to recognise for two reasons. First, definitions of masculinity are socially contingent in so far as certain masculinities are appropriate in one context but not another (Cohen & Nisbett, 1997). Individuals therefore endorse a number of different masculinities, depending on the cultural and sub-cultural expectations and their social position within those contexts. Second, a trait approach implies that masculinity is fixed and therefore potentially resistant to change. This further implies that developmental processes would have a limited impact on the way masculinities change throughout the life-course.

Although masculinity is not inherently concerned with violence, Messerschmidt (1993) has argued that for young lower-class men violence can be a valuable resource for constructing masculine self-images, based on ideas of status, honour and respect. By engaging in violence young men can live up to socially-relevant and accessible role expectations, achieve personally valued goals, and construct an identity grounded in strength, power and respect. While the focus of Messerschmidt’s work has been on young lower class males, the
concept of masculinity offers an overarching framework that helps to explain why some men engage in and rationalise violence, and how this might change across the life-course.

Honour and respect appear especially salient factors in violence that occurs between males. For example, Goffman (1967) viewed violence as situationally-determined, by arguing that people engaged in violent behaviour in situations where their social identity and perceived reputation were threatened. Violence would therefore become a means to restore or save ‘face’, presumably because the person who had 'lost face' experienced shame and inferiority (Goffman, 1967). Similarly, Polk (1994) postulated that male confrontational violence involving violent altercations that occur almost exclusively between males usually involve honour contests. Specifically, Polk (1994) found that regardless of their prior relationship to one another, men would resort to violence over seemingly trivial circumstances to preserve their sense of masculine honour. Violence in these situations was typically spontaneous, the victim was often actively involved in its escalation, and the presence of a social audience, especially other males, played a prominent role.

A more psychological perspective on the role that masculinity plays in violent offending was proposed by Hans Toch (1992). Toch argued that to understand how and why violence is used, it is important to acknowledge that violence is typically the result of an interaction between within-individual propensities and situational factors, with a fragile masculine self-concept identified as an important element of the propensity for violence. Specifically, Toch found that violence was often used to communicate to the self and to others that an individual deserved respect. While some men reacted with violence to perceived challenges to their masculinity, others actively sought violent confrontations to prove they were worthy of the status they enjoyed as dominant, powerful and strong. Even for these men, displays of violence were often driven by a desire to prove their worth. As such, beliefs about ‘manliness’ may be functionally related to the way social cues are interpreted and consequently the way violence is used. It also seems likely that these beliefs will be
influenced by developmental processes. That is, there will be meaningful and clinically relevant differences in the relationship between masculinity and violence for younger, compared to older males.

This perspective has implications for primary and tertiary interventions aimed at violent offenders. While it is acknowledged that prevention is an important goal, an important aspect of the contribution that this thesis makes is how developmental processes that are associated with beliefs about violence and masculinity can be used to inform violent offender treatment.

**Approaches to intervention**

Given the risk posed by violent offenders who return to the community, considerable effort has been devoted to identifying the most effective strategies for reducing recidivism. There is now a large body of evidence to show that the most effective strategies are those aligned with the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model, which has recently been described as a "comprehensive treatment paradigm" (Cullen, 2012, p. 98). While the model is typically discussed in reference to the three core principles of effective practice, risk, need and responsivity, a total of 18 principles have now been described, clustered into five major categories - Overarching Principles, Risk-Need-Responsivity, Assessment, Program Delivery, and Organisational. Overall, the RNR framework is predicated on the idea that risk factors need to be accurately assessed so that treatment can be targeted at high and moderate risk offenders; not just because they represent the greatest risk to the community, but importantly because treatment is most effective with this group (Andrews & Dowden, 2006). Moreover, by virtue of their elevated risk, these individuals have a broader range of treatment needs that require intensive intervention.
The accurate assessment of risk involves the identification of static and dynamic risk factors.

Static risk factors are historical and, by definition, not amenable to change. These include age, previous criminal history, and a history of antisocial behaviour (Andrews, 2011). In contrast, dynamic risk factors are amenable to change and are further divided into stable and acute. Stable dynamic risk factors are defined as persisting over long periods of time and include having a history of drug abuse, or endorsing antisocial attitudes. In contrast, acute dynamic risk factors are of short duration and may include more situationally contingent risk factors, like being intoxicated at the time of the offence.

According to the RNR literature, there are eight central risk factors for crime, including an antisocial personality, antisocial attitudes, antisocial peers, associates or supports, a history of antisocial or criminal behaviour, substance use, dysfunctional familial and/or marital relationships, poor school or work performance and the absence of pro-social recreational or leisure activities (Bonta & Andrews, 2007). In the context of violent offending, impulsivity at the behavioural and interpersonal level and affective dyscontrol including difficulties with emotion regulation have also been identified as important risk factors/treatment needs. More broadly, violent offenders have also been found to need assistance or support in dealing with unemployment, poor interpersonal skills and poor community functioning (Polaschek, 2006).

The needs principle specifies what should be targeted in treatment. In particular, dynamic risk factors are conceptualised as criminogenic needs – areas that are directly correlated to offending, but that are also amenable to change. In this respect, there is a large degree of overlap between the idea of risk and need (Ward & Brown, 2004). Other factors that may contribute to crime but have not been empirically validated as direct correlates are considered non-criminogenic. Under the RNR framework, these factors may be important in the context of providing responsive services but should not be the primary targets of treatment (Andrews, 2011; Bonta & Andrews, 2007).
Finally, the responsivity principle specifies *how* treatment should be conducted. At the core of this principle is the idea that individual differences are not only important but need to be taken into consideration rehabilitation is to be effective. Specifically, Andrews and colleagues emphasise that clinicians should be responsive to the internal and external barriers individuals face when engaging with treatment. There is a sense however, that the responsivity principle has become a ‘catch-all’ category (Polaschek, 2012) where factors that are potentially important are relegated to a category that is difficult to operationalise in practice. For example, gender, learning capabilities, cultural factors, motivation to engage in treatment and self-esteem are all considered important specific responsivity factors (Andrews, 2011), but it remains unclear how these should be addressed, or how they may interact with established risk factors (Polaschek, 2012).

Nevertheless, the principles outlined in the RNR framework provide an overarching framework for the development of more specific violent offender rehabilitation programs. While there now exists strong evidence supporting the efficacy of offender rehabilitation programs generally, the evidence base from which to draw firm conclusions about the effectiveness of psychological treatments to reduce the risk of violent behaviour is somewhat limited (e.g., Cortoni, Nunes & Latendresse, 2006; Landenberger & Lipsey, 2005; McGuire, 2008; Polaschek & Collie, 2004; Polaschek, Wilson, Townsend, & Daly, 2005).

For example, in one of the few in-depth analyses undertaken of violent offender treatment programs to date, Polaschek and Collie (2004) were only able to locate nine program evaluations that included a matched or randomly allocated comparison group and reported subsequent recidivism rates. Of these, only four reported violent recidivism rates. Moreover, only two programs were classified as primarily cognitive and included cognitive skills training and cognitive self-change. The remainder were classified as anger management or multi-modal. While the reviewed programs showed some level of efficacy, it was difficult to draw firm conclusions about their effectiveness given the small number of studies, the
weaknesses inherent in some evaluation designs, and variation in other program features. Moreover, Polaschek and Collie noted an absence of theoretical frameworks guiding the selection of programs and treatment targets.

Similarly, based on a meta-analysis of eleven violent offender treatment evaluation studies, Jolliffe and Farrington (2007) reported that treatment significantly reduced general recidivism. Specifically, violent offender programs were associated with an eight to eleven per cent reduction in re-offending for individuals who had received treatment compared to those who had not. While the impact of treatment for violent recidivism was smaller it nevertheless represented a statistically significant reduction of between seven to eight per cent between treated and untreated offenders. Jolliffe and Farrington further identified that the most effective programs were of longer duration, targeted anger and cognitive skills, used role-play techniques, applied a relapse prevention model, and included homework tasks.

More recently, Polaschek (2011) conducted an evaluation of the Rimutaka Violence Prevention Unit, a high-intensity, cognitive-behavioural program that covers identifying offence chains, restructuring offence-supportive thinking, mood management, victim empathy, moral reasoning, problem solving, communication and relationship skills, and relapse prevention planning. The evaluation included a sample of 138 predominantly chronic violent offenders who were followed up for an average of 3.5 years post release. The 'survival rate' of offenders who completed treatment was compared to case-matched control offenders, as well as offenders who did not complete treatment. Results showed that there was a small positive effect for treatment completion. However, men who completed the program were just as likely to return to prison for a violent offence as the matched controls and the treatment non-completers. Moreover, there were no statistically significant differences in the mean survival times between the groups.
These results indicate that while violent offender programs can be effective at reducing general and violent recidivism, there are still significant gaps in the rehabilitation literature. In particular, there is a need to develop a better understanding of the specific needs of violent offenders (Polaschek, 2006). Given that one of the primary risk factors identified in the RNR scholarship are antisocial attitudes and beliefs, cognition emerges as an important component of violent offender treatment (e.g., Gannon, Ward, Beech & Fisher, 2007). Consistent with the premises of social learning theory, violence-supportive belief systems are thought to develop early in life and to be reinforced through the perceived rewards associated with criminal activity (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). From a developmental perspective these cognitions are likely to change, either through natural processes associated with ageing, or through the impact of significant life-events that provide hooks for individuals to re-define their beliefs about crime and violence (e.g., Laub & Sampson, 2003). Thus whilst program evaluations suggest that interventions with violent offenders, when designed and delivered according to particular practice principles, can be successful at reducing general and violent re-offending, there is scope to improve program outcomes by identifying the specific risk factors and criminogenic needs that are pertinent to different sub-groups of violent offenders.

Aims of the thesis

The relationship between age, masculinity and violence remains underexplored and largely unintegrated in the violence literature. While the developmental criminology paradigm has provided important insights about stability and change in criminal behaviour throughout the life-course, masculinity is rarely considered within this paradigm. Similarly, the role of masculinity in violent crime is largely absent from the rehabilitation literature, despite the overrepresentation of males in the criminal justice system. In the absence of a specific focus on the role of masculinity, it is currently unclear why younger men are more likely to engage
in violent crime or what contributes to a declining prevalence in violence during middle adulthood.

Cognition is an important concept that can explain how beliefs about masculinity are related to violence at different stages of the life-course. Specifically, beliefs that promote the use of violence have been identified as an important correlate of violent offending and by extension, as important treatment targets in violent offender treatment programs (Polaschek, 2006; Polaschek, Bell, Calvert & Takarangi, 2010). If developmental processes play a role in violent offending, then it becomes important to establish how beliefs about violence and masculinity change throughout adulthood. The aim of this thesis is, therefore, to explore differences between younger and older violent offenders relating to their violence-supportive cognitions. In particular, the thesis aims to explain and describe the relationship between beliefs about masculinity and violence in early and middle adulthood. To achieve this aim, two studies conducted with incarcerated, male violent offenders in Victoria, Australia will be presented.

The first study involves a quantitative analysis of the criminal thinking styles of 248 offenders that investigates differences between younger and older violent offenders on a measure of criminal thinking. In particular, the aim of the first study is to identify whether younger adult violent offenders are more likely than their older counterparts to endorse criminal thinking styles that have been linked to attributions of hostility, and masculine gender role identity (Walters, 2001; 2007). To assist with the interpretation of the results obtained in the first study a qualitative study was undertaken with 15 incarcerated violent offenders. The aim of this study was to utilise an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) framework to further explore the hypothesised linkages between maturational processes, violence and masculinity. In this way, the two studies presented here allow for a fuller understanding of the potential, and limits, of using masculinity as an overarching concept to explain changes in beliefs about violence throughout adulthood.
Thesis structure

The next four chapters will set out the theoretical perspectives and the literature that inform this research. In Chapter 2 the developmental criminology literature will be discussed, with a view to establishing the importance of developmental processes in violent offending. This discussion is continued in Chapter 3, which reviews Farrington’s Integrated Cognitive Antisocial Potential (ICAP) theory (Farrington, 2005c) and Sampson and Laub’s general age-graded theory of crime (Sampson & Laub, 2005a). While Farrington’s theory provides a template for understanding how criminal behaviour changes throughout the life-course, Sampson and Laub’s theory focusses specifically on changes that occur during adulthood, thereby providing an important theoretical foundation for the two studies presented in this thesis.

The cognitive processes underlying violent behaviour are then discussed in Chapter 4. Drawing on the social cognition literature, it will be argued that violent offending is promoted by reciprocal interactions between pre-existing beliefs supportive of violence, and information processing biases that promote a hypervigilance to threatening social cues (Huesmann, 1998; Dodge, 2006). Implicit theories and criminal thinking styles will also be discussed, as these provide the foundation for arguing that beliefs about masculinity are functionally related to beliefs about violence. This will be followed by a review of the literature on masculinity and violence in Chapter 5.

The two studies are discussed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. Chapter 6 includes the methodology, results, conclusion and discussion for Study 1, a quantitative comparison of younger and older offenders on criminal thinking styles linked to masculinity and interpretative biases. Similarly, the methodology and results for Study 2, the interpretative phenomenological analysis, are presented in Chapter 7. This is followed by a discussion in Chapter 8 where the results of the interpretative phenomenological analysis are contextualised with the
developmental, cognitive and masculinity literature. Finally, in Chapter 9 the results of both studies are discussed in relation to their implications for theory and practice in violent offender rehabilitation. This discussion focusses in particular on the way that beliefs about masculinity and violence can be integrated into the current best practice framework in a way that is sensitive to the developmental processes underlying these beliefs. The chapter concludes with the limitations of the studies and recommendations for future research on beliefs about violence and masculinity through the life-course.
Chapter 2

Developmental processes in criminal behaviour

Developmental and Life-Course Criminology (DLC) research provides a theoretical framework for the argument that criminal behaviour, while necessarily grounded in historical antecedents, is also fundamentally influenced by developmental changes occurring at all stages of the life-course. The primary focus of DLC is on the identification of childhood risk factors that predict antisocial, criminal and negative life outcomes (e.g., Casey, 2011; Farrington, 1991, 2003a, 2005b; Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2002), with a view to informing social policy, and establishing early intervention programs that can ameliorate the impact of these risk factors.

Prediction for the purpose of early intervention relies on being able to identify risk factors that have a causal relationship to the outcome – in this case, negative life-outcomes that include criminal behaviour (Farrington et al., 2006). To this end, DLC research is based on data derived from prospective longitudinal studies, sometimes of entire birth cohorts within a given region. Although these methodologies do not guarantee causality, a large body of research has now accumulated identifying a range of risk factors that precede criminal behaviour. Moreover, across multiple longitudinal studies that include cohorts from various historical epochs and geographical locations, there is broad agreement regarding the cluster of risk factors that are most predictive of later criminal and violent behaviour (e.g., Pardini, Loeber, Farrington & Stouthamer-Loeber, 2012).
Theoretically, the DLC paradigm has been informed by a wide range of criminological and psychological perspectives. As a result, it draws upon a number of theories, each of which posits a slightly different set of potentially causal risk factors for antisocial and criminal behaviour. Moreover, a distinction exists between 'developmental' and 'life-course' theories (Farrington, 2003a; Farrington, Loeber & Berg, 2012), with developmental theories placing greater emphasis on the role of latent propensities to engage in antisocial and criminal behaviour (Farrington, 2003a) and life-course theories emphasising developmental transitions and turning points that can alter offending trajectories (Laub & Sampson, 1993, 2003; Sampson & Laub, 2005b). Despite these differences most developmental and life-course theories are underpinned by a common focus on the influence of early childhood risk factors for future antisocial and criminal behaviour. For example, risk factors are considered to have a cumulative impact, such that the timing, as well as the type and the quantity of risk factors in a person’s life are important (Loeber et al., 2003; Pardini et al., 2012). Second, risk factors are not invariant throughout the life-course. That is, there are likely to be important differences between the risk factors that predict the onset, and those that are associated with the continuation of offending (Lösel & Farrington, 2012). Moreover, the risk factors that differentiate between those individuals who will and those who will not engage in criminal behaviour are not the same as those that predict delinquency across time for the same individual (Farrington et al., 2002).

**Risk and protective factors**

Although there is debate regarding the extent to which childhood risk factors can explain persistence in antisocial and criminal behaviour during adulthood (Sampson & Laub, 2003, 2005c) or desistance for the sub-set of individuals that are considered chronic offenders (e.g., Kazemian, Farrington & Le Blanc, 2009), it is nevertheless accepted that risk factors originating in childhood are implicated in the aetiology of antisocial and criminal behaviour
According to L. Sel and Farrington (2012) risk factors are “personal or social characteristics of an individual that predict a high probability of a future behaviour problem such as the onset, persistence, or aggravation of youth violence” (p. 9). Despite slight differences in the relative importance attributed to specific risk factors, DLC theorists agree that it is the combination of risk factors across multiple domains that influence life outcomes. In this context, DLC theories reflect a systems approach whereby interdependent relationships between the individual, his/her family, and his/her wider social system contribute to the ultimate level of risk. For example, Moffitt (1993, 2007) has argued that cognitive deficits, hyperactivity and a difficult temperament interact with high-risk environments, including poor parenting and poverty, to exacerbate an individual’s long-term risk of antisocial and criminal behaviour (Moffitt, 1993).

Similarly, Farrington and colleagues have identified a cluster of childhood risk factors across multiple systems, including the individual, his/her family and his/her community (Farrington et al., 2006). Individual-level risk factors include antisocial childhood behaviour, a constellation of factors that are closely associated with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), including impulsivity, along with low IQ and/or low school attainment. Risk factors in the family system include family criminality and parenting practices involving excessively punitive discipline, poor supervision and parental discord. Finally, risk factors in the community system include poverty and poor housing.

These childhood risk factors have been identified in other longitudinal studies, with slight variations in the way specific variables are conceptualised (e.g., Loeber, Farrington et al., 2003; Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber & Farrington, 2008). Moreover, Farrington and colleagues have found that at least one risk factor from each domain independently predicts antisocial
and criminal behaviour from childhood to middle adulthood (e.g., Farrington, 1995, 2003b; Farrington et al., 2006; West & Farrington, 1977). Moreover, Stouthamer-Loeber et al. (2002) have proposed that external systems are distal to the individual (i.e., those at the neighbourhood and community level) and work by influencing the expression of more proximate or internal risk factors. Regardless of the specific mechanisms underlying the systems' interactions, it is well established that risk factors occur across multiple domains, sometimes in mutually reinforcing ways.

Some of the most important risk factors are, however, conceptually similar to the outcome of antisocial and criminal behaviour. For example, it is difficult to disentangle antisocial childhood behaviour from the construct of delinquency – they appear to be measuring a similar, if not the same, underlying construct (Farrington, 2003b). For this reason Farrington (2003b) has proposed that risk factors be distinguished on the basis of whether they are explanatory or non-explanatory. Explanatory risk factors are those that measure a variable that is not related to the same underlying construct as the outcome variable (Farrington, 2003b). For example, family poverty would be considered an explanatory risk factor because conceptually it is not similar to the construct of criminal behaviour. By contrast, non-explanatory risk factors are those that measure the same underlying construct as the outcome.

Risk factors on their own are not sufficient to explain the significant heterogeneity in developmental outcomes. Despite their predictive validity, a substantial proportion of individuals do not follow the predicted trajectory, or deviate from the trajectory earlier than expected (Lösel & Farrington, 2012). Against this backdrop there is growing evidence that protective factors play an important role in developmental trajectories, even for the most high-risk individuals (Moffitt, 2007; Pettit, 2004; Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2002).
Researchers have only recently begun to investigate this facet of DLC. Part of the complexity in any attempt to understand protective factors can be attributed to the fact that one variable can act as a risk factor under certain conditions, but have a protective influence under others (Lösel & Farrington, 2012). Moreover, direct protective factors are thought to have a different impact on antisocial trajectories than buffering protective factors (Lösel & Farrington, 2012; Pardini et al., 2012). Regardless of the mechanism through which they work, protective factors also have a cumulative impact. That is, the likelihood of antisocial and criminal outcomes in later life decreases as a function of the number of protective factors (Lösel & Farrington, 2012; Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2002).

Although the relationship between risk and protective factors requires further elucidation, DLC research has provided a wealth of data linking early childhood experiences with negative adult outcomes (e.g., Farrington et al., 2006; Loeber et al., 2003; Odgers et al., 2008; Piquero et al., 2010). For most developmental criminologists the accumulation of risk factors in early life creates an underlying and enduring propensity for antisocial and criminal behaviour throughout the life-course. Although this assumption is disputed by life-course criminologists (e.g., Laub & Sampson, 2003; Sampson & Laub, 2003, 2005b), the majority of DLC research has been directed at understanding how these risk factors cluster together to predict different developmental trajectories. These developmental trajectories highlight that the prevalence of criminal behaviour changes throughout the life-course and that age-related changes are to be expected. These issues will be discussed in the following sections.

**Taxonomies**

As discussed in Chapter 1, there is a predictable relationship between age and crime, such that the peak of offending tends to occur in middle and late adolescence, followed by a steady decrease during adulthood (Farrington et al., 2008; Moffitt, 1993). This suggests that
at the aggregate level at least there will be little continuity in criminal behaviour from
childhood to adulthood. DLC research has, however, consistently identified a small sub-set
of individuals who show a considerable amount of continuity in their offending throughout the
life-course (e.g., Loeber et al., 2003; Moffitt, 2007; Piquero et al., 2010; Wiesner et al.,
2007). This led Moffitt (1993) to propose that continuity was associated with a distinct
aetiology of criminal behaviour, based on a cluster of childhood risk factors that would not be
present in the majority of people who followed the more traditional age-crime pattern.
Specifically, Moffitt (1993) proposed two developmentally unique trajectories reflecting
different theoretical explanations. One trajectory, the life-course persistent, is comprised of a
small group of individuals with a number of significant early childhood risk factors across
multiple domains. The defining characteristic of this group is the manifestation of age-
appropriate antisocial and criminal behaviour throughout the life-course. Life-course
persistent offenders not only show evidence of aggression during early childhood, but have
been found to make up the small proportion of persistent and serious violent offenders in
adulthood (Moffitt, 2007).

The stability of aggressive, antisocial and criminal behaviour exhibited by life-course
persistent offenders is thought to reflect enduring neuropsychological deficits that occur
either at the prenatal stage, during birth, or early in infancy. These neuropsychological
deficits are linked with a difficult temperament in childhood, including aggressiveness,
impulsivity, inattention, irritability, delayed development, poor verbal abilities, and problems
with self-expression. A difficult temperament is further exacerbated in criminogenic
environments. Specifically, Moffitt argues that the factors most likely to contribute to
neuropsychological deficits are linked to maternal risk factors including drug abuse and poor
nutrition during pregnancy, which are in turn linked to disadvantage and ‘deviance’.
According to Moffitt’s theory, individuals on the life-course persistent pathway do not have
many opportunities to learn alternative, prosocial ways of dealing with or reacting to their
social world. Moreover, neuropsychological deficits that are not addressed early in
development are likely to lead to difficulties in academic settings, and long-term difficulties in gaining stable, well-paid employment. Therefore, continuity in antisocial and criminal behaviour is promoted by “narrowing options” (Moffitt, 1993, p.683). Early contact with the Criminal Justice System, which is one of the most defining characteristics of life-course persistent offenders, also promotes continuity by further blocking opportunities for change.

The second developmental trajectory proposed by Moffitt (1993) – adolescent limited – is defined by the absence of significant childhood risk factors. Although a much larger group than the life-course persistent offenders, individuals on the adolescent limited trajectory show little continuity in aggressive, antisocial or criminal behaviour throughout the life-course. Instead, criminal behaviour by these individuals is thought to reflect what Moffitt (1993, p.687) has termed the “maturity gap”. Specifically, adolescence is a period of development marked by significant disjuncture between the status an individual believes he/she has, compared to the status that is afforded to him/her by society. In this context, antisocial behaviour becomes a means by which individuals are able to attain the status associated with adulthood. As such, adolescent-limited offending is thought to reflect a normative part of development.

Moreover, Moffitt (1993) proposed that adolescent-limited offending is based on a process of social mimicry. During adolescence, life-course persistent offenders experience an increase in popularity because they do not appear to be stuck in the maturity gap\(^2\). That is, they are perceived by their peers as having independence, having achieved an adult status and unfettered access to material goods (Moffitt, 1993). According to Moffitt’s theory, adolescent-limited individuals mimic the behaviour of their more antisocial and delinquent peers, which leads to the increased prevalence of offending during this developmental period.

\(^2\) This contrasts markedly with other stages of development, where highly aggressive and/or antisocial individuals are typically rejected (Moffitt, 1993).
Given the absence of an enduring pathology associated with the adolescent-limited trajectory, once these individuals reach adulthood antisocial and criminal behaviour is no longer perceived as a viable means of achieving desired outcomes. Without experiencing the cumulative consequences of neuropsychological deficits and criminogenic environments, adolescent-limited offenders have greater options for achieving their goals through conventional means, including education, employment and stable relationships (Moffitt, 1993).

**Trajectories**

Moffitt’s dual taxonomy predicts that a small group of individuals will be persistently antisocial and criminal, while the majority will naturally desist in early adulthood (Moffitt, 2007). However, this theory has been criticised for its over-deterministic perspective on development and change throughout the life-course (Sampson & Laub, 2003). Specifically, life-course theorists argue that although childhood risk factors are important, they do not have as much impact on adult outcomes as might be predicted by Moffitt’s theory (Sampson & Laub, 2005c). For example, Laub and Sampson (2003) contend that there is little evidence for a truly life-course persistent trajectory, and that even in the face of cumulative disadvantage, life events during adulthood exert a more powerful influence on adult trajectories, than distal, childhood risk factors (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Sampson & Laub, 2005b).

The assumption that only two primary trajectories are sufficient to explain the significant heterogeneity in antisocial and criminal outcomes throughout the life-course has also been challenged. Currently it is accepted that anywhere between three and six unique trajectories can be reliably identified, depending on the length of follow-up, whether self-report or official measures of crime are used, and whether offending is disaggregated by crime-type (e.g.,
Lacourse, Dupéré & Loeber, 2008; Piquero et al., 2010; Wiesner et al., 2007). Additional developmental trajectories include adult-onset offenders (e.g., McGee & Farrington, 2010), childhood limited offenders (Moffitt, 2007), short-term persisters (Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2008), sporadic, low-rate desisters, high-rate desisters and high-rate persisters (Nieuwbeerta, Blockland, Piquero & Sweeten, 2011) and short-term high-rate, and long-term low-rate chronic offenders (Piquero et al., 2010). The conceptual distinction between the terms ‘persistent’ and ‘chronic’ is unclear, although chronicity typically reflects a high _volume_ of offending throughout a substantial portion of the life-course. Persistence on the other hand is typically used to describe the _duration_ of antisocial and criminal behaviour, irrespective of volume of offending.

The evidence presented so far indicates that a cluster of childhood risk factors across multiple domains are able to predict a number of distinct criminal trajectories throughout the life-course. Despite some variation in the way these trajectories are identified and defined, one consistent finding is that a small group of individuals will follow a life-course persistent pathway marked by a significant amount of serious, criminal behaviour. However, these trajectories have most often been identified in relation to general antisocial and criminal behaviour, not _violent offending_ specifically. The next section will review some of the issues that have been identified within the DLC paradigm as they pertain to violence throughout the life-course.

**Violence from a DLC perspective**

Much of the DLC research is underpinned by the assumption that violence is simply an expression of an enduring propensity towards antisocial and criminal behaviour (e.g., Farrington, 1991, 2007; Moffitt, 2007). As a result, some DLC theorists maintain that serious violence does not require a unique aetiological explanation, independent of the explanation
offered for persistent offending. That is, violence is seen as one manifestation of life-course criminality. To support this position, DLC researchers draw on two related issues – the absence of specialisation for violent crime, and early onset of antisocial and criminal behaviour as a sufficient cause of violent behaviour in adulthood.

Briefly, criminologists have long debated whether in the course of a criminal career there is a tendency towards specialisation, whereby the same or similar crimes are exclusively committed, or whether offenders show a diverse pattern of offences (e.g., Simon, 1997). Currently, the weight of evidence falls on the side of diversity. Specifically, there is little evidence that throughout the life-course violent offenders specialise in violent crime (e.g., Lacourse et al., 2008; Nieuwbeerta et al., 2011)³. However, there is also evidence that within a general pattern of diversity there are pockets of specialisation. In particular, it appears that specialisation increases with age (Nieuwbeerta et al., 2011).

**Risk factors for violence**

In contrast, there is a large body of evidence showing that early onset offending predicts future violence. For example, McCluskey et al. (2006) predicted that early onset offending, defined as an arrest prior to age 14, would be associated with violent and weapon-related offences up to age 19. Official arrest data were obtained for 1,159 men and women first arrested as juveniles between 1989 and 1999. Results showed that individuals with an early onset of offending were almost three times as likely to be arrested for a violent offence during the follow-up period, compared to people with a late-onset (i.e., those with a first arrest after age 14). These results held after controlling for the severity of the first offence.

³ This is not a universally accepted conclusion. For example, Deane, Armstrong and Felson (2005) argue that the regression models typically used to identify specialisation have not been appropriate as they violate the assumption of the independence of predictors. Using a marginal logit model, these authors found evidence for specialisation in violent offending, such that violent offenders were more likely to engage in future violent crimes, and non-violent offenders were more likely to engage in future non-violent crimes (Deane et al., 2005).
Against this backdrop, a number of DLC theorists have argued that the childhood risk factors that predict general antisocial and criminal behaviour throughout the life-course also predict violent offending. For example, Farrington and colleagues (Farrington, 2003b; Farrington et al., 2006) have investigated the predictors of antisocial and criminal behaviour based on data from the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development, a prospective longitudinal project that has followed 411 boys from a working-class area of London from 1961 to the present time. At the time of the last wave of data collection, the men in the study had been assessed from age 8 to age 48 (Farrington et al., 2006).

Risk factors for antisocial and criminal behaviour were assessed at three major developmental periods – childhood, early, and late adolescence. Although men in the Cambridge Study have been assessed at various points in adulthood, the focus of these later assessments has been on life outcomes, rather than explanatory risk factors (Farrington et al., 2006). Therefore, Table 1 summarises the major early life risk factors that have been used by Farrington and colleagues to predict criminal and antisocial outcomes throughout the life-course.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental period at time of assessment</th>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Risk factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childhood (ages 8-10)</td>
<td>Socio-economic</td>
<td>Low social class, low family income, poor housing, large family size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Convicted parent(s), delinquent sibling, young mother at birth of first child, poor child-rearing practices, poor parental supervision, parental conflict, disrupted family, parental interest in child’s education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Low non-verbal IQ, low verbal IQ, low school attainment, high delinquency rate school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>High daring, poor concentration including hyperactivity, high impulsiveness, low popularity, nervous/withdrawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Troublesome, difficult to discipline, dishonest, manipulative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early adolescence (ages 12-14)</td>
<td>Socio-economic</td>
<td>Unemployed father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Lack of involvement by the father in the boy’s activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Leaving school prior to age 15, frequent truancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Bullying, sexual activity, frequent lying, aggressiveness, stealing from outside the home, hostility towards the police, delinquent peers, delinquency, violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late adolescence (ages 16-18)</td>
<td>Socio-economic</td>
<td>Working in unskilled/manual jobs, unstable job history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Poor relationship with parents, living away from home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Not graduating from high-school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>High extroversion, high neuroticism, left-handedness, wearing spectacles, low pulse rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Irresponsible sex, including frequent unprotected sex and promiscuity, having tattoos, heavy smoking, heavy drinking, binge drinking, drug use, fighting while drunk, loitering with friends on the streets, hospitalisations due to motoring incidents or fighting, group fighting, football hooliganism, fighting in general, anti-establishment and aggressive attitudes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using the childhood risk factors listed in Table 1, Farrington and colleagues (Farrington, 2003b) found that the best independent predictors of juvenile crime were high daring, low school achievement, a convicted parent, harsh discipline, low non-verbal intelligence, and family disruption. At age 32, the best independent predictors of criminal behaviour were a large family size, a convicted parent, high daring, poor housing, family disruption, low school achievement, and high popularity. Finally, the independent childhood predictors for adulthood criminality (from ages 21 to 40) were low school achievement, a convicted parent, family disruption and a large family size.

At the final wave of data collection, men who had received a conviction prior to and following their 21st birthday were classified as persistent offenders. Seventy men, from a total pool of 398 whose criminal records were checked at age 50, were classified as persistent. The best independent childhood predictors of persistent offending at age 50 were a convicted parent, high daring, delinquent siblings, a teenage mother at the birth of the first child, and low popularity. When combined, these results show that high daring and a convicted parent appear to be important, independent predictors of life-course persistent offenders. Moreover, low school achievement and family disruption predict criminal behaviour at various stages of development.

The risk factors presented in Table 1 (above), as well as the additional risk factors identified in early and late adolescence have also been used to predict violent offending in adulthood. For example, Farrington (2000) identified a number of risk factors that predicted convictions for violence throughout adulthood (age 21 to 40) as well as self-reported violence during middle adulthood (ages 27 and 32). Of the 411 boys in the Cambridge Study, 404 were assessed as at risk of future violence. Of these, 65 (16%) had received at least one conviction for violence up to age 40. Violent offences included assault causing bodily harm, threats or threatening behaviour, robbery, weapons offences and sex offences that involved an element of violence, including rape and indecent assault (Farrington, 2000). Self-reported
violent offenders included 61 males who between the age of 27 and 32 reported engaging in four or more physical fights, or assaulting their female partners (Farrington, 2000). Table 2 presents the risk factors that independently predicted violent convictions and self-reported violence, as measured during childhood and adolescence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Risk factors measured in childhood, early and late-adolescence that predict adulthood violence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk factors for violent offence convictions</th>
<th>Risk factors for self-reported violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Childhood (age 8-10)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convicted parent</td>
<td>Broken/disrupted family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income</td>
<td>Low SES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dishonesty</td>
<td>Nervous/withdrawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teenage mother at birth of first child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Early adolescence (age 12-14)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile to police</td>
<td>Self-reported delinquency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor concentration</td>
<td>Frequent liar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steals outside the home</td>
<td>Father not involved in child’s activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father not involved in child’s activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reported violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Late adolescence (age16-18)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convicted for nonviolence</td>
<td>Convicted for nonviolence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low job status</td>
<td>Drug use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convicted for violence</td>
<td>Heavy drinker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extroverted</td>
<td>Self-reported delinquency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convicted parent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Childhood to late adolescence (age 8-18)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convicted for nonviolence</td>
<td>Convicted for nonviolence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile to police at age 14</td>
<td>Drug use at age 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low job status at age 18</td>
<td>Nervous/withdrawn at age 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father not involved in child’s activities at age 12</td>
<td>Low SES at age 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convicted parent at age 18</td>
<td>Aggressive at age 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convicted for violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extroverted at age 16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen that some of the risk factors that predict antisocial and general criminal behaviour also predict violence. Specifically, having a convicted parent during childhood appears to be important for explaining a general tendency for engaging in various types of
antisocial and criminal activities, including violent crime. Family poverty, as measured by low income and low socio-economic status also appears to be important for explaining general crime and violent offending. The overlap between distal risk factors, that is, those risk factors that occur early in a child’s development, supports the contention that violent crime in adulthood reflects an extension of a more general propensity towards antisocial behaviour.

Similar results have been obtained from analyses of other longitudinal datasets. For example, Loeber et al. (2005) investigated the predictors of serious violence and homicide, using data from the Pittsburgh Youth Study, a prospective longitudinal project that has followed three cohorts of boys from early childhood to adulthood. Originally, 1,517 boys aged between seven and 13 years old were included in the study. Each cohort included approximately 250 boys who were identified as antisocial/delinquent based on a screening assessment. Using juvenile criminal records, as well as self-report data Loeber et al. (2005) categorised participants into five groups reflecting severity of violent and criminal behaviour, including: 1) homicide offenders; 2) violent offenders convicted of rape, robbery or assault; 3) boys who had self-reported engaging in violent crimes; 4) boys who self-reported engaging in property crime; and 5) a comparison group comprised of boys who had engaged in minor forms of delinquency or who had no history of official or self-reported antisocial or criminal activity.

Results showed that 50 of the 55 risk factors included in the analysis were able to differentiate violent from non-violent offenders. Of these 50 risk factors, 11 significantly predicted serious and self-reported violent offending, while a different set of 10 risk factors significantly predicted homicide. These risk factors are summarised in Table 3. The predictors of violent offending in the Pittsburgh Youth Study largely conformed to those identified by Farrington and colleagues. In particular, socio-economic factors and previous crime, including violent offending, were significant predictors of future violence in both studies. Previous violence therefore emerges as a strong predictor of future violence. In
fact, Loeber et al. (2005) found that 31 of the 33 homicide offenders had either been convicted or self-reported engaging in violent crime, indicating that homicide offenders were not a qualitatively distinct group, with a unique aetiology. More recently, Farrington et al. (2012) used data from the Pittsburgh Youth Study to further investigate the link between general violent offending and homicide. Specifically, these authors postulated that homicide offenders would not differ substantially from other violent offenders on early childhood risk factors. Moreover, homicide offenders were predicted to have engaged in a substantial amount of violence prior to the homicide, as indicated by the results of the Loeber et al. (2005).

To control for the influence of committing a homicide on the future risk of violence, Farrington et al. only investigated criminal behaviour up to age 14, as the youngest homicide offender in the sample was 15 years old at the time of conviction. Arrests and convictions occurring up to age 14 for violence, including robbery, aggravated assault, simple assault, threats, weapons offences, and serious sex offences were included in the analyses. Property offences and other offences, including drug-related crimes, mischief/public disorder, and conspiracy to commit a crime were also included. In addition, self-report data on violent non-sex offences, property and drug-related offences was used to determine the extent of criminal behaviour prior to the homicide.
Table 3
Risk factors predicting serious violent offending and homicide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk factors for violent crime</th>
<th>Risk factors for homicide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low SES</td>
<td>High score on screening measure of antisocial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and delinquent behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family on welfare</td>
<td>Positive attitude towards substance use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in a bad neighbourhood, based on parents’ self-report</td>
<td>Diagnosis of conduct disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truancy</td>
<td>Carrying a weapon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low school motivation</td>
<td>Gang fighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High parental stress</td>
<td>Selling hard drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onset of delinquency prior to age 10</td>
<td>Peer delinquency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruelty towards people</td>
<td>Being held back a grade in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s depressed mood</td>
<td>Family on welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical aggression, including fighting, physically attacking others</td>
<td>African-American status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callous/unemotional traits, including lack of guilt, explosiveness and unpredictability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results showed that 20 of the 21 risk factors included in the analyses, 20 were able to reliably differentiate the 37 homicide offenders from the remainder of the sample (n=1,406). However, only four environmental risk factors and four behavioural risk factors made strong, independent contributions to the outcome measure (i.e., homicide). Moreover, consistent with results reported by Loeber et al. (2005), previous violent offences, both self-reported and officially recorded, significantly predicted homicide. For example, using self-report data the strongest predictor of homicide was vehicle theft, followed by carrying a weapon, indicating that prior to committing the homicide, offenders in this sample had already

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4 The four environmental risk factors were: coming from a broken home, living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood, family on welfare dependence, and having a teenage mother. The four behavioural risk factors included: a positive attitude towards delinquency, being suspended from school, a high risk score at the original screening assessment, and a diagnosis of disruptive behaviour disorder (Farrington et al., 2012).
engaged in a significant proportion of general criminal behaviour (Farrington et al., 2012). This was supported by official criminal history data, which showed that prior to the homicide conviction, 57% of the sample had already received a criminal conviction.

The literature discussed so far indicates that early onset of offending predicts future violence. The primary causal mechanism underlying this relationship appears to be early childhood disadvantage⁵ which is hypothesised to create an enduring, general propensity for crime. In this context, violent crime becomes just one manifestation of negative life outcomes, with little consideration given to how the use of violence evolves, and potentially changes, throughout the life-course. Moreover, while it appears that violent offenders can be prospectively identified based on a small cluster of childhood risk factors, the accuracy of prediction is low (Farrington et al., 2012). That is, a substantial proportion of individuals identified as high-risk in childhood will never go on to engage in violent crime. This may be because criminal violence, especially the more severe forms such as homicide, is a low-base rate event. However, it may also be that with age, the factors that predict violence change and childhood adversity loses its salience. Given the paucity of research on the way violence is used throughout the life-course, it is perhaps not surprising that a DLC theory on violence does not exist. However, Farrington (2003a, 2005c) has developed a comprehensive theory of criminal behaviour that is flexible enough to accommodate violent-specific risk factors. This is considered in the next chapter

⁵ While childhood disadvantage appears to be an important construct in many DLC theories, its definition varies depending on the specific theoretical framework being applied. Nevertheless, at its core childhood disadvantage is characterised by the interaction between the individual and his/her environment (Farrington, 1995, 2005a; Moffitt, 1993). Specifically, psychological, neurological and potentially genetic factors combine with a criminogenic home and broader social environment to create the idea of disadvantage. For the purpose of this thesis, the specific definition of childhood disadvantage is not of particular importance. The central argument is that childhood risk factors on their own lack the necessary conceptual depth required to understand changes that occur during adulthood.
Chapter 3

Developmental theories of criminal behaviour and violence

The Integrated Cognitive Antisocial Potential (ICAP) theory

Farrington’s Integrated Cognitive Antisocial Potential (ICAP) theory draws on strain, control, social learning, labelling and rational choice theories of crime to provide a framework for integrating the large body of Developmental and Life-Course (DLC) criminology literature. Specifically, Farrington has proposed that crime and antisocial behaviour is driven by a latent construct which he has termed ‘antisocial potential’ (AP). AP develops early in life and remains fairly constant throughout the life-course, although it does show age-graded variability. That is, developmental changes in combination with life-events influence the absolute levels of AP. Antisocial potential is conceptualised as a product of the childhood risk factors outlined in the previous chapter, including biological and genetic predispositions, early disruptive family environments, impoverished and high-crime neighbourhoods, and exposure to criminal/delinquent peers. Together, these risk factors contribute to a stable, long-term predisposition towards antisocial and criminal behaviour (Farrington, 2005c).

Long-term antisocial potential will, however, only result in criminal activity in the presence of short-term or situational antisocial potential. Consistent with extant knowledge, Farrington posits an individual by situation interaction, whereby internal predispositions interact with situational/contextual factors to determine criminal behaviour. According to the ICAP, the
presence of opportunities and suitable victims in combination with short-term energising factors such as drugs/alcohol and boredom, leads to a decision-making process where the costs/benefits of engaging in crime are evaluated, and where scripts supportive of antisocial or criminal activity are activated. Together, these processes are presumed to increase the likelihood that long-term antisocial potential will be expressed as criminal behaviour (Farrington, 2003a, 2005c, 2007). Figure 2 provides a representation of Farrington’s model.

Farrington’s theory begins with the explanatory childhood risk factors that have been identified in various developmental longitudinal studies. That is, Farrington has focussed on those risk factors that are not related to the underlying construct of AP. Moreover, Farrington (2003a, 2005c, 2007) argues that different explanatory childhood risk factors are associated with specific causal mechanisms that influence the development of long-term AP. Three primary causal mechanisms are included in the theory, reflecting strain, social learning and attachment theories. For example, drawing on strain theory, Farrington (2005c) has argued that childhood risk factors associated with poverty, including low family income in childhood and school failure during adolescence, will lead to a desire for material goods and consequent status. Similarly, long-term AP is posited to develop in the presence of antisocial modelling by criminal parents, delinquent siblings and antisocial peers, or more broadly in environments high in antisocial role models that include high crime neighbourhoods and schools.

6 While Figure 2 (below) is a modified version of Farrington’s ICAP, the core elements have been retained. In fact, the modifications centre on condensing the various childhood risk factors and hypothesised causal mechanisms into single categories. This has been done for ease of presentation and interpretation.
Figure 2
A diagrammatic representation of Farrington’s ICAP

Childhood risk factors across five domains – socioeconomic, family, school, individual and behaviour

Hypothesised causal mechanisms, including antisocial models, attachment and socialisation

Long-term antisocial potential reflecting between-individual differences

Internal factors, including impulsivity

Live events

Situational influences

Short-term antisocial potential reflecting within-individual differences

Contextual influences

Cognitive processes

Criminal/antisocial behaviour

Consequences
Finally, disruptive or dysfunctional family environments marked by harsh and/or inconsistent parenting, high parental conflict, and broken homes, are posited to contribute to long-term AP through negative attachment and/or poor socialisation. This causal pathway is thought to contain two different processes. First, children low in anxiety may be difficult to socialise because they are resistant to discipline (e.g., Farrington, 2003a, 2005a, 2007), leading to an increase in long-term antisocial potential. Conversely, poor parenting practices, marked by parental rejection, may lead to disruptions in attachment, which may in turn increase the likelihood of long-term antisocial potential (e.g., Farrington, 2005c). However, the specific mechanisms behind this proposed causal pathway remain unclear, as attachment has not been directly investigated in DLC research.

It seems likely that these causal mechanisms exert an influence on the development of long-term AP through interactive effects. That is, individuals who are exposed to poor socialisation in the presence of antisocial/criminal modelling will be likely to have higher long-term AP, than those who are exposed to poor socialisation in the presence of prosocial models. Moreover, long-term AP is independently influenced by individual-level factors, in particular high levels of impulsivity, hyperactivity and restlessness (Farrington, 2005c). In particular, a consistent finding in DLC research is that impulsivity, hyperactivity, restlessness and a poor ability to concentrate are strong independent predictors of life-course persistence (e.g., Farrington, 2005a; Loeber et al., 2003; Moffitt, 2007; Moffitt & Caspi, 2010). As such, impulsivity, which Farrington argues is the overarching construct linking the above risk factors, is posited to be an independent, individual-level contributor to the development of long-term AP. Similarly, and consistent with the life-course criminology focus on the impact of life-events, Farrington (2005c) has argued that significant changes occurring at different developmental periods also influence long-term AP. Specifically, the transition from adolescence to adulthood is thought to contain a number of significant life-events, including co-habitation with a female partner, moving away from home, and starting employment, which have the potential to decrease long-term AP. For example, an individual high on long-
term AP may move from a high crime neighbourhood and begin a relationship with a prosocial female partner, which can reduce his potential for engaging in antisocial behaviour.

There is some evidence that life-events, in particular marriage, can promote desistance from crime in life-course persistent offenders. Theobald and Farrington (2009) used the 167 men with recorded convictions in the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development to investigate the effects of marriage on future criminal behaviour. Of these, 140 had been married at least five years and were retained for the study. Convicted men were matched with a control group based on the number of convictions prior to marriage and a propensity score that reflected the likelihood of getting married. Propensity scores were calculated using four risk factors measured in childhood (ages 8-10) and three risk factors measured in late adolescence (age 18). Specifically, growing up in a low-income family, having few friends, being considered unpopular and growing up in a broken home decreased the likelihood of marriage. In adolescence, being unemployed, using cannabis and never having had sex, also decreased the likelihood of marriage.

The Theobald and Farrington (2009) study showed that getting married was associated with a significant reduction in convictions, but that this reduction was mediated by the age of marriage. Specifically, the number of convictions decreased by 67% for men who married between 18-21 years old and by 73% for those who married between 22-24 years old. These reductions were significantly different to those seen in the matched control groups, who reported a 19% reduction in the number of convictions for unmarried men aged 18 to 21 and a 36% reduction in the number of convictions for unmarried men aged 22 to 24. Moreover, the decreased offending rate, at least as measured by convictions, were observed five years following marriage, indicating a relatively long-term effect. In contrast, marriage after age 25 was not associated with a reduction in official convictions. These findings led Theobald and Farrington to conclude that long-term antisocial potential is influenced by a number of explanatory childhood risk factors that interact with individual-level propensity and significant
life-events. Long-term AP is not a necessary or sufficient condition for criminal behaviour. Instead, short-term influences that are grounded in situational and contextual factors interact with antisocial potential to increase the chances of antisocial and criminal activity. Moreover, these short-term energising factors (Farrington, 2003a, 2005c) can also explain antisocial and criminal behaviour by individuals who are low on long-term AP – namely, Moffitt’s (1993) adolescent-limited offenders.

