

**Exploring the Life Narratives of the Non-Incarcerated:  
An Integrative Model of Differentiation**

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## Abstract

The study of narrative roles in offending action has revealed four dominant roles offenders adopt during the offending experience (Canter & Youngs, 2009; Youngs & Canter 2011, 2012). This finite set of narrative themes that distinguishes offenders and guides their offending action are said to be a distillation of a full life narrative (Canter, 1994). The proposal that offenders' narratives are a distillation of a full life narrative raises the possibility of a finite set of narrative themes for distinguishing non-offenders that encompass the same overarching themes adopted during offending action.

The aim of this study was an elaboration of these four narrative themes to identify if they could be revealed in a non-incarcerated subsample of the general population providing a model of differentiation. In addition, to examine if and how criminal narratives are embedded within an individual's overall life narrative through a comparison of non-offender vs offender narratives to establish if differences emerged and if certain narrative themes were more prone to criminality than others. Currently, no such research exists that explores the possibility of the four offender narrative themes being a distillation of a full life narrative examining how crime is embedded within these. Nor does a model of differentiation exist for a non-incarcerated sample drawing on these four themes, filling the void of an integrative approach to personality (McAdams & Pals, 2005).

Interviews were conducted with 71 participants from the general population using the Life as a Film (LAAF) procedure, an innovative technique to elicit autobiographical life narrative accounts which reveal implicit and explicit aspects of the self, alongside personality measures of the Big Five Inventory (BFI), the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control (LOC) and the Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (PICTS). Frequency analysis uncovered the presence of an overarching narrative theme embraced in positivity, yet underlying themes also emerged. Smallest space analysis (SSA) of the LAAF responses revealed the presence of four narrative themes that relate to the roles of the *Revenger*, *Hero*, *Professional* and *Victim*. These findings also have convincing evidence to support the Intimacy and Potency based distinctions and the three cognitive, affective, and identity components of narrative offence roles as found by Youngs and Canter (2012) providing an integrated model of narrative themes.

To enhance the knowledge of the four narrative themes the personality correlates were examined across the narrative themes, stemming from McAdams' (1995) three levels of self-identity. The LOC and BFI dimensions of personality were predominately reflective of the psychological components of the LAAF items that underpinned the four narrative themes. Self-descriptions stemming from the four offence roles supported the LAAF accounts provided with few differentiations revealed in relation to life outcomes. Certain narrative roles were more associated with female protagonists with few other demographic differences unveiled.

To enhance the understanding the same approach was applied to participants who disclosed a previous offence unveiling similar, more dominant, thematic themes and underlying personality measures. Aspects of criminal thinking were uncovered in relation to three narrative roles, two of which were couched in a more negative theme featuring unresolved dissonance.

The findings provide a novel model of differentiation in the life narratives of a non-incarcerated sample drawing on narrative themes previously only identified in offending action alongside revealing how criminality could be embedded within the life story.

## **Dedication**

To my two girls, Tia and Elliya... without you I wouldn't have set foot on this journey, you are forever my motivations in life and I strive to better life for the two of you.

And, to my Auntie Claire who made this journey possible, R.I.P.

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# Chapter 1: Understanding Narrative Roles

Questions have long arisen over the formation of a person's self-identity, known as the self, and differences in human identity such questions as to who someone is, how and why they are different to others, what motivates them, and why they make certain life choices. As such, people are keen to understand what constructs the self and comprehend how differences within can be understood. Given that individuals themselves are in control of their self-identity, delving into the self itself would provide the best way to comprehend its construction and understand these differences. This is made possible through narrative psychology which steps away from previous trait-based approaches providing a new approach towards the understanding of self-identity (McAdams, 1993).

Personal narratives as a framework for constructing self-identity and the development of life stories has become a fundamental part of psychology to comprehend human identity and has been increasingly used to explore criminality (e.g., Canter & Youngs, 2009, 2015; Maruna, 2001, 2004; Presser, 2009, 2012, Sandberg 2008, 2012, 2013, 2016). These aspects focus on internalised self-stories. A life story is not a detailed description of a person's life and the events and experiences within, it is how an individual assimilates the events and experiences faced internally to make sense of them and constructs them in a story-like structure to provide meaning. This story, otherwise known as a narrative, becomes that person's self-identity and can reveal aspects of the self that provide a sense of understanding of that individual (McAdams, 1993).

A component of the narrative framework is the characters that represent the self, also known as roles. The use of the narrative framework has identified roles individuals adopt within both criminality and everyday life, yet there has been little consideration of the underpinning themes of these narrative roles within the life story as a whole. Yet, the narrative roles have been fruitful in the notion of comprehending individuals' self-identity and behaviour (McAdams, 1993,1995). There is currently no narrative role model that explains the life stories of non-offenders, and how these narratives relate to the criminal narrative roles that have been revealed in the life stories of offenders.



## **1.1 Narrative Roles in Human Identity: A Lack of an Integrative Framework**

McAdams (1993, p. 117-132) puts forward the notion that identity takes the form of a story and individuals adopt the multiple roles they play in life as different characters within the story. These roles, known as imagoes, are idealised personifications of 'the self' tied together by a coherent theme of agency or communion and revealed by the individual's tendencies within the life story such as striving for power and achievement or intimacy and love. He argues that these themes manifest in people's lives through the characters they play and they adopt different roles to make sense of their lives as a whole. However, despite themes of agency and communion being found central to life stories, this model centres solely on these two themes alongside encompassing varying roles within an individual's life story meaning this approach is restrictive. This, therefore, highlights the need for a more condensed framework that reveals the roles individuals adopt within the life story.

Moreover, McAdams (1995) proposed that individual differences in personality comprise of three unique levels. This integrative approach pits the first level of personality as dispositional traits, the second as an individual's characteristic adaptations, and the final level to personality being the integrative life story of a person which addresses individual meaning. This reveals how in order to fully understand an individual, a combination of approaches is necessary including an individual's life story. Despite this, the need for such an approach has been asserted by McAdams and Pals (2005) and a model for differentiation of narrative themes within human identity is lacking.

Within criminality, Maruna (2001, 2004) found different narrative accounts in criminals that have desisted from criminality through the construction of self-narratives, and Presser (2004, 2009) found narrative themes within offenders. However, these focused on post-offence behaviours in which Presser (2008) argued that individuals do not already have a story but rather they construct a story in a particular context that emerges through the interview process. Despite agreeing with Presser (2009) that narratives operate as 'key instigators of action', Canter (1994) argues that to understand the offenders' self-narrative, an understanding of their internalised stories within their offending action provides a deeper insight into why they offend. He further posited that the clue to an offender's narrative is within an ill-formed dominant narrative, a distorted account of a non-offender's narrative. These studies highlight how offenders tend to operate different narratives to non-offenders

yet these narratives are presumed to be a distillation of a non-offending narrative however such life narrative themes are currently not known.

An integrative framework for differentiating narrative roles was developed with the Narrative Action System (NAS; Canter & Youngs, 2009; Youngs & Canter 2011, 2012). The NAS found four dominant narrative roles in a study with offenders and gave a coherent framework for understanding and giving substance to an individual's behaviour. Youngs and Canter (2011) stated that narrative offence roles indicated the processes exerted on a specific crime event by revealing the core psychological themes within the narrative that were active at the time of the crime. These effectively also supplied a distillation of the full, unfolding life story of the individual offender. These roles have been revealed in various crime types (Canter & Youngs, 2009, 2015; Ciesla et al., 2019; Goodlad et al., 2018; Ioannou et al., 2018; Spruin et al., 2014; Yaneva et al., 2018; Youngs & Canter, 2012). Yet the full life story of the offender, nor how this fits with a non-offending narrative, is unknown and precisely how the themes these roles are constructed on are represented in a non-offending sample and how they may operate is not clear.

In a further set of studies, researchers found presence of the same four narrative themes within the life stories of offenders not just in the roles they adopt in offending action and differences within the life stories of offenders. Canter and Youngs (2015) found that the responses individuals gave to the Life as a Film (LAAF) procedure, which elicits an individual's life narratives in a film-like structure, could reveal underlying psychological information in a way that linked to the dominant stories embedded in the protagonists' lives. Given that offenders are said to draw on finite narrative themes of distorted versions of non-offenders' narratives (Canter, 1994), it could then be inferred that these four themes can also be identified within non-offenders in the stories that they live by. This uncovered significant potential for future research in how these life stories compare with non-offenders' life stories and establish any differences within the narrative themes they adopt.

Youngs et al. (2014) also utilised the LAAF procedure in a comparative study on offenders' narratives and non-offenders' narratives. This revealed that offenders' life stories are distinctive in the self-identity and agency processes that facilitate offending. Their narrative accounts had a central focus on criminality, a generally negative undertone, a concern with materialistic matters, and the significant yet problematic nature of relations with others. This highlights how the life narrative approach has been used on offenders and revealed

differences but this study lacked an understanding of what the life narratives of a non-offending sample are and how the criminal life narratives could be distorted from these.

The final set of studies highlights that the themes of the four narrative roles that differentiate roles adopted during the commission of an offence can be identified in a sample of offenders and the presence of these themes has also been identified within the life stories of offenders using a technique that elicited a rich narrative, and that differences are present within the life narratives of offenders. This all points to the four narrative themes being present within the general population, supporting Canter (1994) with offenders' narratives being a distillation of them. However, precisely how these themes are represented in a non-offending sample and how they may operate is not clear. Due to the lack of an integrative framework (McAdams & Pals, 2005) and a three-level approach being needed to fully understand a person (McAdams, 1995), a fully integrative approach inclusive of traits and personal concerns should be utilised. Before we can fully understand the narrative roles offenders adopt within criminal action, we need to understand what life stories these narrative roles stem from in a non-offending sample to fully comprehend how they are a distillation of offending behaviour which in turn will validate the four roles.

# Chapter 2: Life Narratives: An Integrative Model of Differentiation

## 2.1 The Art of Stories

Today, stories are an intrinsic part of society. Everywhere you turn there are books, films, games, news articles, art and so forth which tell a form of a story in differing ways. The art of storytelling has existed for as long as ancient history can tell. It is not known when the art of delivering narrative accounts began but has been said to be recognised in prehistoric times with cavemen said to partake in storytelling with visual representations on cave walls (Pellowski, 1990). Stories exist in various contexts, such being myths, fairy tales, ghost stories, and religious scripts, and are relayed in countless different formats, orally, theatrics and music, media, technology and through written words. Storytelling has evolved and has been passed from generation to generation through many different developments in history from the witnessing of events and recollecting them in a narrative form, for teaching important life lessons, for performances in plays, and expressive through arts (Pellowski, 1990).

There is no one variation to storytelling, fairy tales and legends, and fact and fiction. These adaptive accounts bear no age limits and have no boundaries, they are universal and bridge divides in individuals and communities. They are reflective of wisdom, they can be used to interpret and understand confusing events, and for entertainment purposes in believing in myths and folklore which bind communities together. When we look back to history, it is nothing but a series of stories and accounts that are told differently by different people, but the key facts predominately remain the same, yet every story serves a purpose (Pellowski, 1990).

Stories, in particular life stories, are considered to be an internalised and evolving cognitive structure that provides an individual's life with some degree of meaning and purpose (McAdams, 2006). These life stories, otherwise known as personal narratives, are a framework for constructing self-identity and the development of life stories and have become a fundamental part of personality psychology, an area that attempts to decipher individual differences relating to their behaviour and experiences (McAdams, 1993, 1995). Despite stories being a central component to life for as long as time can tell, the use of storytelling to

understand human identity was previously overlooked and explanations centred on individual's traits (Crossley, 2000; Eysenck, 1990; Jung, 1961).

### **2.1.1 Why Not a Trait Based Approach?**

Various theories throughout history have attempted to explain and understand differences in and between individuals. These theories have primarily focused on differences in personality, human behaviour and motivations, such as Jung (1961) and Eysenck (1990). The primary perspectives that have attempted to explain these differences within personality have stemmed from biological perspectives in which differences are a result of genetics and physiology (Toates, 2007). The behavioural approach, which focuses on personality as learnt behaviour from the external environment (Watson, 1913), and personality in the psychodynamic approach, is argued to be a result of drives and forces within the unconscious (Freud, 1920). However, the majority of approaches that explain personality differences are predominately trait-based and are tightly categorised descriptions of human behaviour (Crossley, 2000).

Traits are distinguishing characteristics in relation to the way in which an individual thinks, feels and acts. Therefore, trait theories, also known as dispositional theories, measure the extent to which an individual's personality is devised of these aspects. These traits are typically stable and broad elements of personality and theories focus on differences or similarities in relation to them between individuals (McAdams, 1995). Evolving research into traits has researchers asserting that there are five basic dimensions of personality that control how people think, feel and interact with others: Agreeableness, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to new experiences (Forrester, Tashchian & Shore, 2016). These dispositional traits form the basis of the self and are said to be the underlying factor in the formation of personality (McAdams, 1995; McAdams & Pals, 2006). Despite trait-based theories revealing key differences within personality, they focus on aspects of personality that are generally stable and fail to comprehend dynamic life changes within it, predominately how situations and events individuals experience have an effect on and can influence personality. Essentially, they lack an explanation of how personality changes over time (McAdams, 2001).

The trait-based approach to personality was expanded on by Freud (1920) with the explanation of understanding human motivation by two fundamental motives positing that

human behaviour is governed by irrational forces, instinctive drives and the unconscious mind. This built on the trait-based approach relating personality and a subjective account of an individual's development. Freud (1920) put forward the notion that individuals' behaviour is driven by two innate forces which are in conflict with one another. These forces being the 'life instinct', in which individuals are motivated in a sexual, loving, or pleasurable way integrating basic survival instincts, and the 'death instinct', in contrast, which is negative, aggressive and self-destructive behaviour. Both forces are suggested to balance each other out and be responsible for motivating human behaviour.

Building on Freud's (1920) theory, Erikson (1968) proposed a framework to explore the process of identity formation across an individual's lifespan that embraced continuity and the impact of external factors within different stages of the life story. These three characteristics; *ego identity*; which focuses on the self, *personal identity*; characteristics that distinguish individuals from one another and *social/cultural identity*; the social roles an individual may personify within their lifetime were fundamental as this theory was the first to integrate social, clinical, and developmental aspects within identity. This outlined a more realistic perspective of personality development (McAdams, 2001).

Human behaviour being governed by two central processes as proposed by Freud (1920) and the use of unconscious motivations was further surmised by Bakan (1966), who acknowledged *Agency* and *Communion* as the 'fundamental modalities' for the behaviour of human beings encasing a motivational duality in human existence. *Agency* is reflective of an individual's need for power and achievement, and a sense of independence from others whereas *Communion* referred to an individual's striving for love and intimacy and to unite with others. These motivations were ingrained unconsciously into the self and were demonstrated by how an individual lived their life said by Bakan (1966) to comprehend the basic motivational themes expressed in individuals' lives.

However, these advances in understanding personality and human behaviour, although broadened understanding, were still lacking with a need for a more integrative approach that was not categorised or dependant on typologies, and encompassed changes. McAdams' (1993) 'life story' model of identity bridged this gap, using a narrative approach to better understand human behaviour. The narrative perspective centres on the notion that humans construct evolving stories from personal and significant events experienced within their lives which provide their lives with a sense of meaning and has re-contextualised personality

psychology. This stems from previous research by Bakan's (1966) two fundamental modalities and Freud's (1920) unconscious drives model in suggesting that individuals unconsciously construct their lives based on personal experiences, like fictional tales and centre around two key themes.

## **2.2 Narratives as a Tool for Understanding Human Identity**

### **2.2.1 The Narrative Approach**

The notion that individuals construct their lives through self-life stories, also known as 'personal myths', is the fundamental theory of McAdams' (1993) life story model of human identity. Life stories provide individuals lives with a sense of purpose and are constantly evolving stories, formulated by individuals reconstructing their past and assuming their futures, developed in late adolescence and early adulthood. Thus, life stories pit the construction of self-identity in the same context as a story, with a plot, a theme, different scenes, and characters. The narrative approach encompasses change in the formation of human identity, with individual experiences, events and the culture lived in impacting the construction, contributing to the significance and importance of how these events are recalled to the individual personally. Therefore, the life story model is a subjective approach, based on inner experiences and reactions to events (McAdams, 1993).

One of the first narrative approaches within psychology was argued by Sarbin (1986) who put forward the notion of narratives as the 'organising principle of human action'. He proposed that narrative structures account for the way in which human beings think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices, known as the 'narratory principle'. Denoting that narratives can help explain the structure individuals tend to enforce that comprehend events experienced.

As such, these narratives function as a process that organises events within a story as a collective through retrospect. Sarbin (1986) contends that individuals instinctively relate past phases or pictures as a collective to form a 'story'. This story provides meaning to these past phases or pictures with a structure that enables the events to flow and take a shape, like that of a plot within a story. When reflecting on these events, they take the form of, and are comprehended by, an organised narrative plot to enable individuals to recount the stories of the individuals and events involved with the plot influencing how these individuals and events are described.

The use of narratives and the ideology that individuals construct their lives through significant events and memories have been utilised significantly in personality psychology to explain human identity. Polkinghorne (1989) “believes narratives have a unique exploratory power” (p.258) and fails to side with other explanations of human behaviour which fail to capture the meaning of human action. He puts forward the notion that humans construct behaviour in a narrative format, and to understand a person they should be read as if they were a story. Giddens (1991) in which, from a state of uncertainty, individual’s piece together the self and identity in a reflexive project, the fragments of knowledge and experience to “form stories, self-narratives about their lives, themselves and their worlds” (Giddens, 1991, p.77). Studies such as McAdams’ (1993) life story model and Maruna’s (2001) reform have further developed and supported the ideology that individuals construct stories from life experiences and significant events and in doing so these stories provide them with a sense of understanding and justification in relation to their actions and social interactions.

Narratives constructed after significant events within the life story can reveal implicit underpinnings of an individual’s self-identity (Crossley, 2000). McAdams (1993) found that stories provide accustomed selective ways of representing the self, being a basic and important element for the construction of identity and a fundamental aspect of stories is that they are expressive of dominant themes within our lives.

### **2.2.2 An Innovative Framework for Personality: Three Levels of Knowing a Person**

The lack of an innovative framework was observed by McAdams (1995), who proposed that an individual’s personality is comprised of three unique levels which, alongside narrative psychology, was also inclusive of traits. As such, he deduced that to obtain a full description of an individual’s personality there needs to be a wider consideration of other components within human life. The first level of personality consists of an individual’s broad traits that describe their personality; their dispositional signature. As previously highlighted, trait-based approaches to underpin psychological individuality are one of the most stable and recognisable perspectives within human identity (Forrester, Tashchian & Shore, 2016). Traits reveal the differentiation of people in such how shy or outgoing they are, or how personable or introverted they are. As such, they underpin differences observed or described in a person therefore they enable a basis to an individual’s self-identity. McAdams (1995) posits that “no description of a person is adequate without trait attributions” (p. 365) therefore to understand



an individual, the broad traits pertinent to their self-identity is crucial to know yet these alone provide little more than the “psychology of the stranger” (McAdams, 1995, p. 371).

The initial trait level provides insight into the general behaviour and attributes of a person, the second level, provides insight into things such as an individual’s desires, beliefs, concerns, goals, values and so forth of a person in association with times, places, and events within their lives. This level of McAdams’ (1995) framework is an individual’s personal concerns, known as characteristic adaptations. The third, and final, level to personality as asserted by McAdams (1995) is an individual’s integrative life story. McAdams and Pals (2006) state “if dispositional traits sketch the outline and characteristic adaptations fill in the details of human individuality, then narrative identities give individual lives their unique and culturally anchored meaning” (p. 209). This third dimension of personality relates to the life stories, or personal myths, constructed by individuals from past experiences that provide their lives with a sense of purpose and meaning and are central to how they construct their self-identity.

Despite life stories being unique to an individual, they also provide an opportunity to explore an individual’s self-identity through their internalised, evolving story. However, this approach alone limits what can be observed from a person due to the different levels of personality observed by McAdams (1995) and highlights how a combination of theories provide a deeper insight into knowing a person. “Personality is an individual’s unique variation on the general evolutionary design for human nature, expressed as a developing pattern of dispositional traits, characteristic adaptations, and integrative life stories complexly and differentially situated in culture” (McAdams & Pals, 2006, p. 212), revealing that to fully know and understand a person an integrative framework is required combining key approaches within personality.

Studies across the level one five dimensions of personality have been fruitful in revealing differences about personality and uncovering an individual’s disposition across the world in non-offending samples (John, Naumann & Soto, 2008; Schmitt et al, 2007). McAdams et al. (2004) also studied dispositional traits and life narrative in relation to agentic and communal aspects of narrative identity utilising two levels of personality that have not been previously empirically linked. However, the results were inconclusive in revealing some aspects of personality and life stories were related in predictable ways and others were not highlighting

the need for further research in this area and focusing outside of just communal and agentic values.

Differences in level one personality types across offending behaviour have been studied and revealed significant differences. Heaven (1996) identified differences in individuals who disclosed high self-reported violence, vandalism, and theft with them revealed to have low Agreeableness and Conscientiousness and high Neuroticism. Samuels et al. (2004) revealed that individuals with higher arrests were more likely to be associated with higher levels of Neuroticism, and lower in Extraversion, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness. Individuals actively shoplifting were revealed to be lower in Neuroticism, Agreeableness and Conscientious and higher in Extraversion. (Egan & Taylor, 2010).

Personality studies, encompassing traits in offending behaviour, have typically concentrated on sexual and violent offences. In sex offences against children, sex offenders were revealed to be significantly higher in Neuroticism, and lower in both Extraversion and Conscientiousness when compared with a non-offending sample (Dennison, Stough, & Birgden, 2001). In contrast and comparison to other offenders, Egan, Kavanagh, and Blair (2005) revealed perpetrators of child sexual abuse were associated with higher levels of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness in comparison with other offenders. In a comparative study between sex offenders, non-sex offenders, and non-offenders, Becerra-García, et al. (2013) found higher levels of Neuroticism in offenders when compared to non-offenders, sexual offenders had higher levels of Extraversion, and non-sexual offenders had lower scores in Agreeableness. Therefore, a non-offending sample was differentiated by lower Extraversion, higher Agreeableness, and lower Neuroticism.

The extent to which individuals feel in control of their lives, control meaning the power they have to determine outcomes within their life in such directly influencing actions, people and events is a construct that Rotter (1966) alleges is part of an individual's personality, also known as locus of control. This element of personality can be related to McAdams' (1995) second level of personality in which personal concerns, also known as characteristic adaptations, can help deepen the understanding of individual personality.

Differences in individuals' locus of control have also been related to wellbeing with those with an internal locus of control having a more positive emotional state and life and career satisfaction (Quevedo & Abella, 2014). In contrast, individuals who possess an external locus

of control are not in control of their successes or failures and ascribe these as a result of external sources such as luck or fate. An external LOC has been associated with higher levels of anxiety, more vulnerable to stress, and psychological and physical problems because of this lack of control of their lives (Roddenberry & Renk, 2010).

In studies looking at LOC in offenders, research has repeatedly highlighted higher levels of external LOC. In a comparative study on the LOC in drink driving offenders and non-offenders, Cavaiola and Desordi (2000) found that those who drive under the influence presented with higher external LOC. Gudjonsson and Sigurdsson (2007) examined the relationship between motivation for offending and personality and found external attribution of blame for offences amongst young offenders.

Similar to the five dimensions of personality, a high number of studies looking at LOC and offending centre around sexual offending. McAnena et al. (2016) found sex offenders with more external LOC were associated with a higher risk. Sex offenders were found to be more external on the overall measure of LOC than non-offenders and non-sex offenders (Graham, 1993). Fisher et al. (1998) found LOC was prevalent in child molesters who had not had treatment and high LOC was associated with a higher risk of reconviction. Within offence types, offenders who had committed offences against the person were more likely to have an external LOC than those who committed offences against property (Marsa et al. 2004), and those with an external LOC had higher recidivism rates (Stevens et al., 2016; Tidefors et al., 2019).

Such findings highlight how variances have emerged at a trait-based and personal concern level and highlight the importance of utilising traits alongside deeper measures in an integrated approach to fully understand a person, it is just not conclusive on how related the traits and narratives are. A three-factor approach by McAdams and Manczak (2015) considered how the internal characteristics that reside within an individual are related to their overall life story. This was done in such a way that these dispositional traits, embedded within an individual, revealed autobiographical accounts which identified how they made sense of their lives and key aspects of their individual self-identities.

## 2.3 The Formation of Narratives

### 2.3.1 Autobiographical Memory

Life stories are constructed through memories and past events experienced by an individual, therefore autobiographical remembering and self-understanding must be combined to formulate a coherent account. As such, autobiographical memory is the foundation for the construction of narratives (Habermas & Bluck, 2000), better understood as a ‘personal scrapbook’ within the mind that is predominately recalled in a narrative format, such as a story. An individual’s life story consists of these different layers of autobiographical memories.

Autobiographical memory does not just encompass past events personally experienced, it also comprises of personal beliefs, thoughts and emotions in relation to these memories, this network of memories formulates an autobiographical memory (Bruner, 1990; Fivush, 2010). These memories develop an individual’s sense of self and guide how they pursue interpersonal future goals. The use of autobiographical memory and recollection of life events has proved fruitful by Conway and Pleydell-Pearce (2000) within their self-memory system (SMS) which conceptualises the working self, and Thomsen and Berntsen (2008) who found associations between life scripts and autobiographical memory. Emotions also impact the extent to which an event is remembered, with contrasting emotions experienced influencing the context in which an event is remembered alongside individuals’ emotional goals influencing recall (Holland & Kensinger, 2010).

Both ‘the self’ and autobiographical memory are constructed through forms of social interaction and cultural influence which leads to the formation of a narrative that highlights a fundamental link between the two. This link between the self and memory is formed by the relationship between language and social interaction, both of which promote the construction of narratives providing a memory. This memory is central for understanding what the self is, what the self was, and what the self can be (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). The SMS model (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000) highlights this link in identifying that autobiographical memories comprise information on *lifetime periods*, *general events* and *event-specific knowledge*.

What McAdams (1985) similarly describes as chapters within an individual’s life story, Conway and Pleydell-Pearce’s (2000) *lifetime periods* are stages or events over a substantial

period of time during the life story, for example, a period of long term employment, years spent in education or the duration of a significant relationship.

On a more specific level, *general events* encapsulate both memories of repeat or related events or episodes such as attending a club or hobby, and single events such as attending a party or a holiday. These memories were found to be typically organised around a result of the achievement or failure of certain goals.

Lastly, *event-specific knowledge* is a vivid significant event or scene in an individual's memory that can relay visual images and sensory details. These memories can reflect positive and negative turning points within the individual's life trajectory, and reflect the high, low and turning points of narratives within McAdams (1985) 'nuclear episodes'.

As such it is argued by Conway and Pleydell-Pearce (2000) that the autobiographical knowledge base operates in a hierarchal structure, with event-specific knowledge being part of general events that feature in lifetime periods. An example being the saying of vows (*event-specific knowledge*) within a marriage ceremony (*general event*) of a significant relationship (*lifetime period*).

### **2.3.2 Narrative Construction**

Narrative coherence is a primary factor within the content and structure of a narrative, relating to how well the narrative 'fits together' and whether it is coherent, logical and consistent. Incoherent narratives can instil a lack of conviction within the narrative making them incomprehensible and imply a disorganised sense of self, revealed by Adler, Wagner and McAdams (2007) and Habermas and Silveira (2008), to lead to doubt within the narrative making it incomprehensible. McAdams (1988) highlights how life stories may become confused, or ill-formed, these life stories are more likely to possess more tension and confusion and be conflicted.

The construction of narratives and the development of an ability to construct and tell stories develop from infancy to adulthood. In reaching adulthood, people are said to be able to recount a narrative story. Autobiographical memory is stated to develop as a child approaches three years old (Howe & Courage, 1997) with infants then being able to organise and understand events experienced as things that have happened to them. This comprehension expands with age, in *temporal coherence* where children gain an understanding of how stories should be structured with the contents and a chronological order of events around the

ages of five to ten years old during the primary school years (Habermas & Silveira, 2008; Pals, 2006).

The ability to structure and recount stories develops further when an individual reaches adolescence when the depth of the narrative accounts deepens, defined by Habermas and Bluck (2000) as *casual coherence*. By this age, individuals have the ability to deliver a narrative account that comprises of an explanation of how different events can trigger, or are related to, other events within the life story. The final stage in the construction of a narrative account is *thematic coherence* where individuals develop a sense of self-identity as they enter adulthood. This provides individuals with a sense of purpose and the understanding of who they are and what they are about in such individuals identify with a specific theme or value that combines past life events to make sense of and convey who they are (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). With the additional influence of the individual's culture, traits and personal concerns, as hypothesised to be the three levels of personality, McAdams (1993) also supports that this results in individuals having a self-identity by the time they reach adulthood. However, not all individuals have a full comprehensive narrative account by the time they reach adulthood. Canter (1994) asserts the likelihood of offenders' narrative accounts being distorted from early years in which they are trying to gain a sense of self-identity however unsure and may turn to the possibilities of criminality.

### **2.3.3 Narrative Themes**

Despite all life stories being unique, common themes have been distinguished within them. Research by McAdams (1985, 1993, 2001) revealed four key themes that were common across narratives and could be identified within their construction. Both themes are governed by two central modalities: *Redemption* and *Contamination*, and *Agency* and *Communion*. '*Redemption*', derived from writings by Carlson (1988) and Tomkins (1987), is a bad or negative event or circumstance within an individual's life story which results in a good or positive outcome. Also known as a '*redemption sequence*' due to the negative event being 'redeemed' by a positive outcome (McAdams, 1993). These do not summarise the whole life story, just events within which contribute to the construction of the narrative.

In contrast '*Contamination*', also stemming from Tomkins (1987), in his nuclear scenes in which something good becomes contaminated resulting in a bad outcome. Within a life story, this can be described as an individual's positive or good event or state, becoming a bad or

negative event or state. Both '*Redemption*' and '*Contamination*' are posited by McAdams (2001) as being key distinguishing factors in distinguishing human motivation and how individuals deal with and react to significant events within their lives.

As previously mentioned, derived from Bakan (1966), McAdams (1993) posits that '*Agency*' and '*Communion*' are primary psychological themes that underpin differences in human function and organise personal myths. These super-ordinate themes distinguish the motivational trends individuals strive for within their life stories and can differentiate the internal disposition of individuals.

The narrative theme of *Agency* reflects an individual high in and driven by achievement and power. These individuals strive to master their environments and gain fulfilment from individual accomplishments. Highly agentic traits were subdivided by McAdams (1993) into four attributes: *Self-mastery* being the bettering or mastering of the self, *Status/Victory* in which individuals strive to achieve a higher status than fellow individuals, *Achievement/Responsibility* gaining success in the achievement of tasks, jobs or goals or important responsibilities, and *Empowerment* being the improvement of the self, through something bigger.

By contrast, Bakan (1966) posits individuals high in *Communion* strive for love and intimacy, need, and are motivated by, the formation of friendships and relationships and uniting with others. Within their life stories this is not just representative of loving relationships but in many different entirities, again, broken down into four themes: *Love/Friendship*, an emphasis of themes of and seeking love and friendship; *Dialogue*, reciprocal and non-instrumental communication with others; *Caring/Help*, compassionate and caring for those known in the life story; and *Unity/Togetherness*, stabilisation within their family unit.

Although redemption and contamination scenes within the life story are key indicators concerning the self-identity of individuals by revealing the way in which they respond to future acts which can suggest the future of it, agency and communion are super-ordinate themes and two key polarising facets in differentiating how individuals relate to their social world. They are key explanations for what motivates an individual and what drives them to act in the way that they do (McAdams, 1993, 2001).

The combination of autobiographical memory, construction and common themes revealed within narrative accounts provide a plot, a story like structure to a narrative. Revealing

insight into a person's inner narrative and personality, how they deal with events, through constructing stories around these (Habermas & Bluck, 2000; McAdams 1985). Despite all narrative accounts featuring a dimension of the core themes, the fact narrative perspectives are integrative means that individuals can move through different plots and they can incorporate different themes within their life stories (McAdams, 1993). Nonetheless, what drives them, i.e., agency and communion, is typically deeply ingrained into the person's personality.

## **2.4 The Role of Characters within the Story**

As with the construction of stories, the narrative accounts of life stories initially present a theme, an overall 'plot' to the story, as with a story, there needs to be the presence of characters. The role of characters within life stories is defined by McAdams (1993) as narrative personifications of the characters that individuals play in everyday life, called imagoes. Imagoes are crafted aspects of the self and dominate the plot within the story. They enable an insight into the way in which an individual assigns meaning to themselves and their activities through a role both consciously and unconsciously (McAdams, 1993).

Stemming from the two central themes within life stories of agency and communion, imagoes are personifications of roles which embody elements of these themes. Each role closely resembles gods and goddesses from Greek mythology representative of a different narrative identity. All deities have different aims and beliefs which personify their individuality. This concept has proved a fruitful foundation within narrative theory by McAdams (1993) in personifying individuals with roles that are divided into four subsequent groups which reflect the agentic and communal themes. Agentic; highly agentic imagoes are powerful characters who use forceful efforts to push the plot forward, seeking to conquer, master, produce, control, analyse and win within their life trajectories. In contrast, Communal; those highly communal imagoes are roles centred on love and intimacy, characters here seek to love and care for others, either through caring careers or passionately in intimacy and embracing others.

Some characters are a combination of agentic and communal themes, they are not centred on one theme but are a blend of both love and power. However, other roles are neither agentic nor communal with none of the central themes are revealed within the characters. As such, they avoid responsibility and do not seek or have space within their lives for power or love



therefore, dominant narratives in their life story possess a sense of confusion in being ill-formed. Canter (1994) posited the clue to offenders' narratives are these ill-formed dominant narratives that are confused and sensitive to events that most people would ignore, yet the distortion in these narratives, which are said to be distorted from early years, is not fully understood.

McAdams (1993) argues that imagoes are diverse in form and despite being categorised in distinct roles, they are all unique in nature and presented differently within the life story which personifies an integrative approach to comprehending motivation and personality. However, the variation and uniqueness within these roles and frequency of imagoes mean this approach is hard to personify, understand, and relate to. Therefore, a more condensed framework for personifying the roles, or narrative themes people adopt which uncovers their life story, would be more fruitful.

## **2.5 The Versatility of Narrative Roles**

### **2.5.1 Do Gender and Age Affect Narratives?**

The overall contents of narrative accounts have been found to have similar core themes and structures (Fromholt & Larsen, 1991). Alongside culture and environment which can influence the narrative, the core themes identified as being present in narrative content are redemption, contamination, agency, and communion (McAdams et al., 2001; McAdams & McLean, 2013). Differences in relation to gender and narrative accounts have been recognised, with the narratives of females found to have more relational content, such as relationship references and social events than the narratives of males (Fivush et al., 2000; Fivush & Buckner, 2000, 2003). This was similarly found by Bischooping (1993) with women reminiscing in their accounts given in relation to intimacy and relationships. In contrast, adolescent males were found to tell memories for entertainment more so than adolescent females (McLean, 2005), and research with adults' narratives demonstrates that females were more likely to give more communal and intimacy orientated narratives than males (McAdams et al., 2004, 2006). However, Fivush (2003) argues that gender and identity are defined in the process of interacting with one another, therefore, insinuating that narratives are a combination of the core elements and not purely restricted between genders.

### 2.5.2 Wellbeing and Narratives

Not all life stories, or narrative accounts, encompass happiness and positivity despite the same central themes; a positive life narrative is associated with positive life outcomes (Lilgendahl & McAdams, 2008; McLean & Breen, 2009). In sum, the more optimistic and positive the narrative account is, the more optimistic and positive the future direction and wellbeing of the individuals is. Wellbeing relates to “the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy” Oxford Dictionary (2018) on top of general happiness, this also embodies how satisfied people are with their lives, their sense of purpose and how in control of their life they feel.

Redemption sequences were found to be a key theme within narrative accounts. Lilgendahl and McAdams (2008) found that individuals whose life stories featured redemption sequences in relation to suffering and adversity faced had better overall well-being. Similarly, McLean and Breen (2009) in an examination of narrative identity of adolescents found redemption was linked to higher self-esteem and a more positive narrative tone. McAdams et al. (2001) found that redemptive sequencing in narratives was a better predictor of well-being than was the overall affective tone of narratives which highlights how understanding the components of a narrative can aid in the understanding of an individual’s self-identity revealing implicit aspects of the self. Maruna (2001) also found redemption sequences within the narrative accounts of offenders, offenders who used redemption sequences were less likely to reoffend.

Understanding wellbeing in relation to narrative accounts has been a key factor in comprehending an individual’s self-identity. Wellbeing has been related to narrative psychology in adults emotionally disclosing narratives of stressful experiences. Fivush et al (2007) explored children’s emotional and non-emotional writing finding that those subject to emotions focused more on negativity subsequently showed higher levels of anxiety, depression and difficulties. This highlights that negativity within the life story can be attributed to poor wellbeing and life outcomes and how the events faced within the life story can shape an individual’s narrative.

Negativity could stem from a lack of coherence in narratives. Failure to develop coherent accounts of identity in adolescence and by adulthood is assumed to result in the loss of a sense of purpose and meaning in life, a feeling of helplessness, and the inability to develop

positive and intimate relationships (Erikson 1950, 1968; McAdams 1993, 1996). Incoherent narratives have also been associated with lower levels of purpose and meaning (e.g., Erikson, 1950, 1968; McAdams, 1993, 1996).

## **2.6 Narratives in a Criminal Context**

### **2.6.1 A New Perspective for Explaining Criminality**

Negative narrative accounts and a lack of coherence have been readily identified with the narratives of offenders (Maruna, 2001, 2004; Youngs et al., 2014), distinguishing them somewhat from those of non-offenders. However, there has been little comparison of the two groups and the use of narrative theories to aid the understanding of criminality which were previously lacking. Traditionally, criminological theories that have focused on the reasoning behind offending behaviour and criminality have primarily centred on identifying the salient personality traits that differentiate between offenders and non-offenders (e.g. Dennison et al., 2001; Egan et al., 2005). Such theories have predominately explained criminality to be embedded within an individual, being a consistent aspect of their behaviour that is comparable with a personality trait in not changing over time (Maruna, 2001).

However, the issue with such theories that assume and explain offending behaviour using a trait perspective is that they consider criminality to be consistent. Offenders are transient, in such their offending behaviour adapts and changes over time and social and developmental influences that impact changes within an offender's criminal career are not considered (Maruna, 1999). Similar criticisms of the trait-based approach were also noted by Youngs (2004) who asserted that trait theories alone fail to demonstrate a link between personality and offence characteristics. This echoes McAdams (1995) who stated that in order to understand a person, three levels of personality should be considered.

As a result of such limitations with the trait-based approach, more weight has been afforded to narrative theories to aid in the understanding of criminality. Narrative theories provide a more dynamic framework that encases the dynamic and evolving nature of events within an individual's life, therefore applying such an approach to a transient, evolving group such as offenders deepens the understanding of their personality not being constrained by limitations (Canter, 1994; Maruna, 2001). This provides insight into their life stories and how they construct their self-identity which can aid in explaining the reasoning behind their criminality.

Canter (1994) was the first to utilise the narrative perspective for exploring offending behaviour to reveal how the life narratives of offenders give meaning to their offending action. Canter (1994) argued that to understand an offender's criminal behaviour, considering the self-created narratives, defined as 'inner narratives' that they hold enables an understanding of the motivation and meaning of their actions. As such, experiences shape a self-narrative and the behaviour exhibited reflects this. Therefore, to understand the offender's self-narrative, an understanding of their internalised stories within their offending action provides a deeper insight into why they offend. He asserts that narratives operate as Presser (2009) described as 'key instigators of offending action' therefore if they prompt such offending, uncovering how this narrative is formed provides an understanding as to why. Canter (1994, p.299) asserts that "through his actions, the criminal tells us about how he has chosen to live his life. The challenge is to reveal his destructive life story, to uncover the plot in which crime appears to play such a significant part". This approach has been utilised in the understanding of different narratives within offending action (see Canter & Youngs, 2009) drawing on a finite set of narrative themes, yet, the focus has primarily been on the distorted offending narrative, not the overall narrative that has been distorted to fully comprehend the offending action.

Narratives have been utilised and supported by Maruna (1999, 2001) in research into desistance from offending behaviour who emphasised two key findings within narrative psychology and the study of offenders. Firstly, the increasing volume of research which proposes that an individual's behaviour is organised and influenced by internal self-narratives and can explain their justification for offending behaviour. And secondly, that narratives by nature are dynamic and constantly evolving and they help to explain changes in a person's life story. This highlights how the narrative approach is a fruitful tool for understanding the life narratives of an individual, particularly an offender.

### **2.6.2 Justifications for Offending: A Narrative Approach**

The use of narratives to explain offending behaviour was implemented by Sykes and Matza (1957) within their neutralisation theory of offending behaviour which stems from, and uses, Sutherland's (1939) theory of differential association as a framework which theorises that criminality is a learned behaviour. Sykes and Matza (1957) proposed that offending behaviour is rationalised by criminals through the construction of a narrative account that

justifies their criminal act whilst keeping moral obligations in place. Despite these justifications being illegal, they are perceived as justifiable rationalisations by the offenders for their behaviour.

Five methods of neutralisation that are used to justify criminality are suggested. The first being (1) *Denial of responsibility*; here the offender believes that they were not at fault, nor were they responsible for their actions. An example of such being the circumstances were out of their control in a poor upbringing or a result of fate. (2) *Denial of injury*, the harm or damage caused is refuted by the offender. (3) *Denial of the victim* in which the criminal act is neutralised by the offender accepting that the victim deserved the actions of the offender. (4) *Condemnation of the condemners*, here the blame is shifted by the offender proclaiming that those who condemn their offence and are doing so out of spite towards the deviant. And lastly, (5) *Appeal to higher loyalties*, where long term consequences or the greater good of their actions justify the immediate act.

Despite these neutralisations being immoral and illegal, and being hard for an outsider to comprehend, in the eyes of the offender and in terms of their individual self-narrative, their behaviour is rational (Canter, 1994) which opens up the idea that the bigger self-narrative is distinct in some way to a non-offender self-narrative and the criminality is embedded within. Neutralisations were also established by Maruna (2001) as a facilitator of further offending as a consequence of the offender becoming hardened to the rationalisations used for their criminality. This highlights a distinction in the life narratives of offenders and non-offenders.

Narratives and the justification of offending behaviour was also posited by Bandura (1999) through moral disengagement. This notion asserts that offenders/individuals selectively disengage moral control from illegitimate acts through the use of psycho-social mechanisms. In short, the use of these mechanisms removes any personal or moral ramifications for individuals when committing inhumane acts, they convince themselves that moral principles do not apply to them in inhumane behaviour.

Bandura (1999, 2002) distinguished three sets of moral disengagement practices. The initial set of moral disengagement practices relates to the inhumane behaviour itself being reconstructed and redefined to justify such acts. *Moral justification* is one such example in which individuals justify their inhumane actions as serving socially worthy or moral purposes, making such behaviours to be deemed socially acceptable. *Euphemistic labelling* is

when individuals use sanitised language to reduce personal responsibility and morally disengage from illegitimate acts. Here language forms the basis of giving the harmful behaviour a different context to soften its detrimental impacts. *Advantageous comparison* is when individuals justify their reprehensible acts by comparison to other reprehensible acts, to make them look morally more acceptable and justified.

The second set of moral disengagement practices focuses on the agency of action in which individuals minimise their involvement in the harm that they have caused. *Displacement of responsibility* is when inhumane behaviour is committed when an individual would not normally do so due to a legitimate authority, displacing the blame onto the authority for such actions meaning individuals do not feel personally responsible for their actions as they are not the actual agent of them, a prime example of this is a soldier at war. Moral control is also weakened by *diffusion of responsibility* where a division of labour alleviates the blame with the harmful event being distributed between others with not one individual being held accountable or felt to be responsible for such actions. A group decision is also an example of a diffusion of responsibility in not one individual being solely accountable. *Distorting consequences* is an example of the harmful effects being avoided through the pursuit of harmful activities to others for reasons of personal gain or social pressures. As such, the suffering or harm caused is not visible due to the offender focusing on the wider consequences minimising the harmful effect.

The final set of practices relates to the victims of offending behaviour whereby how victims are regarded by the individual perpetrating such acts. This typically includes attributions of blame with perpetrators justifying their acts with victims having deserved the suffering they experienced excusing the offender from their actions and dehumanisation. *Dehumanization* is a process in which the perpetrator of an offence removes the human qualities of a victim, meaning they are no longer perceived as a human being with feelings and emotions. In detaching these views, it is then made possible for the offender to inflict inhuman violent conduct. This disengages their morals in the way they perceive people they intend on harming, also attributed to a lack of empathy.

Moral disengagement, therefore, allows insight into how individuals justify and rationalise their offending behaviour through the reconstruction of narrative accounts to make sense of their actions. This reveals key differences in their narratives and life stories that are embedded within their self (Sykes & Matza, 1957). A combination of these justifications

then, combined with other psychological processes, reveals insight into an offender's personality and their self-narratives allowing for differentiation.

Traditionally, understanding these justifications which act as a motivational factor preceding offending behaviour can assist with understanding the reasoning behind individuals' criminal acts, yet moral disengagement has become increasingly more prevalent in understanding everyday situations. Moral disengagement has been observed in individual's cognitive processes in relation to the consumption of meat (Graça et al., 2015), analysed in relation to industries whose productions are harmful to human health and how moral consequences are used to eliminate these restraints (White et al., 2009), and sport (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2010) with doping and behaviours that occur during participation, showing that these theories can be applied to non-offending behaviours and acts.

A lack of comparison with justifications has been highlighted by Maruna and Copes (2005) and also argued how good people not making excuses is unsubstantiated and that theories of neutralisation are universally applicable when there are contradictions in an individual's actions and their beliefs. They also highlighted that justifying an act prior to committing an offence is not determined and is a debate due to this requiring prospective information. Therefore, they hypothesise that offenders may have an underlying belief system that means they are more likely to utilise neutralisations highlighting how an offending narrative may be different from a non-offending narrative.

Maruna and Copes (2005) also argue that neutralisations should be centred more so on persistence and desistance from offending behaviour. This has been identified in work by Maruna (2001) who revealed the importance narrative theories have on offenders' desisting from crime. Derived from work on the significance of the self and identity by McAdams (1993), Maruna (2001) established that the construction of an alternative narrative identity, which encompasses the previous offences of the individual, can desist offenders from criminality. Compelling differences between desisting and persisting offenders were revealed in a comparative study between the two samples despite similar personality traits.

Offenders who persisted in criminality conveyed what Maruna (2001, 2004) described as 'condemnation scripts', these individuals presented a life script though which they had faced blocked opportunities, and life was a black hostile experience personifying a sense of hopelessness, their accounts were encompassed in negativity. By contrast, those offenders

with positive self-narratives presented a 'redemption script', here the offenders made sense of their previous criminality by perceiving it as a consequence of a social or personal disadvantage that triggered their step into a criminal lifestyle. Yet here, offenders became tired of the vicious circle of crime and imprisonment and chose to turn their lives around, typically with an outside influence, and reconstruct their sense of self. Their reconstructed sense of self intended to 'redeem' the wrong they had done, and as a consequence of this, they reconstructed their perceptions of their past, present and future through a new pro-social identity (Maruna, 2001). This reveals different narrative accounts in the examination of life stories of offenders and non-offenders yet there is a lack of clarity in the essence of these narratives.

The constructing of a reformed narrative account that results in a change in self-identity and desistance from offending has been identified in several studies. One such study highlights the validity of this approach and integrates a narrative framework to understand criminality is linked to addiction and the reforming of addicts (Polkinghorne, 2004). White and Epston (1990), based on Giddens' (1991) narrative concepts, assume that rehabilitation can be facilitated using narrative therapy. As such that individuals' life stories are rewritten, with the formation of a new self-identity as a non-addict encompassing positive life experiences. Their history as an addict becomes an externalised past narrative inclusive of their problematic pasts and reasoning or causation for becoming an addict.

Although the reasoning or causations for an addiction varies between individuals, a narrative identity is adopted through a genre that encompasses the individual's own life story. The individual takes the part of a character within this, positively rewriting their self-identity and experiences to facilitate recovery. Stories are then psychologically retold making positive of negative events, reforming the self. This is a finding similarly echoed by McAdams' (2001) key theme of redemption sequences identified within life stories and also supported by Biernacki (1986) and Denzin (1987).

Justifications and neutralisations reveal how individuals, particularly offenders, make sense of their self-identity and their actions and how the narrative approach embodies change in understanding the self. Narratives of the offenders are shown to encase differences, which, although they have the ability to reconstruct these narratives, little is known about how these differ in relation to a non-offending sample.



### **2.6.3 The Use of Narratives in Offending Action**

Further distinctions have been revealed in the narratives of offenders and non-offenders and its fruitfulness in relation to the study of offenders. Agnew (2006) argued that a crucial aspect of comprehending offending behaviour could be understood by utilising a storyline approach. Finding that offenders explained their reasons for offending by the means of, and in the format of a story, storylines are a “temporally limited, interrelated set of events and conditions that increases the likelihood that individuals will engage in a crime” (Agnew, 2006, p. 121). These encompass both experienced and perceived circumstances. Contrasting with criminality being an event the immediate result of “background” or “situational” factors. This highlights how situational factors within the life story itself, before an offence takes place, appeared to have an effect on offending behaviour in such that the criminal behaviour is embedded within the life story and not a separate narrative account.

In contrast, although centred on the construction of stories, Presser (2004) posited that individuals do not presently have a story, instead, they construct a story in a specific context to withstand social problem labels in a study of the construction of ‘the self’ during research interviews with male violent offenders. This revealed offenders used the interview to exclude themselves from the label of ‘violent offenders’ by constructing such a story.

Presser (2004) also suggested that narratives and identities were continually changing and adapting, because of social and environmental influences. Presser (2008) found that the interview itself played a vital role, being an event that shaped the narratives themselves, which were influenced by the interaction of her role as a researcher and a protagonist. A variation of narrative themes was also identified, in support of Maruna (2004) elucidating narrative accounts being used as a reformative procedure, ‘reform’ was a significant finding. Here, the offender primarily separates from criminality through the formation of a new narrative account, with the accountability of their actions being placed on external influences such as deprivation, intoxicants or boredom. This means of justifying their actions is also mirrored by Skyes and Matza (1957) and Bandura (1999). Offenders here had already commenced the reform process with them condemning their former self.

A further narrative theme that emerged was that of ‘stability’, in which the offending behaviour was described as an instance of being momentarily ‘out of character’ for the offender. In the offenders’ minds, this negated the need to reform as they believed that the

offending act was a glitch in their otherwise normal self such as an instance of ‘having to maintain masculinity’. Minimisation of the seriousness of the act was also used by those who portrayed the ‘stability’ narrative theme by use of ‘justifications’.