Unlike long-term AP, which is considered to be relatively stable throughout the life-course, short-term AP is much more variable and situationally contingent. That is, individuals with varying degrees of long-term AP are likely to engage in antisocial or criminal behaviour in the presence of situational and contextual factors that make such behaviour appear appealing. The situational influences posited by Farrington reflect the well-established correlates of criminal and violent behaviour in the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) literature, including the presence of drugs/alcohol, boredom, negative emotional states like anger and frustration, as well as the presence of male peers (e.g., Bonta & Andrews, 2007; Farrington, 2005c). For Farrington, these correlates of criminal behaviour represent important situational influences that increase short-term AP.

Contextual influences, mainly derived from Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979), include the presence of attractive targets (i.e., victims) in the absence of suitable guardians. That is, when opportunities for offending are high, there are attractive targets and offenders perceive a low-likelihood of being caught, there will be a concomitant increase in short-term antisocial potential. However, as the double-headed arrow in Figure 2 indicates, an increase in short-term AP, perhaps resulting from the influence of situational factors, may lead an individual to seek out an opportunity to engage in crime or antisocial behaviour (Farrington, 2005c). Therefore, contextual influences can increase short-term antisocial potential, or become more salient when short-term antisocial potential is high.
Short-term increases in antisocial potential also influence the decision-making processes that promote crime. According to Farrington (2005c) individuals evaluate the relative costs and benefits of antisocial and/or criminal behaviour within a given situation. However, other more enduring cognitive processes, including scripts and schemas that provide a quick, heuristic guide on the most appropriate response within a given situation, may also be activated when short-term antisocial potential is high. Although scripts are mentioned in Farrington’s theory, developmental research in general has not devoted much attention to exploring the role of cognition in criminal behaviour. This is an important issue that will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, in the ICAP, high antisocial potential is presumed to influence decision-making so that criminal or antisocial behaviour is judged to be an appropriate course of action.

As seen in Figure 2, criminal or antisocial behaviour is proposed to be the outcome of the multiple interactions across distal and proximal factors. The exact type of crime is not relevant to the theory, consistent with the assertion that offenders are versatile and therefore likely to engage in a variety of criminal and antisocial activities. However, Farrington (2005c) acknowledges that different crimes may be influenced by specific situational influences. Therefore, while violent offenders may not differ from frequent, non-violent offenders on the level of long-term AP, there are likely to be situational factors that are unique to violent crime. Again, this is an issue that has not received much attention in the DLC research, but which has been extensively investigated in psychology and criminology more generally. One possible violent-specific factor is the role of masculinity, which will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 5.

The final component of the ICAP relates to the consequences of offending. Both positive and negative consequences of offending are predicted to impact short and long-term AP through changes in cognitive processes (Farrington, 2005c). Specifically, reinforcing consequences are likely to contribute to pre-existing cognitive processes that promote the evaluation of
crime as rewarding. Reinforcements can include material gain, increased status with peers, or increased feelings of self-efficacy (Farrington, 2005c). With time, these cognitive scripts are likely to become entrenched, further contributing to long-term antisocial potential. A similar process is proposed to occur when crime leads to negative consequences. In this context however, negative consequences, including punishment can either weaken long-term AP by making the costs associated with crime more salient, or strengthen AP by increasing antisocial attitudes and a commitment to crime. Moreover, negative consequences that result in contact with the criminal justice system (CJS) may lead to stigma and labelling, leading to ‘narrowing options’ for an individual and thereby increasing AP (Farrington, 2005c; Moffitt, 1993). Although these processes are not specified in Farrington’s model, research on the cognitive processes associated with criminal behaviour supports such an interpretation (e.g., Huesmann, 1998).

Therefore, the ICAP provides a comprehensive explanation for the major DLC findings reported in this Chapter. Fundamentally, the ICAP reflects the underlying principle of much DLC work that serious, persistent antisocial and criminal behaviour is the result of a large number of risk factors across multiple domains that are present early in life. However, Farrington (2003a, 2005c) has gone one step further by claiming that criminal behaviour occurs as a result of an interaction between long-term, or distal risk factors, and more situationally contingent, or proximal influences. In this respect, the ICAP can be considered a dynamic theory that takes into account decision-making processes at the time the offence is committed.

**Critique of the ICAP**

Although the ICAP is grounded in the large body of DLC research and therefore has a priori empirical support, the mechanisms proposed by Farrington have not been extensively
investigated. However, a recent study by van der Laan, Blom and Kleemans (2009) supports the contention that an accumulation of risk factors in childhood, as well as short-term risk factors, are associated with juvenile crime. The study was based on a cross-sectional sample of 292 young adolescents who self-reported engaging in a variety of serious and minor offences in the Netherlands. Participants were classified as serious delinquents if they self-reported engaging in offences that could have resulted in a criminal sanction of a minimum of 2 years' incarceration. Consistent with the principles of the ICAP, van der Laan et al. (2009) hypothesised that the interaction between long-term and short-term risk factors would better predict juvenile crime, than either of these factors alone.

To test this hypothesis the authors measured long-term risk factors derived from the DLC literature, including hyperactivity, emotional problems, poor parental practices and lax supervision, and poor school performance. Similarly, short-term risk factors, including the absence of suitable guardians, the presence of co-offenders, drugs/alcohol, and self-reported perceptions of the risk of being caught were analysed. Moreover, age and gender were added as control variables, reflecting the well-established finding that the prevalence of crime increases during middle and late adolescence, with males are more likely to engage in crime than females. Stepwise multivariate logistic regression analyses were used to test the predictive power of long-term and short-term risk factors. The first model included only age and gender, both of which were significantly related to serious delinquency. Long-term risk factors were added in the second model, resulting in improved prediction. Specifically, inadequate parental supervision, poor performance at school, and weak school attachment all increased the probability of engaging in serious crime. Moreover, antisocial behaviour significantly increased juvenile crime, although this appears to be a tautological result given that antisocial behaviour is highly correlated with juvenile crime.

Finally, the inclusion of short-term risk factors further increased the predictive power of the model. Specifically, the absence of guardians and having used drugs/alcohol prior to the
commission of the offence significantly increased the probability of engaging in serious juvenile delinquency. Moreover, when a total risk factor score was calculated based on the number of long-term risk factors, results showed that there was an accumulation effect. That is, participants with a high number of long-term risk factors were more likely to engage in serious juvenile crime. The inclusion of short-term risk factors further increased the likelihood of serious delinquency for this group, although there was no evidence for an interaction effect (van der Laan et al., 2009).

Consistent with Farrington’s theory, these results show that individuals with a large number of childhood risk factors are at an increased risk of engaging in serious crime, at least during adolescence. The results reported by van der Laan et al. (2009) also support Farrington’s premise that short-term risk factors increase the probability of engaging in crime. However, there was no support for the contention that short-term risk factors interact with a pre-existing antisocial potential based on an accumulation of childhood risk factors. The absence of an interaction effect may reflect the small number of risk factors included in the study. Although all risk factors measured by van der Laan et al. (2009) are consistent with those identified in the DLC literature, it is possible that with the inclusion of wider range of long-term and short-term risk factors an interaction effect may have been observed. Moreover, it is possible that interaction effects, if they exist, may have been obscured by the general nature of the outcome variable (i.e., serious juvenile delinquency). That is, it is possible that crime-specific short-term risk factors have more salience than general short-term risk factors.

With these issues in mind, there are two major limitations to the ICAP theory that are particularly relevant for this thesis. First, the theory has not been developed to explain violent offending from a developmental perspective. Although Farrington has claimed that violent crime may be associated with specific short-term risk factors (Farrington, 2005c), the overall assumption is that violent offenders are not a qualitatively distinct group. Second, despite a
developmental focus, very little attention is devoted to explaining changes in offending that occur during adulthood. However, transitions that occur in adulthood, especially in relation to marriage and/or co-habitation with a female partner, do appear to promote change under certain circumstances (i.e., Theobald & Farrington, 2009), indicating that adulthood is an important developmental period. Although Farrington acknowledges the importance of life-events, the focus of his research has predominantly been on the way childhood risk factors influence negative life-outcomes. In contrast, Sampson and Laub have developed a theory that focusses specifically on the way life-events that occur in adulthood can fundamentally alter criminal trajectories.

A life-course perspective

Over the past 20 years, Sampson and Laub have consistently argued against a life-course persistence view of offending, claiming instead that over sufficiently long follow-up periods, desistance, rather than persistence, is the norm (Laub & Sampson, 1993; Sampson & Laub, 2003, 2005c). Their thesis is grounded in a long-standing debate within criminology that contrasts general propensity theories against developmental perspectives. Briefly, the argument hinges on whether a single causal mechanism reflecting an enduring propensity is sufficient to explain criminal behaviour throughout the life-course, or whether unique trajectories, with distinct causal mechanisms are required (e.g., DeLisi & Vaughn, 2007; Gottfredson, 2005; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Nagin & Land, 1993). The propensity position is most notably associated with Gottfredson and Hirschi’s argument that low self-control in combination with increased opportunities for offending, is sufficient to explain all criminal behaviour (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). In contrast, some DLC researchers argue that there are multiple offending trajectories with distinct aetiologies.
Although there is research supporting both positions (e.g., Dean, Brame & Piquero, 1996; Nagin & Land, 1993), some have argued that the underlying issue is not whether unique trajectories exist, but whether they accurately reflect patterns of offending throughout the life-course (Sampson & Laub, 2003). That is, despite the difference in focus, both sides argue that continuity is the hallmark of criminal behaviour throughout the life-course (Laub & Sampson, 2003). In this context, the main point of contention is whether there is such a thing as life-course persistent offending. This argument has been most notably advocated by Sampson and Laub, and is based on longitudinal data that spans a period of 70 years. Specifically, these authors re-analysed and extended on data originally collected by Eleanor and Sheldon Glueck, starting in the 1930s when participants were seven years old.

The original study included 500 serious delinquents, who were matched on a case-by-case basis with a group of 500 non-delinquent boys, based on age, IQ, ethnicity, and low income status (Laub & Sampson, 2003). The entire sample was first interviewed when the boys were on average 14 years old (ages ranged from 10 to 17 years), and were followed up at age 25 and 32. Almost 35 years after the last wave of data collection, Sampson and Laub re-analysed the original data. Excluding the men who had died since the follow-up at age 32, Laub and Sampson (2003) were able to locate criminal history data for 475 men who were originally in the serious delinquency group. Based on their criminal history, these men were classified as ‘persisters’, ‘desisters’, or ‘intermittent’ offenders. A random, stratified sample of 52 men was then selected for detailed life-history interviews. According to Laub and Sampson (2003) the aim of the interviews was to gain a better understanding of how these men assessed their own life from childhood through to late adulthood.

Analysis of the crime data revealed some patterns that are largely inconsistent with the majority of DLC research. Specifically, Laub and Sampson (2003) created person-period observations, such that for each individual the number of convictions per crime for every year of observation was recorded since age 14. Three main crime types were investigated –
property, violent, and drug/alcohol related. Despite differences in the mean number of
offences for each crime throughout the life-course, the overall pattern was one of desistance.
That is, by late adulthood, the men in the Glueck study had reached a near-zero rate of
offending. Moreover, while property crime followed a trajectory that closely resembled the
typical age-crime curve, violent crime was much more variable throughout the life-course,
peaking in the mid-20s and again in the late 30s, but showing a general ‘zigzag’ pattern.
That is, while the overall prevalence of crime was near-zero by the early 50s, there were still
fluctuations in the prevalence of violent crime into late adulthood (Laub & Sampson, 2003;
Sampson & Laub, 2005c).

These patterns remained when childhood risk factors were evaluated. Specifically, Laub and
Sampson (2003) used information collected in early childhood on the major risk factors
identified in the contemporary DLC literature, including IQ, personality, behavioural problems
and early onset of antisocial or criminal behaviour. This information was used to create a
childhood risk factor score for each individual that combined the 13 risk factors deemed most
relevant in current DLC research. A variety of statistical models, including latent growth
analysis (Sampson & Laub, 2005b) showed that even for the most chronic individuals, with
increasing age the predicted probability of engaging in crime sharply decreased in early
adulthood, and reached a near-zero probability by middle adulthood (Laub & Sampson,
2003). This pattern remained for specific crimes. Regardless of whether childhood risk
factors were used to predict property, violent or alcohol/drug-related crimes, the pattern was
the same – increasing probability of offending in adolescence, peaking in young adulthood
and steadily decreasing thereafter, reaching a near-zero probability by middle adulthood.

Despite the general tendency towards desistance, even amongst the most chronic and
persistent offenders, there was evidence of multiple trajectories for general crime, as well as
for property, violent and drug/alcohol-related offending. Moreover, there were important
differences in the shape of each trajectory for specific offences. That is, while the overall
pattern was one of eventual desistance, property offenders as a group followed distinct trajectories to violent offenders

Focussing specifically on violent crime, five distinct trajectories were identified, including high-rate chronic offenders, classic desisters (i.e., equivalent to Moffitt’s adolescent-limited group), moderate-rate chronics, late-onset offenders, and low-rate desisters. Despite differences in the peak age of offending and the age of deceleration, the five trajectories followed the typical bell-curve, showing that with age all violent offenders eventually desisted (Laub & Sampson, 2003). However, for the high-rate chronic trajectory, which accounted for 2.4% of all violent offenders, the decline in violent crime was gradual, and a near-zero rate of offending was only observed in late adulthood. Moreover, the peak of violent offending for this group was in middle adulthood. This late peak is in stark contrast to the majority of research showing that violence peaks during late adolescence and early adulthood.

Finally, Laub and Sampson (2003) tested whether the childhood risk factors were able to differentiate between life-time trajectories of offending. When total crime was examined, none of the individual or family risk factors were able to differentiate between six unique offending trajectories. Childhood risk factors measuring IQ, personality, temperament, behavioural problems, and family dysfunction did not differentiate between individuals who would later follow quite distinct criminal trajectories. This is in clear contrast to the majority of DLC research, but supports Laub and Sampson’s argument that events in childhood, while important, do not have sufficient explanatory depth to predict outcomes at later stages of adulthood. In effect, these results highlight the somewhat static and potentially deterministic nature of much of the DLC literature. According to Sampson and Laub, while childhood risk factors are important for understanding the aetiology of offending, they are of limited utility when attempting to explain maintenance and desistance. Instead, they argue that agency, in combination with the effects of social control, provide a much richer conceptual argument for understanding continuity and change over the life-course. To reinforce this point, Laub and
Sampson (2003) found that the only early risk factors that could differentiate between the six trajectories were arrest frequency between ages 7 and 17, and self-reported delinquency. However, both of these factors reflect the same underlying construct as general criminality and therefore should not be considered uniquely explanatory.

These results raise two important issues that are of direct relevance to the current thesis. First, it is possible to identify unique trajectories of violent offending, indicating that violent offenders may represent a qualitatively distinct group. Second, chronicity in offending does not equate with life-course persistence. For violent offenders in particular, there is evidence of a small group who engage in a large volume of violent crime throughout adolescence and into middle adulthood, but who have near-zero rates of offending by late adulthood. This implies that even for chronic offenders, significant changes occur during adulthood that can reduce the risk of future violence.

Data from the life-history interviews conducted with the sub-sample of 52 men in late adulthood provides some insight into the way life-events in adulthood can alter the course of criminal trajectories. Specifically, a number of important transitions associated with adulthood, which Laub and Sampson (2003) termed ‘turning points’ were identified by the men. Amongst the most important for early desistance were marriage, entering the military and being sent to reform school. Men reported that getting married, having a successful military career, and for some, spending time in a juvenile reform school, were significant life events that made them re-evaluate their previous commitment to a criminal lifestyle. In contrast, the men who showed longer patterns of persistence either did not perceive that they had experienced any meaningful turning points, the turning points had not been positive, or they occurred later in adulthood.

In particular, offenders who persisted in crime, including violent crime, over longer periods of the life-course reported experiencing a number of challenges beginning in early life. To an
extent, this is consistent with DLC research, in that the most persistent offenders had experienced cumulative disadvantage (Laub & Sampson, 1993; Sampson & Laub, 2005b). Unlike DLC theories however, cumulative disadvantage was not reflected in an accumulation of childhood risk factors. Instead, persistent offenders experienced a number of social and structural barriers, associated with dropping out of school, being thrown out of the military and experiencing early and sustained contact with the CJS, which limited their ability to take full opportunity of turning points when they were present (Laub & Sampson, 2003). Therefore, persistence typically resulted from a lack of opportunity for change, much like Moffitt’s notion of narrowing options (Moffitt, 1993).

Some of these barriers were the result of persistent offenders’ prolonged periods of incarceration, which not only limited their ability to reform upon release, but also entrenched beliefs that crime was their only option. Along similar lines, many of the more persistent offenders reported hostile attitudes towards the CJS, and a resentment towards authority figures more generally. Although the genesis of these attitudes was likely in earlier life, their negative experiences in adulthood potentially reinforced these attitudes and made change much harder.

Based on the life-history interviews, Laub and Sampson (2003) argued that persistent offenders differed from those who desisted earlier in life, not on key childhood risk factors, but on the way important turning points were taken advantage of early in adulthood. Specifically, persistent offenders had experienced extremely chaotic lives, marked by failed and often abusive marriages, strained relationships with family, unstable employment histories, long periods of incarceration, and long histories of drug and alcohol abuse. Fundamentally, persistence was associated with instability in life. In contrast, those men who desisted earlier in life, despite the presence of childhood risk factors that should have seen them follow a more persistent trajectory, had adult lives marked by stability and order.
The General Age-Graded Theory of Crime

To account for these differences, Sampson and Laub (2005a) proposed a sociogenic theory of crime based on the theoretical framework of social control. According to this theory, desistance in early adulthood is promoted by individual, situational and structural changes that increase the social control an individual experiences. For example, at the individual level, men who desisted early in adulthood underwent changes in self Definitions such that crime became inconsistent with their emerging ideas of what it meant to be an adult. For many of the men, changed self Definitions were promoted by situational factors, including marriage, entering the military, gaining employment or moving out of high crime neighbourhoods. In fact, ‘knifing off’ the past appeared to be the most important catalyst for change. In this context, knifing off refers to removing the more proximate causes of crime, which were typically associated with delinquent peers and/or environments where crime was normative.

Moreover, changes at the situational and structural levels are thought to promote an attachment to, and investment in, conventional roles. Specifically, men who desisted in early adulthood reported that their self Definitions changed to reflect their role as a husband, a family man, a working man, and breadwinner (Laub & Sampson, 2003). Although these changes may have reflected natural changes in maturity associated with entry into adulthood, they were also associated with increased networks of formal and informal social control. For example, married men reported spending less leisure time drinking with male friends, which decreased the opportunities for offending. Similarly, work provided men with structure and routine, again limiting the opportunities for crime. Therefore, for Sampson and Laub (2005a) desistance is at the first instance promoted by structural changes that provide structure and routine to the lives of individuals, and limit the opportunity for offending. What follows is an attachment to conventional roles and responsibilities that increase the subjective costs of engaging in crime. Underlying this process is personal agency, in the
sense that individuals either consciously or unconsciously commit to their changed roles, in the process creating a new self-definition that is no longer grounded in criminal behaviour and/or lifestyles (Laub & Sampson, 1993, 2003; Sampson & Laub, 2005a).

In contrast, persistence into middle adulthood is explained by the absence of structural changes in combination with a commitment to a criminal lifestyle. In this regard, Sampson and Laub (2005a) acknowledge that an underlying propensity to engage in criminal behaviour may play a role in explaining why some men are unable to successfully negotiate the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The nature of this propensity is not clearly elucidated by Sampson and Laub (2005a) especially given their argument that childhood risk factors are not able to explain adult trajectories. Nevertheless, negative experiences in childhood and adolescence, including poor attachment to parents and school, and early experiences of incarceration, are proposed to block off opportunities for change in adulthood (Laub & Sampson, 2003). In the absence of supportive relationships during adulthood that provide routine and structure, these men continue to be exposed to opportunities to offend, and continue to associate with others that share their propensity towards crime (Sampson & Laub, 2005a). Moreover, men who persist in criminal behaviour into middle adulthood often chose to do so, not because of some underlying pathology but because they experience crime as inherently rewarding (Sampson & Laub, 2005a).

The sociogenic theory of crime thus offers an alternative conceptualisation of the factors that promote persistence in and desistance from, offending. Fundamentally, Sampson and Laub’s theory shares many aspects with DLC research. Early childhood risk factors are considered important, albeit only to the extent that they decrease the level of attachment people have to agents of social control (Sampson & Laub, 2005c). Moreover, the concept of trajectories is accepted by Sampson and Laub, although in a slightly modified way. Specifically, these authors argue that an invariant age-crime curve is not supported by their data, and that specific criminal trajectories are important for understanding heterogeneity in
adult outcomes. However, they object to the idea that unique developmental trajectories are required, and in this regard support the idea that a general mechanism is sufficient to explain the process of persistence and desistance from offending (Sampson & Laub, 2005a).

Sampson and Laub’s sociogenic theory differs from DLC theories in two important respects. First, adulthood emerges as a significant developmental period in Sampson and Laub’s work. In particular, regardless of childhood risk factors, structural turning points in combination with the choices an individual makes during adulthood predict the eventual trajectory that an individual will follow in his adult years. In this respect, the sociogenic theory offers a more dynamic approach to understanding crime throughout the life-course. Specifically, unlike other developmental theories that posit a largely pre-determined outcome throughout the life-course, Sampson and Laub (2005a) argue for a conceptualisation of development that fundamentally positions individuals as active agents in their interactions with the environment. Person-environment interactions are important, but they are always mediated by human choice and decision-making.

Moreover, the sociogenic theory is based on the premise that structural changes, and not internal potentials or propensities, are causally related to persistence and desistance. Any change that promotes attachment and commitment to conventional roles is posited to act as a catalyst for desistance. The nature of the turning points is not necessarily important, so long as they fulfil two important criteria. First, they must provide an individual with the opportunity to ‘knife off’ the aspects of his life that promote offending. Second, they must provide some form of social control that brings routine and structure. The result is an increased commitment to conventional roles, and a concomitant change in self-definition. According to Sampson and Laub (2005a) incremental change resulting from turning points and the concomitant opportunities that arise, alters the adulthood trajectory and may lead to desistance.
As with the ICAP theory (Farrington, 2003a, 2005c) Sampson and Laub’s theory is based on the results of an extensive longitudinal study and therefore has *a priori* empirical support. Beyond this however, there is mixed evidence that social bonding can explain patterns of escalation and de-escalation in offending. For example, Kazemian et al. (2009) investigated within-individual and between-individual predictors of de-escalation in two longitudinal samples. The first sample consisted of men who participated in the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development and therefore represented a community sample. The second consisted of 470 men who were adjudicated as adolescents in Montreal between 1974 and 1975. These men have been followed into their early 40s.

Kazemian et al. (2009) investigated whether early indicators of social bonding, defined as a positive relationship between the child and his parents, attachment to a job, employment stability and few delinquent friends, as well as a cognitive predisposition, defined as low self-control, could reliably predict within-individual patterns of de-escalation up to age 32. In the Montreal sample only, an additional measure of cognitive predisposition, based on Sykes and Matza’s (1957) techniques of neutralization, was used. This included questions that assessed the extent to which individuals felt criminal behaviour was justified. Results showed that when within-individual change was assessed, social bonding and cognitive predispositions did not predict patterns of de-escalation in officially recorded crime up to age 32. That is, there was no evidence that with age, increased social bonding or decreased levels of cognitive predispositions led to decreased offending. Moreover, low self-control was the only variable that significantly differentiated men who persisted in offending, to those who showed patterns of de-escalation. Therefore, social bonding and cognitive predispositions were not reliable predictors of between-group differences in de-escalation up to age 32.

These results suggest that increased attachment to conventional roles, as measured through social bonding, did not predict de-escalation in offending. This is inconsistent with Sampson
and Laub’s fundamental premise that structural changes that increase social bonding are causally related to desistance (Sampson & Laub, 2005a). However, the measures of social bonding used in the Kazemian et al. (2009) study were assessed in adolescence, which is also inconsistent with Sampson and Laub’s argument. As discussed previously, Sampson and Laub propose that the structural changes occurring in adulthood have the greatest power to divert individuals away from a persistent trajectory. Therefore, using measures of social bonding in adolescence does not provide an adequate test for Sampson and Laub’s theory.

On the other hand, there is some research supporting the contention that marriage in particular constitutes a significant structural change that may divert offenders away from a path of persistence. As discussed earlier, Theobald and Farrington (2009) found that marriage in early adulthood was associated with significant reductions in officially recorded offending, over relatively long periods. Similarly, Bersani, Laub and Nieuwbeerta (2009) investigated whether the ‘marriage effect’ would be evident for both genders, in a more contemporary socio-historical context. These authors argued that the socio-historical climate at the time the Glueck men reached adulthood was qualitatively different from more contemporary social climates, and therefore marriage may have exerted a greater form of control.

Bersani et al. (2009) used data from the Criminal Career and Life-Course Study, a longitudinal project based in the Netherlands that includes a representative sample of 4,615 individuals tried in Dutch courts in 1977. Detailed records on criminal history and significant life events were available for all participants from the age of 12 to the age of 55. To investigate the influence of socio-historical climate on the ability of marriage to predict desistance, the sample was divided into three birth cohorts. The first included individuals who were 32 years old or older at the time of their conviction in 1977. The second cohort included individuals who were 22 to 31 years old at the time of conviction in 1977, and the
final cohort included individuals who were 12 to 21 years old when convicted in 1977. Information on marital status (married/not married) was collected annually. Results showed that when married, the odds of a conviction reduced by 35%. That is, being in a state of marriage was associated with fewer convictions, regardless of gender or birth cohort. However, the effect of marriage was greater for men than for women. Specifically, when married the odds of a conviction reduced by 36% for men, but only 21% for women. Moreover, the marriage effect also varied by age cohort. While being in a state of marriage was associated with significant reductions in the odds of convictions for all birth cohorts, the greatest reductions were observed in the youngest or more contemporary age group. Specifically, while in a state of marriage the odds of a conviction decreased by 45% for the youngest cohort, compared with 33% and 28% for the middle and oldest cohorts, respectively.

Similar results were obtained when only violent convictions were included in the analysis. For example, married men had significantly lower odds of being convicted for violence than non-married men. Moreover, the odds of a violent conviction significantly decreased for an individual while in a state of marriage, but increased again when that individual was single (Kazemian et al., 2009). Therefore, these results show that while the marriage effect is stronger for males than females, it does not vary by socio-historical context. In particular, marriage appears to be an important turning point for men especially, although the reasons behind this are unclear. Laub and Sampson (2003) argue that antisocial men have a greater likelihood of marrying prosocial women who are able to act as informal agents of social control. By contrast, antisocial women tend to marry antisocial men, and are therefore not able to ‘knife off’ their past. However, this interpretation remains speculative as there has only been limited research investigating the processes underlying the marriage effect for either gender.
For example, Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph (2002) tested two elements of Sampson and Laub’s social control theory – namely, marriage and job stability. The study involved a longitudinal analysis of 127 young women incarcerated in a juvenile facility in Ohio, and a comparison group of 127 young men drawn from three juvenile facilities in the same state. Data were collected at two time points – once in 1982 and again in 1995. In both data collection periods, criminal involvement, along with social control factors, including job stability and attachment, attachment to romantic partners and attachment to children, were measured. In addition to the quantitative investigation, Giordano et al. (2002) conducted extensive life history narrative analyses with 97 women and 83 men at the second wave of data collection.

Consistent with the large body of literature showing the effect of race and gender on criminal behaviour, Giordano et al reported that being an African-American male was a reliable predictor of criminal behaviour (whether self-reported or through official convictions). However, the relationship between social control and criminal behaviour was less clear. While job stability and attachment to marital/romantic partners and children were associated with reductions in adulthood criminality, none of these variables were statistically significant predictors of desistance. There was however, a three way interaction between the quality of attachment, gender and adult criminal behaviour. Specifically, men and women with high quality marital and familial relationships, as well as high quality employment, were more likely to have desisted as adults. However, these individuals comprised a very small proportion of the total sample, and therefore were not representative of the majority of men and women who participated in the study.

Moreover, the results of the life-history analysis indicated that structural opportunities for change were not sufficient to explain desistance. Instead, structural changes needed to be perceived as representing meaningful hooks that an individual felt capable of utilising for change. Fundamentally, desistance was reflected in the desire for change and subsequent
cognitive shifts that allowed individuals to perceive structural changes as relevant to their self-definitions, goals and desires. In this respect, Giordano et al. (2002) emphasise that agency and subjective interpretations of the opportunities that are available for change must co-exist with the structural changes that promote desistance.

Summary

The two theories reviewed in this chapter share a common focus on explaining continuity of offending throughout the life-course. However, they differ markedly in the way continuity is conceptualised, and the underlying processes that are presumed to promote persistent criminal behaviour.

Farrington’s theory is firmly grounded in DLC research, and as such reflects the view that continuity is a function of individual propensity that originates in early life (Farrington, 2000, 2005a, 2007). The ICAP hinges on the assumption that continuity is at least partly determined by an enduring, latent antisocial potential that promotes long-term criminal and antisocial behaviour, and ultimately results in considerable negative outcomes across various facets of life (Farrington et al., 2006; Piquero et al., 2010). Consistent with life-course research, Farrington also acknowledges that situationally contingent factors play an important, proximal role in criminal behaviour. These proximal risk factors are more dynamic than childhood risk factors, in that they are age-dependent and may be crime-specific (Farrington, 2005c). Despite being informed by a substantial and rigorous volume of literature, the role of maturation has not been clearly elucidated in the ICAP. Although development is clearly important, it is unclear whether offending in adulthood is qualitatively different from offending in adolescence.
The theory proposed by Sampson and Laub (2005a) presents a different perspective on continuity. Specifically, Sampson and Laub reject the idea that internal factors reflecting an enduring propensity are causally related to persistent offending. Instead they propose that structural changes occurring in adulthood, in conjunction with human agency, explain both continuity and discontinuity in offending throughout the life-course. In this context childhood risk factors may signal a propensity for crime, but persistent criminal behaviour is a function of weak bonds to social structures that increase social control, in combination with a commitment to a criminal lifestyle (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Sampson & Laub, 2005a).

Despite these important differences, violence has not been specifically addressed in either theory. In fact, Farrington (2000) has argued that violent offenders are indistinguishable from frequent, non-violent offenders. Similarly, Sampson and Laub (2005a) argue that violent crime does not require a unique theoretical explanation, given the similarity in background risk factors between violent and general offenders. However, these background similarities should not obscure the seemingly obvious fact that frequent non-violent offenders are not the same as violent offenders, at least as far as their criminal history is concerned. The source of this difference may not lie in childhood disadvantage, although this may provide the foundation for later violence. Instead, it is possible that violent offenders differ on factors that have not been addressed from a DLC perspective. One potential source of difference is beliefs about violence and masculinity.

Moreover, developmental and life-course research has not adequately explored whether violence in young adulthood is qualitatively different from violence in later adulthood. Apart from Sampson and Laub’s specific focus on turning points in adulthood, very little attention has been devoted to this developmental period. This may be a function of the DLC focus on reliably predicting the small sub-set of individuals who are at an increased risk of future offending, with a view to developing effective early intervention strategies. From this perspective, violence in adulthood becomes an ‘outcome measure’ – something to be
predicted, but not necessarily understood in great detail. However, it is reasonable to argue that the way violence is used and perhaps even defined, will change as a function of age. One source of this change may be the cognitive processes associated with violent offending.

Although cognition is important in both the ICAP and in Sampson and Laub’s sociogenic theory, the way it changes throughout the life-course has not been fully explored. For example, Farrington (2005c) postulated that the consequences of crime would influence future decision-making processes, implying that with experience (and by extension, age) scripts for offending could fundamentally alter. However, the decision-making processes included in the ICAP reflect the cost/benefit analysis characteristic of rational choice frameworks, and as such do not provide much insight into the way offenders define and justify crime in general, and violence in particular. Similarly, Sampson and Laub (2005a) emphasise the role of human agency in their theory, arguing that individuals make choices and decisions that promote persistence in offending. However, they do not fully explicate how these decision-making processes may change as a function of age.

Overall, given the lack of focus on violent offending, it is unclear how changes in cognition may translate to changes in the way violence is used, defined and internalised at different stages of adulthood. Therefore, the next chapter will begin by reviewing a theory of violence that emphasises the important role of cognition. Consistent with the developmental focus of this thesis, the chapter will then move on to discuss how maturational processes can influence the way violence is used, defined and internalised.
Chapter 4

Social cognition and violent offending

The previous chapter focussed on the role of developmental processes in explaining continuity and discontinuity in criminal behaviour. The majority of research in the developmental criminology literature suggests that risk factors that are present in early life have a long-term effect on the propensity to engage in criminal behaviour. While it is acknowledged that the nature of risk factors change throughout the life-course, the overarching causal mechanism leading from childhood disadvantage to persistent criminality is conceptualised as a latent antisocial construct that is highly resistant to change (e.g., Farrington, 2003a, 2005c). From this perspective, life events that occur in adulthood are important to the extent that they either heighten or lessen this latent propensity, but do not fundamentally alter it. In contrast, life-course criminologists, in particular Laub and Sampson (2003) and Sampson and Laub (2005a), have argued that life-events occurring in adulthood provide a better explanation for continuity and discontinuity in criminal behaviour. Rather than an enduring propensity, these authors argue that structurally-induced changes, in particular life events such as marriage, military service and stable employment, have the power to fundamentally alter criminal trajectories even for those individuals who, based on childhood risk factors, would be predicted to persist with criminal behaviour throughout the life-course.

Developmental and Life-Course (DLC) criminology research has not focussed on violent crime specifically, or on the way violence may change throughout the life-course. In fact, the
The overarching premise of developmental and life-course theories is that the causes of violent crime are essentially the same as the causes of more general criminal behaviour. That is, violent crime does not require a unique theoretical explanation. This premise has empirical support within the DLC literature, but it does not preclude the possibility that violence changes throughout the life-course. Specifically, regardless of the causes of violence, it is possible that younger men define, use and internalise violence in a way that is qualitatively different to older men.

The aim of this chapter is to consider how cognition and cognitive processes change over the life-course, influencing the way violence is used, defined and internalised. Although cognitive processes are implicated in both the ICAP (Farrington, 2005c) and Sampson and Laub’s sociogenic theory (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Sampson & Laub, 2005a), this is an area that has not received much attention from a developmental criminology perspective. Similarly, maturational processes, especially those occurring in adulthood, have rarely been discussed in the social-cognition literature. This is important given that most contemporary violent offender treatment programs place a great deal of emphasis on changing attitudes and beliefs that promote violence (e.g., Gilbert & Daffern, 2010; Polaschek, 2006; Polaschek & Collie, 2004). While social information processing models have been integrated into the treatment literature (Gilbert & Daffern, 2010) little attention has been given to the way attitudes and beliefs change over the life-course. Specifically, there may be important and clinically relevant differences in the cognition of younger and older adult offenders. This is consistent with the growing evidence that risk factors change over time (Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2002; Skelton & Vess, 2008; van der Put et al., 2011), indicating that age is an important variable in its own right that has meaningful consequences for violent offender rehabilitation.

To explore the theoretical links between social cognition and developmental processes, this chapter begins with an overview of the Social Information Processing (SIP) model. While this
model was developed to explain the information processing mechanisms of aggressive children, its underlying principles are fundamentally developmental. In this respect, the SIP represents one of the few information processing models that incorporates a specific focus on violence from a quasi-developmental perspective. To further contextualise the importance of social cognition amongst adult offenders, the literature on the criminal belief systems of adult violent offenders will be reviewed. Underlying this review is the argument that not only are belief systems centrally important to an understanding of violence, but these beliefs are likely to be influenced by the changing perspectives that accompany developmental progression. Put simply, consistent with Erickson’s model (1963) of staged development, beliefs about violence are likely to change throughout adulthood in a way that reflects changing conceptions of the self and the world.

Within forensic psychology the links between cognition and violence are typically understood in relation to the social-cognition paradigm, which itself sits within the broader discipline of cognitive psychology. While cognition in general refers to the processes involved in perception, memory and thinking (Gannon et al., 2007), social cognition is concerned with the way individuals construct meaning about themselves, others and the social world, and how these interpretations influence behavioural responses (Gannon, 2009b). The focus of social-cognition is, therefore, on the way individuals cognitively interact with and respond to their social environment. Research in social cognition has supported a number of well-established principles which are outlined in Appendix 1.

**The Social Information Processing Model (SIP)**

A number of different models have been proposed that attempt to explain the relationship between social cognition and violent behaviour. In this section Crick and Dodge’s (1994) Social Information Processing (SIP) model will be reviewed. The SIP (Crick & Dodge, 1994)
was originally developed to integrate a variety of conflicting findings on the social cognitive processes of maladjusted children. Specifically, Crick and Dodge (1994) argued that maladjustment, including peer rejection, isolation, depression and aggression, could be parsimoniously explained by focussing on the way children attended to, encoded, interpreted and responded to social stimuli.

For Crick and Dodge (1994) social information processing is conceptualised as a transactional process, whereby behaviour is the result of mutually reinforcing interactions between the individual and the social situation. In other words, individuals react to their environment in ways that reflect their capabilities as well as their pre-existing beliefs. These pre-existing beliefs are in turn based on life-experiences, and act as lenses through which information is processed in a way that is consistent with an individual's desires and goals. When confronted with a novel or ambiguous situation, Crick and Dodge (1994) hypothesised that individuals would draw on their stored knowledge, including their beliefs, to interpret the situation and determine the course of action that was not only most appropriate given their goals, but also most consistent with their beliefs about the intentions of the social actor. Figure 3 provides a diagrammatic representation of the information processing steps proposed by Crick and Dodge (1994).

At the core of the model are schemas and other knowledge structures stored in long-term memory. As can be seen by the double-headed arrows, every stage of the information processing cycle feeds back into these schemas, and is in turn influenced by pre-existing knowledge and beliefs. Despite the central role attributed to schemas in this model, Crick, Dodge and colleagues have not elaborated on the content of these schemas. Beyond acknowledging that stored knowledge may include scripts, social schemas and social knowledge that provide heuristic guides for information processing, there is little attention devoted to explicating the content of schemas that may be related to aggressive and violent behaviour.
Figure 3
Stages of social information processing as proposed by Crick and Dodge (1994)

Step 1
Encoding

Step 2
Interpretation – includes attributions and evaluations

Step 3
Goal clarification

Step 4
Response formulation

Step 5
Response selection – includes evaluations and expectations

Step 6
Behavioural response

Schemas
An underlying premise of this model is that information processing is cyclical and non-linear (Crick & Dodge, 1994). That is, each cycle of information processing serves to integrate the outcome of the social interaction into long-term memory, thereby increasing the repertoire of stored knowledge. This knowledge is then drawn on in future interactions to guide information processing, with the outcome once again being integrated into pre-existing schemas.

The model begins with the encoding phase (Step 1) where external and internal cues are selectively attended to, and an individual forms a mental representation of the stimulus based on his/her stored knowledge. Once a mental representation of the stimulus is formed, cognitive resources are allocated to interpretation. For Crick and Dodge (1994) this is the most important part of the social information processing cycle, and forms the backbone of their model.

Interpretation of social stimuli (Step 2) is posited to involve a number of specific processes, including attributions of causality and intent, evaluation of the likelihood of goal attainment, evaluation of past performances under similar conditions, evaluations of the self, and evaluations of others (Crick & Dodge, 1994). Once a stimulus has been interpreted, an individual selects a desired course of action, reflecting his/her goals. Goal clarification (Step 3) is in part based on a number of pre-existing orientations, including a person’s temperament, social learning history, and cultural and sub-cultural norms. In addition, internal cues including affect are also posited to play a role at this step. In fact, achieving and/or maintaining a specific affective state may be a goal in and of itself. While these pre-existing goal orientations play a role at this stage of the model, Crick and Dodge (1994) also postulated that goals can be revised as a social interaction evolves.

Following the interpretation and goal clarification steps, an individual draws on existing knowledge to determine what response is most appropriate in that social context (Crick &
Dodge, 1994). The response options that are available to an individual will by necessity be constrained by his/her previous experiences and the repertoire of knowledge stored in long-term memory. The response that is eventually selected (Step 5) will reflect five main factors, including: a) the way the situation has been interpreted in light of the individual's goals; b) how a particular response has been evaluated; c) the likelihood of the selected response achieving a desired goal (outcome expectancy) and; d) a perceived ability to successfully carry out the behaviour (self-efficacy). As indicated by the dotted arrow from Step 5 to Step 4 in Figure 3, negative evaluations of outcome expectancy and self-efficacy will lead to a new search for an acceptable and appropriate behavioural response (Crick & Dodge, 1994). Finally, a behavioural response is enacted (Step 6).

In a review of literature addressing social information processing deficits in maladjusted children, Crick and Dodge (1994) reported empirical evidence supporting all stages of the model. Moreover, Fontaine and Dodge (2009) have argued that violent individuals show biases at all stages of the processing cycle, and it is the cumulative impact of these processing biases that explain variability in violent behaviour. For the purpose of this thesis however, the way information is interpreted is most relevant. Specifically, interpretative processes are most relevant to a project that aims to understand the way violent offenders define and justify violence. In this context, the attribution of hostile intent has been identified as an important interpretative process in aggressive and violent behaviour.

**Interpretative biases in aggressive and violent individuals**

Compared to their non-aggressive peers, aggressive children have been shown to have a tendency to attribute malice and hostility to the intentions of others, especially in situations where the true intent is ambiguous. For example, Nasby, Hayden and DePaulo (1980) postulated that highly aggressive children would be more likely to misattribute hostility when
none was present. Moreover, Nasby et al. (1980) argued that this attribution bias should reflect a deficit in information processing, rather than an ability to accurately detect hostility in the environment. To test these hypotheses they investigated whether boys with behavioural and emotional disorders would misattribute hostility and malice in a range of pictorial representations of social interactions. Thirty-two boys aged 10 to 16 years were shown 40 photographs, each accompanied by two affective labels, describing the situation in terms of two affective poles – positive-negative and dominant-submissive. For example, anger would be classified as a negative-dominant emotion, whereas sadness would be a negative-submissive emotion.

The results showed that boys who were classified as high on aggression made a greater number of classification errors, relative to less aggressive boys. Specifically, aggression was associated with a tendency to misclassify photos as showing negative-dominant interactions (i.e., anger, hostility) when the depicted scenarios actually reflected negative-submissive (i.e., sadness), positive-dominant (i.e., happiness) and positive-submissive (i.e., gratitude) interactions. Results further showed that highly aggressive and less aggressive participants were equally able to accurately classify negative-dominant interactions, indicating that attributions of hostility were not a vestige of aggressive individual’s skill at identifying hostility in social environments (Nasby et al., 1980).

Similar results were obtained with another group of 40 boys who were asked to sort the same 40 images based on their interpretations of the depicted social interactions. Consistent with the results of the forced-choice task, Nasby et al. (1980) found that highly aggressive boys more often described the social interactions in negative-dominant terms. Based on the results of both studies, Nasby et al. argued that the tendency to attribute hostile intent to social interactions increased with aggressiveness and was apparent even when hostility was not implied.
Similarly, Dodge and Coie (1989) argued that individuals who were hypervigilant to threat cues in the environment would be more likely to make hostile attributions that would in turn lead to aggressive and violent responses. These authors further postulated that the use of violence or aggression for these individuals would be associated with the removal of the threat, and would therefore reflect **reactive** as opposed to **instrumental** or proactive violence. That is, the attribution of hostile intent to perceived provocation was hypothesised to be differentially associated with reactive forms of aggression and violence (Dodge & Coie, 1989). In contrast, instrumental aggression was presumed to be related to an evaluation of aggression as positive and a viable means of enhancing social standing and/or obtaining desired goals (Crick & Dodge, 1996).

A number of studies with children have subsequently confirmed these hypotheses. For example, Dodge and Coie (1989) investigated whether children identified as reactively aggressive would be more likely to attribute hostile intent in social interactions where the actual intent of the provocateur was depicted as hostile, benign, prosocial or ambiguous. The study involved 56 socially rejected African American boys in Grades 1 and 3 and a control group of 58 boys classified as average with regards to their social status amongst peers. To assess hostile attributions, each participant was shown short clips of social interactions involving children their own age. Each clip depicted a situation where one child provoked another, either maliciously, unintentionally, with prosocial intentions, or ambiguously, and children were asked to describe the provocateur’s intention, as well as how they would behave if they had been the target in each scenario.

Results showed that reactively aggressive children were less accurate in identifying benign intentions than proactively aggressive, non-aggressive, and the socially adjusted children. Consistent with the earlier results reported by Nasby et al. (1980) there were no differences between aggressive groups in their ability to accurately identify hostile intent when it was actually present. Moreover, analysis of the anticipated behavioural responses showed that
reactively aggressive boys were significantly more likely to state that they would react with aggression in the hostile and the ambiguous provocation conditions. Although not statistically significant, the reactive aggressive groups endorsed more aggressive responses than the socially adjusted control group, for the benign and prosocial conditions (Dodge & Coie, 1989).

These results were supported in a study investigating the attribution biases of 128 incarcerated juvenile offenders, aged 14 to 19 defined as reactive or proactive based on the nature of their index offence (Dodge et al., 1990). Convictions for murder, assault, sexual assault, robbery, kidnapping and weapons offences were coded as reactive violence if they did not include an acquisitive element (Dodge et al., 1990). Reactive and proactive aggression was also measured using two revised scales from the Revised Behaviour Problem Checklist (Quay & Peterson, 1987, cited in Dodge et al., 1990).

Participants were shown 48 videorecorded social interactions between adolescents, across three conditions depicting hostile, benign, prosocial and ambiguous intent. After viewing the video vignettes, participants were asked to indicate the protagonists’ intent and how they would react if they had been the target in each interaction (Dodge et al., 1990). Results showed that reactive aggression was significantly correlated with hostile attributions. In particular, juveniles convicted of interpersonally violent crime were more likely than juveniles convicted of non-interpersonally violent, and non-violent crimes, to attribute hostile intent to benign and ambiguous social interactions. These results remained statistically significant after controlling for race, intelligence and socio-demographic status (Dodge et al., 1990).

Such studies indicate that reactively aggressive/violent children and adolescents have a tendency to interpret social stimuli through a ‘hostility’ lens. By contrast, the processing biases associated with proactively aggressive individuals have been found to occur during the response formulation and selection stages (Crick & Dodge, 1994; 1996). Specifically,
proactively aggressive children have been found to differ from reactively aggressive and non-aggressive children, in their tendency to endorse positive outcome expectancies and self-efficacy beliefs associated with aggressive and violent behaviour. That is, proactively aggressive children not only positively evaluate aggressive and violent responses, but also hold beliefs that violence is an appropriate and effective means of achieving desired goals and that they have the requisite skills to obtain their goals through violent means (Crick & Dodge, 1996).

Therefore, there is empirical support for the argument that aggression is associated with a distinct pattern of social information processing. The research reviewed thus far however has focussed on children and adolescents, and there has been a relative dearth of research investigating the information processing patterns of adult violent offenders. Although there is no reason to suggest that the mechanisms posited by Crick and Dodge (1994) would change during adulthood, it is possible that developmental processes during adulthood influence the way these mechanisms work.

**Developmental processes**

Recent reformulations of the SIP have focussed on the transactional nature of the model, highlighting mutually reinforcing relationships between the individual and the social world. Fontaine and Dodge (2009) argue that:

> A transactional perspective of social cognition and behaviour maintains that social-cognitive operations that occur in real time (including the interpretation of social cues and evaluative judgement of alternative behavioral responses) cause social behaviors, and that, in turn, social behaviors exact experiences and consequences in the world that inform future social-cognitive processing (pp. 118-119).
The developmental argument underlying this perspective is that with age, individuals accumulate a wider range of experiences that are stored in long-term memory as part of schemas or scripts. The accumulated store of knowledge provides individuals with a broader repertoire of material from which to evaluate new stimuli and generate appropriate behavioural responses. However, much like behaviour, patterns of social information processing are stable across time, and this stability influences not only the type of situations that an individual is likely to be exposed to, but also how these situations are evaluated (Fontaine & Dodge, 2009). This proposition is examined further in the studies that follow.

To date, Fontaine, Yang, Dodge, Bates and Pettit (2008) have conducted the only longitudinal study that has investigated the reciprocal interactions between behaviour and social cognition throughout adolescence. These authors argue that understanding how behavioural outcomes influence future cognition is as important as understanding which social cognitive processes predict aggressive behaviour (Fontaine et al., 2008). Fontaine et al. (2008) hypothesise that throughout adolescence individuals show an increased tendency towards evaluative biases, especially positive outcome expectancies associated with aggression. This increased tendency is posited to be a function of the reciprocal interactions between behaviour and cognition, such that perceived positive outcomes resulting from aggressive behaviour increase the likelihood of positive evaluations of aggression in future interactions.

The study involved two cohorts of children first contacted in 1987 and 1988 when they were starting kindergarten. Aggressive behaviour, conceptualised as externalising problems, was assessed when the children were in Grades 7, 9, 10 and 12. Evaluative biases, occurring at the response evaluation and selection stages of the SIP, were assessed at Grades 8 and 11, using a video vignette methodology. Specifically, participants were shown three gender neutral videos of ambiguous social interactions that were relevant for their age group. An additional three gender specific vignettes were shown to male and female participants, again
reflecting ambiguous social interactions that were relevant to the daily lives of adolescents. For each vignette, participants were asked to imagine being the protagonist in the scenario, and reacting aggressively to the antagonist. Three types of evaluative biases were assessed: a) response efficacy, which consisted of asking participants how easy/difficult it would be for them to enact an aggressive response in each social interaction; b) emotional outcome expectancy, whereby participants were asked to indicate how they would feel about themselves if they reacted aggressively; and c) social outcome expectancy, which evaluated whether participants believed they would gain status, respect or admiration from peers following an aggressive response to the ambiguous provocations.

Results showed that aggressive behaviour and aggressive response evaluations were stable across time. That is, individuals assessed as aggressive in Grade 7, were also assessed as aggressive at Grades 9/10 and Grade 12. Similarly, individuals who evaluated aggressive responses positively at Grade 8 showed the same pattern of information processing at Grade 11. Based on these results, Fontaine et al. (2008) argue that aggressive behaviour and information processing shows stability throughout adolescence. Results further indicated that the response evaluation and decision steps of the SIP (Steps 4 and 5) measured in early adolescence predicted later aggressive behaviour, even after prior aggressive behaviour was controlled for. Similarly, early aggressive behaviour predicted aggressive response evaluation, even after controlling for prior information processing biases. Taken together, these results provide preliminary support for the contention that information processing and behaviour influence each other in a reciprocal, on-going process.

**Social information processing in adulthood**

The results obtained by Fontaine et al. (2008) raise an important developmental paradox in social cognitive processing. On the one hand, maturation is associated with increasing levels of cognitive sophistication, such that individuals have a greater capacity to deliberatively
interpret and evaluate social stimuli. Part of this increased sophistication is associated with a larger store of knowledge and skills against which stimuli can be compared and from which appropriate responses can be selected (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Fontaine & Dodge, 2009). On the other hand, interpretative and evaluative biases are thought to become more entrenched with age (e.g., Dodge, 2006; Fontaine & Dodge, 2009).

A number of interrelated factors can help to account for this paradox. First, individuals tend to interpret information in schema-consistent ways. When aggressive schemas are chronically accessed, they become salient and incongruous information is either dismissed or re-interpreted in a way that is consistent with the individual’s beliefs and knowledge (Huesmann, 1998). Consistent with the developmental criminology literature, it has been argued that children exposed to violence at an early age, especially in the form of abuse, become hypervigilant to cues that signal threat and danger (Dodge, 2006). Moreover, due to limited cognitive capacities at a young age, children make automatic associations between the intent of the actor and the outcome of that intention (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge, 2006). For example, children growing up in abusive environments learn that violent outcomes are associated with hostile intentions. This association, formed in early childhood, is the basis of beliefs about the hostile nature of others and the social world.

Crick and Dodge (1994) have proposed that with age, aggressive individuals actually show a less sophisticated processing style, relative to ‘well-adjusted’ individuals. Specifically, the chronic activation of aggressive schemas and the reliance on interpretative biases is presumed to lead to pre-emptive processing, whereby information is filtered through the lens of attributed malice, and other alternative interpretations are either not considered, or dismissed as incongruent (Dodge, 2006).

Consistent with the transactional premise of the SIP, positive outcomes following aggressive and violent behaviour also contribute to the development and chronic activation of
aggressive schemas and the concomitant attributional and evaluative biases (Dodge, 2006; Fontaine & Dodge, 2009). The result is that, with age individuals develop a repertoire of stored knowledge that is biased towards the assumption that people have hostile intentions and that the world is a negative and dangerous place. Therefore, from a developmental perspective aggressive and violent individuals are actually thought to engage in less sophisticated and complex information processing as they age.

To date, there has been a dearth of research investigating the interpretative and evaluative biases of adults and, in particular, of adult violent offenders. Three exceptions are the research by Copello and Tata (1990) and more recently, Topalli (2005b), and Lim et al. (2011). For example, Copello and Tata (1990) investigated hostile attribution biases in a sample of nine violent offenders who had received a diagnosis of psychopathy or personality disorder. Nine non-violent offenders and nine non-offenders were included as controls. Participants were shown ambiguous sentences that could be interpreted in a violent-threatening, social-anxiety provoking, or neutral way. Each participant viewed 60 sentences that included 36 unambiguous neutral statements, 12 ambiguous violent-threatening and 12 ambiguous social-anxiety provoking statements. Participants viewed each sentence with the last word missing and were provided with a forced-choice task where they had to choose from one of two words to complete each sentence. Following a distractor task participants were presented with an additional 48 disambiguated neutral, violence-threatening and social-anxiety provoking sentences. For each sentence, participants had to indicate whether the new sentences had a similar meaning to the ones presented in the first task.

Compared to non-offenders, violent and non-violent offenders made significantly more hostile attributions to the ambiguous violence-threatening sentences. There was also a significant correlation between hostility scores, as measured by the Hostility and Direction of Hostility Questionnaire (Caine, Foulds & Hope, 1967 cited in Copello & Tata, 1990), and attribution of hostile intent for both offender groups. No other significant differences were
observed (Copello & Tata, 1990). Therefore, contrary to expectations, both offender groups appeared to make hostile attributions to ambiguous violence-threatening sentences. Based on these results, Copello and Tata (1990) posited that attributions of hostile intent were characteristic of offenders in general, rather than being particular to violent offenders.

From a developmental perspective however, these results indicate that attributional biases are present in adult offenders. This is consistent with the stability premise put forward by Fontaine et al. (2008), who argued that patterns of information processing would show stability throughout the life-course. In contrast, the finding that hostile attributions were equally endorsed by violent and non-violent offenders raises the possibility that violent offenders are differentiated by the beliefs that inform attribution biases. That is, offenders as a general category may have similar patterns of information processing, but it is possible that violent offenders have specific beliefs that underlie their hostile attributions. In this context, beliefs about masculinity may play a prominent and important explanatory role.

More recently, Topalli (2005b) investigated the attributional biases of active, male street offenders. Consistent with Dodge and Crick’s formulation, Topalli (2005b) posited that individuals actively engaged in criminal behaviour would develop a repertoire of normative scripts that would predispose information processing towards the evaluation of threat, hostility and malice in the presence of ambiguous stimuli. To test this proposition, a quasi-experimental study was conducted, involving a group of 17 active street robbers who were specifically chosen for their long histories of violent criminal behaviour; a comparison group of 15 men who were demographically similar to the active offenders but had never engaged in crime; and a non-offender comparison group made up of 14 male university students. The study involved participants watching an ambiguous social interaction filmed using a Point Light Display methodology. Each participant was shown three versions of an ambiguous

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7 Point Light Display (PLD) allows a more experimental evaluation of individuals’ social information processing biases by presenting participants with a short clip of human interaction, in the absence of
social interaction involving actor A approaching actor B and placing a hand on actor A’s shoulder. The velocity of the interaction was manipulated, so that each participant viewed actor B approaching actor A at a slow, medium and fast pace (Topalli, 2005b). Topalli hypothesised that fast interactions would signal threat to participants, and therefore would be associated with a greater likelihood of hostile attributions. This was followed by a content analysis of participants’ explanations for each of the social interactions.

Predictably, active violent offenders were more likely to perceive these ambiguous situations as including hostile intent. In fact, themes related to violence, victimisation and weapons were prominent in the narratives provided by active offenders for the slow and medium-paced interactions (Topalli, 2005b). The university students were the least likely to attribute hostile intent to the protagonists in scenarios involving slow and medium-paced interactions. Instead, university students were more likely to perceive the fast-paced interactions as involving aggression, but not necessarily violence. However, the demographic controls provided the most interesting results. These men were similar to the active offenders in that they attributed hostile and violent intentions to the actors in the medium-paced interactions, but were also similar to the university students in perceiving the slow-paced scenarios as involving friendly social interactions (Topalli, 2005b).

These results highlight an important element of social information processing, especially in the context of violent offending. For the active offenders in Topalli’s study, armed robbery, violence and victimisation were normative elements of their social environments. As active members of the criminal world, these men appeared to have well-established scripts for any identifiable facial cues. Actors wearing black body tight suits with reflective tape on the major joints of the human body are filmed against a black backdrop. The images are then modified so that the contrast is set to its maximum limit, thereby allowing an image that is comprised exclusively of the reflective tape – that is, the outline of the human body. These point light displays provide sufficient information to allow participants to discern the gender, height and weight of the actors, but are ambiguous enough to allow for an exploration of the way participants perceive the interactions they are viewing. In the absence of any environmental and facial expression cues, participants construct a story about the social interaction, thereby allowing for an exploration of the attributions individuals make in the absence of more contextualised information.
engaging in armed robbery. These scripts dictated that when approaching a potential target, fast movements were counterproductive, because they would signal to the target that victimisation was imminent. Instead, slow, calm, deliberative movements allowed active offenders to get close to their targets and therefore were more likely to result in successful robberies (Topalli, 2005b). Given these scripts, the active offenders attributed hostile and violent intentions to the slow-paced scenarios, reflecting their stored knowledge about their own areas of expertise, and the social environment they navigated.

Similarly, demographic controls recruited from the same social environment as the active offenders were likely to have developed scripts for violent victimisation. While they did not have the expertise of engaging in robbery (and therefore did not attribute hostile intentions to the protagonists in the slow-paced scenario) they had grown up and lived in an environment where violence and victimisation were normative. As such, they had developed a stored body of knowledge that allowed them to be attuned to signals of threat. Their interpretations of medium-paced social interactions reflected their understanding of the potential for violent victimisation in ambiguous situations (Topalli, 2005b).

These results highlight the socially embedded nature of social cognition. Specifically, schemas that influence attributional tendencies are fundamentally grounded in the experiences of individuals, such that offenders and non-offenders draw on knowledge of their social world, which then shapes perceptions of reality. An individual does not have to engage in crime to develop attributions of hostile intent. He/she merely has to be exposed to environments where it is functional to be aware of the cues signalling threat. This awareness allows an individual to make an attribution about the intention of potential victimisers, thereby increasing his/her potential for self-preservation. For active offenders, attributions of hostility are also likely to be functional from a performance and avoidance perspective. That is, being attuned to signals of threat allows for self-preservation (i.e., avoiding victimisation), just as being attuned to signals of vulnerability opens the possibility for the successful enactment of
crime. In this respect, the environment emerges as an important element influencing the development of schemas and perceptions of the social world.

A more recent study by Lim et al. (2011) also indicates that hostile attributions are more prevalent amongst violent than non-violent offenders. The authors investigated the mediating role of trait anger on hostile attributions in a sample of 40 violent and 38 non-violent offenders incarcerated in Singapore, and hypothesised that trait but not state anger in violent offenders would be associated with a tendency towards hostile attribution biases. That is, a predisposition towards the experience and expression of anger would not only be associated with violence, but also with a greater tendency to engage in hostile attributions.

Hostile attributions were measured using a video vignette methodology. The ambiguous situation involved an unseen protagonist waiting for a space at a car park that was abruptly occupied by an unseen provocateur. Participants were asked to imagine that they were the protagonist and to indicate how likely they would be to engage in three aggressive acts – shout, yell at, or hit the driver. Moreover, participants completed the Hostile Interpretations Questionnaire (Simourd & Mamuza, 2000) which measures interpretative biases and aggressive responses associated with hostility, including overgeneralisation, hostile attributions, external blame, and hostile reactions.

Violent offenders made significantly more hostile attributions, endorsed a significantly higher likelihood of reacting aggressively to ambiguous provocation, and scored significantly higher on trait anger, than non-violent offenders (Lim et al., 2011). Results further indicated that while hostile attribution and trait anger were independent predictors of aggressive responding, there was no interaction effect. That is, hostile attributions predicted aggressive responding independent of the effects of trait anger. Nevertheless, there was a strong, positive correlation between trait anger and hostile attributions, indicating hostile attributions may be more likely in the presence of anger. Therefore, unlike the results obtained by
Copello and Tata (1990) violent offenders in the Lim et al. (2011) study were more likely to make hostile attributions to ambiguous provocation than non-violent offenders. The source of this difference may be methodological, in that the Lim et al. (2011) study had a larger sample, included a measure of anger, and assessed hostile attributions through multiple measures. Despite these differences however, the studies reviewed above indicate that hostile attributions are important social cognitive processes in divergent samples of adult, adjudicated violent offenders.

Critique of Crick and Dodge’s SIP

Crick and Dodge’s (1994) model of social information processing provides an empirically validated framework for understanding how individuals interpret and evaluate social information in a way that promotes aggressive and violent behaviour. One of the major strengths of this model is the premise that information processing and behaviour are part of a mutually reinforcing and on-going transaction, both situationally and longitudinally (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge, 2006; Fontaine & Dodge, 2009; Fontaine et al., 2008).

There is also an inherently developmental perspective underlying the model that is in large part consistent with the findings from developmental criminology. Specifically, Crick and Dodge (1994) have argued that the genesis of social information processing biases, and the schemas that support these biases, are located in abusive relationships experienced in early childhood. For example, Dodge (2006) postulated that early socialisation factors, including abuse, disrupted attachment and modelling, in conjunction with biological/genetic predispositions would lead to the development of aggressive schemas and subsequently hostile attributional biases. These potentially causal factors echo those proposed by Farrington (2005a, 2005b) for the development of long-term antisocial potential. Moreover, Farrington posited a central role for decision-making processes in his Integrated Cognitive
Antisocial Potential (ICAP: Farrington, 2005c) theory. Together, these linkages suggest that social information processing biases may be more prevalent amongst the sub-group of individuals that exhibit long-term patterns of antisocial and violent behaviour. The research reviewed above lends support to this contention, especially the findings that aggressive children, as well as adjudicated violent adult offenders, have a tendency to engage in attributional and evaluative biases.

However, it may be argued that the SIP may not be applicable to adult offenders, given its focus is on aggression and violence in young children and adolescents. While the majority of empirical literature testing the SIP has indeed focussed on younger samples, the literature reviewed thus far highlights the rich theoretical and conceptual potential of this model for all stages of human development. In fact, as discussed by Copello and Tata (1990), Topalli (2005b) and Lim et al (2011) there is growing evidence that elements of this model are evident in adult offenders. To date however, developmental perspectives have not been well integrated into the social cognition literature. Although the study by Fontaine et al. (2008) investigated continuity in evaluative biases throughout adolescence, there has not been any research investigating patterns of continuity into adulthood. Moreover, researchers have not investigated within-individual changes in social cognition throughout the life-course. Therefore, it remains unclear whether biased patterns of social cognition change throughout the life-course, or whether once established they persist throughout adulthood. While social cognitive researchers have argued that chronically activated schemas and processing biases will become entrenched over time, and therefore become more prevalent with age, it seems reasonable to argue that normal developmental changes occurring in adulthood, especially in relation to turning points, may have an impact on the beliefs and the processing biases of offenders.

Despite the central role attributed to schemas, research on the SIP has not investigated the content of violence-supportive schemas, or how this content may influence attributional and
evaluative biases. As seen in Figure 3 (p. 74), schemas are implicated in every step of social information processing and it seems reasonable to argue that violent offenders will not only have specific schemas related to violence, but that the content of these schemas will influence how information is interpreted. In fact, Dodge (2006) postulated that hostile attributions in particular are likely to be influenced by a wide range of factors, including whether an individual perceives that a valued element of his/her self is being threatened. This extends beyond merely physical threat, and may include valued components of one’s identity. In this context, a fruitful area of research, which has not been extensively explored within the social cognition literature, is the role of masculinity.

Specifically, masculinity comprises beliefs about the self and beliefs about violence that may be conceptualised as higher-order knowledge structures. These hypothesised ‘masculinity schemas’ may bias an individual to interpret ambiguous social cues as threats to the self. That is, an individual who holds beliefs about violence as an important component of manhood may be more likely to interpret ambiguous social cues as threats to his masculinity and therefore react with violence. Therefore, hostile attributions may be more likely when an individual’s status, honour and/or dominance are challenged. Additionally, individuals who perceive that they are not being afforded the respect they deserve may also be motivated to attribute hostile intent to the provocateur.

As highlighted throughout this chapter, cognition is posited to play a major role in aggressive and violent behaviour. Although the SIP has made a substantial contribution towards explicating the role of general cognitive mechanisms and processes, it was not specifically developed to explain cognition in violent offenders. Moreover, despite the central role attributed to schemas in the model, relatively little research has been devoted to exploring violence supportive beliefs. Therefore, in the next section, the criminal thinking styles of violent offenders, as originally proposed by Walters (1990) will be explored. Although there is reason to argue that these thinking styles reflect a combination of beliefs, cognitive
processes and post hoc justifications (see Appendix 1), they have typically been conceptualised as cognitive processes (e.g., Gannon, 2009b) and have therefore been included in this section. This will be followed by a review of the literature on the belief systems of violent offenders, and how these beliefs are functionally related to information processing biases and criminal thinking styles.

Criminal thinking styles

Walters' (1990) theory of lifestyle criminality in large part hinges on the existence of thinking styles that give rise to, support and maintain a criminal lifestyle. It remains unclear however, whether these thinking styles represent belief systems and are therefore similar to the schemas proposed in the cognitive literature, cognitive processes akin to those proposed in the SIP, or cognitive products. Walters himself has not clearly articulated what these thinking styles represent, instead stating that:

…within the context of the criminal lifestyle, it is essential that we appreciate the sequence of events responsible for the rise of criminologic thought, a progression that commences with the early and later life tasks and the choices one makes relative to these task. Out of the morass of confusion generated by these interacting influences arises a cognitive system dedicated to supporting, buttressing, and perpetuating the irresponsibility and self-indulgence of adolescence". (Walters, 1990, p. 128, emphasis added).

In a later passage these same criminal thinking styles are described as “eight irrational beliefs” (Walters, 1990, p. 129). Therefore, there is a large degree of inconsistency in the

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Please refer to Appendix 2 for a description of Walters' theory of lifestyle criminality.
original formulation. In the forensic psychology literature, Walters’ criminal thinking styles are predominantly conceptualised as cognitive processes (e.g., Collie, Vess & Murdoch, 2007). While some of the thinking styles do appear to reflect more traditional conceptions of information processing, others appear to more closely align with the outcome of these processes. That is, it can be argued that some of the thinking styles represent attempts to explain and justify criminal behaviour to the self and to others. The eight thinking styles are mollification, cut-off, entitlement, power orientation, sentimentality, superoptimism, cognitive indolence, and discontinuity.

Mollification is defined as a measure of rationalisations and justifications, and closely resembles the techniques of neutralization described by Sykes and Matza (1957). Briefly, Sykes and Matza (1957) argued that antisocial and criminal behaviour by adolescents in particular, produced a degree of cognitive incongruence. On the one hand, juvenile offenders were presumed to be conventionally bonded to society, while on the other, they were drawn to antisocial and criminal activity. This incongruence was posited to produce a sense of guilt and identity disjuncture that was cognitively neutralized. Specifically, Sykes and Matza proposed five neutralization techniques, including: denial of responsibility, denial of harm, denial of the victim, condemnation of the condemners, and appeals to higher loyalties. For example, denial of responsibility involves externalising blame by arguing either a lack of intention or by claiming that the behaviour is outside of the offender’s control.

Denial of harm involves acknowledging that the behaviour is wrong, but asserting that no-one has actually been harmed. Denial of the victim perhaps represents the closest example of an attribution bias. Specifically, in denying that a person deserves the victim status, offenders appear to be interpreting their behaviour as justified. In the context of violent offending in particular, denying the victim may represent a perception that violence is justified under some circumstances and against some people. Therefore, in denying the
victim a violent offender may in fact be interpreting his behaviour as an appropriate form of retaliation, self-defence, or even as a pre-emptive strike.

Condemnation of the condemners represents an attempt to externalise blame by offering other, allegedly more corrupt individuals, as a comparison. Finally, appeals to higher loyalties represents an attempt to qualify responsibility by acknowledging that the behaviour was wrong and contravened social and legal rules, but was necessary to protect the rights and interests of other, more important social groups (Sykes & Matza, 1957). These five techniques of neutralization form the basis of the mollification thinking style. Specifically, Walters has argued that mollification includes denial of responsibility, harm and victim (Walters, 1990). From a clinical perspective, denial of responsibility has typically been conceptualised as a post hoc rationalisation that represents distorted thinking (Maruna & Copes, 2005; Maruna & Mann, 2006).

Based on Walters’ formulation however, it can also be argued that mollification occurs prior to the commission of an offence and may represent a type of interpretative bias. That is, offenders may interpret hostile intent in others, and based on this interpretation form a belief that their actions are justified and therefore their responsibility is minimised. Therefore, it remains unclear whether mollification represents a cognitive process or a cognitive product. In contrast, Walters (1990) defines cut-off as a cognitive process that allows an individual to rapidly eliminate the obstacles to offending, by removing any doubts or anxiety associated with criminal behaviour. Moreover, cut-off is posited to be triggered by anger, and to become an automatic response to stress and frustration through repeated usage.

The entitlement thinking style reflects an individual’s conviction that he/she is superior to others and has the right to take what he/she wants when he/she wants it (Walters, 1990). It remains unclear whether entitlement is a cognitive process, or more accurately represents a belief. Similarly, power orientation is posited to reflect assumptions of superiority and ownership. According to Walters (1990) power orientation can either represent feelings of
worthlessness that are compensated for through intimation, or it can represent actual feelings of superiority and control. Moreover, power orientation is posited to involve the dichotomisation of people into two mutually exclusive categories. That is, an individual high on power orientation is presumed to endorse the view that the world is divided into groups of strong and weak individuals, and that he/she has the right to take advantage of those perceived as weak (Walters, 1990). Again, it is unclear whether this thinking style is more accurately represented as a cognitive process, a product or an overarching belief. It does however appear to be based on interpretations of the social world, and therefore may be more closely aligned with interpretative biases.

Sentimentality is conceptually similar to mollification and represents an attempt at minimising personal responsibility. While mollification shifts the blame externally, sentimentality is associated with a desire to preserve a positive self-image. That is, individuals may acknowledge that their behaviour is harmful, but emphasise that it is not an accurate representation of who they really are.

The superoptimism thinking style reflects a cognitive bias towards infallibility, invulnerability, and an overly optimistic appraisal of one’s abilities, and therefore appears to be more closely associated with cognitive processing than post hoc rationalisations. In particular, Walters has argued that superoptimism is associated with unrealistic appraisals of criminal efficacy. Finally, cognitive indolence and discontinuity reflect ‘deficits’ in information processing. For example, cognitive indolence is defined as immature and lazy thinking characterised by cognitive shortcuts. Discontinuity is similarly defined as the inability to properly evaluate options, either because the individual is not able to follow through on a thought, or because he/she is not able to adequately evaluate and integrate the range of responses that are available in a given situation (Walters, 1990).
Criminal thinking and social information processing

To date there has been little theoretical or empirical work linking Walters’ thinking styles to the cognitive literature. In fact, the majority of research has focussed on the psychometric instrument developed to measure these thinking styles, despite the clear conceptual ambiguity surrounding what specifically they represent. Moreover, given the focus of Walters’ theory is on explaining general criminal behaviour, there has been limited research into whether violent offenders have a specific pattern of ‘criminal thinking’.

For example, McCoy et al., (2006) used the PICTS (Walters, 1995) on a group of college students who had self-reported engaging in criminal behaviour. Three hundred and ninety-three undergraduate students completed an illegal behaviour checklist to determine the frequency of control-status offences (i.e., under-age drinking), drug offences (i.e., sale and/or distribution of illicit drugs), property offences (i.e., property damage), and interpersonally violent offences (i.e., hurting someone with the intention of causing harm). Results indicated that male undergraduate students who self-reported engaging in interpersonal violence scored higher on all eight thinking style scales, compared to male students who had engaged in status, drug or property offences. Female students who self-reported engaging in property offences and interpersonal violence scored significantly higher than females who had engaged in status and drug offences on seven of the eight thinking styles. The only scale that did not differentiate between the four groups of female participants was Discontinuity (McCoy et al., 2006). These results indicate that with a non-offender sample, interpersonal violence was associated with a general pattern of criminal thinking, rather than with specific criminal thinking styles.

There is evidence however, that violent crime is associated with a specific pattern of criminal thinking. Consistent with the argument proposed by Crick and Dodge (1994) Walters, Frederick and Schlauch (2007) predicted that reactive violence (i.e., assault and domestic
violence) would be associated with cut-off, cognitive indolence and discontinuity, while proactive violence (robbery, burglary) would be associated with mollification, entitlement, sentimentality and superoptimism. The Reactive and Proactive scales of the PICTS\(^9\) were used to retrospectively predict reactive and proactive violence in a group of 262 incarcerated offenders. The Reactive Scale retrospectively predicted total number of arrests and total number of arrests for reactive offences, but was not able to predict total number of arrests for proactive offences. Similarly, the Proactive Scale retrospectively predicted the total number of arrests and the total number of arrests for proactive violence. Finally, age was found to be a significant covariate that reliably predicted reactive and proactive arrests, as well as reactive thinking (Walters et al., 2007).

These results provide some preliminary evidence that different types of violence are associated with specific patterns of criminal thinking. Moreover, there is some evidence that Walters’ criminal thinking styles share some conceptual similarity with the interpretative and evaluative biases proposed in the SIP model. Nevertheless, two issues that are pertinent to this thesis require further elucidation.

First, it remains unclear whether patterns of criminal thinking change throughout the life-course. As with the majority of research in social cognition, Walters has emphasised the developmental period of childhood and adolescence but neglected changes that occur during adulthood. There is some indirect evidence however that younger, first-time offenders show more criminal thinking relative to their older, more experienced counterparts. In a study

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\(^9\) These scales were originally developed by Walters (2006) in an attempt to enhance the clinical utility of the instrument. In addition to the eight thinking styles, Walters has developed a number of scales including four factor scales measuring self-assertion/deception, problem-avoidance, interpersonal hostility, and denial of harm, as well as two ‘content’ scales reflecting current versus historical thinking (Walters, 2002b). The Reactive and Proactive aggression scales are described as ‘composites’ that include specific criminal thinking styles, as well as a factor and a content scale.
examining the effects of incarceration on first time-offenders, Walters (2003) investigated changes in criminal thinking between a group of novice offenders who were on average 31 years old, and a group of more experienced offenders, who were on average 36 years old. Results showed that over a six-month period the criminal thinking of novice offenders increased, whereas that of the experienced offenders remained unchanged. In particular, novice offenders showed an increase in the Self-Assertion/Deception scale, which measures the tendency to engage in rationalisations that justify using coercive tactics to communicate power and dominance over others. Walters’ (2003) interpreted these results as evidence that for first-time offenders, the initial period of incarceration can actually lead to more criminal thinking. Specifically, in order to survive in a hostile prison environment, first-time offenders may have to become more criminalised to avoid victimisation.

Second, the role of masculinity has not been adequately addressed in the criminal thinking literature. Again, Walters (2001c) indirectly investigated whether a masculine and feminine gender role identity would be differentially associated with specific patterns of criminal thinking. Specifically, it was hypothesised that the Self-Assertion/Deception scale would correlate with masculinity, while the Denial of Harm scale would correlate with femininity. The rationale for this argument was based on the assumption that self-assertion/deception would be associated with masculine beliefs about power, control and entitlement whereas denial of harm was more closely aligned with feminine tendencies to minimise harm. Moreover, femininity was presumed to be negatively associated with interpersonal hostility. Consistent with these hypotheses, masculine role identity was positively correlated with self-assertion/deception, while feminine role identity was positively correlated with denial of harm and negatively correlated with interpersonal hostility (Walters, 2001c).

There is, therefore, preliminary evidence suggestive of a link between a masculine gender role identity and a pattern of thinking characterised by power, control and entitlement.

Moreover, the prisonisation study discussed above (Walters, 2003) also indicates that
masculine beliefs may be associated with increased criminal thinking, in particular self-assertion/deception. Although this link was not specifically investigated, it seems reasonable to argue that self-assertive patterns of criminal thinking observed in the novice offenders may have been motivated by beliefs that power, strength and toughness would increase their chances of survival in a very masculine environment.

The implicit theories and violence supportive beliefs of violent offenders

The research reviewed thus far shows that aggressive and violent individuals exhibit a characteristic pattern of interpreting and evaluating social stimuli. In particular, there is growing evidence with adult violent offenders that patterns of information processing are biased towards the detection of threat in the social environment leading to attributions of hostility (e.g., Copello & Tata, 1990; Topalli, 2005b). These processing biases are influenced by beliefs in the form of schemas that are acquired through experience, and further reinforced as a result of the perceived positive outcomes that are associated with violence (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Huesmann, 1998). Together, the content of violence supportive schemas and the concomitant processing biases are thought to influence how individuals perceive their social world. For example, James and Seager (2006) proposed that hostile attribution biases in persistent violent offenders would be associated with a hypervigilance towards social cues signalling threat and insult. This attentional bias was further proposed to be associated with underlying beliefs about the inherent malevolence of social actors and the social world more generally.

To test these hypotheses, James and Seager (2006) measured attentional and interpretative biases in a sample of 40 incarcerated male violent offenders. Participants in the study were restricted to men with an official history of assault, including robbery with violence, murder, and institutional misconduct involving fighting. As with the social-information processing
literature, attributional biases were measured using a vignette methodology, consisting of four scenarios depicting ambiguous provocation. For this study, the social interactions involved a friend failing to keep a promise, a fellow inmate refusing a request to turn down his radio, food ‘disappearing’ from the inmate’s tray, and a prison officer refusing a request for a telephone call from an inmate who had used all of his telephone privileges. Beliefs were measured through open-ended questions following each vignette, which sought participants’ perceptions regarding the actor’s intentions.

Attentional biases were measured through a dichotic shadowing task (James & Seager, 2006). Participants were first presented with a list of target words reflecting hostile and violent content (e.g., murder, stab, handgun, punch). The shadowing task involved participants listening to another list of hostile and neutral words presented via headphones. Half of the words were presented to one ear, which participants were asked to attend to (i.e., the shadowed ear). The remainder of the words were presented to the unshadowed ear. Participants were required to repeat the word presented in the shadowed ear, but to also indicate whether they had heard any of the target words, regardless the ear it was presented to. The authors hypothesised that hostile attribution biases would be evidenced if offenders reported hearing the target word when it was presented in the unshadowed ear. This hypervigilance was further hypothesised to reflect beliefs about a dangerous world.

Over two-thirds of the hostile words presented in the unshadowed ear were recognised, relative to neutral words. That is, offenders were able to recognise hostile words even when they were engaging in a distractor task by attending to the shadowed ear. Moreover, the vignette and dichotic listening task accounted for 49% of the variance in assault convictions, again indicating that the violent offenders in this sample showed a tendency to perceive their social world as hostile and potentially malicious (James & Seager, 2006).
Although the results of the James and Seager (2006) study provide indirect evidence for the presence of hostility schemas, these authors did not specifically investigate the content of the hypothesised beliefs. A more recent study by Polaschek et al. (2008) provides some insights into the violence-supportive beliefs of violent offenders. In particular, Polaschek et al drew on the concept of implicit theories as articulated by Ward (2000) to argue that violent offenders hold causal beliefs about violence that are functionally related to their desires and goals. That is, violent offenders were hypothesised to have an interconnected network of beliefs that not only promote the use of violence, but are also drawn on to justify violence across a range of contexts.

Polaschek et al. (2008) used grounded theory analysis to identity implicit theories from an in-depth interview conducted as part of the assessment process for a high-intensity rehabilitation program for violent offenders in New Zealand. Interviews from 20 violent offenders were used to identify a preliminary set of implicit theories. Data from an additional 23 interviews was used to replicate and refine the preliminary results. Moreover, the preliminary implicit theories were trialled in vivo with a group of 30 offenders participating in the high-intensity program. From these different sources, four implicit theories were identified, including ‘I am the law’, ‘beat or be beaten – self-enhancement’, ‘beat or be beaten – self-preservation’, and ‘I get out of control’ (Polaschek et al., 2008).

The ‘I am the law’ and the two ‘beat or be beaten’ implicit theories were contextualised within a background assumption where violence was perceived as normal, justified and as an effective tool for achieving a range of desired goals. Against this backdrop, Polaschek et al. (2008) proposed that ‘beat or be beaten’ as a general implicit theory, reflected the belief that violence was necessary to pre-empt the hostile intentions others. An additional ‘independent’ implicit theory comprised of beliefs of uncontrollability was also identified. These are described in Table 4.
There is some evidence then that violent offenders hold normative beliefs about violence that are linked with attentional and interpretative biases towards social cues signalling threat and hostility. This is consistent with the literature reviewed in the previous chapter. For example, the ‘beat or be beaten’ implicit theories are based on hostile interpretations, consistent with Walters’ mollification thinking style. Similarly, ‘beat or be beaten – self-enhancement’ and ‘I am the law’ were associated with beliefs about social dominance, which reflect similar content as captured by the entitlement and power orientation thinking styles. Moreover, ‘beat or be beaten- self-enhancement’ was also associated with beliefs of infallibility, consistent with Walters’ conceptualisation of superoptimism. Although these linkages have not been empirically investigated, they are compatible with the premises of the SIP (Crick & Dodge, 1994). Specifically, they reflect the principle of mutual reinforcement, whereby content within schemas/implicit theories is presumed to influence information processing and vice versa.

Table 4
Implicit theories identified in violent offenders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implicit theory</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beat or be beaten – self-enhancement</td>
<td>Violence as a means of demonstrating social dominance even in the absence of threat; violence as status enhancing; perceptions of the world as hostile and adversarial; positive self-efficacy attributions for dealing with a hostile world; associated with violence between men.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beat or be beaten – self-preservation</td>
<td>Perceptions of hostile intent in others; resentful and mistrustful world-view; violence as a preemptive strike against potential victimisation and/or abuse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am the law</td>
<td>Beliefs about moral superiority; violence as a means of controlling the social world and others; violence for the protection of others, regardless of whether protection is sought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get out of control</td>
<td>Perceived inability to regulate and control aggression and negative emotions; perception of powerlessness; violence attributed to intense rage and anger; violence not perceived as normal or necessarily acceptable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As indicated by James and Seager (2006) and Polaschek et al. (2008) violence supportive beliefs also appear to have a masculine element. In fact, James and Seager (2006) argued that violent offenders are hypervigilant to insults, which may reflect a desire to be perceived as masculine by retaliating with violence to perceived provocation. Moreover, the implicit theories identified by Polaschek et al. also appear to be related to masculine concepts. For example, both variants of the ‘beat or be beaten’ implicit theory contain assumptions about violence as a means of enhancing or preserving status and dominance. Similarly, the ‘I am the law’ implicit theory appears to be based on masculine and ‘paternalistic’ beliefs associated with the protection of presumably weaker others. These issues will be explored in the next chapter.

Summary

The research reviewed in this chapter highlights the significant role that cognition plays in violent offending. Specifically, there is evidence that violence is facilitated by a cognitive system biased towards interpreting and evaluating social stimuli in a way that is consistent with violence-supportive beliefs. From a social cognition perspective, violent offenders are thought to disproportionately attribute hostile intent to others, especially when the actual intent of the provocateur is ambiguous (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge, 2006). Moreover, violent or aggressive responses appear to be over-represented and selectively retrieved as appropriate reactions to provocation (Fontaine & Dodge, 2009; Fontaine et al., 2008).

The majority of research on the processing biases associated with aggression and violence however, has been conducted with children and adolescents, or with non-offender samples. Although there is no reason to suggest that the mechanisms underlying information processing will be different in adult offenders, it is possible that violent offenders have specific beliefs that influence how information is processed and evaluated. Specifically, the
schemas of violent offenders may be qualitatively different from those of non-offenders, and non-violent offenders. If this is the case, then it is also possible that violent offenders will show interpretative and evaluative biases across a wider range of situations. The research by James and Seager (2006) and Polaschek et al. (2008) lends support to this assertion. Violence appears to be normalised for violent offenders, in part due to beliefs that violence is an effective means of asserting dominance, control and pre-empting the hostile intentions of others.

Moreover, as the theory proposed by Walters (1990) indicates, there are likely to be other cognitive processes associated with violent offending. Although Walters' work has focussed predominantly on general criminal behaviour, there is some preliminary evidence that violent offenders have a characteristic style of thinking that may align with the interpretative biases identified by Crick and Dodge (1994). Specifically, Crick and Dodge (1994) have argued that hostile attribution biases are differentially associated with reactive aggression because they represent a pre-emptive style of processing. That is, social stimuli are filtered through a ‘hostility lens’ leading to the assumption that other people are essentially motivated by hostility and malice. Consistent with this premise, Walters has found that offenders convicted of interpersonally violent offences have a thinking pattern characterised by cognitive impulsivity. Therefore, there is some convergence between the idea of pre-emptive processing and impulsive thinking styles.

There has been a dearth of research, however, investigating how developmental changes during adulthood influence social information processing. This is despite the explicit developmental focus of both the SIP and Walters' theory of lifestyle criminality. Based on the available evidence, it can be postulated that interpretative and evaluative biases that are chronically relied on, will become entrenched and automated. That is, through repeated use interpretative biases will be automatically activated in the presence of threat and/or perceived provocation. Moreover, positive outcomes associated with violence will be stored
in aggression-related schemas, thereby further reinforcing the tendency to attribute hostile intent and to react with violence. In contrast, negative outcomes associated with violence will become increasingly incongruent with the individual’s beliefs, and will either be dismissed or reinterpreted in a way that is consistent with stored knowledge (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge, 2006; Huesmann, 1998).

While Walters has not specifically discussed the mechanisms underlying his thinking styles, he nevertheless proposes that patterns of criminal thinking are grounded in early interactions between the individual and his/her environment, which can constrain the choices that are available later in life (Walters, 1990). In this respect, there is an implicit developmental component to his model, similar to that proposed in the developmental criminology literature. Specifically, early life conditions set the stage for the development of persistent criminality that is in part defined by the way an individual characteristically evaluates his/her social environment. Here too it can be postulated that criminal thinking styles become entrenched as an individual matures.

While the overarching assumption appears to be that cognitive processes become entrenched over time, it is reasonable to argue that with age, beliefs about violence change. These changes may result from significant turning points, including incarceration, marriage, fatherhood or employment. As discussed in Chapter 3, meaningful turning points that facilitate the development of social bonds not only limit structural opportunities to engage in crime, but may also promote a change in roles and priorities (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Sampson & Laub, 2005a). As discussed by Giordano et al. (2002), the impact of structural change is bounded by an individual’s desire to change, as well as his/her perception of opportunities as meaningful and worthwhile. It can therefore be postulated that maturation plays a role not just in the availability of opportunities, but importantly, in the way these opportunities are perceived and interpreted. While interpretative biases may become entrenched through chronic activation, the way an individual perceives his/her social world is
likely to be effected by different experiences and turning points throughout the life-course.

Some of these experiences may serve to further reinforce existing beliefs about a malevolent world and the inherent maliciousness of others. However, other experiences may provide a counter to these beliefs leading to what Giordano et al. (2002) have termed ‘cognitive transformation’.

Beliefs about masculinity may be especially amenable to change with age. This is an issue that has not received much empirical attention, despite the apparent link between masculinity and violence. As will be discussed in the next chapter, there is a growing body of literature indicating that masculine belief systems not only promote violence, but are likely to be most influential during adolescence and young adulthood. As an individual matures, his definition of manhood is also likely to change, which may have flow-on effects for how violence is used and internalised.
As discussed in the previous chapter, aggressive and violent individuals are known to exhibit a characteristic pattern of interpreting and evaluating social stimuli that is functionally related to their beliefs about violence as normal, and as an effective strategy for asserting interpersonal dominance (e.g., Crick & Dodge, 1994; Fontaine et al., 2008; James & Seager, 2006; Lim et al., 2011; Polaschek et al., 2008; Walters, 1990; Walters et al., 2007).

From a developmental perspective, there is evidence that with age processing biases become more entrenched and resistant to change. In particular, the presence of processing biases in childhood is associated with less cognitive sophistication and complexity in adolescence (Dodge, 2006; Fontaine & Dodge, 2009; Fontaine et al., 2008). This is in contrast to the normal course of cognitive development, whereby with age cognitive systems become increasingly sophisticated and complex (Huesmann, 1998). There is evidence, however, that chronically violent individuals engage in an immature style of pre-emptive information processing (Huesmann, 1998; Walters, 1990). That is, violent offenders tend to rely on cognitive short-cuts whereby alternative interpretations for social stimuli are not adequately considered, leading to the default selection of violent behaviour as an appropriate response. One possible interpretation derived from the social cognition literature is that once established biased information processing patterns are continually reinforced.

To date there has been a dearth of empirical research that has investigated changes in information processing across different stages of adulthood. It seems reasonable to
postulate however that maturational processes occurring in adulthood are likely to influence pre-existing beliefs, which in turn may lead to changes in social information processing. For example, meaningful turning points that occur in adulthood may result in changed self-definitions associated with a commitment to new social roles (Sampson & Laub, 2005a). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the content of schemas and belief systems in violent offenders has received comparatively little attention, with most literature either focussing on cognitive processes linked to aggression and violence, or on more general criminal beliefs endorsed by violent offenders (e.g., Mills, Kroner & Hemmati, 2004; Walters, 2002a, 2009a). In this respect, much of the cognitive psychology literature reflects the developmental criminology premise that violent offenders are not a qualitatively distinct group from frequent, non-violent offenders.

While the information processing mechanisms of violent and frequent non-violent offenders may be the same, these processes are part of a larger cognitive system that is driven by beliefs. In this context, a potentially fruitful area of investigation is masculinity. The role of masculinity and masculine beliefs in violent offenders has not been extensively researched, despite the apparently obvious link that exists between masculinity and violence. For example, male-to-male violence has been linked, at least in part, with a desire for status, dominance, honour and respect, constructs that have in turn been linked with masculine beliefs (e.g., Bennett & Brookman, 2009; Lopez & Emmer, 2000; Toch, 1992). Moreover, masculinity may be a concept that is able to knit together developmental and cognitive perspectives, in that masculine beliefs are likely to change throughout the life-course (e.g., Messerschmidt, 1993).

With the above discussion in mind, this chapter will begin by reviewing the literature documenting the link between masculinity and violence. Consistent with the developmental focus of this thesis, the latter part of the chapter will review the literature on masculinity and beliefs about violence in younger and older adult violent offenders. The chapter will conclude
by integrating the developmental and cognitive arguments proposed in the preceding chapters.

**Masculinity and violent offending**

Masculinity has often been invoked in discussions of violence. The gendered nature of violent crime – with males being disproportionately represented as perpetrators and victims of non-domestic interpersonal violence – has led various researchers to posit a role for masculinity, and even hypermasculinity (e.g., Andersson, 2008; Beesley & McGuire, 2009; Deibert & Meithe, 2003; Messerschmidt, 1993; Walker & Bright, 2009; Whitehead, 2005). However, Messerschmidt’s theoretical work provides the most comprehensive analysis of the link between masculinity and crime.

According to Messerschmidt (1993) an individual does not have a single masculinity but a variety of situationally contingent masculinities that are constructed and enacted based on available resources. The resources that Messerschmidt refers to are predominantly a function of a man’s race and social status, which allow him to enact different masculinities that reflect his position within a particular social domain (Messerschmidt, 1993). Messerschmidt argues that masculinities are a function of reciprocal interactions between gender, race and social class. Therefore, in the context of crime not all men inhabiting the same social space will construct ‘violent masculinities’.

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10 Messerschmidt's theory is unique in that it integrates elements of feminist theory, social psychology, sociology and criminology to develop a relatively comprehensive explanation of a complex and often neglected concept. Moreover, it represents one of the few theories that focus specifically on masculinity as a fluid, socially defined and situationally-contingent construct. This is in contrast with more psychologically-grounded theories that tend to emphasise masculine traits (Connell, 2005). For this reason, Messerschmidt’s theory was chosen as the most appropriate for this thesis. Specifically, the argument being pursued here is that masculinity is not a trait or a characteristic of the individual. Instead, it represents a set of beliefs about manliness that are likely to change across situations and over time.
Despite the multiplicity of masculinities that are available to men, there is an overriding hegemonic masculinity that provides men with a template of the essential nature of ‘manliness’ (Messerschmidt, 1993). In industrialised, Western societies hegemonic masculinity centres on deeply heterosexual attributes including authority, assertiveness, aggression, competitiveness, dominance, power, control, independence and autonomy, mastery, and sexual prowess. The power of hegemonic masculinity is twofold. First, it contains a number of attributes that can be differentially accessed, depending on the resources available to an individual. As such, it is not a unitary, fixed concept but rather a constellation of factors that can be combined in a variety of ways to enact a preferred masculinity. Second, it is culturally valued, and therefore provides for a definition of what it means to be a man. The extent to which certain attributes are valued as intrinsically male, will determine whether these attributes are internalised as part of a man’s self-concept (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Messerschmidt, 1993).

Messerschmidt’s theoretical formulation means that for some men violence becomes a resource that allows them to enact a version of hegemonic masculinity, especially when other resources are not available. In this way, Messerschmidt (1993) seeks to explain the link between violence in youth, masculinity and social class. Specifically, the resources available to young, Caucasian, middle-class youth are significantly different to those available to young, lower-class youth from racial minorities. As a result, disenfranchised youth are thought to construct oppositional masculinities that also allow them to enact a specific version of hegemonic masculinity – one that is centred on aggression, assertiveness, power and control, but that is also constrained by the limited resources available to them. Violence then becomes a valued resource that allows some young men to construct acceptable and dominant masculinities.

Although the focus of Messerschmidt’s work is primarily on youth crime, there is a developmental perspective underlying much of his theory. For example, Messerschmidt
(1993) argues that resources are both situationally and developmentally contingent. Just as a man has access to different resources in the public compared to the private domain, so too do adult men have access to different resources than adolescents and young men. While this element of the theory has not been elaborated, it can be postulated that adult oppositional masculinities will be similar to their juvenile counterparts to the extent that violence is perceived as a legitimate means of achieving valued goals.

Based on Messerschmidt’s conceptualisation, it can be argued that masculinity acts as a meta-concept subsuming more specific masculinity-related beliefs about status, honour, dominance and power. For example, Polk (1994) developed a typology of homicide offenders based on a narrative review of coroner’s reports for all homicides in Victoria, Australia between 1985 and 1989. Polk (1994) identified four main types of masculine homicide. Table 5 (below) provides a summary of these typologies.\(^\text{11}\) For the purpose of this discussion only the male confrontational violence is pertinent as it exclusively involved male perpetrators.