A fundamental narrative theme identified was that of ‘the heroic struggle’, as also revealed within the Narrative Action System roles (Canter & Youngs, 2009). A significant feature in predominately all of the offender narratives, the individual portrays a ‘heroic man’ in a state of perpetual struggle against internal and external forces.

Despite Presser (2004, 2008) considering the offenders’ whole life narratives, the study was predominantly concentrated on and informed by, the offending behaviour and subsequent interview process, not the offenders’ life trajectory as a whole. It was also implied that the interview process itself affected the narrative accounts provided by the offenders, therefore, a full life narrative account was not gleaned, nor was this representative of the actual life account.

Research in support of the narrative approach has been found across many elements of crime. Stories related to alcohol consumption were found to be key in understanding drinking among adolescents (Tutenges & Sandberg, 2013). Copes et al. (2008) revealed street offenders distance themselves from labels of crack use through the construction of a new self-identity. Fleetwood (2015) used the narrative approach to understand how female drug traffickers rationalised lawbreaking for drug dealing. Sandberg (2008) revealed three different trajectories drug dealers used to rationalise their involvement in drug dealing. Sandberg (2016) again highlighted the importance of stories in understanding crime and criminal behaviour in interviews with imprisoned drug dealers revealing three forms of narratives.

In violent offences, the narrative approach has been utilised to understand the relationship between drugs and incarcerated carjackers which revealed three narrative identities as a contributing factor in drug-related violence (Copes et al., 2015). Four narrative identities were revealed in the stories of violence related to drug supply by Sandberg et al. (2015). Brookman et al. (2011) explored narratives of incidents of street violence provided by convicted violent offenders, and Brookman (2015) discussed the shifting narratives of violent offenders.

Narrative studies into white-collar offenders revealed that they draw on gendered themes to support their actions with cultural expectations of both masculinity and femininity (Klenowski et al., 2011). Presser (2012), studied the storied nature of mass murder which revealed a narrative identity central to violence and supported that a narrative approach can explain the specifics of crime. Narrative themes have also been revealed in the study of terrorism as Sandberg, (2013) suggests that narrative and crime are closely connected and studying them enables you to get to the core of the complex causes of crime. Further studies revealed individuals equipped themselves with sophisticated counter-narratives that impaired the incentives of terrorist activity (Joosse et al. 2015). This highlights the fruitfulness of the narrative approach in the study of offending behaviour.

## **2.7 The Narrative Action System (NAS)**

One of the most fundamental and recent applications of a narrative framework is the Narrative Action System (NAS), which recognised issues with previous theories in explaining offending behaviour and also recognised the fruitfulness of narrative psychology (Canter & Youngs, 2009). The NAS enhances the understanding of offending behaviour by providing a narrative framework for differentiation. As previously highlighted, every story has an overall theme, or plot, that opens a window to its contents. Frye's (1957) theory of myths suggested there to be four archetypal mythoi, otherwise known as fundamental plots to which narratives are constructed by: *Comedy*, *Romance*, *Tragedy* and *Irony*. This framework is dynamic, structured in a circular dimension, encompassing movement between the mythoi, a key feature in narrative psychology. Despite movement between the mythoi happening, a dominant genre or plot will be seen giving narrative accounts a limited number of dominant plots that reveal similarities and differences.

The *Comedy* mythoi depicts a predominantly optimistic protagonist who in their life story, strives for happiness, love and stability in their relations with others. Similarly, in an optimistic theme, the characters within this mythoi are typically unburdened by guilt and anxiety. The character in the *Romance* mythoi portrays a victorious adventurer whose successful life story centres on the overcoming of adversity and the mastering of challenges. In contrast, the pessimistic and uncertain characters in the *Tragedy* mythoi evade difficulties in their life story, combining themes of both happiness and sadness, pain and pleasure. Lastly,

a typically pitiful character epitomises the *Irony (Satire)* mythoi who endeavours to understand life's inconsistencies and avert chaotic life situations or promote order in these.

Variations on Frye's (1957) dominant plots of narratives have since been proposed. Murray (1985) identified the mythoi not just in narrative texts but in everyday life and relates the *Romance* myth with success, in which there is victorious achievement by a hero who experiences adventures in conquering evil. *Comedy* centres on the success of a man through harmonising conflicting forces, such as a wedding. *Irony*, as described by Murray (1985), is fundamentally about a protagonist who is imprisoned in the world to show how dreams imposed on the world are inadequate. And in *Tragedy*, the hero is defeated and the inevitable force of fate is vindicated. Booker (2004) proposed there to be seven dominant plots in storytelling, stemming from Frye and the dominant plots recognised by Booker (2004) and Murray (1985), likened to genres to date. Examples of such genres are comedy, romance, adventure, action, tragedy and thriller, which provide an overarching theme to the individual's life story and form a basis for the construction of the self.

Canter (1994) posits that offenders draw on finite narrative themes, the four dominant plots of *Comedy*, *Romance*, *Tragedy* and *Irony* were drawn on in the initial application of the NAS (see Canter & Youngs, 2009) which integrated the narrative approach alongside an action system mode and Canter's (2012) victim role framework. In the action system mode, consideration is given to the behaviour of individuals and objects in reaction to their surroundings (Parsons & Shils, 1951). The offender's interaction with a victim as either a person, vehicle or object, forms the basis of the victim role framework which allows significant understanding of the offender's perception of the world and the victim to be uncovered (Canter & Youngs, 2013). Thematic analysis revealed four narrative roles: the Revenger's Conservative Tragedy, Professional's Adaptive Adventure, Hero's Expressive Quest, and Victim's Integrative Irony.

The *Revenger's Conservative Tragedy* narrative is a story of an individual who has been wronged and deprived, and it is their fate to retaliate and avenge this to address the suffering, which is presented in the way in which they commit their crime. The victim is used as a vehicle, playing a symbolic target against which, the offender can exact his revenge.

The *Professionals Adaptive Adventure* narrative is one through which life is seen as an opportunity for mastering the environment and in it, there are effective interactions through

which the character will gain satisfaction and acquire tangible rewards. This interlinks with McAdams (1993) agency themes with the focus of offenders being centred solely on the achievement of objectives.

The *Hero's Expressive Quest* narrative centres on conquering an adverse situation for a grander purpose. Here the heroic individual is on a righteous mission imposing their beliefs on the world. The Hero displays a strong sense of bravado, masculinity, and success to prove themselves and achieve their objectives.

The *Victims Integrative Irony* narrative centres on an individual who is weak, alienated from others, and nothing in the world seems to make sense to them. Individuals within this narrative theme exhibit confusion and impotence, deeming life as meaningless with little hope. The victim is seen as a person or fellow character within the narrative, with the offender desperately seeking some kind of intimacy with the victim in a distorted attempt to address his sense of emptiness. The four narrative roles identified have revealed narrative differences in many criminal offence types such as homicide, rape, burglary, and robbery.

### **2.7.1 An Integrative Narrative Framework**

The overarching aim of personality psychology is to provide such an integrative framework for understanding the whole individual yet is distinctly lacking, with there being a “reluctance to offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the whole person” (McAdams & Pals, 2006, p. 204). The NAS provides an integrative framework for understanding criminality by the application of roles to different offences, yet this framework, or the themes underpinning it, has yet to be applied to non-offenders revealing if it can be as useful in understanding behaviour in non-offenders and revealing how their narratives are distinct.

McAdams (1993) posits that agency and communion are primary psychological themes that underpin differences in human function and organise personal myths. These themes distinguish the motivational trends individuals strive for within their life stories and can differentiate the internal disposition of individuals. These interpersonal tendencies are regularly cited as fundamental aspects of interpersonal personality, such as dominance/submission and love/hate (Leary, 1957), control and openness/inclusion (Dancer & Woods, 2006; Schutz, 1992), strivings for superiority and power and strivings for contact and intimacy (Herman, 1996). Youngs and Canter (2011, 2012) describe these variations as

two psychological constructs of potency and intimacy adapted to understand offenders' narratives and behaviours.

*Intimacy*, instead of love and togetherness, was understood as 'the significance of the victim to the offender', reflecting an interpersonal transaction between them that attains the offenders' objectives. A role high in intimacy would reflect an explicit desire to affect the victim. *Potency*, in contrast, referred to as 'the imposing of the offender's will' signifies an approach to criminal behaviour in which the offender took charge, with the focus on mastering the environment to achieve their aims, similarly identified with McAdams' (1993) communion themes.

To measure such themes in an offender's narrative, Youngs and Canter (2012, p. 6) identified three components to a narrative offence role: "(1.) The offender's interpretation of the event and his or her actions within that event, (2.) The offender's self-awareness or identity in the interpersonal crime event, and (3.) The emotional and other experiential qualities of the event for the offender", otherwise known as cognitive interpretations, affective components, and self-awareness.

### **2.7.1.1 Cognitive Interpretations**

Within the offending experience, the psychological processes within the cognitive interpretation centre on the way the offender constructs interpretations about the offence and their actions within it. In Maruna and Copes' (2005) extensive research on criminal thinking styles, it is outlined how the importance of such research in providing a rich source of knowledge about how offenders interpret their involvement in criminality and how this theory of neutralisation can be used outside criminality to interpret the accounts people give for their actions. Several neutralisation techniques offenders use to justify their offending behaviour are proposed by Sykes and Matza (1957) who posit that these techniques are used to self-justify acts that conflict with a person's moral beliefs and different rationalisations can reflect different criminal thinking styles. In support, Bandura's (1990) strategies for 'moral disengagement' have aided in the understanding of non-offenders (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2010; Graça et al., 2015; White et al., 2009) highlighting how a distinction can be made in both offenders and non-offenders.

Canter and Youngs (2012) proposed that intimacy and potency could differentiate the neutralisations to fit within the different narrative roles by how offenders neutralised their offending behaviour. Cognitions that were less focused on the impact, dismissing or minimising the harm to the victim (e.g., Sykes & Matza, 1957) denial of the victim and Bandura's (1990) assuming the role of the victim oneself were found to have low intimacy. In high intimacy roles, the focus is on the impact of the victim and offending will not be justified by minimising the harm but will take the form of focusing on the offender's objectives. Potency can also be differentiated by the type of justification method implemented. Canter and Youngs (2012) hypothesised that roles low in potency would attribute responsibility for the situation and action to others. For example, in Sykes and Matza's (1957) denial of responsibility, high potency roles reflect the offender taking responsibility for his actions and evaluating them.

### **2.7.1.2 Affective Components**

Emotions have been found to be underpinned by the combination of arousal/pleasure, and non-arousal/displeasure (Russell, 1997). These generated four classes of mood: Elation (High Arousal, High Pleasure), Distress (High Arousal, High Displeasure), Depression (Low Arousal, High Displeasure), and Calm (Low Arousal, High Pleasure). Despite other models of emotion existing (Bradley et al., 1992; Watson & Tellegen, 1985), Canter and Ioannou (2004) demonstrated that criminals' emotional experiences during crimes were supported by the distinction of pleasure/arousal and identified Russell's (1997) four distinct modes of emotion, showing support for this framework of emotions. Russell's (1997) circumplex model has been further substantiated by aligning with narrative roles in both offenders and non-offenders (Hunt, 2020; Ioannou et al., 2016), highlighting its value as a framework for understanding emotion alongside offending behaviour.

Youngs and Canter (2012) found that intimacy reflected the pleasure/displeasure element of emotions, with higher levels of intimacy being associated with greater displeasure derived from the offending. However, this differed in the context of intimacy for a greater good, such as recognition, in which the offending experience would be more pleasurable. Arousal is associated with potency. The lower levels of arousal within a crime, associated with higher levels of criminal potency, is where the offender is solely imposing his will. The low levels of potency show the offender as not in control, and the offending would have an increased aroused emotional state.

### 2.7.1.3 Self-Awareness

Self-identity was a key aspect within narrative roles with the premise that offending behaviour could be classified as a form of implicit or explicit interpersonal transaction. Canter (1994) found that a salient feature of an offender's identity could be revealed by their self-awareness in relation to the victim, or target, of their actions. McAdams' (1993) non-criminological work on imagoes is a key point for identity which he defines as: "*the characters that dominate our life stories . . . a personified and idealised concept of the self*" (p. 124). McAdams (1993) organises the roles in relation to the central themes of high/low agency and high/low communion.

Youngs and Canter (2012) found that narrative roles could encapsulate several of these character roles within offenders' narratives. The agentic imagoes of the *Warrior* (being in battle), the *Traveller* (overcoming obstacles), and the *Maker* (being productive), are all aspects of self-awareness that have the common themes of strength and dominance which contribute to criminal roles with high potency. The roles all suggest a common theme of dominance where the offender views themselves as stronger than the victim. In contrast to this, the imagoes of the *Escapist* (a sense of disconnectedness), and the *Survivor* (feelings of being put on and having no choice), are reflective of a sense of intimacy with self-awareness. They depict a role in which the offender seems weaker than his or her victim and the relevance of feelings and social distance/closeness is a dominant aspect.

Self-awareness is also related to the significance of others. A distinction can be made between others being significant in high intimacy roles and non-significant in low intimacy roles. The combinations of these psychological constructs underpin the basis of the narrative roles that offenders adopt during an offence. McAdams (1988) found imagoes to be the "*...most revealing of the secrets for human identity...*" (pg. 178). McAdams (1988) argues that the imagoes are being crafted by the protagonist to play roles in specific stories which can psychologically distinguish an individual's identity and motives.

The development of an integrated model of narrative offence roles was fruitful in its kind and a new approach to exploring criminality revealing and differentiating narrative themes that have the potential to drive and shape an individual's offending action inclusive of psychological components within. Nonetheless, these accounts that enable an understanding of the processes an offender adopts within an offence through the use of narrative roles does



not explore how these themes fit into the individual's life story as a whole and why particular themes are adopted highlighting a gap within the approach to comprehending offending behaviour.

### **2.7.2 Narrative Action System Research**

Research has found support for the NAS across numerous crime types in robbery, arson, stalking, rape, and serial homicide (see Canter & Youngs, 2009; Youngs & Canter, 2012). In more recent studies, the four narrative themes that relate to the NAS model were revealed in contract killers (Yaneva et al, 2018). The four narrative themes were also revealed in mentally disordered offenders (Spruin et al., 2014) with key differences revealed in relation to the susceptibility of the offenders' mental disorder across the four narrative themes. These four narrative themes were also revealed to be consistent across offenders with personality disorders and psychopathy (Goodlad et al., 2018).

In first time young offenders utilising the narrative framework, Ioannou et al. (2018) revealed three of the four narrative themes: Calm Professional, Elated Hero, and a combined theme of Distressed Revenger and Depressed Victim. Likewise, in a study on female offenders, Ciesla et al. (2019) revealed two of the four themes with Avenging Angel and Choiceless Victim with most female offenders aligning with the Victim narrative role. In non-offenders, Hunt (2020) revealed the four narrative roles in studies on missing children. This highlights that although research does typically find the four narrative themes to be universally applicable, some research across the NAS has revealed differences within the four themes across studies of offenders.

### **2.8 The Life Story of an Offender: The Life as a Film Procedure**

The four narrative themes have proved fruitful in understanding the roles adopted within an offence, however, Canter (1994) posits that offenders live their lives by distorted accounts of non-offenders narratives. Therefore to understand the dynamic storyline that offenders live by, Canter and Youngs (2015) developed the Life as a Film (LAAF) procedure which stems from the core components of narrative psychology outlined in this chapter (Bandura's (1990) neutralisations; Maruna (2001, 2004) in desistance; McAdams (1993) in imagoes; and Sykes

and Matza's (1957) justifications fall within these), and McAdams (1993) autobiographical life narrative accounts.

The LAAF framework is an innovative projective technique, aimed at generating meaningful and psychologically rich material from the participants' understanding of themselves, by how they tell stories about their lives and primarily, how they depict their life as if it were a film. The LAAF procedure focuses specifically on an individual's life narratives, as a film-like structure, to interpret the psychological components and to obtain implicit and explicit aspects of self-identity and relationships to others as well as perceived agency and future orientation within a dynamic storyline that the narratives disclose.

Canter and Youngs (2015) identified the four narrative roles of the Revenger, Hero, Victim and Professional that were previously identified in offending actions. Therefore, it can be assumed that these four narrative roles reflect a life narrative account and the role adopted during an offending action is just a distillation of this. Given that offenders are said to draw on finite narrative themes, distorted versions of non-offenders' narratives (Canter, 1994), it could then be inferred that these four roles can also be identified within non-offenders in the stories that they live by. This study lacked thematic analysis of the structure and components of the LAAF variables so key themes were not identified, but it aided in what formulates an offender's life narrative account giving key insights. It is just not now known how these differ in relation to the LAAF and the NAS themes.

In questioning whether offenders' narratives, in comparison to non-offenders, are distinctive in the self-identity and agency processes that facilitate offending, Youngs et al. (2014) applied the LAAF procedure to both offenders and non-offenders to explore the offenders' life narrative accounts. Significant differences were found, distinct from the narratives of the incarcerated offenders. They identified four features that capture the essence of how the narratives of offenders appeared to be distinct with a level of unresolved dissonance in such the events described conflicted with the stories told. The four ways relate to a central focus on criminality, a generally negative undertone, a concern with materialistic matters and the significant, yet problematic nature of relations with others.

This highlights how the LAAF procedure has the ability to elicit a narrative account from both an offending and non-offending sample. It also reveals that within an offending sample the four narrative roles of the Victim, Professional, Revenger and Hero are present. This

leads to the question of whether or not these four roles are in fact a distillation of a full life narrative theme that can differentiate the narrative accounts. Canter (1994) posited that offenders live by the same narrative account as a non-offender, it is just constructed wrongly making it distinctive to a non-offenders' narrative. This reveals a research gap within this area as it is not known what life narratives a non-offending sample adopt and whether or not these four NAS themes are also present within a non-offending sample aiding in the understanding of how offenders may distort their narratives.

## **2.9 Criticisms of the Narrative Approach**

Despite its benefits on understanding individuals' identities, criticisms of the approach have emerged in narrative psychology. The overarching criticism is the value and ability of the narrative approach to be a more valid approach in understanding human identity and criminal behaviour over other approaches (Strawson, 2004; Ward, 2011).

Challenges have emerged on how reliable internal constructs such as narratives can be accessed by researchers. The stories that are told by individuals are not necessarily the inner self-narrative that they hold, as such the verbatim account provided may not solely be the narrative the individual holds (Maruna & Liem, 2020). Such criticisms have been considered by McAdams (1993) who considers that the stories people tell may be to impress the researcher or certain details are held back but the psychological structure to the life trajectory they tell cannot be invented during an interview process and is evolved gradually through the life course of the individual embedding their life with purpose and meaning. This then makes narrative psychology comparable with other theories within social sciences and studies of criminal behaviour.

The challenge then with narrative research is the most appropriate and fruitful method for eliciting the psychological constructs of the narrative from an individual. More recent research has focused on a semi-structured interview approach like the LAAF protocol (Canter & Youngs, 2015). Research has found however that the LAAF is most significant when used alongside a Life History Calendar because it mitigates the shortfalls in both approaches and together they enable a greater understanding of an individual and enhance the data (Kang et al., 2017) and singularly some core contexts could be missed. A semi-structured approach has also been criticised and narratives being obtained in situ to avoid losing context and meaning and being compared with other approaches such as observing individuals in their

environments (Kirkwood, 2016). Further criticism, despite the approach used, narrative research elicits an extensive data set which can be difficult to record and analyse and the methodology used to code and interpret such rich data can bring challenges such as losing meaning and value (Sandberg, 2016).

Another key concern in the study of narratives is the ever-dynamic nature. Life events faced by an individual result in changes in the narrative account meaning that findings from narrative research are too short-lived to be fruitful (Maruna & Liem, 2020; Strawson, 2004; Ward, 2011). Despite this criticism, research has found the same themes of the NAS across various crime types (Canter & Youngs, 2009; Ciesla et al. 2019; Goodlad et al., 2018; Ioannou et al. 2018; Spruin et al., 2014; Yaneva et al, 2018; Youngs & Canter, 2012) highlighting, although there is a dynamic nature to narratives, the same underlying concepts in an individual remain the same.

Issues have been raised in consideration with the dynamic nature of narratives in relation to individuals constantly evolving and changing then this limits the psychological constructs drawn from the study (Maruna & Liem, 2020). Issues have also arisen in how fruitful the study of narratives are in examining offence behaviour post offence and desistance from offending. The psychological constructs that were employed by the individual at the time of the offence are not necessarily the same psychological constructs that are used post offence due to this evolving nature and the reasoning for desistance from offending articulated by an individual are not necessarily the rationalisation for them desisting (Doekhie & Van Ginneken 2019; Sandberg, 2015). To counteract such issues in the stability of narratives over time to ensure the dynamic nature is mitigated, research (Brookman, 2015; Presser, 2004) recommends multiple interviews via different researchers to ensure the core meanings of narratives are captured over time and uncover the core psychological constructs. This also detracts from interview influencers on the narrative account.

Issues in narrative psychology have also emerged in the interpretation of the narrative by the researcher. Culture has been found to impact narrative meaning (McAdams, 1995) and Presser (2009) highlighted that narratives can be shaped from the environment in which they are taken such implications can restrict the narrative account elicited and detract from the authenticity of the narrative accounts relayed. The interviewee and interviewer relationship has also been scrutinised in which the interviewer can influence the narrative by leading the narrative account and contributing to the story (Presser & Sandberg, 2005).

From an offending capacity, one of the main criticisms stems from ambiguity in the narrative accounts provided by offenders and how accurate their accounts are (Pemberton, Mulder & Aarten, 2019; Sampson & Laub, 1993). As such, the narrative accounts people give to justify their offending actions are not reliable explanations. Such criticism has been argued by researchers (McAdams, 2001; Presser & Sandberg, 2015) to be the sole purpose for analysing stories of offenders themselves. The hidden underlying constructs, whether they are fact or fiction, reveal a key component of their self-identity. Such stories may not be factually accurate or scientific claims, yet they enable key constructs of the individuals to be revealed. As such, narratives alone cannot cause or explain offending behaviour but alongside other factors in an integrative framework, can help deepen the understanding of patterns and behaviour (Maruna & Liem, 2020).

## **2.10 Chapter Summary**

The narrative approach has proved a fruitful method to aid in the understanding of human behaviour, and within criminality, with the identification of four roles adopted by offenders within criminal action (Canter & Youngs 2009). However, there is a lack of validation of the narrative roles offenders adopt in an offending action with no understanding of how these roles stem from their overall life story and are distorted versions of a non-offending life narrative. To address this and understand what narratives the general population hold, a model for differentiation of narrative themes in the life story of a non-offending sample is proposed incorporating an integrative framework for personality differences. This is an elaboration of the four narrative themes proposed by Youngs and Canter (2012) to establish their prevalence in a non-offending sample. Secondly, criminality is assessed by comparing offenders' vs non-offenders' narratives to establish how these narratives differ and establish if any crime supporting cognitive patterns are embedded within these which will uncover how the groups differ.

Narrative roles within criminal action comprise of intimacy and potency with psychological components of self-awareness, cognitive interpretations, and affective components. It is proposed that the four narrative themes will be present within the thematic structure of the life narratives of a non-offending sample and that there will be some degree of these themes of intimacy and potency within the life narrative accounts. It is further proposed that the individual's self-descriptions will corroborate their life narrative. Despite McAdams' (1993)

imagoes highlighting differences in the roles individuals adopt, these roles do not relate to offenders' narratives and are also confined solely to differences in agentic and communal themes. With regard to these narrative accounts, a further proposal is that the narrative accounts of the non-offending sample will be consistent in relation to demographic differences as found by Fivush (2003) rather than with key differences as identified by McAdams (1993).

With regard to the four narrative themes, questions have arisen on the lack of an integrative approach to understanding an individual's behaviour encasing the three levels of personality (McAdams, 1995; McAdams & Pals, 2005) which also incorporates a narrative approach. It is proposed that within any narrative themes revealed by the study, there will be different personality traits related to different narrative roles that support the underlying themes of the narrative.

In relation to the narratives of an offender, it is argued that the narratives of those who have committed an offence will differ to those that have not as hypothesised by Canter (1994) and that those with negative life narratives will be more likely to be prone to criminality through crime supporting cognitive patterns than those that have not as supported by Maruna (2001, 2004).

Therefore, this would enable a greater understanding of the narrative themes a non-offender adopts and how criminality, if it is, can be embedded within an individual's life story through crime-supporting cognitive patterns, allowing a differentiation between individuals and how an individual can turn to criminality through narrative distortion. It has already been argued that there is a lack of an integrative approach for understanding human behaviour (McAdams & Pals, 2006). Significant research has been undertaken on the roles offenders adopt and how they are distinct (Canter & Youngs, 2009; Ciesla et al., 2019; Goodlad et al., 2018; Ioannou et al., 2018; Spruin et al., 2014; Yaneva et al., 2018; Youngs & Canter, 2012), and the roles have shown prevalence within life narrative accounts (Canter & Youngs, 2015), yet it is still unknown how the themes of these roles fit within a non-offending sample.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims to describe the chosen research methodology to answer the research questions of this study. As previously outlined, narrative theories have proved fruitful tools for discerning the construction of self-identity life stories that provide individuals' lives with a sense of purpose (Bruner, 1986; McAdams, 1993, 1996; Presser, 2009). As such, narrative research enables the researcher with a means to understand how individuals make sense of the world and themselves. To investigate what life narratives the general population hold, this research used a life story narrative methodology. However, as McAdams (1995) suggests, there are three levels to personality: dispositional traits, personal concerns, and life stories. This study also utilised personality measures. This gave the study a multiple method approach which has been found by Roberts et al. (2006) to give a more complete understanding of the subjects. This was done using the LAAF framework alongside the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control (Nowicki & Duke, 1974), the Big Five Inventory (John, Donahue & Kentle, 1991; John, Naumann & Soto, 2008), demographic information, and the Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (Walters, 1990) to give a full understanding of the narratives they live by and uncover the three levels of personality within the sample. This chapter will outline why the research methodology was chosen, the participant sample, the procedure undertaken, the data tools used, and the data analysis. It will also highlight ethical issues in relation to the research.

#### **3.1.1 Why Use a Narrative Approach?**

This study will adopt a narrative life story methodology stemming from work on life stories by McAdams (1993, 1996, 2001, 2012), initially by Bruner (1986), which provided a methodology for gathering narrative accounts of autobiographical life stories and also uncovered key psychological components within the narratives. The life story model has become a key research method within narrative psychology and has more recently been utilised within criminal behaviour across various crime types (Brookman, 2015; Brookman et al., 2011; Copes et al., 2008, 2015; Fleetwood, 2015; Joosse et al., 2015; Klenowski et al., 2011; Maruna, 2001, 2004; Presser, 2012; Sandberg, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2016; Sandberg et al., 2015; Tutenges & Sandberg, 2013).

A narrative methodology allows the stories told by individuals to become the centre and subject of the study, capturing the key components and rich accounts within these stories to aid understanding in how individuals make sense of their lives. This approach is favoured in contrast to a quantitative approach which is inadequate for recording such meaning and complexity portrayed within a story (Crossley, 2003). Its fruitfulness has vastly become a dominant area of personality psychology and the meaning and psychological constructs within the stories can be embodied by a sufficient coding method. This rich qualitative data can be transcribed and turned into quantifiable data that is easier to analyse and interpret without destroying the richness and psychological constructs embedded within the narrative accounts and verbatim narrative accounts can support the findings. (Crossley, 2003; McAdams, 1993; Presser, 2009).

The use of a narrative approach within criminality identified roles within criminal action by Youngs and Canter (2012) and such roles have been significantly applied to different criminal behaviours including types of violent and acquisitive crimes (Canter & Youngs, 2009, 2015; Ciesla et al., 2019; Goodlad et al., 2018; Ioannou et al., 2018; Spruin et al., 2014; Yaneva et al., 2018; Youngs & Canter, 2012) and suggests a dominant narrative role that individuals adopt within offences that is a distillation of their life narratives. Dominant narrative roles are also posited by McAdams (1989, 1993) who proposes imagoes are a key narrative component of identity, defined as narrative personifications of the characters that we play in everyday life. These are crafted aspects of the self that dominate the plot within the story and they are a way in which an individual assigns meaning to themselves and their activities through a role, both consciously and unconsciously. McAdams (1993) posits that individuals have a main imago with which they identify but with access to several varying imagoes, yet this lacks a clear distinct underpinning of roles with too much diversity. Given that the narrative approach has proved fruitful in identifying narrative roles in criminal action, and this research aims to identify narrative themes, then this methodology approach is the most appropriate and chosen method.

However, McAdams (1995) proposes that individuals' personality is comprised of three levels. This research aims to examine the life narratives, said to be the third level to personality, and therefore a multiple approach including personality traits and theories is also included to deepen the understanding and underlying constructs of individuals' personality and produce a more integrative framework. Previous researchers have highlighted that



narratives alone cannot explain offending behaviour but prove fruitful alongside other research areas, and an integrative framework can help deepen the understanding of patterns and behaviour (Maruna & Liem, 2020).

This is the first use of the LAAF alongside personality measures which will produce a more substantive narrative account and understanding of the stories the general population live by. The use of a multiple methods approach was said to provide a more complete understanding and complement findings rather than hinder and overlap findings and is a favoured approach within personality psychology (Roberts et al., 2006).

### **3.2 Epistemological Position**

The use of narratives has given an understanding of how individuals shape their lives and provide them with coherence, meaning an abundance of knowledge can be gleaned from narrative psychology. McAdams (1993) posits that individuals in modern society organise and provide their lives with a sense of purpose by constructing internalised evolving self-stories. Thus, their identity becomes a story with a plot, scenes, characters, and a theme. The self is said to be constructed by narratives through forms of social interaction and/or cultural frameworks. A link between the self and memory uses the relationship between language and social interaction, which promotes the construction of narratives (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). Social constructionism can be defined as a perspective that believes that a great deal of human life exists as it does due to social and interpersonal influences (Gergen, 1985, p. 265). Therefore, narrative psychology adopts a social constructionist approach.

Willig (2001, p. 7) noted that “language is an important aspect of socially constructed knowledge. The same phenomenon or event can be described in different ways, giving rise to different ways of perceiving and understanding it, yet neither way of describing it is necessarily wrong”. Similarly, as McAdams (2006) asserted, thematic differences in the stories that encompass individuals’ life stories are the most crucial differences noted. Narrative psychology, therefore, looks at themes that emerge within individuals’ life stories and sees them as the underpinning of how those individuals view their lives and the roles that they live by.

The primary argument of this research is that the narrative approach has proven to be a perceptive tool for uncovering differences in an individual’s personality. It will therefore be a

valuable tool in exploring what the essence of the narratives are of the general population. This approach focuses on how the individuals construct their narratives, using a social constructionist approach, by the formation of their self through social influence.

Although trait-based approaches have addressed personality differences, they fail to address changes that occur in it and particularly in how different situations experienced influence personality. Essentially, they seem not to explain how personality changes over time (McAdams, 2001). Personality psychology uses a situationist approach to life stories and attempts to demonstrate that people's behaviour and experiences are guided by both internal factors (traits) and external situations (narratives). Presser (2004) also suggested that narratives and identities were continually changing and adapting as a result of social and environmental influences. Therefore, the use of narrative psychology adopts the ideology that the internalised stories that people live by hold the key to uncovering the construction of human identity, and that this is strongly influenced by the social constructionist perspectives that assert the construction of life stories is placed more explicitly in the context of every conversation and cultural discourse (Gregg, 1991). Despite criticisms that have been raised with this approach (Kirkwood, 2016; Maruna & Liem; 2020; Sandberg, 2016; Strawson, 2004; Ward, 2011) it has shown its validity across various aspects of crime and criminality and this study will endeavour to alleviate limitations associated with narratives by combining several measures.

### **3.3 Selection Process**

In an aim to select individuals who best represented the general population, a diverse group of people from different sources in the public were chosen, including participants from different socio-economic groups. To have used a restrictive group, such as a sample of solely nurses, would have prohibited a full understanding of the narratives of the general population and would not be representative of them. Data from the LAAF procedure, psychological studies and demographic information were collected for 71 participants.

The participants were enlisted via opportunity sampling of people who were available at the time of the study, met the criteria, and were willing to participate. This technique was favoured due to its ease of use despite it having weaknesses due to researchers selecting participants from their own social groups, and it was ensured that a diverse sample was selected.

Snowball sampling was also used in which participants identified who met the criteria of the study recommended others. The use of this technique was advantageous as it helped to increase participants. The advantages of these approaches were the ease of access and limited time constraints, and also enabled access to individuals that would not necessarily volunteer for such research. However, disadvantages of these approaches are the lack of guarantee on the representativeness of the sample and the issue of bias in inadvertently oversampling a particular network (McLeod, 2014).

Participants were recruited both via social media with posts outlining the aim of the study for voluntary involvement and through the researcher's local social and career networks. Some of the participants were also recruited via previous participants. It was ensured that there was no direct link between the researchers and the participants to ensure independence and alleviate any bias in the interview process.

### **3.3.1 Preparation/Protocol**

Participants were provided with an information sheet detailing the nature of the research (Appendix 7). The document informed participants of the aims of the research project and what taking part in the research would involve. This included information on the study being in relation to non-offenders, life trajectories, and personality measures, to determine life narratives to identify what may make them different to offenders. The information sheet also outlined confidentiality information and what will happen to the results.

A consent form was also provided to participants (Appendix 8). The consent form outlines that the participants had been informed of the nature and aims of the research, consented to be part of the study, consented to data being stored, they were free to withdraw at any point in the study, and could take breaks within the interview process.

Given the nature of the subject matter, participants were informed that they would be asked if they had previously committed an offence and the nature of the offence prior to taking part in the research. They were also made aware that if they did disclose committing an offence that was of concern and had not previously been reported, supervisors and/or police would be informed. All participants who participated in the research were comfortable with taking part.

### **3.4 Data Collection Procedure**

To find out what narratives the non-incarcerated participants live by, the data were collected by a team of four researchers from the International Research Centre for Investigative Psychology. These had been trained in using the LAAF protocol prior to the interviews. Initially, ethical approval was sought and after approval, the participants were selected via opportunity and snowball sampling with the researchers seeking individuals to take part. The main participant was allocated 35 interviews, with the three other participants allocated 10 interviews each to ensure a substantive amount of data was obtained.

As mentioned, a key selection criterion was that both male and female participants should be over the age of 18. This was to ensure that they were all adults and that the data collected would be comparable to an offending sample. The participants were chosen from a public environment in a variety of different domains to try to represent the general population. This was to assist in ascertaining the differences, if any, between narrative themes that were found to exist in the general population. Personality measures and demographic information were also collected for 71 participants.

Before commencement, participants were informed of what the interview would entail and provided with an information sheet (Appendix 7) and a consent form (Appendix 8) to sign. On commencement of the interviews, in order to recall narratives given by the participants and to aid data collection in the LAAF procedure, all interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. The use of audio recording was favoured over taking handwritten notes due to the fact the LAAF procedure is a semi-structured interview meaning the responses could be extensive and detailed. Therefore, an audio recording was advantageous as it enabled an accurate account of the interviews to be obtained whilst allowing the tone the stories were given in to also be recognised. The use of audio recording also enabled direct quotes to be used to support findings and, due to the number of interviews conducted, there was also a full account of every story told. Although a more favoured approach to note-taking, audio recording is reliant on the equipment working effectively, so it was vitally important to check that it was not failing to record the interview which would result in the loss of all data being obtained.

Researchers were trained in the use of the interview protocol due to it being a semi-structured approach, and they were guided in seeking engagement from the interviewees based around a

specific question-set in the LAAF procedure as a guide. This guide was followed by the researchers but when respondents strayed from the question-set, it was significant to the study they were left to continue. This approach was considered best, as several interviewers were conducting the study and it was important to acquire reliable, comparable, qualitative data. Although several different researchers have been raised as a concern in narrative research, due to inconsistencies in the interview style (Maruna & Liem, 2020; Sandberg, 2016; Strawson, 2004; Ward, 2011) this approach was limited by the semi-structured approach of the question set. Measuring narratives has frequently been discussed with open-ended interviews bringing criticism as the lack of structure means accounts are difficult to code (Powell, 2008). So, it was decided to allow the participants the freedom to express their own views, with that being a key strategy in gaining their true narratives. Researchers were also provided with prompts should eliciting the information from the participant have become strained, to ensure enough information was obtained to fulfil the narrative requirements. Interview durations were not recorded, however interviews lasted between 30-90 minutes and predominately, all narrative accounts were of significant length ( $M = 1187.14$ ,  $SD = 1221.16$ ) with words ranging from 123 to 6721.

After the LAAF procedure, the personality measure responses were recorded via individual questionnaire packs which were numbered for ease of access by participants to follow the same approach. However, this approach could have been subject to ordering effects limiting the value of the research. Questions were either read aloud to aid in participants understanding and for their ease or completed individually. All participants were given breaks at regular intervals due to the length of the questionnaire and interview procedure.

Interviews were conducted in various settings by the team of researchers, but mostly in people's work environments to ensure the safety of the researchers. Some interviews were conducted in a home setting if researchers were comfortable in doing so and the participants were known indirectly. Presser (2009) asserted that criminals' narratives are influenced by the environment in which they are obtained, therefore it was important to this study to maintain a similar environment across the participants.

### **3.5 Sample**

The primary aim of the study is to examine the life narratives of non-offenders taken from a sample of the general population, primarily to see if the four NAS themes are present. This

however encounters issues as it has the presumption that members of the population have not committed criminal offences and/or are not offenders. As can be seen in the following section, several participants within this sample have been involved in criminality with committing offences, some with previous convictions. Consequently, instead of defining the sample as non-offenders, they will be classified as non-incarcerated.

The remit of the study was the general population, therefore, an important criterion was to include both male and female participants. Despite previous use of the LAAF procedure being primarily deployed on male participants (Canter & Youngs, 2015), to gain an in-depth understanding of the narratives of non-incarcerated individuals the selection criteria encompassed both male and female participants. This enabled differentiation between the genders to be observed. Participants had to be over the age of 18 and this was to ensure that they were adults and that the data were comparable to an incarcerated sample.

From a general methodological standpoint, there is a requirement of representativeness, in such, that the sample needs to be representative of the general population with varying backgrounds not confined to a specific group within.

### 3.5.1 Gender

The figures in table 3.1 indicate a relatively homogenous split between the genders of the participants, allowing a valid comparison of their life narratives. This allows the identification of whether male and female narratives differ, and how/whether the criminal narrative themes fit within a female sample. Previous research on narratives including the NAS (Canter & Youngs 2009; Youngs & Canter, 2011, 2012) and the LAAF (Canter & Youngs 2015) centred specifically on males, not non-offending narratives. Moreover, McAdams' (1993) life stories did not identify links with criminality, therefore to avoid such issues and to be representative of the general population, a sample was selected of both males and females.

**Table 3.1**

*Gender of Sample*

Gender	Number in Sample	Percentage
Male	34	47.87%
Female	37	52.11%

### 3.5.2 Age

In terms of age, a variation of participant ages was collected. Previous research has focused around the prime ages of offending (Canter, Youngs & Carthy, 2014), yet, the present study intended to identify the narratives of all adult ages to help establish how the narratives of people who are not incarcerated differ in comparison, and if different narrative themes are closely related to different age groups. Maturation over the life span is relevant to both offenders and non-offenders (Canter & Youngs, 2009). Therefore, a diverse age range can identify if narrative differences emerge with age. The age of participants can be observed in table 3.2.

**Table 3.2**

*Age of Sample*

Age	Number in Sample	Percent	Cumulative Percent
18	2	2.8%	2.8%
19	2	2.8%	5.6%
20	2	2.8%	8.5%
21	5	7%	15.5%
23	2	2.8%	18.3%
24	5	7%	25.4%
25	2	2.8%	28.2%
26	4	5.6%	33.8%
27	5	7%	40.8%
28	2	2.8%	43.7%
29	1	1.4%	45.1%
30	2	2.8%	47.9%
31	1	1.4%	49.3%
32	1	1.4%	50.7%
34	1	1.4%	52.1%
35	1	1.4%	53.5%
38	1	1.4%	54.9%
39	3	4.2%	59.2%
40	1	1.4%	60.6%
41	4	5.6%	66.2%

43	1	1.4%	67.6%
44	2	2.8%	70.4%
45	2	2.8%	73.2%
46	2	2.8%	76.1%
47	1	1.4%	77.5%
49	1	1.4%	78.9%
50	3	4.2%	83.1%
53	1	1.4%	84.5%
54	1	1.4%	85.9%
55	1	1.4%	87.3%
56	1	1.4%	88.7%
57	1	1.4%	90.1%
58	1	1.4%	91.5%
70	1	1.4%	93%
71	1	1.4%	94.4%
74	2	2.8%	97.2%
75	2	2.8%	100%
Total	71	100%	

As can be seen from Table 3.2, the age of the sample is a vast mix of ages, ranging from 18 to 75 years old. The mean age of the sample is 37.2 years ( $SD = 15.73$  years) with the median being 32 years. Twenty (28%) in the sample were aged between 18-25 years, 32 (45%) were aged between 26-45 years, and 20 (28%) were over the age of 45.

In relation to the different genders, the mean age of the 34 male participants was 34.79 years ( $SD = 14.82$  years). Ten (29.4%) of the male sample were aged between 18-25 years, 17 (50%) were aged between 26-45 years, and 7 (20.6%) were over the age of 45. The mean age of the 37 female participants was 39.41 years ( $SD = 16.41$  years). Ten (27%) of the female sample were aged between 18-25 years, 15 (40.5%) were aged between 26-45 years, and 13 (35.1%) were over the age of 45. This gives three subsets of ages (younger, middle, and older ages) and both genders within the whole sample, to allow a comparison of different narratives with different ages to see if these differ.



### 3.5.3 Ethnicity

In terms of ethnicity of the participants, 95% of the participants described themselves as White, 3% described themselves as Black Caribbean, and 1% described themselves as Mixed Black Caribbean and White, as can be observed from table 3.3.

**Table 3.3**

*Ethnicity of Sample*

Ethnicity	Number in Sample	Percentage
White	68	95%
Black Caribbean	2	3%
Mixed Black Caribbean and White	1	1%

Ethnicities that were not fully represented in the sample were Black Africans, and Indian and Pakistani. In the 2011 Census, 86% of the population gave their ethnic origin as White, with Asian ethnicities being the second highest (7.5%) (Office for National Statistics, 2012). In terms of representation of the general population, the sample can be considered relatively homogenous, the under-representation of ethnic minorities within the sample can be a result of the researchers using opportunity samples from their social groups, already noted as a limitation (McLeod, 2014). However, McAdams (1995) posits that culture influences narratives meaning this is not necessarily influenced by ethnicity therefore this may not impact results.

### 3.5.4 Educational qualifications

The 2011 Census in England and Wales reported that 23% of the population had no qualifications. This is not represented in the present sample as can be seen in table 3.4, with only 4% having no qualifications, being significantly lower. The general population of offenders are typically representative of low or no qualifications, and as this study seeks to determine the status of non-incarcerated individuals, it therefore gives a clearer sample less likely to be representative of those like offenders (House of Commons Library, 2017).

**Table 3.4***Educational Qualifications of Sample*

Educational Level	Number in Sample	Percentage
None	3	4%
GCSE's	29	40%
College/Apprenticeship	13	18%
A/AS Levels	8	11%
Degree	10	14%
Postgraduate (Masters & PhD)	7	9%

The dominant educational level within this sample was GCSE's with 40% of the sample being educated to GCSE level, that being slightly higher than the 2011 Census with the national average being 28%. However, the Census was 7 years before this study, and the national levels could have changed since then. The successfulness of participants in the sample is evident from the higher levels of university (14%) and postgraduate (9%) educational levels they had attained and that is in line with the 2011 Census, with 27% having an educational level of a degree or above. This allows the comparison of different educations in relation to different narrative themes to identify if certain themes are more prevalent with certain education levels.

**3.5.5 Socio economic status**

As can be seen below in table 3.5, nearly half of the respondents were in an unskilled occupation (48%). The majority of the rest of the respondents were also employed in skilled and professional roles (36%) and the remainder were either unemployed, studying or retired. This is relatively in line with findings in the 2011 Census.

**Table 3.5***Socio Economic Status of Sample*

Socio-economic Status	Number in Sample	Percentage
Unskilled	34	48%
Skilled	15	21%
Professional	11	15%
Retired	4	6%
Unemployed	4	6%
Student	3	4%

**3.5.6 Relationship status**

Most of the participants reported their relationship status as single (45%), which is slightly higher than the national average in the 2011 Census at 34.6%. In the 2011 Census, 46.6% were also married, which was slightly higher than the 35% reported by participants within this study. Also in the study, 14% reported they were cohabiting and 6% reported they were divorced or separated, again differing from the Census 2011 in which 11.6% were separated or divorced. McAdams (1993) differentiates narratives by agency and communion, those who seek intimacy and love and those that seek success and achievement, the relationship status is a useful insight into the narrative themes associated with different relationship statuses, if any. Table 3.6 reveals the relationship status of the sample.

**Table 3.6***Relationship Status of Sample*

Relationship Status	Number in Sample	Percentage
Married	25	35%
Divorced/Separated	4	6%
Cohabiting	10	14%
Single	32	45%

### **3.5.7 Family background factors**

The predominant household composition while growing up of the participants was ‘living with both Mum and Dad’, with 63% reporting so. Just 6% of the participants reported being brought up with one parent, and 7% with a parent and a step-parent. One participant was brought up by a grandparent, and one in a children’s/foster home. Twenty-four of the participants reported being brought up in a household situation that varied from both parents, to one parent, step-parents, and 2 reported spending some time in a children’s home/foster home.

Over two thirds (89%) of the sample reported living with siblings (full, step and/or half) during childhood, and 11% were only children. Of those with siblings, 76% had 1-3 brothers and sisters, and 11% reported living with 4-plus siblings as a child. Past research by West and Farrington (1973) found that a boy’s risk of a criminal conviction as a juvenile was doubled if they had 4 or more siblings before reaching the age of 4, signifying that some of the participants in this study could have criminal tendencies.

Thirteen percent of the participants had parents who had criminal convictions, and 1 participant reported they were unsure. Having parents with criminal convictions increase the likelihood of a child offending, (Murray & Farrington, 2008)

### **3.5.8 Criminal background**

Criminal backgrounds were examined to help establish how narratives differed in those who had committed an offence. Sixty-five percent had spoken to the police in some context: 29% as a victim, 9% as an offender, 13% in both a victim and witness context, and 6% as a witness.

Of the 71 participants, 28% ( $n=20$ ) reported that they had previously committed a crime, these being 20% male and 8% female. Participants were given the option to disclose their crimes within the questionnaire, the results were as follows: one participant would not disclose, eight drug offences were reported, 11 declared thefts, three declared burglaries/robberies, five admitted violent offences, one admitted a sex offence, two admitted fraud offences, six admitted public order offences, and ten admitted traffic offences. It should be noted that none of the offences disclosed warranted the need for researchers to inform the police.

Of the 28% of the sample who reported they had previously committed a crime, 7% of the respondents had been convicted of a crime. Of those who disclosed being convicted of a crime, 80% were male and 20% female, with all White ethnic origin.

### **3.6 Data Collection Tools/Measures**

This section will detail all of the data collection measures utilised within the present study to obtain the life narrative accounts. This includes all relevant information in relation to each instrument and why the measure was selected. The incorporation of all these measures created an innovative technique for extracting narratives, building on the LAAF procedure to elicit a richer and more detailed aspect of personality and human identity as McAdams (1996) states that personality comes in three levels. All documents are included in the appendix.

#### **3.6.1 Life Narratives**

The data collection tools within this section of the study relate to eliciting the narrative components of the study and the components of the LAAF procedure. As mentioned previously, life narratives are a fruitful method in eliciting information on the self (McAdams, 1993, 1996, 2001; Presser, 2004, 2009).

#### **3.6.2 Life as a Film Framework (LAAF)**

The Life as a Film (LAAF) framework (Canter & Youngs, 2015) is the main technique utilised within this current study for eliciting narrative relevant data from the participants (Appendix 1). The LAAF framework is an innovative projective technique, aimed at generating meaningful and psychologically rich material from the participants understanding of themselves by how they tell stories about their lives and primarily, how they depict their life as if it were a film. The LAAF procedure focuses specifically on an individual's life narratives, as a film-like structure, to interpret the psychological components and to obtain implicit and explicit aspects of self-identity and relationships to others that the narratives disclose. The language and content participants use in doing so is analysed for key themes relating to their self-identity.

The LAAF procedure is favoured in projective techniques, as the absence of a detailed template means individuals unconsciously reveal aspects central to their life and the processes that shape the understanding of their actions. As summarised by Youngs, Canter and Carthy (2014, p.11), "The LAAF seeks to derive the psychological essence of an

individual's narrative by characterizing their life in an active, plot-driven, character-focused, dramatic format, highlighting features less immediately obvious in static, standard psychological processes". Alongside the richness of the narratives the LAAF procedure has extracted in previous studies, Canter and Youngs (2015) found four narrative roles which uncovered significant potential for future research. These themes showed that the responses individuals give to the LAAF procedure could reveal underlying psychological information in a way that linked to the dominant stories embedded in the protagonists' lives.

As it was primarily constructed for use with an offending sample the LAAF procedure is simplistic and easy to administer. The use of a film makes it less obvious that the interviewee is the main subject and it keeps them engaged in areas that will have distinct psychological significance, allowing the indication of the sorts of processes that shape an individual's understanding of his/her actions.

The extended LAAF framework was used for this study and this version of it encompasses more structure and dimensions to the film procedure, eliciting a richer and more detailed narrative account. The extended LAAF framework is split into four sections and is semi-structured, allowing similarities between participants to be analysed and to help guide the interviews. The LAAF procedure opens by asking participants for a general overview.

**If your life were to be made into a film, what type of film would it be?** This includes what would happen, the main characters, the main events, and how the participants believe the film would end.

**The Main Scene of the Film** – participants are asked what happens in the most exciting scene including its location, what is happening, who else features in this scene, and how the participant feels during it.

**How the Film opens** – when the film representation starts, they are asked what is going on and the type of person the protagonist is during that period. Participants are then asked to tell the interviewer what happens between the opening scene and the main scene in as much detail as they can.

**You in the film** – they are asked what sort of person the individual is, whom they have good and bad feelings about and the reasons why, how they are perceived by other people, any mistakes made, and how they change during the film.

The foundations for the LAAF framework stem from work by McAdams (1993) in which autobiographical accounts of life stories were found to be central to how an individual lives their life. Stories help shape identity and make sense of the world, and understanding an individual's story gives an insight into how they view the world. This detail is derived from several key areas of literature based on narratives and crime (e.g., Bandura, 1990; Canter, 1994; Canter & Youngs, 2009, 2012; Frye, 1957; Maruna, 2001; McAdams, 1993; Russell, 1997; Sandberg, 2009; Sykes & Matza, 1956).