Confrontational violence was defined by Polk (1994) as altercations occurring between males, typically in public places where people congregate to engage in leisure activities. In a substantial proportion of cases, alcohol played a prominent role. Another defining feature of this type of male violence was the presence of an audience, typically peers who encouraged, participated in, or otherwise facilitated the escalation to violence. Finally, in many of the cases the victim played an active role in the altercation. This highlights the interactional nature of these confrontations. For example, the incidents leading to lethal violence typically began with a relatively minor altercation involving verbal and non-verbal taunts that the eventual perpetrator perceived as affronts to his honour. Challenges were varied and

\(^{11}\) In addition to these four typologies, Polk also identified other types of homicide that occurred with less frequency and therefore were not amenable to a detailed analysis. These included homicides within families where the primary victims were children, homicides within families where the victim was another family member, serial homicide, mercy killings, and cases where motives were not possible to discern.
included insulting remarks made to the eventual perpetrator’s female companions, eye-
contact from a male victim towards the perpetrator that was perceived as provocative, racist
comments, and verbal taunts challenging a man’s sexuality, stature and status (Polk, 1994).
As such, there are some similarities between Polk’s discussion of male confrontational
violence, and the research on hostile attributional biases. Polk (1994) further argued that for
young adult males in particular, the presence of peers acted as an impetus to prove their
masculinity through violence. In circumstances where the audience was comprised of
strangers, their presence also constituted an incentive for males to continue with the
escalation to violence. In short, the need to defend or uphold male honour was made more
salient when others were present.

Table 5
Typologies of masculine homicide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typology</th>
<th>Frequency12</th>
<th>Main themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homicide in sexual relationships</td>
<td>101 (27%)</td>
<td>Masculine control, women as possessions, asserting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dominance, eliminating a ‘rival’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male confrontational violence</td>
<td>84 (22%)</td>
<td>Honour contest, situationally contingent, presence of an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>audience, leisure activities as settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide in the course of other crime</td>
<td>61 (16%)</td>
<td>Risk-taking and competitiveness, attachment to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>criminal lifestyle, drug dependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide as conflict resolution</td>
<td>38 (10%)</td>
<td>Pursuit of justice, marginality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, Toch (1992) postulated that the parties involved in violent altercations developed a
hostile view of each other from the start of the interaction, such that the eventual perpetrator

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12 Between 1985 and 1986 there were a total of 380 homicides investigated by Victoria Police. The
four primary typologies do not cover all 380 cases, but constitute almost 75% of recorded homicides.
perceived the victim’s original verbal communication as a challenge, threat, or provocation that led to a hostile reaction. The eventual victim, in turn, reacted negatively to the perpetrator’s hostility, which served to reinforce to the perpetrator that his original interpretation was accurate. From there, violence was presumed to escalate quite quickly, as each party perceived his masculinity to be at stake. Drawing on in-depth interviews conducted with 44 incarcerated violent offenders, Toch (1992) developed a typology of violence-prone men, which is depicted in Figure 4.

The typology is comprised of two over-arching strategies. Preserving a self-image was the dominant superordinate category, representing 77% of the sample. Toch (1992) defined self-preserving strategies as instances where violence was used for the purpose of enhancing, promoting and expressing a person’s identity, to himself and to others. In dehumanising strategies, the second superordinate category, violence was associated with feelings of entitlement – the men’s needs, desires and goals were perceived as more important than the needs and desires of others, and violence was used for control.

The self-preserving category includes five main typologies and two sub-typologies. Specifically, self-image compensation was the most prevalent self-preserving strategy, and within this, self-image promoting emerged as the main typology for violent offenders. As a general typology, self-image compensating reflects the relationship between violence and self-esteem, such that violence is used to enhance a person’s sense of self-worth to himself and to others (Toch, 1992). The majority of violent offenders were classified as self-image promoters. For these men, masculinity was a prominent theme and violence was the primary tool used to enact masculinity and construct an identity that was grounded in a desire and willingness to engage in violence.

There were two defining characteristics of self-promoters – an inflated self-esteem and the active pursuit of violence. Men in this category were observed to create situations where
their masculinity could be challenged, typically by being overly obnoxious and demanding unquestioned and often unwarranted respect from others. For these men, violence was perceived as necessary to achieve respect, and justified when that respect was not given.

The second sub-typology, *self-image defending*, represented men who *responded* with violence to challenges on their masculinity, rather than actively seeking situations where their masculinity could be challenged (Toch, 1992). Unlike self-image promoters, these men were perceived to have very low self-esteem and to use violence as a means of assuaging their own doubts about their inherent masculinity. Therefore, for the majority of violent offenders in Toch’s study, the use of violence was closely linked to masculinity. Whether these men actively promoted their masculinity, or defended it in the face of perceived provocation, the function of violence was to communicate to the self and to others a willingness to defend personal honour and status.

*Reputation defending* and *pressure-removing* also emerged as important typologies. Men classified as reputation defenders assumed a *role* as violent, which was typically imposed on them due to their status, social standing, or stature. Although over time a self-identity as violent became internalised, violence was originally used because it was an expectation rather than because it served an internal need. In contrast, for pressure-removers, violence was an expression of helplessness, and reflected a limited capacity to deal with interpersonal conflict. For these men, violence was seen as an effective and efficient way of dealing with frustrations and interpersonal conflicts. The narratives of these offenders showed that panic, rage, frustration and helplessness immediately preceded their violence (Toch, 1992).
Figure 4
A diagrammatic representation of Toch’s typology of violence-prone men (N=69)

Self-preserving strategies
n = 53

- Reputation – defending
  n = 10

- Norm – enforcing
  n = 3

- Self-image compensating
  n = 28

- Self-defending
  n = 4

- Pressure-removing
  n = 8

Self-image defending
n = 9

Self-image promoting
n = 19

Dehumanizing
n = 4

Bullying
n = 4

Explaining
n = 4
The least common strategies reflected violence for self-defence and norm-enforcement. *Self-defenders* typically engaged in violence as a reaction to real or perceived threat by feared opponents. Although masculinity may have been inherently involved in this type of violence, Toch (1992) argued that for the most part, paranoia was more prominent. In contrast, *norm-enforcers* most closely embodied the idea of hegemonic masculinity. In particular, these men defined themselves as protectors of their close family and friends, and as defenders of ‘justice’ and ‘morality’.

The dehumanising strategies represented by *bullying, exploitation, self-indulging* and “catharting” (Toch, 1992, p.134), represent slightly different strategies for enacting masculinity. For example, ‘exploiters’ used violence when their attempts at control through manipulation were unsuccessful. ‘Bullies’ used violence to overcome their own sense of fear by provoking fear in others. The ‘self-indulgers’ were driven by a sense of entitlement, especially when they perceived that their needs were not met. In addition, over time these men had developed a belief that the world was an inherently unfair and often malevolent place, which further reinforced their views that violence was an effective way of achieving their goals. Finally, the ‘catharsis’ strategy was the only one that lacked a masculine element. According to Toch (1992), men in this category used violence indiscriminately often to alleviate a wide range of predominantly negative emotional states.

The typologies developed by Toch indicate that violence may have been internalised and became a way for these men to achieve and enact a particular identity. Violence as a means of self-preservation was most closely linked with masculinity. For the majority of men in Toch’s study, violence was perceived as a valuable way of communicating to the self and to others that the individual was worthy of respect and that his status as someone to be feared (and admired) was justified.
There are parallels between Toch’s strategies and the implicit theories identified by Polaschek et al. (2008), especially in regard to the normalisation of violence as a background assumption. At a more specific level, violence as a strategy for self-enhancement and self-preservation was observed in both studies, despite the divergent samples and historical periods for data collection.13 This provides preliminary, albeit indirect support for the contention that beliefs about violence are linked to masculinity, which in turn may influence information processing biases related to the selective attention to threat cues in the environment, and the attribution of hostile intent. Masculinity may, for example, be conceptualised as a constellation of beliefs about manliness and violence.

Drawing on the cognitive neoassociative framework (Berkowitz, 1990) discussed in the previous chapter, it is possible to further conceptualise an associative network of schemas, such that the activation of beliefs about manliness may lead to the simultaneous activation of schemas about violence. Although this hypothesised relationship has not been empirically investigated, it is consistent with the argument that for some men, violence is perceived as an effective strategy for promoting and enhancing a masculine identity (Polaschek et al., 2008). It remains unclear however whether masculinity and masculine beliefs are differentially associated with violence in adolescence and young adulthood. Although Messerschmidt’s work focused predominantly on violence in younger men, the research discussed in this section suggests that masculinity is relevant throughout adulthood.

**Masculine violence in young adulthood**

Messerschmidt’s (1993) argument reflects the assumption that hegemonic masculinity enacted through violence is especially important during adolescence. Not only do young

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13 While Toch’s work was published in 1992, it was based on interviews conducted in the 1950s.
disenfranchised men have less access to resources that allow for the construction of alternative, and less violent, masculinities, but the developmental period stretching from middle adolescence to young adulthood is also marked by an increased concern with identity formation (Erikson, 1963; McAdams, 1996; Tanti, Stukas, Halloran & Foddy, 2008). For some individuals, violence may provide a means through which to establish a desired identity that is fundamentally grounded in their beliefs about masculinity. This is likely to be the case for young men who live in hostile environments, where violence is not only normalised but also valued.

Recently, Crowther, Goodson, McGuire and Dickson (2012) argued that the social-cognition literature does not pay sufficient attention to the social context within which schemas and cognitive processes emerge. While much is known about processing biases in aggressive children and adolescents, there is a dearth of research exploring how these biases are linked to the way individuals understand their aggressive behaviour. Crowther et al. (2012) further argue that social environments marked by relative deprivation would give rise to belief systems that normalise violence, and that individuals therefore contextualise their violent behaviour within their broader understanding of their own identity.

In their study, Crowther et al. (2012) interviewed 11 boys aged 12 to 16 years who had engaged in aggressive behaviour while attending a school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. All participants were identified as coming from low socio-economic backgrounds, defined as living in a poor neighbourhood, in a single-parent household, and receiving free school meals. Data analysis revealed a central core concept labelled ‘becoming a fighter’ that was the result of ‘living in hostility’ and that had a reciprocal relationship with ‘earning respect’. That is, for the young men in this study, developing a reputation as a fighter was centrally important to their self-definitions and their understanding of violence, but the genesis of this identity lay in their perceptions of living in hostile environments. For example, for many participants violence was always justified because of
their underlying assumption of anticipated victimisation. Similar to the hostile attribution bias discussed in the previous chapter, the young boys perceived that violence was necessary and justified because they lived in hostile environments marked by attempts at domination and intimidation by others. Moreover, violence was perceived as a way of demonstrating self-worth based on the perception of strength and toughness. In this normative context, demonstrating that one was able and willing to engage in physical fights, and developing a reputation as a fighter led to enhanced social standing and a decreased likelihood of victimisation.

For the boys in Crowther et al.’s (2012) study, becoming a fighter and earning respect were mutually reinforcing concepts. That is, by showing a willingness to fight, these boys were able to earn respect from their peers, and this respect was further reinforced by a boy’s willingness to fight. In this context, fighting was perceived as necessary not only for earning respect, but also for maintaining status. Therefore, violent retaliation to perceived insults (i.e., disrespect) was fundamentally linked to beliefs in the inherent strength of the individual. In contrast, an unwillingness to engage in violence in the face of disrespect was perceived as a sign of weakness. However, a low tolerance for disrespect, rather than fighting per se was more important in creating the ‘fighter’ identity.

These results indicate that even during the early stages of adolescence violence is linked to concepts of respect and status, which are in turn fundamental attributes of masculinity. Similar results have been obtained in studies with older adolescents and young adults. For example, Lopez and Emmer (2000) interviewed a sample of 24 male juvenile violent offenders (14 to 20 year olds) recruited from a treatment centre and a halfway house in Texas. The aim of the study was to explore the way juvenile offenders defined, interpreted and justified engaging in violent behaviour. Results showed that motivations for violence interacted with beliefs to produce four overarching motivational categories of violence: namely reward-driven, emotion-driven, belief-driven, and mixed. Masculine violence was
evident for the reward and belief-driven categories, but not for the emotion and mixed-motive categories. For example, reward-driven violence was associated with achieving power and asserting dominance. Violence was used to procure tangible rewards and to enhance or preserve the individual’s self-concept as tough and powerful. Moreover, violence was perceived as necessary and justified, but only to the extent that the victim(s) did not comply with the offender’s expectations (i.e., if the victim fought back, resisted, or somehow antagonised the offender). Lopez and Emmer (2000) also found that onlookers would increase the likelihood of violence being chosen as a predominant strategy, presumably because of the impact that a non-violent reaction would have on a juvenile offender’s identity.

Similarly, the belief-driven category was defined by violence as a means of maintaining identity integrity. Belief-driven violence usually occurred as a result of a perceived threat, harm, or insult, and was associated with satisfaction, lack of remorse and/or regret, and a ‘hero’ self-perception. Specifically, violence was used to protect and enhance the self-concept of a tough, ruthless and dominant male. Within this context violence was perceived as both justified and necessary. In contrast, for the juvenile offenders in the emotion-driven category, violence was perceived as an effective means of alleviating negative affect, especially anger, sadness, grief, confusion or loss. While not always considered justified or necessary, violence was defined as an effective coping strategy and was therefore valued. Finally, juvenile offenders in the mixed-contexts category reported only using violence due to situational contingencies such as when victims were not compliant or the situation changed unexpectedly. Therefore, violence was inherently functional and rarely associated with pleasure or catharsis (Lopez & Emmer, 2000).

Masculinity was again a prominent theme in this research, although not all violence was motivated by a desire for status, dominance, power or respect. Although it is possible that masculine beliefs are differentially associated with reactive forms of violence, it is also
possible that different types of violence are linked to different constructions of masculinity. For example, reactive violence may be associated with a masculinity defined by dominance and power, while proactive violence may be associated with a masculinity defined by the accumulation of wealth, restrained violence, and cunning. To date, however, these issues have not been systematically explored.

There is some evidence that assaultive violence, which is typically defined as reactive, is associated with the notion of male confrontational violence as discussed by Polk (1994), but that this violence is more common in older compared to younger adults. For example Deibert and Meithe (2003) used a stratified sample of 185 cases involving non-domestic assaults with a weapon taken from a larger pool of 7,102 cases reported to the Las Vegas Police Department in 1998. The authors investigated the situational and individual factors that contributed to the escalation to violence in confrontations that resulted in assault. In particular, Deibert and Meithe (2003) postulated that escalation would be most common in situations defined as character contests (Goffman, 1967), or situations where both parties tried to assert their status in the face of perceived provocation and disrespect.

Character-contests were apparent in approximately 66% of dispute-related assaults, but were also disproportionately more likely to occur amongst young (i.e., under 25 years old) African-American and Hispanic males. Paradoxically however, older (i.e., over 25 years old) Hispanic males were 2.35 more likely to be involved in character contests that resulted in violence. That is, while younger males were overrepresented in the sample of assaults, it was the older males who were more likely to engage in violence due to a desire to assert their status.

These results raise the issue of culturally defined and shared ideologies of masculinity, and in particular the concept of machismo. There seems to be some academic consensus that Latin and certain European cultures are defined by a prevailing ‘macho’ ideology whereby
men and women endorse rigid, traditional gender roles (Barker & Loewenstein, 1997; Gilmore, 1990). Conceptually, machismo and masculinity appear to share some common elements, although machismo is a broader concept that attempts to capture the culturally idealised version of masculinity particular to Latin American cultures (Torres, Solberg & Carlstrom, 2002). However, amongst the myriad beliefs about masculinity and femininity contained within the concept of machismo, there is a strong emphasis on defending honour (Torres et al., 2002). In this respect, it may be that Latin American men are more sensitive to slights, insults or challenges to their honour. This may help to explain their over-representation in North American statistics on crime and incarceration (Truman, 2011; Warren, Chiricos & Bales, 2012).

However, based on an extensive cross-cultural analysis, Gilmore (1990) argued that despite some cultural variation in the characteristics, traits, attitudes and beliefs idealised as inherently masculine, there is a near universal aspect to masculinity. Specifically, beliefs about virility in conjunction with a desire to protect and defend one’s women, family/kinship groups, and territory are evident across widely divergent cultures. This indicates that while cultural variations are important, there may be an essential element of masculinity defined by violence and aggression. As such, the fact that Hispanic males in the Deibert and Meithe (2003) study were more likely to respond to perceived challenges with violence, may not be an artefact of their machismo. Instead, it may simply reflect a broader masculine belief that threats to honour require violent retaliation.

Deibert and Meithe (2003) also found a statistically significant three-way interaction between perpetrator gender, victim gender and the location of the assault. The greatest likelihood of character-contests (odds ratio of 2.35) was observed for assaults that occurred in public between males. Similarly, a statistically significant interaction was found for perpetrator age and the presence of bystanders, such that older perpetrators were more likely to engage in violence in the presence of an audience (Deibert & Meithe, 2003). Counter to the masculinity 123
arguments proposed by Messerschmidt (1993) and Polk (1994) this interaction held regardless of gender. In fact, the odds ratio was higher for older female perpetrators engaging in violence in the presence of bystanders, than for older male perpetrators (2.20 and 1.23 respectively).

The research reviewed thus far provides partial support to the contention that violence committed by young males can be understood as an inherently masculine enterprise, the aim of which is to enact and preserve a self-concept based on an idealised masculinity. The presence of bystanders in male-on-male assaults indicates that respect, dominance and status are important concepts in the escalation to violence. However, the results of Deibert and Meithe’s (2003) study also indicate that masculine violence is relevant in older adults.

**Masculine violence in later adulthood**

Research exploring the role of masculinity in older adult offenders has identified similar themes to those discussed in the previous section. This is consistent with the continuity and stability arguments proposed in the developmental criminology and social-cognition literatures. Beliefs about masculinity and violence that develop in early life are thought to become entrenched through their continued use, thereby leading to stability in the way these beliefs are linked within cognitive systems (i.e., Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge, 2006; Huesmann, 1998). Similarly, there is continuity in behaviour, such that violence in early life is a strong predictor of violence in adolescence and adulthood (e.g., Farrington, 1991; Farrington et al., 2009).

Despite the strong evidence for continuity in violent behaviour and aggressive cognition, there has been relatively little research investigating whether older adult males endorse a similar version of masculinity as their younger counterparts. Although masculinity appears to
be important throughout adulthood, it remains unclear whether definitions of masculinity show the same level of continuity and stability as individuals mature. It seems reasonable to postulate however that older offenders will be less concerned with identity formation. In this context, violence may come to serve different functions during middle and late adulthood, thereby reflecting different beliefs about masculinity.

A study by Bennett and Brookman (2009) provides some indirect evidence for this contention. These authors investigated differences in the way violence was rationalised in assault compared to robbery as reported by a group of 55 adult prisoners in the United Kingdom. While the study involved male and female prisoners, the majority of participants were male and on average 27 years old. Data were obtained through individual semi-structured interviews and were coded to reflect four motivations for violence that have been previously identified with violent offenders, namely to successfully enact and complete the offence, to achieve a buzz, to protect or assert an individual’s status and honour, or to seek informal justice. Table 6 provides a summary of the main results.

Table 6  
Frequency of reported motivations for robbery and assault

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation/Theme</th>
<th>Robbery (%)</th>
<th>Assault (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Successful offence enactment</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buzz</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status and honour</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal justice</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen, the most prevalent motivation for robbery was the successful enactment of the offence, which typically involved violence for purposive or instrumental goals. That is, violence was used to subdue a victim, gain victim compliance and to establish or regain
control of a situation. For some offenders, violence was employed pre-emptively as a form of intimidation to avoid victim non-compliance (Bennett & Brookman, 2009).

The second most prevalent motivation was to achieve informal justice. Here, the aim of violence was to retaliate against a wrong and violence was used to send a message to the victim. A substantial proportion of robbery offenders also described engaging in violence for ‘thrills’. Offenders described feeling an adrenaline rush that outweighed the financial benefits of robbery. Others described engaging in robbery for the purpose of provoking physical confrontations, describing the pleasure associated with fighting. Finally, the pleasure of violence was also associated with fear. Here, violence was pleasurable because it gave the perpetrator a sense of power and control (Bennett & Brookman, 2009).

The least frequently cited motivation – status and honour - was also the one most closely linked to the definition of masculinity that is typically endorsed by younger offenders. For these robbery offenders a reputation for violence, or even a reputation for a willingness to use violence, elevated their status amongst their peers which led to increased respect (Bennett & Brookman, 2009).

In contrast, asserting status and defending honour, as well as exacting informal justice were the most frequently cited motivations for engaging in violence amongst assault offenders. For example, assault offenders reported engaging in violence as a means of enhancing a reputation as tough, which translated to respect from their peers. Reputations grounded in violence also served to minimise potential victimisation. In this respect, reputation appeared to be closely associated with masculinity, in that violence was equated with strength, courage and fearlessness (Bennett & Brookman, 2009). Similarly, violence in the pursuit of informal justice was associated with a desire to exact revenge for real or perceived disrespect.
Although ‘achieving a buzz’ was the least cited motivation for violence, some offenders nevertheless reported experiencing a sense of excitement and pleasure through fighting. In particular, winning the fight, rather than fighting per se, was considered pleasurable especially in the presence of an audience (Bennett & Brookman, 2009). While the authors did not explore why winning was perceived as pleasurable by these offenders, it can be postulated that for some men, physically overpowering and beating an opponent engenders feelings of worth, strength and power. This may provide confirmation, to themselves and to their peers, that they are worthy of respect.

The results of Bennett and Brookman’s (2009) study indicate that there may not be substantive differences in the masculine beliefs of younger and older violent offenders. Specifically, a desire for respect has been identified as an important concept associated with violence regardless of age. However, there also appears to be a subtle difference between respect linked to status, and respect achieved by correcting a perceived wrong. Specifically, status has social elements, in that a person has status relative to the social standing of others. Violence in this context may be about gaining respect through dominance and power. On the other hand, justice can have social as well as more personal connotations. In this case, violence may be used to achieve self-respect. Although status may flow from seeking informal justice, it is possible that this is a by-product of an underlying desire to increase feelings of self-worth. Whether there are age differences in the way violence is used to achieve different types of respect remains to be investigated.

A study conducted by Presser (2008) provides some evidence that definitions of masculinity and violence in older adults may be qualitatively different from that of younger adults. Presser (2008) conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 27 incarcerated violent offenders, with a view to gaining a better understanding of how these men constructed a coherent life-story that was able to account for who they perceived themselves to be in the context of the violence they had engaged in. The men were on average 35 years old, with an
age range of 17 to 57 years. Presser (2008) reports that seven offenders (26% of the 
sample) followed a stability narrative, characterised by a tendency to perceive themselves as 
always inherently decent regardless of their violent behaviour. For these men, violence was 
not problematic but rather was conceptualised as honourable and masculine. For some, 
vioence was appropriate as long as it was used in a manner consistent with 'codes of 
honour’. These codes not only dictated the situations where violence was acceptable, but 
also determined who should be victimised. In particular, violence was perceived as 
honourable if it had a purpose and was restrained (Presser, 2008).

For many of the participants, violence for the protection of women, and in contests over or 
on behalf of women was always perceived as justified. Moreover, some men invoked notions 
of chivalry in describing their violence, highlighting the virtuousness of protectionist attitudes 
towards women (Presser, 2008)\textsuperscript{14}. This represents one element of hegemonic masculinity 
associated with respect and dominance.

Presser’s research indicates that older violent offenders may not only use violence differently 
to their younger counterparts, but may also have different conceptions of masculinity. 
Specifically, definitions of honour appear to shift through adulthood, with younger men 
defining honour as the \textit{willingness} to fight, and older men defining honour as the ability to 
show restraint in violence. Underlying both of these definitions of honour is the issue of 
respect, which appears to be salient in both younger and older adult offenders.

One issue that remains unexplored, however, is the way turning points may influence how 
vioence and masculinity are defined. According to Messerschmidt (1993), older men will 
have access to a different set of resources that may allow for the construction of an

\textsuperscript{14} Many of the men who justified violence as chivalrous, masculine and protectionist also engaged in 
a substantial degree of violence \textit{against} women. This type of violence was neutralized quite 
differently. Specifically, the men invoked more conventional techniques by focussing on remorse, 
when justifying this type of violence.
alternative, and less violent masculinity. One possible resource or turning point occurring within the private domain is marriage (e.g., Farrington, 1995; Sampson & Laub, 2005a; Theobald & Farrington, 2009). An additional resource that has not been explored in the literature is parenthood, particularly for younger offenders. According to Theobald and Farrington (2009) the positive effects of marriage are most pronounced with younger men and it may be that marriage and parenthood in early adulthood provide the requisite resources that allow for a shift in masculine identity, and potentially a concomitant change in the situations where violence is perceived as justified.

For older adults, however, changed definitions of masculinity may be more closely aligned with maturity. In particular, violent offenders who spend long periods of their adult life incarcerated may develop alternative definitions of masculinity, in part based on their own experiences with violence. For these individuals, respect may still be important but alternative methods of achieving respect may become favoured. Again, this is an issue that to date has not been widely investigated.

**Summary**

The research presented in this chapter indicates that violent offenders have a potentially unique set of beliefs that not only promote violence, but can also explain the attentional, attributional and evaluative biases identified in the social information processing literature. Concepts of masculinity, such as status, honour, respect and dominance, appear to be at the core of these beliefs. Respect in particular emerges as a salient theme in research with violent offenders, and is perhaps the concept best suited to explaining why violent individuals are hyper-vigilant towards social cues signalling potential threat and insults (e.g., James & Seager, 2006; Topalli, 2005b). For individuals who endorse an idealised masculinity where self-worth is defined by how much respect they command, violence may
become an effective strategy of communicating to others that disrespect will not be tolerated. In this instance, social cues signalling potential disrespect may become selectively attended to, leading to the interpretation of hostility. From a social-information processing perspective, with time these cognitive linkages are presumed to become entrenched such that violence becomes the default reaction to perceived disrespect.

However, according to Messerschmidt (1993) the relationship between masculinity and violence is also a function of the resources available to individuals. From this perspective, violence becomes a primary site for young, disenfranchised men to construct a version of masculinity that at an abstract level is culturally valued. That is, when individuals do not have access to resources through which to enact a more conventional masculinity, they will perceive violence as an effective means of achieving valued masculine attributes, including power, control, and status.

Although Messerschmidt’s argument is fundamentally sociological, it provides a theoretical framework for understanding how masculinity and masculine beliefs may lead to violence, especially amongst young men from disadvantaged backgrounds. The idea of different masculinities that are determined, at least in part, by the resources available to an individual, implies that a man’s self-concept is grounded in his beliefs about what it means to be masculine within specific socio-cultural and socio-political contexts. This in turn provides a link to the research by Polaschek et al. (2008) and Toch (1992). Specifically, for persistently violent offenders, who are typically socially and economically marginalised, violence is perceived as an important way of promoting and enhancing a self-image that is based on culturally valued concepts of status, dominance and control. Masculinity therefore appears to be a useful concept for bridging the multiple perspectives discussed in the preceding chapters.
Integrating masculinity with developmental and cognitive perspectives

The research reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 showed that for a small group of individuals, persistent offending is the result of a latent antisocial potential that emerges in early life (e.g., Farrington, 2003a, 2005c). The genesis of this long-term antisocial potential has been linked to significant disadvantage experienced in childhood, in combination with internal predispositions that heighten the impact of criminogenic environments (Farrington 2005a; Loeber et al., 2003; Moffitt, 2007). Although antisocial potential can fluctuate throughout the life-course, it is thought to be persistent in the sense that antisocial behaviour is evident across multiple life domains and extends into middle and late adulthood (e.g., Farrington et al., 2006; Farrington et al., 2009; Odgers et al., 2008; Piquero et al., 2010). However, turning points in adulthood associated with marriage and employment, have been found to decrease antisocial potential. In fact, according to Sampson and Laub (2005a), marriage may be able to change the antisocial and criminal trajectories of even the most persistent offenders. This change is further presumed to be promoted by changes in self-definitions and roles associated with increased attachment to formal and informal agents of social control (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Sampson & Laub, 2005a). This may also lead to changes in the way masculinity is defined15.

As discussed in Chapter 4, persistent violent offenders are characterised by a pattern of information processing that is biased towards attributions of hostile intent and positive evaluations of violence (e.g., Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge, 2006; Walters, 2007a). These processing biases are in turn a function of beliefs where violence is perceived not only as

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15 Cross-sectional, qualitative data like that used in the majority of studies exploring these issues cannot be used to draw firm conclusions about change over time. Narratives are constructed and reconstructed as individuals attempt to build (both privately and publicly) a coherent story of who they are and how they came to be that way (e.g., McAdams, 2004). As such, reconstructed beliefs associated with behaviour may not provide the most objective measure of change, or the processes leading to change. With these caveats in mind, the argument being proposed here is that developmental processes are likely to influence beliefs about violence and masculinity. Whether individuals are able to accurately report such changes is a question that remains open for debate. This however, does not negate the possibility that life changes can lead to concomitant changes in self-definitions, including beliefs about masculinity and violence.
normal but also as functional and in many situations necessary. Developmentally, the
genesis of these beliefs and concomitant processing patterns appears to be in early
childhood. In fact, consistent with the developmental criminology literature, internal factors in
combination with criminogenic environments set the stage for the development of a world-
view characterised by persistent beliefs in the inherent hostility and maliciousness of others
(e.g., Dodge, 2006; Walters, 1990, 2002a). Moreover, this world-view appears to develop in
early childhood and to persist throughout the life-course, especially amongst the small sub-
group of individuals who show aggressive behaviour in early life.

Overarching these developmental and cognitive perspectives is the role of masculinity.
Specifically, masculinity can be conceptualised as a cognitive construct, in that it involves a
set of beliefs related to an individual’s self-concept or identity. Masculinity is also socially
constructed, in that people tend to agree on characteristic masculine attributes (Cohen &
Nisbett, 1997; Gilmore, 1990; Messerschmidt, 1993). Therefore, there may be a reciprocal
relationship between structural turning points and masculinity. That is, definitions of
masculinity may enable individuals to perceive turning points like marriage as meaningful
and important, which may in turn lead to changing definitions of masculinity. Through a
change in the structural opportunities to engage in violence, as well as changed social roles,
based patterns of information processing may be accessed less frequently, thereby further
leading to decreased antisocial potential.

The research reviewed in this chapter also raises the possibility that masculinity may take on
different meanings at different stages of the adult life-course. Although respect and to a
certain extent status appear to be important for younger and older adult offenders, there is
the suggestion that qualitative differences exist in the way violence is used by younger and
older violent offenders. This raises the possibility that certain elements of masculinity are
more salient during early adulthood while other, perhaps less violent aspects, begin to
emerge at later stages of adulthood.
These hypothesised relationships are explored in the chapters that follow. In particular, the next chapter describes the results of a quantitative study with incarcerated violent offenders. The study investigates age-graded differences in criminal thinking styles linked to masculinity and interpretative biases, as measured by Walters’ (1995) Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (PICTS). To assist with the interpretation of the results obtained in the quantitative study, a qualitative study was conducted with 15 incarcerated offenders. The aim of the qualitative study was to further explore and elaborate on the relationship between beliefs about violence and masculinity at different stages of the adult life-course. Together, the two studies presented in the following chapters attempt to address a neglected area of study: namely, the intersections between age, masculinity and beliefs about violence.
Chapter 6

Study 1
Age-related differences in the criminal thinking styles of violent offenders

Aims

The literature reviewed in the previous chapters shows that developmental processes are likely to play an important role in cognition. However, the literature also raises a number of important contradictions and paradoxes that require further elaboration. According to the principles outlined in the Social Information Processing (SIP) model (Crick & Dodge, 1994), reciprocal relationships between schemas and information processing biases are thought to develop early in life and become entrenched through chronic activation (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge, 2006). This implies that as individuals mature, they become increasingly reliant on cognitive shorts that increase the likelihood of interpreting socially ambiguous information in schema-supportive ways. From this perspective, information is processed in a way that reinforces pre-existing beliefs about violence.

Alternatively, it can be argued that developmental processes have the opposite effect. That is, as individuals mature their beliefs about violence may change, leading to a concomitant change in information processing. While this hypothesis has not been directly investigated, there is some evidence that adulthood is associated with sometimes significant changes in beliefs about the self and the world (e.g., McAdams, 2001; McAdams, Hart & Maruna, 1998). From this perspective, significant life events can impact on self-schemas that influence the way information is attended to and interpreted. As beliefs about the self and the world
change, information will start to be processed in a way that is consistent with these beliefs. For violent offenders, possible changes in beliefs about masculinity and violence may be especially pertinent.

Given these possible relationships, the aim of this study is to investigate whether younger and older adult violent offenders show differences in thinking styles that have been linked to information processing biases and masculinity. As discussed in the previous chapter, masculinity is a broad, socially-defined concept that is not easily amenable to categorisation and measurement. Despite the conceptual difficulties associated with the operationalisation of masculinity (Hoffman, 2001; Smiler, 2004) it has often been operationalised and measured as masculine gender role identity, masculine traits, and to a lesser extent, beliefs associated with idealised versions of masculinity (Smiler, 2004).

For the purpose of this study masculinity was operationalised in reference to a cognitive style marked by a tendency towards self-assertion and dominance in interpersonal situations. Specifically, masculinity was measured through scores on the Self-Assertion/Deception Scale of the Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (PICTS; Walters, 1995), which purports to measure a pattern of thinking marked by a desire for power and interpersonal dominance. In this respect, the Self-Assertion/Deception scale can be considered a proxy measure of masculine role identity. Four hypotheses will be investigated in this study:

Hypothesis 1 – Younger offenders are more likely than older offenders to engage in a pattern of thinking characterised by cognitive shortcuts, attributions of hostility, a desire for power and control, and minimisation of responsibility.

Hypothesis 2 – Older offenders are more likely than younger offenders to minimise the extent of their ‘criminal identity’.
Hypothesis 3 – Younger offenders are more likely than older offenders to engage in a pattern of criminal thinking that reflects a masculine role identity.

Hypothesis 4 – Older offenders are more likely than younger offenders to engage in a pattern of criminal thinking characterised by attributions of hostility. In particular, by virtue of their age, older offenders are hypothesised to have more entrenched processing patterns biased towards the attribution of hostility and malice in others.

The first hypothesis proposes that younger offenders will score significantly higher than older offenders on a number of specific thinking styles that are considered proxies for the interpretative biases identified in the social-cognition literature. Specifically, it is proposed that younger offenders will score significantly higher on the Mollification, Power Orientation, Entitlement, Superoptimism and Cognitive Indolence thinking styles of the PICTS, compared to older offenders. The second hypothesis states that older offenders will score significantly higher on the Sentimentality thinking style of the PICTS than younger offenders. It is argued that older offenders, by virtue of their developmental stage will be more likely to emphasise the non-criminal elements of their identity and lifestyle. This hypothesis therefore provides a partial test for the argument that definitions of masculinity centred on toughness and aggression will be less salient for older, compared to younger offenders.

The third hypothesis provides a more direct test for the relationship between thinking styles and masculinity. In particular, Walters (2001c) found that scores on the Self- Assertion/Deception scale had a significant, positive correlation with a measure of masculine role identity. Moreover, Walters has argued that Self-Assertion/Deception measures a pattern of thinking characterised by a desire for power and control, as well as beliefs of entitlement and dominance. Drawing on Messerschmidt’s (1993) argument that younger men will have limited access to resources that allow for the construction of a version of masculinity that is less dependent on violence, it is hypothesised that the desire for power and control in particular will be more pronounced in younger violent offenders. Therefore, the
third hypothesis states that younger offenders will score significantly higher on the Self-Assertion/Deception scale of the PICTS compared to older offenders.

Finally, to investigate the paradox identified in the developmental and social-cognition literature, the final hypothesis explores whether chronically accessed patterns of thinking lead to an entrenched pattern of evaluating social stimuli. Drawing on Walters' (2006) argument that the Reactive Thinking composite scale is a proxy measure of interpretative biases, it was hypothesised that older offenders would have relied on these patterns of thinking for longer periods than their younger counterparts and would therefore show an increased reliance on cognitive shortcuts to process information. Therefore, the final hypothesis states that older offenders will score significantly higher on the Reactive Thinking composite scale compared to younger offenders.

Participants

Participants were adult, male violent offenders incarcerated at a 300-bed medium-security prison which aims to provide specialist rehabilitation services. Of the 313 offenders for whom data were available, four were serving a term of imprisonment for sexual offences and were therefore excluded. An additional 52 cases were deleted due to missing data for all of the variables used in this study. The exclusion of sex offenders requires some explanation.

16 While this hypothesis may appear to be conceptually similar to hypothesis 1 it is in fact testing subtly different process. In particular, hypothesis 1 reflects the argument that younger offenders will be more impulsive in their thinking, and will be more likely to have patterns of thinking characterised by a desire for power, social dominance and control, consistent with an idealised definition of masculinity grounded in violence. In contrast, hypothesis 4 tests the assumption that with age and repeated usage, chronically activated styles of thinking will become entrenched and therefore automatically accessed when new social stimuli are presented. Together, these hypotheses provide an exploratory test of the apparent contradiction in the developmental criminology, social cognition and masculinity literature between stability over time (i.e., cognitive styles become entrenched with chronic usage) and change (i.e., life experiences provide new opportunities for growth, which may lead to changes in self and world-views).
First, while it can be argued that criminal thinking is a property of offenders, rather than of the type of offence they commit, the PICTS has not been validated, nor has it been extensively applied in research with this offender population. The exception is a study by Hatch-Maillete, Scalora, Huss & Baumgartner (2001) who used the PICTS to identify whether child sex offenders could be differentiated from non-sex violent offenders on the PICTS thinking styles. Results indicated that child molesters had different PICTS clinical profiles compared to non-sex offenders, although there were no statistically significant differences between the groups on specific thinking styles. This indicates that the PICTS was able to identify clinically meaningful differences between child molesters and non-sex violent offenders, but was less successful at identifying specific differences related to patterns of cognition (Hatch-Maillete et al., 2001).

Second, social cognitive research has consistently indicated that sex offenders (both rapists and child molesters) have qualitatively different implicit theories to non-sex violent offenders (e.g., Beech, Fisher & Ward, 2005; Blake & Gannon, 2009; Polaschek et al., 2008; Polaschek & Gannon, 2004; Thakker, Ward & Navathe, 2007). While there may be some overlap in the way offenders in general perceive the world, child molesters are thought to represent a distinct group of offenders. Finally, the focus on male-to-male confrontational violence does not logically extend to sex offenders.

Nevertheless, it cannot be guaranteed that the violent offenders included here had not engaged in sex offences in their past. While there was no indication that violent offenders had committed any previous sexual offence, this does not preclude the possibility that such offences had been committed but had not come to the attention of the criminal justice system. With these issues in mind, the data presented here are based on the 248 men with a non-sex index offence and no identifiable history of sexual crimes. Table 7 provides a summary of the demographic profile of the offenders in this study.

Table 7
Demographic profile of 248 incarcerated violent offenders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic information</th>
<th>Variable category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Younger (19-29)</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Older (30-60)</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest education level</td>
<td>Year 8 or below</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 9</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TAFE certificate</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed at time of</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incarceration</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>De-facto</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Anglo-Australian</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indigenous Australian</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean age of the sample was 32.06 years (SD=8.37) with ages ranging from 19 to 60 years. On average participants had served four prison sentences (M=4.07, SD=3.75, range = 1-23) and two community based orders (M= 2.01, SD=2.96, range = 0-20). Almost one-quarter of the sample (23.8%) were currently serving a sentence for armed robbery, with another 19% serving a sentence for intentionally causing serious injury. Aggravated burglary (9.7%), recklessly causing serious injury (8.9%), manslaughter (5.2%) and murder (4.8%) were the other offences represented amongst this group of violent offenders. Most

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17 In Victoria, the secondary education system commences in Year 8 when children are approximately 13 years old and extends through to Year 12. TAFE is a post-secondary vocational training institution that offers technical courses.
participants were identified as Anglo-Australian with low educational attainment. At the time of incarceration slightly more reported being employed, and the majority were single.\(^{18}\)

### Measures

**The Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles**

The PICTS is an 80-item self-report questionnaire which purports to measure the thinking patterns that support and maintain a criminal lifestyle. The PICTS is theoretically grounded in Walters' theory of lifestyle criminality (Walters, 1990) which posits an interaction between conditions (i.e., internal and external factors at the physical, social and psychological level that exert influence over behaviour), choices (which can be restricted by the conditions in an individual’s life) and cognitions (which result from the interaction between conditions and choices). Walters' main theoretical assumption is that these three factors can explain the aetiology and maintenance of chronic criminal and antisocial behaviour.

The PICTS consists of two eight-item validity scales (Confusion-Revised and Defensiveness-Revised) and eight thinking style scales, each of which is made up of eight items. All items are rated on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 4 ('strongly agree') to 1 ('strongly disagree'). All items on the Defensiveness scale are reverse scored (Walters, 2001b). The eight thinking styles are labelled Mollification, Cutoff, Entitlement, Power Orientation, Sentimentality, Superoptimism, Cognitive Indolence and Discontinuity. Scores on each scale range from 8-32, with higher scores indicating greater endorsement of that

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\(^{18}\) The demographic information reported above indicates that the sample was comprised of serious offenders. However, ethics approval for this study did not allow access to individual criminal history files. Given the absence of reliable indices in the dataset it was not possible to determine the true extent of violence amongst this sample. While it would have been possible to construct a proxy variable, this may not have been an accurate representation of the official criminal histories of these men.
particular criminal thinking style. The PICTS items can also be combined to produce: four factor scales (Problem Avoidance, Interpersonal Hostility, Self-Assertion/Deception, and Denial of Harm – Walters, 1995); two content scales (Current and Historical - Walters, 2002b); two composite scales (Proactive and Reactive – Walters, 2006); a Fear-of-Change scale (Walters, 2001a); and a General Criminal Thinking (GCT) score. A description of the PICTS thinking styles and scales, along with psychometric information is reported in Table 8 (below).

**Factor Scales**

The four factor scales were derived from a factor analysis (Walters, 1995; 2005a), and each comprises 10 items taken from the individual thinking styles. Problem Avoidance is comprised of items from the Cutoff, Cognitive Indolence and Discontinuity thinking styles. According to Walters (1995) this factor scale measures an individual’s tendency towards lazy and erratic thinking. Walters (2005a) has further argued that this factor scale can be conceptualised as a cognitive mechanism that allows individuals to justify engaging in criminal behaviour (Walters, 2005a). The Interpersonal Hostility scale is comprised of items from the Cutoff, Entitlement, Power Orientation and Superoptimism thinking styles. Walters (1995) argued that there was no obvious underlying construct to this scale, although it does appear to reflect a hostile and arrogant interpersonal style. Self-Assertion/Deception comprises items from the Mollification, Cutoff, Entitlement, Superoptimism and Discontinuity thinking styles and reflects an attitude of entitlement. Finally, Denial of Harm includes items from the Mollification and Sentimentality thinking styles and is associated with a tendency to minimise the harmful consequences of criminal behaviour (Walters, 1995; 2005a). Scores on the factor scales range from 10 to 40, with higher scores indicative of a greater tendency towards the different types of criminal thinking represented by each scale.
**Content Scales**

The two content scales were developed to approximate the static/dynamic distinction found in the risk assessment literature. In particular, Walters (2002b) argued that the Current content scale, which is comprised of 13 PICTS items written in the present tense, reflect an individual’s attitudes towards crime at the time of testing. In this respect they are conceptualised as amenable to change (i.e., equivalent to dynamic risk factors) in that they represent how an individual justifies criminal behaviour in the present. In contrast, the Historical content scale, comprised of 12 PICTS items written in the past tense, represents an individual’s past beliefs about, and justifications for crime. Walters (2002b) asserts that the Current scale measures change while the Historical scale measures stability. Scores on the Current scale range from 13 to 52, while scores on the Historical scale range from 12 to 48. In both cases higher scores indicate greater evidence of contemporary and historical cognitions supportive of criminal behaviour.

**Composite Scales**

More recently, Walters (2006) has developed two composite scales – Proactive and Reactive thinking. These two scales are theoretically linked to the social-cognition literature and in particular were developed to assess interpretative biases (Reactive Thinking) and positive outcome expectancies (Proactive Thinking). Moreover, the composite scales can be used as general measures of criminal thinking and have been found to have stronger psychometric properties than the thinking styles, factor or content scales (Walters, 2006; 2010). The Proactive composite combines the entitlement thinking style, the Self-Assertion/Deception Scale and the Historical content scale in the following way:

\[
\text{Proactive} = (\text{Entitlement} \times 2) + (\text{Self-Assertion/Deception} \times 1.5) + \text{Historical}
\]
Scores on the Proactive composite can range from 43 to 172, with higher scores indicative of a greater tendency to endorse a positive evaluation of one’s abilities as a criminal, as well as the positive outcomes associated with criminal behaviour. Similarly, the Reactive Composite scale is comprised of a combination of items from the Cutoff thinking style, the Problem Avoidance factor scale, and the Current content scale. The following formula is used to arrive at the score for Reactive thinking:

$$\text{Reactive} = (\text{Cutoff} \times 2) + (\text{Problem Avoidance} \times 1.5) + \text{Current}$$

Scores on this composite range from 44 to 176, with higher scores indicating a greater tendency to engage in cognitive shortcuts associated with interpretative biases. Finally, the 64 items can be summed to produce a total score, labelled General Criminal Thinking. The total score ranges from 64 to 256 with higher scores indicating greater evidence of global criminal thinking.

As detailed in Table 8 (below), the thinking styles and factor scales have moderate to good internal reliability coefficients, and test-retest reliabilities. The composite scales however outperform the thinking style and the factor scales, both in terms of internal consistency and test-retest reliability.
Table 8
Scale description and psychometric properties for the PICTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thinking styles</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mollification</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cutoff</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entitlement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power Orientation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sentimentality</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Superoptimism</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive Indolence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discontinuity</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Factor Scales**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem Avoidance</td>
<td>A pattern of thinking characterised by a tendency toward lazy and erratic thinking and/or a tendency to remove obstacles to engaging in crime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Hostility</td>
<td>A pattern of thinking characterised by hostility and arrogance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Assertion/Deception</td>
<td>A pattern of thinking characterised by entitlement and the desire to control and dominate others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of Harm</td>
<td>A pattern of thinking characterised by a tendency towards justifications and rationalisations that neutralize the harm caused by criminal activity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Content Scales**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current</td>
<td>Comprised of PICTS items written in the present tense. Represents a measure of an individual's current attitudes towards crime and offending.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>Comprised of PICTS items written in the past tense. Represents a measure of an individual's historical or static beliefs about crime and offending.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Composite Scales**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proactive</td>
<td>A composite measure that captures thinking styles associated with positive outcome expectancies for criminal behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive</td>
<td>A composite measure that captures thinking styles associated with interpretative biases.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**General Criminal Thinking**

| Description | A global measure of a pattern of thinking that supports and maintains criminal behaviour. |
Walters (1995; 2002c; 2010) has reported significant correlations between the eight thinking styles and four indices of criminal history, indicating that the PICTS has good criterion validity. Specifically, the results of a meta-analysis show that many of the thinking styles are positively and significantly correlated with measures of past criminality, including number of prior arrests and number of previous incarcerations. The PICTS thinking styles also show negative and significant correlations with age at first arrest and age at first incarceration (Walters, 2002c).

Moreover, Walters (1996) found that Cut-off, Entitlement, Power Orientation, Sentimentality, Cognitive Indolence, and Discontinuity were able to predict disciplinary infractions in a sample of 536 medium security inmates who were followed for 12 months, with age and Power Orientation emerging as the strongest predictors (Walters, 1996). Palmer and Hollin (2004a) report that with a sample of 174 male violent offenders incarcerated in England, only the Superoptimism scale was able to predict recidivism. However Walters (2005b) found that in a sample of 137 male medium-security prisoners in the United States, Cut-off was able to predict recidivism when it was measured dichotomously, whereas Entitlement was able to predict recidivism when dichotomous or continuous measures were used. These results indicate that the predictive validity of the thinking styles may be dependent on sample and study characteristics, and are therefore not likely to be stable measures of criminal outcomes. The results of a recent meta-analysis confirm this conclusion, showing that the thinking styles and composite scales have low to moderate predictive validity (Walters, 2010).

To date, the PICTS has been validated with male and female offenders in the United States, (Walters, 1995; Walters, Elliott & Miscoll, 1998); with male adult and juvenile offenders in the United Kingdom (Palmer & Hollin, 2003, 2004b); and with college students who self-reported engaging in delinquent and criminal behaviour (McCoy et al., 2006). The PICTS has also been used with sex offenders (Hatch-Maillete et al., 2001), although it has not been
specifically validated for use with this population. Currently, the PICTS has not been validated with an Australian prisoner or offender population.

**Data cleaning and screening**

Demographic, offence history and psychometric data collected by psychologists based at a correctional centre in the western region of Victoria, Australia formed the basis of the analyses reported in this study. The data were collected between April 2006 and October 2009, as part of the clinical assessment offenders undergo to determine eligibility for a moderate to high intensity violence program.

Age in years was converted into a dichotomous variable containing two levels – younger and older offenders. Drawing on current research from the developmental and cognitive psychology literature, a cut-off age of 29 years\(^\text{19}\) was used to demarcate between the ‘younger’ and the ‘older’ participants The younger offenders group comprised 110 individuals aged 19 to 29 years at the time of data collection (M=24.75, SD=3.08), with the older group comprising 138 individuals aged 30 to 60 years (M=37.89, SD=6.45).

Prior to data cleaning, response sets were checked for evidence of socially desirable responding. The two validity scales that have been built into the PICTS were used to identify response sets marked by a tendency to either ‘fake bad’ by exaggerating the presence of psychological problems (i.e., Confusion-Revised) or a defensive style of responding where the true extent of criminal thinking is minimised (i.e., Defensiveness-Revised). Standardised scores on the Confusion-Revised scale between 65 and 80 indicate ‘fake bad’ response

\(^{19}\) For example, developmental and cognitive psychologists tend to demarcate the period of young adulthood as ranging anywhere from age 18 to the mid-to-late 20s (e.g., Beumont & Pratt, 2011; Scheibe & Blanchard-Fields, 2009). Given this thesis is grounded in developmental and cognitive models of offending, the same demarcation was utilised here.
sets, scores between 81 and 100 invalidate the PICTS profile for clinical interpretation but may not have a detrimental effect to the data if it is being used for research, while scores over 100 are considered completely invalid. Similarly, standardised scores between 55 and 65 on the Defensiveness-Revised scale indicate a ‘fake good’ response set, while scores greater than 65 indicate invalid responding on the rest of the PICTS (Walters, 2010).

Five offenders (2.2%) had scores between 81 and 100 on the Confusion-Revised scale, indicating that for these participants’ responses were likely exaggerated in the direction of ‘faking bad’. Although these cases represent extremes that limit the clinical interpretability of the PICTS, Walters (2010) maintains that they may still be considered valid for research purposes. Therefore, these five cases were retained. An additional 52 offenders (22.5%) scored between 65 and 80 also indicating a moderate exaggeration of psychological problems. For the Defensiveness-Revised scale, 32 offenders (13.9%) had scores between 55 and 65, indicating moderately defensive responding. Four offenders however (1.7%) had scores greater than 65 indicating an extremely defensive responding style and a desire to impression manage. Given the threats to validity reported by Walters (2010) these cases were removed from the sample.

**Data imputation**

A Missing Value Analysis (MVA) was conducted to ascertain the amount and pattern of missing data for the eight thinking styles, four factor and two composite scales of the PICTS. The composite scales had 11% missing data, while the thinking styles and factor scales had between 3.1% and 3.5% of data missing. Results of the MVA showed data was missing ‘completely at random’ (Little’s MCAR $^2_{(18)} = 22.97, \ p=.19$), indicating that there was no systematic pattern contributing to missing values (McKnight, McKnight, Sidani & Figueredo, 2007). As a result, missing data were imputed through Expectation Maximisation (EM), an
iterative process that uses maximum likelihoods to generate parameter estimates for the missing values based on the parameters of the existing data (McKnight et al., 2007).

**Assumptions of normality**

The distribution for each variable was checked for younger and older offenders separately. The central limit theorem states that in large samples (i.e., over 200 participants), the sampled data will approximate normality, even if the sampling distribution is in fact non-normal. Therefore, checking normality for the entire sample may mask deviations within groups, which in turn may make the data unstable for analysis (Field, 2009).

A number of distributions deviated from normality, in part due to the presence of univariate outliers. These were modified by converting each outlier to a standardised score, and then reverse engineering that standardised score into a value from the sample distribution. A more detailed description of the data imputation process can be found in Appendix 3. This process was repeated until there was no further evidence of univariate outliers. The outcomes of the various rounds of data cleaning are presented in Appendices 4 through 6. At the end of data cleaning, the distributions for the Power Orientation and Superoptimism thinking styles, and the Interpersonal Hostility scale remained non-normally distributed in the younger and older offenders group, while scores on the Proactive Thinking scale remained non-normally distributed in the older offenders group only.

To address these deviations log and square root transformations were applied to the data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). As shown in Table C and D of Appendix 4, the standardised values of skew improved substantially for these distributions following the log transformation. Histograms and Q-Q plots for each variable following data transformation are presented in Appendix 7. Despite the improvement in normality, the transformed data did not produce
substantively different results to the untransformed data. For this reason, the untransformed data were used in the subsequent analyses.

The assumption of homogeneity of variance was tested using the Levene statistic, which showed that none of the dependent variables violated this assumption. Multivariate normality for each level of the independent variable was assessed using the Mahalanobis Distance statistics (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Five multivariate outliers were identified and deleted from the sample, resulting in a final sample size of 248 non-sex violent offenders.

Finally, correlations between the PICTS thinking styles, factor and composite scales were checked for evidence of multicollinearity and singularity, which indicate redundancy between variables and can pose a threat to the stability of statistical tests. Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) advise that correlation coefficients exceeding .8 are evidence of multicollinearity, while coefficients of .9 or greater are evidence of singularity. As can be seen in Table 9 (below) there is evidence of multicollinearity and singularity between some of the thinking styles and the composite scales in particular. This is due to the way factor, content and composite scales have been constructed, as discussed in the previous section. Given the high intercorrelations between the thinking styles, factor and composite scales, separate tests were conducted to examine age-based differences on the PICTS.
Table 9
Correlations between age, thinking styles, factor and composite scales

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Mo</th>
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<th>En</th>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.124</td>
<td>-.117</td>
<td>-.125</td>
<td>-.075</td>
<td>-.104</td>
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</table>

Note: * p<.05, ** p<.01
Mo (Mollification), Co (Cutoff), En (Entitlement), Po (Power Orientation), Sn (Sentimentality), So (Superoptimism), Ci (Cynicism), Ds (Denial), Prb (Problem Avoidance), Int (Interpersonal Hostility), Ast (Self-Assertion/Deception), Dnh (Denial of Harm)

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Procedure

Approval to conduct this research was obtained from the Department of Justice (project reference number CF/09/11386), and the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committees. Following ethics approval, a senior clinician based at a prison in the western region of Victoria, Australia provided the researcher with a de-identified SPSS file containing demographic, offence history and psychometric information collected from consecutive waves of offenders who were assessed for their eligibility to participate in the Moderate and High Intensity Violence program. The type and format of data collection were determined by the needs of the clinicians and the demands of the violence program at the prison. The first two hypotheses were tested through a MANOVA, while the third and fourth hypotheses were tested through two separate ANOVAs. Although multiple tests increase the chance of Type II errors (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), the high correlations between the thinking styles, factor and composite scales means that separate tests are necessary. As such, prior to running the analyses the alpha level was adjusted to account for the inflated Type I error rate associated with multiple tests. The following equation, recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) was applied:

\[ i = \frac{f_{w}}{p} \]

where \( i \) is the adjusted alpha level, \( f_{w} \) is the family wise error rate and \( p \) is the number of tests. Using a familywise error rate of 0.05 and conducting three separate tests the adjusted alpha level for the analyses is 0.02. Therefore, the tests reported below will be evaluated against this significance level.
Results

The first hypothesis tests the assumption contained in the developmental and social cognition literature that younger offenders are more likely than older offenders to engage in a pattern of thinking characterised by cognitive shortcuts, attributions of hostility, a desire for power and control, and minimisation of responsibility. In contrast, the second hypothesis draws from the developmental literature to argue that older offenders are more likely than younger offenders to minimise the extent of their criminal identity. Specifically, this hypothesis partially tests whether age-related changes in social and cognitive maturity are associated with a concomitant decrease in the internalisation of a criminal identity.

To test these two hypotheses, a one-way between-groups MANOVA was conducted with age serving as the independent variable (with two levels – younger and older) and the Mollification, Entitlement, Power Orientation, Superoptimism, Cognitive Indolence, and Sentimentality scales serving as dependent variables. There were no violations of the assumptions of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices and homogeneity of variance. With unequal sample sizes Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) recommend using the Pillai’s trace statistics to assess the significance of the omnibus effect. Results showed no significant group differences, $V=0.005$, $F(6,241) = 0.215$, $p = .97$. Univariate effects, means and standard deviations for all subscales are presented in Table 10. Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported. Moreover, as can be seen in Table 10 across every statistical analysis effect sizes were marginal, further indicating that with this sample of offenders the PICTS was not able to detect any meaningful or substantive age differences in criminal thinking.

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20 To reduce the impact of multiple tests on Type II errors, hypothesis 1 and 2 were tested in one MANOVA. As such, the Mollification, Entitlement, Power Orientation, Superoptimism and Cognitive Indolence scales were the dependent variables for Hypothesis #1, with the Sentimentality scale serving as the dependent variable Hypothesis #2.
Table 10
Descriptive and univariate statistics for the relationship between age and the PICTS thinking styles, factor and composite scales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Younger M (SD)</th>
<th>Older M (SD)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Effect size ($\eta^2$ and $\omega^2$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mollification</td>
<td>13.22 (3.98)</td>
<td>12.85 (4.09)</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entitlement</td>
<td>13.71 (3.96)</td>
<td>13.28 (4.03)</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Orientation</td>
<td>13.54 (3.90)</td>
<td>13.26 (4.46)</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superoptimism</td>
<td>15.12 (3.97)</td>
<td>14.83 (4.19)</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Indolence</td>
<td>16.94 (4.36)</td>
<td>16.33 (4.56)</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentimentality</td>
<td>16.21 (3.65)</td>
<td>15.94 (3.58)</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Assertion/Deception</td>
<td>18.81 (5.70)</td>
<td>18.36 (5.86)</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive Thinking</td>
<td>87.45 (31.96)</td>
<td>82.07 (34.95)</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A one-way between-groups ANOVA was then conducted to test for differences between younger and older offenders on patterns of thinking related to masculine role identity (Hypothesis #3). Results showed that although younger offenders scored higher on Self-Assertion/Deception than older offenders, this difference was non-significant, $F(1,2226) = 0.501$, $p = .48$, $\eta^2 = 0.002$. The univariate effects are detailed in Table 10 (above). As can be seen, Self-Assertion/Deception had an extremely weak effect, explaining only 0.2% of the variance in age. The third hypothesis was therefore not confirmed. To the extent that the Self-Assertion/Deception scale captures a thinking style associated with masculine ideals of power, control and entitlement, there is no evidence that younger offenders endorse this pattern of thinking to a greater extent than older offenders.

Finally, a one-way between-groups ANOVA was conducted to test that hypothesis that older offenders would score significantly higher than their younger counterparts on a pattern of thinking characterised by the tendency to engage in interpretative biases (Hypothesis #4). Results again failed to identify any significant group differences, $F(1,226) = 0.52$, $p = .47$,.
As with the other analyses reported thus far, Reactive Thinking had a weak effect, explaining only 0.2% of the variance in age. Moreover, contrary to expectations younger offenders scored higher than older offenders on this measure. Despite a non-significant difference, younger offenders showed a greater tendency to engage in a pattern of thinking characterised by interpretative biases, compared to older offenders. Nevertheless, to the extent that the Reactive Thinking Scale is a measure of a tendency to engage in hostile attributions, these results indicate this pattern of information processing is no more entrenched in older compared to younger violent offenders.

Discussion

Based on a review of the developmental, social-cognition and masculinity literature, it was predicted that a decreased prevalence in violent crime would be associated with a concomitant decrease in the attitudes and beliefs that support and maintain a worldview where violence is perceived as inherently justified. Specifically, it was hypothesised that older offenders would show less evidence of criminal thinking. It was further predicted that these changes would in part be driven by changing beliefs and perceptions about masculinity. To test these hypotheses, the PICTS was used as a proxy measure of social-information processing, in particular interpretive biases that have been linked to masculinity. Contrary to expectations the data here does not provide support for a relationship between age and changes in criminal thinking.

The null results raise some important questions about the developmental processes that underlie changes in cognition. In particular given that risk decreases with age it is unclear why there do not appear to be concomitant decreases in criminal thinking. There are a number of explanations that can potentially account for this seemingly paradoxical finding and these are discussed below.
Adulthood as a ‘static’ developmental period

The null results reported above may be interpreted as evidence that adulthood represents a ‘static’ period of development, at least as far as cognitive changes are concerned. For example, the large body of research from developmental criminology and social-cognition has focussed almost exclusively on the transitions from childhood to adolescence, and adolescence to adulthood (e.g., Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge, 2006; Dodge et al., 1990; Farrington, 2007; Farrington et al., 2009; Huesmann & Kirwil, 2007; Loeber et al., 2005), with comparatively less attention devoted to changes that occur across adulthood. Moreover, social-cognitive theorists have argued that once established, interpretative and evaluative biases are highly resistant to change (e.g., Dodge, 2006; Fontaine & Dodge, 2009). Thus it might be argued that although alternative ways of appraising and interpreting information can be learnt, interpretative biases are never fully eradicated.

If this were the case however, it would be expected that younger offenders would show less evidence of social-information processing biases than older offenders. As detailed in Table 10 (p. 154), younger offenders scored higher on the measured PICTS thinking styles, factor and composite scales, compared to older offenders. Although none of the investigated relationships reached statistical significance, three out of the four hypothesised differences between younger and older offenders were in the predicted direction. In particular, despite a non-significant difference, younger offenders scored higher than their older counterparts on a measure of interpretative biases. The small effect sizes further indicate that developmental differences may be important for some offenders but not for others. If this is the case, group differences would have been masked by the fact that not all offenders show evidence of changes in their criminal thinking as a function of maturation or even age.

The null results can also be explained with reference to the distinction between age and broader developmental processes. Chronological age is only one element of development
and may represent a crude proxy for the full range of developmental processes that influence violent behaviour. While chronological age may be a good marker of biological and cognitive development, it may be less strongly associated with ‘maturational reform’ (Shapland & Bottoms, 2011). For example, in a recent study Shapland and Bottoms investigated social maturation as an element of desistance in a group of young adult recidivist offenders. They argued that young adulthood represents a time when individuals are trying to align their violent behaviour the person they perceive themselves to be in the present, and who they would like to be in the future. Maturation therefore involves identity negotiation which is linked to beliefs about the self, the world and violence. It is possible therefore that maturation, rather than chronological age, is a better measure of the way beliefs about violence change throughout the life-course. Therefore, while adulthood may in fact be associated with less dramatic changes in patterns of thinking, more subtle developmental processes associated with maturation are also likely to play a role during this period. This is consistent with Sampson and Laub’s thesis that turning points during adulthood can divert an individual away from a criminal lifestyle, even in the presence of an enduring antisocial potential (Laub & Sampson, 1993; Sampson & Laub, 2005a). An important aspect of turning points appears to be their influence on self-definitions and role-identities, which can in turn have an indirect effect on the way individuals interact with their social world.

**Conceptual foundation of the PICTS**

An alternative explanation for the null results can be found in the conceptual foundation of the PICTS, which was not designed to measure developmental processes or masculinity. Instead, it was primarily developed to explain the link between criminal thinking and life-time offending. In this context, it has most often been applied as one element of a risk-assessment battery. A number of studies attest to the PICTS' predictive ability as a measure of institutional misconduct and recidivism (e.g., Walters, 2005b; 2007b; 2007c; 2009b;
Walters & Mandell, 2007; Walters, Trgovac, Rychlec, Di Fazio & Olson, 2002). As such the PICTS may simply not be able to detect age-related differences because it was not designed to do so. Moreover, the PICTS is a measure of criminal rather than violence-specific thinking. Although developmental criminologists have argued that violence is simply one component of an enduring potential for antisocial behaviour, there is reason to argue that at a cognitive level, violence is interpreted and perceived differently from non-violent criminal conduct (Polaschek, Collie & Walkey, 2004).

There is some evidence that violence is supported by a specific set of implicit theories that are qualitatively different from those identified in other groups of offenders (e.g., Dempsey & Day, 2011; Polaschek et al., 2008; Polaschek & Gannon, 2004). Therefore, it is possible that age-related differences exist but are more apparent when violence-specific, rather than general cognitions are examined. This argument is also consistent with a developmental perspective. For a small group of individuals antisocial behaviour is presumed to persist throughout the life-course, implying that antisocial attitudes will also be evident into adulthood. In contrast, violent behaviour tends to decline during adulthood, implying that as individuals age their attitudes towards, and beliefs about violence are also likely to change. As a measure of criminal thinking the PICTS may not be able to detect age-related differences because high and moderate risk offenders are likely to exhibit similar patterns of antisocial cognition.

The confounding effect of risk

From a developmental perspective it is expected that the risk of re-offending should be inversely related to age, such that younger offenders are at an increased risk of engaging in future violence, compared to older offenders. As an individual matures however, the risk of violence should decrease, consistent with the body of literature showing that the peak
prevalence of violent offending occurs during early adulthood and steadily declines thereafter.

However, it appears that the relationship between age, risk and criminal thinking is a little more complex. Developmental criminologists posit an enduring underlying potential towards antisocial behaviour throughout the life-course, which is partly comprised of antisocial attitudes and beliefs (e.g., Farrington, 2005c). Individuals high on antisocial potential during adulthood (i.e., risk) should also be high on a measure of antisocial cognitions, such as the PICTS. However, criminal thinking is just one marker of risk, and the relationship between risk and age is not straightforward. Specifically, maturation is not currently considered in any risk assessment instrument, creating the potentially fallacious assumption that age is only relevant for risk assessment to the extent that younger men are by definition higher risk.

Therefore, the PICTS may be able to identify differences in criminal thinking based on risk classification, but not the more subtle differences associated with maturational processes. Fundamentally, antisocial cognitions are associated with risk, if risk is conceptualised as long-term potential for generally antisocial and criminal behaviour. This relationship may not necessarily extend to beliefs about masculinity and violence, even with samples of serious offenders. Put simply, developmental differences in beliefs about violence and masculinity may be indirectly linked to risk in a way that is not easily captured by general measures of criminal thinking. While this hypothesis is beyond the conceptual scope of this thesis, some supplementary analyses with risk, age and the PICTS were conducted and are presented in Appendix 8.

**Criminal thinking and masculinity**

Masculinity is a difficult construct to operationalise and measure, in large part due to its fluid, contextual nature. As such, current measurement approaches have been criticised for
emphasising masculine role identity, which is conceptually different to beliefs about masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Smiler, 2004). In this respect, the Self-Assertion/Deception Scale, as a proxy measure of masculine role identity, may not be an adequate measure of masculinity as a broad construct. Specifically, the Self-Assertion/Deception Scale is a measure of thinking styles associated with justifications for crime that emphasise power, entitlement, and interpersonal dominance, not of beliefs about the ‘essential nature of manhood’ or how this can be accomplished through violence.

However, the results of this study may have been different had a more specific measure of masculinity been employed. Despite the broad criticisms against the operationalisation of masculinity, a number of instruments have been developed that specifically measure masculine identity in relation to violence and aggression. For example, the Hypermasculinity Inventory (HMI: Mosher & Sirkin, 1984) is based on a conceptualisation of masculinity as a process of enculturation (Mosher & Tomkins, 1988) whereby a masculine self-concept develops from childhood, based on environmental reinforcement of characteristics, beliefs and behaviours that are considered manly. Hypermasculinity is defined as an extreme form of masculinity, comprised of three core elements: calloused sexual attitudes; beliefs about violence as manly; and perceptions of danger as exciting (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984).

The HMI is comprised of 30 forced-choice items spread evenly between the three core elements of the hypermasculine personality constellation. Sample items include, “Get a woman drunk, high or hot and she’ll do whatever you want/ It’s gross and unfair to use alcohol and drugs to convince a woman to have sex”, “If you’re not prepared to fight for what’s yours, be prepared to lose it/ Even if I feel like fighting, I try to think of alternatives” and “He who can, fights; he who can’t, runs away/ It’s just plain dumb to fist fight.” (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984, pp. 154-155). The authors reported high internal consistency coefficients for the entire scale (0.89), and the three subscales (0.79, 0.71 and 0.79 for Violence, Danger and
Calloused Sex, respectively). However, the HMI has not been extensively used and has been criticised for its forced choice format (Peters, Nason & Turner, 2007).

A recent and more direct measure of masculinity and violence is the Maudsley Violence Questionnaire (MVQ: Walker, 2005). The MVQ was specifically designed to measure violence supportive beliefs within a framework that acknowledges the role of threatened self-esteem, humiliation and a perceived need to ‘save face’ as important factors in the explanation of violence. As such, the MVQ represents a measure of violence supportive beliefs that are fundamentally underpinned by masculine concepts. The MVQ consists of 56 items that measure masculinity (Machismo scale) and the normalisation of violence (Acceptance of Violence scale). Sample items from the Machismo scale include, “I would rather lose a fight and get beaten up than embarrass myself by walking away”, “If you are not willing to fight it means you are weak and pathetic”, and “Being violent shows you are a man”. Sample items from the Acceptance of Violence scale include, “It’s OK to hit your partner if they behave unacceptably”, “Sometimes you have to use violence to get what you want” and “Some people only understand when you show them through physical strength” (Walker, 2005, pp. 194-195).

Walker (2005) has reported that internal consistency estimates for the factors range from 0.73 to 0.91. Both factors were also significantly and positively correlated with self-reported violence. The MVQ has also been recently validated with an adult offender population (Walker & Bowes, 2013). Both factors were again found to have high internal reliability coefficients (0.93 and 0.82 for Machismo and Acceptance of Violence, respectively) and offenders scored significantly higher than a comparison group of non-offenders on the Machismo, but not on the Acceptance of Violence scale.

Finally, the Criminal Attitudes to Violence (CAVS: Polaschek et al., 2004) which was designed to specifically measure attitudes supportive of violent behaviour, may also have
provided a different pattern of results to what was obtained here. While it was not designed to specifically measure masculinity or masculine beliefs, it contains a number of items that tap into beliefs about masculinity and violence, including “Men should be allowed to sort their differences out by fighting”, “Fighting between men is normal”, “I am more likely to be violent when someone shows me up in public”, and “The best lesson a man can teach his son is how to fight” (Polaschek et al., 2004, p. 493). This scale therefore not only measures violence-specific attitudes, but also appears to tap into underlying beliefs about violence and masculinity. While the CAVS was not designed to assess developmental differences it is possible that as a more direct measure of violence and masculinity such differences may have been observed.

Although the three instruments discussed here may have provided a more appropriate measure of masculinity and masculine beliefs associated with violence, the PICTS Self-Assertion/Deception scale has also been found to have high corrections with the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974; Walters, 2001c). Moreover, the PICTS remains one of the most widely used and validated measures of criminal thinking within correctional settings. These issues notwithstanding, it does contain a number of psychometric idiosyncrasies that may also explain some of the results reported above.

**Psychometric properties of the PICTS**

Although the PICTS is considered one of the best and most comprehensive measures of criminal thinking currently available (Egan, McMurr, Richardson & Blair, 2000), it nevertheless contains a number of psychometric idiosyncrasies. Most notably, the 80 items have been combined and re-combined to form a number of additional scales, including the Content, Factor and Fear-of-Change scales. This has created a situation in which the PICTS thinking styles show high intercorrelations, sometimes bordering on singularity, with the various scales (as shown in Table 9 above). While this may not pose a problem in a clinical
context, it becomes problematic when researchers want to investigate individual thinking styles as well as the factor, content, and composite scales.

Walters (2010) has also argued that the Composite Scales have the strongest psychometric properties and are therefore more appropriate for research purposes than the individual thinking styles. There is a substantial degree of overlap, however, in the items that have been used to create these scales. For example, the Proactive composite is heavily weighted towards the entitlement thinking style, not just because the score on Entitlement is doubled, but also because items from the Entitlement thinking style form part of the Self-Assertion/Deception scale. The same pattern is observed in the Reactive Thinking composite scale. Beyond stating that these composite scales were derived from “item content and correlational patterns with other PICTS scales” (Walters, 2006, p. 26) it is unclear how the overlap in Entitlement for the Proactive composite, or Cutoff for the Reactive composite are addressed.

Finally, the factor structure of the PICTS remains unclear. For example, in the original validation study Walters (1995) found that a four factor structure provided the best fit for the data. More recently, based on the results of a taxometric analysis, Walters and McCoy (2007) argued that the PICTS is measuring a dimensional construct that is hierarchically organised. That is, criminal thinking is best conceptualised as fluid and dynamic, rather than discreet and categorical. Moreover, the General Criminal Thinking (GCT) score is presumed to be located on the top of this dimensional hierarchy, and is therefore considered to be the strongest and most reliable indicator of criminal thinking.

Support for this assertion can be found in the results of two factor analyses. Egan et al., (2000) conducted a principal components analysis with varimax rotation using data obtained from 54 mentally disordered offenders. Results indicated the eight thinking styles loaded onto a single factor which accounted for 58.8% of the total variance. Palmer and Hollin
(2003) obtained similar results using a sample of 255 male violent offenders. Using the same analyses as Egan et al., Palmer and Hollin found that a two-factor solution was able to account for 64.7% of the total variance in the PICTS. The first factor contained the eight PICTS subscales and accounted for 50.8% of the total variance. The second factor contained the two validity scales. Based on these results Palmer and Hollin argued that the PICTS is measuring a latent construct of general criminal thinking. This further reinforces that the PICTS may be a valid and reliable measure of criminal thinking as a global construct, but is unable to measure more specific cognitions related to violence or masculinity.

Conclusion

The results obtained in this study indicate that on a measure of criminal thinking, older and younger offenders cannot be differentiated on thinking styles associated with interpretative biases or masculinity. These results run counter to the large body of literature which highlights that developmental processes are likely to play an important role in the way violence is justified and internalised, and that definitions of masculinity may provide an overarching framework for understanding such differences. Therefore, from a theoretical perspective, there is a strong argument to be made that beliefs about violence change throughout the life-course. To date, the intersections between age, masculinity and beliefs about violence remain underexplored. However, the literature reviewed in Chapter 5 indicates that the way masculinity is defined is likely to change throughout adulthood, in part because individuals have access to a greater range of resources that allow for the construction of alternative, idealised masculinities.

There is a need to investigate not only the relationship between masculinity and violence, but also whether this relationship is linked to developmental processes. The null results
obtained in this study, in combination with the paucity of research on this topic more generally, highlights the need for qualitative studies where concepts related to masculinity, violence and maturation can be explored in greater detail. With the above in mind, the next chapter reports the findings of a qualitative study that explores how younger and older violent offenders conceptualise masculinity and its relationship to the violence they have used throughout their life.
Chapter 7

Study 2

An interpretative phenomenological analysis of masculine violence in adulthood

Aims

The results of Study 1 showed that younger and older violent offenders did not differ on criminal thinking patterns associated with interpretative biases and masculinity, as measured by the PICTS. The literature reviewed thus far, however, indicates that there is an important relationship between beliefs about violence and masculinity and that this relationship is likely to be influenced by developmental processes occurring throughout the life-course. The nature of these processes remains largely unexplored and it is currently unclear how beliefs about masculinity influence the way violence is used and justified during adulthood. These issues however are important from a rehabilitative perspective, especially considering that males are disproportionately represented as correctional clients and that cognition is posited to play a central role in the aetiology and maintenance of violent behaviour (e.g., Crick & Dodge, 1994; Gannon et al., 2007; Polaschek, 2006).

This chapter details a qualitative study conducted with 15 incarcerated violent offenders that was designed to explore the relationship between violence and masculinity in younger and older incarcerated violent offenders. For the purpose of this study ‘violent masculinities’ is defined as a set of beliefs that centre on the way violence can be effectively used to convey to the self and others that an individual is manly. To address this central aim, the following research questions will be addressed:
What role does masculinity play in the violence these men have committed throughout their life?

How do younger offenders perceive the relationship between violence and masculinity in their own lives?

How do older offenders perceive the relationship between violence and masculinity in their own lives?

How does maturation influence beliefs about violence and masculinity in early and later stages of adulthood?

The following sections detail the methodology and the analytical framework used in this study. This will be followed by an interpretative phenomenological analysis where the data are discussed in reference to the developmental criminology, social cognition and masculinity literature.

Participants

Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique (Creswell, 2012). One of the main sampling criteria in phenomenological research is that participants have direct experience with the phenomenon being investigated (Shinebourne, 2011; Smith, 2004). Incarcerated male violent offenders represent a population that has direct experience with violence and masculinity, and therefore were considered an appropriate population from which to sample. For this study the primary criterion for inclusion was a current conviction for a violent, non-sexual, confrontational offence. While beliefs about masculinity also play a central role in gendered violence, including rape and sexual assault (e.g., Burt, 1980; Kersten, 1996; Murmen, Wright & Kaluzny, 2002; Polaschek & Gannon, 2004; Ryan, 2004) and intimate partner violence (e.g., Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Dempsey & Day, 2011; Elisha, Idisis, Timor & Addad, 2009; Polk, 1994; Schrock & Padavic, 2007) the focus of this
research is on male-on-male violence and men with a current conviction for sexual and/or domestic offences were excluded.

Participants were recruited from a medium to minimum-security correctional centre in Eastern Victoria, Australia, that contains mostly long-term prisoners nearing the end of their sentence. The majority of prisoners reside in the mainstream and protection units, with a small number of minimum-security prisoners residing in a separate facility located on the grounds of the prison but which operates independently. A total of 15 offenders, comprising six from mainstream, four from protection and five from the minimum-security community participated in this study21. Table 11 (below) describes the demographic and offence histories of each participant. All names have been changed to protect participants’ identities.

Participants were on average 34 years of age and were mainly serving a long-term sentence for serious offences, such as murder. Consistent with the classification used in Study 1, younger offenders were defined as men aged between 18 and 29 years, while older offenders were aged between 30 and 60 years. Using these criteria, the seven men in the ‘younger offender’ group were on average 26 years old, and the eight men in the ‘older’ group were on average 41 years old.

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21 Originally, access was sought to a variety of prisons, including the only maximum security prison in Victoria. However, the only prison that allowed this research to be conducted was the prison described here. While a group of higher risk prisoners at different stages of their sentences would have been a preferable sample, this was not feasible given the constraints imposed by the prisons and the Department of Justice.
Table 11
Demographic and offence histories of the men participating in Study 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Index offence</th>
<th>Prior convictions</th>
<th>Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jorge</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>Unlawful assault; trafficking heroin</td>
<td>Mainstream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Murder/arson</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Mainstream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Mainstream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcus</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Defensive homicide</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillip</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Murder and two counts of theft</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>Multiple convictions including assault, damaging property, and behaving in a disorderly manner</td>
<td>Mainstream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>Multiple convictions including unlawful assault, intentionally causing injury and wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm</td>
<td>Mainstream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamie</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>Multiple convictions for violence, arson, dishonesty, drug use, drug trafficking, burglary, and theft</td>
<td>Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liam</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>Multiple convictions for non-violent offences only</td>
<td>Minimum security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brody</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Intentionally causing serious injury</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Mainstream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callum</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Minimum security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Minimum security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julian</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Minimum security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zach</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Intentionally causing serious injury</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Minimum security</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Information about the index offence and prior convictions was sought from participants. Although most self-reported the index offence and whether they had been previously incarcerated, there was a general reluctance to provide these details. To supplement the information obtained through the interviews, the Australasian Legal Information Institute (AustLII) database was searched following data collection. Sentencing comments for 11 participants were identified, providing information about the events leading up to the index offence, as well as the participant’s prior contact with the Criminal Justice System. Offence history data for four younger men were not available. As detailed in Table 11 (above), the older men were all serving a sentence for murder and the majority had previous convictions. In contrast, three of the younger men were serving sentences for assault-related offences with one other convicted of defensive homicide.

The narratives of most participants, along with the sentencing comments indicate that most index offences listed in Table 11 reflect elements of Polk’s (1994) male confrontational violence. That is, violence in most of these instances arose from confrontations where men perceived that they had somehow been challenged or insulted. As will be discussed below, masculinity played a fundamental role in the violence of these individuals.

**Analytical framework**

Qualitative research that has sought to describe and explain the belief systems of violent offenders has typically employed a Grounded Theory framework (e.g., Crowther et al., 2012; Dempsey & Day, 2011; Lopez & Emmer, 2000; Polaschek et al., 2008). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), however, provides an alternative methodology. Although the fundamental assumptions underlying IPA differ from those of Grounded Theory, the process of data analysis and the final outcome share some important similarities. For example, while IPA places greater emphasis on understanding the lived-experiences of
participants, the ultimate aim is to link these experiences to extant psychological theory, thereby providing a theoretically grounded interpretation of a phenomenon, as experienced in real life (Smith, 2004). Given that the aim of this study is not to explicate the causes, consequences or contingencies of masculinity, but rather to develop a better understanding of how masculinity is experienced in the context of violence at different stages of the adult life-course, IPA was considered a more appropriate analytical technique.

IPA sits within a broader phenomenological tradition with a strong philosophical grounding. The philosophical principles of phenomenology in general and IPA are discussed in Appendix 9. As a methodology however, IPA places particular emphasis on interpretation, a combination of inductive and deductive analytical techniques, and idiographic research (Smith, 2004; Smith & Osborn, 2008). For example, deductive strategies are employed in an effort to link participant experiences to extant psychological theories. Consistent with the ethos of phenomenology, however, analysis is always grounded in the life-world of participants. Therefore, while theoretical constructs are often relied on to aid interpretation, the experiences and interpretations of participants that are true to their own words are given priority (Smith, 2004; Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006).

There has been some debate however, as to how much attention should be devoted to the individual experiences of participants, given that the major goal of phenomenological research is to explicate how a phenomenon is experienced (Finlay, 2009). While some interpretative phenomenologists argue that emphasis should be placed on the normative elements of the phenomenon being studied (Larkin et al., 2006), others argue for a case-study approach (Smith & Osborn, 2008). For the purpose of this study the focus will be on the normative elements of violence and masculinity as expressed and experienced by younger and older participants.
Integrity and credibility in qualitative research

Integrity in qualitative research can often be difficult to articulate, in large part because of differences in the ontological and epistemological traditions that underpin many approaches to qualitative research (Creswell, 2012). Nevertheless, there is mounting agreement that general guidelines can be used to promote rigour across the various methodological traditions (e.g., Fossey, Harvey, McDermot & Davidson, 2002; Tracy, 2010). While there are slight variations in the way integrity is defined, there is general agreement that it is equated with quality, rigour, transparency, and ethical conduct (Tracy, 2010). For example, Elliott, Fischer and Rennie (1999) proposed seven broad criteria that include philosophical coherence, appropriate sampling, giving participants a voice, checking the credibility of the analysis, analytical coherence, and resonance. Underlying these criteria is the issue of transparency. Strong qualitative research is not only based on the narrated experiences of participants, but also gives voice to participants through the use of extensive examples. It is also transparent about the philosophical underpinnings of the methodology, and the methods for sampling, data collection and analysis. Credibility is maintained when data analysis is reviewed, either by the participants themselves or by an independent researcher with experience in the topic.

Credibility in IPA is achieved through the use of an audit trail that details the steps a researcher has taken in arriving at the final interpretation. This involves a detailed description of how the researcher developed categories from the data, including specific examples taken from transcripts that highlight the essence of each category. Although the intersubjective nature of phenomenological analyses means that different researchers may interpret data from different perspectives, the audit trail should nevertheless be transparent enough so that an independent person can see how an interpretation is grounded in the experience of participants (Smith, 1996; 2004).
In some qualitative methodologies, saturation is identified as another component of integrity, although it is not necessarily applicable or appropriate for all qualitative research (Creswell, 2012; O’Reilly & Parker, 2012). This is particularly true of phenomenology, where the aim is to develop a deeper understanding of the experiences of participants. In fact, the phenomenological literature does not address the issue of saturation. Phenomenological researchers advocate that adequate sample sizes can range from three to 10 or 15 participants, depending on the research question and the aim of the study (e.g., Creswell, 2012; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Where a normative or more general description is sought, such as in this study, 10 to 15 participants is considered appropriate, so long as the sample is constituted of individuals who can provide a range of perspectives on a phenomenon they have direct experience with. For example, Elisha et al. (2009) used phenomenological analysis to develop a typology of intimate partner homicide, based on interviews conducted with 15 incarcerated offenders. Similarly, Duff (2010) used IPA to explore how beliefs about sexual offending were represented in the apology letters to victims from 13 sex offenders attending a community-based treatment program. From an interpretative phenomenological perspective, small sample sizes allow a researcher to engage with each participant’s narrative in a way that promotes an understanding of lived experience. Put simply, small samples sizes are likely to contain sufficient, detailed information about the phenomenon under investigation.

**Procedure**

Ethics approval for this study was obtained from the Victorian Department of Justice (Project Number CF/11/18134) and Deakin University. Data were collected over a three-day period in July 2012. Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually, and audio recorded with each participant’s consent. The interviews were structured around four main themes – defining violence, using violence, internalising violence and turning points. More specific
questions within each theme were used as prompts, but the general approach was to give participants the freedom to tell their stories in relation to these four key themes. In this way, there was scope to explore major themes regarding attitudes to violence and relevant turning points as they arose in each interview. Interviews varied in duration, lasting from 20 minutes to close to an hour. A copy of the interview schedule can be found in Appendix 10.

Participants were recruited from the mainstream, protection and low-security wings of the prison. Initially, the Programs Manager at the prison put up notices in the mainstream wing briefly explaining the nature of the research and detailing the day and time where the researcher would be attending the prison to run a short introduction and information session. At this session, the project was explained in more detail and three men agreed to be interviewed. On the second day of interviews an additional three men from the mainstream wing indicated their desire to participate in the project. Given the small number of participants at this stage, the Programs Manager recommended conducting another introduction and information session with prisoners in the protection unit. This resulted in an additional four men being interviewed. Finally, clinicians working with offenders in the minimum security wing allowed the researcher to introduce the project at the end of a program session. This resulted in an additional five younger men indicating their desire to participate in the project.

The sample therefore was comprised of a mix of younger and older men with diverse experiences of violence. The men in the protection unit were especially salient to this project, given that, for the most part, they had been excluded from the mainstream offenders due to their overtly violent and difficult behaviour. While the younger offenders represent a potentially lower-risk sample, this is counterbalanced by the fact that most of the participants were based in the mainstream and protection wings, and therefore were likely to represent a more violent group of individuals.
Prior to commencing the interview, each participant was provided with a Plain Language Statement that detailed the aims of the study, what the interview would entail, and the researcher’s independence from the prison and the Adult Parole Board. Care was taken to reassure participants that information revealed during interviews would not be made available to the Department of Justice, prison officials, resident psychologists or the Adult Parole Board. A copy of these documents is presented in Appendix 11.

**Analytic process**

Interviews were first transcribed verbatim then imported into NVivo 10, a software package that assists with the storage, management, and analysis of qualitative data. The first stage of analysis involved a close reading of each transcript, where statements that were relevant or interesting were highlighted. For each interview a memo was also created, where the relevance of the statements was described, and preliminary thoughts about emerging themes, and potential linkages with the theoretical frameworks of developmental criminology, social cognition, and masculinity were identified. The second stage involved another close reading of each transcript and its corresponding memo. At this stage, the initial statements were clustered into categories representing similar concepts or ideas. Once all data were coded into relevant categories, each category was analysed independently, as specified by Larkin et al. (2006). Here, the aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the concepts related to masculinity, violence and change throughout the life-course, as discussed by participants. Each of the identified categories was then re-analysed, which helped to refine the number of categories that contained subtly different themes. At each stage of the analysis cycle, categories were checked against each of the interviews, to ensure that the emerging interpretations accurately reflected the experiences of participants. Each interview transcript was then analysed for content relating to violence, masculinity and change during adulthood. Three master themes were identified including Personal
Historical/Contextual Factors, Masculinity and Change. Each category contains a number of additional themes that explore the intricate relationships between violence and masculinity at different stages of adulthood.

The present study employed two forms of integrity checks. First, throughout the data collection stage I kept a reflexive journal, where I reflected on my impressions of the prison environment, interviews, each participant and my reactions to them, my ideas about important and relevant themes that were raised in each interview, and the linkages that were emerging from the interview data. This allowed me to identify the ways I was closing myself to seeing things from the perspective of the participants, especially by relying too heavily on academic knowledge. As data collection continued, I made a concerted effort to be attuned to what participants were saying, and allowed them to provide me with the prompts for exploring masculinity and violence in greater detail. Second, at the analysis stage a codebook containing examples from the data was compiled. This codebook was checked by a senior researcher with extensive experience on violent offenders and cognition. As a result, a number of categories were modified to more clearly reflect the underlying concepts in the participants’ narratives.

**Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is an important part of interpretative phenomenology and is based on the epistemological view that knowledge is co-constructed through interactions (Finlay, 2008). Reflexivity also involves being aware of the pre-conceptions and biases that a researcher brings to the research. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that the narratives presented in the following sections have been fundamentally influenced by the interactions that took place between the researcher and participants. While I attempted to minimise the
influence of pre-existing, academic assumptions, these nevertheless permeated many of the interviews.

At the same time, the lived experiences of each participant were so foreign to my own that their perspectives began to take precedence as the interviews progressed. As such, the participants and I were mutually affecting the stories being told. While the narratives presented throughout this chapter are based on the experiences and perspectives of the participants, they were nevertheless co-constructed through the interview process.

**Analysis**

Three master themes, labelled ‘Historical and contextual factors’, ‘Masculinity’ and ‘Changes associated with maturation’ were identified in the narratives of the 15 men. Each master theme also contained a number of sub-themes, which are detailed in Figure 15 (below). In this section, the overarching themes and their attendant sub-themes will be discussed. Consistent with the principles of IPA, where applicable the themes will be linked to the theoretical discussion on violence, masculinity and maturation, as presented that underlies this thesis.

Beliefs about violence and masculinity are fundamentally influenced by historical and contextual factors. For example, the social cognition literature identifies that exposure to violent role models in early life provides the foundation for the development of violence-supportive beliefs (e.g., Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge, 2006). Similarly, developmental criminologists emphasise that criminogenic environments, including exposure to antisocial role models in the home and the wider social ecology, play an important role in the development of persistent offending throughout the life-course (e.g., Farrington, 2005a; 2005c; Farrington et al., 2012). While the masculinity literature does not explicitly address
Figure 5
Overarching and sub-themes identified in the narratives of incarcerated violent offenders

- Historical and contextual factors
  - Growing up with violence
  - Violence and masculinity in the prison environment
  - Low self-worth

- Masculinity
  - Honour
    - “The respect of a one man fight”
    - Being disrespected
    - Protecting the vulnerable
  - Violence and masculinity in younger adult men
  - Violence and masculinity in older adult men
  - Reputation
the role of social learning these processes are nevertheless implied from extant research as beliefs about masculinity do not emerge in a vacuum but rather are learned. This literature, however, emphasises the important role contextual factors play on the way masculinity is internalised and performed. That is, different facets of masculinity may be enacted depending on the nature of the social interaction (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Jewkes, 2005). The first theme in the present analysis therefore focuses on the role of personal historical factors, as well as the impact of the prison environment on beliefs about violence and masculinity.

**Historical and contextual factors**

For the men in this study, the influence of personal histories and contextual factors on masculinity was evident in the narratives of growing up with violence and the impact of prison. These two factors provide a necessary overarching framework for addressing the research questions for this study. While it was often difficult to separate the phenomenological narratives of general violence from those about violence in prison, the prison environment nevertheless emerged as an important theme that reflected each participant’s current lived experiences. As such, violence and masculinity in the prison is presented below as a discrete theme.

**Growing up with violence**

For many participants, childhood experiences of violence were presented, albeit implicitly, as precursors to their violent behaviour in adulthood. Importantly however, childhood experiences were perceived as having an indirect effect on later violence. That is, many participants reported that their childhood experiences promoted their later substance abuse, while also providing them with a framework for inappropriately dealing with strong emotions.
For example, childhood experiences of violence were often associated with intense, negative emotions including anger and rage that persisted throughout adolescence and into adulthood. During later stages of adolescence, antisocial behaviour including substance use was often linked by participants not only to the inability to cope with negative emotions, but also with an increased incidence of violent behaviour. For example, Liam vividly articulated the interrelationship between childhood violence, substance use in adolescence and adulthood, and the inability to regulate his emotions.

So like, after 10 bashings, 20 bashings, getting bullied at school from bigger kids, you know you can’t beat them in a fight and you don’t know how to talk about it because you don’t have the big cognitive words to use, and it’s all in there, just manifesting, building over. Inside you’re raging, you’re flat out and you get home and your parents abuse ya, or give you the whip, you know. Then you’re in your room, crying, thinking I wish I was dead, I wish he was dead. And then when you’re older, you’re not living your dream, because you’re indulging in other things, like alcohol, drugs stuff like that. So now your dreams are dwindling away and then you’ve got regret and you don’t know how to live with regret. Now this is all building up to frustration, sadness. You just keep it inside because you don’t know how to let it out, always feeling that. And then it can just happen, like the alcohol can take away your conscious [sic], you know and you don’t realise it. And then after a while it’s… you’re just immune to caring about you know, about other people, property, stuff like that. Not having empathy and, bang you’re on. It can just explode.

This pattern was also evident in the narratives of other men. For example, Stephen described growing up with a violent, alcoholic father who modelled violence as a key method of achieving desired outcomes in problematic situations.

Me old man was a bad drunk and smashed up the house and belted me mum, and us kids weren’t off limits either. So growing up, you know, the lessons I learned was, um, deal with things with violence. That’s the lesson I got learned from me father. You know what I mean? Get angry, throw a tantrum … So for me, the violence comes out at things that probably don’t warrant the violence. But it’s been little things that have led up to an explosion, you know what I mean, because people just don’t worry about it, suppress it, put it away, don’t talk about it, don’t deal with it. And then something else, small, don’t worry about, forget about it, and they push it down, suppress it, and so keep putting little bits like that down, down, down, suppressing emotions and then all of a sudden (slaps hands together). Without dealing with it, that’s where an explosion of violence comes from (Stephen).
The accumulation of negative emotions resulting in a violent outburst, were central to Stephen’s narrative. For Tony, anger was also identified as a primary trigger for violence and it appears that this anger was related to his experiences of violence as a child.

Um, mine started with my dad. He was a violent bastard and … toward my mum and everything like that. So growing up seeing that … seeing your mum being smashed around stuff like that… yeah that sort of played a big part in it I think. You know I used to always like… you have to protect yourself you know. And do anything to protect yourself, so. I used to smash everything, used to get into a lot of fights. Angry all the time … Just, little things used to just set me off and then I was … a dickhead to be honest (laughing). But yeah, I was just an angry person and it turned into violence, so (Tony).

Not all men however, experienced violence in childhood. Most reported growing up in positive, nurturing environments where physical discipline was constrained and in most instances perceived as appropriate. For these men, the inability to perceive or utilise non-violent problem-solving strategies, in combination with drugs and alcohol, were the primary triggers for violence.

Because the person who I fell out with he thought he was, you know, tough and all that sort of stuff, and, well he paid the ultimate price which is you know, unfortunate. I wish I didn’t do it, but at the same time, going back then, I didn’t see any other choices, you know. Like, what else was I supposed to do? Like I couldn’t have got my old man, because he was aggressive and he was angry that night, because someone’s trashed his house, so I couldn’t really grab him and walk away. But after I was sentenced, I found a really good friend in here and he was trying to talk to me, he goes ‘There’s always choices’. You know, you didn’t have to grab your old man, you didn’t have to pull the knife out, he goes, there were so many things you could have done. There’s like three, four different choices I could have made then. But you know I didn’t see that then (Marcus).

For many of the men, violence was perceived as the end-result of feeling like there was no other choice. A variety of factors were identified that contributed to these perceptions, which all converged on the issue of problem-solving. As Liam indicates,

Maybe it’s, it’s… they don’t know how to control the situation so they can do something to get out of it, with arguments and stuff. You know if people are in
arguments and it’s starting to heat up they can walk away, or just throw punches because they don’t know how to deal with the situation (Liam).