The LAAF procedure deconstructs the criminal's narrative content into four different classes:

**1. Psychological complexity** – To interpret the richness of the narrative accounts, complexity was measured in two bases:

- Substantive complexity which measured items such as the number of distinct people mentioned, as well as the number of distinct psychological ideas, being the presence of coherent themes, and roles for characters;
- A formal basis inclusive of the number of words and the presence of contingent sequences.

**2. Remit: Implicit psychological content** – To be able to interpret the narrative based on what the individual describes within their film projections, the nature of what the individual discussed was examined. The focal content of the narratives was expressed through the mention of different scenes and events, as well as content and the genre chosen to describe the film projection. Stemming from Frye's (1957) mythoi, the tone of the narratives was explored alongside the resolution of the film being happy or sad (Hankiss, 1981). In addition, it was also necessary to check what the participant sought to achieve, within the narrative stemming from Sandberg's (2009) implicit messages in accounts of deviant activities.

**3. Explicit processes** – Psychologically active components are organised within the explicit processes section of the LAAF procedure. These include McAdams' (1993) agency and communion themes, Youngs and Canter's (2011) four roles of the Narrative Action System (Hero, Revenger, Victim and Professional), plus, themes of contamination and redemption which Maruna (2001) found in desisting and persisting offenders.

**4. Nature of agency** – This section of the LAAF procedure considers differences in how participants deal with the world. Including the latter two sets of Bandura's (1990) moral disengagement incentives for the motivations of the participants, Sykes and Matza's (1957) neutralisation techniques of avoidant and confrontational behaviours, McAdams' (1993) imagoes for the roles of the protagonist, and weak or strong self-identity stemming from Canter's (1994) victim-roles framework. There is also the significance of others, alongside hostility and empathy, and Russell's (1997) four emotional quadrants.

### **3.6.3 Demographics**

The questionnaire was concluded by a group of demographic questions (Appendix 6). These questions consisted of gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, qualifications, family, and upbringing. A diverse set of demographic questions was required as it would allow further insight into the relationship between the different narrative themes identified and the demographics behind the respondents who were likely to adopt those narratives, if any. It also enabled differentiation between elements of the participants, such as gender and age, and a comparison to an offending sample. A section on criminality also featured in the demographics given that defining the general population as non-offenders was not viable. As one cannot be guaranteed that they do not offend, a picture of the respondent's relationship with the police and criminality was asked for. This consisted of asking whether the participants had talked to the police and in what context, whether they had committed an offence and if so what, and whether they or their family, had any previous convictions.

Alongside the LAAF procedure, participants' life outcomes were assessed in which they were asked 7 questions in relation to how they lived their lives. These stemmed from Seligman's (2011) PERMA model of happiness, in which he believed that five essential elements should be in place for psychological happiness and wellbeing. Positive emotions were the first element, relating to optimism, feeling good, and viewing life in a positive perspective. Engagement was the second element, in which personal happiness was said to be able to grow through fulfilling hobbies and careers. Positive relationships were the third element, with social connections, love, and intimacy. The fourth element was Meaning that was having a purpose and meaning to life. The fifth and final element was Accomplishment, which meant having goals and a sense of ambition to achieve things (Seligman, 2011). The participants' levels of happiness in relation to life outcomes were scored using a 5-point Likert scale,



forced-choice format, similarly to the Life Narrative Questionnaires ranging from Not at all (1) to Very much (5).

### **3.7 Personality Measures**

To deepen the narrative accounts and uncover further levels of personality as stated by McAdams & Pals (2006), personality measures were also included. Self-report questionnaires allowed the identification of underlying components to the themes identified. Although self-report measures have limitations concerning their validity in that individuals do not provide honest answers and have self-criticism (Northrup, 1996), these are used to enhance and support findings, not as a sole basis for the research.

#### **3.7.1 Big Five Inventory**

The Big Five Inventory (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991; John, Naumann & Soto, 2008) (Appendix 3) is a self-report inventory designed to measure personality traits in relation to the Big Five dimensions: *Agreeableness*, *Extraversion*, *Conscientiousness*, *Neuroticism*, and *Openness to new experiences*. Measured on a continuum, in which items are not distinctly different from one another, yet the extremes are quite distinct. As the present study is aimed at uncovering what the essence of non-offenders' narratives are, combining the LAAF framework with a trait-based personality measure such as the BFI, can deepen the understanding of a narrative and its underlying components and uphold five simplistic personality psychology traits which have already proved fruitful in significant research in relation to narrative themes.

The inventory consists of 44 items with a five-point Likert scale, in which participants are asked to rate a statement based on characteristics on how much they agree or disagree with that statement in relation to themselves. Responses are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Disagree Strongly* to *Agree strongly*, and responses were scored per the scoring instructions. The BFI is derived from analyses of the natural language terms people use to describe themselves and others, in contrast of a particular theoretical perspective (John & Srivastava, 1999), making it a fruitful tool for this research as the LAAF procedure adopts a method based on similar principals. Previously studies in personality psychology have lacked a descriptive model that could be interpreted simplistically, although research stemming from Goldberg (1992) and Costa and McCrae (1992) independently, has united the five major dimensions in personality to ease the study of related personality characteristics.

The Big Five theory is based on the principle that individual differences in the five personality dimensions dictate how people think, feel, and interact with others (Forrester, Tashchian & Shore, 2016). Scoring highly on the scale of *Agreeableness* indicates an individual who is friendly and understanding, in contrast to someone scoring low who is said to be unsympathetic and rude. Organised, hardworking individuals score highly in *Conscientiousness*, in contrast, those who score low are explained to be disorganised and carefree. Unconscientious individuals are impulsive instead of considering things before making a choice or a decision, and they make the choice irrespective of this which can lead to regret. They are less goal-orientated, less driven by success, and more likely to engage in criminal behaviour (Ozer & Benet-Martinez, 2006). An individual scoring low in *Neuroticism* is described as calm and confident, whereas one rated as high in neuroticism is thought to signify a person with sensitive, nervous characteristics. An *Extroverted* individual is inclined to be sociable and gregarious, in contrast to an introverted individual who would be said to be shy and reserved, particularly in social situations. And lastly, those said to be open to experience have a degree of intellectual curiosity and be curious and creative, contrasted with those closed to new experiences who are said to be consistently cautious (Forrester, Tashchian & Shore, 2016; John, Naumann & Soto, 2008).

The BFI has shown validity in many studies, its validity, history, and usage are well documented by John, Naumann and Soto (2008). A comparison of the BFI reliability and convergent validity coefficients, alongside factor analysis, with the NEO Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) and Trait Descriptive Adjectives (TDA) showed the BFI had the highest mean of the alpha values at .84 with the TDA .82 and NEO-FFI .81. Two of the personality traits, Agreeableness and Openness were somewhat least reliable traits however the alpha value with both was highest with the BFI. The BFI was also more time-efficient and at a broad level was found to provide an integrative descriptive taxonomy for personality research.

In a British sample, internal reliabilities for the BFI range from 0.72 - .87 showing high reliability, the test-retest coefficients ranged from 0.75 – 0.80 (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Its robustness has been seen across the world (Schmitt et al., 2007) with it being highly replicable across all major cultures across the world. The internal reliabilities of the BFI scales across 56 nations were .77, .70, .78, .79, and .76 for all five traits highlighting good reliability. Alongside this, the factor structure of the BFI across all cultures was comparable

to the structure in the American structure. There was also a significant degree of congruence among personality structures (.94). Differences in personality types across offending behaviour have been studied using The Big Five revealing significant differences in offenders and non-offenders (Becerra-García, et al., 2013), which revealed a similar factor structure to the original BFI and internal reliabilities using Cronbach's alpha ranged from .82 to .71 showing good reliability.

Similar studies that compared offenders and non-offenders found high internal reliability, Dennison, Stough and Birgden's (2001) Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .95 to .86 and similarly revealed differences in personality of offenders and non-offenders revealed in previous research. Similarly, Egan, Kavanagh & Blair revealed significant differences in personality supporting the construct of the BFI. Egan and Taylor (2010) internal reliability of the BFI personality traits ranged from 0.87 to 0.76, again, supporting the validity of the measure across different samples. High school students involved in violence, theft and vandalism also had comparable internal reliability ranging from 0.84 to 0.60 for the five BFI traits, with test-retest finding similar alpha values. These studies, therefore, support the BFI's use here and make it a key theory for being able to identify how different traits may relate to the different narrative themes.

The trait-based approach has met criticism explaining personality alone (McAdams 1995; McAdams & Pals, 2006). In particular, a lack of environmental factors, McAdams (1995) that traits provide valuable information about persons and is the first level of personality and so this, combined with a narrative approach, can aid in the understanding of the personality dimensions of the narratives of the non-incarcerated sample. A narrative approach alongside the traits encompasses more depth to the understanding of an individual and a more innovative framework in understanding the personality (McAdams & Pals, 2006).

Cronbach's alphas for the 44 BFI items was .728 showing acceptable internal consistency. The Extraversion subscale consisted of 8 items ( $\alpha = .853$ ), the Agreeableness subscale consisted of 9 items ( $\alpha = .819$ ), Conscientiousness scale consisted of 9 items ( $\alpha = .791$ ), the Neuroticism subscale consisted of 8 items ( $\alpha = .834$ ), and the Openness scale consisted of 10 items ( $\alpha = .710$ ) highlighting a good reliability (Field, 2009).

### 3.7.2 The Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (PICTS) v4.0

The Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (PICTS) v4.0 (Walters, 1990) will be used to assess thinking styles and cognitive patterns of the respondents (Appendix 4). The version used will be the adapted layperson version to establish if any of the eight thinking styles presumed to play a role in criminal behaviour and general criminal thinking style can be detected in the general population, and how/if these fit into any narrative themes identified. This also includes whether this criminal thinking is proactive or reactive, all calculated on the combination of the eight thinking styles.

Stemming from Sykes and Matza's (1957) neutralisation theory which consider there to be five methods of neutralisation which offenders use to rationalise their offending behaviour, PICTS is designed to measure factors that support a criminal lifestyle, specifically an individual's cognitions in relation to attitudes, beliefs, and thinking styles. Three interrelated variables, both internal and external, are believed to influence a person's actions known as the criminal lifestyle: conditions, choice, and cognition (Walters, 1990). These thinking styles are separated into two factors, with proactive and reactive criminal thinking, stemming from Dodge's (1980) instrumental and hostile aggression.

Eight interrelated thinking styles are the foundations for this criminal lifestyle and these thinking styles concern an individual's interaction with their surroundings. *Mollification* demonstrates the justification of blame by projecting it onto external factors, e.g., family upbringing. Impulsivity is the primary feature of a *Cutoff* thinking style, viewed by the use of phrases such as 'fuck it'. An individual who seeks power and control over the external environment would score highly in *Power Orientation*. To alleviate guilt or harm, *Sentimentality* is the belief that a good deed will banish the harm inflicted on others. Avoiding negative consequences that are typical of offending behaviour, such as incarceration, is the belief-style of an individual high in *Superoptimism*, and taking shortcuts, and looking for the easy way out, is key to *Cognitive Indolence*, with these shortcuts regularly getting them into trouble. Unpredictability in relation to being easily distracted and side-tracked by environmental events, is a feature of *Discontinuity* and entitlement which manifests as having a sense of uniqueness, used to award permission to violate laws of society and the rights of others (Walters, 2001, 2002).

To assess these eight thinking styles, theorised to support a criminal lifestyle, PICTS is an 80-item self-report inventory designed to measure criminal thought processes. Each item is scored on a four-point Likert scale with responses ranging from strongly agree (4) to disagree (1). The primary PICTS is used for offenders, however, a layperson version of the PICTS was used for this study due to it being focused on the narratives of non-offenders. It also does not presume that the respondents have a prior criminal history, making it a valid tool in establishing if there is any criminal thinking present within the narratives identified, and how these fit within the different themes, adding depth to the narratives in assessing the presence of any crime-supporting criminal thinking styles within the participants' gender (Walters, 1990).

The reliability and predictive validity of PICTS is well documented and has been tested in relation to its internal consistency and test-retest stability in all traits. In relation to the internal consistency of PICTS, Cronbach's alpha coefficient on male participants ranged between .61 to .94 and .54 to .93 for female participants. Inter-correlations between items ranged between .17 to .36 for male participants and .11 to .39 for female participants (Walters 2001). Such findings are suggestive of PICTS having a moderate to high internal consistency. In relation to the test-retest stability of the PICTS measures, coefficients for both 2 and 12 weeks were conducted for both male and female participants. After two weeks the stability of both male and female participants was .70 indicating a high test-retest stability and after 12 weeks both were .50 which highlights a moderate test-retest stability (Walters 2001).

PICTS has shown validity across both offending behaviour and non-offending behaviour, it has been used in studies on recidivism in sex offenders (Walters et al., 2015), the PICTS showed good levels of internal consistency from .94 to .61 and was used alongside the Static 99R which measures sex offence recidivism to test the validity of PICTS and was fruitful in its ability to assess criminal thought processes and correlated significantly with elements of recidivism.

In studies on female offenders by Walters et al. (1998) internal consistency, concurrent validity, test-retest stability, alongside the factor structure of the PICTS showed comparability to previous research on criminal thinking in male offenders. And test-retest validity over durations of 6 months, 12 months and 24 months yielded moderate levels of internal consistency and was fruitful in predicting recidivism alongside a recidivism risk assessment and identifying criminal thought processes (Walters & Lowenkamp, 2016).

Although not fruitful in detecting recidivism in young offenders, the PICTS showed good internal reliability and construct validity with criminal thinking in studies with young offenders (Palmer & Hollin, 2004), PICTS successfully identified criminal thought processes in white-collar crime (Walter & Geyer, 2004) with internal reliabilities ranging from .78 to .64. PICTS also measured criminal thinking with good reliability  $\alpha \geq .76$  and successfully revealed criminal thinking patterns in those that had faced high levels of childhood adversity and low parental attachment (Yang & Perkins, 2020), Test-retest validity of PICTS in male offenders prior and post anger management programs also revealed a reduction in the criminal thinking across the offenders (Walters, 2009).

In examining gender differences in criminal thinking (Walters, 2001; Walters et al., 2009), moderately high internal consistency and test-retest validity was found with the PICTS thinking, validity and content scales across both male and female offenders. The layperson version has had significant findings in relation to thinking styles and crime in college students (McCoy et al., 2006) with comparable findings with those who had committed an offence to previous findings with the use of PICTS with male and female offenders. This, therefore, validates the use of PICTS in this study with its ability to identify criminal thinking across different genders.

Cronbach's alphas for the 80 PICTS items was .942 showing high internal consistency and reliability (Field, 2009). The Mo subscale consisted of eight items ( $\alpha = .777$ ), The Co subscale consisted of eight items ( $\alpha = .795$ ), The En subscale consisted of eight items ( $\alpha = .789$ ), The Po subscale consisted of eight items ( $\alpha = .727$ ), The Sn subscale consisted of eight items ( $\alpha = .648$ ), The So subscale consisted of eight items ( $\alpha = .677$ ), The Ci subscale consisted of eight items ( $\alpha = .764$ ), The Ds subscale consisted of eight items ( $\alpha = .749$ ). The Reactive subscale consisted of four items ( $\alpha = .843$ ), the Proactive subscale consisted of three items ( $\alpha = .876$ ), the GCT consisted of seven items ( $\alpha = .899$ ) highlighting good reliability (Field, 2009).

### **3.7.3 The Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control (LOC)**

The Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control (LOC) is a personality dimension that measures an individual's beliefs in relation to events being controlled internally, dependant on behaviour and determined by their own choices and actions, or externally where they consider what

happens to them is the result of others, luck, or fate outside of their influence (Nowicki & Duke, 1974) (Appendix 5). The LOC was developed due to the clear need for a reliable methodical measure to use to study the locus of control within a wide age range of children.

The LOC has been used in a substantial number of studies and is a reliable valid measure of children's expectancies (Furnham & Steele, 1993). Despite the measure being designed for children, it has been adapted for use with adults by the change of the word kids to people, and such a subtle change mean it still holds value, allowing direct comparisons with wide age range samples. Its simple language makes it easy to use with a variety of populations. The foundations of Locus of Control stemmed from Rotter's (1954) social learning theory of personality which assumes personality represents an interaction of the individual with his or her environment, with some individuals believing that this resides internally within them, and others, externally with other forces.

The reliability of the LOC is well documented and has been tested in relation to its internal consistency and test-retest stability. The reliability of the LOC found by Nowicki and Duke (1974; 1982) was 0.83 and the test-retest validity was 0.69 highlighting a good level of reliability for this measure of individuals' belief systems. The LOC has been used successfully in both non-offending studies with emotional state and career which supports the construct validity of the LOC, studies on anxiety have supported the reliability of the LOC with the alpha value found .75 and test-retest validity alpha value of .67 indicating a good reliable tool. Similarly, a critical review of the LOC found the Nowicki Strickland LOC to have good internal reliability ( $\alpha = .81$  to  $.62$ ) (Furnham & Steele, 1993). The internal reliability of the three scales of the LOC ranged with alpha values from  $.64$  to  $.78$  (Levenson, 1974). In relation to gender, no significant differences were revealed across genders adding to the construct validity of the LOC and its diversity.

Most research on offending behaviour focuses on the construct validity of the LOC aligning with research around offenders having higher levels of external control. In a comparative study with offenders and non-offenders of drink driving those who drove under the influence had higher levels of LOC supporting proven research (Cavaiola & Desordi, 2000). In research on personality and offending behaviours, young offenders had an external locus of control (Gudjonsson & Sigurdsson, 2007). In comparisons of offenders, sex offenders and non-offenders, sex offenders were found to have an external LOC in comparison with non-offenders and non-sexual offenders (Graham, 1993; McAnena, Craissati, & Southgate, 2016).

Child molesters who ended up reconvicted had higher LOC (Fisher, Beech, & Browne, 1998), and offenders committing a crime against the person had a higher LOC than those who committed property offences (Marsa et al., 2004). Recidivism was associated with higher LOC (Stevens et al., 2016; Tidefors et al., 2019). Given the diversity of studies in relation to both offending and non-offending and the construct of the LOC being supported alongside the internal reliability, and no significant gender differences being revealed across genders (Shultz & Shultz, 2005), the LOC is deemed a primary personality model for this study. The internal consistency of the LOC across this sample is .628 indicating average reliability (Field, 2009).

The LOC questionnaire consists of 40 yes/no items to assess whether participants attribute life events to external or internal causes. Scores range from 0 (internal) to 40 (external), with the higher score indicating greater external locus of control. Research has shown those with a high internal locus of control have better control of their behaviour than those with a high external locus of control. Responses are scored by the scoring key and norms are based on data collected by Nowicki and Duke (1974) external scorers, a strong belief that events are beyond their control; intermediate scorers, inconsistent views about the extent to which own fate is controlled; and internal scorers, a firm belief in own ability to influence your outcomes.

In Canter and Youngs (2009) Narrative Action System, a similar concept to the LOC, is employed with internal and external action systems featuring action systems that consider the behaviour of any objects or individuals that react to their surroundings (Parsons & Shils, 1951). Youngs (2013, p.269) notes a difference within two of the narrative roles in relation to the locus of control, “The difference between comedy and tragedy is that in comedy the person overcomes circumstances but in tragedy, the circumstances overcome the person. In psychological terms, these two poles imply a difference in locus of control running over a set of related episodes, the comic reflecting internal agency and the tragic an external one.”

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

This section will outline the steps involved in the analysis of this data to elicit the narrative accounts of the non-incarcerated sample.



### 3.8.1 Coding

When all interviews were completed, they were transcribed and coded following the LAAF coding framework (Appendix 9) to ascertain what the essence narrative themes of the general population were. Transcribing and coding of all narratives accounts and questionnaires was independently completed by the main researcher.

The LAAF procedure comes with a coding framework, allowing the examination of the thematic structure of the participant's narratives. Thematic content analysis has been found to be fruitful in the analysis of narrative data (McAdams, 2009). Despite this, narrative research elicits an extensive data set that can be difficult to record and analyse as such the methodology used to code and interpret such rich data can bring challenges such as losing meaning and value (Sandberg, 2016).

The coding framework contains 125 variables relating to the different narrative components of the four sections the LAAF procedure explores. Each of these items is coded dichotomously with 0 = not present and 1 = present, except for some variables within the complexity which are coded using a scale format. These items are length in words, number of people cited, number of distinct events cited, and number of distinct psychological ideas. It is important to note that some elements of the LAAF coding framework have duplication, as such, 'Victim', 'Self Victim', and 'Victimisation' all encompass the same overarching theme. As a consequence, there is the possibility of this causing inflation of narratives.

Following the data being coded by the main researcher, a fellow researcher also then coded the data using the same LAAF coding framework. The data was inter-rated by two coders and the consistency and reliability of this were tested using Cohen's Kappa. This is a statistical measure of the agreement between the two coders with qualitative data (Field, 2009). Kappa was chosen as an appropriate measure for this study due to it factoring in the probability of any agreement occurring by the two coders occurring by chance, meaning that a more robust result is reached (Field, 2009).

A higher figure in a Kappa value indicates a higher agreement of reliability, with values ranging from 0 – 1.00, with 1 indicating perfect agreement between the two inter-raters. A Kappa value greater than 0.75 is considered to be an excellent agreement, and one in the range of 0.40 to 0.75 implies a fair to good agreement (Field, 2009). The Cohen's Kappa measure of inter-rater reliability within this study is 0.67 indicating a fair fit. Given that the

narrative accounts can be subjective, and with the issues of losing meaning and value through content analysis (Sandberg, 2016), discussions took place between the two coders to discuss and determine the differences and both coders then agreed on the final version used for the study.

Content analysis using the LAAF coding framework allows a comparison of the narratives without detracting from the richness and meaning ingrained within them. The use of content analysis is advantageous in this study as it preserves the richness of the themes and meanings within the data by looking specifically at communication via transcripts, systematically converting it into a quantitative dataset. This allows a closeness of text between key themes and relationships which can be coded and statistically analysed.

It is also both quantitative and qualitative, unobtrusive, and when it is done correctly can provide an exact research method when linked to proven research. Nonetheless, it is time-consuming, subject to increased error, and reductive when dealing with complex texts (Field, 2009). Criticisms have also been raised around this approach losing meaning and value to narrative research (Sandberg, 2016). Frequency analysis was then used to compare the frequency distribution of the participants' LAAF responses. This allowed comparison between the number and percentage of participants who said yes for the variables, determining common themes amongst the participants to gain an understanding of their life narratives.

### **3.8.2 Smallest Space Analysis (SSA)**

The results of the questionnaire responses were inter-correlated using Jaccard's coefficient and subjected to Smallest Space Analysis (SSA). SSA is a form of nonmetric multidimensional scaling (MDS) developed by Guttman and Lingoes (Lingoes, 1973). It is used to find non-parametric relationships and Euclidean distance between variables. In this procedure, variables are represented as points in a space such that the closer together the ranked distances between the points, the closer in ranks are the associations/correlations between the points those variables represent. It works by the use of ranks which produce the interpretable results in a smaller mathematical space. The closer together the variables occur, the higher the likelihood of a correlation between those variables. This visual representation means the relationships among variables can be readily examined through the consideration of the configuration of the points, uncovering themes between variables. It can be assumed

inter-correlated items, in this instance behaviours, are likely to co-occur within a narrative theme. Raw correlations are used and when using SSA, a null hypothesis is that the variables being examined have no comprehensible relationship to each other (Canter, 2000).

SSA is a well-established technique for identifying structure in phenomena and has been the methodology of choice for the majority of studies of stylistic variation in offending conducted within the Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling tradition (e.g., Canter, Bennell, Alison, & Reddy, 2003; Canter & Heritage, 1990). More recently, multi-dimensional scaling has been revealed to be highly fruitful across various crime types and the NAS (Canter & Youngs, 2009; Youngs & Canter, 2012), contract killers (Yaneva et al., 2018), mentally disordered offenders (Spruin et al., 2014), offenders with personality disorders and psychopathy (Goodlad et al., 2018), first-time young offenders (Ioannou et al., 2018) and female offenders (Ciesla et al., 2019). SSA has not just been used in the offending context, it has also been productive across the study of non-offenders through the study of missing children (Hunt, 2020).

A facet theory approach to research was used to explore the inter-correlation between the items. For this approach, the regions of items in the SSA plots are distinguished based on the continuity of the items in the plot. There are no mathematically precise positions for the line, they represent boundary conditions between the regions defined within the plot. Items that are near the boundary regions are expected to share more qualities with the other items within that region of the plot and are expected to share fewer qualities with the items that are placed further away on the plot. The SSA will also produce the coefficient of alienation (Borgs and Lingoës, 1987), which is used to show a measure of how good the fit between the spatial representation and the co-occurrences is. The smaller the coefficient of alienation value is, the closer fit between the plot and the matrix.

Jaccard's coefficient was chosen as the pertinent correlation for this study as it is the most appropriate association coefficient for dichotomous data and has been fruitful in the analysis of criminal behaviour (Godwin, 1999). As the data in this study was coded dichotomously with 0 when a variable was not present, and 1 when present, this was the most appropriate method to use. Jaccard's was used as it allows each variable to be compared with every other variable and does not account for joint non-occurrences meaning missing variables are not accounted for limiting bias and showing a clear SSA region (Godwin, 1999). The use of this

on the LAAF variables enables the identification of whether a thematic structure of the narratives was revealed indicative of narrative themes.

### **3.8.3 Test of Normality**

Thematic analysis of the LAAF responses revealed four narrative themes. Despite this, it does not classify the participant as solely that one narrative role. Individuals may have had items from differing narrative roles within their life trajectories. Due to the distinct themes revealed in the SSA, it is expected that most of the items would fall into one particular narrative role. To discover this, all 71 cases were examined to assess whether they could be assigned to a specific narrative based on the LAAF items that were identified within their narrative accounts.

Every participant was given a percentage for the number of LAAF variables present for each of the four narrative themes. The criteria for assigning each participant to a theme was through calculating the variables in each theme and the dominant theme was the narrative that had the greatest number of variables than any other theme. Due to each narrative theme having an unequal number of variables percentages were used. If a case was a hybrid narrative, in such it contained an equal number of variables to two or more narrative themes revealing no overarching narrative theme it was not contained in the analysis.

When the narrative roles had been calculated, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Goodness of Fit Test was performed to ascertain if the data in the personality measures (BFI, LOC, & PICTS), and demographic information was normally distributed. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is used to compare a hypothetical 'normal' distribution against the distribution of data to assess the goodness of fit of the data being used and is best used on smaller sample sizes (Field, 2018).

### **3.8.4 One-Way ANOVA & Kruskal-Wallis**

To test for differences across the four narrative themes, a one-way ANOVA was used when data were normally distributed. A one-way ANOVA compares the means of three or more independent groups to determine whether there are statistically significant differences between them. This, therefore, ascertains if the means between the samples are statistically significant from each other (Field, 2018; Laerd Statistics, 2018). This, therefore, allows the four different narrative themes to be compared with each other to identify if there are any

significant differences between them in relation to the personality measures. An ANOVA controls Type I errors, therefore using ANOVA over other measures, such as a T-Test, reduces the likelihood of false-positive findings and means that any statistically significant findings are more likely to be reliable. If statistically significant results were revealed by the ANOVA, a post-hoc Turkey Honestly Significant Difference [HSD] test was performed to ascertain which narrative groups were significant from one another in relation to the different measures. The Turkey HSD test was chosen due to its utilisation of scores when levels are equal as well as its low error rates (Field, 2018). The effect size was manually calculated using Omega squared.

If data were not normally distributed, a Kruskal-Wallis test was used which is a non-parametric version of the one-way ANOVA and does not assume a particular distribution. Again, the Kruskal-Wallis tests is used to determine if there are statistically significant differences between two or more groups using a rank-based approach (Field, 2018; Laerd Statistics, 2018). Following the same approach as the ANOVA, post hoc tests were used to ascertain between which groups significant differences are related to. This allows a comparison of the four different narrative themes across the aspects of personality measures and demographic differences to reveal how the narrative themes of the general population are underpinned.

One-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis results are presented in tables that outline the significance level of the values, this shows whether or not a result has occurred by chance. Significance levels are indicated under each table, with a value smaller than .05 than this result is significant and rejects the null hypothesis (Field, 2013). The tables also report the mean, standard deviation, the degrees of freedom which represents the size of the sample and effect size.

In Chapter 7 and Chapter 9 the dependent variables were the five personality traits of the BFI (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness) and the participants' overall score on the LOC. In Chapter 10 the dependent variables were the 11 traits of the PICTS (Mollification, Cutoff, Entitlement, Power Orientation, Sentimentality, Superoptimism, Cognitive Indolence, Discontinuity, Reactive, Proactive & GCT).

### **3.8.5 Pearson's Chi-Square Analysis**

Within Chapter 9, a Chi-Square test was used to compare the LAAF responses of those who had committed an offence with those who had not, in order to answer the research question of how the narratives of those who committed an offence differed with those who had not.

Within this section, all variables of the LAAF were analysed against the participants who committed a crime and those who had not. A Pearson's Chi-Square test was used to statistically compare the responses from the different offence types to determine which LAAF variables were significantly associated with those who committed an offence and those that had not.

A statistical test that compares differences between data, Pearson's Chi-Square tests the likelihood of an observed distribution being a result of chance. As such, this test determines any significant differences between two or more groups of data, measuring how well the data fits with what would be expected if the variables were independent (Field, 2018).

This non-parametric test was used due to it not requiring normal distribution or assumptions of equal variance in the sample data, meaning hypotheses can be tested on homogeneous data (Field, 2018). Chi-Square is an easier approach and can also test two or more variables for associations. As such, this test was favoured as those who had committed an offence were much lower in frequency than those who had not. However, this statistical test can prove unreliable if using data of low frequency and relative data (Field, 2009). Therefore, Fishers Exact test values were used when the distribution was too low for Chi-Square. Due to not all data being categorical, frequency analysis was also used to determine the mean figures of both the offenders' background and narrative complexity section of the LAAF.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

The data for the non-incarcerated participants was collected via interviews by members of the International Research Centre for Investigative Psychology (IRCIP), and the current author. Consent to use the data for the current project was approved by Dr Donna Youngs and by the University of Huddersfield SREP Panel. As previously referred to, participants were provided with an information sheet prior to the interviews proceeding which outlined the aims of the current project, the procedure that would be followed, and the withdrawal entitlements should they wish to do so. This information was discussed in person to aid psychological support and avoid participant stress.

A consent form was also provided to participants prior to the interviews commencing. Within the form, they were asked to agree to be given the information sheet, show they had an understanding of the requirements of the research, and had the chance to ask questions. Additionally, it requested their permission for the use of anonymous direct quotes in future publications following the research, and for their data to be stored in the IRCIP archives. Data for the thesis was collected prior to the introduction of GDPR and therefore not subject to the retention conditions imposed therein. A risk assessment was also completed which was submitted as part of the ethics application and approved by the SREP panel (appendix 10). The risk assessment considered the potential risks and ethical issues faced, one being the loss or theft of data. To ensure this was minimised, interviews were audio-recorded on a password protected recording device and following completion, were transferred to a password-protected computer on the day of recording. These were then kept under password protection and deleted when transcribed. During the transcription process, any identifiable information was omitted and deleted.

The personal safety and wellbeing of the participants was also considered. Given the nature of the subject matter, there was a likelihood that participants could become stressed or emotional, particularly when describing past events that they had experienced. Interviewers ensured that they debriefed the participant following the interview process to ensure they were ok and offered breaks throughout. Prior to the research, they were informed that this material was to be asked and did consent to this. There was the risk of participants disclosing information relating to criminal activity that they had been involved in. Should this have been raised during the interview process then the supervisors and/or police were to be consulted depending on the nature of the information disclosed.

Interviewer personal safety was also paramount and was ensured that all interviews were conducted in safe places away from the researchers' homes. The schedule of interviews was known by other researchers, and contact was maintained with other researchers on the team to ensure their whereabouts and safety were known.

The nature of the current research project involved working with personal data, and confidentiality was paramount. Confidentiality was always adhered to with personal details only requested for the participant consent form, which was kept separate from the interviews to avoid breaching confidentiality and for anonymity.

Participants were known only by their participant numbers, and the list of associated names was kept separate from all other research material. That was locked away in a secure place and was destroyed 3 months after the end of the interviewing process.

When transcribing the interviews, all confidential information or any that could lead to the identification of the participant or anyone else mentioned was removed and anonymised. To minimise ethical issues, the data was only accessible to researchers and students who were involved within the study group using the same data. The anonymised data was stored as a secure file on a password-protected computer and if transferred, it was done so on a password protected memory card. A copy of the data will be kept in the IRCIP archives.



# **Chapter 4: The Life Narratives of a Non-Incarcerated Subsample of the General Population Using the LAAF Procedure**

## **4.1 Introduction**

The Life as a Film (LAAF) framework is a content framework that focuses specifically on an individual's life narrative as a film-like structure to interpret the psychological components that the narratives disclose. Derived from several key areas of literature (Bandura 1990; Canter & Youngs, 2009; Frye, 1957; McAdams, 1993; Russell, 1997; Sykes & Matza, 1956), this projective technique was constructed for offenders aimed at uncovering key themes within offenders' life stories and in turn, revealing key aspects of their self-identity. This procedure reveals implicit and explicit aspects of self-concepts and relationships to others, alongside future orientation within a dynamic storyline. The LAAF has proven fruitful in revealing key themes within offenders' life narratives. Using the LAAF procedure, Canter and Youngs (2015) found four narrative roles which, when combined with other psychological constructs, uncovered significant potential for future research. These themes showed that the responses individuals give to the LAAF procedure could reveal underlying psychological information in a way that linked to the dominant stories embedded in the protagonists' lives.

A direct comparison between offenders and non-offenders using the initial LAAF procedure was conducted in relation to unresolved dissonance in the narratives of the offenders (Youngs, Canter & Carthy, 2014), yet the overarching narrative theme of the non-offenders was not researched as the focus was predominantly on the offenders' narratives and the inconsistencies within them, therefore, leaving little knowledge into the stories non-offenders live by. This study will apply the LAAF procedure to a non-incarcerated sample and then use thematic content analysis.

The purpose of this chapter is to discover the life narratives of the present sample of non-incarcerated individuals by applying the LAAF procedure and uncover the overarching narrative theme within their life stories and the narrative components within these, and measure the validity of the LAAF procedure when it is used solely on a non-incarcerated sample that is a small subset of the general population in how fruitful it is in exploring life

narratives. The research questions within this chapter are: What are the life stories that this sample of participants from the general population hold? How do these life stories differ? And, what narrative components underpin them?

McAdams (1993), derived from Bakan (1966), found the central themes within life stories are 'Agency' and 'Communion'. These reveal how individuals interact with their social world and the traits they exhibit within their life stories, with Bakan (1966) proposing that Agency and Communion were the two key attributes of human existence. These two differences in individuals reflect differentiation in the overall life stories. It is hypothesised that within this analysis the LAAF procedure will elicit rich life narratives within this sample of non-incarcerated participants giving validity to the LAAF procedure in eliciting life stories and that there will be an overarching narrative theme within these life stories however that there will be subthemes of other narratives present.

## **4.2 Data Analysis Method**

### **4.2.1 Participants**

The participants used in this study were all 71 participants for whom data was collected. The participants consisted of 71 individuals (34 males, 37 females), aged between 18-75 years. The mean age of the sample is 37.2 years ( $SD = 15.73$ ). Twenty (28%) individuals were aged between 18-25 years, 32 (45%) were aged between 26-45 years, and 20 (28%) were over the age of 45.

### **4.2.2 Material and Analysis**

The LAAF interviews were subject to content analysis by firstly coding the transcripts following the LAAF coding framework to assess the psychological content and complexity of the trajectories. This complex coding framework meant the richness of the narrative accounts and the meaning ingrained within them could be retained enabling the construction of a data set to quantify and analyse the presence of themes, relationships, and meanings within the data allowing analysis and comparison.

The use of content analysis in narrative psychology has been fruitful such as Maruna (2001) in desistance from offending behaviour and persisting offenders, McLean and Breen (2009) in a study of gender and well-being in adolescents, McAdams (2009) in life stories, and Canter and Youngs (2005) in the LAAF application to offenders. Although criticisms with

this approach have been documented with it being labelled a simplistic technique and not applicable for detailed statistical analysis (Morgan, 1993), the validity it has had with previous research and the previous LAAF procedure application will allow the analysis of extensive interviews.

Findings within this chapter are evidenced with verbatim narratives to illustrate the themes identified.

### 4.3 Results: LAAF Responses of the Non-Incarcerated Sample

#### 4.3.1 Psychological Complexity

The complexity of the narratives was measured both substantive complexity, which addressed aspects such as the number of distinct people mentioned and number of distinct psychological ideas, and formal complexity, which addressed items such as the length of the narrative, number of words, and presence of contingent sequences of accounts. Predominately all narrative accounts were of significant length ( $M=1187.14$ ,  $SD=1221.16$ ) with words ranging from 123 to 6721 and all accounts had all the narrative components despite the differentiation in the length.

**Table 4.1**

*Psychological Complexity LAAF Responses of the Non-Incarcerated Sample*

Theme	LAAF Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	%
PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPLEXITY	Film narrative – Number of people	4.87	2.58		
	Substantive complexity				
	Distinct events cited	6.40	4.46		
	Distinct psychological ideas	9.75	4.89		
	Presences of coherent themes			65	91.50%
Formal complexity	Roles for characters			27	38.00%
	Distinct beginning, middle and end components			57	80.30%
	Presence of contingent sequences			50	70.40%
	Length	1187	1221.16		

Over two-thirds of respondents gave a clear beginning, middle, and end sequence to their narratives giving them a structured format. Most respondents mention 4 or more people in their life representations and typically mentioned 6 events within their trajectories. The narratives on average all had a high number of psychological ideas which shows the significance of the LAAF procedure for exploring individuals' ways of thinking about others and their interaction with them. Nearly all narrative accounts were coherent, and over two-thirds included the presence of contingent sequences. Despite the majority having a good complexity to their narratives, there is a distinction in differences observed highlighting a subset of different themes that are apparent within the sample. Over one-third of the sample used roles for characters. Miller and Treacher (1981) showed that delinquents more readily identified with fictional characters and also showed a preference for the masculine and popular heroes who were more likely to use direct action to solve their problems. Therefore, a subset of the sample could possess criminal thinking styles or behaviours.

#### **4.4 Remit: Implicit Psychological Content**

##### **4.4.1 Genre**

The initial section of the LAAF procedure focuses on the individual's generic representation of their life stories. Participants were asked to select a genre that they felt best represented how their life would be presented if it was to be portrayed as a film. In interviews conducted by McAdams (1993, p. 264), interviewees were asked to look at their entire life as a story and to 'discern a central theme'. McAdams (1993) proposed that by reflecting on life in story form, the autobiographical stories told incorporating characters, scenes, and plots, can reveal key life themes and processes fundamental to an individual's life narrative.

**Table 4.2***Story Genre LAAF Responses of the Non-Incarcerated Sample*

Theme	LAAF Item	<i>N</i>	%
STORY GENRE Generic presentation	Comedy	29	40.8%
	Drama*	22	31%
	Overcoming Adversity*	20	28.2%
	Romance	10	14.1%
	Action	7	9.9%
	Adventure/Sports*	7	9.9%
	Tragedy	5	7%
	Thriller	3	4.2%
	Crime	1	1.4%

\* Not genres included in the LAAF procedure

The majority of protagonists within this study described film genres consistent with events that were present within their lives, alongside the inclusion of individuals who would feature within their film representations. Asked at the onset of the study, this set the scene of the narrative accounts and revealed a dominant overarching theme to the content of the narrative accounts of the sample. However, in some instances, the genre and events mentioned by the participants were inconsistent with the overall theme, yet consistent with the ideas presented.

The dominant aspect of the narrative ideas presented by the whole sample was positive and consistent with general life events that would be experienced in everyday life. This was conveyed with the overarching genre being comedy, also a prevalent genre within the film industry. Nearly half of the sample felt their life would best be represented by a comedy genre of some variant. The psychological exposition of a comedy film described as happy, carefree, and comical, allows an interpretation as to how individuals perceive their lives to be. This reveals an understanding of one of the main components within the narratives of the non-incarcerated sample that shapes their identity.

*P44 - 'It would be a comedy, it would be a variety of slapstick moments'*

*P38 - 'Erm a happy one, a comedy one'.*

Individual responses for those who described their lives using the comedy genre varied, and although most of the narratives had positive associations, some carried negative ones. This

signifies that there is an underlying differentiation within the governing genre of the narratives that may indicate differences within the narrative components in relation to other components.

*P34 - 'Well it would definitely be a comedy as my life is a joke.'*

*P39 - 'It would probably be a comedy film, it would involve the unfortunate and unbelievable events of my life'*

The comedy genre, however, was frequently used in combination with other film genres, such as romance and action, yet predominately alongside drama, with participants combining light-hearted, fun times alongside serious events/scenes that had occurred within their lives. These overarching variables give a clear representation of the most common narrative accounts identified within the sample, featuring relationship events and overcoming hardship being central to the participants' storyline. These findings are consistent given the association between typical life events and the self-reflection of depicting one's life into an overarching theme, particularly with individuals' lives being a combination of highs and lows, and gives a perception into how the sample viewed their lives, as described by participant 71:

*P71 - 'It would be a funny happy-type film but with sad bits because my parents died, maybe like a dramatic comedy.'*

Drama was the second highest frequency genre mentioned within the participants' life trajectories. Drama films represent serious presentations or stories, with settings or life situations that portray realistic characters in conflict with either themselves, others, or forces of nature. Given the object of the elicitation procedure obtaining life stories, this reflects that. A distinction between comedy and drama is the focus on real life events and difficulties faced within the trajectories described and highlights that there is a variation in the underlying components of the narrative accounts, yet, as mentioned above, dramatic comedies were a popular choice to describe the individuals film projections.

*P60 - 'Drama. Lots of ups and downs, but lots of ups.'*

*P25 - 'F\*\*k it lets say drama. I wanted to say thriller but it's not really that brilliant, I wish it was.'*

Although not a specific genre in the LAAF procedure as defined by the coding framework, many of the participants described the genre of their films to be a film that would overcome

adversity or challenges in some element, or following a journey of highs and lows, these being a representation of the life of the protagonist and the common ideas present within the life trajectories. Known in the film industry as an inspirational film, in which life lessons are to be learnt reveals a key dimension to the participant's life stories, their self-identity and how life was perceived by them that was not identified in an offending sample.

*P3 - 'It would be positive and encouraging for other people maybe to follow their passion and dreams'.*

*P5 - 'obviously facing adversity along the way yeah someone who overcomes anything but never gives up'.*

*P22 - 'So like a, I don't know, it's like a not a rags to riches because that's completely ridiculous but like a having nothing and motivating yourself to do something.'*

In the majority of cases, participants picked a specific genre which they felt most described their lives, though several participants gave, instead, a representation of how they wanted their life to be, or the films they had enjoyed watching. Hypothetical situations reveal a key part of the participant's self-identity, and although not autobiographical, can reveal behaviours and concepts fundamental to their narratives. Other categories mentioned by participants but not a feature in the LAAF procedure included documentary and adventure, as shown in table 4.2.

#### **4.4.2 Focal Content**

Additionally, with the Remit: Implicit psychological content of the LAAF procedure, protagonists described events within their life stories as scenes. Events mentioned in the life as a film narrative were a combination of autobiographical and hypothetical events in which the latter of course differed from the significant event narrative where the events had predominately always taken place. This meant the film representation offered the chance for the offenders to portray how their life would differ from the actual events they had experienced, revealing key concepts to their self-identity.

**Table 4.3***Focal Content LAAF Responses of the Non-Incarcerated Sample*

Theme	LAAF Item	<i>N</i>	%
Focal content	Relationship success	38	53.5%
	Relationship problem	28	39.4%
	Birth	25	35.2%
	Material success	18	25.4%
	Doing crime	13	18.3%
	Victim of crime	13	18.3%
	Sport	12	16.9%
	Death	11	15.5%
	Imprisonment	3	4.2%

Relationship success was the most prevalent event amongst the participants, with over half of the sample mentioning relationship success in some context. Relationship success here was seen as being indicative of a level of intimacy or belongingness (McAdams, 1993). Again, portraying that the sample tended to focus on events that are part of their lifestyle and consistent with their life narratives. This also supported the overall positive connotation and overarching positive theme that emerged as a dominant aspect of the narratives, centred on happiness and ordinary life events such as relationships, as also revealed by the genres.

Relationship success was described by the protagonist themselves in terms of them having relationship success with a partner (P7), and also described in a relation to a friend or family member, shown by participant 9 in relation to his son:

*P7 - Then I met xx (husband) when I was down here and absolute love of my life, he'd been through 2 marriages before, older than me and I just thought he was going to look after me. It was something more than that, we were meant to meet you know it was something different it was more spiritual we were MEANT to be together'.*

*P9 - 'I think our relationship would get better and stronger along that journey but I come back to that first event that my learning to leave him to do what he is best at and not necessarily think I know best'.*



Relationship success was also displayed in hypothetical events, in which protagonists described themselves as ‘wanting it to happen’. This fictional description of events revealed concepts fundamental to the participants’ self-identity.

*P34 - ‘and then maybe Channing Tatum, definitely Channing Tatum he would be the person I end up with in the end we would live in a big mansion.’*

*P40 - ‘I think it’d be I’d meet Gary Barlow this pop star, I’d meet him at a gig or something and our eyes would meet across the room that would be it.’*

In contrast, scenes that portrayed relationship problems were frequently described within the individuals’ life depictions. These were mentioned both with the protagonist experiencing a relationship breakdown, usually that of a partner, although these were not always a clear definitive narrative theme, they still featured prominently. Showing the significance of the LAAF procedure for eliciting key components to an individual’s self-identity, and how a clear dominant theme of individuals who gain fulfilment through interaction with others as identified with McAdams (1993) communion themes is a prime theme within this sample. Other variants on this theme of relationship problems concerned close associates such as the protagonist’s parents splitting up:

*P25 - ‘Partner suddenly cheating on you and life gets spun upside down and having to deal with stuff like that’.*

*P31 - ‘splitting up with xx boyfriend of the time cause’ that definitely changed things’.*

*P20 - ‘Then put in parent’s separation, that was rough, my dad didn’t turn into a very nice person, he was always a good dad but he wasn’t a very nice person’.*

*P25 - ‘So from there we would go to parents arguing in front of me, plates being smashed by my dad and mum taking me and my sister and leaving’.*

#### **4.4.3 Tone and Resolution**

Tone was coded from the overall tone expressed within the narrative, not the events within it. Tone is problematic to establish through written content, contrasted with what can be expressed verbally, as while the events being discussed could be positive, the overall tone of the narrative could be negative. Negative tone was demonstrated by negative emotional expressions, such as ‘betrayal’ or ‘wrong done to them’, and it was coded on the tone of the

overall narrative, not one particular scene. Positive, proactive, and passive tones were similarly coded. Proactive was coded when a protagonist described behaviours such as ‘taking initiative’ within their life trajectories, whereas passive tone was coded when behaviours such as ‘accepting what was happening without resistance’ was apparent.

**Table 4.4**

*Tone and Resolution LAAF Responses of the Non-Incarcerated Sample*

Theme	LAAF Item	N	%
Tone	Positive tone	44	62%
	Proactive	32	45.1%
	Passive	24	33.8%
	Negative tone	23	32.4%
Resolution	Happy ending	59	83.1%
	Sad ending	3	4.2%

As found with the focal content and genre, an overarching theme of positivity emerged within the sample in high levels of positive tone, with over 60% found. In contrast, 32% of the life stories revealed a negative tone, revealing that although a dominant theme emerged, this highlights other themes present within the sample. Over 80% of the offenders described a happy ending for their film narrative, but these were more so hypothetical as events mentioned were ones that the protagonist would *like* to achieve in the future. Sub-themes also emerged in the happy endings such as the participants finding happiness within a family-related event:

*P32 – ‘I hope it would end with me finding my happily ever after, I’m quite happy in my job now so I think I’ve found that happily ever after of my life but I am hoping it ends with me finding my prince charming and having kids and having a drama free life.’*

*P2 - ‘I would like to go for the old like they live happily ever after, yeah it would be a happy ending, definitely a happy ending.’*

A further sub-theme was achieving something they had always wanted to achieve, which was both real-life and hypothetical (P4). Examples varied from achieving personal happiness, a work-related goal or ambition, such as going to university or getting a career, or attaining the hypothetical end of the challenge they were facing.

*P60 - 'Oh definitely with me getting my degree, with success – challenge met.'*

*P5 - 'Um it would end with me becoming the person I was capable of being and the person I am today. Happy'.*

*P4 - 'Free energy for everyone. Positively'.*

These resolutions, although happy, show a differentiation in the narratives of themes of agency and communion. A small subsample of individuals were not sure how their film would end, or left it on an unknown ending.

*P31 - 'On an ominous note where you are not quite sure what's going to happen, you think you know but you will have to wait to see'.*

#### **4.4.4 Sandberg (2009)**

Sandberg (2009) found that offenders utilise different narratives which combined a gangster discourse alongside a more conventional moral discourse. He found six widespread narratives and showed how they were embedded in larger cultural discourses. Three narratives, 'it was my own choice', 'I'm decent', and 'we're the same', were seen to be embedded in a conventional discourse. These narratives were utilized in claims to be 'morally decent' or in 'searching for respect' in a conventional way.

The further three narratives, 'I'm interesting', 'I'm smart', and 'I'm dangerous', were embedded in the gangster discourse of a violent street subculture. They were utilized in order to appear as 'fascinating' and 'competent. Sandberg (2009) found that individuals drifted between mainstream and sub-cultural discourses, in a search for respect.

**Table 4.5**

*Sandberg (2009) LAAF Responses of the Non-Incarcerated Sample*

Theme	LAAF Item	<i>N</i>	%
SANDBERG 2009	I'm decent	21	29.6%
	I'm interesting	19	26.8%
	It was my own choice	8	11.3%
	I'm dangerous	8	11.3%
	We're the same	7	9.9%
	I'm smart	6	8.5%

The most prevalent moral narrative that emerged in the narratives of the participants was ‘I’m decent’, in which protagonists stressed the goodness of the real self. This was presented in ways of mentioning caring towards others, a moral upbringing, and having codes of morality. Supporting the overarching positive narrative theme identified within the narrative accounts.

*P1 – ‘because I had quite a happy upbringing so I would of thought it would probably start with that... I think I am an ok person I think I am fairly normal I suppose I am just a normal child and teenager erm I don’t know, and I think I’m probably quiet, especially in the later on part I suppose I was much nicer and much more caring, and caring towards both dad and my career path and things’.*

*P2 – ‘I’m a kind person, I think at the start of the film that kind person gets trampled on a lot because he doesn’t know how to be kind and still be strong’.*

Interestingly, the second highest-frequency narrative was one which Sandberg (2009) found to be embedded in a gangster-discourse, the ‘I’m interesting’ narrative. In this, the participants presented themselves as ‘interesting’ in the way they exaggerated parts of their film narrative that they believed people would be interested in. Again, highlighting a differentiation within the narrative

*P17 – ‘we went to Miami and we nearly died about 20 times because it was a really scary place and a man robbed us of one dollar, 38 cents. And a police lady told us about being gang-raped and dying – this would be really dramatic’.*

*P19 - Moved abroad when I was about 16. That’s when the film starts getting good then, when I moved abroad as well. That’s when It would turn more to a crime thriller and stuff like that really. A lot of crime smuggling across borders, in Gibraltar to Spain. Smuggling a lot of stuff across there. It’s like the business film, that’s actually based in Gibraltar so a lot of stuff in that film, I was involved in one way or another, with the cannabis, immigrants are a lot of the stuff I smuggled into countries’.*

## 4.5 Explicit Processes

### 4.5.1 Agency and Communion

McAdams (1993) characterised agency and communion as two fundamental modalities in the existence of individuals, being central to life-stories and how individuals relate to the world and shape their identity. ‘Agency’ refers to the way individuals gain fulfilment through individual accomplishments and are driven by achievement and power, whereas ‘communion’ refers to the way individuals gain fulfilment through interaction with others and have a strong need for love and friendship.

**Table 4.6**

*Psychological Content LAAF Responses of the Non-Incarcerated Sample*

Theme	LAAF Item	<i>N</i>	%
PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTENT	Achievement/ responsibility	27	38%
Agency	Status – victory	17	23.9%
	Self-mastery	14	19.7%
	Empowerment	3	4.2%
Communion	Love/ friendship	34	47.9%
	Unity/ togetherness	27	38%
	Caring/ help	18	25.4%
	Dialogue	2	2.8%

Overall, the findings show that the protagonists within this sample expressed a slightly higher number of communion themes within their life as a film narrative, rather than agency, attributed to the participants having a sense of belongingness with others. This also supports relationships being the key events discussed. However, themes of agency were also high amongst the participants, with a high number having aspects of being ‘independently-driven’ and ‘focused’. As characterised by McAdams (1993), there is a distinction within the life stories identified by this study, yet the overarching central theme is predominately communion.

Love/friendship was the highest frequency communion theme and it was portrayed through the expression of love, friendship, and how others were significant to them in their lives through one, or several relationships. This was generally done in terms of a partner.

P7 – *‘Yeah and I was marrying the man of my dreams I loved him more than I could ever think I could love anyone. I love him more now, like it was just amazing.’*

P10 – *‘I think my wife is the key really, she doesn’t know it but I think she is really she’s just great. She’s just a good person she’s loving, I look back sometimes and think, probably all do this and I think the older I’ve got our relationship is even better which sounds corny again doesn’t it but it does, I think ‘gosh I’m lucky to have this woman’.*

P18 – *‘she has got a big impact on my life because she sort of settled me down if you like which I think it was I needed and for me I would love to settle down and for me that’s it for me now, she’s the one I’m hopefully going to marry one day and have kids with.’*

This was also done in relation to family and friends:

P26 – *‘family is supremely important to me and also friends, friends to me are very important in the relatively typical male way’.*

P2 – *‘Friends and family and probably cats, Yes girlfriend, definitely mum dad and my bro, I’d have to mention my grandad in there as well on my dad’s side cause he’s just an amazing, he’s a good influence on my life doesn’t know it obviously bless him but yeah and my dad would be a huge influence on my life’.*

Unity/togetherness was also a common theme revealed within the narrative ideas, presented as stabilisation within the family, or with a partner, with the protagonists wanting or having the togetherness of the family unit. This was expressed both hypothetically in the future, for how they would like their film to end, as well as autobiographically through events that had already occurred, within the individuals’ life story.

P15 *‘I can imagine it ending nice and settled with my partner in a lovely little cottage in the country away from the hustle and bustle that I was used to you know normally like or used to like and yeah kind of settled with lots of dogs, chickens, long grass running through the fields yeah that kind of cliché’.*

P70 - *‘With me driving off into the sunset with a girl to live happily ever after’.*

Some reports, however, also had a negative tone.

P1 - *'I would like everybody to live happily ever after but I can't see that being the case at the moment so I don't know'.*

Achievement/responsibility is portrayed by the protagonist gaining success in the achievement of tasks, jobs, goals, or important responsibilities. This was the highest-frequency agency theme revealed within the life narratives, with the protagonists describing achieving something significant to the self, such as gaining a new job, a life goal/ambition, or completing their studies. This was also displayed as the overall theme of the film showing some aspect of achievement or bettering the self.

P23 - *'it was on Remembrance Day and I think that that is, I won't ever forget that but I finally achieved something that it was almost like 4 years in the making. Like I failed once and tried again whereas other people might have failed once and not tried again you know I decided to say screw this, I messed up the first time and decided to go back and do it properly and I did as an original and not only had I gone back and done it I had gone back and done it well'.*

P6 - *'all I wanted to do was to be a pro, be a footballer and play in the first team you know it was basically it was something that I would dream about, that moment when I was told that id got a contract or didn't get a contract you know it was something that I really wanted, dreamt about, dream come true'.*

P52 - *'Then there would be the big part where she goes off to university and she gets her first class honours at the end of that film.'*

There were also hypothetical events:

P26 *'you may have built your log cabin and this would not be luxury but it would be safe you would of achieved your objective you would have got to the other end you are now in California or wherever it is'.*

P3 - *'People would achieve their goals which they thought they would never be able to achieve. They would live happily ever after.... I think it would be the achievement of, so after you find yourself and you find your passion and you do something that you didn't think you'd be able to do.'*

The second highest frequency communion theme identified within the trajectories was that of victory/success, with the protagonists achieving a higher status than fellow individuals, with them winning a competition or winning a sporting activity. Many of these were fictional accounts, shown in P4 and P9.

P59 – *‘I worked really, really hard, it took three years solid training doing 3 or 4 nights a week for three years. I thought it was a massive achievement. It was a lot of hard work, sweat, blood – blood did pass. But you know I thought it was a major achievement in my life getting a black belt.’*

P4 – *‘that someone is maybe trying to destroy this information and I know what it is and I know what um, impact it could have so for whatever reason I’m not sure how there trying to get the information out. Then there is a battle and we win and then clean energy for everyone’.*

P9 – *‘I can’t even think of the words to make this happen but somehow on a corner where overtaking probably is impossible my son would probably make that overtaking manoeuvre and I would see that happening because I would probably be at the back of this group and he would do this fantastic overtaking manoeuvre to win on the last lap in Monaco.’*

#### **4.5.2 Redemption**

A redemption sequence is described by McAdams (1993) as a bad or emotionally negative event or circumstance within a person’s life story that leads to a good or emotionally positive outcome. Redemption was coded by a move in ‘negative to positive’ within the narrative.



**Table 4.7***Redemptive Theme LAAF Responses of the Non-Incarcerated Sample*

Theme	LAAF Item	N	%
Redemptive theme	General redemption	52	73.2%
	Suffering or injustice in lives of others during childhood	13	18.3%
	Repeat negative events transformed to redemptive sequence	10	14.1%
	Sets forth pro-social goals	7	9.9%
	Development of sense of moral steadfastness	7	9.9%
	Enjoys a special advantage	4	5.6%

Three-quarters of the interviewees expressed a redemption sequence within their narratives, such as where they had experienced something bad or had a hard upbringing, and this was turned around somehow. Redemption sequences (and contamination sequences) are fruitful ways in explaining human motivation and how individuals react to significant events revealing important aspects of self-identity (McAdams, 2001). The substantial number of redemption sequences within this sample shows that redemption is a key feature of the non-incarcerated sample, turning a negative event into something positive, similarly found with Maruna (2001) desisting offenders.

Redemption was expressed in bettering their living situation, new relationships after separations, and substantiating their initial beliefs after knock-backs to the notion that they could achieve what they wanted to achieve.

P1 – *‘my family situation, me becoming a parent myself, then obviously the whole divorce thing and then carrying on through to how I have improved my life since then, so going back to university and getting a career.’*

P2 – *‘but yeah that hugely impacted me and, what I think is the good that came from that is that I would never of met x (current partner) and all that sort of stuff so the good that came from that is, I think I learnt that you know, ultimately that no matter how hard things get I can deal with it’.*

P3 – *‘after second baby goes through another really low part after the second baby and maybe relationship troubles a little bit and then it turns a corner, things change’.*

In themes of redemption, witnessing suffering or injustice in the lives of others was the highest-observed frequency. This suffering and injustice varied in context, with some instances being family members facing illness, being victims of abuse, and family members facing incarceration.

P20 - *'dad getting ill, me having a hard time dealing with it, 4 years after that my Mum getting breast cancer.'*

P25 - *'So then mum getting married then seeing him be violent to my mum then him being violent to me 'til it kind of gets to breaking point when one night mum comes home and says to me he's been violent and she's locking him out and he comes to the house effing and blinding 'til we have to ring the police and the police come and arrest him and so on and so forth'.*

P32 - *'be when my dad told me that he was going to prison and my first emotion was being in absolute shock because I knew he was being investigated and going on trial because it was explained to me that the basics that were explained to be were that my dad shouldn't of gone'.*

P68 - *'It would open with me and my sister being abused by my mum's girlfriend and her just letting her do it and not saying anything at all'.*

### **4.5.3 Contamination**

A contamination scene or sequence is a good or positive event or state, which becomes bad or negative, contamination was coded by a 'positive to negative' move.

**Table 4.8***Contamination Theme LAAF Responses of the Non-Incarcerated Sample*

Theme	LAAF Item	N	%
Contamination theme	General Contamination	29	40.8%
	Betrayal	16	22.5%
	Victimisation	14	19.7%
	Physical/ psychological illness or injury	12	16.9%
	Disappointment	10	14.1%
	Failure	8	11.3%
	Loss of significant other	7	9.9%
	Disillusionment	3	4.2%
	Sex guilt, humiliation	1	1.4%

In contrast, 40% of interviewees articulated a theme of general contamination in their life as a film narrative, in which a good or positive event became a bad or negative state.

Contamination sequences in the narratives were not always representative of the overall theme, with some protagonists having a redemption sequence also. Nonetheless, this still reveals a subset of participants who have differing narratives to the overall narrative theme that has emerged within this sample. This was shown by failure in jobs and relationships and in circumstances beyond the protagonist's control, such as family members being involved in accidents.

P6 – *‘And obviously after that I got released and it was a bit bitter as they should of kept me on and got me fit as it was an obligation but they sort of didn’t and the way the manager did it he was a bit of a dick’.*

P7 – *‘I think I’ve met somebody that is lovely and were going to save for a house (son’s Dad) and that turns into another nightmare a bit like erm what’s it called, with Julia Roberts and Kevin cline, its erm, he controls things and yeah if you google it. It was very abusive and bad and controlling, he’d make up things just to see me cry and yeah he’d love to see me cry and hurt me’.*

P11 – *‘I think from being in a position of starting out kind of thing you know kind of thing to building and having a business that’s doing really well and successful in London to hitting*

*rock bottom again, or lower than rock bottom with my dad having my accident that would definitely be a significant part'.*

Contamination sequences were also used in fictional accounts in the narratives, with the protagonists facing adversity with everyday life transforming to a negative circumstance.

P4 – *'I'm waking up I'm in bed. I don't know why and I don't know how I get to the end result. It starts as like, maybe a normal day, just in bed and then somethings going to happen.'*

P26 – *'You are going to endure hardship, you are crossing hostile land, being attacked'.*

In themes of contamination, the highest mentioned was betrayal, which was expressed either through a partner wronging them, a family member, or a close associate:

P20 – *'fair play he did back me up when I went to college but he was cheating on me and we'd been together for 3 years, what a dick'.*

P18 – *'that I found out just after my birthday I think it was my 20<sup>th</sup> birthday that she had been cheating on me with Dave and that was a big kick in the teeth because it was obviously my first serious relationship and um I found out about that'.*

P7 – *'When my mother took my house away from me'.*

P69 – *'It would be about how I've been abandoned by everyone and follow my struggles'.*

Victimisation, illness, and injury were also a high-frequency theme found within the life trajectories. These were shown within the narratives, with protagonists facing falling ill:

P6 – *'And then I was there for sort of 6 years, met my wife, I met my wife there, had kids (2) and then towards the end I had a really bad injury there so I suppose that was around 2011, it was really bad'.*

P30 – *'It would start where I was this sporty type of person then gets struck down by ME.'*

P48 – *'It would be the active life leading up to the accident, then the many fissures of impact in my life afterwards'.*

Or being a victim of abuse or a crime:

P64 – ‘Then the shitty things that happen, like my Dad was a really angry parent so home life wasn’t that great’.

P17 – ‘we went to Miami and we nearly died about 20 times because it was a really scary place and a man robbed us’.

#### 4.5.4 Narrative Action System

The behaviours mentioned within this section reflect behaviours within the four narrative themes of the Narrative Action System (NAS). The Adventurer and Quest narratives were the highest frequency, with 60 mentions of behaviours within the Adventure narrative, and 55 in the Quest. In contrast, behaviours within the Tragedy narrative had 21, and in the Victim narrative, integrative irony had 32, reflecting there was a slight difference in the behaviours of the participants’ narratives and the themes could be appropriately identified within them.

**Table 4.9**

*Narrative Action System LAAF Responses of the Non-Incarcerated Sample*

Theme	LAAF Item	N	%
Tragedy theme	Wrong done to them/ theirs	16	22.5%
	Compulsion	3	4.2%
	Revenge	2	2.8%
Irony theme	Impotence/ hopelessness	14	19.7%
	Confusion/ misunderstanding	10	14.1%
	Fate	8	11.3%
Adventure theme	Fulfilment/ satisfaction	34	47.9%
	Tangible rewards/ acquisitions	15	21.1%
	Effectiveness/ skills/ competencies	11	15.5%
Quest theme	Victory/ proving self/ success	20	28.2%
	Overcoming struggles/ obstacles/ mission	18	25.4%
	Masculinity/ bravery	17	23.9%

The highest frequency narrative was the Professional’s Adaptive Adventurer narrative, with fulfilment/satisfaction being the most common variable, echoing the most dominant theme of positivity and fulfilment that has been identified within the most frequent variables described by the participants. This high frequency of satisfaction was particularly attributed to the

participants who described their film representations with scenes, events, and/or people that would bring overall satisfaction or fulfilment to their life, or their desired life. The things that brought them satisfaction differed per participant, however. A high majority mentioned fulfilment in the family unit, alongside being financially comfortable, and a general feeling of fulfilment. These findings are consistent with the overall narrative ideas emerging from the life trajectories presented in being positive and optimistic.

*P11 – ‘Yeah very happy, very happy it better be happy. It will end with me being married to some amazing girl I guess, enjoying life definitely enjoying life’.*

*P46 – ‘I’ve come through the other side had a successful garage business, opened a motorcycle business, which has helped a lot of youngsters along the way especially the CBT’s. I’ve brought up a family – 2 girls who are successful in life, grandchildren and I’ve achieved everything I want to achieve in life’.*

*P22 – ‘I’d like it to end happy, I guess another twist as well and rather striving for money and success kind of thing it would be more about finding something I’m happy with’.*

Tangible rewards and skills were also notably present within the narrative accounts. These were addressed both illegitimately and legitimately, primarily being money. These findings were in line with participants who displayed themes of agency within their narrative accounts.

*P66 – ‘There would be fast cars, sexy girls, gambling, gangs, drugs in it. It would definitely be an 18 rated ... It would start with me winning the lottery or something... I think I’d give myself a better car in the film though it would be a Ferrari a red one.’*

*P37 – ‘. I would win the lottery and buy a big house abroad and go live there most of the year.’*

*P19- ‘We were at the point, we were smuggling motocross bikes across the border making £500 a day, each of us’.*

Another pertinent NAS theme was that of the Hero were, with all behaviours similar in frequency, its mentions of overcoming struggles, victory or success, and overcoming struggles were all often mentioned behaviours. Being as overcoming struggles and adversity was a key genre mentioned by the participants, it is apparent there is a subtheme within the

sample. Victory or success was marginally the most frequent behaviour, shown through events such as gaining victory in a personal goal, success in studies, or the career path.

*P3 – ‘so she just thought she’d be a mum and there’s like little else until the children go off and don’t really need her that much, so she, with encouragement sets herself a goal that she never thought she would be able to do and she achieves it. She’s throwing her hat in the air.’*

*P28- ‘It would be graduating from university with a master’s degree, I was the first person in my family to graduate with a masters’.*

Victory or success was also shown in fictional accounts, with protagonists gaining success or victory in their film representation through hypothetical events.

*P4 – ‘Then there is a battle and we win and then clean energy for everyone’.*

*P9 – ‘I can’t even think of the words to make this happen but somehow on a corner where overtaking probably is impossible my son would probably make that overtaking manoeuvre and I would see that happening because I would probably be at the back of this group and he would do this fantastic overtaking manoeuvre to win on the last lap in Monaco’.*

Overcoming struggles/obstacles/missions were found to be generally represented by overcoming personal barriers, as shown in participant 23, overcoming life’s challenges, as shown in participant 5, and overcoming hypothetical events, shown in participant 26.

*P23 – ‘in the film there obviously barriers and you come across barriers but the whole point of the film is you can see through my time at training I had my barriers and I had to overcome that.’*

*P5 – ‘A little bit of ‘girl does good’ obviously facing adversity along the way yeah someone who overcomes anything but never gives up.’*

*P26 – ‘Standing up for yourself, being attacked. I see that kind of scenario as a theme of vulnerability and being attacked but you would come through this’.*

And masculinity/bravery was shown in several different contexts in which the protagonists displayed behaviours or attributes of strength, or dominance, and faced situations in which they were required to be brave. This was displayed both hypothetically, and in real life events, which participants had faced in work, or just alluding to their nature signifying

underlying themes within the narratives. Hypothetical behaviours were inclusive of events such as:

*P26 – ‘know I imagine myself with my rifle on my shoulder lying behind a rock pumping bullets down into the marauding hordes..., you would be thinking of yourself in a soldierly fashion’.*

*P62 – ‘With some disaster or other and me saving people because that’s what happens in the film’.*

*P11 – ‘There would be fast cars, there would be nice things about I guess, people would be saved, there would be a hero probably me’.*

*P4 – ‘Physical fight, probably with some weapons, guns I guess... I want to say heroic but I feel uncomfortable saying that. Feels a bit, self-absorbed now which I don’t like (laughs) Strong, powerful that kind of role.’*

Real-life events, in which the protagonists showed masculine or brave behaviours, included:

*P23 – ‘we do this big room clearance you know like everyone loves seeing room clearance because its fast, loud noises going out, flashbangs going off, grenades just all this chaos then as the dust settles we are there and we’ve cleared it so like that’.*

*P7 – ‘I was well known in school, popular but people would like be scared of me because I had a lot of power like triads, what have you and I did weight lifting so I was very strong I had been known to put people up against walls and I was working on doors in clubs and no one would ever, ever try it not even blokes so I had a bit of a reputation so it was all about power’.*

The highest-mentioned behaviour in the tragedy theme was wrong done to them/theirs. This was portrayed by the protagonist being wronged by partners in relationships, as a victim of something, and their personal beliefs. Given that the overarching theme to the narratives is positive and optimistic, this reveals underlying themes within the non-incarcerated narratives.

*P21 – ‘. Bad feelings obviously for what he put me through and how vile he was towards me, how he put me down I cannot imagine ever treating someone the way that he treated me back then’.*



*P25 – ‘issues with my stepdad but that is being very diplomatic. So obviously he was quite violent to me, my mum and my brother eventually so that’s going to be a key part so just trying to put it diplomatically’.*

*P19 – ‘people that I have met in my life put me in bad situations to benefit themselves and a lot of, basically in a nutshell I have been fucked over a lot by a lot of nasty people I have gone out of my way for big time and they have screwed me right over’.*

Impotence/hopelessness was the highest behaviour in the Irony narrative, where feelings of impotence and hopelessness were expressed in actual life events within the film depiction. These participants had a more negative outlook on their life stories revealing that, despite the overarching coherent narrative theme of positivity recognised within the narrative accounts, there is a differing, less dominant narrative concept present.

*P69 – ‘The sort of person who tries hard but never seems to be able to get things right. I feel really let down by everyone really... Everything I do seems to be a mistake. Made friends-mistake they robbed off me, got attached to a family-mistake, they moved me on when they got fed up with me’.*

*P60 – ‘I haven’t got any interest in anything. It’s bleak and miserable, everything just creeps up on top of you’.*

*P49 – ‘Because you are trying to struggle by doing more things then it becomes a very sad event and think the film will end up with – because of the beliefs of the shininess, coming into the dark. I would die... To the dark side that you feel that when you come to the end of this film a realization that you don’t feel like you have achieved something so it’s a very sort of saddened state at the end’.*

## **4.6 Nature of Agency**

### **4.6.1 Psychological Components**

Bandura’s (1986, 1999) social cognitive theory of behaviour proposes that behaviour is motivated by a series of different psychological incentives. Youngs (2006) found that monetary, power/status, and sensory incentives, are a key dimension of criminals’ self-reports about their offending actions. The psychological incentives were relatively similarly distributed.

**Table 4.10***Psychological Components LAAF Responses of the Non-Incarcerated Sample*

Theme	LAAF Item	N	%
PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPONENTS	Sensory gain	17	23.9%
	Incentive		
	Material/ financial gain	15	21.1%
	Social gain	15	21.1%
	Power/ status gain	12	16.9%
Interpersonal style	Avoidant of others	19	26.8%
	Confronting of others	15	21.1%
Locus of control	Proactive	24	33.8%
	Reactive	24	33.8%

Material/financial gain was described both in real life events and in hypothetical situations. Despite high communion themes found within the life trajectories, power/status gain was the lowest-frequency incentive. Sensory gain was the highest-frequency incentive in the life narratives and this was presented as doing events for pleasure in the narratives, through holidays, etc.

*P57 - 'If I was going to make it into a film that lads would like I would make it the holiday. Me and my mates all went out to Spain. It was epic – there were about 12 of us in our 20's and we were just pissed up the whole time. We didn't stop laughing from the minute we took off. There was lots of drinking, dancing, having a laugh, hanging out by the pool during the day. Some days that's all we could do, we just sat by the pool because we had such bad hangovers. But we would start drinking again and that would make us feel better and we just carried on drinking until the early hours again. That was a great time'.*

Reactive and proactive behaviours were equally distributed in the narratives and of those that displayed some form of interaction within their life stories, a higher percentage were more avoidant of others than of confronting behaviour. Avoidant behaviours were typically displayed in the protagonists describing their personalities. Although all are reasonably equally distributed, they do not apply to the whole sample, meaning certain interpersonal elements of a selection of the samples' self-identity are more evident and could reveal key themes within their narrative.

P68 – *‘I’m a quiet person, I’m a bit shy and don’t mix easily’.*

P6 – *‘Ah shy, yeah wouldn’t say nothing to anyone and pretty timid you know, trying to, not really having any confidence in anything just trying to get by really I suppose’.*

#### 4.6.2 Justifications and Neutralisations

Derived from Bandura’s (1999) moral disengagement theory and Sykes and Matza’s (1957) neutralisation theory of offending behaviours in which offenders rationalise their offences through the use of justifications or neutralisations, the protagonist’s justifications and neutralisations were coded based on the life story as a whole and how they justified or rationalised their behaviours in general, not just based on an offending behaviour.

**Table 4.11**

*Justification/Neutralisation LAAF Responses of the Non-Incarcerated Sample*

Theme	LAAF Item	N	%
Justifications/distortions	Assume the role of victim	22	31%
	Denial of responsibility	7	9.9%
	Diffusion of responsibility	5	7%
	Distorting the consequence	3	4.2%
	Denial of the victim	3	4.2%
	Appeal to higher loyalties	2	2.8%
	Displacement of responsibility	1	1.4%
	Condemnation of condemners	1	1.4%
	Denial of injury	-	-
	Dehumanising the victim	-	-

The use of justifications was relatively low within the narratives and interestingly, the highest-occurring justification was assuming the role of the victim and showing themselves in a negative light:

P49 – *‘middle unhappy, not blending in not feeling like you are a part of anything. Teenage hood middle of the film still not happy, not satisfied with trying to get what you thought was an easy task like getting work and stuff like that. To the dark side that you feel that when you come to the end of this film a realization that you don’t feel like you have achieved something so it’s a very sort of saddened state at the end’.*

### 4.6.3 Emotions and Self Identity

The emotional context of the narrative was divided into four different emotions using Russell’s (1997) four emotional quadrants of elation, distress, depression, and calm. Alongside these, emotions of empathy and hostility were also coded, which addressed participants’ interpersonal levels with others.

**Table 4.12**

*Emotion and Self-Identity LAAF Responses of the Non-Incarcerated Sample*

Theme	LAAF Item	<i>N</i>	%
Emotions	Non-aroused positive	31	43.7%
	Non-aroused negative	20	28.2%
	Aroused positive	15	21.1%
	Aroused negative	4	5.6%
	Empathy for others	28	39.4%
	Hostility towards others	20	28.2%
Identity	Others as significant	66	93%
	Self-ID stronger than others	31	43.7%
	Self-ID weaker than others	31	43.7%
	Others as non-significant	3	4.2%

The majority of participants displayed positive emotions ( $n=46$ ), in comparison to negative emotions ( $n=24$ ). Non-aroused positives were the highest-frequency emotion, which reflected the overall emotions of the film of happiness and calm consistent with the overarching narrative theme presented.

P10 – *‘I feel blessed really in some ways, I feel blessed really because I’ve got a stable home life, I’ve got great children, I’ve got grandchildren now, you know I feel, I feel thankful for it. I’ve had no major sort of traumas in my life you know my parents are elderly now but I’ve had no one, we’ve lost no one really. I feel thankful’.*

P17 - *I think I would end really well there has been some ups and downs but I’m a happy guy, I wake up every morning with a smile on my face’.*

Non-aroused negative emotions were also a key factor in the narratives of the general population. The negative emotions within the life narratives gave a significant indication of

the overall emotional characteristics of the protagonists' lives. Negative emotions were articulated in themes of unhappiness and dissatisfaction within the lives of the participants, indicating a subset of participants hold a different narrative theme.

*P19 – 'not always happy on the outside, not always on the inside'.*

*P58 – 'If my life was going to be a film it would be a sad one with heartbreak and sadness and getting into trouble all the time – I don't get anything right.'*

Nearly a third of the sample expressed some aspect of hostility within their life stories, coded as emotionally-charged, aggressive/angry behaviour. However, the protagonists were overall more empathetic, coded as 'understanding the feelings of others'.

*P9 – 'I think our relationship would get better and stronger along that journey but I come back to that first event that my learning to leave him to do what he is best at and not necessarily think I know best, I think I would of learnt from that moment that happened back then and I think I would apply that behaviour to this journey and I would take responsibility to do that because he is 23 he's not really mature and he would still react badly to some dad stuff and I would have to take responsibility for making that work and I think, over time we would both get good at that'.*

*P10 – 'you know keep myself to myself but I do care about people and I've always tried to do the right thing for people'.*

'Others' were significant in nearly all of the life narratives and this was shown in ways of friendships, love, children, partnership, and a variety of other aspects. Self-identity was equal with an equal number of participants having strong and weaker self-identities.

#### **4.6.4 Imagoes**

Characters within the life story are described by McAdams (1993) as 'imagoes'. These dominant figures are portrayed by how the individual personifies themselves in their narrative accounts of their life stories. Imagoes embody elements of McAdams's two central themes of 'agency' and 'communion'.

**Table 4.13***Imagoes LAAF Responses of the Non-Incarcerated Sample*

Theme	LAAF Item	<i>N</i>	%
Identity - protagonist	Survivor	16	22.5%
	Maker	10	14.1%
	Friend	10	14.1%
	Traveller	9	12.7%
	Escapist	9	12.7%
	Caregiver	7	9.9%
	Lover	7	9.9%
	Warrior	6	8.5%
	Sage	2	2.8%
	Ritualistic	1	1.4%
	Teacher	1	1.4%
	Counsellor	1	1.4%
	Arbiter	-	-
	Healer	-	-
	Humanist	-	-
	Identity of others	Caregiver	12
Lover		11	15.5%
Warrior		8	11.3%
Teacher		6	8.5%
Counsellor		2	2.8%
Escapist		1	1.4%
Healer		1	1.4%
Maker		-	-
Traveller		-	-
Sage		-	-
Ritualistic		-	-
Humanist		-	-
Arbiter		-	-
Survivor		-	-

‘Friend’ was the most prevalent imagoes across the sample with participants discussing a close association within their life trajectories. Interestingly, ‘Survivor’ was the strongest of

the imagoes within the life trajectories. Understood as being a victim, but surviving and overcoming bad/difficult situations within their life, this is significant given the overcoming-adversity/Inspirational genre the participants chose as the theme of their lives to follow.

*P12 – ‘I suppose if I was being negative I would be showing myself as a victim and then as a survivor so sort of a transition.’*

*P64 – ‘I think that would be how she deals with stuff, how she copes with it and overcomes it and gets back on her feet and has something good again. It’s like I have shitty stuff like I was going out with a lad that hit me – but then I met xxxx[husband] and I’ve been with him for 28 years. Then I had 2 kids, so it was something good – there’s my life, it’s turning around, it’s good – but then I get a job and I have loads of shit in a job. So I think it would be how I deal with stuff and overcome it’.*

Other significant imagoes within the offenders’ life stories were ‘the maker’, someone seeking achievement rather than power; ‘the friend’, loyal and lifelong friends central; and ‘the traveller’, someone who progresses over terrain, exploring, fast-paced; and ‘the escapist’, someone unwilling to take on responsibility for work or home, fun-loving, and partying at weekends.

Interestingly, the importance of ‘others’ was often expressed within the narratives, where over half of the participants had a positive person in their lives, typically expressed in the way of a friend, a caregiver, or a lover.

*P23 – my best mates, one that was already in the core and my mate that got me through training – my sidekick. So if we are talking about hero action movie my sidekick’.*

*P2 – ‘my grandad in there as well on my dad’s side cause he’s just an amazing, he’s a good influence on my life doesn’t know it obviously bless him but yeah and my dad would be a huge influence on my life I think, definitely’.*

*P3 – ‘my husband because he supports me and encourages me, he erm there’s another word I’m looking for as well, he believes in me.’*

## 4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter reveals key narrative themes within the participant's life stories, showing that the LAAF is a valid tool for eliciting narratives not just in an offending sample, but also in a non-offending sample, highlighting how this engaging technique is diverse in its use. The overarching narrative theme of the non-incarcerated sample is positive in nature and the aspects of self-identity revealed are optimistic. This predominant theme is supported in its nature by LAAF items that corroborate the key themes showing this is how the non-incarcerated offenders perceive their lives. However, themes opposing this positive narrative are also revealed in the frequency analysis in such, not every participant's narrative was positive, not every participant was in search or centred their life story on optimistic happy events. Some participants, as asserted by McAdams (1993), were more likely to portray themes of communion than agency highlighting that there is differentiation in the narratives and not all non-incarcerated offenders perceive their self-identity the same.

Some narratives centre on hostility, unhappiness, tragic events, and negative emotions which are not drawn out in frequency analysis. Sandberg's (2009) narrative themes that are embedded in a gangster discourse were also identified within the sample highlighting how differences underpin different narrative themes and the mentions of crime and criminality. Therefore, in the next chapter, a thematic analysis of the responses will be performed using Smallest Space Analysis (SSA) to identify what different themes emerge and, although this chapter reveals the overarching narrative theme and validates the LAAF procedure, this will allow the identification of any themes present in the narrative accounts. Particularly, if the four narrative action system (NAS) themes are present and provide greater detail of what the narratives of this non-incarcerated sample are.



# **Chapter 5: A Narrative Model of Non-Incarcerated Offenders: Thematic Analysis of the LAAF Items**

## **5.1 Introduction**

In his research on life-stories, McAdams (1993) highlighted agency and communion as the underlying components of narratives that underpin differences in human function and organise personal myths. Regularly cited as fundamental aspects of interpersonal personality (Dancer & Woods, 2006; Herman, 1996; Leary, 1957; Schutz, 1992), these themes can distinguish the motivational trends individuals strive for within their life stories and can differentiate individuals' internal disposition. Youngs and Canter (2011, 2012) describe these variations as two psychological constructs of potency and intimacy.

Potency and intimacy were identified in the development of the narrative action system (NAS). The NAS found four narrative roles in a study with offenders and gave a coherent framework for understanding and giving substance to an individual's behaviour. Youngs and Canter (2011) stated that narrative offence roles indicated the processes exerted on a specific crime event by revealing the core psychological themes within the narrative that were active at the time of the crime. These effectively also supplied a distillation of the full, unfolding life story, of the individual offender. The Professional is a role high in potency and low in intimacy and represents an individual who attempts to master the environment. The Hero is a role high in both potency and intimacy and is a role of someone overcoming struggles for a greater good. In contrast, the role of the Revenger is low in both potency and intimacy depicting an individual who has been wronged and needs to avenge this, and the victim which is low in potency and high in intimacy. This was further supported by the LAAF study (Canter & Youngs, 2015) which found these four roles to apply to the life narratives of offenders.

Chapter 4 revealed that an overarching theme was present within the narrative accounts given by the participants, yet underlying themes were also revealed to be present within these narrative accounts. This then would be expected to present themes within the thematic structure of the narratives by the co-occurrence of LAAF items. In this chapter, the LAAF responses were analysed to explore themes in the life stories of a non-incarcerated sample by examining the thematic structure of the responses. The study aims to identify if the thematic

structure of the narratives reveals that roles are present within the life stories of a non-incarcerated sample. This then can aid in the understanding of how the offending narratives are assumed as being a distillation of a full unfolding story and how these are embedded within life narratives and how these roles are underpinned. Identifying what underpins the narratives of non-incarcerated participants will be done by firstly depicting if the four roles of the Narrative Action System can be identified within the life stories of the general population, and secondly, to establish whether Youngs and Canter (2012) proposed intimacy and potency distinction in narratives are recognised in the life narratives of a non-incarcerated sample putting forward a model of differentiation.

The research questions within this chapter are: Can the life narratives of a non-incarcerated sample be differentiated by the NAS roles as these have only been identified within the roles criminals adopt in an offending action? And if so, are these roles underpinned by the intimacy and potency distinctions identified by Youngs and Canter (2012)? It is hypothesised that the four narrative roles will be revealed within the life narratives and that they will have proposed intimacy and potency distinctions like the NAS.

## **5.2 Data Analysis Method**

### **5.2.1 Participants**

The participants used in this study were the participants who had not disclosed committing an offence during the interview process. Those who had committed an offence were removed from this analysis due to the study focusing on non-offenders to determine the narratives of a non-offending sample. The participants consisted of 51 individuals (20 males; 31 females) aged between 18-75 years. The mean age of the sample is 37.55 years ( $SD = 16.21$ ).

### **5.2.2 Analysis**

The 51 cases that had been coded following the LAAF content dictionary in a dichotomous format, with 1 where the information was present, and 0 where the information was absent, were statistically analysed. This coding meant the questionnaire responses were inter-correlated using Jaccard's coefficient and subjected to Smallest Space Analysis (SSA). Jaccard's coefficient was because it is used to assess the degree of co-occurrence between variables and has been found to work well with dichotomous variables (Borgs & Lingo, 1987). In doing so, it ignores the co-occurrence in relationships between missing information

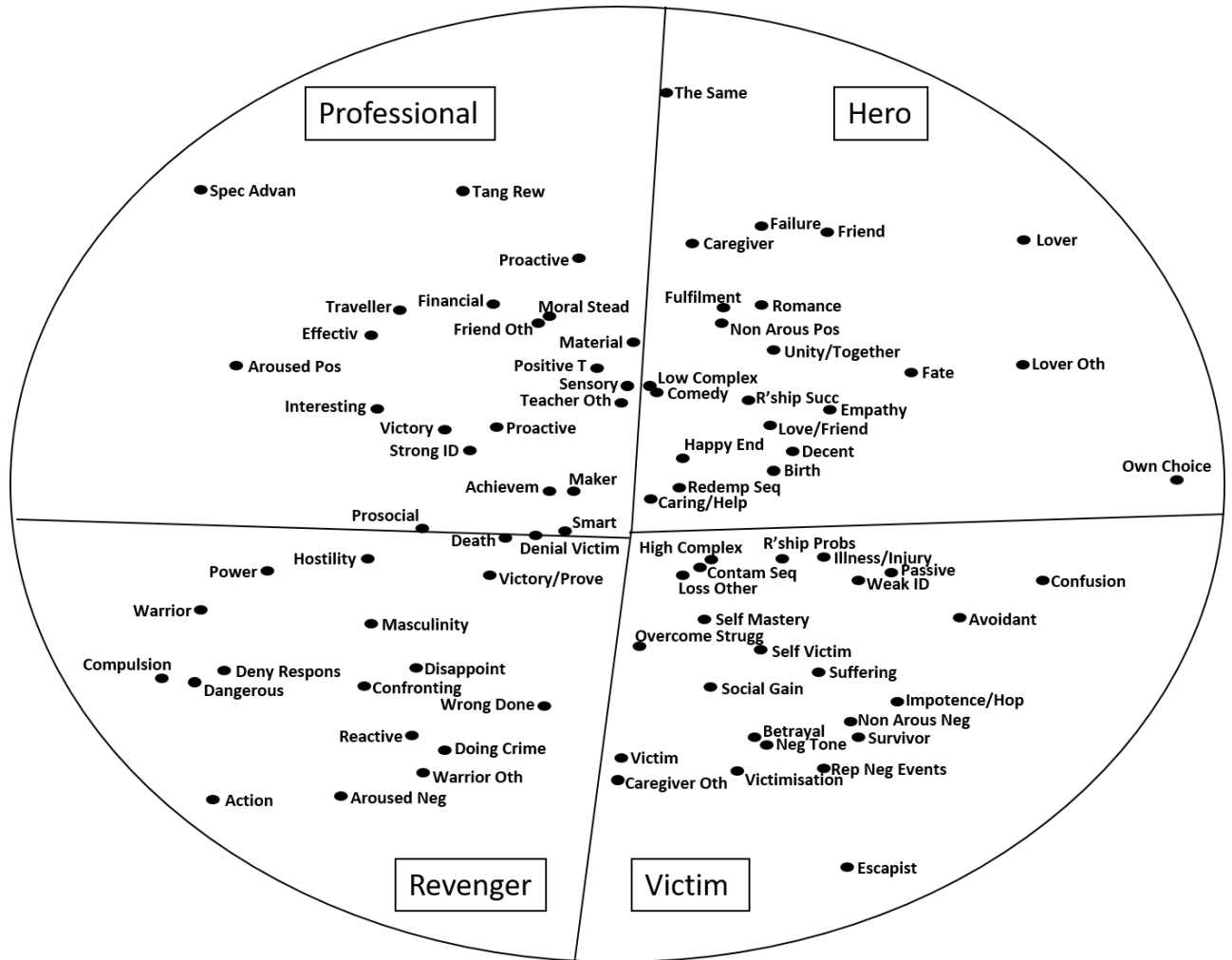
which provides a clearer SSA plot and eliminates bias towards them (Canter, 2000; Godwin, 1999). As previously described within the methodology chapter, SSA is a form of nonmetric multidimensional scaling (MDS) developed by Guttman and Lingoes (Lingoes, 1973) in which the LAAF items are represented as points in space and the closer together the ranked variables appear on the plot, the higher likelihood there is that there is a relationship between the variables.

A facet theory approach was used to explore the inter-correlation between the items. In this, the regions of items in the SSA-I plots are distinguished based on the continuity of the items in the plot. There are no mathematically precise positions for the line, they represent boundary conditions between the regions defined within the plot. Items that are near the boundary regions are expected to share more qualities with the other items within that region of the plot and are expected to share fewer qualities with the items that are placed further away on the plot (Lingoes, 1973). Appendix 11 shows the LAAF items and the SSA abbreviations of these for ease of interpretation.

### 5.3 Smallest Space Analysis

Figure 5.1.

*Smallest Space Analysis of LAAF Items of Non-Offenders of the Non-Incarcerated Sample*



85 Variables from 51 cases of the non-incarcerated sample of the general population LAAF responses. Vector 1 by Vector 3 of 3D solution. Coefficient of alienation 0.18620

The first projection (vector 1 by vector 3) of a three-dimensional SSA-I solution is presented in Figure 5.1. This consists of 85 variables of LAAF items, where those items that occurred less than 3 times were omitted so as not to skew the analysis. The three-dimensional solution was considered to describe the pattern of relationships better than the two-dimensional solution. Some items in the SSA-I are labelled as summaries of the full behaviour, but the full behaviours are presented in Appendix 11 for ease of interpretation.

The SSA also produces a coefficient of alienation (Borgs & Lingoes, 1987) which shows the best fit between the correlations and the geographic representation of the items in the configuration (Guttman, 1968). A score of zero signifies a perfect fit, and a score of 1 is a poor fit. Scores in the range of under 0.15 are considered a good fit, scores in the range of 0.15 and 0.20 are considered a reasonably good fit, and those above 0.2 are considered an acceptable fit. The closer together the variables appear (co-occur) in the space, it can be assumed that these variables, which could be behaviours or actions, are likely to co-occur.

The number of variables and the amount of error in the data can influence the level of fit in the data. As the LAAF framework has a large number of variables (85), it is expected that the level of fit between the plot and the matrix would be around 0.2-0.3, showing an acceptable level of fit. The Guttman-Lingoes coefficient of alienation for this solution is 0.18620 indicating a reasonably good level of fit between the Jaccard's co-efficient and the LAAF items, and their corresponding geometric distances in the plot configuration.

The pattern of co-occurrence of the items has a similar item configuration to that found in previous research by Youngs and Canter (2012). As hypothesised, this suggests that similar features exist in the life narratives of the general population as they do within the life stories of offenders in relation to their criminal offences. The item configuration can be understood by the four distinct narrative themes of hero, victim, revenger and professional, as found with Youngs and Canter (2012). Each narrative theme is underpinned by a combination of LAAF items that reveal similar psychological processes to these four roles in the individual's affective state, cognitive interpretation, and self-awareness. The narrative roles are also governed by two polarising facets of intimacy and potency, which are identified in the LAAF items through various combinations of the underlying psychological processes. The promising result of broadly similar regions demonstrates the validity of the psychometric properties of the scale.

### 5.3.1 Internal reliability

A Cronbach's alpha coefficient is used to assess the level of internal reliability of the items that are suggested to measure each narrative role. An alpha value of above 0.8 is perceived as a good measure, and above 0.6 is deemed as acceptable (Field, 2018).

**Table 5.1**

*Internal Reliability of the Four Narrative Roles revealed by the SSA*

Narrative Role	Professional	Victim	Hero	Revenger
Number of items in LAAF	21	24	22	18
Cronbach's $\alpha$	.775	.827	.687	.881

Cronbach's alpha shows that each region within the SSA-I plot displayed in table 5.3.1 has a good to acceptable level of internal consistency for the themes presented in the different sections of the plot.

## 5.4 Results: Narrative Roles

### 5.4.1 The Professional's Adventure

The items in the upper left region of the plot depict a similar theme to Youngs and Canter (2012) Professionals Adventurer narrative. In the criminal context, this narrative is one through which life is seen as an opportunity for mastering the environment and in it, there are effective interactions through which the character will gain satisfaction and acquire tangible rewards. Canter and Youngs (2009, p. 130) describe the Professional as an "ever moving adventurer who tries to overcome diversity and take control of the new challenges in order to emerge victorious throughout life's journey".

Underpinned by a life narrative of adventure, the Professional narrative role stems from Frye's (1957) mythos of summer, romance. Romance, in Frye's (1957) framework, signifies an adventurer who attempts to overcome hardship and master new challenges to go through life victorious. The essential element of a plot in romance is an adventure, and Murray (1985) also relates the romance myth with success in which there is a victorious achievement by a hero who experiences adventures in conquering evil. Effectively, this shows a quest for good in which the protagonist strives to overcome this evil.

As can be seen in the upper left region of the plot, there is a co-occurrence of LAAF items that also portray a life theme of a protagonist who is victorious in mastering his or her environment, and it is also representative of the Professional's adventure narrative established by Youngs and Canter (2012). The Professional's adventure NAS role stems from offenders' accounts of their crimes, however, Canter (1994) articulated that criminal narratives are a distillation of full life narratives and this supports that the narrative of the Professional is also prevalent in the life stories of non-offenders within the general population.

The role of the Professional, identified within non-offenders, is someone who is determined, happy, with an outlook on life that is focused on achieving success. Low intimacy is represented here with a pleasurable affective state to the professional narrative, and this is revealed with the 'positive tone' variable occurring within this region of the SSA alongside 'proactive voice' and 'proactive behaviour's which are also present. These are also indicative of high potency in relation to the cognitive state of the individuals in which they take responsibility for their actions.

The co-occurrence of these variables within this region gives light to the overarching theme of the protagonist within the Professional narrative as optimistic and positive, being in control of situations and displaying behaviours of taking action. Supported by 'aroused positive emotions', the broad class of mood being seen is elation, combining of aspects of excitement, joy, happiness and exhilaration (Russell 1997).

This emotional state distinguishes the participant's descriptions of their life story, perceiving it to be pleasurable, and it can be similarly identified with Youngs and Canters (2012) Professional role which describes the offending experience as fun and interesting. Although low arousal is a high potency distinction of the affective state of the narrative in Youngs and Canter (2012), aroused positive emotions support the overall theme of joy and optimism to the narrative, yet the foundations are less aroused in that there is an element of routine taking responsibility for actions.

'Sensory gain' is also shown in this region, indicative of a pleasure-based focus to these narratives, with individuals seeking to fulfil a desire or a task and the character gaining satisfaction through physically feeling the experience presenting a pleasurable affective state.

The acquisition of tangible rewards, as found within the criminal narrative of the Professional, is also prevalent within this sample and it is displayed within the same region of

the SSA plot with the LAAF variables ‘tangible rewards’, ‘material gain’, and ‘financial gain’. This role, as with Youngs and Canter (2012), is low in themes of intimacy. It is also low in themes of McAdam’s communion in how individuals relate to the world and shape their identity; with the overall theme of the narrative within this sample being for success and material gain, which is revealed by these items.

The Professionals adventure in mastering the environment and emerging victorious is prevalent in these LAAF themes, where success and a theme of victory are revealed within them by ‘achievement’ and ‘victory’. All these underpinning themes of the professional, the nature of ‘victory’ show high potency in the protagonists achieving a higher status than fellow individuals, with the participants seeing themselves within this narrative as having a stronger self-identity (‘Strong Self-ID’) than others. The low intimacy displayed within this narrative is also displayed with ‘achievement’, in which the protagonist gains success in the achievement of tasks, jobs, goals, or important responsibilities and here, the narrative is primarily about and centred on success, plus the journey travelled to achieve success.

Adventure narratives, within a criminal context that specified effective skills and achievements, were similarly identified using the LAAF by Canter and Youngs (2015). The overcoming of evil or challenges can be also viewed in this region by ‘moral steadfastness’, in which the participants have faced challenges and returned to a new sense of life to better themselves, as well as to reach their overall goal, and bad situations within their lives have improved by a ‘special advantage’. Here, the narrative within this sample is all about mastering the environment and overcoming challenges for a tangible gain to be victorious, using ‘effectiveness’, skills, and competencies. These are all about agentic qualities (McAdams 1993), and the cognitive interpretation of their life is taking responsibility for their actions.

A strong self-identity is dominant within this narrative, in relation to the self-awareness and interpersonal identity of the participants within this region of the plot, and they perceive themselves as stronger as, and more powerful than, those with a weaker self-identity - but this strength is in a powerful context, and not in that of a manly, physical context. This is similarly found with Youngs and Canter (2012). They personify agentic imago characters (McAdams, 1993), with the productivity of the ‘maker’ creating, and focused on achievement. With the ‘traveller’ overcoming obstacles, progressing over terrain fast-paced and exploring, all central to Youngs and Canter’s (2012) Professional narrative high in



potency, low in intimacy and a very useful source in understanding how the participants within this region perceive themselves, underpinning what is central to this narrative theme.

The cognitive interpretation within this narrative is high in potency in taking responsibility for actions, is displayed by the proactive behaviours and the overall tone and focus of the narrative, being focused on achievement and being victorious. Others are insignificant within the criminal context of Professional narrative and this is somewhat echoed in the non-offender role of the professional, with little or no emphasis on relationships with others and being a primarily low intimacy narrative role. The only indication of others is in a 'friend other' or a 'teacher other' role, indicative of an individual within their life story who passes on knowledge or skills, or friend alongside them within their storyline.

Also, within this region of the plot, in support of the narrative theme of Professional being revealed in the life stories of non-offenders, is Sandberg's (2009) 'I'm interesting' and 'I'm smart' themes, both embedded within the gangster discourse of a violent subculture.

Participants presenting as interesting, strive to present themselves as fascinating and smart, presenting themselves as intelligent, competent, and clever, are also clear indicators of how this subset of protagonists perceive themselves, and the self-narratives they embody, utilising these assets to appear as fascinating and competent in their mastery of the environment, with a strong self-identity.

#### **5.4.2 The Hero's Quest**

In contrast to the role of the Professional, the upper right-hand region of the SSA plot reveals an overall narrative theme that can be interpreted as Youngs and Canter (2012) Hero's quest narrative. In the criminal context, the Hero narrative defines an individual as being on a heroic, righteous mission, and portraying their manliness in an attempt to impose their beliefs on events and situations within the world. The Hero narrative encompasses the idea of an overcoming struggle or mission that has a bigger, and better, purpose, and is all about the Hero proving himself - portraying masculinity, bravado, and success. The Hero role is derived from the underlying life narrative theme of Quest. This theme relates to Frye's (1957) comedy narrative, where the protagonist is concerned with overcoming obstacles in pursuit of a happy ending and joyful objectives, and in the context of this non-offending sample, that is where the overall theme of this narrative stems from.

The quest of the comedy narrative centres around the success of a man through harmonising

conflicting forces, the success being usually the result of a festivity, typically a wedding, and as a consequence of this, society is more peaceful and easy going (Murray, 1985). Likened to a romance or a love story, the achievement of success within this mythos is through external forces of harmony beyond the individual's control.