This is not to imply that the violence perpetrated by these men represented an appropriate or acceptable problem-solving technique. In fact, many of the participants acknowledged that, in hindsight, they could have dealt with their specific situations in other, potentially non-violent ways. However, at the time that violence was used, many men reported feeling that they *had* to act, a point demonstrated in the following statements by Stephen and Marcus.

*It probably wasn’t my place, I probably could have sat back and not done anything about it. But, I felt … something needed to be done, so I went there, not to perpetrate violence, but things got out of hand. So, I had a couple of drinks, um, and then I lost control* (Stephen).

*Like, in the heat of the situation I know things happen quickly and you just, sometimes you can’t control it, but there’s always a choice. You’ve always got a choice. You’ve just gotta see that* (Marcus).

Therefore, for the men who had grown up with violence, their own violence in adolescence and early adulthood was influenced by the presence of drugs and alcohol in combination with intense negative emotions. In contrast, poor problem-solving, in combination with substance use and the presence of negative emotions were identified as the main triggers for the violence by men who had not experienced abusive childhoods. In the absence of identifiable role models for violence, in some situations these men still perceived that there was no choice but to react with violence. This indicates that exposure to a violent or an antisocial role model is not a necessary condition for violence in later life.
Low self-worth

While there is debate in the literature regarding conceptual distinctions between self-worth and self-esteem, as well as the role these constructs play in violent offending (e.g., Andrews, 2011; Baumeister, Bushman & Campbell, 2000; Salmivalli, 2001; Walker & Bright, 2009), a growing body of literature indicates that poor evaluations of the self are related to masculinity and aggressive or violent behaviour (e.g., Toch, 1992; Walker & Bright, 2009; Walker & Knauer, 2011). In particular, Walker and Bright (2009) have argued that violence can be an effective strategy for establishing dominance in the context of negative core beliefs about the self. Put simply, a fragile self-concept grounded in beliefs of inferiority can be effectively masked through the enactment of an ideal masculinity based on dominance, power and violence.

There was some indication that low self-worth was an important underlying factor in the violence perpetrated by some men. In particular, violence was perceived as a way for individuals to make themselves feel better about their perceived inadequacies. This was indicated in the following three narratives.

They feel they're lacking in something, and they feel that by being aggressive and you know to them powerful and domineering, it makes them feel better about what they may lack in their life. It could be something as simple as they haven’t been lucky enough to have a good education when they’re growing up. They come, you know, they come across someone who is only simply had the luck of being able to go through primary school and high school and get a good education and they feel, well you know, what makes you better than me? I can do this to you! Um, so, I think that’s the biggest one really. It’s that they feel they have a lack of something and they want to fill it with violent acts (Joshua).

I guess … I don’t know … I’m not (long pause). I guess I want to be more than I am out there, in a sense. I want to be more than just average Joe you know what I mean, like on the dole, you know, or um, you know, working his arse off for … oh, it can be good pay, but I don’t know (Phillip).
Um, trying to be something more than they are. Like, their intellect, or their charisma, or whatever it is, is not what they would hope, so they have to perpetrate violence to be seen, or to be recognised, or lauded or whatever it is, you know what I mean? (Stephen)

For others, low self-worth was linked to a need for acceptance that emerged early in life. This was especially evident in the narratives of men who had experienced violence in childhood. For these individuals, violence appeared to provide an avenue to prove to others that they were worthy of respect or admiration.

“In my youth I was consumed by acceptance, anxious, my charisma not conducive to reverence. So follow the crowd I did for a while, before becoming aware I did no longer smile.”22 So, I don’t care what other people think anymore, because when I was younger what other people thought of me was more important than what I thought of myself. So now, I don’t, I’m not like that anymore. If I’m happy with who I am, and how I’m going, and what I’m doing, then it shouldn’t really matter what other people think (Stephen).

While Stephen sought the admiration and respect of others in adolescence he now appears to rely on his own, perhaps more positive self-evaluations. Stephen’s narrative therefore points to some of the developmental processes that may lead to changes in beliefs about violence and masculinity during adulthood. For Tony, low self-worth was much more firmly grounded in a desire to live up to an image of a violent, but absent father. He states:

I got a bit of a name for doing stupid shit you know what I mean? And my dad was exactly the same as me, and I grew up hearing all his stories. Like if I go to a pub everyone … like there are blokes there that will talk about what he’s done, and this and that …. And in some sense, I thought I had to live up to that sort of thing you know? And that’s where I started being … fighting and carrying on and whatever. Because my dad was never around really in the end. So I used to … try and do that to, I don’t know, like seem better in front of him, but it got me nowhere in the end, so (Tony).

22 This is one of Stephen’s own poems.
This is reinforced by Julian’s narrative, where a desire for acceptance was identified as an important driver for violence, at least during earlier stages of his life. For example, he states that:

It’s strange because sometimes people… sometimes people set out to please other people. So they won’t necessarily do what they think is right, like they can turn their back on their own ethics or morals to try to please others. To feel a sense of worth, within their group of people, who they think are cool. So they’ll go against what they believe to try to impress people who they hold in high regard (Julian).

Based on these narratives, low self-worth appeared to be influenced by a need for acceptance arising during childhood and adolescence. Even amongst offenders who had not experienced abusive childhood environments, violence was considered a technique for self-aggrandizement, even if, in retrospect, it was also considered self-defeating. In this context, violence served at least two important functions. First, it allowed individuals to convey to others that they were worthy of respect. Second, it made individuals feel better about their perceived shortcomings, even if this type of self-worth was only superficial. In other words, violence may have been used to mask feelings of inferiority.

The narratives in this section highlight that offenders perceive their own personal history to have influenced their beliefs about violence and masculinity at later stages of their life-course. One particularly relevant factor, for some men at least, was experiencing violence in childhood. The impact of these early experiences on violence committed at later stages of the life-course was not direct, but instead appears to have been influenced by a range of internal and external factors. These included the accumulation of intense negative emotions that were often regulated through substance abuse.
Negative emotions and substance abuse were also evident in the narratives of men who had not experienced violence in childhood, indicating that growing up with violence is not a necessary or sufficient pre-condition for explaining violence at later stages of the life-course. For these men, violence in adolescence and adulthood was more closely associated with a perception that in some circumstances, there was no alternative but to use violence. Problem-solving therefore was an important theme in the narratives of these individuals.

Underlying these narratives of attributed causality was the issue of self-worth. For individuals with abusive upbringings low self-worth was grounded in a desire for acceptance. For others however, it was more closely aligned with a desire to be perceived as worthy of respect and admiration. For most individuals, violence was perceived as an effective strategy for communicating to the self and to others that an individual is somehow bigger, better, more important than he really feels. In this respect, violence can be seen as a self-aggrandizing strategy with clear links to masculinity. These themes echo Toch’s (1992) typology of self-image compensating, and Polaschek et al.’s (2008) ‘beat or be beaten – self-enhancement’ implicit theory. Specifically, it appears that underlying the violence of some individuals is a desire to assert themselves over others. As will be discussed shortly, this desire in large part reflects an individual’s attempts to enhance their perceived (low) self-worth through masculine displays of violence.

**Violence and masculinity in the prison environment**

Masculinity, however, is also fundamentally influenced by contextual factors. As shown in Figure 5, the prison environment is part of the historical and contextual factors that inform an understanding of beliefs about violence and masculinity. For the men in this study, prison constituted an environment where a certain type of masculinity was not just expected but also condoned. While it can be argued that these men ‘imported’ their beliefs about masculinity into the prison (Jewkes, 2005) they were also constrained in their ability to enact
or construct alternative versions of masculinity within the normative culture of violence and hostility. As such, prison may either reinforce and entrench existing beliefs, or force individuals to perform a certain type of masculinity, regardless of whether it is internalised (de Viggiani, 2012; Jewkes, 2005).

The pressures of incarceration have been widely documented, with research indicating that the prison environment promotes hypermasculinity (e.g., Sykes, 1958; Jewkes, 2005). For example, excessive violence, hypersensitivity to perceived insults, and displays of dominance and physical power are central to men’s discussions of masculinity within prison. The prison environment therefore appears to promote displays of hypermasculinity, in large part because the failure to conform to cultural expectations of what it means to be a man within a prison can lead to violent victimisation.

I mean in here no fear comes into it, you’re actually fighting for your life in here. You know, it’s either kill or be killed, bash or be bashed, or go to the (unclear) so you don’t have to put up with it. You know, that’s basically what it is. You’re taken out of your comfort zone, and put into a world you can’t handle or don’t like. A world you’re not prepared for. That’s what this is. This is another world. And it’s a most violent world. Believe me. I’ve seen a lot of things in the last 10 years, as far as fellas being bashed, stabbed, throats cut … and said nothing (Craig).

Moreover, the minor triggers for violence in combination with the excessiveness of the violence that is used in the prison context creates a perception that in order to survive individuals need to at least give the impression that they are willing to retaliate with violence if necessary. Thus, as Marcus states:

People get hot-watered. And it could be over anything, you know. It could be over little stuff that happens in here, like, people take people’s milk out of the fridge and because we can’t actually go out to the shop and buy milk, we have to wait for the delivery the next day, it really annoys us. Or like, being on the phone before somebody else when he asks for it. You know, pushing in, you know, stuff like that it’s just not on. And you know, some people if they don’t want to fight them, or if they’re too scared or … it’s hectic. They’ll just get boiling water, or boiling oil, and just throw it in their face and then, give them a beating (Marcus).
The prison environment also appears to promote strategies for using violence that many individuals perceived as qualitatively different from those used in the community. In particular, the ‘sneako’, a strategy where an individual is attacked by a group of prisoners, typically from behind and without warning, was identified as a prominent way to resolve problems. Marcus describes the ‘sneako’ in this way:

In jail, sneako’s the best go. You say something to me in jail, and you know, just say I’ll pretend that I don’t want to fight, and you walk away, I’ll just run up and hit you from behind. There’s no rules in jail. If you come at me wanting to fight me, I’ll just get my mate to jump in, or I’ll pretend to fight you and let him jump in and go for it. There’s no rules in jail at all. If I beat your butt, you’ll probably come back half an hour later, or the day after, with a knife. There’s no rules (Marcus).

Similarly, Craig, the oldest participant in the sample, identified a discernible shift in the culture of the prison and explicitly linked it to the drug culture within and outside the prison walls.

There used to be a code of ethics, there’s not anymore. It used to be mutual respect, you know. Whether it’s between the crims and the screws or whatever, you know or whether it’s between the crims to each other. There’s just no respect anymore and that’s because of the drug world (Craig).

As a result, suspiciousness and attributions of hostility were perceived as part of the normative prison culture. In an environment marked by hostility, violence and the constant threat of victimisation, hostile attributions may not only be accurate but may also serve a protective function. As such, violent responses may represent an ‘appropriate’ problem-solving strategy. In other words, not reacting with violence in the context of the prison environment is perceived to increase the chances of victimisation. For example, Marcus elaborates on this issue in the following quote:

You know, some people, just think that you know, the way they’ve been spoken to could be, with a little bit of attitude. But like, to people like you and I, I wouldn’t, like I wouldn’t take it as attitude, but people in jail, people in jail, people would end up turning around and saying, what’s with the attitude? When you like, you don’t even mean to do anything. And then that will just escalate from there. Especially in here, you know (Marcus).
For some men, the climate of suspiciousness and hostility was fundamentally grounded in fear, which promotes further violence in a mutually reinforcing way. While there were elements of fear for personal safety, as Jorge’s narrative indicates there was also a fear that not reacting with violence would lead to perceptions of weakness and therefore further victimisation.

Personally I think a lot of violence is borne out of fear. Fear, fear that you could be seen as weak or as an easy target, especially in this place. People might say things about you, if I’m – if you’re seen to be weak, you become an easy target for them, whereas if you stand up for yourself you gain more respect and people tend to leave you alone. Sort of like, there’s no point picking on him because it will come back to me (Jorge).

All of these factors contributed to a belief that violence was an effective, and perhaps the only strategy for self-assertion and dominance. In this respect, violence in prison becomes a way for men to express their frustrations, and perhaps also their despair in a way that is consistent with definitions of idealised masculinity. Thus as Nathan states:

I think most people use violence because they don’t know how to assert themselves in other ways. Maybe they haven’t been taught, or they don’t know how to be like that. And it’s more extreme in here. This is the most hostile and oppressive environment on the fucking planet. You know, we’re all … you’ve got 500 blokes all in the same boat who are all missing out on the same things, or missing their families, their friends and things like that. And if they don’t speak up they’re not going to be heard. Most of the time they use violence to get their way (Nathan).

The culture of the prison therefore provides a necessary framework for understanding how these men articulate the relationship between violence and masculinity in their own lives. While there are likely to be important differences between different prisons, and even between units within the same prison (e.g., Day, Casey, Vess & Huisy, 2012) there is nevertheless an underlying normalisation of violence in these institutions. As the above narratives indicate, violence is not just perceived as an effective strategy for survival. Importantly for this research, it also appears to allow prisoners to assert their masculinities.
The next section explores beliefs about masculinity generally before moving on to a discussion of the relationship between violence and masculinity amongst younger and older offenders.

**Masculinity**

As detailed in Figure 5 (above) masculinity was another master theme identified in these narratives. These narratives of masculinity reinforce the view that beliefs about masculine violence do not simply emerge as a result of incarceration. Based on their narratives, it can be argued that these men brought with them pre-existing beliefs about how masculinity should be enacted through violence and these beliefs were then reinforced through the hypermasculine culture of the prison. Moreover, consistent with the masculinity literature, there were complex and nuanced ways in which masculinity was defined and enacted. For example, narratives of violence and masculinity between men were different to the narratives of violence and masculinity in relation to women. There were also differences between ‘negative’ and more ‘positive’ masculinities enacted through violence. These different narratives were evident regardless of the age of participants, indicating that there may be core elements of violent masculinities that exist independently of developmental processes.

One of these core elements, especially in relation to masculinity that is enacted in relation to other men, was the desire to not be perceived as weak. In fact, this was an overarching, or meta-narrative in these interviews, in that every participant acknowledged that not reacting with violence could be perceived as an indication of weakness. The masculinity literature emphasises that some idealised masculinities are enacted in relation to weaker or subordinate males, who represent feminised versions of manliness (e.g., Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; de Viggiani, 2012; Jewkes, 2005). Subordinate males are perceived as weak and therefore represent the antithesis of what it means to be masculine. For the
men in this study, not wanting to be perceived as weak, and showing a willingness to stand up for the self with violence, were prominent themes. The following extended quote illustrates this point:

Stephen: It’s about respect … I don’t …. and it can be achieved. Absolutely it can be achieved, but not if, say an 8 foot tall, 120 pound bloke goes to town on a 60 pound 5 foot 2 bloke, he’s not getting any respect out of that. The 5 foot 2 bloke who’s had a crack, he’s gonna get respect.

Int: Right. Even if he gets smashed?

Stephen: Even if he gets smashed. Because he’s had a crack, you know what I mean? He’s never looked likely to win the fight, but it wasn’t the point. He didn’t back down, he had a crack, so you know what I mean, he’ll get the respect. This other bloke will just be looked at as a cocksucker, you know what I mean?

A willingness to stand up for yourself, rather than an actual ability to do so and win a confrontation, appears to be the important element of masculinity in this context. This was reinforced by other participants who mentioned that fighting was about “trying to achieve that you can stand up for yourself” (Marcus) and achieving honour by not demonstrating weakness and backing down from a confrontation. Honour and self-respect were particularly salient in some accounts, as indicated by Joshua and Tony.

Someone could be denigrating your character. If you can’t defend yourself verbally back to them, then…you’re just, what, you’re just supposed to be allowed to sit there and cop it? (Joshua)

Yeah, I think a lot of blokes would … they think it’s weak or something you know, to just to leave it and go. Sort of gotta … it’s pride. I think it’s a pride thing you know. I know it might sound stupid but (chuckling) … (Tony).

Zach reinforced this issue, by indicating that masculinity has a performative dimension. From Zach’s experiences, masculinity was enacted through violence not just for an individual’s own sense of self-respect, but importantly, to achieve the respect of other men.
I've seen it, gone through it myself. You don't wanna be the one who can't do anything, on the ground, because then yeah, I suppose you see yourself as weak. It's also the perception of what the other blokes around you will think, and stuff like that, as well (Zach).

For most of the men in this study, a willingness to defend reputation with violence was considered an inherent part of being a man. As the narratives above indicate, however, not wanting to be perceived as weak also incorporated themes of honour, power and reputation. The prison environment provided an additional pressure to react with violence to perceived affronts. As Phillip’s quote demonstrates:

In jail it’s about honour. So if someone says something to ya, or does something to ya, and you don’t stand up for yourself, then you are viewed as weak. You may then be a target, all these sort of things (Phillip).

Regardless of the context, honour appears to be an important component of masculinity. This has also been reported in the literature, where honour, status, and respect have been consistently identified as important themes in the narratives of violent offenders (e.g., Crowther et al., 2012; Bennett & Brookman, 2009; Lopez & Emmer, 2002; Polaschek et al., 2008; Topalli, 2006). Honour however can be defined and achieved in a number of different ways. For the men in this study, there were three primary forms of honour associated with masculinity. The first involves the coupling of violence with fairness and protection. The second was associated with violence in the protection of vulnerable people. Finally, for some men honour involved the use of violence as a reaction to perceptions of disrespect. These three elements of honour are described below.
Honour

“The respect of a one man fight”

For some men, there was a perception that masculinity could be achieved through ‘honourable’ violence. In this respect, violence that occurred between evenly matched opponents was considered appropriate, and an acceptable test of an individual’s manliness. For example, Craig referred to a time when violence was between two individuals who faced off and dealt with their differences in a respectful, albeit confrontational way.

The world I grew up in was respect. If you had a beef with a fella you see him on the street or at the pub. You fixed it with him. It was…the respect of a one man fight, you know. Me and him, not me and his four mates and him. You know, now all you hear from the younger fellas is, oh we got him. Where, where’s the victory there? You know, you get victory when it’s one-on-one and then you stand up and shake hands afterwards and go have a beer together (Craig).

For Craig, honour was associated with victory against an opponent on even terms. The underlying issue of fairness is apparent from his narrative, suggesting that regardless of the outcome, a fair fight allows an individual to prove his manliness. This was reinforced by Zach, who argued that “if you hit someone from behind when they’re not looking, that’s a bit of shit go”, and that “blokes two or three outing another bloke is uncalled for”. In contrast, other participants emphasised that fighting against ‘weaker’ opponents was neither satisfying nor rewarding. For example, Phillip stated that:

If you’re the dominant person I believe as well you shouldn’t … I don’t know. You should always give them a choice to walk away. Like, I had a mate that … he was getting it, like a guy just kept pushing and pushing and pushing, and my mate is a 6 foot 120 kg bloke, he’s a big boy. And he hit this guy once and killed him. Yeah. This other guy was a smaller, weaker person and me mate knew that, so he, he told him, nah go away, you don’t, you don’t wanna do this. The guy’s pushed the limit, my mate hit him and yeah … So, I guess there’s a code of conduct in that sense that you don’t wanna hit someone that’s smaller than you, weaker than you. There’s not much of a challenge in it either (Phillip).
Phillip’s narrative also highlights that honour is associated with codes of conduct at least as perceived by some individuals. There is some literature indicating that codes are important in street violence, and provide unwritten rules about how violence should be used and against whom (e.g., Anderson, 1999; Brookman et al., 2011; Topalli, 2005a). While these codes were originally identified as salient for largely urban, African-American street offenders there is emerging evidence that elements of the street code are apparent in the narratives of violence of racially diverse individuals in the United Kingdom (Brookman et al., 2011). However, these codes appear most evident in the context of gang violence and it is unclear whether the codes of conduct referred to by the men in this study were qualitatively equivalent to the ‘codes of the street’ reported in the literature. Nevertheless, for some individuals, violence was related to codes of honour that appear to emphasise the importance of fighting against people who are able to provide a suitable challenge.

Protecting the vulnerable

Violence in the protection of weak or more vulnerable people was another component of the honour theme associated with more positive expressions of masculinity. For some men, this appeared to be an inherent element of their self-definition tied to the concept of self-respect. In particular, the narratives in this study indicate that respondents drew pride from their self-imposed roles as protectors or defenders of the weak. For example, the following extended quote highlights how violence can be associated with positive definitions of masculinity.

Craig: Because when I was doing what I was doing, as they say back in the day, no oldies were hurt, you know what I mean? You didn’t run into somebody’s home and then bash them for their personal pension which is what’s happening these days. And you hear about that all the time in the news. And I sort of think to meself even though my way of thinking has changed I think to myself oh I’d love to be sitting in that house when they run through. You know, come up against a brick wall instead of an old age pensioner.
Int: And hypothetically, violence in that scenario would serve…?

Craig: It would serve the purpose of saying, ok young fella have a go at me. I'm gonna stand up and protect this old fella. You wanna get to him and take his pension cheque? Go through me first. Get through me and then you're welcome to what I've got on me.

Similarly, the following scenario described by Stephen highlights how violence for the protection of vulnerable people serves a communicative purpose. That is, violence does not just stop vulnerable individuals from being abused it also communicates to the perpetrators that their type of violence will not be tolerated.

Me and me mates were sitting in the car, and we were watching this girl just yelling abuse at this boy, right in his face, swearing, carrying on like an absolute idiot, you know what I mean? And like, this kid was a bit slow, he wasn't all there. And, he crossed the street, and this girl had a little bit of an entourage with her, and she's screaming at him "go on, hit me, hit me, fucken, go on have a go you fucken idiot" all these things. And this boy, he done everything he possibly could. He's crossed the road and he's trying to go home, and she's pushing him, she won't let him walk, so he's gone bang and he's hit her. And he didn't hit her hard. It was more of a shove out of the road than anything else. And as soon as he done it, another guy jumped on him, straight over the balcony. Nah, fuck that. I'm not copping that. So I went and I fucken bashed him. And as far as I'm concerned that's every, I'm justified to do that, because he done everything he could that kid, and that was just a dead set setup. Fucken, beat up on a slow kid, you know what I mean. So… I bashed him (Stephen).

These narratives demonstrate an element of righteousness associated with violence that is used for the protection of those that are perceived as vulnerable. Honour, in this respect, is equated with standing up for those who are not able to stand up for themselves. There are some parallels between the narratives of honour described here, and Presser’s (2008) research on stability narratives. Specifically, some of the men in Presser’s study positioned themselves as always inherently decent despite their violent histories, by emphasising the righteous and often ‘chivalrous’ nature of their violence. Similarly, Polaschek et al.’s (2008) ‘I am the law’ implicit theory reflects beliefs that violence for the protection of others is acceptable and justified. The culture of honour (Cohen & Nisbett, 1997), may also contribute
to these definitions of righteous violence and masculinity. In particular, violence in the
defence of personal honour may be culturally sanctioned, thereby allowing for the
expression of masculinity through violence in way that is, perhaps, less likely to evoke social
censure.

The last component of honour however has a different connotation, that is associated with
the more ‘toxic’ elements of masculinity typically described in the literature (Connell &
Messerschmidt, 2005).

**Being disrespected**

The final element of honour was associated with reacting to disrespect. Unlike the honour of
a fair fight or the righteousness of protecting the vulnerable, reacting to behaviour that is
perceived as disrespectful by using violence represented an attempt to defend one’s status
as masculine. This type of violence was more prevalent in the prison environment, where, as
indicated above, individuals were not only hypervigilant to disrespect, but where a wide
range of seemingly innocuous situations were construed as evidence of disrespect. Julian
described the nature of this type of disrespect in the following way:

In jail, from what I’ve seen, in my personal experiences on both sides of the fence, in
jail it can be the simplest things. But these simple things we hold in high regard … It’s
not just what … it’s not just a personal item, or personal possession. It can be a
respect thing that’s blown way out of proportion because it is what it is. And it means
much more in here than it would on the outside (Julian).

Similarly, Jamie recounted an incident where the disrespect associated with taking
something without permission resulted in the use of lethal violence.

Like, we’re in 10 man units and the doors, the main door is locked and then we all
have bedrooms sort of thing and a kitchen type deal. Years ago when the place first
opened all the guys, the 10 guys in the unit they made a brew, a home brew you know. And so, they all got drunk and one of them ended up dead. And as it come [sic] out later on, it was over a piece of chocolate cake that was in the fridge. And he got stabbed and they found him the next morning in his cell dead on the floor (Jamie).

There was also a suggestion that disrespect played in an important role in violence committed outside of jail. In particular, across the various scenarios of masculine violence, honour was a counter to shame. That is, individuals felt that violence was the most likely outcome when other men attempted to shame them, tried to make them look like fools, or otherwise undermined their masculinity. As the following quotes indicate, beliefs about masculinity promote violence when other men try to make an individual feel less manly.

Honour is … I’m showing you respect, I’m talking to you nicely, I’m not swearing I’m not nothing. You expect the same thing back you know what I mean? And if you’re trying to be nice, they gotta be nice to you. And if they think they’re better than you and they put on shame in front of people, well then you have to protect yourself. It doesn’t have to be violent, but it’s gonna end up leading to violence. That’s always the case. Because you’re gonna tell him to shut up, he’s gonna say no, then … it’s just gonna happen like that. Because if you let one man, or a man, step on you one time, then the next time it’s gonna happen, and it’s gonna keep happening and eventually you’ll think this is normal, I’m just nobody, everybody can just step on me whenever they want. If you’re gonna think for everybody that disrespects you, talks to you bad, oh something’s wrong with him… then you always end up leaving em. And then you always get used to it (Brody).

I was at … I found myself in a situation where I didn’t know how to handle it properly. I felt that … my only option was violence. Without going into specifics of what happened, I felt that my dignity had been violated, that my integrity as a man was (chucking) … I don’t know it’s hard to explain. I was, I was very angry and very upset, you know. I didn’t really think, I just went from (snaps his fingers) 0 to 10, lashed out and next thing you know, he was, he was gone (Nathan).

These narratives demonstrate that manhood, honour and violence are considered to be inextricably linked. In situations where there was a perceived threat to a person’s integrity as a man, not reacting with violence was interpreted as a sign that an individual had no self-respect, and could therefore be perceived as weak. Honour, therefore, appears to be an
important core element in violence that occurs between men. The narratives of these men resonate with Polk's (1994) argument that violence over seemingly trivial things in fact reflects honour contests, where men feel compelled to defend their masculinity.

The narratives of participants also contained elements of hegemonic masculinity, especially in relation to women. While these narratives serve as a reminder that women play an important role in the way masculinity is defined and enacted through violence, the focus of this research is on confrontational masculine violence. Therefore, a summary of the narratives of masculinity defined in relation to women is presented in Appendix 12.

Despite the common elements of masculinity associated with honour, there were some important differences in the way younger and older men understood the relationship between violence and masculinity in their own lives. The next two sections explore how beliefs about violence and masculinity may evolve and change as individuals mature into adulthood.

**Violence and masculinity in younger adult men**

For the younger men in the sample, there were two dominant narratives of violence and masculinity. These included the seductions of violence and establishing a reputation. For example, a small number of men acknowledged that violence could be appealing. Consistent with the argument proposed by Katz (1989), the seductions of violence were both physiological and phenomenological. This was indicated by Marcus in the following extended quote:

Marcus: Because I used to ... I can relate to that, like I thought it was fun. Sometimes I thought it was fun. Like I’d go to work and talk to my apprentice, and we’d just *(chuckling)* we’d have a laugh about it. You know, like, these guys were acting like dickheads and we gave them a beating. You know, like, and it would actually be funny.
Int: What is it, what makes it fun?

Marcus: The adrenaline rush. Just like, speeding in a car, yeah. Adrenaline. Yeah, like you, you’re in power. With the fighting, certain people think it is because they’re good at it. You know, yeah. You like to be the tough one, you like to be intimidating you know, you want to make a name for yourself you know, you want to be a good fighter, yeah …

The rush associated with violence was mentioned by a number of other participants, which demonstrates its visceral appeal. There was also an element of sensation seeking associated with the seduction of violence, as highlighted in the following statement:

Some guys get a rush out of it I guess. They go out looking for it. You see it very common, guys going to bars and you know, a few drinks in them and all of a sudden they want to just take on the world. You know, that’s a good night out for them. I sort of don’t really … I don’t know, I don’t get it, but then you know, you see it enough you sort of yeah, accept that what they’re saying could be true (Zach).

While the seductions of violence were most clearly evident in the narratives of younger men, some of the older participants also reported experiencing a sense of exhilaration when they had used violence during early stages of their lives. In this context, Stephen’s narrative reinforces the interplay between phenomenological and visceral aspects of violence.

It’s an empowerment if you like …. After I took the bloke’s life, for a very brief time, for a very brief time, I felt almost immortal. Like it was unbelievable. It didn’t last long, but it was most certainly there, you know. So I can understand that people really get that adrenaline, get that high and … of being bigger, or more important, or more powerful, or whatever it is, than they actually are. And from that you can understand, I could understand, how people could chase that again (Stephen).

The high associated with violence was not experienced by all participants, although there was an implicit understanding that violence could be appealing. For some men however, there was an important distinction between the appeal of controlled compared to
unrestrained violence. For example, Nathan emphasised the distinction between ‘lashing out’ at someone and the controlled violence of sport.

For me personally, nah. I’ve never found it thrilling, or anything like that. For like, fighting, like professional fighting like boxing or cage fighting or something like that, there’s a sense of excitement with the violence that goes with that. But, that’s just sport. It’s controlled, it’s got rules, there’s doctors you know, there’s all that sort of … there’s control to it. But just violence in general, like just lashing out at someone, I don’t see the thrill or anything in that (Nathan).

Therefore, the younger men in particular experienced violence as something that was appealing, predominantly because of the physical and experiential rush associated with fighting. There was also an underlying narrative related to masculinity, especially when fighting was used to establish a reputation as a ‘mad fighter’.

**Reputation**

The narratives in this section again highlight the overlap between narratives of violence in prison and violence on the outside. In particular, reputation emerged as an important element of masculinity for the younger men in both contexts. Moreover, there was no indication that building a reputation through violence was achieved in qualitatively different ways inside or outside of the prison environment. For this reason, the narratives are presented together, and where distinctions between the two contexts are evident these are highlighted.

Reputation was associated with reacting to challenges, feeling aggressive, being known as a ‘mad fighter’, and helping friends. Overarching all of these elements however, was the role of the audience (Goffman, 1969). In particular, reputation is a social construct that is built and maintained in the presence of others. In this respect, the audience is typically comprised of other males who witness the violence of the ‘mad fighter’, and award him respect. For
example, Liam emphasised the 'one upmanship' that can occur in male friendship circles that reinforces the importance of an audience to witness the performative dimensions of masculinity.

> You know, when the boys get together, have a drink and they try to outdo each other. You know, then some … they just get in like weird states of mind, like let’s get into a fight, they find another group and it’s on. So they probably show off a bit, yeah. Then it can escalate (Liam).

The audience also appeared to play a role in some individuals' beliefs that violence was necessary in order to save face, or not be perceived as weak. This is indicated in the following quote from Phillip.

> Because you’ve got people that are bigger and they know they’re stronger and they’ll purposefully go and, you know what I mean, hurt somebody that’s weaker, just to, I don’t know … I believe that it’s to show that they will do it if they have to. It comes down to that as well. You’ve got like people that will walk away from it and just realise, you know, you’re not worth my time. But then you’ve got people who are like, well everyone else is looking, so you can’t you know … to save face (Phillip).

Against the backdrop of the audience, young men may feel pressure to prove their masculinity by engaging in violence to save face. In these narratives, the link between masculine violence and self-worth is most clear. Displays of hypermasculinity in the presence of an audience allowed these participants to make others believe that they were somehow more superior, important or better than they themselves felt. Thus, being perceived as a 'mad fighter' was identified as an important element of building a reputation and gaining the respect of other men, in and outside of prison. As the following quotes demonstrate, a reputation as a mad fighter was fundamentally grounded in an individual’s willingness to react to perceived provocation with violence.

> People use violence … to show that they’re better than some people. They don’t like people thinking that they’re better than them. So they use that violence to prove well
you're not, I'm better than you. Sometimes I used to do that. Like I was, you know, 16 to 20, 21, yeah. You know I'd catch someone looking at me and I'd just be like, I'm in the mood, why not? What the fuck are you looking at? You think you're better than me? And then it just escalates. Especially when you know, you've sort of got a few drinks in ya, liquid courage, and you just don't care, you know? (Marcus)

I think it's when people are with other people you know, they ... I don't know if they think they're heroes or something, but (laughing) ... yeah. Like some people act, I don't know, they put a front on or something. I don't know what it is, you know. It's ... like I don't know the bigger man or something. And you're just there having a good time or whatever and then they start being smartasses I guess. They start being a bit lippy and if you can't take it you're gonna end up getting into a fight I guess. You know, so, it sort of takes over, you get angrier I guess and ... yeah, then it's on from there (Tony).

If it's just a fight, it's to win the fight to get that honour or respect or whatever the hell point they were trying to prove. You know, people will just be violent for the hell of it ... someone looked at them the wrong way, all that sort of shit. Or they just plain don't like someone. You see that a bit too. Somebody will just walk in and they just don't like the look of them so all of a sudden they'll act out and ... just to see what the other person will do, to get a response (Zach).

In addition to a willingness to react with violence to perceived provocation, the 'mad fighter' also develops a sense of pride that again links to the idea of self-worth. For many of the younger men in this study, a reputation for violence appeared to be fundamental to their self-definitions as worthy. This is demonstrated by the following quotes.

You become proud. People think oh look at this bloke. You end up growing a head over it, and you like the fact that everyone's talking about you, that everybody knows how strong you are, who you've hit in the past. People like that. Some people like it (Brody).

I've probably been in maybe 20 fights in my entire life. And like I didn't really fight in high-school, but well, you know ... some people thought they were tough in high-school. I didn't like fighting back then, I thought, you know, like getting hit, shit you know I don't really want to do that. But then after high-school I just thought, fuck it you know, like, I'm better than some of those people who thought they were tough and um, I ended up falling out with them. And I wasn't scared anymore. And then you know, it's an adrenaline thing, and, you know, you want to make a name for yourself. You want to be a good fighter, you want people to know you're a good fighter, so when you go out to a pub everyone will just leave you alone. Or, if for some stupid reason you're in the mood for a fight, you know no one would want to, so you know
that you’ve got… Because you can’t go into a fight scared cause then you lose, you’ve lost. So yeah. Some people think it’s cool. Your mates will think I’m friends with, you know this bloke, he’s a mad fighter (Marcus).

The reputation of a ‘mad fighter’ therefore appears to be internalised, at least by some of these men, as evidence that an individual is worthy of respect. Beyond the pride associated with this reputation, there is also an element of power associated with this type of masculinity.

I think … So you got that power over them I guess you know what I mean? Where you might actually, you might not even be thinking about it, but people talk you know, say oh he did this, or he’s done that, don’t go near him he, he’s off his head, or something, you know what I mean? Stupid stuff like that. But that’s where it all starts I reckon, so. And then you’ve got the name so you sort of just keep it going I guess (laughs). I don’t know, it might sound stupid, but it’s like you’ve got a target on your back you know? People keep on trying to have a good at ya, just to see, and test you and stuff like that (Tony).

The masculinity of the ‘mad fighter’ was also contingent on his willingness to defend and protect his friends. ‘Helping your mates’ was perceived as an important element of younger men’s masculinity, in part because reputation was enacted through and also for an audience of peers. For example, some men invoked the idea of mateship by arguing that when friends are in trouble “you back up your mates you know … it’s friendship” (Luke). Beyond a person’s duty to help their friends in fights, there was also an element of camaraderie associated with having a reputation as a ‘mad fighter’.

You got out with your mates or whatever and some guy starts ya, another guy jumps in, dude gets his teeth punched out and then you’re back at your mate’s house having a laugh, saying oh how funny was that, the guy got it. Or you know, your group of mates will come to watch you lay out some dude, stuff like that. I suppose it’s sort of … yeah, it’s that whole, everyone enjoys watching a fight (Zach).
The idealised masculinities of younger men in this sample therefore appeared to be based on a desire to be perceived as stronger, more intimidating and tougher than other men. In this respect, masculinity was at least partially enacted for peers, with the audience emerging as an important site for showing that an individual was worthy of respect. Moreover, violence was experienced as something thrilling and seductive, thereby potentially reinforcing beliefs in an individual's masculine superiority. That is, for the younger men, engaging in behaviour that clearly carries a large degree of risk may reinforce their beliefs that violence is manly and they are superior to other men who do not engage in violence.

**Violence and masculinity in older adult men**

For the older men in the sample, power was a prevalent theme in the narratives of violence and masculinity, which constituted one of the main qualitative distinctions between the two age groups. There were two major elements to the power narrative, which involved establishing dominance, and achieving status. While there are some links between status and reputation, for the older men in the sample status was associated with maintaining a reputation as someone who was powerful and deserving of respect. In contrast, the younger men appeared to be engaging in the process of reputation building, where there was a desire for power that had not yet been achieved.

Power through dominance was typically associated with the ability to intimidate through fear. In particular, using violence for the purpose of intimidation was perceived to confer on individuals the power to control others, and thereby achieve a range of goals. These interrelationships between control and power are highlighted in the following quote.

> To have people be scared of me, to have people be terrified when I walked into the room, to hear a pin drop when you walked in the room when beforehand you’d be outside the door and everyone’s you know talking, laughing, joking and you step into that room and not one word is said, nobody’s game to even look up at you. And that
is a power trip and a half, you know. It was power. I had it, I had it over them. You know, and that’s where a lot of violence comes into it, it’s the power trip (Craig).

This type of strategy could also be effectively employed in the prison environment, where power was often achieved through intimidation and dominance. The following quote indicates that ‘standing over’ people is common in prison, although there is also an implication that this type of behaviour used to be more prevalent.

Some guys in here use it to intimidate people you know. So it’s a form of, just a form of intimidation, hey I’m stronger, tougher than you. I’m gonna beat you up for your pair of shoes. I mean, I don’t see that happen too often anymore because the system has changed a lot um, but I did see a bit of that when I first came in (Joshua).

Regardless of the context, there was a perception that intimidation allowed some individuals to communicate to other men that they were stronger and more powerful than they otherwise were, and therefore should not be messed with. The ability to inspire fear in others was not only a sign of strength, but also allowed these men to position themselves in relation to subordinate males. In this way, intimidation was one strategy for enacting masculinity by creating distance between the self as manly, and other weaker males. The following statement highlights this process:

Oh it comes in I’m a lot stronger than you, you’re weak because you won’t stand up to me. What’s wrong with you? You know, like I said survival of the fittest, the strongest survive. And that’s the world I lived in. I mean, another fella liked my missus. So I ran to his house and I terrorised him. I had him sit in a corner for two days. I used his drugs. I made him walk to the shops with me and buy the beer I was drinking. Because he was too terrified not to (Craig).

While the narratives of power through intimidation and dominance applied to violence committed both in prison and in the community, status was most often discussed in the context of prison violence. The reason for this contrast is unclear, but may relate to the importance placed on dominance hierarchies within the prison system (Toch, 1998). In this
respect, status is perhaps more salient, easier to achieve and to hold onto in a closed environment than in the community, where these type of hierarchies may be more fluid.

For the men in this study, status within the prison was typically achieved as a result of being perceived as willing and able to intimidate or control others. While dominance was effective in establishing masculinity in relation to a specific subordinate male, status was also associated with a wider acknowledgement that an individual was at the top of a dominance hierarchy. That is, the older men no longer had to prove they were worthy of their status. While violence was not essential to maintain status, especially for the men serving long sentences for murder, the perception that these men were willing to use violence also contributed to their status. This was most clearly articulated by Stephen in the following quote.

I've come to jail for murder, so people look at me differently to someone else. So you see, they will look at me and if they want to confront me they have to ask themselves... ok he's willing to go to that length. Are they then willing to go to the same length to confront me? Do you know what I mean? So, it does mean, compared to if I was in here for bag snatching, there's going to be no problems about confronting someone in here for bag snatching, if that makes sense. Like, they're not scared, because um, I'm not just gonna do anything for nothing, but um, like I say, I've been to that extreme, so are they then going to step up to that extreme?

Moreover, status achieved through violence was perceived to have an important communicative function. That is, it communicated to other prisoners that an individual was "willing to teach you a lesson... you know, just to let you know he's the one you don't muck around with" (Luke). Although not all of the older participants endorsed these views, there was nevertheless a perception that violence and masculinity were associated with status within the prison. The following quote highlights this link.

I can't speak personally because I never craved that sort of power, but I have seen it in the prison environment. People crave that power, feeling of being important. The other inmates will look upon you as, oh you're a man. And with that reputation,
especially I suppose, the younger circles, with that reputation comes you know, power. Power to control other people (Jorge).

The statement by Jorge also highlights an interesting contradiction. While the older men most often referred to the idea of status, there was a perception that it was younger men who craved power. Most narratives reveal that older men had reached a stage in their lives where they no longer appeared to crave or need acceptance from other men. Their higher status was implicit as the younger men were attempting to prove themselves in relation to the older prisoners. This created an environment where the younger men engaged in more prison violence and more overt displays of masculinity in an attempt to build a reputation.

The distinction between status and reputation is important in the context of masculinity within the prison setting, but mostly relates to the degree rather than kind of violence employed. Specifically, for the younger men a reputation was associated with being perceived as tough, whereas status was associated with real or implied power independently of the actual uses of violence. This suggests that the relationship between masculinity and violence amongst younger men requires more detailed exploration, particularly in relation to their desire for a reputation and power within and outside of prison.

Overall, the narratives of violence and masculinity indicate that masculine violence may serve different functions at different stages of adult development. While the narratives of the younger men emphasised using violence to communicate to other males that an individual was somehow more ‘manly’, older offenders focussed more attention on the role of violence in enforcing a reputation through intimidation and control. For the younger men, masculinity was enacted for their peers, with the audience emerging as an important site for showing that an individual was worthy of respect. In contrast, the older men no longer required an audience to enact their masculinity. Bennett and Brookman (2009) similarly identified that status and honour were the primary motivations for assault-related offences in their sample of older violent offenders. While the older men interviewed for this study were on average
older than those in the Bennett and Brookman study, the convergence of the findings suggests that status, rather than reputation, is important at later stages of the adult life-course. The following section discusses some of the developmental processes that may underlie the construction of alternative definitions of violence and masculinity at different stages of the adult life-course.

**Changes associated with maturation**

A number of developmental influences were identified in the narratives of participants that included growing older, the internal and external strains experienced as a result of being incarcerated, and the emergence of new perspectives about the self and violence. There was also some indication that these factors were interrelated, such that growing older shared some common elements with the pains of incarceration, and both of these factors contributed to the development of new perspectives about the self and violence. The nature of this relationship differed slightly between younger and older offenders, in part because the older offenders were serving much longer sentences than their younger counterparts.

For younger offenders, growing older was somewhat of a misnomer. These men were in their mid to late-20s, and for them incarceration served as the dominant ‘turning point’. That is, they recognised they had become more mature but identified incarceration as the trigger for behavioural and attitudinal change. In fact, there was some convergence in these narratives with Sykes’ (1958) concept of the pains of incarceration. According to Sykes, the structure and processes of prison life exert a large amount of pressure on inmates, which can be negotiated through a variety of means. These pressures are what Sykes (1958) referred to as the ‘pains of imprisonment’. Based on a qualitative study of a maximum security prison in New Jersey, Sykes argued the deprivations associated with imprisonment affect the way men perceive themselves and their social world. In particular, deprivations
associated with the loss of liberty, material possessions, relationships, and importantly, autonomy, can have profound effects on an individual’s sense of identity. How individuals negotiate these deprivations can also have a long-term impact on their commitment to persistence, or change (Sykes, 1958).

In this study, incarceration provided some individuals with the opportunity to reassess their use of violence outside of prison, as illustrated in the following representative quotes.

I would’ve kept going. And maybe who knows, it could’ve gotten worse and worse every time. So it was a good thing I ended up here. It really was. Not as much as I really wanted to, but, it makes you snap out of it sometimes. Like, I know it sounds stupid (chuckling) but it takes a man to admit his fault. Because you don’t think… the way you look at life out there is different than when you end up here. Because in here you’ve got all the time in the world to think about what you did. And you look around, and you see and just… You gotta be honest with yourself to say, look, it’s wrong (Brody).

Um, some, sometimes you know, like it, it does get a bit fun, as stupid as that sounds, as in, you know like, after you’ve done it you go and have a few beers with your mates and you’re like, yeah, you know, we got into this wicked brawl, you know it was … But, when you get older, like, I was arrested when I was 22 and I’ve been in jail ever since, and it’s just, it’s pathetic. Yeah. Now you know, now that I’m 25 and away from my fiancé and away from my family it’s, it’s not appealing at all (Marcus).

Before I had my kids I was I was stupid, stupid. Had my kids, slowed down, but still stupid. But now I guess coming here, and realising what I did have, and what got me here. So what I was doing wasn’t working, you know what I mean? So I guess yeah, coming here and my kids (Tony).

For others, the impact of incarceration was more difficult to discern. For example, in the following quote, Phillip indicates that prison does not have a positive impact on an individual’s desire to change.

I was a lot younger I guess, and stupider. I don’t know, I just… I don’t think I saw the future as much. Like, I never had much …. Just been labouring all my life, sort of not
really going anywhere, using a lot of drugs. And um… I guess I had a lot of um … low self-esteem in myself, so …. I was just younger and silly and just didn’t think, didn’t think of when I’d be 28, 27. I never thought about where I’d be then, it’s more or less living in the day, you know. What are we gonna get today, how am I gonna get this, how am I gonna do that? And then at 22 or whatever, same sort of thing. You get back in that situation … Jail doesn’t rehabilitate you, it just makes you think about life a bit for a while, sends you back out there. You be good for a while and then everything starts building up again (chuckling). But I don’t know … I’m better … it’s fucked, it sounds so fucked …. Even the parole board, I’ll say you know, I’m better off in here in a sense. I’m not … Oh, I hate saying it, but I’m a better person in here. And that’s strange as well (Phillip).

While for some of the younger men incarceration was perceived as positive to the extent that it gave them an opportunity to re-evaluate their lives and their priorities, for others, like Phillip, incarceration was evaluated in negative terms, but was nevertheless perceived as the only place where he was able to be a ‘better person’. Incarceration also played a role in the attitudinal changes experienced by older men, but in a slightly different form. The amount of time they had spent in incarceration throughout their adulthood, in combination with a sense of growing older led to new perspectives about life, violence and in some cases, masculinity. Here, the focus was on the cumulative impact of ageing while incarcerated.

I’ve done enough jail. By the time I finish this I would have done 19.5 (years). So, you know. Well there’s 5.5 back in the 70s, 14 now, so there’s 19.5. Without counting the couple of months here and there that I’ve done. Because they’re not jail sentences, it’s just like going camping for a weekend (laughing). But yeah, it’s the length of time it’s taken away from your family, your loved ones (Craig).

A developing sense of increased emotional maturity was also linked to new perspectives about violence and masculinity. For example, some men distanced the person they believed themselves to be in the present, with the person they had been as younger adults. The following quotes highlight this distinction:

I think just growing up a bit that’s all. Having that emotional maturity I think, just growing out of it really. When you’re 16, 18 you don’t think like you do when you’re 25 or 30, you just tend to do and ask questions later. And it’s not just with violence, it’s pretty much with everything. You just experience a lot of different shit for the first
time. You don't know how to handle the situations properly, you don't know the right way to go about things. But like, I've got 3 years to go, I've done the hard yards... my change, my way of thinking, my cognitive processes have changed a lot over that time. What I say now I mightn't have said 5 years ago, 6 years ago, my head would have been in a completely different place (Nathan).

I think as you get older, you just ... you've had enough, you've done it, basically. So it's around that early age where it's just, it can be out of control. You know you go to nightclubs, let's just get into a fight, let's get into a fight with the bouncers because they're always knocking you back here and there, they're the ones that are kicking you out, they're the bad guys. So you try and start a fight. You don't care if you get hurt. It all heals I guess (Liam).