In summary, this theme is of the individual in pursuit of love and happiness and stability where not only are they focused on love and happiness, and where they “seek simple and pure pleasures, but they are generally optimistic and the recurrent emotions that they experience are generally positive, such as joy and contentment” (Canter & Youngs, 2009, p. 133). As can be seen from the co-occurrence of LAAF variables within this region, the overarching theme found is centred on love and happiness, and protagonists within this region's storylines are central to this, following the foundations for Canter and Youngs (2012) criminal narrative of the Hero.

The Hero narrative expresses high intimacy during the offending experience and similarly, in the non-offending context, in this sample from the general population, the Hero theme also expresses high intimacy and depicts an individual in which love, caring and relationships are the central elements to their life stories. The main genre here is ‘Romance’ and romance in the film industry is displayed by love stories and journeys of the heart, centred on passion and emotion. Comedy also appears within this region, with the psychological exposition of a comedy film described as happy, carefree, and comical, allowing an interpretation as to how individuals perceive their lives to be. Both genres underpin the overarching theme of this narrative, endorsing Frye's (1957) theme of comedy as a basis for the role of the Hero.

The variables ‘Love/Friendship’ and ‘Unity/togetherness’ stem from McAdams' (1993) themes of communion, and the presence of these are through the portrayal of expressions of love and how others were significant to them, through different relationships and stabilisation within the family, or a partner, with the protagonists idealising or having the togetherness of a family unit. Family and relationships were key within the Hero narrative, with a strong emphasis on love and intimacy and the pursuit of this in the quest they faced in searching for this happiness. This is in support of Bakan (1966) who found individuals had a strong need for love and intimacy, a theme that was central in some individuals' life stories. It was also seen in McAdams' (1993) communion themes, which showed how individuals related to the world; and those seen as high in communion identified as individual's striving for love and intimacy.

In relation to the self-awareness and interpersonal identity of the protagonists within this Hero region, the representation of the self and personification of individuals here are high in intimacy dominated by love. These life stories are crafted by McAdams (1993) communal characters who are orientated towards love and intimacy within their personal myths. The occurrence of 'Friend', presented as someone who is loyal, and a lifelong friendship is central to their narratives. The role of 'Lover', as someone who lives to love, and 'Caregiver', in which individuals care for and sacrifice themselves for others, suggest roles that are key in showing how the individuals within this narrative perceive themselves to be, how they make sense of their lives, and also what underpins the key themes within the identity of this Hero narrative. The references of 'caring/help' involving looking after children, grandchildren, or other members of the family, illustrate how central family and relationships are to this narrative role.

Within this region are three of Sandberg (2009)'s morally-decent narratives, in which individuals search for respect in conventional ways and show key elements of the self-identity and the cognitive interpretation of the Hero's storylines. Ways of presenting moral narratives of the self-encompass expressions of caring towards others and being moral by upbringing. Individuals downplay differences in perceiving them to be similar ('we're the same') so, the goodness of the real self is stressed (I'm Decent), alongside 'Own Choice', demonstrating the high potency of the narrative in taking responsibility for actions, but presenting their own evaluations too, with protagonists being in control of their own situation and behaviour. The victim plays an important role within the Hero narrative in which the offender uses as a vehicle in attaining his objectives within the offending experience. This reveals how others are significant within the Hero narrative in expressing desires and fulfilling their mission. In this context with non-offenders, the importance of others can be observed with the presence of 'lover other', with a partner in a romantic context being central to the narrative and to accomplish their quest for love and happiness.

The righteous mission, which the Hero pursues despite the harmonising of conflicting forces (Frye, 1957; Murray, 1985), and being part of a bigger mission (Youngs & Canter, 2012), can be seen here with 'fate'. Although fate means a predetermined course of events by the universe and out of the protagonist's control, here it can be interpreted as the harmonising (or conflicting) force which the protagonists face or something that they are fated to do, instead of events being predetermined - again supporting the description of their being engulfed in

the whole mission.

The forces faced, and the overcoming of struggles in pursuit of this happiness is shown by 'failure'. The mission is not all straightforward happiness, and the protagonists endure 'failure' within their life stories but this is not what they focus on, nor are their storylines centred on this failure. The Hero narrative also demonstrates high potency with an offending sample 'taking charge', and the crime is conceptualised through them conquering their environment by overcoming obstacles to achieve their offending aims. Within the non-offending sample, conquering the environment is portrayed by 'redemption sequences', in which the protagonists overcome their struggles to achieve their missions. Events are centred on love and happiness, by bad or negative events, or circumstances in their life stories resulting in good or positive outcomes, and feeling fulfilled "fulfilment", again demonstrating the high potency element of taking responsibility for actions.

The affective state within this narrative is of neutral, calm emotions ('non-aroused positive'), and in Youngs and Canter's (2012) Hero role, the emotional content shows low arousal. The presence of non-aroused positive emotions here displays similar themes of low arousal and reveals the tone and the nature of the hero as calm and content. The significance of others has been portrayed in the above paragraphs, and the feelings of others are considered too ('empathy'). These narratives were low in complexity, and a higher, more complex life story and a lack of coherence have been found by both Adler et al. (2007) and Habermas and Silveira (2008), leading to doubt within the narrative, making it incomprehensible and implying a disorganised sense of self. This gives way to the hero portraying a strong, coherent narrative, with a strong sense of self.

The Hero's role in Frye's comedy narrative prevails in the end, and comedy integrates the family, adjusting it to society as a whole. There is the foregone conclusion of a happy ending, and after overcoming the struggles faced in the mission, the Hero himself has cleverly navigated life effectively to reach this conclusion. In this narrative, the happy ending is present ('happy end'), with life stories in the narrative role being happy and optimistic. The events described in it, such as 'birth' and 'relationship success' giving the ultimate happiness and an end to the love story, revealed by weddings, relationships, and the birth of children.

### **5.4.3 The Victim's Tragedy**

In contrast to the positive roles of the Professional and the Hero, although both different in

their overall aims with material and tangible rewards for the Professional, and love and happiness for the Hero, the lower right region of the SSA-I plot depicts a narrative theme where the protagonist presents themselves in the role of a Victim. In the offending experience, the narrative role of the Victim includes a sense of confusion and is one of generalised impotence and meaninglessness. It is a life story underpinned by a sense that nothing makes any sense, where there are no rules, and nothing matters about the offending experience being against the protagonist's will (Youngs & Canter, 2013). Here, the offender sees himself as having no power and being alienated from others, who are nonetheless significant to him. In doing so, he sees himself as a Victim within this irony narrative (Youngs & Canter, 2012). This role stems from Frye's (1957) mythoi of winter irony. The Irony mythoi involves an individual who attempts either to prevent or encourage order to chaotic situations and understand the inconsistencies in life. The overarching theme of this narrative is of tragedy and a negative emotional world which is chaos. The mythoi of satire, as described by Murray (1985), is fundamentally about a protagonist who is imprisoned in the world, intending to show how dreams imposed on the world are inadequate. As can be seen by the lower region of the plot, this has several resemblances to the psychological components presented in Youngs and Canter's (2012) Victim narrative in a non-offending context.

The Victim narrative exhibits an overall sense of impotence and is low in potency in the offending experience. Victim's feel they have been wronged, yet they feel a sense of satire in relation to this wrong, but not in anger or violence, rather in the attribution of responsibility and blame to others. In this sample, the Victim theme also expresses low potency and a similar sense of injustice and impotency. The primary genre here is 'Tragedy', a genre that is a story of human suffering and a sense of sorrow, and it stereotypically portrays a protagonist who encounters negative events and a fall from grace or renown, leading to ruin. In Booker's (2004) *Seven Plots*, the tragedy plot centres on a theme of vulnerability and demise, in which the protagonist has a victim mentality and a dream pursued starts to go wrong with things slipping out of control, ending in destruction. This gives a key insight into how the protagonists here within the Victim narrative perceive their lives to be, and the outlook they hold.

The 'confusion' within this narrative can be interpreted as attribution of responsibility to others, showing distortion in their perceptions of reality beyond their understanding, in which

they do not accept responsibility for their actions. In addition, they see themselves as the victim to outside circumstances, be this stemming from others, or situations, and this is also indicative of a more aroused emotional state. The victim mentality is seen within this region, with 'Victim', 'Victimisation', and 'Self Victim', and is one in which the participant has the inverted notion that they are in fact the victim within this role, in support of Youngs and Canter (2012). However, in the LAAF procedure with offenders, the drawing of the 'irony' narrative form was not well represented (Canter & Youngs 2015). A clear theme of the weakness and lack of positivity and hope in this narrative (on which it is centred) is presented by 'impotence/hopelessness'.

The Victim in one instance is a result of the combination of multiple events described within the life trajectories 'Repeat Negative Events' and 'contamination scripts', echoing Booker's (2004) tragedy plot in which a good or positive event or state becomes a bad or negative event or state. The presence of 'suffering/injustice' in the lives of others during childhood here, although a redemption sequence within this narrative can be interpreted as the protagonist not redeeming these circumstances, this is seen as the norm as within Frye's (1957) irony mythoi in which social conventions are accepted.

This narrative encompasses predominately all the circumstances of contamination and the events described within the narrative vary from 'illness/injury', in which the protagonist faces physical or psychological illness and/or injury, 'relationship problems' was also prevalent in the narratives, in contrast to that of the hero narrative, in which relationship success was paramount. With this narrative, the protagonist experiences a relationship breakdown, usually that of a partner. There, life depictions also centred around loss ('loss other') in which a close associate, be this a human or an animal, passed away, showing how respondents here focus on the negative events within their life stories and how these are central to their storylines.

Crucially, and a key distinction between the narrative of the Victim and the Revenger in Youngs and Canter (2012), NAS is the sense of being wronged, which in the role of the Revenger is expressed through anger and hostility. In the role of the Victim, it is represented by helplessness and impotence, and is resembled within this sample by 'betrayal'. They have been the victim of circumstances in which they have been wronged, be this through abusing their trust, unfaithfulness, or something other. This betrayal is dealt with by victims in the way of satire; and Frye (1957, p. 224) notes: "one is wit or humour founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd, the other is object of attack". These themes resemble the

blaming of others and external circumstances as found within the Victim narrative.

The affective state within the Victim narrative is of displeasure and the emotional content, as resembled by Youngs and Canter (2012), is associated with negative emotions seen here with 'non-aroused negative' emotions. The feelings of displeasure associated with these participants range from sadness and depression to boredom. This is further reinforced by 'disillusionment', with participants feeling disappointed as a result of discovering something is not as good as one believed it to be.

The participants' self-awareness and interpersonal identity is weak ('weak self-ID'), and they view themselves as weaker than other people showing low intimacy. In a criminal Victim narrative role, the offender views themselves as weaker than the victim with a weaker self-identity. However, in this context, the individual sees themselves as weaker than others within the whole life story.

The narratives were presented with a 'negative tone', demonstrated by the discussion of negative events. However, some events that are predominately perceived as positive that were described by participants within the life stories were described with a negative connotation. The negativity is attributed to displeasure associated with high intimacy.

'Passive' tone was also present within this narrative, with behaviours of accepting and allowing what was happening, without response or resistance. Murray (1985, p. 179) notes, "In satire failure is achieved *despite* it being within the power of the hero to avoid; the cause of failure is the hero's ineptitude, corruptness, or idealism", showing the character of this narrative is that, although they can be in control of the events, they choose not to be.

Interestingly, in direct contrast to the narrative of the hero, life stories within the victim region were high in complexity. The structure of these narratives was less coherent and they presented them with a lack of contingent sequences, a higher word count, more characters, and less structure to their beginning, middle, and end components. McAdams (2006) found a successful narrative is challenging to construct when unexpected or difficult events or experiences occur within a life story, and they are harder to construct into a meaningful format. Ill-formed narratives (McAdams, 1998) are indicative of confusion.

This narrative theme shows individuals who have experienced many negative events, meaning it could be harder for the protagonists to articulate. Narratives higher in complexity, as stated above, imply a disorganised sense of self which demonstrates the confusion and

misunderstanding attributed to the role of the victim.

Others as non-significant appear in this region of the plot ('others non sig'), which contrasts with that of the role within Youngs and Canter (2012), with the victim primarily focused on their own objectives. Then, the life stories were not centralised around others but were primarily about the victim and their objectives.

'Avoidant' behaviours, that is avoiding direct interaction or involvement with others, were also present in how these individuals shaped their lives and detached themselves from society. Fascinatingly, 'social gain' appears in this region too, showing that despite this avoidance, there is a desire for intimacy with others and a seeking of recognition. This fits with how victims, in the offending experience, desire intimacy from their victims (Canter & Youngs, 2009; Youngs & Canter, 2012).

The self-awareness and interpersonal identity here are how the protagonist perceives themselves, and the self here is personified by the role of a 'survivor' and an 'escapist'. The survivor and escapist imagoes are low in communion and low in agency, however, and they see themselves as below others (as previously shown, with weak self-ID), with feelings of 'being put on' or 'having no choice' in the role of the 'survivor, and 'escapist' trying to escape the negative events individuals have experienced in life with little responsibility. Giving way to other characters highlights key themes of social distance and/or closeness, which is key in the defining of their identity. The only mention of others is in the role of someone who cares for others ('caregiver other').

In tragedy, failure is inevitable because of forces such as social limits, which are often beyond the individual hero to avoid. And in satire, failure is achieved despite it being within the power of the hero to avoid. The cause of the failure is the hero's ineptitude, corruptness, or idealism (Canter & Youngs, 2009). The important thing to note within this narrative is that the presence of 'overcoming struggles' signifies some small hope within these participants, in the sense of having faced numerous negative events, they have overcome them or attempted to overcome them to continue with life, and this could be an element in which has diverted their path from one of criminality. It could be as a result of 'self-mastery', in which the protagonists become more powerful or wiser through mastering, enlarging, or bettering the self. Nonetheless, despite this, the overall depiction of their narratives are sad and negative.



#### **5.4.4 The Revenger's Mission**

In the fourth segment of the SSA, in the lower-left region of the plot, the items grouped together reveal a narrative that is a resemblance to Youngs and Canter's (2012) Revenger. Like that in the role of the Victim, the role here, in contrast to the Professional and the Hero, is negative.

The Revenger's narrative in the offending experience is a story of an individual who has been wronged and deprived, and their fate is to retaliate and seek revenge to avenge this hurt which manifests itself in the way they carry out their crime. Revengers see their actions as right and that committing an offence is the only choice to vindicate the wrong they have suffered, believing this to be a result of fate,

Canter and Youngs (2009, p. 132) define this as capturing the revenger's "egotistical sense of his own significance". This narrative role stems from Frye's (1957) mythos of autumn, tragedy. The Tragedy narrative is a story of an "extraordinary victim," an individual unfairly targeted who must respond to the wrong or deprivation they have suffered.

In tragedy, there is a major movement towards the death or defeat of the hero. This fall or demise is the death stage of the seasonal calendar of Frye's mythoi. The plot of the tragedy narrative begins with a hero, in which all is good and the hero has free will, but there is an initial act that provokes some form of revenge, which is controlled by external fate. The protagonist then tries to counterbalance this wrong, to make things right, and then the hero falls. As Murray (1985, p. 178) noted, "The hero is defeated, and the inevitable force of fate is vindicated".

Within the Revenger narrative, there is a theme of wrong done to them, and an over-estimation of control in the beliefs of the victim. The way in which they try to avenge this wrong is, as mentioned earlier, in the distinction between the Hero and the Revenger, through anger and hostility.

This is what the findings with this sample focus on. The genre used to represent the narrative is 'action' as found within the bottom region of the chart. The interpretation of an action film is one in which physical action takes precedence within the storyline, by many physical challenges, demonstrated through various methods of violence, frantic chases and physical feats. The use of these genres within this sample is fully representative of the themes of tragedy and revenge with external forces and anger and hostility.

The key themes within this narrative are 'being wronged' and 'revenge'. Being wronged is shown here by the presence of LAAF item, 'wrong done', a revenger NAS theme in which there is the mention of the protagonist (or someone of theirs) being wronged within their life trajectories.

Revenge within the narratives did not feature in more than 3 occurrences to be present within the SSA and was removed, yet the other revenger NAS theme of 'compulsion' also features within this region. The appearance of this variable reveals how the protagonist feels compelled to do something, and this is out of their control, which can be interpreted as an attribution of responsibility to others. This fits with the role of the Revenger in the criminal narratives and reveals how this behaviour is also recognised in the life stories as a whole in a sample of the general population.

In respect of the cognitive interpretation of the narrative, the attribution of responsibility to others is indicative of low potency and low intimacy, as found with Youngs and Canter (2012). This role here is the first role within this sample that features distortions and justifications for behaviour within its narrative, which highlights a key difference between this narrative and the others in relation to cognition.

The use of justifications to rationalise behaviour by Sykes and Matza (1957), who believe that offenders create a narrative account, justifies the offence and keep moral obligations in place and two such justifications can be seen within this region. The denial of responsibility ('deny responsibility') in the offending context, would be such as the offender saying that things were not their fault and were a result of circumstances out of their control. It is the same within this sample in which protagonist's attribute responsibility to others and circumstances out of their control eliciting the key themes of the tragedy narrative, as of being one of fate.

The content of narratives within this region was of a different nature, in that the events discussed were more in line with the above-mentioned genre of action. Therefore, given this and the content of Youngs and Canter's (2012) Revenger, foreseeably denial of victim ('deny victim') in which the participants, in the offending experience, are under the belief that the victim deserved the offence and had it coming. This was represented within the present sample. The presence of this within this region highlights how cognition within this role is centred on an individual who vindicates the wrong faced, and justifies it via distortions,

supporting Youngs and Canter (2012) low levels of potency by sharing a similar theme.

One of the key themes within this narrative, in contrast to the victim, is redeeming wrong done through violence, and this is prevalent within this region with several behaviours seen. In the tragedy myth, the hero is wronged and seeks to avenge it. 'Hostility' is a reactive behaviour, in response to the wrong done to them, and expedites the Revenger.

This is further expressed through themes of 'masculinity and bravery' with a show of masculine behaviours of strength, toughness, and courageous characteristics, and 'confronting' others by reacting to this wrong and dealing with the situation in person. There is a sense of 'compulsion', in feeling required to deal with the situation in this violent way, it being beyond the protagonist's control, and there appears then to be a 'power gain', providing the incentive for the acts of violence and the protagonist ascertaining 'victory/prove self'. Here, the narrative is primarily focused around the physical and aroused affective state of protagonists, in which they gain pleasure. This narrative is very different in theme to that of the other narratives, and is very physical, with the content being in line with the offending narrative of the Revenger's tragedy.

The emotional content here within this narrative is negative, in line with the theme of the story presented. The 'aroused negative' emotions signal high displeasure and arousal, and this emotional pattern portrays distress and anger, supportive of the confronting behaviours above alongside 'reactive' behaviours also presented within this region, in response to the wrong(s) they have faced.

The tone here is negative, and the self-awareness and interpersonal identity of the revengers is in line with this negativity in the different identities of the participants, who rely on it while enacting a role within their life story, with the 'warrior'. The role of the warrior forcefully engages and attains power over others, in a battle-like approach, which can be interpreted as the role the protagonist took in avenging the wrong faced and the aroused cognitive state here. This fits within the role of the revenger, as the fall of the hero and a lack of regard, echoed by a theme of 'disappointment' in relation to the events. Also present here is the mention of the role of the person wronged with the 'warrior other', in which there is a strong character featuring in the storyline of the protagonist.

Interestingly, the events discussed within his narrative were for subjects 'doing crime' and 'death', and mention of these fits within the overall theme indicating similarities to that of the

narrative within the offending experience. These narratives were centred on criminality and are indicative of the role the protagonist played in avenging the wrong done to them and the lack of significance to others. The presence of ‘disappointment’ here is in support of themes of negativity as dominant to this role and a sense of pleasure in doing so.

Sandberg’s (2009) ‘I’m dangerous’ narrative features within this region, in which the protagonist narrates a dangerous self in presenting a violent persona. This narrative is embedded in a gangster discourse, in which the personal stories of young men are told, through which they emphasise how hard and violent they are. This is significant in understanding the self-identity within the role of the revenger, especially in the context of a non-offending sample.

## **5.5 An Integrated Model of Narrative Roles**

The findings within this study have convincing evidence to support the intimacy and potency-based distinctions within narrative roles revealed by Youngs and Canter (2012) within their integrated model of narrative offence roles and that these can be applied to a non-offending sample in relation to not just an event but the full life narrative. As mentioned previously, intimacy is understood as ‘the significance of the victim to the offender’ in reference to an interpersonal interaction that attains the offender’s objectives and potency is referred to as the imposing of the offender’s will more indicative of an offender taking charge. These roles were drawn together by offenders’ situational interpretations (cognitive), emotional experience (affective), and self-awareness (identity) in their accounts of their crimes. As predicted, the empirical structure of the SSA reveals the underlying psychological processes of intimacy and potency with higher intimacy in the upper and lower right of the plot and lower in the upper and lower left and higher potency in the upper two quadrants and lower in the bottom two. The participants in this study were non-incarcerated therefore giving the narrative roles significant support in their use with a non-offending sample.

### **5.5.1 Cognitive Interpretations**

Within the offending experience, the psychological processes within the cognitive interpretation centre on the way the offender constructs interpretations about the offence and their actions within it. In Maruna and Copes’ (2005) extensive research on criminal thinking styles, it outlines the importance of such research in providing a rich source of knowledge about how offenders interpret their involvement in criminality and how this theory of

neutralisation can be used outside criminality to interpret the accounts people give for their actions. Several neutralisation techniques offenders use to justify their offending behaviour are proposed by Sykes and Matza (1957). These techniques comprise of denial of injury, denial of responsibility, denial of the victim, condemnation of those who condemn, and an appeal to higher loyalties. Within this theory, Sykes and Matza (1957) posit that these techniques are used to self-justify acts that conflict with a person's moral beliefs and different rationalisations can reflect different criminal thinking styles.

In support, Bandura (1990) classifies three sets of moral disengagement with the initial set focusing on redefining the offence through behavioural justifications in redeeming the harmful behaviour into good behaviour. The other two sets focus on the individual's role in minimising the harm caused and the relationship with the victim. The latter two disengagement practices relate to: displacing responsibility, diffusing responsibility, dehumanising the victim, assuming the role of the victim for oneself, and distorting the consequences of the action.

Traditionally, understanding these justifications which act as a motivational factor preceding offending behaviour can assist with understanding the reasoning behind individuals' criminal acts. Yet moral disengagement has become increasingly more prevalent in understanding everyday situations and has been observed in individuals' cognitive processes in relation to the consumption of meat (Graça et al., 2015). Mechanisms of moral disengagement have also been analysed in relation to industries whose productions are harmful to human health and how moral consequences are used to eliminate these restraints (White et al., 2009). These have also been used in sport identifying morality in doping and behaviours that occur during sports participation (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2010). Such widespread use of justifications highlights their validity in an application to non-offending behaviours and acts.

Canter and Youngs (2012) proposed that intimacy and potency could differentiate the neutralisations to fit within the different narrative roles by the way in which offenders neutralised their offending behaviour. Cognitions that were less focused on the impact, dismissing or minimising the harm to the victim such as Sykes & Matza's (1957) denial of the victim and Bandura's (1990) assuming the role of the victim oneself, were found to have low intimacy. In high intimacy roles, the focus is on the impact of the victim and offending will not be justified by minimising the harm but will take the form of focusing on the offender's objectives. Potency can also be differentiated by the type of justification method

implemented. Canter and Youngs (2012) hypothesised that roles low in potency would attribute responsibility for the situation and action to others. For example, in Sykes and Matza's (1957) denial of responsibility, high potency roles reflect the offender taking responsibility for his actions and evaluating them.

In this study, LAAF items stemming from statements that encompass these justifications and reflect the hypothesised potency and intimacy-based differences within the cognitive elements of the narrative, are separated on the plot and the overall theme in relation to them are like that of the offending sample of Canter and Youngs (2012). In this sample, cognitions less focused on impact in dismissing or minimising harm were associated with roles low in intimacy. This can be observed in the upper and lower left-hand side of the SSA-I plot with the Revenger which featured a significant number of justifications in the 'denial of responsibility', 'denial of victim', and 'wrong done to them'; and in the Professional with low intimacy behaviours displayed by the life stories being primarily centred on success and achievement. In opposition, in the upper and lower right-hand side of the plot, the narrative roles are higher in intimacy and are concerned with the impact on others, these themes are reflected in the roles of the Victim and the Hero focusing on their own objectives with no justifications and a desire for intimacy within the life stories.

The level of potency further distinguished the narrative roles, with those low in potency attributing the responsibility for situations and action to others and high potency roles where individuals own up to their actions and evaluate them. Similarly found with Youngs and Canter (2012), there is a clear facet of potency dividing the SSA plot with low potency items in the lower two regions of the plot in the role of the Victim with items of 'confusion', 'hopelessness', and masculine behaviours in the Revenger of 'wrong done' and 'compulsion' attributing responsibility to others.

In contrast, the upper regions of the plot display high potency distortions in which the offenders take responsibility for their actions but present their own evaluations for doing so and for the greater good. The Professional in their pursuit of tangible rewards and success within the job like nature of this role and the Hero in their pursuit for love and relationship success.

There are recognised differences in the proposed cognitive potency and intimacy distortions within the behaviour descriptions however Youngs and Canter (2012) used the Narrative

Roles Questionnaire (NRQ) which is used to indicate the roles criminals see themselves as playing whilst committing a crime whereas this study utilises the LAAF framework, focusing on the whole life story of participants and is not centred around an offending event, nor is it directed at offenders and the variables differ. This means the perceived context of the variables has to be altered to reflect the roles portrayed within the narratives, in such 'fate' can be perceived as the Hero's mission to control the situation in that they were fated to do so this then can still support the hypothesised potency and intimacy divide.

### **5.5.2 Affective Components**

Emotions have been found to be underpinned by the combination of arousal/pleasure and non-arousal/displeasure (Russell, 1997). These generated four classes of mood: Elation (High Arousal, High Pleasure), Distress (High Arousal, High Displeasure), Depression (Low Arousal, High Displeasure), and Calm (Low Arousal, High Pleasure). Canter and Ioannou (2004) demonstrated that criminals' emotional experiences during crimes were supported by the distinction of pleasure/arousal and identified Russell's (1997) four modes of emotion which have been previously supported in research on both non-offenders and offenders and narratives (Hunt, 2020; Ioannou et al., 2016).

Youngs and Canter (2012) found that intimacy reflected the pleasure/displeasure element of emotions, with higher levels of intimacy being associated with greater displeasure derived from the offending. However, this differed in the context of intimacy for a greater good such as recognition, in which the offending experience would be more pleasurable. Arousal is associated with potency. The lower levels of arousal within a crime, associated with higher levels of criminal potency are where the offender is solely imposing his will. The low levels of potency show the offender as not in control and the offending would have an increased aroused emotional state.

Emotional states within narrative roles are also governed by the two polarising facets of potency and intimacy. The emotions underpinned by combinations of arousal/non-arousal and pleasure/displeasure are reflected in Youngs and Canter (2012) narrative roles. Intimacy based emotions are associated with the pleasure/displeasure element. Roles higher in intimacy were more likely to be associated with greater displeasure.

The configuration of items in the SSA-I plot reveals a clear distinction in the emotional state of the protagonists and gives some support to the displeasure/pleasure hypothesis Youngs and

Canter (2012) identified. However, a difference noted is in the role of the Hero and the Revenger as can be observed in the two lower regions of the plot which depict an emotional state that is negative and displeasure-able. The Victim and Hero roles are high intimacy, said to be associated with displeasure in the offending experience. However, Youngs and Canter (2012, p. 14) state that “direct contact may mediate the generation of displeasure”. Given that the present sample is representative of overall life narratives of non-offenders and not an act of criminal behaviour, the items within these regions are in support of pleasure/displeasure division and can be readily understood as the overall affective state of the protagonists and not just a distillation of a full narrative in relation to the event of an offence. This can be interpreted as offenders’ narratives being a warped version of a full narrative (Canter 1994). In contrast, the items in the upper two regions of the plot reflect a life narrative that is pleasurable with positive emotions and tone supporting Youngs and Canter (2012).

In relation to the arousal/non-arousal emotional state in the offending experience, roles high in potency were found to be less aroused during a crime with the offender simply imposing his will. Low levels of potency were found within offenders not in control of the event having a more aroused emotional state. In the offending context, the Professional and the Hero have a less aroused emotional state, as can be seen from the plot. The Hero within this role supports the psychological element of narratives provided by Youngs and Canter (2012) with non-aroused positive emotions within their life stories portraying calm. The role of the Professional, in contrast to Youngs and Canter (2012), has a more aroused emotional state. Here, the narratives are more supportive of joy and fulfilment which supports the pleasure state of the Professional role, however, the overall focus on material gain and communion values (McAdams, 1993), or what Youngs and Canter (2012) define as high potency with the protagonist imposing their will can be inferred as less aroused in the overall narrative theme.

The role of the Revenger again sustains the emotional state within Youngs and Canter (2012) portraying high arousal within the narratives (‘aroused negative emotions’), though in this sample with the overall life story the Victim portrays low arousal with themes of depression, nonetheless ‘confusion’ can be seen in this narrative and as a role that is low in potency in such the victim having no control over their life, this is indicative of a more aroused emotional state.



### 5.5.3 Self-Awareness

Self-identity was a key aspect within narrative roles with the premise that offending behaviour could be classified as a form of implicit or explicit interpersonal transaction. Canter (1994) found that a salient feature of an offenders' identity could be revealed by their self-awareness in relation to the victim, or target of their actions. McAdams' (1993, p. 124) non-criminological work on imagoes is a key point for identity, which he defines as: "*the characters that dominate our life stories . . . a personified and idealised concept of the self*". McAdams (1993) organises the different character types along the central themes of high/low agency and high/low communion.

Youngs and Canter (2012) found that narrative roles could encapsulate several of these character roles within offenders' narratives. The agentic imagoes of the *Warrior* (being in battle), the *Traveller* (overcoming obstacles), and the *Maker* (being productive), are all aspects of self-awareness that have the common themes of strength and dominance which contribute to criminal roles with high potency. The roles all suggest a common theme of dominance where the offender views themselves as stronger than the victim. In contrast, the imagoes of the *Escapist* (a sense of disconnectedness) and the *Survivor* (feelings of being put on and having no choice), are reflective of a sense of intimacy with self-awareness. They depict a role in which the offender seems weaker than his or her victim and the relevance of feelings and social distance/closeness is a dominant aspect.

Self-awareness is also related to the significance of others. A distinction can be made between others being significant in high intimacy roles and non-significant in low intimacy roles. The combinations of these psychological constructs underpin the basis of the narrative roles that offenders adopt during an offence. McAdams (1988, pg. 178) found imagoes to be the "*...most revealing of the secrets for human identity...*". McAdams (1988) argues that the imagoes are being crafted by the protagonist to play roles in specific stories which can psychologically distinguish an individual's identity and motives.

The way the participant views themselves and the roles they adopt within their life narratives is another psychological distinction that differentiates the narrative roles using the polarised facets of intimacy and potency. Roles lower in potency were reflective of a weak sense of self-identity, these distinctions are noticeable on the plot in the role of the Victim with the 'survivor' and 'escapist' imagoes attributing a weak self-identity on the lower right region of

the plot. In contrast, on the upper left side of the plot, the Professional has a strong sense of self-identity ('strong self-ID') with the 'traveller' and 'maker' imagoes revealing the individuals here view themselves as strong and is indicative of high potency.

Similarly, in the role of the Hero, the communal characters of the 'Lover', 'Caregiver', and 'Friend' are supportive of a strong self-identity and self-awareness, although not mainly like the offending narrative of the Hero found by Youngs and Canter (2012). The nature of this study is that it encapsulates the full life story, therefore the narratives included are not just focused on offending behaviour. The role of the Revenger is supported with the presence of the 'warrior' here, although typical of a strong self-ID personifies the role the protagonist adopts in avenging the wrong and does not epitomise the overall narrative.

The level of self-awareness within the roles that relate to the significance of others, in reflection of the intimacy element of Youngs and Canter's (2012) integrated model, is also supported within this sample. Others are seen as being insignificant for the Revenger 'getting own back,' omitting anything in order for this and the Professional narrative roles in the search of power and tangible rewards, and significant for the Hero in searching for love and relationships shown by many LAAF variables, and with the Victim others are deemed as significant here with 'social gain' in seeking a desire for intimacy which fits with the desire for intimacy in the offending role.

## **5.6 Chapter Summary**

The findings of the present study are in support of roles within the participants' life stories that fit within the roles found by Youngs and Canter (2011) and put forward an integrated Narrative Role Model for a non-incarcerated sample with the *Professionals Adventure*, *Hero's Quest*, *Victim's Tragedy*, and *Revenger's Mission*. The LAAF responses from the participants were coded and subject to thematic analysis using SSA-I which enabled the thematic structure of the items to be examined. The structure of the plot supported the four roles of the Professional, Hero, Revenger and Hero that were revealed by Youngs and Canter (2011, 2012) within their narrative action system for offending action. The findings are further distinguished by the operating facets of intimacy and potency that are similarly revealed within this sample.

The correlation of items here is in support of the four roles being present within a sample of

non-incarcerated participants and suggests that the narrative roles of the Professional, Hero, Revenger and Victim can be identified within a life story dimension supporting the use of the LAAF as found by Canter and Youngs (2015) and in the life stories of non-offenders which is novel in its findings as no such study has applied the LAAF to the general public and attempted to reveal if the NAS roles are identified here. This adds validity to the roles and can aid with future research in identifying how the distorted criminal narrative fits within the life story narrative.

The correlation of items within the distinct regions of the plot and the underlying psychological components supports those found by Youngs and Canter (2011) of this adds weight to this potency and intimacy distinction and brings support to the narrative roles being a combination of the combined psychological processes of cognitive, affective and identity constructs.

Despite the support, there are some differences identified within the dominant narrative themes in comparison to the LAAF, this could be down to several factors. The LAAF itself is a projective technique that focuses on the whole life story and not just encapsulating one offending event. Therefore, the underlying components and variables are distinctly different as is the nature of the events discussed, as a result of this differences would be expected.

This study is key as it focuses on themes within the whole life trajectory and applies a novel technique in a way it has not been presented before and it has revealed a similar structure in the narratives despite this. Research has previously suggested that individuals live by a dominant narrative (McAdams 1985, 1993, 1996) and that these dominant narratives are underpinned by certain psychological ideas (McAdams, 1993; Schutz, 1992; Youngs & Canter, 2011) which supports the four narrative themes here being found and can help to understand how the offenders deviate from these.

In summary, the LAAF has proven to be a fruitful technique for uncovering life narratives with non-offenders, as it has similarly done with offenders (Canter & Youngs 2015), and has also revealed that the psychological constructs that underpin the four roles of the narrative action system can be applied and are supported in the life stories not just an event and with non-incarcerated participants putting forward an integrative narrative model of differentiation. Such knowledge is useful in that it can help underpin why individuals deviate from their narratives into offending narratives and is a beneficial tool for treatment and

rehabilitation programs and prevention programs in offending behaviour. Further information on what underpins these narratives such as the personality aspects of the narratives to further substantiate theme is needed and this is delved into in the next chapters.

# Chapter 6: Narrative Themes: Demographics and Life Outcomes

## 6.1 Introduction

Previous research on narrative roles in offending action has focused solely on male offenders, with Youngs and Canter (2012) revealing four narrative roles that are utilised in offending action and similarly revealed in offenders' life narratives (Canter & Youngs, 2015). Despite these being fruitful in facilitating the understanding of criminal action, neither study delved deeper to better understand the relationship between the roles and the life narratives and how other elements could enable a greater understanding of them.

The construction of life stories is developed from infancy to adulthood with adults said to have constructed a self-identity by the time they reach adulthood (McAdams, 1993). Although culture and environment can influence the narrative (McAdams, 1995), and differences have been identified within the complexity and structure of narratives in such, the longer you have lived the more stories and events you have to tell, the overall contents of narratives have been found to have similar core themes and structures (Fromholt & Larsen, 1991; McAdams et al., 2001; McAdams & McLean, 2013).

Differences in relation to gender and narrative accounts have been recognised, with female narratives being more centred on relationships, intimacy, and communal values (Bischoping, 1993; Fivush et al., 2000; Fivush & Buckner, 2000, 2003; McAdams et al., 2004, 2006). In contrast with male narratives who were more likely to tell memories for entertainment (McLean, 2005). Differences have also emerged in the narratives of female offenders with only two of the four NAS themes revealed (Ciesla et al., 2019). Despite this, Fivush (2003) argues that gender and identity are defined in the process of interacting with one another therefore insinuating that narratives are a combination of the core elements and not purely restricted between genders.

Wellbeing across narrative accounts has also revealed key differences in relation to how satisfied people are, their sense of purpose, and how in control of their life they feel. Individuals that used redemption sequences within their narrative accounts in relation to suffering and adversity faced were more likely to have better wellbeing (Lilgendahl & McAdams, 2008), higher self-esteem and positive life stories (McLean & Breen, 2009), less

likely to reoffend (Maruna, 2001), and a better predictor of well-being than the overall tone relayed in the account (McAdams et al., 2001), highlighting how important the overall life outcome of an individual can be to understanding their narrative identity and how they perceive their self-identities rather than just the content of the narrative.

In contrast, negativity and incoherence in narrative accounts have been associated with anxiety and depression (Fivush et al., 2007), poor wellbeing and negative life outcomes, less purpose and meaning (Erikson, 1950, 1968; McAdams, 1993, 1996) and further offending (Maruna, 2001). Failure to develop a coherent account of identity across the adolescent and emerging adulthood period is thought to result in the loss of a sense of purpose and meaning in life, a feeling of helplessness, and possibly even result in the inability or failure to develop positive intimate relationships (e.g., Erikson, 1950, 1968; McAdams, 1993, 1996).

The inclusion of more detailed measures to understand the underlying components therefore has value as research has revealed key distinctions in narrative themes across wellbeing and gender as relayed above. Negative narrative accounts have emerged in this study with two of the four narrative themes, indicating that there could be some variation in the life outcomes across the four narrative themes. Previous research has revealed variations in the narrative accounts across gender, therefore it is hypothesised that, despite core themes remaining the same, there will be variation across the narrative themes in relation to gender. Few distinctions have emerged across age, therefore it is hypothesised that these will be universal across the four narrative themes. In sum, the research questions here are: do the narrative themes differ in relation to demographic information and life outcomes? And if so, how do they differ?

## **6.2 Data Analysis Method**

### **6.2.1 Participants**

The participants used in this study were the participants who had not disclosed committing an offence during the interview process. Those who had committed an offence were removed from this analysis due to the study focusing on non-offenders. The participants consisted of 51 individuals (20 males, 31 females) aged between 18-75 years. The mean age of the sample is 37.55 years ( $SD = 16.21$ ).

### **6.2.2 Material**

As part of the interview process, following on from the LAAF procedure, the participants were given an ordered questionnaire set which consisted of four questionnaires. The demographics questionnaire was the last questionnaire for the participants to complete. This consisted of demographic information relating to the participant's gender, age, career, qualifications, criminal history, and questions regarding their upbringing/family. The purpose of these questions was to enhance the information relating to narratives and demographic information to establish if certain roles were associated with different elements of a participants' background.

The demographic questionnaire also included a questionnaire on life outcomes which stemmed from Seligman's (2011) PERMA model of happiness, in which he believed that five essential elements should be in place for psychological happiness and wellbeing. This was answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Not at all* (1) to *Very much* (5). This was included to assess how life outcomes differed across the four narrative themes.

### **6.2.3 Analysis**

Whilst the thematic analysis of the LAAF responses revealed four narrative themes, it does not classify the participant as solely that one narrative role. Individuals may have had items from differing narrative roles within their life trajectories. Despite this, due to the distinct themes revealed in the SSA, it is expected that most of the items would fall into one particular narrative role. To discover this, the 51 cases were examined to assess whether they could be assigned to a specific narrative based on the LAAF items that were identified within their narrative accounts. Every participant was given a percentage for the number of LAAF variables present for each of the four narrative themes.

The criteria for assigning each participant to a theme was through calculating the variables in each theme and the dominant theme was the narrative that had the greatest number of variables than any other theme. Due to each narrative theme having an unequal number of variables (Professional = 21, Victim = 24, Hero = 22, Revenger = 18), percentages were used. If a case was a hybrid narrative, in such it contained an equal number of variables to two or more narrative themes revealing no overarching narrative theme, it was not contained in the analysis.

The prevalence of each narrative theme can be observed from Table 6.1 with all 51 cases being attributed to one dominant narrative theme. The most prevalent narrative theme in the narratives was the Hero which represented 52.9% of the sample. The Victim narrative contained 23.5% of the sample being the second most prevalent theme. The professional (15.7%) and the Revenger (7.8%) narrative themes were the most underrepresented in the current sample.

**Table 6.1**

*Narrative role of Participants*

Professional		Victim		Revenger		Hero	
<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
8	15.7%	12	23.5%	4	7.8%	27	52.9%

To determine if there was a significant difference between the four narrative roles and the demographics and life outcomes, a Kruskal-Wallis test was performed on age and life outcomes as the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality indicated that the variables were non-normally distributed ( $p = <0.001$ ). A Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine if there are statistically significant differences between two or more groups using a rank-based approach (Field, 2018; Laerd Statistics, 2018). Gender differences were analysed using Pearson’s chi-square test. A Pearson’s Chi-Square test compares differences between data, testing the likelihood of an observed distribution being due to chance. The Chi-Square test will identify which gender the narrative roles were significantly associated to within this sample.

### 6.3 Results

A Chi-Square test examined the relationship between gender and narrative roles. The relation between these variables was significant  $X^2(3) = 8.505, p = 0.037$ , with different narratives associated with different genders.



**Table 6.2***Comparisons of Narrative Roles with Chi Square: Gender*

Demographics	Professional <i>N (%)</i>	Victim <i>N (%)</i>	Revenger <i>N (%)</i>	Hero <i>N (%)</i>	Chi-Square
Male	6 (30%)	3 (15%)	3 (15%)	8 (40%)	$X^2(3) = 8.505, p = 0.037^*$
Female	2 (6.5%)	9 (29%)	1 (3.2%)	19 (61.3%)	

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ 

A Kruskal-Wallis test across the age and life outcomes was performed, finding no significant difference between age and the four narrative roles as shown in table 6.3

**Table 6.3***Demographic Mean Ranks across Narrative Roles*

Demographics	Professional <i>M Rank</i>	Victim <i>M Rank</i>	Revenger <i>M Rank</i>	Hero <i>M Rank</i>	H, df(x)
Age	32.69	19.08	18.50	28.20	5.841, (3)

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ 

A Kruskal-Wallis test found no significant differences between life outcomes across the four narrative roles as can be observed in table 6.4.

**Table 6.4***Life outcomes Mean Ranks across Narrative Roles*

Life Outcomes	Professional <i>M Rank</i>	Victim <i>M Rank</i>	Revenger <i>M Rank</i>	Hero <i>M Rank</i>	H, df(x)
Positive Emotions	29.63	24.25	16.25	27.14	2.796(3)
Hope for the Best	24.31	22.96	30.38	27.20	1.254(3)
Expect the Worst	25.13	29.50	35.75	23.26	3.642(3)
Exciting Adventures	33.75	26.96	13.13	25.19	5.869(3)
Positive Relationships	30.69	23.17	14.63	27.56	4.889(3)
Sense of Direction	26.25	25.50	16.63	27.54	2.213(3)
Strive Better	27.88	25.08	30.75	25.15	.875(3)

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

### 6.3.1 Gender

As Table 6.2 reveals, significant differences emerged across the narrative roles and gender of participants. The role of the Professional was more likely to be male and in contrast, female participants were more likely to be the Hero and Victim narrative roles. As was revealed in Chapter 5, the role of the Professional was a narrative of someone who is focused on success and achievement, the nature of the narrative is positive with excitement and focused on life being an adventure to achieve their agentic goals and objectives.

In contrast, the role of the Revenger was reflective of an individual who has been wronged and is out to avenge the wrong done to them. The narratives were more centred on doing harm, masculinity, strength, and criminality. Their film trajectories were more graphic and dramatised. In contrast, the role of the Hero was centred on love and happiness, and the role of the Victim was couched in negativity, negative events, and hopelessness.

Differences in relation to narrative accounts given by males and females have previously been revealed in research, in such that females relate a narrative that is more focused on relationships and communal values (Bischoping, 1993; Fivush et al., 2000; Fivush & Buckner, 2000, 2003; McAdams, 1993). Differences also emerged in the study of female offenders with a Victim narrative dominating the findings through the use of the NAS (Ciesla et al., 2019). The finding that females are more likely to be represented by the Hero and Victim narrative does support previous research in the narratives of females being more reflective of intimacy-based narratives (Hero and Victim) and centred on love and relationships or of a more Victim based life trajectory.

This also aids support to McLean (2005) who found males were more likely to tell memories for entertainment, the narratives of the Revenger were graphic in their context, the films described within Chapter 4 were of action, and the masculine behaviours and events were of a more entertaining nature. The role of the Professional was very Agentic, focused on goals and success which research has also supported with males (Bischoping, 1993; Fivush et al., 2000; Fivush & Buckner, 2000, 2003; McAdams, 1993).

Fivush (2003) argues that gender and identity are defined in the process of interacting with one another and not purely restricted between genders. The interviewers within the LAAF process were all female which could have impacted some gender bias on the interviewees as was highlighted by Presser (2009). The sample size with the Hero was dominant of the whole

sample, given that this was more prevalent across the four narrative themes it could be a more reflective, accurate depiction of both male and female participants. Should the sample size of the other roles, especially that of the Revenger and Professional narrative which were low in frequency, be higher these findings could be different. Ciesla et al. (2019) also found a subset of female offenders with a more Revenge like nature, the Avenging Angel. This highlights, with a greater sample size, further differentiation in the narrative themes could be observed.

The LAAF elicitation procedure centres on the whole life story encompassing different events that the protagonists have faced within their lifetimes. This interweaves positive and negative stories and can include a combination of both agentic and communal events and situations faced by the protagonists. Certain features of these events are more dominant in the overarching narrative theme that is attributed to the participants and some key differences are revealed in relation to gender across the four narrative themes.

### **6.3.2 Age**

As can be seen from Table 6.3 there are no significant differences in relation to the age of the sample across the four narrative themes as anticipated. The ability to construct and tell stories develops from infancy to adulthood with all individuals said to have developed a sense of self of self-identity which enables them to understand who they are what they are about in commencing adulthood (Habermas & Bluck, 2000), supported by McAdams (1993). The core themes of narratives, despite age, are being redemption, contamination, agency, and communion (McAdams et al., 2001; McAdams & McLean, 2013) which are revealed here in this sample. Nonetheless, the four narrative themes differ in the four dominant themes of narratives with some narratives being more agentic and others being more communal.

It is also important to note that research has addressed that narrative accounts may fail to encompass the dynamic nature of narratives (Maruna & Liem, 2020; Strawson, 2004; Ward, 2011) and that past experience can influence and shape the narrative with it evolving over time. This highlights that despite the dynamic nature of narratives, the four narrative themes are still applicable despite age and not one dominant narrative is attributed and more likely to feature the older and somewhat wiser a person is with life experience.

Therefore, this highlights that irrespective of age, narrative accounts can all stem from similar underpinning themes. The sample here ranged from 18-75 meaning all participants were of an age that had the capability to recount stories and the core themes fundamentally found to be

central to individuals' stories which does reveal that the narrative themes are generic across age ranges.

### **6.3.3 Life Outcomes**

No significant differences were revealed across the four narrative themes and life outcomes which highlights a more universal approach to life outcomes across the four narrative themes. Interestingly though, the role of the Revenger was a lot less loved in mean across the four narrative roles in relation to having a sense of direction, positive relationships, and exciting activities. The Revenger was also interestingly lower in expecting the worst and positive emotions across the four narrative themes indicating a layer of weak self-identity and lower life outcomes than the other four narrative roles. Although not of significance, this does reveal some interesting findings in relation to the Revenger narrative and life outcomes and similarly with the Victim narrative which, despite the overall narrative theme of the Victim being inherently negative, the responses to questions in relation to their future is not as negative as anticipated.

The theme of the Revenger was a role that was masculine, dominant, and focused on revenge in the harm that the individual had faced. Research has highlighted an element of unresolved dissonance in the narrative accounts of offenders in relation to non-offenders (Youngs et al., 2014) in which conflict is present and there is a focus on certain aspects with the narrative. Conflict within the narrative was also identified by McAdams (1988) in relation to responses which could highlight why there is a lack of clarity in relation to the life outcomes of this narrative theme and confusion in what they seek to achieve in the future, these narratives are more likely to be linked to offending behaviours, being poorly constructed (Canter, 1994). The narrative theme of the Revenger stems from Frye's (1957) tragedy narrative in which the hero sets off with a calm state yet is wronged and life goes to ruin which may be a factor in negativity observed here. With the Revenger narrative appearing strong and dominant but there is an underlying weakness. This does add some support to research being centred on negativity within life accounts being attributed to difficulties being faced in life (Fivush et al., 2007) and that negativity in the life story can be attributed to poor life outcomes (Erikson, 1950, 1968; McAdams, 1993, 1996).

Lilgendahl and McAdams (2008) found that individuals who used redemption sequences in relation to suffering and adversity faced within their life stories had better overall well-being. The findings here, although not of significance, add some support to the more positive narrative roles who manage to overcome life events are more related to positive life outcomes. Nonetheless, there are no significant findings in relation to life outcomes which reveals how across the four narrative themes there are little future direction differences.

#### **6.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter aimed to explore if the narrative themes revealed by the SSA differed in relation to demographic information and the life outcomes they reported. Few demographic differences between the four themes emerged, which adds support to McAdams (1993, 1995) that life stories and personalities are similar in their central themes irrespective of differences and lifestyle. One significant finding emerged across the four narrative themes with gender being more likely to be associated with the Hero and Victim narratives.

The Hero and Victim narrative are more communion focused, from a narrative perspective they are high intimacy and people are significant to them. Previous research has highlighted differences in gender with the narrative accounts of females being more likely to centre on relationships and communal values (Bischoff, 1993; Fivush et al., 2000; Fivush & Buckner, 2000, 2003; McAdams, 1993). Differences amongst female offenders also emerged with only two of the four narrative themes being revealed through thematic analysis and the Victim narrative role being the one that was prevalent (Ciesla et al., 2019). The Hero narrative role emerged as one centred on love and happiness with supports this research despite it being a combination of both male and female participants, which then adds support to other research (Fivush, 2003; McAdams, 1993) in that some narratives are universal. One limitation of such a finding is that some of the frequency of narrative themes was slim, with the Revenger only having four participants in this theme. Such a slim sample can skew the results somewhat in not being a big enough cohort to fully understand demographic differences across the themes.

Although not of significance, the narrative role of the Revenger was exceptionally lower in mean scores across the life outcomes. This adds support to negativity in life trajectories being centred on more pessimistic life outcomes (Erikson, 1950, 1968; McAdams, 1993, 1996).

Yet, despite this, the narrative role of the Victim is dominated by a theme of negativity and hopelessness and there were few findings of negative outcomes with them, which highlights a stark difference between the two narrative accounts. Despite the narrative role of the Victim being hopeless, it reveals that there is a hidden subset of psychological underpinnings in that narrative role which is somewhat optimistic for the future.

Although the limitation of sample size has been highlighted as a factor of concern, with the exception of gender, this study does highlight that demographic and life outcome differences have little difference across the four narrative themes and the narrative themes are universally applicable. Given that few differences emerge in relation to demographic differences, the next chapter of the thesis will examine how the narrative themes compare across personality traits and personal concerns.

## **Chapter 7: Personality Correlates of the Narrative Roles. An Integrative Framework**

### **7.1 Introduction**

“Personality is an individual’s unique variation on the general evolutionary design for human nature, expressed as a developing pattern of dispositional traits, characteristic adaptations, and integrative life stories complexly and differentially situated in culture” (McAdams & Pals, 2006, p. 212). Such a notion highlights how to fully know and understand a person an integrative framework is required.

The overarching aim of personality psychology is to provide such an integrative framework for understanding the whole individual yet this is distinctly lacking, with there being a “reluctance to offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the whole person” (McAdams & Pals, 2006, p. 204). Single approaches to understanding the self have been significant in deepening understanding yet the trait-based approach has met criticism and the understanding of the life story, such as Youngs and Canter (2012), does not fully integrate dispositional traits alongside the projected narratives. Narratives are fundamental in the understanding of the self and traits, although useful in highlighting a broad psychological understanding of the individual, there is the need to go beyond both, incorporating the disparate theories to deepen the understanding of an individual’s self-identity to make sense of human identity (McAdams & Pals, 2006).

McAdams (1995) proposed that individual personality is comprised of three levels. The first level consists of an individual’s dispositional signature, otherwise known as the broad traits they exhibit that describe their personality. Variations in traits are one of the most stable and recognisable aspects of psychological individuality, with the Big Five being the most recognisable contribution within personality psychology for distinguishing differences in the broad dimensions of social and emotional differences between people and has recognised important differences, for example, these general traits reveal differences in how shy or outgoing an individual is or how friendly or antisocial someone can be (John, Naumann & Soto, 2008; Schmitt et al., 2007). McAdams (1995 p.365) posits that “no description of a person is adequate without trait attributions”. Therefore to understand an individual, the broad traits pertinent to their self-identity is crucial to know, yet these alone provide little

more than the “psychology of the stranger”. McAdams et al. (2004) revealed inconsistencies in the study of dispositional traits across agentic and communal aspects of narratives in revealing some aspects of personality and life stories were related in predictable ways and others were not highlighting the need for further research in this area. A three-factor approach by McAdams and Manczak (2015) considered how the internal characteristics that reside within an individual are related to their overall life story.

The Big Five Inventory (John et al., 1991, 2008), provides a comprehensive method for classifying basic personality tendencies and has been said to contribute fairly well in summarising an individual’s traits (McAdams, 2006). Differences in personality types across offending behaviour have been studied using The Big Five with significant differences revealed, and despite these significant findings, differences emerged in the overall traits reflected in offenders (Becerra-García, et al., 2013; Dennison et al., 2001; Egan et al., 2005; Egan & Taylor, 2010; Heaven, 1996). Narrative roles provide a key concept in understanding offending behaviour yet they lack in encompassing traits personality (Youngs & Canter, 2012) and in combining the two personality theories could be fruitful in uncovering a deeper understanding of both an offender’s and non-offender’s personality dimensions.

McAdams’ (1995) level two relates to an individual’s personal concerns known as characteristic adaptations, relating to the individual’s personal desires, beliefs, concerns, stresses, goals, values, attitudes and so forth, of a person in association with times, places, and events within their lives. The LOC relates to these level two personal concerns or personality descriptions in such revealing the way in which individuals feel in control of their lives with outcomes and events moving somewhat beyond the trait-based approach and encompassing the characteristic adaptations an individual would take in relation to life events faced deepening the understanding of knowing a person.

The Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control ([LOC]; Nowicki & Duke, 1974) provides a deeper understanding in relation to the personal concerns in how much control individuals feel they have in life. Differences in having an internal and external locus of control have been revealed in general population studies with internal LOC associated with higher life satisfaction and more positive emotional states and external being associated with higher anxiety (Quevedo & Abella 2014; Roddenberry & Renk, 2010). Studies in relation to LOC and offending behaviour have also significantly highlighted higher levels of external LOC



associated with offenders (Cavaiola & Desordi, 2000; Fisher et al., 1998; Graham, 1993; Gudjonsson & Sigurdsson, 2007; McAnena et al., 2016).

The LOC has been previously related to narrative psychology in the narratives of offenders with the Narrative Action System (NAS) with differences between an external and internal locus of control reflected in the four narrative roles adopted within an offending action. Youngs (2013, p.269) states “The difference between comedy and tragedy is that in comedy the person overcomes circumstances but in tragedy the circumstances overcome the person. In psychological terms, these two poles imply a difference in locus of control running over a set of related episodes, the comic reflecting internal agency and the tragic an external one”. Despite this focusing on an offending sample, differences were recognised with not just external LOC being associated with offenders as the role offenders identified with reflected different elements of control. Therefore, some versatility in narratives has been acknowledged.

The third and final, level to personality as stated by McAdams (1995), is an individual’s integrative life story. McAdams and Pals (2006, p.209) assert “if dispositional traits sketch the outline and characteristic adaptations fill in the details of human individuality, then narrative identities give individual lives their unique and culturally anchored meaning”. This area of personality is the life stories of personal narratives constructed by individuals in which provides their lives with a sense of purpose and provide meaning and construct their self-identity. These stories are unique yet can provide the opportunity to explore an individual’s self-identity through their internalised evolving story. Studies have found fruitfulness in this approach in both non-offenders (McAdams, 1993), and offenders (Canter & Youngs, 2015; Maruna, 2001, 2004)

This chapter aims to examine to what extent personality measures in relation to traits and personal concerns are associated with the four narrative roles identified, to deepen the knowledge of the four narrative roles and provide an integrative framework using personality measures that have shown good validity across both offending and non-offending samples. It is hypothesised that there will be a correlation between some of the personality measures and the narrative roles identified that reflect the overarching themes of the narrative roles. For example, the Professional being more extroverted and open in pursuit of goals and the Hero being more agreeable aligning with the high intimacy, communal aspects of the role. In contrast, the Victim and Revenger narratives being more aligned with findings on criminal

narratives with the Victim's tragic storyline reflected in more neuroticism and being introverted and the Revenger being less agreeable. Similarly, there is expected to be a more external LOC attributed to the role of the Victim and the Professional a more internal LOC. Nonetheless, due to the findings of previous studies revealing inconsistencies across personality traits as outlined above there could be inconclusive results.

## **7.2 Data Analysis Method**

### **7.2.1 Participants**

The participants used in this study were the participants who had not disclosed committing an offence during the interview process. Those who had committed an offence were removed from this analysis due to the study focusing on non-offenders. The participants consisted of 51 individuals (20 males, 31 females) aged between 18-75 years. The mean age of the sample is 37.55 years ( $SD = 16.21$ ).

### **7.2.2 Material**

The 51 respondents were given a questionnaire pack that included the BFI and LOC. The BFI assesses the Five basic dimensions that have been linked to personality that control how people think, feel, and interact with others: Agreeableness, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to new experiences (Forrester et al., 2016). Differences in relation to the scale in which people are in relation to each aspect of these five traits, high or low, reveal differences in relation to their personality characteristics, or dispositional traits. The BFI consists of 44 items, scored on a five-point Likert scale, in which participants are asked to rate a statement based on characteristics on how much they agree or disagree with that statement in relation to themselves ranging from *Disagree Strongly* to *Agree strongly*. Responses were scored following the scoring instructions.

The Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control (LOC) is a personality dimension that measures an individual's beliefs in relation to events within their lives being controlled internally or externally (Rotter, 1966). The LOC questionnaire consists of 40 yes/no items to assess

whether participants attribute life events to external or internal causes. Scores range from 0 (internal) to 40 (external), with the higher score indicating greater external locus of control.

As previously mentioned, the participants were assigned a narrative theme. Narrative themes were assigned to each participant through calculating the variables in each theme and the dominant theme was the narrative that had the greatest number of variables than any other theme (see Table 7.1).

**Table 7.1**

*Narrative role of Participants*

Professional		Victim		Revenger		Hero	
<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
8	15.7%	12	23.5%	4	7.8%	27	52.9%

### **Internal Reliability**

A Cronbach's alpha coefficient is used to assess the level of internal reliability of the items that are suggested to measure each narrative role. An alpha value of above 0.8 is perceived as a good measure, and above 0.6 is deemed as acceptable (Field, 2018). Cronbach's alphas for the 44 BFI items was .728 showing acceptable internal consistency

**Table 7.2**

*Internal Reliability of the Big Five Inventory Items*

BFI	Number of Items	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Extraversion	8	.853
Agreeableness	9	.819
Conscientiousness	9	.791
Neuroticism	8	.834
Openness	10	.710

Cronbach's alpha shows that each BFI Item has a good to acceptable level of internal consistency with the sample.

The internal consistency of the LOC across this sample is .628 indicating an average reliability (Field, 2009).

### 7.2.3 Analysis

A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality was performed to examine the normality of the data in relation to the BFI results showed that Extraversion ( $p = 0.058$ ), Conscientiousness ( $p = 0.200$ ), Neuroticism ( $p = 0.200$ ) and Openness ( $p = 0.200$ ) were normally distributed, though Agreeableness ( $p = 0.013$ ) was not normally distributed. Despite this, the data were considered large enough for the non-normally distribution assumption to be overlooked (Field, 2018). The LOC was also normally distributed ( $p = 0.164$ ). As data were normally distributed, a one-way ANOVA was performed to determine if there was a significant difference between the four narrative roles and the personality traits and LOC.

### 7.3 Results - Big Five Inventory

The mean personality trait scores between the narrative themes are presented in Table 7.3 and Figure 7.1. A one-way ANOVA found a significant difference in Agreeableness between the narrative themes ( $F(3, 47) = 3.66, p = 0.013$ ). A Tukey post-hoc test indicated no significant differences between groups, given the low frequency between narrative roles this could be due to low statistical power. There was a small effect size in Extraversion, Neuroticism and Conscientiousness and a medium effect size in Openness and Agreeableness. The larger the effect size the stronger the relationship between the variables (Field, 2018).

**Table 7.3**

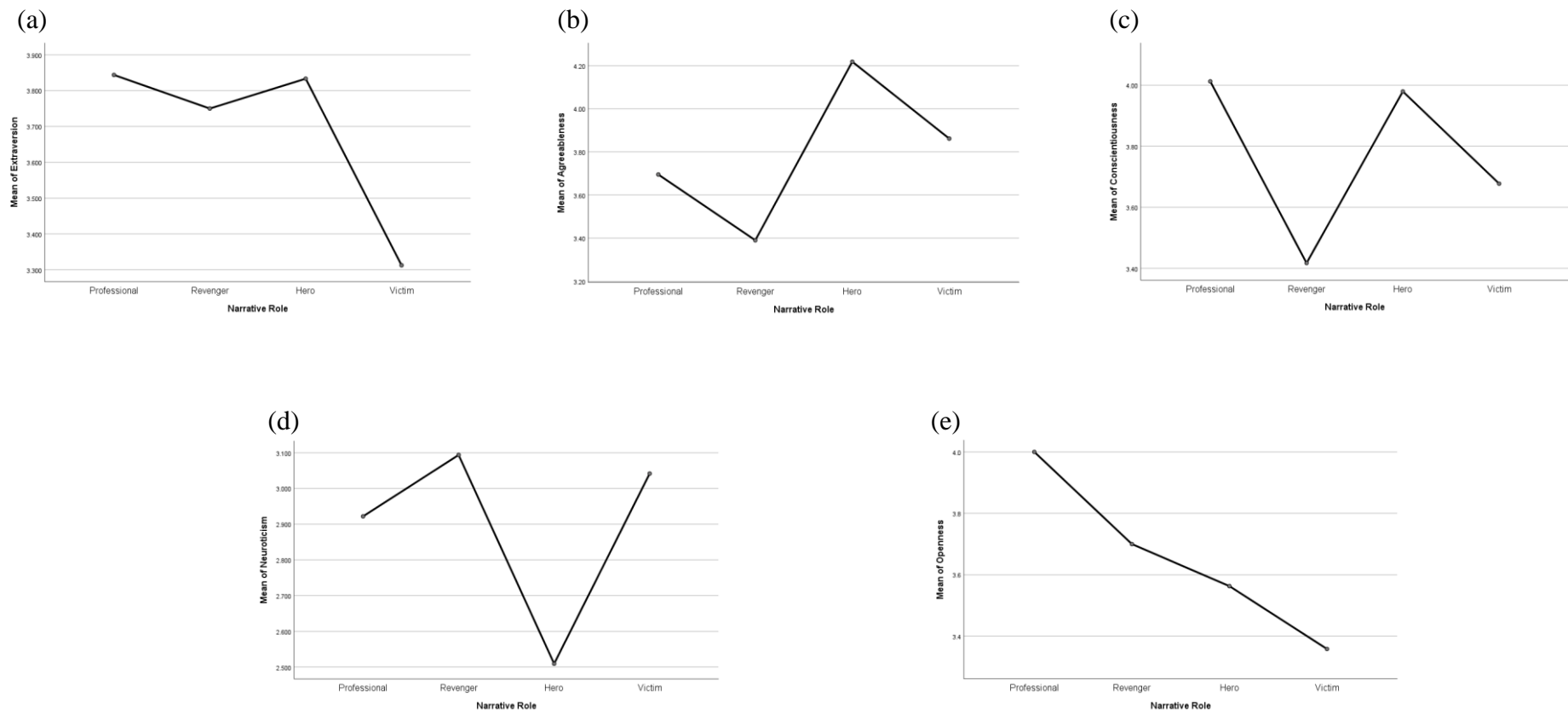
*BFI means, standard deviations and one-way ANOVA*

Personality Trait	Professional		Victim		Revenger		Hero		F(x)	$\omega^2$
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Extraversion	3.84	0.63	3.31	1.04	3.75	0.78	3.83	0.63	47(3)	0.02
Agreeableness	3.69	0.83	3.86	0.74	3.39	0.64	4.22	0.57	47(3)*	0.09
Openness	4.00	0.67	3.36	0.50	3.70	0.22	3.56	0.53	47(3)	0.08
Neuroticism	2.92	0.99	3.04	0.71	3.09	0.71	2.51	0.77	47(3)	0.04
Conscientiousness	4.01	0.56	3.68	0.68	3.42	0.74	3.98	0.63	47(3)	0.02

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Figure 7.1**

*Mean (a) Extraversion, (b) Agreeableness, (c) Conscientiousness, (d) Neuroticism, and (e) Openness scores across the four narrative themes.*



### **7.3.1 Big Five Inventory Traits: Victims Tragedy**

Although not statistically significant, differences emerged between the roles in relation to Openness alongside the Professional narrative. With those of a Victim narrative having lower levels of Openness than those who are of a Professional narrative and the lowest level of Openness across the four narrative themes. A score low in Openness to new experiences typically personifies an individual who is closed off, less receptive, and cautious. Such traits are reflective of an individual who is more likely to keep themselves on the outside, more detached from society, and have a weaker self-identity which reflects the role of the Victim and the low potency elements as identified by Youngs and Canter (2012) in that these individuals are more likely to feel that they are victim to life events and have no hope therefore less likely to engage in new things.

Again, making poor choices and regret is supportive of the Victim narrative role with their negative perception of life and the contamination sequences in their life stories in which things have gone wrong which could also explain them having lower levels of Openness. In previous studies on non-offenders, McAdams et al. (2004) found that individuals who were low in openness expressed narrative accounts that were centred on familiarity, continuity, and predictability rather than articulating changeable dynamics within their narratives. There were no findings that these related to agentic or communal narratives nor those that were more couched in negativity. Openness was of little significance with offending samples in previous studies or in comparison with offending and non-offending (Becerra-García, et al., 2013; Dennison et al., 2001; Egan et al., 2005; Egan & Taylor, 2010; Heaven, 1996).

Although not statistically significant, the role of the victim was also the most introvert across the four narrative themes, again, a key component in the life stories of those high in the Victim narrative within this study, and the Victim narrative by Youngs and Canter (2012). Being introvert is reflective of an individual who detaches from social engagement and is more likely to be quiet and detached from the social world.

Those in the Victim narrative were also high in Neuroticism, Neurotics struggle to cope with life stressors, which is supportive of the high potency aspect of the role with a weak self-identity in that the Victim views themselves as worse off than others and struggles to cope. This can also combat elements of being envious and jealous of others. A key aspect of

neuroticism is the blame of the self, this is a key theme identified with the Victim narrative role, and supportive of the low potency element of the Victim role as identified by Youngs and Canter (2012) in that that they are victim to life events and have no hope. High neuroticism is also related to emotional instability, in such individuals are more likely to consistently worry and be anxious, they focus on the negative sides of situations not the positive which is revealed in the Victim narrative.

Previous studies have found Neuroticism was associated with a negative emotional tone to the life narratives, and from a criminal perspective, Neuroticism was typically associated with crimes against the person, more so with sex offenders (Becerra-García et al., 2013; Dennison et al., 2001), which does reflect the high intimacy findings of the victim narrative. Although not significant, these again do reveal how the personality traits show some correlation with the narrative roles to give a deeper insight into the personality of the individuals and aiding support of McAdams' (1995) theory of personality being three-fold.

Few statistically significant differences emerged in the victim narrative in comparison with the Big Five personality traits, and one finding of near significance which does reflect one element of the overarching theme of the Victim narrative. Yet some key findings amongst the other narratives have been revealed through this analysis which does reveal that personality traits are not significantly correlated with the Victim narrative and does support inconsistencies with Big Five studies previously identified in offenders and non-offenders (Becerra-García et al., 2013; Dennison et al., 2001; McAdams et al., 2004).

As this narrative role was initially identified with offenders, Canter (1994) suggests that offenders live distorted versions of these narratives it may be that the narrative accounts of offenders in relation to traits reveal different underlying personality traits, or that due to the approach being reflective of the whole life story in which different events and scenes take place and the study is limited in sample size. However, this is fruitful in providing understanding to how personality traits that are seemingly linked to the Victim role and can aid in that greater understanding of how traits may be associated within an integrative format in the study of self-identity in McAdams' (1995) theory of personality being three-fold.

### 7.3.2 Big Five Inventory Traits: Hero's Quest

As can be seen from table 7.3, statistically significant differences arise between the roles in relation to Agreeableness, although no further differences arose in post hoc tests. The mean of the Hero narrative is higher in comparison to the other narratives highlighting that those in this narrative are more likely to have higher levels of agreeableness. Agreeableness reflects a general concern for society. Personality traits associated with being high in agreeableness are being warm, friendly, kind, and empathetic reflecting the role of the Hero within the narratives identified in Chapter 5.

Here, the personality trait is supportive of the narrative theme that was revealed with the Hero and having an understanding at that baseline level of personality in that those with the Hero narrative are more likely to be Agreeable would not give the whole picture of an individual presenting with this narrative or trait, as posited by McAdams (1995). Yet combining the narrative alongside the personality trait reveals the behaviours that underpin the personality and the narrative gives a clearer reflection of the self-identity they assign to themselves.

Those high in agreeableness are also said to seek to resolve conflict, they like social harmony. The role of the Hero is someone who has a strong self-identity, they take control in events and in seeking to resolve conflict this can be interpreted here with them taking responsibility, linking to the low potency element of this narrative role. A further element of agreeableness is prosocial behaviour. This draws on McAdams' (1993) communion themes that were thematically present in the underlying structure of the narrative role of the Hero in Chapter 5 whereby people high in this are more likely to be associated with helping others and have empathy. Both of these themes were pertinent in the Hero narrative role in this non-incarcerated sample with the imagoes featuring caregivers and lovers and taking initiative in their actions. Again, reflective of the high intimacy low potency elements of this narrative role highlighting how these traits interlink with the narrative theme divulged by the participants, in turn deepening the understanding of their personalities as posited by McAdams (1995).

The sociable nature of being high in Agreeableness is again supported within the narrative role and the underlying components thematically analysed in their life stories. Individuals here like to get along with others and the nature of this is in a positive light, positivity, and positive emotions were again a key theme within the narrative account of the Hero.



Lower levels of Agreeableness have been typically associated with non-offenders through studies of crime (Becerra-García et al., 2013; Dennison et al., 2001), although some differences emerged in child sex offenders with them being higher than other offenders but this is not reflective of them having high levels of agreeableness in general. Given the nature of the accounts relayed in the Hero narrative, few centred on criminality and could add support to Agreeableness being associated with non-offenders. The findings here are in contrast with the Revenger narrative role who is lower in levels of agreeableness, and also appears in an opposite region of the SSA revealing those fundamental differences in narrative themes. This finding would add support to McAdams et al. (2004) who revealed that Agreeableness were related to narrative themes of communion, which relayed themes of friendship and caring for others.

Not of significance, but interestingly, the role of the Hero was more Conscientious alongside the Professional than the Victim and Revenger. Conscientiousness reflects an individual who is more likely to be reliable and successful, whether this is in pursuit of agentic or communal goals. This was reflected in McAdams et al. (2004) who found Conscientiousness to not be separated by either agentic quality. Again, low levels of Conscientiousness has been associated with criminality (Dennison et al., 2001; Samuels et al., 2004). The Hero was also the narrative theme that presented with the lowest levels of Neuroticism across the four narrative themes, those low in Neuroticism are more likely to be calm and emotionally stable and less likely to be affected by stressful life events which epitomise the Hero narrative and the journey to overcoming events revealed in Chapter 5. Again, high levels of Neuroticism have been associated with criminality (Dennison et al., 2001; Samuels et al., 2004) and associated with emotionally negative narrative accounts (McAdams et al., 2004) which the Hero narrative did not epitomise. Such findings highlight that although not statistically significant, there is some relationship between traits and the narrative accounts revealed by participants.

Few statistically significant differences again emerged in relation to the personality traits, which has been found in both studies with offenders and non-offenders (Becerra-García et al., 2013; Dennison et al., 2001; McAdams et al., 2004), which may reveal that traits are not fully embedded and reflective of the narrative accounts and that different narrative themes can be reflective of different traits but some are slightly more dominant but not of enough to be significant. Nonetheless, some interesting results did emerge in relation to the themes

revealed in the narrative. The Hero theme was the most prevalent in the sample which could explain the more significant finding due to the larger sample size. Nonetheless, despite only one trait having significance with the offender, it does support the narrative theme revealed in this study and does enable a greater insight into how a trait is embedded in the narrative account to provide an integrative method but could just deepen that understanding of the person. Such studies have not previously been done with an offending sample in the same contexts therefore it would be interesting to see if differences emerge as studies have found that certain traits are more linked to offenders and how this compares with this non-offending sample.

### **7.3.3 Big Five Inventory Traits: Professional's Adventure**

Being high in Openness was of near significance with those high in the Professional role, in contrast to the Victim role, both narratives appear opposite one another in the thematic analysis of the narratives. Openness to experience is a trait that reflects an individual who is intellectually curious and will venture out of their comfort zone, reflective of the strong sense of self identity of the Professional narrative role and the work like nature in being more focused on agentic qualities. Individuals high in openness, which stems from Maslow's (1943) self-actualization, are more likely to exhibit daring and imaginative traits and be more proactive (McCrae & Costa, 1987).

Proactivity was located within the thematic analysis of the role of the professional, in taking the initiative within their life stories reflective of the low intimacy low potency qualities of the role. Higher levels of intelligence have also been found to be related to those high in openness (Weisberg et al., 2011) and with individuals also perceiving themselves to be more intelligent than others and independent. Those high in this role viewed themselves as more successful than others which again supports that this trait is associated with the underlying narrative components. The external world is the focus here and the Professional has been identified as someone who wants to master the environment, which is crucial in understanding the traits behind this narrative and how in asserting themselves, it enables them to focus on and achieve their objectives.

Individuals who were higher in Openness were found to have more intricate narratives and to be more innovative, non-traditional, and multifaceted in their cognitions by McAdams et al.

(2004), and findings here support this. In studies with offending behaviour, Openness is less prevalent in studies and in comparison with offending behaviour which could reveal that Openness to experience does not drive criminal action and is more a personality trait that reveals underlying traits of the individual, whereas offending action is multifaceted.

Not of significance but the Professional narrative had the highest levels of Conscientiousness across the four narrative themes. Conscientiousness reflects an individual who is driven, organised, hardworking, and goal-oriented which here, is reflective of the narrative theme of the Professionals Adventure. The agentic nature of the Professional is in pursuit of achieving success and objectives and is deemed a key personality trait for success. Low Conscientiousness has been associated with Criminality (Dennison et al., 2001; Samuels et al., 2004), highlighting that the Professional narrative is less likely to be centred on criminality which is revealed through Chapter 5.

Again, no statistically significant differences emerged with the Professional narrative role with one being of near significance, but there are interesting findings revealed across the four narrative themes. Albeit this one finding is in line with the overarching theme of the Professional narrative and does further reveal that being higher in certain personality traits can reveal deeper insight into the identity of individuals through narratives and traits in an integrative approach. Yet the study also reveals that inconsistencies emerge in comparison to hypothesis with expected traits which could be down to the multi-faceted approach of narratives and the complex nature and that traits are not so much embedded within the life story and this level of personality is different to that that is revealed through the protagonist accounts provided.

#### **7.3.4 Big Five Inventory Traits: Revenger's Mission**

Although post hoc tests revealed no significant differences between narratives, Agreeableness was significant across the narratives and the role of the Revenger had a lower mean score than the Hero. Individuals who are low in Agreeableness are more likely to be hostile, question other's motives, hold resentment for others, are less cooperative, and are more likely to be driven by their own needs and desires rather than the personal interests of others, even if such needs and desires are in conflict with others. The role of the Revenger is someone low in intimacy and potency whose narrative is epitomised by someone who seeks revenge after

being wronged and behaviours are masculine, hostility is also present in these narratives, alongside the resentment held for others, which does reveal some link between traits and narratives here with the role of the revenger although not statistically significant.

Emotions in this narrative were found to be aroused negative, signaling high displeasure and arousal in both offending samples and non-offending, this behaviour is reactive. This emotional pattern portrays distress and anger at the treatment from others and there is an urge to right the wrong. Being low in agreeableness has been related to higher levels of anger and aggression (Carver et al., 2004).

Studies on offending behaviour have found that lower levels of agreeableness to be associated with criminality. Non-sexual offenders were found by Becerra-García et al. (2013) to have lower scores in Agreeableness. Similarly, Heaven (1996) found those who disclosed violence, vandalism, and theft, to have lower Agreeableness, predominantly in crimes of a violent nature. This finding reflects the narrative of the Revenger which was the only narrative that featured events of doing crime, described as dangerous and was centered on violence and compulsive behaviours and acts in avenging wrong done.

Interestingly, the Revenger narrative was the highest in Neuroticism across the four narrative themes. Those high in Neuroticism typically focus and dwell on negative situations. McRae and Costa (1987) state that those high in neuroticism are more likely to use inappropriate coping mechanisms due to dealing with more disruptive emotions such as feelings of jealousy, envy, frustration, and anger. Such emotions and themes were highlighted in Chapter 5 within the narrative themes of the Revenger, and also reflect the offending theme of the Revenger of being wronged, couched in hostility and negativity. Neuroticism is also identified within offending behaviour and more in offences of violent crime (Becerra-García et al., 2013; Dennison et al., 2001) such reveals that the victim in these crimes could be a vehicle or object to release such anger and hostility.

The Revenger narrative was also lowest in Conscientiousness, said to be reflective of being impulsive, less driven by success and goals, and has also been found to be associated with offending (Dennison et al., 2001; Egan et al., 2005). The narratives relayed by the Revenger were couched in a more hostile and displayed themes of criminality, which does seem to be reflected, although not significantly, in the individual's personality.

Although post hoc results did not differentiate a significant difference in narratives, the findings here somewhat align with traits being reflective and that initial level of personality alongside the deeper narrative identity. Studies previously relating elements of narratives alongside traits have found inconsistencies in relation to expectations of linked traits with narrative elements, but the findings here reveal that, although traits may be universally applicable, certain traits do have some relationship with the narrative role or are more aligned in certain roles, such as the Revenger here. Nonetheless, this narrative role could be less prevalent in the general population as it is with this subsample of the general population meaning that it could be more aligned with offending behaviour or a more niche narrative role.

#### 7.4 Results - Locus of Control

The mean LOC scores across each of the narratives are presented in Table 7.4 and Figure 7.6. A one-way ANOVA revealed no significant differences in the LOC between the narrative roles that can be observed below.

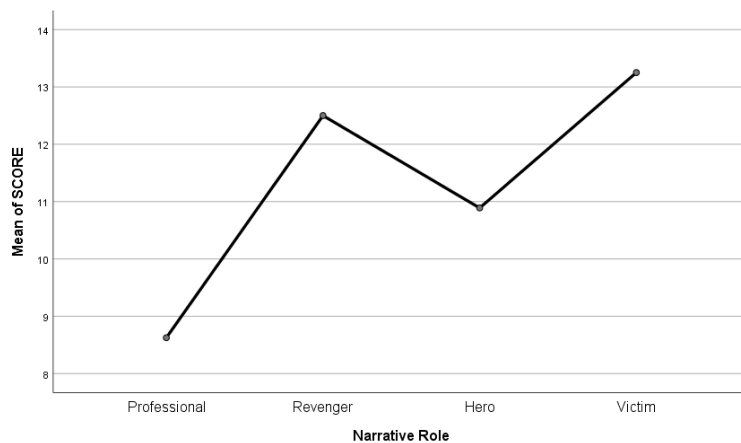
**Table 7.4**

*LOC means, standard deviations, and one-way ANOVA*

	Professional		Victim		Revenger		Hero		F(x)	$\omega^2$
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
LOC	8.63	4.307	13.25	3.279	12.50	5.972	10.89	4.560	47(3)	0.05

**Figure 7.6**

*Means of LOC Score across four narrative themes*



#### **7.4.1 Locus of Control: Professional's Adventure**

No statistically significant findings were revealed in relation to the Professional and the LOC. Nonetheless, it was interestingly revealed that no Professionals had an external LOC were more likely to have an internal LOC. Although not significant, the internal LOC being more likely to be present in the Professional does add some support to the low potency element to the Professional narrative in such the strong self-identity and taking responsibility is evident here with this narrative having lower LOC scores and the belief here is that they are in control, and a striving for success is solely down to their efforts (Nowicki & Duke, 1974). Success and mastering their environment was the fundamental theme of the Professional which does add some support to the narrative account revealed in Chapter 5 with these individuals more likely to overcome circumstances faced and be the internal drivers of their lives.

This again does add some support to the narrative action system roles as identified by Youngs (2013) who found a difference in the LOC in relation to internal and external agency, with the Professional narrative having external agency overcoming events. Here, this is somewhat similarly echoed with the Professional more likely to have an internal LOC.

In the criminal context, studies have argued that an external LOC is more likely to be related to offending behaviour (Cavaiola & Desordi, 2000; Gudjonsson & Sigurdsson, 2007; McAnena et al., 2016), yet studies comparing offence types have found differentiation in LOC and nature of offending, the Professional in the NAS system has been found to have internal source of action conquering their environment in a study on offenders (Youngs, 2013). Given that this study is a non-incarcerated sample of the general population it has reflected in the lower external LOC and does reveal some understanding of how the underlying psychological belief systems sits with the narrative accounts and how the previous research (Canter & Youngs, 2012; Youngs, 2013) on this role can be identified within a non-incarcerated sample.

Being centered on achievement and success is a key theme uncovered in the life narratives of non-offenders, this here is similarly identified with an internal locus of control being identified in individuals who expect to succeed, are motivated and achievement-focused. LOC has also been related to wellbeing with those with an internal locus of control having a

more positive emotional state and life and career satisfaction (Quevedo & Abella, 2014) which again is reflective of the LAAF components which formed the narrative role.

These findings open the door to more research in understanding how the role of the Professional relates to LOC, nonetheless, it does add some support to understanding and giving a deeper insight into the cognitive processes in individuals' thinking in the level two dimension of personality as found by McAdams (1994) and how this can integrate with the narrative identity to further understand an individual's personality.

#### **7.4.2 Locus of Control: Revenger's Mission**

Again, as similarly found with the BFI, there is no significantly associated locus of control in the role of the Revenger. This highlights that there is a variation in the belief system of those high in the Revenger role. It was hypothesised that these participants would have a more externally focused locus of control, given the high potency element of the role attributing responsibility to others. Across the four narrative themes, the Revenger was more external alongside that of the Victim revealing that, although not statistically significant, the Revenger does have a slightly more external belief system.

In the previous section, in relation to personality traits, the themes revealed with the Revenger were more readily associated with offending behaviour for the level one of personality, level three personality in the narratives were couched in a more negative and hostile trajectory with more negative and masculine behaviours and from a LOC level two perspective, studies have found that those with a higher LOC are more likely to be associated with criminality (Cavaiola & Desordi, 2000; McAnena et al., 2016). If the sample size of the Revenger was higher, this could reveal differences in the native theme.

However, given the high masculine behaviours dominant to this role, there is some element of own initiative which could be inferred from the non-significant LOC in relation to a fully external belief system. This again could be a result of conflict that is present within the narrative accounts, criminal narratives have been identified as being conflicting in unresolved dissonance (Youngs et al., 2014), and therefore this sense of distortion and no set belief system could be a factor in this.

### **7.4.3 Locus of Control: Hero's Quest**

As similarly found with the Revenger, no statistically significant findings were revealed with the Hero narrative and the LOC. The Hero narrative is high in intimacy, focused on love and happiness, with relationship successes and failures, a highly communion based narrative theme (McAdams, 1993). In comparison to the other narrative themes, the Hero narrative was lower in overall mean scores in comparison to the Victim and Revenger with a more intermediate locus of control which reflects the high intimacy, high potency nature of the narrative.

With an intermediate locus of control, individuals have inconsistent views about the extent to which their own fate is controlled, a combination of both external and internal locus of control. This narrative theme was one of the most prevalent within the general population with it being the highest frequency narrative. Mid-score LOC is not typically reflective of offending behaviour (Cavaiola & Desordi, 2000; McAnena et al., 2016), and the narrative accounts presented in Chapter Five does reflect both themes of internal LOC with mastering of the self but also fate with situations being out of the Hero's control. Their journey reflects both events they controlled, and events that controlled them but overall themes of redemption sequence prevail.

Despite the finding here not being of significance, the results here bear similarities to the overall narrative theme of the Hero and does provide greater insight into the level two dimension of personality (McAdams 1994) in relation to the intrinsic links between narrative identity and an individual's personal concerns.

### **7.4.4 Locus of Control: Victim's Tragedy**

Again, no statistically significant findings emerged in the Victim narrative with LOC. Those with the Victim narrative had no internal LOC and had the highest mean indicative of a more external LOC. This does reveal some underlying levels of individuals are more likely to feel out of control in relation to their successes and/or more likely failures and attribute them to be a result of fate or luck. The role of the victim is an individual who has no hope, there is a sense of impotence and hopelessness embraced in a theme of negativity in which they view themselves as the Victim, similarly identified with Youngs and Canter (2012). The role is low



in potency and high in intimacy, in which the Victim attributes blame to external circumstances, which is reflective of an external locus of control, in that external circumstances control them. Although not of significance, it is an interesting finding and does aid some support to the second level of personality that reflects the nature of the narrative as the third level of personality.

In the offending context, the Victim is argued by Youngs (2013) as having a negative external imposition in such that the tragedy narrative the circumstances faced overcome the person related to a difference in the locus of control of the individual with the victim projecting an external agency. A higher LOC has also been associated with criminality (Cavaiola & Desordi, 2000; McAnena et al., 2016), and has been associated with higher levels of anxiety and a tendency to be more likely to be stressed or have psychological or physical problems due to the lack of control they have reflective of their weak self-identity (Roddenberry & Renk, 2010). Chapter 5 revealed that Victims were more likely to experience suffering, psychological or physical illness and/or injury, and these events were significant features within their storylines. This aids some support to a higher score reflective of an external locus of control can be attributed to higher levels of stress and illness/injury and how the personality measures correlate with the themes relayed by the individuals in the life story deepening an understanding of the self.

Although not of significance, it is a noteworthy finding that there is some support within the psychological constructs of the offending Victim narrative role and in the findings within this thesis reflective of the life narrative of the victim and the components that underpin it. Being helpless is a core component of the Victim narrative and is one readily associated with an external locus of control with these individuals under the belief that they can do nothing to change circumstances. This does reflect the three-dimensional integrative system of personality (McAdams, 1994), and also reflects the criminal narratives as revealed by Youngs and Canter (2012), showing that there is some fruitfulness to the NAS and greater understanding between an offending and non-offending sample.

## **7.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter aimed to identify if personality measures in relation to traits and personal concerns, stemming from McAdams' (1995) three levels of personality, could be differentiated across the four narrative roles revealed in the thematic analysis of the LAAF

items in Chapter 5. It was highlighted by McAdams and Pals (2005) that an integrative framework for understanding an individual's identity is lacking, therefore this Chapter endeavoured to provide the said framework in relation to the four narrative roles with a three-level personality approach (McAdams, 1995). The NAS has proved fruitful in criminal behaviour yet has not yet been distinguished in non-offenders to enable differentiation and a greater understanding between the two groups. It was hypothesised that there would be a correlation between the personality measures and similarly themed narratives.

In relation to the Big Five personality traits, few significant differences emerged, nonetheless, there were interesting findings revealed which were reflective of the overarching themes that underpin the narrative roles. These findings were similarly replicated with the LOC, which despite no significant differences emerging, interesting results do emerge.

The results here reveal that the narrative role of the Victim in the non-offending sample is more likely to have an external LOC, the victim is someone who attributes responsibility to others with low intimacy and a weak self-identity. An external locus of control blames outside forces for having no control over life events which is in support of the Victim role. The BFI also revealed personality traits typical of the Victim narrative role which support the disorganised and weak self-identity in being detached and neurotic. Although of little significance, these findings at both levels of personality bear some resemblance to the expected hypothesis and could aid in supporting an integrative framework for providing a richer understanding of the various elements of personality.

Again, the personality traits associated with the Hero narrative do bear some resemblance to the high communal themes identified within the Hero role in this sample as someone who is calm and centred on love and intimacy providing a clearer reflection of the self-identity they assign to themselves and reflect the key themes of the Hero. The LOC of the Hero was not significantly associated with anything but the intermediate LOC revealed by these protagonists does reflect the narrative account relayed in Chapter 5 of them controlling aspects of life, but aspects of life controlling them.

The personality traits of the Professional revealed here were associated with the Professional role were reflective of the narrative accounts nature being positive and excitement to achieve success and objectives with higher levels of conscientiousness and openness to experience which is a trait of the Professional in pursuit of their agentic objectives which again, does

give some support to the significance of including such a measure alongside the LAAF to fully uncover the three levels of personality, deepening the understanding of the narrative roles and the individuals self-identity.

The role of the Revenger again reflected personality dimensions and personal concerns that were somewhat reflected in the narrative accounts of hostility and masculinity. Such narrative accounts were more couched in criminality and centred on acts of crime. Conflict within narratives has been identified as a key factor within the narratives of an offender, therefore, this could be indicative of the role of the Revenger being a more criminal narrative and having less variation when revealed in a non-offending sample.

Despite there being interesting findings, contrary to predictions there were few significantly associated traits in the level one tier of personality which provides the outline of personality and no significant associations in level two tier of personality which can provide an individual's motivations alongside the four narrative themes. Similar findings were previously found by McAdams et al. (2004) and reflect variations found in offending behaviour (Dennison et al., 2001; Marsa et al., 2004; Samuels et al., 2004).

The narrative accounts provided during this study encompass the highs and lows of the protagonist's life story, narratives are dynamic and evolving throughout the life course, and such static measures such as the BFI and LOC may not necessarily provide enough nuance to reflect this and how personality evolves over time. Such broad traits are not fully comparable to the fluidity of a detailed narrative, yet some interesting findings are still revealed. How a person makes sense of their life or the stories they retell may not be fully indicative of their underlying traits.

Similarly, this study examined the BFI personality traits alone across the narrative themes as John et al. (2008) identified, there are five traits to personality that all interplay, it lacked the different facets of the Big Five incorporating all traits together alongside the narrative themes which together could provide a deeper understanding into how facets of BFI could link to narratives and be empirically linked. The sample size in this study is relatively small in comparison to the four narrative themes, done with a bigger sample size could be more fruitful and reveal significant differences in line with the interesting themes that emerged.

From an offending standpoint, previously the four narrative themes have been found in offending behaviour in the roles offenders adopt during the commission of a crime (Canter &

Youngs, 2009; Youngs & Canter 2012) and in the life narrative (Canter & Youngs (2015), the belief system of the offenders was considered in this with an external course of action and an internal course of action which was inferred from the narrative accounts and did not include the LOC measure. Certain personality traits and belief systems have been linked to offending behaviour with differences found across offence types (Dennison et al., 2001; Marsa et al., 2004; Samuels et al., 2004), yet the comparison of the four narrative themes with an offending sample and personality measures has not yet been done to see how traits and personal concerns relate with an offender's, which would provide further detail and understanding of an integrated model of differentiation.

In sum, this chapter does reveal some key associations in relation to personality traits and personal concerns in line with the narrative roles identified, providing some support to McAdams (1995) and McAdams and Pals (2005), and also highlights that there may be some aspect of unresolved dissonance (Youngs et al., 2014) within the life story accounts. To enable a greater understanding of how criminality links to the narrative accounts, the next chapter will examine how criminality is related to the four narrative roles within this sample.

## **Chapter 8: Criminal Narratives: A Comparison of Offenders and Non-Offenders**

### **8.1 Introduction**

Canter (1994) proposes that criminals live their lives by distorted narratives and that, although they live by the same narratives as the non-offending population, they construct them wrongly which leads to distortion. Youngs and Canter (2012) developed a narrative framework that proposed four narrative roles in the offending action which can reveal significant details on how the offender views the world and the victim, yet no research has identified how these narratives, centred on the offence itself, fit into the overall life narratives of these offenders and if they are in fact a warped narrative account adopted by non-offenders.

Youngs et al. (2015) noted that the offenders had unresolved dissonance within their life stories and the events conflicted with the stories told, with the offenders' stories having a general negative undertone, a central focus of criminality, and the problematic nature of relations with others, yet the content within the narratives was in discord. However, this study did not focus on the components of the narratives of the non-offenders, nor the stories they live by. This study, alongside the study by Canter and Youngs (2015), identified the roles of the Revenger, Hero, Victim and Professional, but it did not thematically analyse the structure and components.

As found within the previous chapters, the narrative action system roles identified by Youngs and Canter (2009, 2012), are revealed within the life stories of the non-incarcerated sample of the population. Yet, non-incarcerated does not necessarily mean that they are not offenders, have previously been offenders, nor that they have not committed offences. This chapter aims to assess if there are any underlying themes of criminality within the present sample, and how they differ from the other narratives present, using content analysis. This method has proved fruitful in comparing narrative datasets in relation to criminality (Maruna, 2012), and will glean an insight into the different narratives adopted by the general population. Also, it will give an overview of how, if present, criminality can be embedded within the life stories, and whether unresolved dissonance is present within this sample.

The research questions here are: Do the life narratives of those who have committed an offence differ from those that have not? And if so, how are these narratives underpinned?.

## **8.2 Data Analysis Method**

### **8.2.1 Sample**

#### **8.2.1.1 Committed a Crime (Offenders)**

Of the participants who took part in the research, 20 stated that they had committed a crime. Of those who admitted a crime, the offences described by them varied, with one participant not disclosing. Eight had committed drug offences, eleven committed theft offences, three committed burglary and/or robbery, five committed violent offences, two committed fraud offences, six committed public order offences, and ten had committed traffic offences. One participant further disclosed a previous sex offence within the LAAF interview.

Fourteen of the sample were male and six were female, all aged between 19-74 years old with a mean age of 36 years ( $SD = 14.8$ ). Five (25%) were 25 and under, 10 (50%) were aged between 26-45 years, and 5 (25%) were over 45 years old at the time the interviews took place. All the sample that committed a crime were of white ethnic origin.

The qualifications of the offending group varied from no qualifications to degree level. Three (15%) had no qualifications, and 8 (40%) were educated to GCSE level. Six (30%) were in education up to college/apprenticeship, 1 participant (5%) was educated up to A/AS level, and 2 (10%) were educated to undergraduate degree level. The largest portion of the sample, 40% ( $n=8$ ), were in unskilled employment, with 30% ( $n=6$ ) in skilled employment, 10% professional, and 20% ( $n=4$ ) were unemployed.

Ten percent ( $n = 2$ ) had parents with convictions, and 5% ( $n = 1$ ) were 'unsure'. Regarding their childhood, 15% ( $n = 3$ ) had lived with one parent, 70% ( $n = 14$ ) lived with both parents, 5% ( $n = 1$ ) their grandparent, and 5% ( $n = 1$ ) both mum and step dad. Five percent ( $n = 1$ ) had been brought up in a foster home/children's home.

#### **8.2.1.2 Not Committed a Crime (Non-Offenders)**

In this instance, of those that had disclosed that they had not committed a crime, 20 (39%) were male and 31 (61%) were female. The age range was between 18 and 75 years, with a

mean age of 37.55 ( $SD = 16.21$ ). Fifteen (29%) participants were aged 25 years and under, 22 (43%) were aged between 26 and 45 years, and 15 (29%) were over the age of 45 years. A large proportion of the non-offending sample was White 94% ( $n=48$ ), 4% ( $n=2$ ) were Black Caribbean, and 2% ( $n=1$ ) were of a race described as 'other'. Twenty-six percent ( $n=13$ ) of the sample were educated to GCSE level or equivalent. A further 16% ( $n=8$ ) were educated to degree level, and 14% ( $n=7$ ) were educated to postgraduate level.

In relation to the marital status of those who had not committed a crime, 16% ( $n=8$ ) were cohabiting, two (4%) were divorced, 18 (35%) were married, two (4%) were separated, and 21 (41%) were single. Despite not committing an offence, over half (59%,  $n=26$ ) had talked to the police in some capacity. Seven (14%) had family members with convictions (fraud, burglary, assault, violence, and drink driving).

### **8.2.1.3 Convicted**

Those who revealed they had convictions were four males and one female, all of white ethnic origin. One participant was aged 25 and under, three aged 26-45 years, and one over 45 years. Twenty percent were unemployed, 60% unskilled, and 20% skilled. All those with convictions were single, 80% ( $n = 4$ ) were educated to GCSE level, and 20% ( $n = 1$ ) had no qualifications. Convictions varied for drug offences but for theft and violent offences, participants confessed to committing more offences than they had been convicted of, and often more serious offences. One participant (20%) grew up in a foster home/children's home, three participants (60%) grew up with their mum and dad, and one participant (20%) grew up with their mum and stepdad. Interestingly, 40% had family with convictions.

### **8.2.2 Material**

The LAAF responses were content-analysed and within the demographic section of the questionnaires, participants were asked whether they had committed an offence and if so what this was, as well as if they had ever been convicted of an offence. It is important to note that ethical approval was granted for this, but although data had been given in confidence, if a participant was to disclose something that was of concern, the relevant channels would have been pursued in relation to this.

Those who had confessed to committing a crime, and those that had confessed to being convicted of a crime, were coded in turn and a comparison between the samples was

performed, using frequencies to analyse the content. This is detailed in the first section of this chapter.

### **8.2.3 Analysis**

Differences were analysed using Pearson's chi-square test. A Pearson's Chi-Square test compares differences between data, testing the likelihood of an observed distribution being due to chance. The chi-square test will identify which of the two sample groups ('committed a crime' and 'not committed a crime') the LAAF variables were significantly associated to, within this sample. When the frequency was too low, Fisher's exact test was used as this tests the association between two categorical variables when the expected value is less than 5.

It is important to note that although this section says 'not committed a crime', just because they did not disclose one in the interview does not mean they had not committed one. In contrast with the previous applications, it was not just male participants, but female participants were included too. For the purposes of this study, those who had committed an offence will be termed 'offenders'. Verbatim narratives will be used to illustrate the findings.

## **8.3 Narrative Differences between Offenders and Non-Offenders: Committed an Offence**

### **8.3.1 Psychological Complexity**

As can be seen from Table 8.1, both sets of respondents used the LAAF procedure to generate rich engaging narratives. The structure of the narratives was similarly distributed amongst both groups, although marginal differences were noted between the storylines.



**Table 8.1**

*Comparisons of Psychological Complexity LAAF responses with Chi-Square/Fisher's Exact: Not Committed a Crime and Committed a Crime*

Psychological Complexity	No Crime			Committed Crime			Chi-Square
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	%	
Film narrative –							
Number of people	4.84	2.52		4.95	2.78		X <sup>2</sup> (1)=8.839, p=.547 <sup>a</sup>
Distinct events cited	6.2	3.92		6.95	5.67		X <sup>2</sup> (1)=8.005, p=.924 <sup>a</sup>
Distinct psychological ideas	9.92	5.23		9.32	3.96		X <sup>2</sup> (1)=14.029, p=.727 <sup>a</sup>
Presences of coherent themes	<i>n</i> = 47		92.2%	<i>n</i> = 18		90%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.086, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
Roles for characters	<i>n</i> = 16		31.4%	<i>n</i> = 11		55%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=3.403, p=.065 <sup>a</sup>
Distinct beginning, middle and end components	<i>n</i> = 41		80.4%	<i>n</i> = 16		80%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.001, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
Presence of contingent sequences	<i>n</i> = 35		68.6%	<i>n</i> = 15		75%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.280, p=.597 <sup>a</sup>
Length	1087	936.96		1425	1727.4		X <sup>2</sup> (68)71.000=, p=.378 <sup>a</sup>

Note: \**p* < .05; \*\* *p* < .01; \*\*\* *p* < .001

<sup>a</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using chi-square. <sup>b</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using Fisher's exact test

Canter and Youngs (2012) generated the LAAF procedure for use with offenders, primarily in a prison environment due to its simplicity, and this supports its use with both offenders and non-offenders as this study was performed using non-offenders and outside a prison environment. The narratives of those who had committed a crime were centred on more events and featured more people within the storyline than the non-offenders, revealing that the complexity within offenders' narratives as identified was slightly higher. Higher complexity is indicative of more incoherence and confusion with the narratives (Erikson, 1950, 1968; McAdams, 1993, 1996), and these incoherent narrative accounts are more likely to be associated with negativity which has been associated with the narratives of offenders (Maruna, 2001). The respondents who had not committed a crime had marginally more 'psychological ideas'.