These narratives indicate that some men in this study may have been developing a different way of thinking about themselves and the world. These new perspectives were in part influenced by the development of a more positive self-worth in combination with a growing understanding of the ‘ripple effects’ of violence.

**Positive self-worth**

Low self-worth was frequently related to violence especially for the younger men. In contrast, one of the major changes that the older men reported was a growing sense of self-acceptance. This is consistent with the self-esteem literature where genuinely high self-esteem is characterised by beliefs of inherent self-worth as well as an acceptance of personal faults and shortcomings (Salmivalli, 2001). While it was not possible to determine whether the men in this study had genuinely high self-esteem, the following quotes indicate that self-acceptance was an important change for some individuals.

Me, I don't think about it anymore. Uh, I don't dwell on the past. I mean it’s all part of my past. Everybody says oh, is there anything in your past you would change? I wouldn’t change one second of my past. I’ve done a lot of things that I’m not proud of, but there’s nothing in my past that I’m ashamed of. Because to be ashamed of anything in my past, violence and all, to be ashamed of any of that means that I’m ashamed of part of me. There’s nothing about me I’m ashamed of. And that's the way it is (Craig).
Like, I can afford to say it now, um, I … I’m not so insecure as what I was when I first came in. Plus I’m a lot older now, been in for 10 years, I’m not as emotionally immature as I was when I first came in too. Who I am though, hasn’t … I’d like to think it hasn’t changed. But I know that when I get out, I’m gonna have a lot of behaviours and mannerisms and stuff that have rubbed off because I’ve been in here for so long. I’m conscious of that, I’m aware that you know, I’m gonna have to make the effort not to get upset if some pushes in front of me at the canteen line, or like in Coles or something like that. Just little shit like that (Nathan).

In the process of gaining self-acceptance, the narratives of some men indicate that they were also developing a more positive self-worth that was not as firmly grounded in violence. For example, as the following quotes demonstrate, self-worth for some individuals was associated with accomplishments and accolades they had acquired while incarcerated.

I’ve done the violence course and I was … invited to the violence course as a guest speaker because a couple of fellas were sort of glorifying the violence so I was brought back as a guest speaker. Afterwards I had these young fellas thanking me for talking. And like, sometimes schools come in here, you know, and if can get through to one of them kids so they don’t take the next step up the road. I’d like to work with kids (unclear) when I got out. If it was part of my parole, make it part of me parole, I’d want to go to (unclear) and talk with them once or twice a week. I’d love to do shit like that (Craig).

I’m one of the prisoner representatives here, and also one of the peer supporters so I’ve done a bit of counselling training so that I try to speak to guys in that sort of capacity. You know, being someone they might prefer to talk to instead of the psychologists …. I finally know how to cook because I’ve done a Hospitality 2, kitchen operation certificate. And I’m just starting, hopefully, a Bachelor’s degree in writing, professional writing and editing and stuff. You know, I’m lucky to have my own in-cell computer because of the education I’ve done and so I’ll edit letters for guys, write letters because I’m good at the language. So … and that’s all just to give strings to me bow so I’ve got options (Joshua).

These narratives also highlight that the men in this study may have been redefining their view of masculinity. For example, Craig’s narrative highlights that he perceives himself as a mentor for younger prisoners and his goals for the future contain a similar theme. Adopting the role of the ‘sage’ is consistent with the generativity literature, which shows that as some individuals enter middle adulthood they begin to focus on their legacy and helping the next
generation (Erikson, 1963; Halsey & Harris, 2011; McAdams et al., 1998). The ‘sage’ may therefore represent a version of masculinity focussed on sharing wisdom with the younger generation. Similarly, Joshua appears to be defining his masculinity based on his capacity to contribute to the wellbeing of others and to society more generally through his academic pursuits. To a lesser extent, the younger men also appeared to be constructing new definitions of masculinity that were not as firmly grounded in violence.

I don’t know I just want good for my family now, that’s it. I’m over the bullshit and I just wanna do this time and go home (chuckling). And just try to live a normal life, you know. I know shit’s gonna come up here and there, but the way I deal with it… instead of breaking things or hurting someone, just deal with it in better ways you know. But that’s what I wanna do … for me (Tony).

Despite his long history of self-reported violence, Tony now appears to be focussing on an alternative and more positive construction of manliness as the good father and husband. While there appears to be some ambivalence regarding his ability to control situations in non-violent ways, there is also an obvious desire to provide his young son with a positive role model. For Tony, who grew up with an abusive, alcoholic and largely absent father, being a present and positive influence for his son appears particularly salient. Whether this goal is achievable is open to debate, especially in light of the significant barriers ex-prisoners face upon release (e.g., Halsey, 2008; Richards & Jones, 2004).

Alternative definitions of masculinity were also evident in the goals these men had for the future. For example, most men spoke about settling down by starting a family and owning a house and/or a small business, as indicated by the following quotes:

I do have a lot of plans, big plans. Whether they come to fruition or not, I don’t know. I’d just be happy to have a partner … have a roof over my head, something out this way, doesn’t matter. Food on the table, just leading a quiet life (Jorge).

I’ve already planned everything. I’ve actually just finished drawing plans up for my house, for my new house, last week actually. So yeah in five years’ time, I’ve got two
kids in my house and engaged. Like, properly, like you know, just about to be married (Marcus).

I just wanna be happy (laughing) and just live a normal life. Um, just be a good dad. That’s me main thing, that a big thing for me (Tony).

To the extent that conventional cultural norms influence definitions of masculinity, it can be argued that these men were beginning to define their masculinity in reference to the more positive and widely endorsed characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, including being a good father and husband, providing for their families, and owning assets (Jewkes, 2005). Settling down by starting a family, owing a house and/or a business therefore can be considered more closely aligned with conventional definitions (and expectations) of masculinity.

Positive elements of hegemonic masculinity can also be accomplished through stable employment. This may be a particularly salient resource for men who lack an education, and feel restricted in their ability to enact their masculinity through the role of breadwinner (Jewkes, 2005). For some of the men in this study, being able to earn a living post-incarceration was an important goal and reflected their belief that manliness was equated with being active and productive.

Five years from now? Settled … possibly have a job, a stable, job. My plan is once I’m on parole to try to get some sort of steady job, whatever work that has to be, whether it’s manual labour or intellectual or whatever. So that’s my plan. Um, to keep active, keep busy. Like because I’m not one of those dole bludging types that can just sit around and you know, be unemployable because I’ve done 10 years jail. That’s not, that’s not going to be me, hopefully (Joshua).

Well, hopefully I’ll be in outback QLD. Yeah, on a station out there, working on a station23 (Phillip).

23 Outback stations, also known as cattle stations, are large isolated farms predominantly located throughout the north and central regions of Australia.
Others focussed on more contemporary notions of success. For example, both Liam and Nathan mention that financial stability is best achieved by aiming for employment in the field of information technology.

Yeah, I wanna have heaps of money. So you know, in 5 years' time I'm gonna be set up, flat out. Don't know about kids, because I've gotta be settled and... birth is scary you know. But yeah, I wanna invest in property and stuff, but also have my artistic thing going. I wanna get into Apps too (Liam).

Oh, I'd love to have my own IT company. Maybe, if I don't have that, maybe working for, I don't know, a big IT firm or something like that. It's pretty much how everything is these days out there (Nathan).

As these narratives show, a number of different types of masculinity can be achieved through the avenue of employment. Property investment and owning a business are clearly associated with contemporary views of success. In this respect Liam and Nathan appear to be conforming to a conventional type of masculinity characterised by a desire to be a free agent in a free market economy. In contrast, Phillip’s masculinity is associated with a more rugged version of manliness defined by physical labour, strength, toughness, and in some instances, aggression (e.g., Liepins, 2000). Both of these constructions of idealised masculinity highlight the value that is placed on employment as a way of being manly.

Other goals for the future however were less clearly associated with masculinity, but instead were about repairing the damage caused by previous acts of violence. For example, Craig expressed a desire to make amends to his son by getting him “out of the Melbourne world and give him a start at a good life … make up for some of the time that we’ve lost” (Craig). A similar desire was expressed by Nathan.

But, more importantly, I have to earn the trust back of my family, like the people I care about, the one’s I feel I’ve let down the most with what I did, and ... That’s one part of my moral self that I think about more than anything else. Yeah, just... make sure that all these things we’re talking about now about how I’ve changed and how I see things differently and all that sort of stuff that ... long pause … that it doesn’t
affect them as well. Like they’re not gonna have to like, worry about that themselves when I get out. That’s probably more important to me than anything. (Nathan)

Overall, based on these narratives it can be argued that the goals these men had for the future reflected a growing self-acceptance and sense of positive self-worth that was associated with an emerging, more conformist definition of masculinity. There was also some indication that for some of these men, violence was beginning to be redefined.

Understanding the ‘ripple effects’

In addition to developing a growing sense of self-worth and self-acceptance, many spoke at length about the ‘ripple effects’ of their violence, not just on their victims but also on important people in their lives. This type of narrative was apparent regardless of whether the men had participated in violent offender rehabilitation programs. On the surface, understanding these ripple effects included an acknowledgement that violence had caused harm to the self and to others. For many participants however, underlying this awareness was the belief that their worldview had fundamentally changed. This was again most evident in the narratives of older offenders, as demonstrated by the following quotes:

I like the way I think now. I think with a clear head because there’s no violence in the head, there’s no drugs and alcohol in the head. And, I think with a clear head for the first time in that many years it ain’t funny. Before it’s just I couldn’t give a stuff – this is what I want, go and get it. And 9 times out of 10 it was the violence that achieved it. Like 15, 20 years ago if I wanted something, it wasn’t my right to have it, but I wanted it so I was getting it. Irregardless [sic] of what it took to get it I’d get it, you know. And I look back now and it was wrong. I mean the amount of people that I had to terrify to get what I wanted. And … for my kids to see that and to think how much power their father had and it was right to have that power, is the wrong way of thinking. Would I like it being done to me? No way. Not a very proud feeling. And I look back and I think what type of mongrel was I? You know? (Craig)

Yeah, I look at situations a lot differently. Even though I’m in prison and I’m surrounded by violence I still look at situations a lot more clearly. I know the consequences of my actions a lot more. I know that if I choose to do this it’s going to cause me more headaches in the long run. Whereas when I was younger, I’d want to
win and that was it. There was no, there was no fucking around. It was my way or the highway, and I tended to force that physically if I had to (Nathan).

The younger men appeared to be redefining their perceptions of themselves and their social environments, but here too there was a degree of ambivalence that was not as evident in the narratives of the older men. In particular, the younger men tended to focus more attention on the negative impact of violence, rather than on any fundamental change they had experienced in relation to themselves. This is exemplified in the following statements by Julian and Zach.

I mean it’s strange because I grew up with very similar things you know. The mum, the family, everything’s broke because of one … because of the violence of one. But it, it’s probably, it’s probably the fact that it’s not just a broken jaw, or you know, or anything like that. It’s the emotional damage, and the ripple effect it has on like the other people, the family. Their children having to see their dad, their brother, their uncle like that. And then it starts all over again. That was probably the, my light bulb moment (Julian).

I think violence is there. There’s just a difference between those who get caught and those who are lucky … you know, unfortunately it’s just the way things are. I think it can be changed, but until, you know, I suppose you get that whole message across of there’s a difference between seeing someone hurt superficially, you know what I mean? Like, a friend actually said to me before I got locked up and I was on trial, he said how would you feel if that would be your brother, your father, something like that? And it brings it back to home because you just look at what you’ve done to this family and stuff like that. Not to say that you’ve hurt all of them physically, you only hurt one person, but then to see the ripple effect going on in their lives. And that’s when you sort of start to think you wouldn’t want to wish it on anyone, so why would you do it? You know? Yeah. It’s alright when it’s not so in your face. Or, a better way of putting it is seeing what you’ve done to someone. Realising it, looking at it from their perspective (Zach).

For others, there was a greater degree of ambivalence regarding the ability to control potentially violent situations in the future. This ambivalence is demonstrated in the following quotes.

Yeah, a little bit, but it’s gonna be everywhere, so I gotta … it’s not always everyone else’s fault, you know. I learnt that. I always used to blame people for all the stuff,
you know. But, it's not always other people's fault, and if there's ... there's certain places I guess too, where you know, something might happen, so I'll just try to stay away from them, you know what I mean? Like pubs and stuff like that, so. That's what ... hopefully, that's me big plan anyway (laughing). (Tony)

I think I'm a better person, you know, because I actually feel sorry for what I've done. Yeah. He didn't deserve to die. You know, he probably deserved a beating to pull his head in, but he didn't deserve what happened. And I was stupid enough to do it (Marcus)

While there was a widespread belief that violence is harmful, some of the younger men still perceived it as justified. For example, Marcus, who had stabbed and killed an acquaintance, states that his own lethal violence was not appropriate, but that his victim probably deserved to get a "beating to pull his head in". Similarly, Tony states:

I think just ... a fight in general isn't so bad that's my opinion anyway, but uh, between two people you know. I think it's when groups fight I think sometimes it can get worse. You know, you get stabbed, or you get shot or something like that, so.

The behavioural and attitudinal changes in younger men appear to be more directly associated with the pressures of incarceration, rather than meaningful insights about the self and violence. This is in contrast to the narratives of the older men, where there is a stronger indication for a meaningful change in the way violence is perceived, as well as a deeper change in the way the self is understood and defined.

The catalysts for change were also different for younger and older participants. For some of the older men, participation in rehabilitation programs was perceived as an important turning point. For example, Craig attributed his new way of thinking to his participation in the violence program.

When I first went in there I went, oh, what a load of shit. I mean ... but then I sat back and I started listening to what people were saying. I actually took the cotton wool out
of my ears and put it in my mouth. And, because at this particular time in my life I wanted to change I was able to. I mean, if you don’t want to change it’s no point doing the course. Because no matter what course you do, it’s not going to alter your way of thinking at all if you don’t want to alter it. You know. It’s the same as violence. You’re not going to stop being violent unless you want to stop. But now when I’m talking I can see the way that I’ve changed. And it was mainly because of the violence course that actually got my way of thinking changed (Craig).

Similarly, Liam spoke at length about the influence that the cognitive skills program had on his ability to understand the reasons for his own violence, and the ripple effects of his actions. In particular, the language of the program appeared to have given form to some of the feelings he had experienced for much of his life.

I was 29 when I got locked up. First time in jail, 12 years … You start to reflect on everything you’ve done, all the bad stuff, all the negative stuff. And you keep thinking about all that. It’s not just one period, it’s little sections of things that you keep going on and on and on. So like, when I was 25, 26 I hated fighting, I hated it. You know, I hated the violence. But then you fantasise a bit, if I had a gun I’d just go and shoot the bully in the face. You wouldn’t think twice about it. But if you done that now you’d think, oh my god there’s funerals, there’s police, there’s all the families crying, their kids … you know. It just has that ripple effect. So I knew I had changed the way I felt, the way I thought about empathy, and caring for others and that sort of thing. I think I really realised it in cog skills and doing problem-solving and stuff like that. It’s a really good course, you know. And I was looking at life in a different way. And you look at in a better way of appreciation, understanding. And you learn the words of consequential thinking and the ripple effect and you start to think, oh yeah that’s right. You know, it’s there, you just don’t know the wording for it, or how it can play out, stuff like that (Liam).

Rehabilitation programs appear to have been a positive catalyst for self-reflection for some of these men. As the statements above indicate however, the benefit of these programs was contingent on an individual’s readiness to internalise the message of these programs. This is reinforced by the comments from Jorge, which indicate that problem-solving skills are only as effective as the context allows.

I’ve done a few courses while I’ve been in prison, cognitive skills and whatnot and certainly those skills might have come in handy back then. Try to analyse the facts, but you have to have the facts available as well. If you’ve only got one side of the story, unless you can get the other side of the story, then it’s fiction (Jorge).
For the younger men on the other hand, participation in the drugs and alcohol program, rather than the violence or cognitive skills program, was perceived as an important turning point that allowed for introspection.

It all come to be when I come to jail. Like if I was … I know it sounds bizarre, but jail’s probably the best thing that happened to me. I had a lot, a lot of time with a clear head you know. No drugs or anything like that for self-reflection and expression. A lot of time (Julian).

For other younger men ‘getting clean’ while in prison was perhaps better viewed as a forced hiatus. For Phillip this change was transient and contingent on staying in jail. His narrative highlights the vulnerability experienced by some of these younger men that can help to explain their use of violence within and outside of the prison environment.

I guess you become … I’m not the same person I was, I am, I have been. Like … things, contributing factors change you. Like drugs is one thing that… you might, it mightn’t seem that way but it makes you a totally different person. Like, you just … You sit back now after being straight for god knows how many months and you, and you think, man was that me? Like, how could I be like that? I guess … I, I believe I can get back to that same place if I start using again and start, you know what I mean, I’ll get straight back to that same place that I was when I was 18 and it was when I was you know, 20, 25, I know I’ll get back there. If I start using drugs it’s just how it’s going to happen (Phillip).

Phillip’s narrative provides a contrast to the perspectives of most other participants. While there were variations in the degree to which change was internalised, most individuals appeared to either have developed or were in the process of developing a new perspective on themselves, the world and violence. In this respect, understanding the ripple effects of violence was also associated with a growing awareness that most narratives of violence represented attempts at justifying something that was not always easily justified.

I don’t know, if you’re gonna use violence you’d really want to be a life or death situation, because yeah. Getting locked up for something that could’ve you know … I don’t know (chuckling). You try to justify it but you can’t really (Zach).
Other participants indicated that while they had not cared about who they were hurting or the damage that they were causing at the time that violence was used, understanding the consequences made the violence more difficult to justify. This is demonstrated in the following quotes.

Violence is violence I think. There’s just different grades of violence I guess. Like you can either smash people or can smash furniture or something like that. It’s still all violence and anger and frustration. But um … some people, yeah, just go further and yeah, you know, they don’t care about hurting other people or … um, when they do it they don’t care and later you’ve gotta live with that sort of thing (Tony).

But when, um, like someone attacked me and then I went overboard, I went to extremes, because I thought it was justified, because I was in the right. So it didn’t matter if I hit him 2 times or I hit him 20 times, I was in the right. Maybe because all of the wrongful harm that come to me I’m taking it out on them now, I’m letting it out. You know. Yeah. I’m disappointed in it, how it happened (Liam).

These narratives indicate the tensions inherent in the process of change. While there was some evidence that most men were beginning to develop a different, perhaps less violent way of thinking, this was most apparent in the narratives of the older participants. This indicates that maturation may play a role in the way beliefs about violence and masculinity change throughout the life-course. In contrast, the younger men still appeared to endorse beliefs about violence and masculinity, albeit in less aggressive forms than may have been the case had they not been incarcerated. It is possible that during early stages of adulthood, when individuals are still in the process of developing emotional maturity, beliefs about violence and masculinity are more resistant to change. The culture of the prison, which permeated the narratives across the three major themes, is also likely to contribute to beliefs amongst younger men that violence is an important resource for enacting masculinity. The narratives presented in this study therefore raise important theoretical questions about the relationship between masculinity and violence at different stages of the life-course and these are addressed in the next chapter.
The narratives described throughout Chapter 7 emphasise that violence and masculinity are complex, nuanced concepts that are largely contingent on situational demands. Both constructs are influenced by social and situational constraints, and both appear to evolve and change throughout the life-course. Two primary sources of change were identified in Study 2 – growing older and the pains of incarceration. Natural changes associated with ageing, combined with long periods of incarceration, provided the catalyst for changed perspectives about the self and violence. While it is unclear whether these changes can be translated once men return to the less structured routines of community life, they nevertheless indicate that even within hostile and violent environments, individuals are able to redefine their beliefs about violence and masculinity.

Moreover, some of these changes were more pronounced in the older men, although there was also some indication that the younger participants were in the process of redefining their own masculinity and their perceptions of violence. These results can be contextualised within the social cognition, masculinity and developmental literatures.

Beliefs about violence and masculinity

The social cognition literature has consistently identified a strong link between the presence of enduring beliefs supportive of violence and processing biases. In particular, aggressive children and adolescents, as well as adult violent offenders, have been found to attribute
hostility to provocative but ambiguous situations, and to have positive outcome expectancies for violent behaviour (e.g., Crick & Dodge, 1996; Dodge, 2006; Dodge et al., 1990; Fontaine & Dodge, 2009; Topalli, 2005b; Vitale, Newman, Serin & Bolt, 2005). Consistent with the premises of social learning theory, the genesis of these biases is considered to lie in early exposure to violence. Young children who are exposed to hostile environments and valued role models that engage in violence are thought to develop an interconnected network of beliefs that support the use of violence. Moreover, hostile environments promote the development of hypervigilance to threat, which over time is thought to become an automatic style of processing information (Topalli, 2005b). That is, early experiences of violence and neglect heighten the salience of threat cues in the environment, and children become increasingly vigilant to these cues across a variety of situations (Dodge, 2006).

The relationship between exposure to criminogenic environments in childhood and later criminality has also been well documented in developmental criminology (e.g., Farrington, 2005a; Farrington et al., 2009; Moffitt, 2007; Odgers et al., 2008). While there is growing evidence that promotive factors ameliorate the impact of these environments (Farrington, Loeber, Jolliffe & Pardini, 2008), individuals who lack such buffers are at an increased risk of developing an enduring potential for criminal and antisocial behaviour, including violence. Moreover, scripts supportive of antisocial and violent behaviour are thought to play a prominent role in the development and maintenance of a long-term potential for antisocial behaviour (Farrington, 2005a).

The extended interview data in Chapter 7 lend some support to these premises. For example, the men who reported growing up in hostile and abusive environments reported developing a number of problematic behaviours during adolescence that persisted into adulthood. These included an accumulation of intensely negative emotions that some men felt incapable of understanding or expressing in non-violent ways, substance abuse problems, and violence commencing at a relatively young age that continued into adulthood.
For these men, violence and substance use were perceived as effective strategies for discharging the accumulated anger, rage and frustration that they attributed to their early experiences of violence. Beyond its cathartic effect, violence was also a means of self-expression. Specifically, some of the narratives indicated that violence gave some men a voice that allowed them to make their presence felt. In this regard, some of the men appear to represent the 'life-course persistent' offender of the developmental criminology literature (e.g., Farrington et al., 2009).

Not all men experienced abusive childhood environments. For these individuals, difficulties with problem-solving, in combination with the presence of negative emotions and substance abuse, were perceived as important contributing factors associated with their violent activity. In this context, problem-solving involved an inability to evaluate alternative non-violent solutions to interpersonal conflicts. More importantly for this thesis, this inability has some linkages with the types of processing biases discussed in the social cognition literature (e.g., Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge, 2006). In particular, some individuals reported that in early adulthood they were quick to react to a perceived provocation with violence, especially when they felt that they were being challenged. Moreover, it often did not matter whether the provocation was real or perceived. If an individual was in the ‘mood’, he was willing to assume that he was being challenged, and would therefore react with violence. This was most clearly articulated by Marcus, one of the youngest participants in Study 2.

You know I’d catch someone looking at me and I’d just be like, I’m in the mood, why not. What the fuck are you looking at? You think you’re better than me? And then it just escalates. Especially when you know, you’ve sort of got a few drinks in ya, liquid courage, and you just don’t care, you know?

These results again highlight the stability paradox discussed in previous chapters. Specifically, the narratives presented in Chapter 7 indicate that younger offenders perceived their social world through a hostility lens in a way that is qualitatively different from their older
counterparts. This suggests that interpretative biases may be more prevalent during adolescence and early adulthood. This is also consistent with the results reported in Chapter 6, which although non-significant were in the direction of younger offenders scoring higher on a measure of interpretative biases, than their older counterparts.

This contradiction may be explained in a number of ways. First, hostile attributions were not directly addressed in Study 2, and it may be that with more direct measures, older men will show greater evidence of this processing bias. Second, drugs and alcohol also play a role in masculine violence, as indicated by many of the narratives reported in Study 2. Therefore, it is possible that attributions of hostile intent appear more prevalent amongst younger offenders because they are more likely to be in situations where drugs and alcohol are present, and where public displays of masculinity are perceived as important. Polk (1994) raised a similar point in the context of confrontational homicide. While he argued that the settings where alcohol and violence occur provide important information about how masculinity may be enacted, it is also likely that the physiological effects of drugs and alcohol, in combination with the presence of a social audience, increase the salience of any perceived challenges that lead to confrontational behaviour. These cues are then interpreted in a manner consistent with an individual’s pre-existing beliefs about violence and masculinity.

A recent study by McMurran, Jinks, Howells & Howard (2010) provides some support for this assertion. These authors investigated the relationship between alcohol-related violence, and the self-reported motivations for violence in a sample of 149 incarcerated juvenile offenders. Three primary motivations were identified, which included utilitarian, social dominance and self-defence in response to threats. Utilitarian motives were typically associated with robbery in the pursuit of goods and/or money to buy drugs and alcohol. Self-defence motives, on the other hand, involved alcohol-fuelled violence driven by anger and fear. The social dominance motives, however, were clearly linked to the issues discussed above. In
particular, violence in the context of social dominance was associated with heavy drinking, a desire to redress a perceived harm or insult, supporting a friend in a fight, responding to insults or challenges, and anger or displaced aggression (McMurran et al., 2010). These results indicate that for younger offenders, masculine violence is not just associated with reacting to perceived insults in the presence of an audience, but is also perhaps fuelled by the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.

Third, hypervigilance to threatening cues, and the concomitant attribution of hostile intent, may be influenced by a number of processes, including beliefs about the self and the world that change throughout the life-course. There is some evidence for such multiple pathways influencing the attribution of hostile intent. For example, Vitale et al. (2005) found that psychopathy and depressogenic styles differentially contributed to attributions of hostility in Caucasian and African American violent offenders. Specifically, for Caucasian offenders, psychopathy directly contributed to attributions of hostility and violence. In contrast, hostile attributions by African American offenders were influenced by psychopathy and a depressogenic cognitive style, which was marked by social withdrawal, and a tendency to attribute negative events to internal, stable and global causes. That is, hostile attributions made by African American offenders were the function of a generally negative view of the self, the world and others (Vitale et al., 2005).

The study by Vitale et al. indicates that processing biases can be influenced by race and depressogenic factors. It is possible, therefore, that other factors, including age and masculinity, may also represent different pathways that influence attributions of hostility and subsequent violence. For example, the narratives of offenders in Study 2 indicate that attributions of hostility during early adulthood may be influenced by a definition of masculinity that emphasises overt and sometimes exaggerated displays of aggression in the face of perceived challenges. Whether the attributions of hostility arising from perceived challenges indicated true processing biases, or were simply used as justifications is unclear from the
interview data presented. Nevertheless, there is an indication that being challenged is an important element in the violence of younger men, and in this respect they actively engage in an interpretation of others’ intentions as provocative.

In contrast, older offenders do not appear to define masculinity in the same way, and report engaging in more deliberative problem-solving when confronted with potentially provocative situations. For these men, the consequences of violence have become much more salient, partly due to participation in rehabilitation programs, and partly due to their increased cognitive and emotional maturity. While some of these men could be classified as chronic offenders, they nevertheless appeared to have reached a stage in their development where the costs of violence were perceived to clearly outweigh any discernible benefits. Again, it is unclear whether their cognitive processes had in fact undergone a radical change due to age. It was clear, however, that their beliefs about violence and masculinity were being re-defined, and as such, their way of thinking about the utility of violence was also changing.

Developmental differences were also evident in the way younger men described violence as seductive. In a phenomenological analysis of crime and delinquency, Katz (1988) argued the seductions of violence and its experiential qualities are simultaneously external and internal to an individual. That is, seductions exist in the way violence is experienced as a ‘rush’, as well as in the way it allows an individual to construct a particular type of identity for the self and for others. Moreover, Katz introduced the ‘badass’ and the ‘hardman’, two conceptually similar archetypes for whom violence provides tangible and intangible rewards. While the ‘badass’ was most often a young, urban male from an ethnic minority, the ‘hardman’ was his older equivalent. The seduction of violence for the ‘badass’ was associated with what violence conveyed about him/her - that he/she was tough, independent, and in some sense superior to others who did not follow the ‘way of the badass’ (Katz, 1988). In contrast, the seductions of violence for the ‘hardman’ were associated with control over others, over the ‘system’ and over one’s own life. For the armed robbers in Katz’s study, violence was
perceived as seductive by virtue of what it allowed them to achieve, as well as what it conveyed about them as individuals. Violence was part of a broader image of the self as someone who had an inherent superiority over others, which is exercised through power and strength (Katz, 1988).

The narratives of the men in this study reveal a similar pattern. Specifically, violence for the younger men was experienced as thrilling mainly because of the adrenaline rush it induced. The thrill of violence was linked to winning fights to prove one’s inherent toughness and superiority over other males. While the older men were more circumspect about the appeal of violence, they nevertheless equated it with power. For these individuals, violence was not thrilling in the experiential sense described by the younger men. It was appealing because it communicated an individual’s dominance over other men. Therefore, the results of Study 2 highlight that developmental processes may play an important role in the way beliefs about violence and masculinity are expressed at different stages of the adult life-course.

**Violence, masculinity and self-worth**

Masculinity is a multifaceted concept with several contradictions and conflicts. A single individual can embrace slightly different definitions of masculinity, depending on the nature of the social interaction and the person or people against whom masculinity is being enacted (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). For example, masculinity enacted in relation to other men is subtly different from masculinity enacted in relation to women. Moreover, an individual may endorse hypermasculinity in one context, and a less virulent masculinity in others. These inherent tensions mean that there is no single type of masculinity, but rather a multitude of components that are drawn on to create different masculinities in different contexts (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).
In this respect, the data presented in Study 2 highlight two important points about masculinity and violence. First, because masculinity is socially constructed and enacted, the context in which masculinity is expressed needs to be considered. Research with incarcerated offenders therefore needs to explicitly acknowledge the impact of the prison culture on the way masculinity is defined. This may be especially pertinent for men serving long terms of imprisonment who are exposed to the hypermasculine demands of prison life, given the relative absence of alternative models of masculinity in this environment.

The narratives of the younger men provide some support for the contention that the prison environment promotes the adoption of a ‘toxic’ form of masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In particular, fear of being perceived as weak was a prominent theme in the narratives of prison violence. In this context, violence was perceived as a necessary strategy for either pre-empting or avoiding victimisation. Moreover, there was a widespread belief that prison was not only a hostile, violent and oppressive environment, but that the rules governing violence in the community did not apply. This further contributed to the belief that hypermasculinity was necessary to survive in prison.

Similar themes have also been identified in the masculinity literature. For example, an ethnographic study with incarcerated offenders by Jewkes (2005) found that hypermasculinity was adopted as a ‘front management’ strategy to promote acceptance and avoid victimisation. The men in Jewkes’ study described putting on a front of hypermasculinity that consisted of the overt sexualisation of women, intense homophobia, and bodybuilding. This type of masculinity allowed those men to form bonds with other prisoners, thereby reducing the potential for victimisation (Jewkes, 2005). However, Jewkes also reported that hypermasculinity was not internalised. That is, the men performed hypermasculinity while in prison, but did not necessarily believe that it was the only or most desirable type of masculinity.
Second, there appears to be a link between masculinity, violence and self-worth or self-esteem. This relationship is contentious, in part because it remains unclear whether high or low self-esteem is associated with violence and aggression (Baumeister et al., 2000; Salmivalli, 2001). For example, according to Salmivalli, conceptual ambiguity about the construct of self-esteem has contributed to conflicting results in the literature. Specifically, self-esteem is not a unitary or polar construct, and the distinction between high and low self-esteem misses some of its inherent complexity. Instead, Salmivalli argues that there are important distinctions between genuinely high self-esteem, and ‘fake’ self-reported high self-esteem that in fact masks core doubts about one’s inherent worth. In contrast, Baumeister et al. (2000) have argued that there is no evidence to support that fake or grandiose self-esteem actually masks a deeper self-doubt. Moreover, these authors report that high and not low self-esteem has been consistently linked with aggression.

There is emerging evidence, however, that low self-esteem is associated with aggression, and that this relationship has a developmental component. Specifically, low self-esteem in early adolescence has been found to predict externalising problems, including antisocial and violent behaviour in later adolescence (Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt & Caspi, 2005), and negative life-outcomes in adulthood (Trzesniewski et al., 2006). For example, using cross-sectional data on 292, 11 to 14 year olds, Donnellan et al. (2005) found a significant and negative association between self-esteem and delinquency. This relationship was replicated using longitudinal data where self-esteem was measured when individuals were 11 years old, and was used to predict externalising problems when they were 13 years old. Finally, using a sample of university students, Donnellan et al. found that self-esteem and narcissism made independent contributions to self-reported aggression. That is, when narcissism was partialled out of the self-esteem score, the relationship between low self-esteem and aggression increased, and exceeded the independent effect of narcissism on aggression. Similarly, using longitudinal data from the Dunedin Birth Cohort Study, Trzesniewski et al. (2006) found that low self-esteem measured during early adolescence
significantly predicted negative outcomes in adulthood, including poor physical and mental health, economic instability and criminal convictions.

There also appears to be a cognitive link between low self-esteem, masculinity and violence. For example, Walker and Bright (2009) used a social-learning model to describe how low self-esteem may promote beliefs about masculinity leading to violent behaviour. Early experiences of abuse and neglect, in combination with internal predisposing factors like temperament, are presumed to influence the development of core negative beliefs about the self that are global, stable and internal. For example, an individual may develop a core belief that he/she is stupid/inferior/unworthy, that these traits are fixed and unchangeable, and are intrinsic to the self. These core beliefs then develop into specific cognitive strategies, or scripts, that guide information processing and subsequent behaviour. These may include scripts that when a person is challenged, confronted or put in humiliating situations, the appropriate compensatory response is violence. Therefore, when an individual's core negative beliefs are activated, they engage in an evaluative process where violence is perceived as the most effective strategy for either avoiding or retaliating against situations that could lead to humiliation or feelings of low self-worth. The outcome of the violence is then positively evaluated, because it momentarily decreases anxiety and fear, and increases feelings of empowerment (Walker & Bright, 2009).

While the Walker and Bright model has not been extensively studied, there are undertones of this process in the narratives of the men in Study 2. Specifically, for most individuals violence appeared to be grounded, at least partially, in feelings of inferiority and insecurity. This was most prevalent in the narratives of younger men, and in the way older men perceived themselves at earlier stages of their lives. Moreover, the fear of being perceived as weak was fundamental to descriptions of violence. For most participants, being disrespected, made to look foolish, and being challenged were all situations where a man had to stand up for himself. For the older men, being perceived as intimidating was also
associated with fear of being perceived as weak. That is, using violence to intimidate and control others made these men feel powerful and feared. The status this type of power afforded was further linked to feelings of self-respect and worth. Therefore, regardless of age, violence was often used to show others that these men believed themselves to be better, stronger or more important than their opponents.

Although there is clearly a need for stronger empirical evidence to establish the link between masculinity, self-esteem and violence, the narratives reported in Chapter 7, in combination with extant literature, provide a foundation for arguing that masculinity and self-worth play a crucial role in explaining violence. To date, Toch (1992) appears to have provided the only explicitly psychological link between male confrontational violence, masculinity and low self-worth. However, this relationship has also been alluded to in more contemporary research. For example, the ‘beat or be beaten – self-enhancement’ implicit theory identified by Polaschek et al. (2008) contains elements of self-worth. Specifically, the men endorsing that implicit theory believed violence was an effective strategy for maintaining status. To the extent that a desire for status is linked to a fear of being perceived as weak, there appear to be links between that implicit theory and low self-worth. Similarly, the young men in Crowther et al.’s (2012) study perceived that not reacting with violence to insults would communicate weakness to their peers. While the link between masculinity, violence and self-worth is not often explicit, it appears to permeate much of the literature on beliefs about violence, providing further support for the contention that masculinity plays an important role in violent offending.

Whether these constructs are directly linked to violence, or whether they act as background factors, remains to be established. However, what appears clear is that for some men, violence is perceived as an effective way of communicating to other men that an individual has self-respect, and is willing to stand up for himself if his manhood is challenged. As Joshua indicated:
Someone could be denigrating your character. If you can’t defend yourself verbally back to them, then … you’re just, what, you’re just supposed to be allowed to sit there and cop it?

Moreover, these processes appear to be relevant within and outside of prison, further reinforcing the link between beliefs about masculinity and violent behaviour24.

**Violence and masculinity in a developmental context**

To the extent that masculinity includes beliefs about the self and others, and is informed by attributions, evaluations and interpretations, it can be considered a cognitive construct. This is not to deny its fundamental social nature, but simply to emphasise an aspect of masculinity that has not been adequately explored. The cognitive element of masculinity also raises the possibility that like other types of cognition, it is amenable to change, either naturally or through direct intervention. While much of the masculinity literature includes an implicit assumption that maturational processes play a role in the way manliness is defined, this has not been directly investigated in previous research.

The results reported in Chapter 7 indicate that beliefs about masculinity evolve throughout the adult life-course, influenced in part by changing self-concepts. This again raises the possibility of a link between self-esteem/self-worth, masculinity and violence. Specifically, the older men in this study appeared to be developing self-concepts based on a growing self-acceptance. According to Salmivalli (2001), genuinely high self-esteem includes beliefs

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24 It is important to note that the data presented in Chapter 7 do not allow for a clear link to be made between beliefs about masculinity and violence in the community. While some of the men discussed violence they had committed while in the community, for many, this violence had occurred at least 10 years before the interviews were conducted. As such, it is not possible to determine whether a group of active violent offenders, or a group of men who had engaged in violence but never spent time in prison would have similar perspectives to the ones outlined by the men in Study 2.
about inherent worthiness, as well as an acceptance of personal faults. That is, individuals come to accept themselves for who they are. There was some indication that the older men were moving towards this type of self-acceptance. Moreover, as their self definitions changed, there were concomitant changes in the way masculinity was defined. In particular, the older men were beginning to endorse more positive elements of hegemonic masculinity. Rather than focussing on dominance and status, some men were nurturing masculinities based on being positive role models for the younger generation, including their own children, while others were focussing on becoming productive and active members of society through work and scholarly achievements. Joshua provided an indication of this when he stated that five years from his release date he would like to be:

Settled … possibly have a job, a stable, job. My plan is once I’m on parole to try to get some sort of steady job, whatever work that has to be, whether it’s manual labour or intellectual or whatever. So that’s my plan. Um, to keep active, keep busy. Like because I’m not one of those dole bludging types that can just sit around and you know, be unemployable because I’ve done 10 years jail. That’s not, that’s not going to be me, hopefully.

The narratives of change provide some support for Laub and Sampson (2003) and Sampson and Laub’s (2005a) thesis that structural changes occurring in adulthood can act as hooks for change. While the men in this study did not identify marriage as a significant turning point, there was some evidence that incarceration provided the younger men an opportunity to redefine their priorities. Furthermore, there was some evidence of a desire to adopt new, perhaps ‘transformative’ roles associated with less aggressive versions of hegemonic masculinity. These included being good fathers and husbands for the younger men, and being mentors, scholars or hardworking men, for the older participants.

It is possible therefore that for younger men, who were predominantly first time offenders, the pains of incarceration (Sykes, 1958) acted as a meaningful turning point. In particular, imprisonment allowed them to stop abusing drugs and alcohol, which then created a space
for self-reflection, and a desire to nurture other elements of masculinity outside of prison, including being good fathers/husbands, and owning homes or business. While there was some evidence of a desire to change, there was also a large degree of ambivalence in their narratives of violence and masculinity. While incarceration may have provided them with a forced hiatus and the opportunity to reflect on their lives and goals for the future, it is unclear whether developmentally they were ready to sustain that change post-release. As such, these men may not yet possess the cognitive and emotional maturity that can act as hooks for subjective change associated with developing a revised set of beliefs about the self, the world and violence (e.g., Lebel, Burnett, Maruna & Bushway, 2008; Giordano et al., 2002).

This was most evident in the ambivalence about violence and masculinity that was evident in the narratives of the younger men. Less extreme forms of violence, including fighting, were still perceived as appropriate, and many of the young men continued to fear being perceived as weak. However, this may have been a reflection of their experiences during incarceration. The younger men were under more pressure than their older counterparts to prove themselves within the prison environment. In fact, one of the main differences between the younger and older offenders was that the older men no longer had anything to prove. As discussed in Chapter 7, hypermasculinity within the prison environment, in combination with their cognitive and emotional immaturity, may have led younger men to internalise the rules of masculine conduct to a greater extent than their older counterparts.

In contrast, for the older men, growing older and becoming more emotionally and cognitively mature while incarcerated, contributed to the development of new perspectives about the self and about violence. Some of these changes are consistent with the generativity literature. For example, in his model of psychosocial development, Erikson (1963) posited that individuals progressed through eight stages, each defined by a specific psychosocial conflict. Under this model, middle adulthood is characterised by the conflict of generativity versus stagnation, where generativity is defined as the desire to leave something of oneself
behind for future generations. The driving motivation behind generativity is a concern for one’s legacy, which can include raising and caring for children, and making a meaningful or lasting contribution to society (McAdams et al., 1998).

In the criminological literature, generativity has most often been discussed in the context of desistance. For example, in the seminal study of active and desisting ex-prisoners, Maruna (2000) invoked the concept of generativity to explain the way desisting ex-prisoners constructed non-criminal identities that facilitated their transition away from a criminal lifestyle. In particular, Maruna identified that ex-prisoners constructed redemption scripts, where past mistakes were reconstructed as turning points that facilitated a shift back towards the always inherently decent self. Moreover, embedded in the redemption scripts of ex-prisoners were countless examples of generative acts, such as giving back to society by mentoring younger, active offenders. According to Maruna, generativity was an important component of desistance, because it enabled the ex-prisoner to achieve a sense of personal fulfilment, exoneration for previous behaviour, and legitimacy by showing that he/she had indeed changed, and was willing to help others change.

As such, generative concerns may have underlined the attitudinal changes experienced by the older men in Study 2. For example, Craig, the oldest man to be interviewed, spoke at length about his desire to be a mentor to children and adolescents at risk of becoming involved in a life of crime. His narrative also contained numerous references to saving his son from becoming ensnared in the drug and criminal world, and shame about the way he had modelled violence and power to his children. Craig also drew pride from being nominated as a guest speaker for the violence program, an accolade that was in stark contrast to his long history of violence. Similarly, Nathan emphasised the conflict he was experiencing in attempting to reconcile who he believed himself to be, with the person he felt he had become through time in prison. For example, at one stage of the interview, Nathan stated:
It’s something I’m struggling with myself at the moment now. I’d like to think that this place hasn’t changed me, that I still have the same moral values and same character as I did before I came to jail. But your reality after so many years and years of seeing the same things and doing the same things, learning how to deal with situations a certain way, what’s kind of expected of you, things like that I guess it can influence your morals, it can change what you think is right.

Both of these men were engaging in a generative process of reconciling their past and present selves in a way that allowed for the development of a ‘better’ future self.

The research presented in Study 2 builds on the developmental criminology, social cognition and masculinity literature by showing that definitions of violence and masculinity can evolve throughout adulthood, and that masculinity has a cognitive component, which may be amenable to change. The results reported in this thesis therefore have clear implications for the assessment and treatment of violence offenders. These are discussed in the next chapter.
The relationship between age, masculinity, and violence is well-established, with crime statistics consistently showing that young males are disproportionately represented as perpetrators and victims of violence across most industrialised countries [e.g., Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2012; Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), 2011; Guerino et al., 2011; Home Office, 2011; Statistics Canada, n.d.; Statistics New Zealand, 2010]. This relationship is most often explained with reference to the age-crime curve, with the assumption that by virtue of being male individuals are more likely to engage in violent crime, especially during adolescence and adulthood (Messerschmidt, 1993). This raises two questions that this thesis has sought to address: a) why young males are more likely to engage in violent crime and b) what contributes to the declining prevalence of violence during middle adulthood? The construct of masculinity was identified as having the potential to inform answers to these questions, and the studies reported in this thesis explore the relationship between violence and masculinity in early and later stages of adulthood in samples of adult male violent offenders. In particular, it was postulated that beliefs about violence would not only be related to beliefs about masculinity, but that both of these belief systems would change through the life-course.

The results of the two studies presented in this thesis provide some support for these relationships. For example, in the first study it was hypothesised that younger offenders would score higher than older offenders on those PICTS (Walters, 1995) scales that are most closely related to masculinity. While the PICTS is currently considered to be one of the best psychometric measures of criminal thinking, no significant differences in scores on
these scales were observed between younger and older violent offenders, although younger offenders did score higher than their older counterparts on thinking patterns marked by suspiciousness and the tendency to engage in cognitive shortcuts as measured by the Reactive Composite scale. Younger offenders also showed a tendency towards thinking styles characterised by a desire for power, assertion through dominance and feelings of entitlement, as measured by the Self-Assertion/Deception scale. These results provide an indication that there may be age-graded differences in criminal thinking, but more sensitive measures of masculinity may be required to establish this empirically.

To assist with the interpretation of the theoretically counterintuitive null results obtained in Study 1, a qualitative study was conducted to further explore the way beliefs about violence and masculinity are conceptualised at different stages of adult development. The results of Study 2 provided some support for the assertion that beliefs about violence and masculinity are differentially defined throughout adulthood. In particular, during early stages of adulthood there appeared to be a relationship between low self-worth and definitions of masculinity grounded in hegemonic concepts of not being perceived as ‘weak’ and a having reputation as a ‘mad fighter’. As individuals matured, however, there was a sense that negative beliefs about the self were replaced with more positive views that were associated with emerging beliefs that masculinity could be enacted through non-violent means. While these emerging beliefs were still grounded in an idealised, ‘toxic’ form of masculinity, they were nevertheless more closely aligned with the non-violent and perhaps more positive ideals of being a good father/husband, an autonomous agent within a free market economy, and a desire to share knowledge and wisdom to help younger generations.

Older men also tended to re-define violence as something that was only justified under a restricted range of circumstances, and then only if it was carried out with restraint. In contrast, the younger men appeared to be more ambivalent about violence and its ability to communicate strength, power and superiority. While extreme forms of violence were not
perceived as appropriate by any of the participants, the younger men appeared to view fighting as acceptable, especially if their opponents needed to be ‘taught a lesson’.

These results may reflect elements of Moffitt’s (1993) adolescent-limited and life-course persistent taxonomy. The majority of younger men in Study 2 were first-time offenders serving sentences for assault-related crimes. As such, these men may be in the process of naturally ageing out of crime, which has perhaps been accelerated by the ‘pains of incarceration’ (Sykes, 1958). In contrast, the offence histories of the older men indicate that a substantial proportion can be considered life-course persistent offenders. However, the older men appeared to be redefining their beliefs about violence and masculinity in a qualitatively different way to the younger men. Thus, it appears that developmental processes associated with ageing may have been responsible for the different narratives of the younger and older men. That is, the data indicate that the older and potentially life-course persistent offenders were beginning to engage in a process of change that was perhaps more meaningful than their younger, ‘adolescent-limited’ counterparts.

The importance of the context in which violence occurs was also clearly identified in the analysis. Most of the participants in the qualitative study were serving long sentences for serious offences, including murder. As such, their narratives on violence and masculinity were fundamentally affected by the culture of the prison, where it was perceived that displays of hypermasculinity and extreme forms of violence were acceptable, and often considered necessary. Specifically, not being perceived as weak appeared to be an overriding imperative for most of the participants, especially the younger men. Definitions of masculinity were therefore inextricably linked to the hostile environment of the prison. Paradoxically, the older men, who had spent the longest time in these hostile environments, appeared to reject the hypermasculinity of the younger prisoners, in part because they enjoyed some status at the top of the dominance hierarchy. That is, the older men had
already proved their masculinity within the prison, and were therefore freer to entertain other
definitions of manliness that were less grounded in violence and the desire for power.

Taken together, the results of Study 1 and 2 indicate that developmental processes may play
an important role in the way violence and masculinity are defined and internalised.
Moreover, incarceration during early adulthood can reinforce existing beliefs about
masculine violence, thereby creating a potential barrier for younger men to construct
alternative definitions of masculinity. Importantly however, later stages of adulthood appear
to be associated with a growing self-acceptance that facilitates a re-definition of masculinity,
even within the prison context.