Both groups of participants used coherent themes and contingent sequences which were similarly high in frequency. The length of the narrative given by the respondents who had

committed a crime ( $M=1425$ ,  $SD=1727.4$ ) was longer than the narrative given by those who had not committed a crime ( $M=1087$ ,  $SD=936.96$ ). The length of words for the participants who had participated in criminal activity ranged from 123 to 6721, and from 174 to 4248 words for those who had not committed a crime, indicative of slightly higher complexity.

One apparent distinction is the offenders took the procedure more carefully and in a more film-like context than the non-offenders using roles for characters. Miller and Treacher (1981) showed that delinquents more readily identified with fictional characters, showing a preference for the masculine and popular heroes who were more likely to use direct action to solve their problems. Participants in this sample used roles to describe groups (participant 7) or real-life actors/characters.

*P7 - 'The triads'*

*P11 - 'Myself, will smith probably'*

*P19 - 'Mr Grey with guns...'*

### **8.3.2 Implicit Psychological Content**

The dominant aspect of the narratives of those who had committed a crime was of a more criminal nature than those who had not. This was expressed in the narratives detailing genuine accounts of criminal behaviour that they found central to their storyline. Doing crime was statistically significant in these narratives, highlighting that people who commit offending behaviour focus on their criminality as a central focus to their LAAF, demonstrating how crime is embedded within their life stories.

### 8.3.2.1 Genre

In terms of the overall theme of the film described by participants which represent their LAAF, there were noteworthy differences between the genres of the participants who had confessed to committing an offence and those who had not, as can be observed in Table 8.2.

**Table 8.2**

*Comparisons of Story Genre LAAF responses with Chi-Square/Fisher's Exact: Not Committed a Crime and Committed a Crime*

Story Genre	No Crime		Committed Crime		Chi-Square
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	
Comedy	24	47.1%	5	25%	$X^2(1)=.2893$ , $p=.089^a$
Overcoming Adversity	16	31.4%	4	20%	$X^2(1)=.918$ , $p=.338^a$
Drama	15	29.4%	7	35%	$X^2(1)=.210$ , $p=.647^a$
Romance	9	17.6%	1	5%	$X^2(1)=1.899$ , $p=.263^b$
Adventure/Sports	6	11.8%	1	5%	$X^2(1)=.740$ , $p=.664^b$
Action	3	5.9%	4	20%	$X^2(1)=3.222$ , $p=.092^b$
Tragedy	2	3.9%	3	15%	$X^2(1)=2.693$ , $p=.132^b$
Thriller	1	2%	2	10%	$X^2(1)=2.294$ , $p=.189^b$
Crime	-	-	1	5%	$X^2(1)=2.586$ , $p=.282^b$

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using chi-square. <sup>b</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using Fisher's exact test

Comedy was the highest-frequency genre amongst the non-offending participants at 47%, although the comedy genre was also high in those who had offended too at 25%, and of near significance. Those who had not committed a crime were nearly twice as likely to describe their narrative as a comedy, and when doing so, it would often be a negatively associated comedy as their life 'was a joke' too which highlights distinctions between the samples in their life trajectories. Twenty percent of participants who had offended described their LAAF as an action film in comparison to only 5.9% of non-offenders and was also of near significance. The offenders within the sample were also over three times more likely to describe their LAAF with an action theme or tragedy, thriller, and crime, than the non-offending sample.

### 8.3.2.2 Focal Content

The events mentioned with the narratives of the participants varied depending on their criminality as can be observed from Table 8.3.

**Table 8.3**

*Comparisons of Focal Content LAAF responses with Chi-Square/Fisher's Exact: Not Committed a Crime and Committed a Crime*

Focal Content	No Crime		Committed Crime		Chi-Square
	N	%	N	%	
Relationship success	27	52.9%	11	55%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.024, p=.876 <sup>a</sup>
Birth	19	37.3%	6	30%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.331, p=.565 <sup>a</sup>
Relationship problem	18	35.3%	10	50%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=1.301, p=.254 <sup>a</sup>
Material success	10	19.6%	8	40%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=3.157, p=.076 <sup>a</sup>
Sport	9	17.6%	3	15%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.072, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
Victim of crime	8	15.7%	5	25%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.833, p=.496 <sup>b</sup>
Death	6	11.8%	5	25%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=1.922, p=.272 <sup>b</sup>
Doing crime	4	7.8%	9	45%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=13.261, p=0.001 <sup>b ***</sup>
Imprisonment	2	3.9%	1	5%	X <sup>2</sup> (1).041=, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using chi-square. <sup>b</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using Fisher's exact test

The discussion of doing crime, for those who had committed a crime, was significantly higher than for those who had not, and death was mentioned nearly twice as often in those that had committed a crime alongside material success. Material success was near significance with offenders mentioning this in 40% of narratives in comparison to non-offenders with only 20%. Being a victim was also more prevalent in the life narratives of those who had committed a crime, as were relationship problems. These findings support that the life stories of offenders are more negative than those of non-offenders as revealed by Maruna (2001, 2004) and Canter, Youngs and Carthy (2014).

In the life stories of those who had not committed a crime, and although it was not a LAAF content variable, the mention of 'sport' was higher, and the mention of 'birth' was notably higher too. Relationship success was marginally higher in those who had committed a crime but relatively similar in comparison between the two groups.

Although Presser (2010) noted that all narrative interviews were a social interaction and had a social context, in such the environment that the interviews were conducted influenced the narrative account provided. Previous narrative studies were conducted in a prison context and have been salient to crime and imprisonment within the narratives (Canter & Youngs, 2009). The narratives here were conducted in an everyday environment in participant's homes and work environments, therefore these LAAF accounts do draw attention to just how central a role crime and its wider ramifications play in the lives of those offenders, and how this aids in defining their self-identity. The mention of doing a crime was scarce in accounts of those who had not committed a crime, and when mentioned, it was a hypothetical event. The mention of crime, with this sample, were all real-life events as presented below.

P7 - *"I was completely off my head every day on heroin, it was codeine and then heroin at school... by the time I was 13, I was embroiled in gang related activities with the Triads, I was working in clubs, there was lots of drugs around, I was using a lot of drugs, I was drinking a lot so by the age of 15 I was hooked on heroin"*.

P19 - *"Fell in with the wrong crowd and into crime and everything else. We were at the point, we were smuggling motocross bikes across the border making £500 a day, each of us. Smuggling bikes, cannabis, firearms, cigarettes, anything really across the border"*.

P69 - *"I got arrested for shoplifting and done for it, so I suppose that would be an exciting scene. I had robbed load before and never got caught. I was robbing CDs. As I was walking out the shop the security guard pounced on me I tried to get away but there were two of them"*.

### **8.3.2.3 Sandberg**

Statistically significant differences emerged in Sandberg's (2009) narratives in the life stories of the two groups as can be observed in Table 8.4.

**Table 8.4**

*Comparisons of Sandberg 2009 LAAF responses with Chi-Square/Fisher's Exact: Not Committed a Crime and Committed a Crime*

Sandberg 2009	No Crime		Committed Crime		Chi-Square
	N	%	N	%	
I'm decent	19	37.3%	2	10%	$X^2(1)=5.123, p=0.024^{a*}$
I'm interesting	10	19.6%	9	45%	$X^2(1)=4.726, p=0.030^{a*}$
We're the same	5	9.8%	2	10%	$X^2(1)=.001, p=1.000^b$
I'm smart	5	9.8%	1	5%	$X^2(1)=.429, p=.668^b$
It was my own choice	4	7.8%	4	20%	$X^2(1)=2.124, p=.209^b$
I'm dangerous	4	7.8%	4	20%	$X^2(1)=2.124, p=.209^b$

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup>Frequencies of occurrence tested using chi-square. <sup>b</sup>Frequencies of occurrence tested using Fisher's exact test

Morally-decent narratives prevailed more in the life stories of the participants who had not committed an offence within the sample. The 'I'm decent' narrative was over twice as high in the participants that had not committed a crime, and this was similarly found with the 'we're the same' narrative. The 'I'm decent' narrative was the highest frequency theme in those who had not committed a crime. The 'it was my choice' narrative was over twice as high in those that had committed an offence.

In the offending narratives, 'I'm dangerous' was more than twice as high in those who had committed a crime, highlighting a significantly different narrative tone portrayed within their life stories. Another dominant aspect of the offenders' life narratives was the notion to appear interesting in their narrative accounts. Displayed by behaviours and scenes, this was the highest-frequency theme in those who had committed a crime, with nearly half of the sample reflecting this theme. Sandberg's (2009) 'I'm interesting' narratives were utilized by individuals presenting themselves as 'interesting' in the way in which they exaggerated the parts of their film narrative that they believed people to be interested in as shown by participant 17. The 'I'm smart' narrative was double that of those who had committed a crime but was not a high-frequency theme, this narrative is one that is associated with being embedded in the gangster discourse of a violent street subculture.

P17 – *"I got really drunk on one of the first nights and then we went to Miami and we nearly died about 20 times because it was a really scary place and a man robbed us of one dollar, 38 cents. And a police lady told us about being gang raped and dying – this would be really*

*dramatic*”.

### 8.3.2.4 Resolution

Table 8.5 reveals significant findings in relation to the resolution and tone of the narratives. The narratives of those who had committed a crime were more proactive than those who had not, and a passive tone was expressed more frequently in the narratives of those who had not committed an offence too. Interestingly, a positive tone was higher in those who had not committed a crime, and a negative tone was higher in those who had committed a crime, again, supporting that offenders live a more ‘contaminated’ script.

**Table 8.5**

*Comparisons of Resolution and Tone LAAF responses with Chi-Square/Fisher’s Exact: Not Committed a Crime and Committed a Crime*

Resolution and Tone	No Crime		Committed Crime		Chi-Square
	N	%	N	%	
Sad ending	-	-	3	15%	$X^2(1)=7.988, p<=.020^{b*}$
Happy ending	46	90.2%	13	65%	$X^2(1)=6.893, p=0.29^{b*}$
Proactive	22	43.1%	10	50%	$X^2(1)=.273, p=.601^a$
Positive tone	34	66.7%	10	50%	$X^2(1)=1.693, p=.193^a$
Passive	19	37.3%	5	25%	$X^2(1)=.964, p<=.326^a$
Negative tone	15	29.4%	8	40%	$X^2(1)=.735, p=.391^a$

The resolutions of the film presentation also statistically differed from those non-offenders in their belief of a happy ending, supporting the strong negative tone that appears quite distinct to the offenders here, and as recognised by (Maruna, 2001), as this individual (49) asserts. The resolution, although not always stated as being a sad ending, had events described within it that were not happy as shown in participant 58 whose narrative emphasised both the ‘I’m interesting’ narrative alongside the negative ending. These two examples show two of the strong themes that emerged from the narratives in the criminal context, the negative tragic story typical of a Victim theme and the fast-paced excitement, but with a negative tone.

*P49 – “Then it becomes a very sad event and think the film will end up with – because of the beliefs of the shininess, coming into the dark. I would die”.*

P58 – “It will probably end in a big ball of flames. I reckon it will be a scene were I’m driving a super-fast car trying to out run someone, maybe the police, and it will be like really tense with me driving my car up off a bridge, doing a huge jump and crashing down on the other side only to smash into something”.

### 8.3.3 Explicit Processes

#### 8.3.3.1 Agency and communion

McAdams’ (1993) agency-themes were relatively evenly distributed between the two groups and no notable differences emerged between them as can be observed in table 8.6. Similarly, communion themes overall were equal between those participants who had and had not committed an offence, yet those with no previous offences were higher in love and friendship, and those who had committed an offence, were higher in themes of caring/help. This supports the intimacy and potency differentiation in narratives posited by Youngs and Canter (2012), whether criminal or non-criminal and how the individuals relate to the world and shape their identity (McAdams, 1993).

**Table 8.6**

*Comparisons of Agency and Communion Psychological Content LAAF responses with Chi-Square/Fisher’s Exact: Not Committed a Crime and Committed a Crime*

Psychological Content	No Crime		Committed Crime		Chi-Square
	N	%	N	%	
Agency					
Achievement/ responsibility	19	37.3%	8	40%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.046, p=.830 <sup>a</sup>
Status – victory	12	23.5%	5	25%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.017, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
Self-mastery	10	19.6%	4	20%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.001, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
Empowerment	2	3.9%	1	5%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.041, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
Communion					
Love/ friendship	27	52.9%	7	35%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=1.853, p=.173 <sup>a</sup>
Unity/ togetherness	20	39.2%	7	35%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.108, p=.742 <sup>a</sup>
Caring/ help	11	21.6%	7	35%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=1.369, p=.242 <sup>a</sup>
Dialogue	1	2%	1	5%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.485, p=.487 <sup>b</sup>

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using chi-square. <sup>b</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using Fisher’s exact test



### 8.3.3.2 Redemption/Contamination

No significant findings were revealed in relation to the redemption and contamination elements of the narratives in comparison with offenders and non-offenders as can be revealed in table 8.7.

**Table 8.7**

*Comparisons of Redemption/Contamination LAAF responses with Chi-Square/Fisher's Exact: Not Committed a Crime and Committed a Crime*

Redemption and Contamination	No Crime		Committed Crime		Chi-Square
	N	%	N	%	
Redemptive Theme					
General redemption	36	70.6%	16	80%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.649, p=.420 <sup>a</sup>
Suffering or injustice in lives of others during childhood	8	15.7%	5	25%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.833, p=.496 <sup>b</sup>
Sets forth pro-social goals	6	11.8%	1	5%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.740, p=.664 <sup>b</sup>
Repeat negative events transformed to redemptive sequence	6	11.8%	4	20%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.805, p=.370 <sup>b</sup>
Development of sense of moral steadfastness	4	7.8%	3	15%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.828, p=.363 <sup>a</sup>
Enjoys a special advantage	3	5.9%	1	5%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.021, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
Contamination Theme					
General contamination	18	35.3%	11	55%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=2.309, p=.129 <sup>a</sup>
Betrayal	10	19.6%	6	30%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.889, p=.346 <sup>a</sup>
Victimisation	9	17.6%	5	25%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.491, p=.517 <sup>b</sup>
Physical/ psychological illness or injury	9	17.6%	3	15%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.072, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
Disappointment	6	11.8%	4	20%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.805, p=.452 <sup>b</sup>
Failure	5	9.8%	3	15%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.388, p=.678 <sup>b</sup>
Loss of significant other	5	9.8%	2	10%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.001, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
Disillusionment	2	3.9%	1	5%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.041, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
Sex guilt, humiliation	-	-	1	5%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=2.586, p=.282 <sup>b</sup>

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using chi-square. <sup>b</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using Fisher's exact test

Themes of general redemption were marginally higher in those who had committed an offence than those that had not. In specific themes of redemption, suffering or injustice in the lives of others was the most frequent theme in those who had committed an offence, and this was also more frequent than in the narratives of those who had not committed an offence alongside repeat negative events and development of a sense of moral steadfastness. Setting forth pro-social goals was higher in those who had not committed an offence, however, suffering or injustice in the lives of others was also the highest frequency theme in their narratives.

In themes of contamination, general contamination was significantly higher in those who had committed a crime. Negative narrative accounts have been associated with criminality (Maruna, 2001), and this finding supports this notion. Those who had committed an offence were also higher in all specific themes, and while betrayal was the highest theme in the narratives of both samples, this was higher in those who had committed a crime.

Victimisation was also a high frequency contamination theme in the narratives of those who had committed an offence.

### **8.3.3.3 Narrative Action System**

As can be observed below in table 8.8, differences did emerge amongst the offenders and non-offenders in relation to the NAS themes.

**Table 8.8**

*Comparisons of NAS LAAF responses with Chi-Square/Fisher's Exact: Not Committed a Crime and Committed a Crime*

Narrative Action System	No Crime		Committed Crime		Chi-Square
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	
Tragedy Theme (Revenger)					
Wrong done to them/ theirs	10	19.6%	6	30%	$X^2(1)=.889, p=.360^b$
Revenge	1	2%	1	5%	$X^2(1)=.485, p=.487^b$
Compulsion	3	5.9%	1	5%	$X^2(1)=.021, p=1.000^b$
Irony Theme (Victim)					
Impotence/ hopelessness	9	17.6%	5	25%	$X^2(1)=.491, p=.517^b$
Fate	7	13.7%	1	5%	$X^2(1)=1.094, p=.427^b$
Confusion/ misunderstanding	7	13.7%	3	15%	$X^2(1)=.019, p=1.000^b$
Adventure Theme (Professional)					
Tangible rewards/ acquisitions	9	17.6%	5	25%	$X^2(1)=.491, p=.517^b$
Fulfilment/ satisfaction	26	51%	8	40%	$X^2(1)=.694, p=.405^a$
Effectiveness/ skills/ competencies	9	17.6%	2	10%	$X^2(1)=.642, p=.717^a$
Quest Theme (Hero)					
Victory/ proving self/ success	14	27.5%	6	30%	$X^2(1)=.046, p=.830^a$
Overcoming struggles/ obstacles/ mission	13	25.5%	5	25%	$X^2(1)=.002, p=.966^a$
Masculinity/ bravery	9	17.6%	9	45%	$X^2(1)=5.680, p=0.017^{a*}$

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using chi-square. <sup>b</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using Fisher's exact test

The Revenger's narrative was marginally more prevalent in the life stories of those who had committed an offence and is supportive of the negativity identified within the overall sample in Chapter 4. These participants expressed higher themes of wrong done to them, although this was the highest theme across both groups. The Victim's narrative was expressed evenly over the two groups, and while those who had committed an offence were higher in themes of impotence/hopelessness, this was the highest-frequency behaviour in both groups. Those who

had not committed an offence were higher in themes of fate and confusion was evenly distributed.

The Professional narrative was a popular theme in the narratives and this was the highest theme overall in those who had not admitted to an offence. Despite this, tangible rewards/acquisitions were higher in those who had committed an offence. Other behaviours were highest in those who had not committed an offence. The Hero narrative was the most popular narrative among those that had committed an offence. The 'victory/prove-self' behaviour was equally distributed, and while overcoming struggles were relatively similar, masculinity/bravery was more than twice as high in those that had committed a crime. This shows how the four narrative themes have versatility in a non-offending sample with findings comparable between an offending and non-offending sample and does aid some support to the LAAF as a technique for eliciting narratives.

The protagonists who had committed a crime were much more likely to display behaviours or attributes of strength or dominance in their narratives and faced situations in which they were required to be brave. This was displayed both hypothetically, and in real life events. Participant 58 shows an example of aroused negative emotions and masculinity and how his past shaped his future.

P58 – *“Got moved around a lot from place to place. I was full of anger at everyone, still am really but at least now I know what was happening, I didn't then. A few fight scenes, a few more fight scenes [laughter]”*.

Statistically, significant Masculinity/Bravery was presented in different ways and both supported the overall emotions presented by the protagonist, masculinity shown in an aggressive format asserting power or anger, and bravery, which was more hypothetical with the protagonist being a hero trying to save people.

P7 – *“I was well known in school, popular but people would like be scared of me because I had a lot of power like triads, what have you and I did weight lifting so I was very strong I had been known to put people up against walls and I was working on doors in clubs and no one would ever, ever try it not even blokes so I had a bit of a reputation so it was all about power”*.

P11 – *“So that's where the hero bit comes in you know, yeah save as many people as I can”*.

### 8.3.4 Nature of Agency

#### 8.3.4.1 Justifications

The narratives of the participants who had committed an offence gave more justifications and neutralisations, which was identified in the Revenger theme of the thematic analysis in Chapter 5, highlighting that this theme could be more deviant than the others as can be observed in table 8.9.

**Table 8.9**

*Comparisons of Justification LAAF responses with Chi-Square/Fisher's Exact: Not Committed a Crime and Committed a Crime*

Justifications	No Crime		Committed Crime		Chi-Square
	N	%	N	%	
Assume the role of victim	13	25.5%	9	45%	$X^2(1)=2.557, p=.110^a$
Denial of responsibility	5	9.8%	2	10%	$X^2(1)=.001, p=1.000^b$
Distorting the consequence	2	3.9%	1	5%	$X^2(1)=.041, p=1.000^b$
Diffusion of responsibility	2	3.9%	3	15%	$X^2(1)=2.693, p=.132^b$
Appeal to higher loyalties	2	3.9%			$X^2(1)=.807, p=1.000^b$
Denial of the victim	2	3.9%	1	5%	$X^2(1)=.041, p=1.000^b$
Displacement of responsibility	1	2%	-	-	$X^2(1)=.398, p=1.000^b$
Condemnation of condemners	1	2%	-	-	$X^2(1)=.398, p=1.000^b$
Denial of injury	-	-	-	-	-
Dehumanising the victim	-	-	-	-	-

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using chi-square. <sup>b</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using Fisher's exact test

Assuming the role of the victim was the most prevalent justification associated with their life narratives, being considerably higher in those who had committed an offence than in those who had not. Again, this was identified in the Victim narrative theme and one could again infer that this is a more deviant narrative too.

'Assuming the role of the victim' was the highest-frequency in those who had not committed an offence. 'Diffusion of responsibility' was notably higher in those who had committed an offence. Justifications and neutralisations were identified by Bandura (1990) and Sykes and

Matza (1957) as a way in which criminals justify and rationalise their criminal behaviour, which is a likely finding here.

### 8.3.4.2 Emotions and identity

Statistically significant findings were revealed in the emotions across offenders and non-offenders as can be observed in table 8.10.

**Table 8.10**

*Comparisons of Emotions and Identity LAAF responses with Chi-Square/Fisher's Exact: Not Committed a Crime and Committed a Crime*

Emotions and Identity	No Crime		Committed Crime		Chi-Square
	N	%	N	%	
Non-aroused positive	30	58.8%	2	10%	$X^2(1) = 13.833, P = 0.00$ <sup>a ***</sup>
Non-aroused negative	12	23.5%	4	20%	$X^2(1) = .103, p = 1.000$ <sup>b</sup>
Aroused positive	7	13.7%	8	40%	$X^2(1) = 5.952, p = .023$ <sup>b *</sup>
Aroused negative	5	9.8%	8	40%	$X^2(1) = 8.758, p = .006$ <sup>b *</sup>
Hostility towards others	12	23.5%	7	35%	$X^2(1) = .964, p = .326$ <sup>a</sup>
Empathy for others	23	45.1%	5	25%	$X^2(1) = 2.430, p = .119$ <sup>a</sup>
Self-ID weaker than others	22	43.1%	9	45%	$X^2(1) = .020, p = .887$ <sup>b</sup>
Self-ID stronger than others	21	41.2%	10	50%	$X^2(1) = .455, p = .500$ <sup>b</sup>
Others as significant	47	92.2%	19	95%	$X^2(1) = .177, p = 1.000$ <sup>b</sup>
Others as non-significant	2	3.9%	1	5%	$X^2(1) = .041, p = 1.000$ <sup>b</sup>

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using chi-square. <sup>b</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using Fisher's exact test

With the explicit psychological processes, hostile behaviours were significantly more frequent in the life stories of those who had committed an offence. In contrast, empathy was higher in those who had not committed an offence. A clear and significant distinction emerges in the emotions of those who had committed an offence. Non-aroused positive emotions were dramatically higher in those who had not committed an offence, being over double of those who had. In comparison, non-aroused negative emotions were expressed considerably more in those who had committed an offence, again being over-double.

Aroused positive emotions were also expressed more in those who had committed an offence, as were aroused negative emotions, displayed by distress and anger:

P13 – *“I think I’d be angry... before I used to spend money like it was water I used to go out and just blow it all you know cars, anything. No matter what has gone on I love my Mum, it wasn’t her fault those [expletive] decided to take us away from her. She loved us. Some parents don’t even give a sh\*t about their kids, at least our mum cared for us, provided for us and did her best. Who the [expletive] did they think they were ripping a family apart like that”.*

P17 – *“Sad and psychotic. Angry”.*

Aroused positive emotions in contrast with the aroused negative emotions depict themes of excitement and elation, these emotions were typically associated with narratives that had a fast-paced and exciting theme.

P7 – *“Happy as anything – Elated”*

P57 – *“All fast paced and really exciting”*

The identity of the protagonists differed slightly between those who had committed an offence and those who had not. Self-identity, as ‘stronger than others’, was proportionately higher in those who had committed an offence, but participants viewing themselves as ‘weaker than others’ was relatively even in comparison. The significance of ‘others’ was evenly distributed between the two groups, with virtually all participants viewing ‘others’ as significant.

### **8.3.4.3 Imagoes**

Imagoes were higher in the life narratives of those who had not committed a crime within the sample, and the role of ‘the survivor’ was marginally the highest frequency imago with traveller, maker, friend, and lover, also being popular roles as can be observed from table 8.11.

**Table 8.11**

*Comparisons of Imagoes LAAF responses with Chi-Square/Fisher's Exact: Not Committed a Crime and Committed a Crime*

	Imagoes	No Crime		Committed Crime		Chi-Square
		N	%	N	%	
Self	Survivor	10	19.6%	6	30%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.889, p=.360 <sup>b</sup>
	Traveller	8	15.7%	1	5%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=1.482, p=.429 <sup>b</sup>
	Friend	9	17.6%	1	5%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=1.899, p=.263 <sup>b</sup>
	Maker	7	13.7%	3	15%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.019, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Lover	7	13.7%	-	-	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=3.045, p=.081 <sup>b</sup>
	Caregiver	5	9.8%	2	10%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.001, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Warrior	5	9.8%	1	5%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.429, p=.668 <sup>b</sup>
	Escapist	3	5.9%	6	30%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=7.549, p=.012 <sup>b*</sup>
	Sage	2	3.9%	-	-	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.807, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Ritualistic	1	2%	-	-	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.398, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Teacher	1	2%	-	-	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.398, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Arbiter	-	-	-	-	-
	Healer	-	-	-	-	-
	Humanist	-	-	-	-	-
	Counsellor	-	-	1	5%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=2.586, p=.282 <sup>b</sup>
Other	Caregiver	9	17.6%	3	15%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.072, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Lover	8	15.7%	3	15%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.005, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Warrior	5	9.8%	3	15%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.388, p=.678 <sup>b</sup>
	Teacher	4	7.8%	2	10%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.086, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Counsellor	2	3.9%	-	-	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.807, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Friend	14	27.5%	7	35%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.393, p=.531 <sup>a</sup>
	Healer	1	2%	-	-	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.398, p=1.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Maker	-	-	-	-	-
	Traveller	-	-	-	-	-
	Sage	-	-	-	-	-
	Ritualistic	-	-	-	-	-
	Escapist	-	-	1	5%	-
	Humanist	-	-	-	-	-
	Arbiter	-	-	-	-	-
	Survivor	-	-	-	-	-

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using chi-square. <sup>b</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using Fisher's exact test

In the life narratives of the protagonists who had committed an offence, differences emerged. 'Lovers' only emerged in the narratives of those who had not committed a crime (13.7%), and was absent in the narratives of those who had (0%), being of near significance. The popular role of 'traveller', in the narratives of those who had not committed an offence, was



low in the narratives of those who had committed an offence. These imagoes feature in the roles identified in Chapter 5 and are typical of the Hero, and the Professional, showing that these are more likely to be non-offending themes.

Interestingly, the narratives of the offenders were significantly associated with the escapist imago, being over four times more prevalent. The escapist is a person who lives for diversion, and escaping situations, be this through drinking, or holidays, or using drugs to escape their day to day lives. Imagoes (McAdams, 1985, 1993) help provide a framework to understand the stories individuals create to make sense of life's journey. This imago was found in Canter and Youngs (2015) to be associated with an offending sample and is a low-agency, low-communion imago, who cannot find time for power or love.

A third of those who had committed an offence was associated with this imago and while drinking was the main way these individuals 'escaped' the day to day activities of their lives, some also showed it through instability in their lives, such as bouncing from job to job/area to area. They have unstable relations with others.

P 19 – *“Moved over, got settled in, bounced from bar job to bar job, to waiter job, a load of rubbish. Looked for more jobs couldn't find anything. Treated it a bit like a holiday”.*

P13 – *“When I was 13 and I started going out drinking with them you 13-14 big places locally, you know Saturday nights out with them lot and you know school life was really jack the lad really liked to go out and have a good time. Especially when I started to go out locally. Meet other people that were older, I used to go out on a Wednesday night, Thursday night, Friday night, Saturday night. I'd go out 4 nights a week”.*

Similarities also emerged in the role of 'others' in the protagonists' stories. The 'Friend' imago was the highest-frequency role 'others' played to the protagonists in both groups, alongside 'caregiver' and 'lover' imagoes. The negative role of 'warrior' was similarly distributed.

#### **8.3.4.4 Psychological Components**

Psychological components differed between those who had committed a crime and those that hadn't as can be seen in table 8.12.

**Table 8.12**

*Comparisons of Psychological Component LAAF responses with Chi-Square/Fisher's Exact: Not Committed a Crime and Committed a Crime*

Psychological Components	No Crime		Committed Crime		Chi-Square
	N	%	N	%	
Incentive					
Social gain	12	23.5%	3	15%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.627, p=.531 <sup>b</sup>
Sensory gain	10	19.6%	7	35%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=1.869, p=.219 <sup>b</sup>
Material/ financial gain	8	15.7%	7	35%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=3.216, p=.105 <sup>b</sup>
Power/ status gain	7	13.7%	5	25%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=1.300, p=.299 <sup>b</sup>
Interpersonal Style					
Confronting of others	8	15.7%	7	35%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=3.216, p=.105 <sup>b</sup>
Avoidant of others	13	25.5%	6	30%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.149, p=.699 <sup>a</sup>
Locus of Control					
Reactive	7	13.7%	5	25%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=1.300, p=.299 <sup>b</sup>
Proactive	19	37.3%	5	25%	X <sup>2</sup> (1)=.964, p=.326 <sup>a</sup>

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using chi-square. <sup>b</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using Fisher's exact test

Sensory-gain and material/financial gain were significantly higher in those that had committed an offence, but both were equally the highest-frequency gains in the life narratives of those that had committed an offence. Material financial gain was of near significance with 35% of offenders and only 15.7% of non-offenders. Power/status gain was also higher in the narratives of those who had committed an offence, and social gain was relatively even. Those who had committed an offence were also more likely to express behaviours for the gain of something.

Bandura (1986, 1990) posits behaviour is driven by different psychological incentives and in support of criminal narratives here, Youngs (2006) found monetary, power/status, and sensory incentives, were key aspects noted by offenders in their offending action. This gives rise to the suggestion that the present sample does include criminal narratives that are supportive of previous literature. Being 'avoidant of others' was relatively even in the comparison, however, and interestingly, being 'confronting of others' was displayed more than twice as often in the life stories of those who had committed an offence (35%) than

those that had not (15.7%), and was near significance, highlighting a difference.

#### 8.4 Narrative Differences between Offenders and Non-Offenders: Convicted of Crime

A small number of the sample, as stated earlier, revealed convictions during the LAAF questionnaire procedure. Further analysis of the narratives of those with convictions revealed distinctions into how their narratives differed, with these narratives giving additional support to the two emerging criminal narrative themes of the offenders who confessed to committing a crime with a negative tragic storyline, and an exciting masculine film. This can be observed in table 8.13.

**Table 8.13**

*Significant LAAF responses of Participants without Convictions and with Convictions Using Fisher's Exact Test*

LAAF Item	No Crime		Convicted Crime		Chi-Square
	N	%	N	%	
Tragedy Genre	3	4.5%	2	40%	$X^2(1) = 8.925, p = 0.037^*$
Doing Crime	9	13.6%	4	80%	$X^2(1) = 13.686, p = 0.003^{**}$
Happy Ending	57	86.4%	2	40%	$X^2(1) = 7.114, p = 0.031^*$
Sad Ending	1	1.5%	2	40%	$X^2(1) = 17.011, p = 0.012^*$
Fulfilment/Satisfaction	34	51.5%	-	-	$X^2(1) = 4.493, p = 0.033^*$
Escapist	6	9.1%	3	60%	$X^2(1) = 10.883, p = 0.013^*$
Hostility	16	24.9%	4	80%	$X^2(1) = 7.141, p = 0.020^*$
Non-aroused Positive	32	48.5%	-	-	$X^2(1) = 4.413, p = 0.044^*$

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using chi-square. <sup>b</sup> Frequencies of occurrence tested using Fisher's exact test

The mention of doing a crime was still a dominant feature and statistically significant within the narratives of those who had been convicted of a crime. The detailing of past crimes they had committed was a central feature to the underlying storyline of their narratives with four out of the five participants mentioning this.

An even divide was found within those who had been convicted of an offence, in the resolution of the films, between happy and sad endings. Happy endings were statistically more likely to be present in those who had not been convicted in comparison to those who

had, and in contrast, a negative resolution was statistically more likely to feature in the narrative accounts of those who had been convicted of an offence.

Again, this supports the notion that there is differentiation within the narrative accounts in the overall sample here that criminal narratives do feature, and the crime could be embedded within these. Similarly, the escapist imago reinforced the offenders' negative representation of the self and the traits they identified with (McAdams, 1993). In doing so they presented themselves as an individual who lived for diversion, escaping their day-to-day lives. That supported the overall negative or exaggerated theme to the stories, where positive psychological constructs such as non-aroused emotions, being happy, and calm, did not feature.

Interestingly, in the narratives of those who had committed a crime tragedy was a dominant genre, which has been identified with the Victim narrative theme. Participants revealed disappointment in their lives by feeling saddened and going through hardship.

P69 – *“A sad one. It would be about how I’ve been abandoned by everyone and follow my struggles to survive”*.

Hostility was a statistically significant behaviour that featured in life trajectories, again shown through emotionally-charged, angry behaviour and bitter resentment, highlighting how theirs was a contaminated script, as identified by Maruna (2001) and Presser (2009), and that the narratives of offenders are habitually negative in nature.

P 13 – *“I was a bit of a shit when I was younger, I remember being suspended from primary school on the first day, for throwing a chair through a window and telling a teacher to fuck off basically”*.

P62 – *“Good bad feelings - I have bad feelings about neg heads (people who have negative attitudes) I just can’t be arsed with people like that, they can just f\*\*k off”*.

Adding to negativity being a prevailing feature of offenders' life stories, there were no themes of fulfilment/satisfaction displayed in offenders with convictions narratives. Not one of the participants mentioned the feeling of being satisfied or fulfilled with any aspect of their lives, which was significant in relation to the life stories of those who had not been convicted of an offence. There were, however, still two themes that differentiated the narratives, a bitter

life, with a tragic, negative narrative, and a fast-paced, exciting, crime-focused, thriller-type film.

## 8.5 Case Studies

Taking the key points from the above findings, the narrative accounts below reveal the two dominant themes that emerged within the analysis in relation to criminality.

Participants 49 and 69 highlight the negative narrative theme that emerged, which can be closely associated with that of the Victim narrative theme. Their storylines were focused on being wronged, not making sense, and the blaming of external circumstances.

P49 – *“But then you suddenly go away from childhood and start to see what life is all about, that it’s not all clean and fairies and shiny – that there’s so many bad things around and the fact that you have to deal with so many things... you grow up than start taking on life in general and the world and it starts getting a bit darker. Because you are trying to struggle by doing more things then it becomes a very sad event and think the film will end up with – because of the beliefs of the shininess, coming into the dark. I would die...*

*Do what you think you are meant to do but not being able to get it right to achieve it... Going through just before middle unhappy, not blending in not feeling like you are a part of anything. Teenage hood middle of the film still not happy, not satisfied with trying to get what you thought was an easy task like getting work and stuff like that. To the dark side that you feel that when you come to the end of this film a realization that you don’t feel like you have achieved something so it’s a very sort of saddened state at the end...*

*A lot of that is because of distancing myself in the film from people, not wanting to get involved with the people”.*

P69 – *“A sad one. It would be about how I’ve been abandoned by everyone and follow my struggles to survive. It would probably start with my Mum leaving me when I was young she couldn’t look after me and put me into care. I have spent my life going from children’s home to different foster homes getting into all kinds of fights and nobody gives a shit about you.... I didn’t have many friends when I was young in fact I still don’t have many friends I tend not to trust people. Probably with something happening to me getting into some kind of trouble I always seem to get into trouble...The sort of person who tries hard but never seems to be able to get things right. I feel really let down by everyone really... Everything I do seems to be a*

*mistake. Made friends-mistake they robbed off me, got attached to a family-mistake, they moved me on when they got fed up with me”.*

In contrast, participant 19 highlights that a criminal narrative is not just negative and a sense of victimisation but also can highlight the bravado, masculinity and hostility that were dominant features within the offending narratives.

P19 – *“It would be a dark comedy like really black comedy, dark humour, action, thriller, crime in with the thriller and action, lot of cannabis smoking, hell of a lot of drinking... That’s when the film starts getting good then, when I moved abroad as well. That’s when I t would turn more to a crime thriller and stuff like that really. A lot of crime smuggling across borders... It’s like the business film...*

*The best action bit in the film, there is a lot of action it could either be getting changed down Spanish motorways by the guard civil about 10 of us all on stolen motorbikes and the guard civil rolling down the window and beating my mate with a baton and knocking him off of his bike on the motorway when we are going about 60mph. or Spanish guy walking down the road with two machetes marching towards us with two machetes, and we had to stop him stabbing us. Or I got a load of weights tied round my legs and nearly thrown in the sea by a nightclub owner who thought I had robbed his nightclub, but I hadn’t it would someone else and the coastguard just came around the corner at the right moment or I would be fucking six feet in the bottom of the sea right now. Running down the beach with a big box of cigarettes throwing them over the border fence getting shot at by the police. Dodgy dealings on top of the rock, I don’t know, waiting for a plane to come in so we could unload it, I don’t know. Loads of shit really...*

*The easiest way to describe my whole mentality from 16 – to now it’s never changed is, evil brain angel heart, not always happy on the outside, not always on the inside., or get aggressive and calm the situation down. I’d never be the one to start it”*

## **8.6 Unresolved Dissonance**

In their comparative study on offenders and non-offenders, Youngs, Canter and Carthy (2014) found significant differences, distinct to the narratives of incarcerated offenders. Although this study is not a direct comparison with offenders, particularly in an incarcerated environment, the admission of committing an offence or being convicted of an offence is a primary chance to see if the findings of their study can be found in offenders in the public.

They identified four features that capture the essence of how the narratives of offenders appeared to be distinct. The four ways relate to a central focus on criminality, a generally negative undertone, a concern with materialistic matters and the significant, yet problematic nature of relations with others.

The findings from the present sample replicate some of the key distinctions within offenders' narratives in the LAAF paper, these being a general negative undertone, a central focus of criminality, and the problematic nature of relations with others, as revealed in the above sections. Although materialistic matters were not a central focus in them, the above findings highlight that those who had committed or been convicted of an offence were more likely to mention material/financial gain.

The comparisons revealed that films described by both offending samples were dominated by their involvement in crime and criminality, with the repeated mention of doing crime. Although the emphasis on criminality is likely to be a product of the prison context, this study shows that the predominance of crime and criminality is embedded within their life stories and is not just a feature of the social situation in which the study was conducted as previously identified by Presser (2010).

The negative undertone was prevalent in both offending samples, supported by the tragedy genre and aroused negative emotions. This was reinforced by Maruna (2001), who found offenders made sense of their lives as a series of blocked opportunities, seeing life as bleak and hostile experiences, with a sense of hopelessness. The problematic nature of relations with others was displayed in hostility and the escapist imago, supporting the notion that offenders cannot forge meaningful relationships (Canter & Youngs, 2012).

For many of the offenders, it appeared to be the involvement in or with crime that lent dramatic impetus to their lives, and although these offenders' LAAF accounts were typically characterised by pervasive negativity (be this through a sense of hopelessness and impotence in such a Victim theme, or of a high-focused, negative role of hostility), there was some nature of unresolved dissonance in the narrative accounts presented here. This highlighted that there was a subset of criminal narratives within this sample, which supported Youngs et al. (2014) distinction in how the narratives of offenders differed by four features, in comparison to a non-offending sample. That also highlighted that there was, as Canter (1994) stated, a distorted narrative present in their life trajectories that was part of a fuller, unfolding

story, yet the underpinning themes and psychological constructs were somewhat different, and more contaminated by nature, as found by Maruna (2001).

## **8.7 Chapter Summary**

The findings here reveal that the narrative accounts provided by both those who had committed an offence and those that had not are similar in their trajectories. This bears fruit that the four narrative themes that were revealed in Chapter 5 through thematic analysis have similar underpinning elements, yet some differences emerged in those who had committed an offence.

Reasonably, the narratives of different participants accentuated more psychological components and constructs than others, meaning all narratives had a variety of specific, detailed forms but the overarching theme within them was of a similar nature. Notably, in contrast with the offender narrative themes identified, the non-offenders' accounts were distinct in their life stories, being typically positive, with an optimistic nature and events, as identified by McAdams (1993, 1996).

In contrast, taken together with the themes that characterised the offenders' narratives, there was the characterisation of a narrative that was dominated by criminality, and inherent negative relations with others, being a theme of negativity and was typically problematic. This supports findings by Youngs et al. (2014) that offenders' narratives reveal underlying unresolved dissonance and aids Canter (1994) in that offenders live by the same narratives as non-offenders by constructing them wrongly leads them to criminality. Similarly, Maruna (2001) found that despite similarities in personality traits, the overall narrative theme differentiated persisting and desisting offenders, with persisting offenders expressing what Maruna (2001) described as a 'condemnation script', in which life was a negative event.

This aids support that all four narrative themes and the underpinning elements of the LAAF can be used in both offending and non-offending samples to reveal an individual's self-identity. Interestingly, the themes of the Victim and Revenger appear to be the narratives that are couched in a more negative theme and given that studies have revealed that negative narrative accounts are more couched in criminality (Maruna, 2001, 2004; Presser, 2010), and that certain elements relayed within a narrative are more indicative of criminality (Miller &



Treacher 1981). Although the study has limitations in that the sample size is small and the revelation of committing an offence or being convicted of an offence was not confirmed and it was down to what was disclosed by participants within the interview process, which could skew the results. It is also important to note that this study uses a high number of repeated chi-square tests increasing the likelihood of Type I error. A Type I error can occur when multiple comparisons are used testing the null hypothesis, i.e. the higher the number of tests run, the greater the type I error rate is. This increases the chances of getting at least one false positive in the results by rejecting the null hypothesis when the null hypothesis could be true.

The rate for type 1 error is equal to the P-value for statistical significance, typically 0.05, meaning that rejecting the null hypothesis is accepting a 5% chance that you are wrong, with every subsequent test this percentage increases. To mitigate the Type I error corrected p-values can be used such as a p-value of 0.01 reducing the Type I error risk to 1%, however, this increases the likelihood of a Type II error in which the null hypothesis is rejected when it is true; a false negative (Field, 2018; Laerd Statistics, 2018). It is possible that some of the results here occurred by chance and different statistical analyses would reveal different results. If different statistical measures were used the findings here could be revealed to be by chance and Type I errors. Nonetheless, the findings here do reveal that narratives of those who have committed an offence on the whole are comparable with those who have not committed an offence, but with some notable differences.

Chapter 9 will analyse the thematic structure of those who have committed an offence and the personality dimensions and traits to see if similarities emerge or there are significant differences in a comparison of offenders and non-offenders. Given that the overarching aim of this study is to look at an integrative model of differentiation between offenders and non-offenders, it is important to reveal how offenders' narratives are thematically revealed and the underlying and underpinning components of these. It is hypothesised that the overarching four narrative themes will be revealed through thematic analysis with the offenders yet differences will emerge. Given that in Chapter 7 few significant differences emerged with personality traits and personal concerns, it is hypothesised that there will be some differences in relation to personality within the offenders' narratives.

# Chapter 9: Thematic and Personality Correlates of Offender Narratives

## 9.1 Introduction

The four narrative themes of the NAS have been revealed across both offenders and non-offenders (e.g., Canter & Youngs, 2009). Previous chapters have identified the thematic structure of the four narrative themes and the psychological constructs and personality measures that underpin these in a sample of non-offenders. Despite the narrative roles being observed across offenders, little is known about those offenders who are not incarcerated and the underlying personality dimensions that support and underpin offenders' narratives. Chapter 8 observed differences in the LAAF elements across the non-offending and offending samples with a more criminal focus, supporting Youngs et al. (2014) with a more central focus on criminal narratives.

Differences in personality dimensions have been revealed in previous research comparing offenders and non-offenders. The Big Five reveals significant differences in offenders and non-offenders (Becerra-García et al., 2013; Dennison, Stough & Birgden, 2001; Egan, Kavanagh & Blair, 2005; Egan & Taylor, 2010; Heaven, 1996), and the LOC of offenders has been revealed to be higher than non-offenders (Cavaiola & Desordi 2000; Graham, 1993; McAnena et al., 2016). These studies have typically focused on crime type as with the NAS roles not overarching personality dimensions. Canter and Youngs (2012) revealed the NAS themes have a different LOC with certain roles being controlled by outside events and other roles controlling outside events.

This chapter will reveal the thematic structure of the LAAF items of those who disclosed committing an offence to aid support in the model of the non-incarcerated model of differentiation. The narrative themes that are revealed will then be statistically analysed across the personality measures of the BFI and LOC to identify if the personality measures support those revealed with the non-offenders in the sample aiding support to a three-level of understanding of personality. It is hypothesised that the thematic structure will reveal the same four overarching narrative themes as the non-offenders but with slightly different underpinning elements with more of a central focus on criminality. In relation to personality elements, it is hypothesised that these will be aligned with the non-offenders of the sample

alongside the LOC. Despite this, research has revealed that a higher LOC is associated with offenders therefore it is presumed that the findings here will be higher than the non-offenders. The research questions here are: do the narratives of those who disclosed an offence have the same thematic structure as the non-offenders? And are offenders' narratives underpinned by the same elements of personality as the non-offenders?

## **9.2 Data Analysis Method**

### **9.2.1 Participants**

The participants used in this study were the participants who had disclosed committing an offence during the interview process. Those who had not committed an offence were removed from this analysis to reveal the narratives and personality traits of offenders. The participants consisted of 20 individuals (14 males, 6 females), aged between 18-75 years. The mean age of the sample is 36 years ( $SD = 14.8$ ).

### **9.2.2 Material**

The 20 respondents were given a questionnaire pack that included the BFI and LOC. As previously discussed, the BFI assesses the Five basic dimensions that have been linked to personality that control how people think, feel, and interact with others comprising of Agreeableness, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to new experiences (Forrester, Tashchian & Shore, 2016). The BFI consists of 44 items, scored on a five-point Likert scale, in which participants are asked to rate a statement based on characteristics on how much they agree or disagree with that statement in relation to themselves ranging from *Disagree Strongly*, to *Agree strongly*. Responses were scored in accordance with the scoring instructions.

The Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control (LOC) is a personality dimension that measures an individual's beliefs in relation to events within their lives being controlled internally or externally (Rotter, 1966). The LOC questionnaire consists of 40 yes/no items to assess whether participants attribute life events to external or internal causes. Scores range from 0 (internal) to 40 (external), with the higher score indicating greater external locus of control.

### 9.2.3 Analysis

To analyse the thematic structure of the narrative accounts, the 20 cases of those who had disclosed committing an offence had been coded in accordance with the LAAF content dictionary in a dichotomous format, with 1 where the information was present and 0 with the information was absent were statistically analysed. This coding meant the questionnaire responses were inter-correlated using Jaccard's coefficient and subjected to Smallest Space Analysis (SSA-I).

As previously described, SSA is a form of nonmetric multidimensional scaling (MDS) developed by Guttman and Lingoes in which the LAAF items are represented as points in a space and the closer together the ranked variables appear on the plot, the higher likelihood there is that there is a relationship between the variables (Lingoes, 1973). The items on the plot were labelled in the same format as those in Chapter 5 and appendix 11 that shows the LAAF items and the SSA abbreviations of these for ease of interpretation.

Following the SSA, participants were assigned a narrative theme like with the non-offenders. Narrative themes were assigned to each participant through calculating the variables in each theme and the dominant theme was the narrative that had the greatest number of variables than any other theme (Table 9.1).

**Table 9.1**

*Narrative role of Offending Participants*

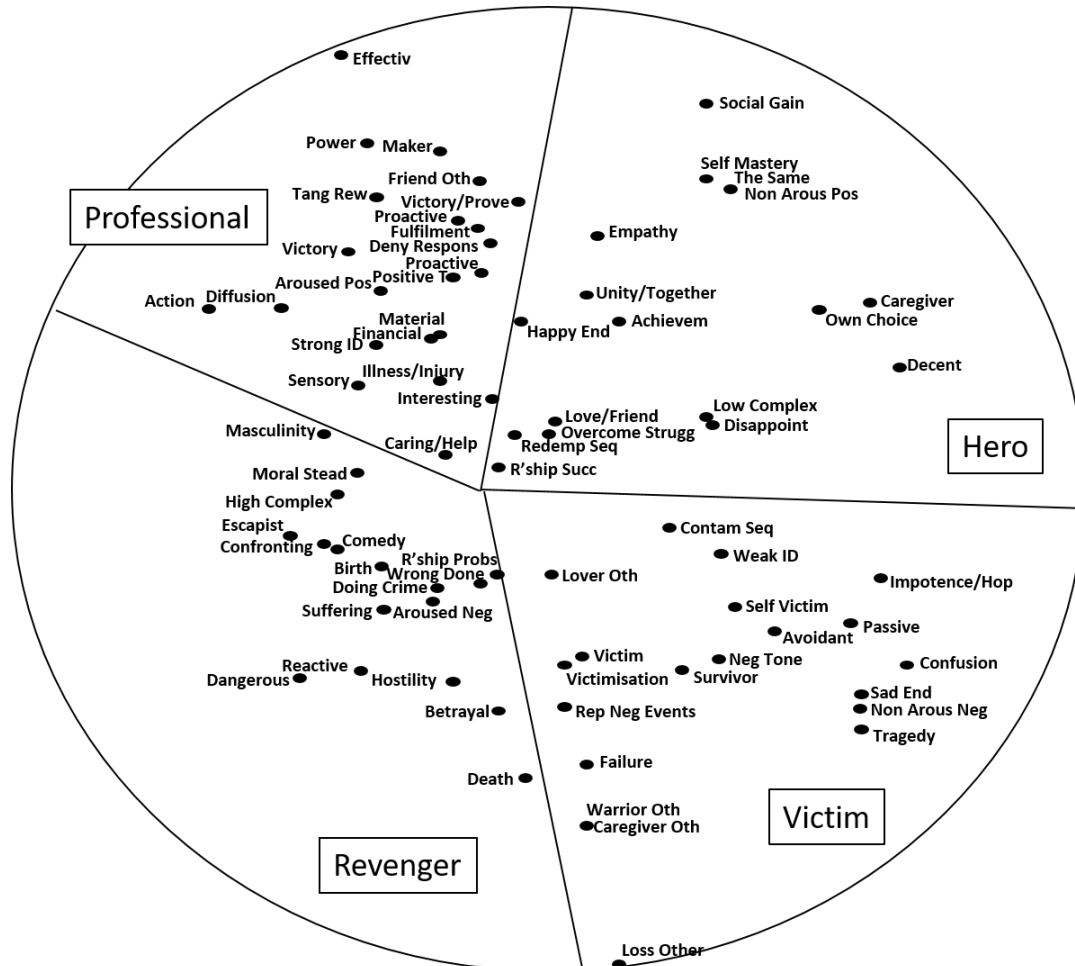
Professional		Victim		Revenger		Hero	
<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
6	30%	6	30%	4	20%	4	20%

A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality was performed to examine the normality of the data in relation to the BFI results showed that Extraversion ( $p = 0.068$ ), Agreeableness ( $p = 0.200$ ), Conscientiousness ( $p = 0.200$ ), Neuroticism ( $p = 0.200$ ) and Openness ( $p = 0.200$ ) were normally distributed. The LOC was not normally distributed ( $p = 0.008$ ). As data was normally distributed for the BFI, a one-way ANOVA was performed to determine if there was a significant difference between the four narrative roles and the personality traits. For the LOC, a Kruskal-Wallis was used instead.