To date, developmental processes and masculinity have not received much research
attention in the offender rehabilitation literature, despite it being well-established that age
reduces the risk of recidivism (e.g., Andrews & Dowden, 2006; van der Put et al., 2011), and
that attitudes and beliefs supportive of violence increase the risk of recidivism (e.g.,
Andrews, 2011; Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Andrews & Dowden, 2006; Bonta & Andrews,
2007; Dowden & Andrews, 2000). Given these relationships, it is reasonable to argue that
developmental processes influence the way violence and masculinity are defined and
internalised at different stages of the adult life-course, and that these relationships will have
a number of implications for the treatment and management of violent offenders.

Implications for Practice

According to the Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) scholarship that underpins violent offender
program delivery in most western jurisdictions (Andrews & Bonta, 2010) there is no reason
to suspect that the *effectiveness* of programs adhering to the RNR principles should differ by
the age of participants. As Andrews (2010) states,
Effective services that are sensitive to a few key characteristics of individuals for the most part are widely applicable regardless of the uniqueness of individuals… despite the myriad of differences between girls and boys and between men and women, the major risk/need factors in relation to criminal recidivism are basically the same for girls and boys and for women and men (p. 14).

While the focus of this statement is on gender differences, Andrews also appears to imply that developmental differences should not be expected to impact on the effectiveness of programs that adhere to the RNR framework.

However, in the only published meta-analysis to date examining the impact of the risk principle on recidivism in violent offenders, Andrews and Dowden (2006) concluded that violence prevention programs adhering to the RNR framework were most effective with juvenile offenders. While the authors argue that these results may have been an artefact of the coding employed in the analysis, the result nevertheless points to the possibility that younger and older offenders react differently to treatment. This is not to imply that treatment is only effective for younger offenders, or that older offenders are by necessity lower risk. Rather, there is a suggestion that risk factors change and evolve throughout the life-course, and that these changes are influenced by internal as well as external factors (van der Put et al., 2011).

The results of this thesis suggest that a more nuanced approach may be useful in so far as while criminal thinking is an important risk factor for younger and older adult offenders, it may nevertheless be expressed in qualitatively different ways at different stages of adulthood. That is, younger and older offenders may justify the violence they have used in different ways, which represents a different set of beliefs about violence, as well as differences in the way they position themselves in relation to that violence. Therefore, the
effectiveness of contemporary violent offender rehabilitation programs may be increased if developmental differences in masculinity-related beliefs are considered. In particular issues related to a desire to build a reputation may be particularly important for younger offenders, as indicated in this research, and in the studies conducted by Lopez and Emmer (2000), Polk (1994) and Toch (1992). In contrast, rehabilitative work with older offenders may need to focus more attention on beliefs about status, power and dominance. This again is consistent with the research of Bennett and Brookman (2009), Presser (2008) and Toch (1992).

**Implications for assessment**

While age is an important risk factor for violence, it is not necessarily an adequate proxy for the full range of developmental processes that occur throughout the life-course. For example, the risk assessment instrument currently used in Victoria includes current age as one of the six static risk factors, along with age at first violence conviction and number of young offender convictions (Wong & Gordon, 1999; 2006). While these static risk factors are consistent with the RNR scholarship and the developmental criminology literature, they reflect an emphasis on biological age rather than developmental processes.

Recent research with sex offenders however, confirms the view that a focus on biological age masks some important developmental differences between younger and older offenders. Specifically, Skelton and Vess (2008) found that older high-risk offenders reoffended at a similar rate to low-risk younger offenders. That is, a 60-year-old high-risk offender was more similar to a 20-year-old low-risk offender, than a 20-year-old high-risk offender. Despite similar risk classifications, the older men in the Skelton and Vess study were qualitatively different from their younger counterparts.
The results of Study 2 provide some additional support for the contention that developmental processes play an important role in the way violence is justified and internalised throughout the life-course. In particular, the violence committed by the younger men in the study appeared to be driven by qualitatively different concerns, predominantly related to an idealised masculinity grounded in a desire for self-aggrandizement. This suggests that there is a real need to consider developmental or age-related differences in risk classifications and to calibrate existing risk assessment tools to take account of these variances. Further, the extent to which beliefs relating to masculinity contribute to future risk may help to improve the predictive validity of current tools.

**Criminogenic need**

The role of masculinity has not been widely investigated in the context of male confrontational violence, and is rarely identified in the current treatment literature as an important treatment target. The exception to this is the literature on family violence programs, many of which explicitly seek to challenge patriarchal beliefs linked to hegemonic masculinity (Schrock & Padavic, 2007). This may be because masculinity is typically discussed within a sociological rather than psychological framework, and is a difficult construct to operationalise. Nevertheless, the results of Study 2 indicate that masculinity does play an important, albeit slightly different role in violence that is used by young and older men. Moreover, there is reason to argue that masculinity comprises important cognitive elements in relation to self-schemas and beliefs about violence that are amenable to change. Thus there is a need to consider the development of program content that considers issues of gender roles and identity more explicitly.

An important finding from Study 2 is that many of the beliefs about violence during younger adulthood appear to be grounded in low self-worth which itself may be grounded in childhood experiences of violence. For many of the younger participants, feelings of
inferiority and insecurity at the psychological and physical levels were explicitly linked to
crudetud experiences of violence perpetrated by their fathers. In this respect, social learning
plays a significant role in the development of belief systems about violence as a necessary
means of protecting the self and others, but also of hiding fear. Importantly however, self-
worth appears to be related to beliefs about a particular type of masculinity, reflected in
attitudes that ‘real men’ do not show weakness or fear. This idealised masculinity was
displayed through acts of violence intended to communicate to other men that an individual
was willing to stand up for himself. Moreover, the younger men appeared to take pride in
their perceived reputations as ‘mad fighters’ – as individuals who were assertive through
violence, tough and quick to react to perceived challenges to their masculinity. For the
younger men therefore, there was some indication that low self-worth was associated with a
‘violent’ masculinity that masks their underlying fears and insecurities25.

The older men, in contrast, appeared to be developing a more positive sense of self-worth,
grounded in their accomplishments and perceived strengths. In particular, these men
appeared to be less concerned about being perceived as weak, in part because they had
already proved their worth through years of incarceration. The emergence of a more positive
self-worth was further grounded in self-acceptance. That is, the older men were attempting
to reconcile the violence they had engaged in throughout their lives, with their perceived
underlying moral character. Here too, there was some indication that masculinity played an
important role. Specifically, the violent masculinities of the younger men were rejected by the
older participants, in favour of less ‘toxic’ (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) elements of
hegemonic masculinity. For the older men, more conventional elements of masculinity were

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25 It is also possible that older offenders may have enjoyed engendering fear in the younger prisoners, thereby
increasing their own feelings of superiority and concomitantly decreasing the self-worth of the younger
prisoners. While the interviews conducted for Study 2 did not address this issue specifically, there is some
indication in the narratives of older men in particular that the source of their increased self-worth was not
related to dominating or intimidating younger prisoners. In fact, many of the older men identified younger
prisoners as being overly concerned with attaining status and dominance within the prison system through
violence.
beginning to emerge, based on the role of the good husband and father, the entrepreneur/businessman, the sage and the scholar. While their capacity to enact these versions of masculinity upon release can be questioned, there was nevertheless a discernible shift in the way masculinity was defined by older violent offenders.

These results suggest that there is an important relationship between masculinity and self-worth, which is influenced by developmental changes during adulthood. In the RNR literature self-esteem is considered a non-criminogenic need that may be appropriate to address with some offenders as part of the specific responsivity principle (Andrews, 2010; Bonta & Andrews, 2007). There is some debate, however, regarding the specific relationship between self-esteem and violence, with some researchers arguing that grandiose self-esteem promotes violent behaviour (e.g., Baumeister et al., 2000), and others claiming that violence is promoted by an underlying low self-esteem that is perhaps masked by self-aggrandizement (e.g., Salmivalli, 2001; Walker & Bright, 2009; Walker & Knauer, 2011). Underlying these debates are different conceptualisations of the main constructs, including self-esteem and self-worth. In particular, Salmivalli has argued that current measures not only assume that self-esteem exists as a dichotomy (high versus low), but also do not take account of the distinction between positive self-presentation biases and a truer underlying evaluation of the self.

Although the data presented in Study 2 do not address these conceptual debates, they nevertheless indicate that low self-worth may contribute to the development of a masculine identity grounded in violence. In this respect, the relationship between self-worth and violence may be mediated by beliefs about masculinity. Moreover, to the extent that self-worth and masculinity represent self-schemas, or beliefs about the self, they may be amenable to change.
Implications for Treatment

There is some evidence that masculinity can be integrated into programs that adhere to the RNR framework. In one of few accounts suggesting how to do this, Johnstone (2001) has argued that it is possible and even desirable to incorporate discussions of masculinity in work with offenders in a way that is consistent with the principles of effective correctional programming. Specifically, Johnstone states that:

Working with men in the Probation Service should aim to introduce critical, alternative and creative thinking processes by exploring the social constructions of masculinity. This would seek to enable male offenders to appreciate the way in which their own social construction of masculinity acts as a ‘straight jacket’ to their thinking and behaviour. This may be a particular issue for young working class men who feel they have little or no access to legitimate work, the financial benefits it brings, or indeed the status it can give (Johnstone, 2001, p.12, emphasis added).

Johnstone argues that the foundations for addressing beliefs about masculinity and violence already exist in cognitive-behavioural programs. Specifically, the process of bringing dysfunctional beliefs into conscious awareness, deconstructing these beliefs, and reframing them in more pro-social ways are common elements of cognitive-behavioural work. Johnstone (2001) has argued that masculinity is associated with the rewards of violence, including status and respect, which exerts an additional pressure on individuals to commit violence. Specifically, the presence of other men can increase a desire to show masculinity, or make individuals less likely to avoid violence for fear of being perceived as weak (Johnstone, 2001). Drawing attention to these beliefs is therefore perceived as an important first stage in the process of change.
At the deconstruction stage the rewards of violence for a masculine self-concept can be challenged, with a view to making offenders identify the discrepancy between what they want to achieve (i.e., status, respect) with the actual outcomes of violence. Johnstone further argues that this type of restructuring is likely to make offenders take responsibility for their actions because it allows them to focus on issues that are personally meaningful and relevant. That is, for offenders to appreciate the impact of violence for their victims, they first need to understand the negative impacts of their beliefs about masculinity and violence for themselves. This requires men to not only be aware of, but also actively challenge their own constructions of masculinity. Finally, reframing can involve providing individuals with alternative definitions of masculinity, and emphasising that these alternatives can be rewarding. This process is fundamentally grounded in the principles of cognitive-behavioural therapy, including positive role modelling and reinforcement (Johnstone, 2001).

Johnstone thus argues that masculinity is not only important in understanding violent offending, but that it can also be incorporated into current treatment programs delivered from within an RNR framework. Given that recent meta-analytic evaluations of violent offender programs have reported moderate effect sizes associated with a seven to eight per cent reduction in violent offending rates following treatment (e.g., Jolliffe & Farrington, 2007), there is a good case for incorporating these approaches into current treatment and evaluating their effects.

On the other hand, developmental processes may be conceptualised as one element of specific responsivity. The data in Study 2 indicates that some of the older men were more receptive to the content of rehabilitation programs, in part because the content was perceived as more salient given their current perspectives about controlling violent behaviour. This provides some justification for considering developmental processes as part of the specific responsivity principle. More broadly, however, there is reason to argue that developmental processes should be incorporated into current assessments, not just focusing
on risk/need but also on change. As indicated throughout this thesis, there appear to be important differences between younger and older violent offenders that may usefully inform case management and treatment plans. In this respect, identifying how risk factors for violence in younger adult offenders differ from those of their older counterparts may allow clinicians to focus on the criminogenic needs that are more salient and relevant for their clients. This may involve being responsive to the differential role of status, power and dominance in the violence of older men (e.g., Bennett & Brookman, 2009; Toch, 1992), and to the apparent need of younger offenders to defend their honour and character through violence (e.g., Polk, 1994).

The impact of incarceration on beliefs about masculinity

Andrews and colleagues have identified that the impact of rehabilitation is attenuated when delivered in institutional environments (Andrews et al., 1990), in part due to the discrepancy between the therapeutic environment of program sessions and the more antisocial environment of the prison. That is, while offenders may be able to engage with treatment, it may be more difficult for the skills and ways of thinking endorsed in programs to be applied when interacting with other prisoners and prison officers in their daily routines (Day & Howells, 2002).

While it is generally acknowledged that the prison environment is not the most conducive to change (Day et al., 2012), there has been comparatively less discussion about the way this environment can reinforce violent masculinities. For example, Jewkes (2005) argued that in prison, idealised masculinities associated with working-class values are not just reinforced but exaggerated by the prison culture. In an ethnographic study of masculinity in a UK prison, Jewkes (2005) reported that overt displays of aggression, displays of status through wearing designer shoes, excessive concerns with bodybuilding and physical signs of
strength and dominance, as well as the sexualisation of women and homophobia were not only condoned, but also perceived as important ways of constructing masculinities. The men in that study reported that these definitions of masculinity allowed them to avoid victimisation, and build a sense of camaraderie with other prisoners. While not all men appeared to have internalised this version of hegemonic masculinity, many reported that it was important to perform some of its elements. That is, when in the presence of other prisoners some men felt they had to conform to the dominant masculinities endorsed within the prison setting.

The results of Study 2 indicate that prison has an important influence in the way that masculinity and violence are defined. For example, most participants regardless of age identified the prison as a hostile, violent and oppressive place where a man was not allowed to show weakness. Violence was therefore perceived as a necessary strategy, not just to establish dominance, but to convey to other men that an individual was willing to stand up for himself. While similar themes were evident in the narratives of community-based violence these men had engaged in, the prison environment created an extra pressure for younger men in particular to react with violence against perceived provocations. Moreover, the younger men also appeared to be more concerned with the status and power associated with dominant masculinities in prison.

This highlights that developmental processes in the way masculinity and violence are defined may be even more salient in the prison environment. Therefore, attempts to address beliefs about violence and masculinity may need to take into consideration the role of the prison in promoting particularly ‘toxic’ idealised masculinities that are achieved through violence, especially for younger men. In this respect, developmental processes again emerge as a salient issue. That is, older men may be more willing to begin challenging their definitions of masculinity, and re-framing these towards less violent constructions of what it means to be a man. For these men, the prison setting may not represent a strong barrier for
change. In contrast, younger offenders may benefit more from community-based programs where they are less likely to be exposed to the pressures of a hypermasculine environment.

**Limitations and future research**

While the research presented in this thesis provides some support for the contention that younger and older adult violent offenders hold qualitatively different beliefs about the role of masculinity, and its interplay with the motives for violence, there are nevertheless a number of limitations to the two studies presented. First, as discussed previously, the PICTS is not a direct measure of masculinity, violence or developmental processes. Although research has shown that some of the scales can act as proxies for hostile attribution biases and masculinity (Walters, 2001c; 2007a) it is possible that with more direct measures different relationships would have been observed. The fact that most relationships were in the predicted direction however, indicates that younger offenders may be more likely to engage in interpretive biases and have a pattern of thinking consistent with masculine beliefs than older offenders. Nevertheless, future research would benefit from employing a more direct measure of masculinity and violence, such as the Maudsley Violence Questionnaire (Walker, 2005), the Hypermasculinity Inventory (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984), the recently revised Hypermasculinity Index (Peters, Nason & Turner, 2007), or the Criminal Attitudes to Violence Scale (Polaschek et al., 2004).

Second, the sample for Study 2 was relatively homogenous in terms of index offence. The older men were all serving sentences for murder, and the majority of younger men were serving sentences for assault-related offences. Moreover, a substantial proportion of the younger participants were first-time offenders residing in a minimum-security wing of the prison. As such, they may have represented a low-risk sample of younger adult offenders. Together, these issues mean that the developmental processes linked to beliefs about
violence and masculinity may not be transferable to higher-risk samples, or to offenders with different offence histories.

The fact that all of the participants were incarcerated is also a limitation of this study. While incarcerated offenders represent a relatively ‘convenient’ group of participants, they are not necessarily representative of all violent offenders. In fact, it has long been suggested that prisoners represent unsuccessful offenders (e.g., Topalli, 2005b). It is possible that men with histories of serious violence who manage to evade the criminal justice system represent a qualitatively distinct group of offenders, with potentially different beliefs about violence and masculinity. However, there is a strong body of evidence showing that a large proportion of active offenders cycle in and out of prison (e.g., Topalli, 2006). As such, it is unlikely that prisoners and active offenders represent distinct groups of serious violent offenders.

However, the type of masculinity and violence experienced in the prison setting is likely to be qualitatively different from that experienced in the community. In this respect, the men interviewed for Study 2 may have skewed beliefs about violence and masculinity. This becomes increasingly likely, given that many of the participants had been incarcerated for over 10 years. As one participant indicated, his beliefs about violence and masculinity had changed substantially throughout his incarceration, and the way he felt at the time of the interview may not have been the way he felt at earlier stages of his sentence. This indicates that for the older men it is difficult to disentangle the influence of ageing from that of extended periods of incarceration. It is not therefore fully possible to determine whether the changes reported by the older men were the function of natural maturation, the pains of incarceration, or a combination of both factors. This is an issue that deserves further study.

Similarly, the long periods of incarceration meant that many men had not engaged in violence in the community for most of their adulthood. This again limits the transferability of these results to men who have not spent as much time incarcerated. Specifically, given the
influence of the prison environment on the way masculinity is defined, it is possible that violent individuals in the community endorse different beliefs about masculinity and its relationship to violence. This limitation is slightly attenuated, however, by the narratives of the younger men, who had not experienced such extensive periods of incarceration. Based on their narratives, it can be argued that younger men in the community may have similar masculine beliefs to those reported by the men in this study.

Finally, given the focus of this thesis was on identifying developmental processes, a longitudinal design would have allowed for the identification of within-individual change throughout the life-course. Although participants in Study 2 were encouraged to discuss how their beliefs about violence and masculinity had changed throughout their lives, cross-sectional designs can only capture how men perceive their past from their present vantage. In other words, interpretations of the past are by necessity reconstructed in a way that is consistent with current beliefs and perspectives (McAdams, 1996). Moreover, a cross-sectional design does not allow inferences to be made about difference or change. That is, there is no way to clearly ascertain whether the younger offenders in Study 1 and Study 2 were younger versions of the older offenders, or whether they were qualitatively different on the core concepts being discussed throughout this thesis. In contrast, a longitudinal design would have allowed for stronger conclusions to be made about the similarities between younger and older offenders on issues around risk and criminal trajectories, while simultaneously allowing for a comparison of difference and an evaluation of change.

Despite these limitations, the two studies presented here provide a foundation for arguing that beliefs about masculinity not only influence violence, but also evolve throughout adulthood. Moreover, as the discussion above highlights, masculinity as a set of beliefs is amenable to change in a manner consistent with the principles of the RNR framework. As Bonta and Andrews (2007) state,
Offenders, like all human beings, are always changing their behaviours as a consequence to [sic] environmental demands and through their own deliberate, autonomous, self-directed change. By adhering to the need and responsivity principles through the assessment of criminogenic needs and responsivity factors we acknowledge that change is an important aspect of life and behavioural change can be facilitated by the appropriate intervention (p.7, emphasis added).

In light of this, it can be argued that a focus on developmental processes is not only consistent with the principles of the RNR framework, but also with its fundamental ideology. A number of issues however, require further elaboration. Specifically, masculinity is a multifaceted and fluid construct and it would be useful to develop a better understanding of the alternative masculinities that are perceived to be available to violent offenders. Moreover, research with a broader cross-section of violent offenders, including men with extensive histories of violence, men at different stages of their incarceration, and men on community corrections orders, would not only illuminate how masculinity is defined by violent offenders, but may also provide the basis for the construction of more targeted psychometric instruments.

If masculinity is to serve as a useful construct from a rehabilitative perspective, it needs to be operationalised and measured in a way that allows for the possibility of change throughout the life-course. In a similar vein, there appears to be a need to develop psychometric instruments that are able to measure the influence of developmental processes on attitudinal and behavioural change. Therefore, another avenue for future research would be to investigate whether younger and older violent offenders are different on other risk factors/criminogenic needs. This would provide a firmer foundation for arguing that younger and older offenders represent qualitatively distinct groups, while facilitating the development of assessment instruments that are sensitive to these differences.
Concluding remarks

The relationship between violence, masculinity and age is often implicit in popular and academic discourse. While on the surface this relationship appears self-evident, the research presented in this thesis, in combination with a large body of literature spanning criminology, sociology and cognitive psychology, indicates that these relationships are much more complex and nuanced than they may otherwise appear. Beliefs about masculinity are not only influenced by the dominant social norms, but also by the resources available to individuals in their specific social milieus. Moreover, masculinities grounded in violence appear to be associated with rewards that are psychologically meaningful to individuals. In particular, for some men violence conveys to others that they are worthy of respect. This appears to be particularly relevant for younger adults, who may perceive that they do not have access to alternative versions of an idealised masculinity.

Given the sometimes porous nature of masculinity as a concept, it can easily be reduced to simplistic representations reflecting dualistic and static assumptions. The value of this concept however, lies squarely in its fluid, dynamic and broad scope. As a result, masculinity can equally be used to represent a set of beliefs (about the self, others, and the broader social world) that can be situationally contingent, deeply internalised, or a combination of both. In this respect, masculinity can be conceptualised as an element of personality, or more narrowly as a cognitive construct to be targeted in rehabilitation programs. Importantly, it is also something that can be performed without necessarily being internalised. These can all be considered accurate representations of masculinity, so long as researchers and clinicians do not lose sight of the broader cultural and interpersonal factors that contribute to definitions of what it means to be a man.

In a political and social climate marked by punitive rhetoric it becomes increasingly important to advance knowledge that can assist in the rehabilitation of serious violent offenders. In this
context, a focus on the way beliefs about violence and masculinity change throughout adulthood may provide ‘hooks’ for change that are both theoretically sound and personally meaningful for correctional clients. Enabling violent offenders to understand, challenge, and redefine their beliefs about masculinity and violence in a way that is relevant to their stage of adult development provides one such avenue for this type of change.
References


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Appendices
Appendix 1

An overview of social information-processing

While the term social cognition refers to broader processes linked to meaning-making (Bruner, 1990), it is nevertheless underpinned by cognitive processes. In this respect, a number of well-established principles have been proposed, relating to the way information is processed, as well as the cognitive structures that allow individuals to interpret social stimuli. In addition, affective states have also been implicated in the way individuals selectively attend to, interpret and encode information. These principles are outlined below.

Sequential processing

In a broad sense, cognition occurs in parallel such that multiple stimuli can be simultaneously processed at any given time (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Fontaine & Dodge, 2009). However, it is often suggested that each stimulus is processed in a largely sequential manner, such that some steps of the processing system are necessary pre-requisites for subsequent steps (Fontaine & Dodge, 2009). Therefore, it is presumed that parallel processes are at work as individuals attend to multiple stimuli at once, but that each stimulus is processed in a sequential manner (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Huesmann, 1998).

Structures, mechanisms and outputs

A number of different cognitive elements are involved in information processing. These include higher-order cognitive ‘structures’, more specific processing mechanisms, and cognitive outputs. The higher-order cognitive structures are typically conceptualised as abstract mental models which are stored in long-term memory (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Berkowitz, 1990, 1993; Crick & Dodge, 1994; Gannon, 2009b; Huesmann, 1998). These
mental models, commonly referred to as schemas, contain information about social concepts and categories that allow individuals to quickly interpret social stimuli and predict behaviour in response to that stimuli. Moreover, schemas are presumed to involve complex, interconnected networks such that activation of one schema results in activation of other, related schemas (Berkowitz, 1990; Huesmann, 1998).

There is some disagreement however as to the structure of these mental models. For example, terms such as schemas, scripts, implicit theories and implicit cognitive distortions are often used interchangeably, although there are important, albeit subtle differences between each of these concepts (Ward, 2000). For example, Huesmann (1998) defined schemas as “any macro knowledge structure encoded in memory that represents substantial knowledge about a concept, its attributes, and its relations to other concepts” (p. 79). In this context, individuals are thought to possess self-schemas, event-schemas and belief-schemas each reflecting an interconnected network of stored knowledge about the self, events, and belief systems. In contrast, scripts are more specific knowledge structures that are composed of event-schemas. That is, scripts include information about how to behave within particular situations, and involve networks of associated knowledge about appropriate behaviour within specific domains (Huesmann, 1998). Therefore, while scripts are composed of schemas, conceptually they are not the same thing.

Similarly, Ward (2000) has argued that implicit theories are conceptually distinct from schemas, although they too represent knowledge structures stored in long-term memory. Specifically, implicit theories are thought to represent interconnected knowledge structures grounded in beliefs about ontology. That is, implicit theories represent knowledge about the nature of human beings and social interactions that are grounded in ‘lay theories’ about why people behave the way they do. Individuals are presumed to use these beliefs to derive meaning from their social word and to make inferences about their own and other’s behaviour. The content of implicit theories therefore allows individuals to make predictions
about the social world that are consistent with their beliefs about human nature and human interactions (Ward, 2000). Recent research has identified a number of implicit theories in violent offenders, including beliefs about violence as normal, as an effective strategy to assert dominance over others and the social world, and as a way of avoiding perceived victimisation (Polaschek et al., 2008). More recently, Dempsey and Day (2011) identified a number of implicit theories in domestically violent offenders that also reflected beliefs in the inherent untrustworthiness of others and the normalisation of violence.

Despite these differences, there is general consensus on the function of higher-order cognitive structures. Specifically, it is widely acknowledged that the information stored in long-term memory influences the way information is attended to, encoded, processed and evaluated (Dodge, 2006). The ‘top-down’ view of information processing posits that the knowledge stored in schemas guides information processing such that new information is processed in a way that is consistent with pre-existing beliefs (Huesmann, 1998). In the context of aggressive and violent behaviour, there is a substantial body of literature showing that interpretative biases play a role in information processing. In particular, research has shown that aggressive individuals are more likely to selectively attend to threat cues in the environment (e.g., Crick & Dodge, 1994, 1996; Schultz, Grodack & Izard, 2010) and to encode, process and evaluate information based on causal inferences and attributions about hostile intent (e.g., Copello & Tata, 1990; Dodge, 2006; Fontaine & Dodge, 2009; Lim et al., 2011; Tremblay & Belchevski, 2004). Moreover, there is evidence that in the presence of perceived provocation aggressive individuals are less likely to evaluate all alternative interpretations and behavioural responses but to instead respond in ways that are consistent with pre-existing beliefs that promote violent behaviour (Fontaine & Dodge, 2009; Huesmann, 1998).

The end results of top-down information processing systems are the cognitive outputs or products. Cognitive products typically represent the rationalisations individuals provide to
themselves and others for their behaviour. There has been a dearth of research investigating the rationalisations provided by violent offenders, at least when compared to the volume of research on the rationalisations of sex offenders (e.g., Blake & Gannon, 2008; Burn & Brown, 2006; Gannon, 2009a; Ward, Hudson, Johnston & Marshall, 1997). Nevertheless, rationalisations are typically equated with denial or minimisation of responsibility and therefore taken as evidence of underlying pathology (Maruna & Copes, 2005). From a social-information processing perspective however, cognitive products are functionally related to the schemas and processing biases that influence the way information is encoded, processed and evaluated. That is, the different elements of the social information processing system are proposed to work in a mutually reinforcing way. As such information processing is influenced by the content of higher-order structures, which is in turn also influenced by the outcome of the processing system and which ultimately leads to cognitive products including rationalisations (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

**Self-regulation**

At a general level, social information processing theorists have argued that emotional arousal is potentially implicated at all stages of information processing (e.g., Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Berkowitz, 1990; Crick & Dodge, 1994). In particular, emotions are posited to differentially activate schemas that are associated with a specific emotion, or cluster of emotions (e.g., Huesmann, 1998). Similarly, emotional arousal is posited to constrain cognitive resources, thereby diminishing the depth of processing and potentially leading to an overreliance on cognitive short-cuts including interpretative biases (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Berkowitz, 1990; Crick & Dodge, 1994; Huesmann, 1998).

Negative emotions, in particular anger, have been specifically linked to social information processing in aggressive and violent individuals (Schultz et al., 2010; Tiedens, 2001). There is evidence suggesting that anger may mediate the link between attribution of hostile intent
and aggressive behavioural responses, but only for individuals who are chronically aggressive (e.g., Novaco, 2011; Robins & Novaco, 1999; Schultz et al., 2010; Tiedens, 2001; Topalli and O’Neal, 2003). For example, Topalli and O’Neal (2003) investigated the link between the experience of anger as a result of provocation on participants’ tendency to attribute hostile intent and, in the presence of opportunity, a desire to exact revenge on a provocateur. Specifically, Topalli and O’Neal argued that anger would act as a mediator for the activation of attributional biases to ambiguous social interactions. Furthermore, the causal mechanism linking anger to attributional biases and the desire for revenge was presumed to lie in the activation of interconnected neural networks.

To test these hypotheses, Topalli and O’Neal (2003) randomly assigned 70 individuals to one of four conditions: 1) provocation and the opportunity for revenge; 2) provocation and no opportunity for revenge; 3) no provocation but the opportunity for revenge; and 4) no provocation and no opportunity for revenge. All participants began the experiment by reading three vignettes depicting an ambiguous social interaction. Participants in the provocation conditions were then berated by one of the researchers for being tardy in arriving for the study. Following the ‘provocation’, all participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire measuring their mood, before reading the final three vignettes. Half of the participants in the provocation condition were further advised that they would be given the opportunity to provide feedback about the researcher (i.e., the provocateur) at the completion of the study, and that the feedback would be used by the School of Psychology Chair in his evaluation of the researcher’s prospects for continued employment (Topalli & O’Neal, 2003).

Results showed that participants in the provocation condition made significantly more hostile attributions about the intentions of the protagonists in the vignettes, than participants who were not provoked. Moreover, participants who were provoked and given the chance to retaliate made significantly more attributions of hostility than all other participants. The effect of provocation was especially pronounced amongst individuals who scored high on trait
aggressiveness. That is, individuals with a predisposition towards habitual aggression who were provoked, experienced more anger and were more likely to attribute hostile intent in ambiguous social situations than all other participants. While the interaction between trait aggression, anger and attributions of hostility was statistically significant, it was only marginally so. This therefore indicates that a predisposition towards aggression is important, but anger and the chance to retaliate against a perceived insult play a stronger and more direct role on individuals' hostile interpretations of ambiguous social stimuli (Topalli & O'Neal, 2003).

The above study provides some indication of the complex relationship between anger and the cognitive processes that facilitate violent behaviour. The emotional arousal associated with anger may indeed lead to the selective activation of schemas and interpretative biases that increase the salience of potentially threatening or hostile cues in the environment. However, the results reported by Topalli and O'Neal (2003) reveal that anger is most strongly associated with attributional biases in the presence of “retaliatory motivation” (p. 158). In this respect, attributions of hostility may be more prevalent in situations where individuals experience anger as a result of a deliberate provocation, and where there is a perception that retaliation is possible and imminent. Therefore, rather than a diffuse and global relationship between anger and cognition, it may be that the effects of emotional arousal on violent offending are mediated by an evaluation of the possibility of revenge26.

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26 The study by Topalli and O'Neal (2003) raises some intriguing possibilities, but it is limited by the fact that none of the participants could be classified as violent offenders. Moreover, while the provocation may have been ecologically valid, even amongst a group of violent offenders, it can be argued that the ‘retaliation’ was not. Specifically, participants were told that they could provide a negative evaluation of the researcher, which may or may not have resulted in the suspension of his research. While this may have been perceived as adequate retaliation for a sample comprised of predominantly middle-class young men, it is does not accurately reflect the real lives and social environments of most violent offenders. In this respect, it remains to be seen whether the relationship between anger, attributions of hostility and retaliatory motivation is similar amongst men with histories of violent criminal behaviour. However, on the surface, there does not appear any reason to argue that the principles outlined by Topalli and O'Neal should not transfer to samples of serious violent offenders.
The relationship between anger and aggression however remains contentious, in part because anger itself is a complex construct. For example, anger has been conceptualised as an interpersonal phenomenon that is used to explain and/or justify behaviour (Averill, 1993; Novaco, 1997). From this perspective, anger involves physiological, interpretative and behavioural components that interact to produce a subjective experience of ‘being angry’ (Averill, 1993). Alternatively, anger has been conceptualised as a more general emotional experience that involves physiological, as well as cognitive elements (Berkowitz, 1990).

Beyond its conceptual complexity, there are a number of additional dimensions to anger that are differentially related to violence. For example, anger can be situationally contingent, in that it is only activated in the presence of specific stimuli, or a more enduring characteristic that is easily activated and extends across multiple situations (e.g., Deffenbacher, 2011; Novaco, 2011; Schultz et al., 2010). While anger is a common and functional reaction to many forms of provocation, research has identified that an enduring propensity towards experiencing anger is commonly linked to aggressive and violent behavioural responses (e.g., Brezina, 2010; Lim et al., 2011; Schultz et al., 2010).

Moreover, the expression of anger, especially whether it is highly controlled or undercontrolled, can also have a differential impact on the way violence is used. For example, Mergargee (1966) originally argued that the inhibition or over-control of anger would be likely to lead to explosive bouts of violence due to the accumulated psychological pressure associated with inhibiting anger and aggression. In contrast, the unrestrained anger associated with disinhibition was proposed to be associated with more indiscriminate violence resulting from real or perceived provocation (Mergargee, 1966). More recently, Davey, Day and Howells (2005) have proposed that within the over-controlled category a further distinction can be made between individuals who fail to phenomenologically experience their anger, and individuals who do experience anger but actively control its expression.
Although the relationship between anger and violent offending falls outside the parameters of this thesis, the preceding discussion highlights that the link between anger and social cognitive processing is not likely to be straightforward. Moreover, some social-cognitive theorists argue that the link between anger and violence is dependent on the type of violence being investigated (e.g., Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Crick & Dodge, 1994). Others however, have argued that negative affect, rather than a specific emotional experience, leads to cognitive appraisals that increase the likelihood of aggressive and violent behaviour (e.g., Berkowitz, 1990).
Walters has proposed a theory of criminality, based on the premise that persistent offending is best conceptualised as one element of a lifestyle characterised by irresponsibility (Walters, 1990; White & Walters, 1989). Although not specifically grounded in the social-cognitive literature, Walters has proposed that a criminal lifestyle is maintained and supported by a number of cognitive processes and belief systems.

The theory of lifestyle criminality (Walters, 1990) is based on a number of postulates that explain the development of cognitive styles associated with persistent criminal behaviour. In particular, criminal thinking styles are proposed to temporally precede actual criminal behaviour. However, they are also conceptualised as having a maintenance role, in that criminal thinking is posited to proximally facilitate criminal behaviour as well as provide the basis for post hoc justifications. Moreover, criminal thinking is proposed to be one element of a broader pattern of lifestyle criminality. In this context, Walters (1990) has proposed that four secondary motives produce four behavioural strategies underpinned by criminal thinking styles. Together, the secondary motives, behavioural strategies and concomitant criminal thinking styles are proposed to reflect the needs and values of offenders. These associations are presented in Table A.
As can be seen, patterns of criminal thinking are differentially related to behavioural strategies, secondary motives and underlying needs. For example, Walters (1990) has argued that a desire for independence and autonomy can be expressed as resistance to authority and rebelliousness. This rebelliousness may in turn be expressed through crime that is motivated by anger. Moreover, criminal activity in this context is presumed to be supported and justified by a tendency to deny responsibility, minimise harm and engage in cognitive disinhibitors that remove internal obstacles, including fear. Similarly, the desire for power and status are thought to be differentially related to behavioural strategies marked by interpersonal intrusiveness, which themselves reflect the underlying motive of power and control.

For some individuals, crime is hypothesised to give them a sense of superiority that is presumably evident in thinking styles marked by entitlement and a presumed sense of power over the environment and others. For other types of lifestyle criminals however, the underlying desire for hedonist pleasures is presumed to result in the quest for excitement, thrills and stimulation. For these offenders immediate gratification takes precedence over longer-term goals and therefore their thinking is characterised by a biased evaluation
towards their own efficacy, capacity to evade detection and to obtain valued outcomes. Walters (1990) has argued that these offenders also show a cognitive style that is biased towards minimising the harm associated with their criminal conduct, by emphasising instead their inherent decency.

Finally, the desire for success is posited to lead some offenders to engage in crime. Unlike non-offenders however, achievement and mastery in the conventional sense would not be possible for many offenders, given the aversive conditions they had experienced in childhood leading to constrained choices in later life. Therefore, for these offenders, crime would be perceived as a viable option for achieving a sense of mastery and accomplishment. The process by which this goal is achieved however is characterised by irresponsibility, in the sense that the lifestyle criminal is presumed to covet the rewards offered by society for hard work, but does not have the requisite skills, ability or motivation to achieve those rewards in a prosocial manner. Therefore, for this type of lifestyle criminal there is inconsistency in thought and action, typically characterised by impulsive behaviour and information processing (Walters, 1990).
Appendix 3

Data imputation to correct for the influence of univariate outliers

Univariate normality was assessed through the absolute and standardised values of skew and kurtosis, standardised scores for each case on each level of the dependent variables, and inspection of histograms, stem-and-leaf, box plots, and Q-Q plots. The first column of Table C and Table D in Appendix 4 provides the standardised values of skew and kurtosis for younger and older offenders, respectively, prior to data cleaning. As shown, a number of distributions deviated from normality, in part due to the presence of univariate outliers. Although univariate outliers represent a threat to the stability of parametric tests, they do not necessarily need to be deleted. If the extreme value is part of the sampled population, rather than due to incorrect data entry, it is worthwhile retaining it, albeit in a less extreme form. Given that violent offenders naturally represent an ‘extreme’ group it is likely that true outliers are important in that they represent meaningful extremes within the population of violent offenders. In these instances, a viable option to deletion is to modify the score so that it does not have such an impact on data analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Field (2009) suggests that when outliers are causing skew and/or kurtosis changing the scores can be an effective way to achieve normality, without limiting the interpretability of the results. The underlying logic is based on the distribution of standardised scores (z-scores). For example, standardised scores above 3.29 represent potential univariate outliers (Field, 2009; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The below equation is used to reverse engineer the standardised score to a value that can be used as a replacement for the outlier.

\[ X = (z \times s) + \bar{X} \]
where \( z \) is the standardised score (3.29), \( s \) is the standard deviation, and \( \mu \) is the mean. Essentially, Field (2009) advocates that outliers should be replaced with a value that represents the mean plus two times the standard deviation. Alternatively, the mean plus three times the standard deviation can also be used as a replacement for outlying values.

For the younger offenders group, univariate outliers were identified on the Mollification, Entitlement, Power Orientation, Sentimentality and Superoptimism thinking styles, on the Interpersonal Hostility, Self-Assertion/ Deception and Denial of Harm factor scales, and on the Proactive composite scale. For the older offenders group univariate outliers were identified on all thinking styles except Sentimentality, on the Interpersonal Hostility, Self-Assertion/ Deception and Denial of Harm factor scales, and on both composite scales. The distributions for each of these variables for younger and older offenders are presented in Appendix 5. Univariate outliers for each of these distributions were modified using the formula proposed by Field (2009). This process was repeated until there was no evidence of univariate outliers on the normality plots or the standardised scores. As shown in Appendix 6 however, a number of distributions for the younger and older offender groups still deviated from normality. In particular, Power Orientation, Superoptimism and Interpersonal Hostility remained non-normally distributed in the younger and older offenders group, while Proactive Thinking remained non-normally distributed in the older offenders group only.

To address these deviations from normality, log and square root transformations were applied to the data. As shown in Table C and D of Appendix 4, the standardised values of skew improved substantially for these distributions following the log transformation. Histograms and Q-Q plots for each variable following data transformation are presented in Appendix 7. Despite the improvement in normality, the transformed data did not produce substantively different results to the untransformed data. For this reason, the untransformed data were used in the analyses described in Chapter 6.
The assumption of homogeneity of variance was tested using the Levene statistic. As Table B indicates, there were no violations of this assumption for any of the dependent measures. Multivariate normality for each level of the independent variable was assessed using the Mahalanobis Distance statistics (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). With 14 dependent measures the critical $^2$ value is 36.12 at a conservative alpha level of $p<.001$. Five multivariate outliers were identified, three of which belonged to the younger offenders group. These five cases were deleted, resulting in a final sample size of 248 offenders.

Table B
Results of Levene’s test of homogeneity of variance

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<th>PICTS scales</th>
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<th>Significance level $p$</th>
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### Assumptions of univariate normality – skew and kurtosis

#### Table C
Comparison of standardised skew and kurtosis values for PICTS thinking styles, factor and composite scales following data cleaning and transformations for the younger group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PICTS scales</th>
<th>Prior to data cleaning</th>
<th>Following the modification of univariate outliers</th>
<th>Following Log10 transformation</th>
<th>Following Square Root transformation</th>
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Table D
Comparison of standardised values of skew and kurtosis values for PICTS thinking styles, factor and composite scales following data cleaning and transformations for the older group

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</table>
Appendix 5

Histograms and Q-Q plots for thinking styles, factor, and composite scales for younger and older offenders

Composite Scales

Proactive
Reactive
Thinking Styles

Mollification

Histogram
for Age: Block - Younger (39-25)

Histogram
for Age: Block - Older (59-88)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Mollification Pre-test
for Age: Block - Younger (39-25)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Mollification Pre-test
for Age: Block - Older (59-88)
Cutoff

Histogram for Age, DiABE: Younger (30-20)

Histogram for Age, DiABE: Older (30-40)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Cutoff Pre-test for Age, DiABE: Younger (30-20)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Cutoff Pre-test for Age, DiABE: Older (30-40)
Power Orientation

Histogram for Age_Disk3: Younger (19-29)

Histogram for Age_Disk4: Older (30-44)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Power orientation Pre-test for Age_Disk3: Younger (19-29)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Power orientation Pre-test for Age_Disk4: Older (30-44)
Sentimentality

Histogram
For Age: Elderly (65+)

Histogram
For Age: Younger (35-25)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Sentimentality Pre-test
For Age: Elderly (65+)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Sentimentality Pre-test
For Age: Younger (35-25)
Superoptimism

Histogram for Age: Older (70-99)

Histogram for Age: Older (70-99)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Superoptimism Pre-test
for Age: Older (70-99)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Superoptimism Pre-test
for Age: Older (70-99)
Cognitive Indolence
Discontinuity
Factor Scales

Problem Avoidance
Interpersonal Hostility

Histogram
for Age, Psych:< Younger (18-25)

Histogram
for Age, Psych:< Older (26-64)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Interpersonal Hostility Pre-test
for Age, Psych:< Younger (18-25)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Interpersonal Hostility Pre-test
for Age, Psych:< Older (26-64)
Self-Assertion/Deception

Histogram for Age_Dist(0)- Younger (38.29)

Histogram for Age_Dist(0)- Older (36.60)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Self-Assertion Pre-test for Age_Dist(0)- Younger (38.29)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Self-Assertion Pre-test for Age_Dist(0)- Older (36.60)
Denial of Harm

Histogram
for Age (60+): Younger (18-29)

Histogram
for Age (60+): Older (30-49)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Denial of Harm Pre-test
for Age (60+): Younger (18-29)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Denial of Harm Pre-test
for Age (60+): Older (30-49)
Appendix 6

Histograms and Q-Q plots for non-normally distributed variables after data cleaning

Proactive – Younger group only
Mollification – Younger and older groups
Entitlement – Younger group only

Power Orientation – Older group only

Interpersonal Hostility – Older group only
Self-Assertion/Deception – Younger group only

Denial of Harm – Older group only
Appendix 7

Histograms and Q-Q for the thinking styles, factor, and composite scales following Log10 transformation

Composite Scales

Proactive
Reactive
Thinking Styles

Mollification
Cutoff

Histograms for Age, Ethnicity: Younger (left) and Older (right).

Normal Q-Q Plots for LogCo for Age, Ethnicity: Younger (left) and Older (right).
Entitlement
Power Orientation

Histogram for Age < 60 kg: Younger (18-39)

Histogram for Age < 60 kg: Older (40-60)

Normal Q-Q Plot of LogPo for Age < 60 kg: Younger (18-39)

Normal Q-Q Plot of LogPo for Age < 60 kg: Older (40-60)
Sentimentality

Histogram

Normal Q-Q Plot of LogSin

for Age_Distinct: Younger (18-29)

for Age_Distinct: Older (30-69)
Superoptimism
Cognitive Indolence
Discontinuity
Factor Scales

Problem Avoidance

Histogram

Normal Q-Q Plot of LogPb

for Age: Older (38.27)

for Age: Younger (38.27)

for Age: Older (50.04)

for Age: Older (50.04)
Interpersonal Hostility
Self-Assertion/Deception
Denial of Harm
Appendix 8

Supplementary analyses on age, risk and criminal thinking

While the PICTS may not be a sensitive measure of developmental processes, there is sufficient evidence showing that it is a strong adjunct measure to risk (e.g., Walters, 1996; 2007b; 2007c; Walters et al., 2007). As such, it was hypothesised that the PICTS criminal thinking, factor, content and composite scales would be able to statistically differentiate between low, moderate and high risk offenders. Moreover, given the well-established link between age and risk, it was further predicted that differences between lower and higher risk offenders would also reflect, to a certain extent, developmental differences. That is, younger offenders were predicted to be higher risk than their older counterparts, and therefore were also predicted to score significantly higher on all of the PICTS scales, relative to older offenders.

To test these relationships, all offenders were categorised into a risk category based on their scores on the Violence Risk Scale (VRS: Wong & Gordon, 1999). The Violence Risk Scale (VRS) is a measure of an individual’s risk of violent re-offending. Theoretically it is grounded in the Psychology of Criminal Conduct (Andrews & Bonta, 2010), which posits a confluence of psychological and psychosocial factors that increase a person’s propensity to engage in criminal behaviour. While acknowledging within and between group differences in propensity for crime, Andrews and colleagues have argued that there are a group of general risk factors that reliably predict re-offending (e.g., Andrews, Bonta & Hoge, 1990; Andrews, Bonta & Wormith, 2006; Andrews et al., 1990; Bonta & Andrews, 2007; Dowden & Andrews, 2000). These include a history of antisocial behaviour, antisocial attitudes, antisocial associates, antisocial personality, substance abuse, a history of crime and problems at school, home, work, and leisure activities (Andrews et al., 1990; Wong & Olver, 2010).
The VRS is comprised of six static and 20 dynamic risk factors. Unlike other risk assessment instruments that are more heavily weighted towards static risk factors, the VRS is meant to be a clinically relevant tool, which allows practitioners to identify and manage an individual’s specific areas of need. Although every item on the scale is equally weighted, the overrepresentation of dynamic risk factors means that the VRS is considered a third-generation risk assessment instrument that allows treatment targets to be identified and monitored (Yang, Wong & Coid, 2010). In this context, for each dynamic risk factor the VRS includes a stages-of-change component, which can be used to determine a client’s progress (Wong & Gordon, 1999). According to Wong & Olver (2010) the VRS addresses the risk, need and responsivity principles – it provides a total risk score, identifies treatment targets (i.e., areas of need), and identifies an individual’s readiness to engage with the treatment process.

Scoring is done by a clinician following an in-depth interview and a review of the individual’s institutional file. Each item indicates a risk factor. Items are scored on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 0-3. Lower scores typically indicate the absence of a particular risk factor in the individual’s life. Three scores can be computed from the VRS – a static risk score, which is the sum of the static items (scores range from 0-18); a dynamic risk score, which is the sum of the dynamic items (scores range from 0-60); and a total VRS score, which is the sum of the 26 items (scores range from 0-78). The total score can thus be used to classify offenders into a risk category – low risk (0-35), moderate risk (36-50), and high risk (51-78).

The VRS was originally validated on a sample of 918 incarcerated male violent offenders in Canada (Wong & Gordon, 2006). The authors report good internal consistency (static item total Cronbach = 0.93, dynamic item total Cronbach = .94, VRS total Cronbach = .69 ), and reasonable concurrent validity with other risk assessment instruments, including the Psychopathy Checklist – Revised (between 0.62 and 0.83), the Level of Service Inventory – Revised (0.83), and the Historical-Clinical-Risk Management 20 (between 0.83 and 0.84).