### 9.3 Smallest Space Analysis

**Figure 9.1.**

*Smallest Space Analysis of LAAF Items of Incarcerated Sample*



**76 Variables from 20 cases of the offending sample of the general population LAAF responses. Vector 1 by Vector 2 of 3D solution. Coefficient of alienation 0.16376**

The first projection (vector 1 by vector 2) of a three-dimensional SSA-I solution is presented in Figure 9.1 which consists of 76 variables of LAAF items. Items that occurred less than 3 times were omitted so as not to skew the analysis. The three-dimensional solution was considered to describe the pattern of relationships better than the two-dimensional solution. The Guttman-Lingoes coefficient of alienation for this solution is 0.16376 indicating a good level of fit between the Jaccard's co-efficient and the LAAF items, and their corresponding geometric distances in the plot configuration (Borgs & Lingoes, 1987; Guttman, 1968).

The pattern of co-occurrence of the items has a similar item configuration to that found in Chapter 5 with the non-offenders and in previous research by Youngs and Canter (2012). Although some differences have emerged in some of the four narrative themes which were revealed in Chapter 8. Nonetheless, this does suggest that those who have committed offences previously, or who are in the general population and still offending, have similar narrative accounts to those who are incarcerated or are non-offenders.

### 9.3.1 Internal reliability

A Cronbach's alpha coefficient is used to assess the level of internal reliability of the items that are suggested to measure each narrative theme. An alpha value of above 0.8 is perceived as a good measure, and above 0.6 is deemed as acceptable. Table 9.2 shows the internal reliability of the four narrative themes of the offenders.

**Table 9.2**

*Internal Reliability of the Four Narrative Themes revealed by the Offender SSA*

	Professional	Victim	Hero	Revenger
Number of items in LAAF	22	20	17	17
Cronbach's $\alpha$	.866	.824	.746	.877

The Cronbach's alpha shows that each region within the SSA-I plot has a good level of internal consistency for the themes presented in the different sections of the plot.

## 9.4 Results: Narrative Themes

### 9.4.1 The Victim's Tragedy

The lower right region of the SSA-I plot depicts a narrative theme where the protagonist views themselves as a Victim and the core themes and LAAF items revealed here with the offending sample is very similar to the themes of the non-incarcerated sample in Chapter 5. The items revealed here with the participants who disclosed committing an offence are comparable to those who are non-offenders and the overarching themes are the same as previous research described above with the offending experience (Youngs & Canter, 2012).

The Victim mentality is again revealed with offenders, as it was revealed with the non-offenders, with the themes of 'Victim', 'Victimisation', and 'Self Victim'. Similarly, the themes of weakness and pessimism are present within this region ('impotence/hopelessness'). Interestingly, those who have committed an offence described their life trajectory as a Tragedy, a genre that is a story of human suffering and a sense of sorrow, and it stereotypically portrays a protagonist who encounters negative events and a fall from grace or renown, leading to ruin. The trajectory would also have a sad end that was not revealed or described by the non-offenders. Both reflected the theme of the Victim and alludes to offenders having a deeper level of the Victim narrative than the non-offenders, in such their life experience has been more tragic. This gives a key insight into how the protagonists here within the Victim narrative perceive their lives to be, and the outlook they hold.

Similarly, as found with the non-offending sample, 'confusion' is a core theme within the offenders' narratives showing distortion in their perceptions of reality beyond their understanding, in which they do not accept responsibility for their actions and they see themselves as the victim to outside circumstances with a more aroused emotional state. The pessimistic nature of the narratives is described with repeat negative events and contamination themes as found with non-offenders. Avoidant behaviours are again also present in how these individuals shaped their lives and detached themselves from society.

The affective state revealed here again is one of negativity with 'non-aroused negative' emotions and a 'weak self-identity' aids support to the Victim in the offending experience, perceiving themselves as weaker than the victim and in the overarching life narrative with them perceiving themselves to be weaker than other people in a low intimacy role. Narratives were presented with a 'negative tone', demonstrated by the discussion of negative events. 'Passive' tone was also present within this narrative, with behaviours of accepting and allowing what was happening, without response or resistance.

The self-awareness and interpersonal identity with how the offenders in the sample perceive themselves is again the role of the survivor. Surviving life experiences, interestingly despite the repeated negative events and surviving them, there were fewer focal events in the narrative accounts of the Victim with offenders than there were the non-offenders, in the non-offenders, there were descriptions of relationship problems and illness/injury whereas here it is more of self-pity of bleak hopelessness. Interestingly, those who are offenders in the Victim narrative to not have self-mastery, this could be perceived as them not being able to

better the self to overcome events that lead to criminality whereas those who have not offended manage to overcome their negative events.

The non-offender Victim narrative was also associated with high complexity which is now more aligned with the Revenger narrative role. The Revenger trajectories were more couched in criminality and higher complexity narratives have been found to be more aligned with offenders (Maruna, 2001, 2004; Youngs et al., 2014) which could explain this, however, both the Victim and the Revenger are low potency roles.

Overall, the role of the Victim here has very similar underlying constructs to that of the non-offenders and those observed in the offending experience. The affective state, cognitive interpretations, and self-awareness are the same as previously identified which, despite differences, does give the LAAF procedure validation for its use and reveal that the narrative theme of the Victim is one that can be revealed in the general population

#### **9.4.2 The Hero's Quest**

The upper right-hand region of the SSA plot reveals the narrative role which aligns with the Hero narrative. The Hero theme is derived from the underlying life narrative theme of Quest which stems from Frye's (1957) comedy narrative, where the protagonist is concerned with overcoming obstacles in pursuit of a happy ending and joyful objectives. The overarching themes of the Hero with the offenders in this sample is a combination of the Hero narrative in the offending context (Youngs & Canter, 2015), and the Hero narrative in the non-offending context in Chapter 5. The predominant themes of 'Love/Friendship', 'Unity/togetherness' stemming from McAdams' (1993) themes of communion and the resembling the self to a 'Caregiver', reveal how expressions of love, relationships, and caring for others are central to the Hero role and what underpins their self-identity. The affective state within this narrative is of neutral, calm emotions ('non-aroused positive'), supporting Youngs and Canter's (2012) Hero role with the emotional content showing low arousal.

As similarly found with the non-offenders, Sandberg (2009)'s three morally decent narratives also feature in the Hero narrative role with individuals downplaying differences in perceiving them to be similar ('we're the same'), the goodness of the real self is stressed (I'm Decent), alongside 'Own Choice', demonstrating the high potency of the narrative in taking responsibility for actions but presenting their own evaluations too, with protagonists being in



control of their own situation and behaviour.

In aligning more with the Hero criminal narrative, 'Self Mastery' features within the Hero narrative of offenders. The Hero narrative also demonstrates high potency with an offending sample 'taking charge', and the crime is conceptualised through them conquering their environment by overcoming obstacles to achieve their offending aims. This is reflected here with the Hero mastering, enlarging, or bettering the self. 'Redemption sequences' also show how the protagonists overcome their struggles to achieve their missions, despite there being some 'disappointment' in their experiences.

The offenders here are less likely to describe their film projection as a comedy which aligns with the narrative not being comedic or humorous and being more centred on overcoming struggles and mastering the self and gaining that social interaction ('social gain') with the high intimacy elements of the Hero role. Again, this narrative role is supportive of the underlying elements of the Hero role.

#### **9.4.3 The Professional's Adventure**

The items in the upper left region of the plot depict a similar theme to Youngs and Canter (2012) Professionals Adventurer narrative. However again, this was slightly more centred on a dominant narrative as found within the criminal narratives. In the criminal context, this narrative is one through which life is seen as an opportunity for mastering the environment, and in it, there are effective interactions through which the character will gain satisfaction and acquire tangible rewards (Canter & Youngs, 2009)

A similar overarching theme is revealed here with the offenders as revealed with the non-offenders. The Professional with the offenders is also a low intimacy narrative role with a pleasurable affective state ('positive tone', 'proactive voice' and 'proactive behaviour's). There is also aroused positive emotions as found with the non-offending sample, characterised by excitement, joy, happiness, and exhilaration. This is also revealed by the action genre being present in the Professional and not the Revenger, the fast paced, exciting life that these individuals desire and portray.

'Fulfilment' and 'sensory gain' again are also representative of the protagonist here gaining satisfaction from fulfilling a desire or task. Fulfilment with non-offenders was revealed in the Hero narrative whereas here it is represented by the Professionals gaining satisfaction from achieving their objective. Objectives in this region are again focused on low intimacy aims

with the focus here being on tangible rewards, material and financial gains which reveals that these individuals, in both an offending and non-offending sample are focused on acquisitions rather than relationships, high in McAdams (1993) agentic themes.

In contrast with the non-offenders, but aligned with the incarcerated study by Youngs and Canter (2013), the offending professionals were more driven with power and status and in being victorious and proving themselves than the non-offending sample. Despite both narratives encompassing the overarching themes of the Professional narrative, the drive here was stronger to pursue that end goal, reflected by the agentic imago characters (McAdams 1993), with the productivity of the 'maker' creating, and focused on achievement.

The strong self-identity is dominant within this narrative, in relation to the self-awareness and interpersonal identity of the participants within this region of the plot, and they perceive themselves as stronger as and more powerful than those with a weaker self-identity, but this strength is in a powerful context and not in that of a manly, physical context.

Given that this was for offenders, justifications emerged within the offenders that were similarly found in studies with incarcerated offenders (Youngs & Canter, 2013). Denying responsibility for actions, and diffusing responsibility by alleviating the blame by a division of labour. Such justifications have been found in inhumane behaviour (Bandura, 1990), and are representative of the offending context here. This is supported by Sandberg's (2009) 'I'm interesting' and 'I'm smart' themes, both embedded within the gangster discourse of a violent subculture.

Again, the overarching theme of the Professional here supports the model of differentiation with non-offenders as similar themes are found, with subtle differences emerging. Given that the individuals in this sample had committed an offence, their life trajectories are the stories the recount will differ which could explain some of the differences in findings and them being more dominant in the pursuit of their objectives.

#### **9.4.4 The Revenger's Mission**

The role of the Revenger is revealed in the lower-left region of the plot. This role in the offending experience personifies an individual who has been wronged and must retaliate to avenge the wrong they have suffered (Youngs & Canter, 2012). Based on Frye (1957)'s

tragedy narrative in which begins with a hero, in which all is good and the hero has free will, but there is an initial act that provokes some form of revenge, which is controlled by external fate.

Findings in Chapter 5 found support of this role within the non-offending sample and this role is further supported here with similar overarching themes revealed. The role with the non-offenders was centred on masculinity, wrong done, criminality and avenging the hurt faced. This narrative has also been the one that describes the most offending action within the life trajectories and in Chapter 8 had the highest prevalence of NAS themes in comparison to the other four themes with the offending sample.

Again, in support of the findings in Chapter 5 and the model of differentiation in the non-incarcerated, similar overarching themes are revealed here with the focus being on being 'betrayed' and hostile, violent behaviours that avenge this wrong. The description of life events within the narrative accounts of the Revenger are more negative in connotation, with 'relationship problems', 'suffering and injustice' and the mention of 'other lovers' which was less prevalent within the non-offenders' narratives with more focal content here. The sense of wrong seemed to centre on relationships and the response to being wronged or wrong-doing they have suffered at the hands of others. Interestingly, the Comedy narrative was more associated with the Revenger, yet this was given in the context of life being seen as a joke rather than of a humorous nature.

The key theme in this narrative, as similarly found with the non-offenders is redeeming wrong through violence. And this is prevalent with the LAAF items that co-occur in this region 'Hostility' is a reactive behaviour, in response to the wrong done to them, of 'masculinity and bravery', with a show of masculine behaviours of strength, toughness and courageous characteristics, and 'confronting' others by reacting to this wrong and dealing with the situation in person and it is beyond the protagonist's control. Sandberg's (2009) 'I'm dangerous' narrative is also revealed here, in which the protagonist narrates a dangerous self in presenting a violent persona and mentions doing crime. The escapist imago here relates to an individual unwilling to take responsibility with a lack of regard and living for diversion.

Despite again differences within the narrative variables, this again gives support for the narrative theme of the Revenger in a non-incarcerated sample as similar overarching themes are revealed which reflect the core themes of the Revenger. Given that the focus here is on

offenders and some committed violent offences, there is a higher reflection of this relayed in the life trajectories.

## 9.5 An Integrated Model of Narrative Themes

### 9.5.1 Results: Big Five Inventory Offenders

A one-way ANOVA found a significant difference in the personality trait Extraversion  $F(3,16) = 11.726, p = .004, \omega^2 = .017$  and in Neuroticism  $F(3,16) = 9.952, p = .001, \omega^2 = .003$  between the narrative themes. A Tukey post-hoc test revealed statistically significant differences in Extraversion between the Professional and Victim ( $p=.002$ ) with large effect size and Neuroticism between the Professional and Victim ( $p=.001$ ) with a small effect size. The mean personality scores are presented in Table 9.3.

**Table 9.3**

*BFI means, standard deviations and one-way ANOVA Offenders*

Personality Trait	Professional		Victim		Revenger		Hero		F(x)	$\omega^2$
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Extraversion	4.44	0.53	2.48	1.06	3.68	0.90	3.37	0.53	16(3) <sup>**</sup>	0.17
Agreeableness	3.69	0.54	3.24	0.25	3.64	1.06	4.00	0.64	16(3)	0.19
Openness	3.33	0.56	3.52	0.80	3.86	0.61	3.70	0.53	16(3)	0.20
Neuroticism	2.19	0.60	4.00	0.79	3.25	0.62	3.21	0.31	16(3) <sup>***</sup>	0.03
Conscientiousness	3.55	0.47	3.29	0.88	3.88	0.57	3.55	0.47	16(3)	0.19

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

### 9.5.2 Big Five Inventory Traits: Professional's Adventure

In this study and previous research (Canter & Youngs, 2012, 2015), the Professional is someone who is focused on success and achievement. The nature of the narrative is positive with excitement and focused on adventure to achieve success and objectives. The role of the Professional was significantly associated with being highest in Extraversion compared to the Victim narrative and was the highest in Extraversion across the four narrative roles. This supports the findings in Chapter 7, which although was not of significance, the Professional narrative was highest in Extraversion across the four narrative roles and adds support to this being a personality trait aligned with the Professional and being that first level of personality alongside the narrative role.

High levels of extraversion are related to high levels of energy and positive emotions which is reflective of the narrative theme of the Professional in both an offending and non-offending sample. Assertiveness is also a component of being high in extraversion, shown as confident and sometimes forceful behaviour in which an individual stands up for what they believe and is self-assured. This supports the underpinning themes of the Professional narrative and the self-identity of those protagonists in their strong self-identity in pursuing their goals and taking responsibility for their actions.

Although Extraversion can be related to being sociable and enjoying engaging with others which is less aligned with the role of the Professional due to the low intimacy facet of the role. It can align with the strong self-identity and pursuit of goals to achieve their objectives and master their environment (Canter & Youngs, 2009). High Extraversion can also be reflected in being attention-seeking and domineering which does highlight how such a trait can be construed in an offending context. Eysenck (1970) found criminality to be linked to higher levels of Extraversion which was found to have support by Shapland and Rushton (1975). Nonetheless, the five factor model of comparison with offending behaviour has provided more value (Costa & McCrae, 1995).

Using the Big Five approach, Becerra-García et al. (2013) found that non-offenders had lower levels of Extraversion which do support that the higher levels of Extraversion are associated with criminality. However, this was a comparison with violent offenders. In studies on acquisitive crime which is reflective of the role of the Professional, higher levels of Extraversion were revealed in individuals who were actively shoplifting. Predominant research on BFI and offending has centred on more sexual and violent offences. Nonetheless, this does support the focus of the Professional and its link with offending behaviour.

Interestingly, individuals actively shoplifting were also revealed to be lower in Neuroticism (Egan & Taylor, 2010), which was also statistically significant with the Professional narrative in contrast with the Victim. In a non-offending sample, the Professional was not the lowest in levels of Neuroticism, which was reflected by the Hero narrative. High levels of Neuroticism have been typically related to crimes against the person (Becerra-García et al., 2013; Dennison et al., 2001), whereas the Professional is more focused on agentic qualities and tangible rewards. These findings do reveal that crime type may be linked to the BFI personality traits alongside the narrative role. People low in Neuroticism are less likely to

experience negative emotions and be more confident which does support the overarching theme of the Professional in both an offending and non-offending context.

Interestingly, the Professional narrative in the offending experience was the least Openness to new experiences. This trait reflects an individual who is intellectually curious and will venture out of their comfort zone, which does reflect the narrative themes revealed in this study in offenders and non-offenders. This could be explained by the small sample size captured in this study or reveal elements of Canter (1994) wrongly constructed narrative with the differentiation between the non-offending narrative and the offender construing it wrongly and less likely to follow those legitimate goals.

### **9.5.3 Big Five Inventory Traits: Victim's Tragedy**

The role of the Victim seems to reflect the personality traits of the non-offending sample, most in comparison with the four other narrative themes in offenders as was previously revealed in the thematic analysis of offenders. In Chapter 7 in the non-offenders, the Victim was found to be the most introverted across the four narrative roles but not of statistical significance. Here with the offenders, this is statistically significant in relation to the Professional. This highlights how those who have committed an offence seem to have stronger dimensions and elements of personality on the BFI continuum than the non-offenders.

Low levels of Extraversion, also known as being introverted, is a key component of the Victim narrative roles that has been revealed in this study in the non-offending and offending samples. This is portrayed by an individual who detaches from the social world, is isolated and has a weaker self-identity, their focus is not on money or status. This finding does aid in supporting the level one element of personality in the non-incarcerated and comparability across offenders and non-offenders. The Victim was also the least Agreeable across the four narrative roles, although not of significance. Individuals who are low in Agreeableness are more likely to hold resentment for others and are less cooperative and more likely to be driven by their own needs and desires rather than others.

Offenders in the Victim narrative were statistically significantly higher in Neuroticism across the Professional narrative. This was also found with non-offenders, just not of significance.

Neurotic individuals struggle with stress in life with elements of being envious and jealous. Such personality dimensions are highly reflective of the overarching themes of the Victim narrative role in both offenders and non-offenders with the weak self-identity and perceiving themselves as worth off than others and blaming the self. This supports the Victim narrative role in being victim to life events, hopelessness and alongside this, high Neuroticism is also linked to emotional instability which is supportive of the Victim role.

Interestingly, studies on offending behaviour and the BFI have revealed that lower levels of Extraversion alongside high levels of Neuroticism and lower levels of Agreeableness in an individual's personality are linked to offending behaviour and crimes against the person. Individuals with higher levels of Neuroticism and lower levels of Extraversion and Agreeableness were found to have higher arrests than non-offenders (Samuels et al., 2004). Higher levels of Neuroticism and lower extroversion was also associated with individuals who had committed sexual offences against children. This supports the high intimacy element of the Victim role with crimes against the person and not an acquisitive crime and does give a deeper insight into the personality traits of the Victim narrative role.

The findings with the Victim narrative role to add support to the model of differentiation and the findings with non-offenders, they just highlight a more extreme level of personality. Nonetheless, the sample size here is very small and the personality traits are looked at in silo.

#### **9.5.4 Big Five Inventory Traits: Hero's Quest**

The Hero in the non-offending capacity was centred on love, happiness, and overcoming struggles. In relation to the level of personality traits, the Hero was the most Agreeable across the four narratives. This is supported here with the offenders in the sample as the Hero is the most agreeable across the offenders' narratives, just not of significance. Agreeableness reflects a general concern for society and being warm, friendly, kind, and empathetic, all of which support the overarching theme of the high intimacy Hero narrative role in both the offenders and non-offenders.

People high in Agreeableness are more likely to resolve conflict and take responsibility for their actions, a role that has a strong self-identity and is centred on overcoming struggles. Nonetheless, given that this was on people who have committed an offence it would be interesting to see if the offence was related to conflict or a crime related to property. Lower

levels of Agreeableness have been typically associated with non-offenders through studies of crime (Becerra-García et al., 2013; Dennison et al., 2001) and the narrative accounts of the Hero were less likely to be centred on offending action, just the protagonist overcoming negative events they had faced.

Conscientiousness was highest in the non-offending sample across the narrative themes with the Hero. This was not reflected here, however, lower levels of Conscientiousness have been linked with offending behaviour (Egan et al., 2005), and Conscientiousness was relatively consistent across the four narrative themes highlighting that it is not a strong trait associated with the offending narratives.

The Hero narrative was the narrative that was most prevalent in the non-offending sample and is of low frequency here, but findings are similarly reflected in that of the offending sample. This does reveal that personality traits have some links and are reflective of the narrative theme of the Hero and knowing this does help to understand more fully the self-identity of those within the role. Combining the trait alongside the narrative provides a richer and deeper understanding of what underpins the personality of the individuals and the self-identity they present to the world through the story of narratives.

### **9.5.5 Big Five Inventory Traits: Revenger's Mission**

Interestingly, within the offending study, the BFI personality traits that were revealed with the Revenger were the most varied in comparison with the narrative identity and contradicted a few of the findings with the non-offending sample. In the study in Chapter 7 with the non-offenders, the Revenger was found to be the least Agreeable across the four narrative themes, although the sample size in comparison with the other narratives was relatively small which could skew the results.

Levels of Extraversion were comparable with the non-offending sample, Extraversion, as revealed with the Professional narrative reflects an individual who has higher levels of energy and is more gregarious. The role of the Revenger is not someone who is typically sociable with the low intimacy elements, nonetheless, the outgoing side could be reflected in their hostile, over exaggerate mission to seek revenge.



The Revenger with the offenders has also revealed the most Openness to new experiences. This reflects an individual who will seek experiences outside of their comfort zone and are more likely to exhibit daring and imaginative traits (McCrae & Costa, 1987). This is a contradictory finding to that with the non-offenders who exhibited some of the lower levels of Openness. The Revenger's narrative accounts consisted of narratives that were glamorised which could explain some of the inflated levels of Openness in comparison to the non-offenders. This could also be a factor in their involvement with criminality.

Despite the Revenger's narrative theme being one couched in negativity, revenge, and masculinity, it was revealed to be the most Conscientious across the four narratives within this study of offenders which was the opposite to what was found with the non-offending sample. Conscientiousness reflects an individual who is more likely to be reliable and successful, whether this is in pursuit of agentic or communal goals. As this study is examining the personality traits of offenders and not non-offenders, there is naturally a difference expected due to offenders having different identified personality traits to non-offenders (Dennison et al., 2001, Egan & Taylor, 2010; Heaven, 1996). Despite this, there could be some element of being driven to avenge the wrong that has been done to them successfully.

Notably, studies in offending behaviour have found that perpetrators of child sexual abuse had higher levels of Conscientiousness in comparison with other offences and non-offenders (Egan et al., 2005). This could be indicative of the crime related focus of the offenders, as offenders have been linked to crimes against the person and crimes against property. The role of the Victim is someone who wants to avenge the wrong and it would be fruitful to understand how this role relates to person or property offences.

In the non-offending participants, the Revenger narrative was the least Agreeable and this is somewhat reflected here with offenders with them being in the two most disagreeable narratives alongside the Victim. Both the Victim and the Revenger narrative are roles with a weak self-identity with negative emotions which does reflect that of the overarching themes.

The Revenger in this sample does have the most mid-range scores across the sample. These mid-range scores are naturally perceived as being harmonious in relation to the five factors of personality, however, Raggatt and Weatherly (2015) explored dilemmas in relation to mid-range scores and identified conflict within individuals in relation to the statements of the

traits and the narrative identity accounts. Given that conflict in the narrative accounts has been identified through unresolved dissonance (Youngs et al. 2014), this could be one explanation of this finding.

The Revenger narrative has the most interesting findings in the BFI, with distinct differences being revealed with the personality traits, alongside similarities. The results though are not of significance and a greater sample size would provide a deeper understanding of the underpinning elements. This does reflect McAdams et al. (2004), finding inconsistencies when comparing elements of narrative themes with BFI.

### 9.5.6 Results: Locus of Control Offenders

A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality was performed to examine the normality of the data in relation to the LOC results showed the data was not normally distributed ( $p = 0.008$ ). A Kruskal-Wallis test across the LOC was performed, finding no significant difference. The mean narrative scores are presented in Table 9.4.

**Table 9.4**

*Mean Ranks of Narrative Roles Offenders across LOC*

	Professional <i>M Rank</i>	Victim <i>M Rank</i>	Revenger <i>M Rank</i>	Hero <i>M Rank</i>	H, df(x,x)
LOC	6.92	13.83	10.75	10.63	4.159 (3)

### 9.5.7 Locus of Control: Professional

No statistically significant findings were revealed in relation to the offending Professional and the LOC. Nonetheless, it was again interestingly revealed that no Professionals had an external LOC. An internal LOC reflects an individual who is more likely to take responsibility for their actions and are driven internally rather than externally (Nowicki & Duke, 1974). This is reflective of the role of the Professional with a strong self-identity controlling events, not letting events control them (Canter & Youngs, 2009), and does add support to the narrative themes with them being comparable between offenders and non-offenders.

Research centered on offending behaviour has found that offenders are more likely to have an external belief system (Cavaiola & Desordi, 2000; McAnena et al., 2016). Given that this study is on an offending sample, this is an interesting finding and does reflect the success and environment mastering elements of the Professional and these individuals being the internal drivers of their lives. Although not of significance here, it is an important finding with it being comparable to the non-offending sample.

#### **9.5.8 Locus of Control: Victim**

Similarly, like with the Professional narrative, the findings of the Victim reflect that of the non-offending sample in Chapter 7 with no internal LOC revealed here. The role of the Victim is an individual who feels they have no control in life and are more likely to feel a sense of impotence and hopelessness and blame external circumstances for the events they face (Youngs & Canter, 2012). An external LOC is reflective of the belief system of the Victim with individuals believing things are down to luck or fate and are outside of their control (Nowicki & Duke, 1974).

Those with the Victim narrative had no internal LOC and had the highest mean indicative of a more external LOC. Which does reveal some underlying levels of individuals here are more likely to feel out of control in relation to their successes and/or more likely failures and attribute them to be a result of fate or luck. This supports the findings from the personal concerns level of personality in that there are different belief systems for the different narratives, despite it not being of significance. This also adds some support to Youngs (2013) with the Victim narrative role projecting external agency.

A higher LOC has also been identified with criminality (Cavaiola & Desordi, 2000; McAnena et al., 2016), and associated with higher levels of anxiety and psychological problems (Roddenberry & Renk, 2010). This does reflect the thematic structure of the Victim narrative with the events retold by the participants with being a repeat victim and experiencing suffering and in the weak self-identity that was revealed.

Although these findings are not of significance, it is again noteworthy that this not only reflects the underlying psychological constructs of the Victim narrative, it also supports the LOC findings in Chapter 7 with the non-offenders, highlighting that there is an element of differing belief systems within the narrative themes. This adds weight to there being a three-factor system of understanding personality and the versatility of this approach, but further

research and studies need to be completed with a greater sample size.

#### **9.5.9 Locus of Control: Hero**

Again, no statistically significant findings were revealed with the Hero narrative and the LOC. The Hero narrative is one high in intimacy focused on the pursuit of love and happiness yet overcoming struggles and obstacles to get there. There is an element of being fated within this role (Canter & Youngs, 2009), which could be reflected in the findings here with there being intermediate to external levels of LOC with the Hero. This aligns with the study in Chapter 7 on the non-offenders which found that the Hero narrative was a combination of both external and internal LOC in which individuals have inconsistent views to the extent in which their own fate is controlled.

Of note, there is a higher level of external LOC in the Hero with the offenders than the non-offenders which could be indicative of the criminality aspect of these participants. Research has found that higher LOCs are more associated with offending behaviour (Cavaiola & Desordi, 2000; McAnena et al., 2016), and this finding does reflect that there could be an element of this in the Hero narrative role here with offenders.

Despite the finding here not being of significance, the results here bear similarities to the overall narrative theme of the Hero and align with previous research on the LOC and criminality. This, therefore, does provide a deeper insight into the level two dimension of personality (McAdams, 1994) in relation to the intrinsic links between narrative identity and an individual's personal concerns.

#### **9.5.10 Locus of Control: Revenger**

Again, as similarly found with the Hero, the role of the Revenger was not significantly associated with the LOC which was what was revealed in the study of non-offenders, highlighting that there is a variation in the belief system of those in the Revenger role. Though the Revenger here, like with the non-offending sample, has a slightly higher external LOC, which was also found with the Victim and Hero narrative roles. Previous studies in relation to BFI personality traits and criminality have revealed a more external LOC

(Cavaiola & Desordi, 2000; McAnena et al., 2016) which could be indicative of the Revenger having a more external LOC.

Through the previous studies, the Revenger narrative has been one that is linked to a more deviant narrative. The personality traits identified in that initial level one layer of personality were more readily associated with offending behaviour. Similarly, the narrative accounts (level three of an integrative model of personality) aid in support of this role being more deviant. The narrative here featured masculine and strong behaviours which were in response to being wronged, indicative of the Revenger taking some responsibility for their actions which could account for the lack of significance here with the Revenger being in control of some events and some events being out of their control.

In the non-offending sample, there was the belief that there was some conflict present in the narrative accounts of the Revenger. Research (Youngs et al., 2014) has highlighted several themes present within the narratives which were present in the Revenger narratives. Despite there being little significance here, there are again noteworthy findings to aid in the integrative framework for a non-incarcerated sample.

## **9.6 Chapter Summary**

The study here examined if the life narratives of those who had committed an offence were similar in comparison with those revealed by the non-offenders, and also to see if there were similarities in the personality traits and personal concerns using the BFI and LOC. This enables the validation of the measure with the non-incarcerated sample to see if the themes and personality dimensions found were similar.

The thematic structure of the narratives in the SSA-I presented very similar themes across the four narratives but with important distinctions noted. It is important to note that not all variables were present in the offending sample to allow a complete comparison. The overarching theme of the four narratives was revealed. The Hero was underpinned by the same constructs of love and intimacy yet with the offending narratives there was a distinction noted in the more focused levels of overcoming struggles and achieving their objectives. The same was revealed with the role of the Professional, the energetic, fast paced focus on gaining those agentic qualities was the core of the narrative yet there was more of an emergence in power and victory. The core themes of the Victim narrative were comparable to

that with the non-offenders yet there was a stronger sense here of tragedy, with more dramatic impetus on the narrative. The role of the Revenger was again centered on strength, masculinity and wrong-doing but features a higher element of betrayal and wrong done to them than the non-offending sample; they were also more likely to use hypothetical events and storylines.

The findings give support to the roles identified in the non-offending sample but also highlight that offenders' narratives are couched in a stronger more extreme version of the narrative. Given that the LAAF enabled people to recount their life events, it could be that those within the study who had committed an offence and had a more significant, eventful life than those who had not. Or, this finding could be represented of the offenders constructing their accounts differently to the non-offending population aiding support to Canter (1994) in offenders constructing the same narratives as non-offenders but wrongly which leads to some distortion in the narrative. Previous research has also revealed that offenders are more likely to recount negative narrative accounts than non-offenders (Maruna 2001, 2004; Youngs et al., 2014), which could explain the heightened differences revealed here in comparison to the non-offenders. In addition, differences have been observed in the narratives of male and female offenders using the NAS protocol which could explain differences in the narratives as this was a mixed gender study (Ciesla et al., 2019).

The findings of more extreme narrative accounts were also reflected in the personality dimensions through the Big Five, although very similar themes are noted in general with the four roles there are some important distinctions revealed. The findings of the non-offenders in the role of the Victim and Professional are very similar, just, with the offending sample, they are significant. This could be that the offenders have a higher rank on the continuum of personality traits; research has revealed distinctions in comparative studies with offenders and non-offenders (Dennison et al., 2001; Egan & Taylor, 2010; Heaven, 1996). These studies also revealed higher levels of certain personality traits with different offence types, predominantly violent/sexual offences, and acquisitive crime. There is an underlying intimacy element of the narratives, and their focus is on more agentic and communal goals which could explain some of the differences revealed here.

Nonetheless, these do add support to the integrative model of personality with certain personality traits more likely to be associated with certain narrative roles in both offenders and non-offenders. It is important to note that due to studies finding differences between

offenders and non-offenders personality traits, this could account for differences observed like with the role of the Revenger which featured the more different personality traits in comparison with the non-offenders Revenger narrative.

As also revealed, there were no significant associations with the LOC and the offenders, although the same reflections of Professional having a more internal LOC and the Victim a more external which does support the narrative themes and is comparable across both offenders and non-offenders. There was a slightly elevated LOC in the Hero and Revenger narratives, previous research has found that offenders are more likely to have an external LOC (Cavaiola & Desordi, 2000; McAnena et al., 2016), which could account for this. Overall, there are some interesting findings in relation to LOC but not of significance across both samples.

Despite the interesting findings, there are some limitations to this study. Firstly, the sample size is relatively small and not comparable to the non-offending sample. When comparing offenders and non-offenders, research has found that there are comparable differences (Maruna, 2001, 2004; Youngs et al., 2014), and also in comparison of narrative themes with gender (Ciesla et al., 2019). Despite this, the overarching theme and main components of the narrative themes are the same which does add support to the integrative model of differentiation with the non-incarcerated sample. It can also not be proven through this study that the offenders have committed an offence. Given that the committing an offence was self-description, there could be an element of falsification by participants in disclosing that had committed an offence and also in not disclosing committing an offence.

Overall, the findings here support the narrative model of the four themes being similar in both an offending and non-offending sample. There are also certain underpinning personality traits and personal concerns that are more likely to be associated with both offenders and non-offenders. Through this research, there is the revelation that several of the narrative themes are couched in criminality and negativity which has been associated with offending (Maruna, 2001, 2004; Presser, 2009; Youngs et al., 2014). Interestingly, the themes of the Victim and Revenger are the ones that are couched in a more negative theme and this study has revealed certain personality traits significantly associated with them. Chapter 10 will examine if both the offenders' and non-offenders' narrative themes are underpinned by criminal thinking. It is hypothesised that there will be some differences in the criminal thinking styles of the Revenger and Victim with the two narratives having some aspect of criminal thinking. Given

that some of the analysis will be done on an offending sample, it is still hypothesised that there will still be some differentiation within the sample.



## **Chapter 10: Criminal Narratives: Are the Narrative Themes Underpinned by Criminal Thinking?**

### **10.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims to identify if, and how, crime-supporting cognitive patterns are embedded within the narrative themes of both the non-offending and offending samples. As revealed throughout the thesis, the Victim and the Revenger narrative themes centre on negativity and hostility. The Revenger theme also explicitly centres on criminality. Such themes of negativity within narratives have been intrinsically linked to criminality in studies comparing offenders and non-offenders (Maruna, 2001; Youngs et al., 2014).

Chapter 8 revealed two dominant narrative themes which were revealed in the narratives of the Revenger, centred on masculinity, criminality, and revenge; and the Victim, centred on hopelessness, tragedy, and sadness. Similar themes emerged in the study of offenders highlighting the validity of the model in its use with the general population.

McAdams and Manczak (2015) proposed dispositional traits, also known as personality traits, were embedded within an individual and revealed in the accounts they gave. This has been supported in Chapter 7 which found certain dispositional traits more aligned with the narrative themes. Given that traits are embedded with the self and interlink with narrative theories, the aim here is to examine if any narrative themes have a disposition to criminal traits and are more likely to be criminal. Previous research has revealed a difference in personality measures with offending behaviour (Becerra-García et al., 2013; Dennison et al., 2001), and between narratives and offending behaviour (Canter & Youngs, 2009), but none have examined the two together in an integrative way to form a deeper level of understanding.

The Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (PICTS) is designed to measure factors that support a criminal lifestyle, specifically an individual's cognitions in relation to attitudes, beliefs, and thinking styles. Three interrelated variables, both internal and external, are believed to influence a person's actions, known as the criminal lifestyle: conditions, choice, and cognition (Walters, 1990). Eight interrelated thinking styles are the foundations for this criminal lifestyle and these thinking styles concern an individual's interaction with their surroundings. These thinking styles are separated into two factors, Proactive and

Reactive criminal thinking, stemming from Dodge's (1980) instrumental and hostile aggression. PICTS has proved fruitful in uncovering thinking styles in both offending and non-offending samples (McCoy et al., 2006; Walters, Elliott & Miscoll, 1998), and its validity has been supported in eliciting risk-taking behaviours (Williams et al., 2020). Despite this, Egan et al. (2000) have found the BFI to be a fruitful tool in understanding criminal tendencies.

This chapter will examine whether there are any crime-supportive cognitive patterns within the narrative themes and how these compare across the four narrative themes in both a non-offending and offending sample which will enable a greater depth to understand further differentiation in the narrative accounts and to identify if the narrative themes have elements of crime-supporting cognitive patterns underpinning them leading them to be more likely to be deviant. The role of the Revenger and Victim in the non-offending sample was based on a more negative and hostile life trajectory. Therefore, it is hypothesised that these two narrative roles will be more likely to be linked to criminal thinking. With those who have disclosed an offence, it is expected that these narrative roles will be linked to criminal thinking and there may be underpinning elements that support the underlying core themes of the narrative roles. Nonetheless, this is the layperson's edition for use with the general public and not the criminal PICTS so it could hinder findings. The research question here is: are certain themes more prone to criminality than others?

## **10.2 Data Analysis Method**

### **10.2.1 Sample**

This study separated those who had committed an offence (offenders) and those who had not committed an offence (non-offenders). Of the participants who took part in the research, 20 stated on their questionnaires that they had committed a crime. Fourteen of the sample were male, six were female, and all were aged between 19-74 years old ( $M_{age} = 36$  years,  $SD = 14.8$ ). Fifty-one participants disclosed that they had not committed a crime, 20 (39%) were male, and 31 (61%) were female. The age range was between 18 and 75 years, with a mean age of 37.55 ( $SD = 16.21$ ).

In relation to criminal thinking styles, 45% of the offenders had average to high levels of general criminal thinking. In contrast, only 14% of the non-offenders had average general criminal thinking.

### **10.2.2 Measure**

Participants were given the PICTS questionnaire as part of the interview process. PICTS is an 80-item self-report inventory designed to measure criminal thought processes (Walters, 2009). Each item is scored on a four-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from strongly agree (4) to disagree (1). The primary PICTS is used for offenders, however, a layperson version of the PICTS (v4.0) was used for this study due to it being focused on the narratives of non-offenders. Data were scored in accordance with the PICTS manual and a scale item was devised based on the participants' scores. As previously mentioned, the participants were assigned a narrative theme. Narrative themes were assigned to each participant through calculating the variables in each theme and the dominant theme was the narrative that had the greatest number of variables than any other theme.

### **10.2.3 Analysis**

A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality was performed to examine the normality of the data in relation to the PICTS and all results were not normally distributed ( $p=0.001$ ). As the data was not normally distributed, a Kruskal-Wallis test was used to compare the PICTS traits across the four narrative themes. A Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine if there are statistically significant differences between two or more groups using a rank-based approach (Field, 2018; Laerd Statistics, 2018).

### **Internal Reliability**

A Cronbach's alpha coefficient is used to assess the level of internal reliability of the items that are suggested to measure each narrative role. An alpha value of above 0.8 is perceived as a good measure, and above 0.6 is deemed as acceptable (Field, 2018). Cronbach's alphas for the 80 PICTS items was .942 showing high internal consistency and reliability (Field, 2009).

**Table 10.1***Internal Reliability of the PICTS Traits*

PICTS Traits	Number of Items	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Mollification (Mo)	8	.777
Cutoff (Co)	8	.795
Entitlement (En)	8	.789
Power Orientation (Po)	8	.727
Sentimentality (Sn)	8	.648
Superoptimism (So)	8	.677
Cognitive Indolence (Ci)	8	.764
Discontinuity (Ds)	8	.749
Reactive	4	.843
Proactive	3	.876
GCT	7	.899

Cronbach's alpha shows that each PICTS trait has a good to acceptable level of internal consistency with the sample.

### 10.3 Results – Non-Offenders

A Kruskal-Wallis test across each of the PICTS traits was performed, finding a significant difference in the PICTS measure Co  $\chi^2(3) = 8.328, p = .040$  between the narrative roles. Pairwise comparisons highlighted significant differences between the Professional and Hero ( $p = .026, r = -0.43$ ) and Professional and Victim ( $p = .009, r = -0.59$ ).

The Kruskal-Wallis test also revealed a statistically significant difference in the PICTS measure Ci  $\chi^2(3) = 8.096, p = .044$  between the narrative themes. Pairwise comparisons revealed significant differences between the Revenger and Victim ( $p = .008, r = -0.67$ ).

A final statistical significant difference was revealed in the PICTS measure Ds  $\chi^2(x) = 10.387, p = .016$  between the narrative themes. Pairwise comparisons found a significant difference between the Professional and Victim ( $p = .010, r = -0.57$ ), the Professional and

Revenger ( $p = .018$ ,  $r = -0.68$ ) and the Hero and Victim ( $p = .034$ ,  $r = -0.33$ ). The mean narrative scores are presented in Table 10.1.

**Table 10.2**

*Non-Offender PICTS mean ranks and Kruskal-Wallis*

PICTS	Professional <i>M Rank</i>	Victim <i>M Rank</i>	Revenger <i>M Rank</i>	Hero <i>M Rank</i>	H, df(x)
MO	19.25	24.82	36.13	26.06	6.004, (3)
CO	15.69	31.14	19.25	27.04	8.328, (3)*
EN	25.75	29.73	25.75	23.67	2.348, (3)
PO	25.63	27.41	23.75	24.94	.426, (3)
SN	26.38	23.59	20.25	26.80	1.442, (3)
SO	25.38	31.91	16.00	24.33	5.655, (3)
CI	22.44	32.50	14.13	25.24	8.096, (3)*
DS	17.63	32.91	36.13	23.24	10.387, (3)*
GCT	26.13	29.50	29.25	23.93	3.472, (3)
Proactive	29.13	23.92	26.00	26.00	5.208, (3)
Reactive	24.50	28.79	30.75	24.50	4.468, (3)

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

### 10.3.1 PICTS: Professional's Adventure

Significant differences emerged in relation to the role of the Professional across the four narrative themes. The role of the Professional was lower in Cutoff (CO) than the Hero and Revenger narratives. CO reflects impulsive behaviours and an impulsivity to commit crime. The Professional, in an offending situation, is in control and confident with a strong self-identity in the commission of the offence. They are calm and professional, expressing their expertise as a 'trick of the trade', yet outside of that, there is excitement and pleasure in what has been accomplished (Youngs & Canter, 2012).

An individual who reveals low levels of CO represents an individual who exhibits an above-average level of self-discipline and is less likely to be deemed impulsive, especially during the commission of an offence (Walters, 2001, 2002). The Professional being significantly lower across the narrative themes in CO does reflect the nature and underpinning components of the Professional narrative. In an offending context, they are calm and composed but pleased (Youngs & Canter, 2012), and in a non-offending context, in what has been

revealed in this thesis, is a comparable theme with the individuals smoothly conquering their terrain and mastering their environment yet excited with aroused positive emotions.

The role of the professional was also of near significance with being lower in Cognitive Indolence (Ci) against the Victim narrative. Ci is linked to impulsivity in the offending experience, this is characterised by having strong critical reasoning skills and being less likely to be perceived as lazy or impulsive. The role of the Professional is high in potency and low in intimacy, with participants taking responsibility for their actions and focussing on success and material gain driven to achieve their objectives. The Professional was the highest amongst the narrative themes to have an internal LOC of control, being in control of events which is also echoed here by the finding that they are less impulsive and more organised and driven.

The Professional was also significantly lower than the Victim and Revenger narratives in Discontinuity (DS). Throughout the study, the narratives of the non-offenders in the role of the Victim and the Revenger have been centred on more negativity and hostility than the Professional and the Revenger. The narrative theme of the Professional lacks the negativity which Maruna (2001) established in offenders perceiving their lives with a sense of hopelessness, and Youngs et al. (2014) with the unresolved dissonance in offenders' narratives in comparison with non-offenders. The findings in this study currently reflect that the role of the Professional has lower levels of crime supporting cognitive patterns than the other roles.

An individual low in DS is more likely to be focused, goal-orientated, and consistent in their thinking and behaviour. They have a stronger self-identity, which was revealed as an underpinning construct of the role of the Professional. The qualities of the narrative of the Professional, within both the non-offenders and offenders in the sample, is of someone who is focused on achievement, who has mastered their environment for gain, and the narrative account is optimistic and exciting, yet it maintains a professional edge in relation to them fulfilling their ambitions. Being low in DS highlights a cognition to be more focused and goal-driven which supports the overarching narrative theme of the Professional and aligns with research on non-offenders (Maruna, 2001; McAdams, 1995).

Though Youngs (2006) found monetary, power/status, and sensory incentives to be an important feature expressed by criminals in their offending action, the narrative theme of the

Professional lacks the negativity that has also been revealed in narrative research to be central (Maruna, 2001; Youngs et al., 2014). The Professional role has no evident criminal thinking style through PICTS, the narratives relayed were more centrally focused on achieving legitimate objectives obtained in an honourable way and being focused on legitimate goals. This narrative role in this sample therefore is revealed to not be underpinned by criminal thinking. The previous two Chapters have revealed some slight differences in the Professional narrative with the offending Professional narrative which could support that the non-offending narrative could be a non-distorted version of the Professional narrative revealed in offenders as posited by Canter (1994).

### **10.3.2 PICTS: Hero's Quest**

Significant differences also emerged in relation to the Hero narrative role and criminal thinking styles. In the offending context, the Hero is an individual who is all about proving oneself, overcoming struggles and missions, for a bigger and better purpose, showing masculinity and bravado (Youngs & Canter, 2012). The Hero narrative role was significantly higher than the role of the Professional in Cutoff (CO), with the Hero more likely to have sufficient emotional control under most circumstances but may act out when put under significant pressure or stress.

Within this sample, the story that these participants provide their life with a sense of purpose is centred on love and happiness, which was the overarching theme of narrative with the Hero is in pursuit of a happy and joyful ending drawing on Frye (1957). Despite this, there were elements within the narrative of failure and disappointment and overcoming struggles, with their storylines encompassing small circumstances of negativity, but the overarching themes of happiness and positivity dominated the plots through redemption sequences. This does reveal a hidden cognitive element of the Hero narrative which could indicate how certain life pressures trigger the Hero to act out and commit a criminal act. Given the Hero narrative in the criminal context is more likely to prove themselves for better things, this could indicate how the narrative is a distorted version of the non-offending Hero.

This does reveal that there is some element of criminal thinking present in the Hero across the four narratives which given the underlying nature of the narrative theme of happiness is an

interesting finding. Despite this, the Hero narrative was the most prevalent narrative in the sample which could account for some of the differences revealed.

The Hero was also significantly lower in DS than the Victim, and nearly of significance with the Revenger. This is represented by individuals who are more focused and goal-driven with more rational thinking. Despite this focus, there is a tendency to be side-tracked but no more so than most offenders. The Hero narrative role is an individual with a strong self-identity, like with the Professional, focused on overcoming struggles for a bigger and better purpose. This does relate to the underpinning elements of the narrative of the Hero being more focused and driven and adds support to the psychological underpinning of the role.

### **10.3.3 PICTS: Victim's Tragedy**

The Victim narrative role was the most associated with higher levels of criminal thinking across the four narrative themes. It was hypothesised that the Victim would have underlying cognitive patterns which relate to criminality. The role of the Victim in the offending context is of low potency and high intimacy (Youngs & Canter, 2012), with them feeling they have been wronged by society. Confusion and impotence epitomise this narrative with the offender seeing themselves as the victim, with social and moral codes not applying to them, and the narrative couched in negative emotions.

The low potency element of the theme attributes responsibility to others. The emotional aspect of the offending behaviour relates to the high intimacy element of the narrative. People are significant to the Victim role, identified within the victim role framework by Canter and Youngs (2012), and the NAS role of the Victim (Canter & Youngs, 2009), in which the role offender assigns to the victim within their personal narrative is as a person with the offender desperately seeking some kind of intimacy with the victim in a distorted attempt to address his sense of emptiness,

Impulsivity is a feature of the Cut-off (CO) thinking style in having little or no forethought, reflection, or consideration of the consequences (Walters, 2001, 2002). The Victim, highest in CO amongst the four narrative themes, is more likely to act under extreme stress but maintain sufficient emotional control under most circumstances. Perceiving themselves as the victim in events means the impact of their behaviour is refocused onto their own objectives, and that adds weight to the 'nothing else matters' element of this theme. The Victim narrative role in the non-incarcerated echoed the offender role of the Victim with negativity, confusion,



and repeat negative events. Such repeat events faced and the negative mentality could explain the Victim role being more likely to act out.

Social and moral codes do not apply to the Victim narrative theme. There are no rules, and nothing else matters. The role of the Victim was also highest in Cognitive Indolence (CI) across the four narrative themes, and significantly higher than the Revenger and of near significance with the Professional. CI relates to taking shortcuts and the easy way out. Victims, therefore, are more likely to take occasional shortcuts to achieve their aims, disregarding what is right and any rules. This can end up with the Victim in trouble which they may perceive as wrong being done to them which is an underpinning element of the Victim narrative. The Victim also has a weak self-identity and see others as better than them, such a view could explain those taking shortcuts because they feel they have no choice other than to.

Discontinuity (DS) was also revealed as significantly higher with the Victim across narrative themes of Professional and the Hero. DS is seen as a form of unpredictability in relation to being easily distracted and side-tracked by environmental events. Individuals high in DS have difficulties following through on good initial intentions due to external distractions, struggle to complete tasks, and are more likely to face disciplinary problems. They are also more likely to experience behavioural problems in the community due to this lack of focus (Walters, 2001, 2002). The Victim narrative is underpinned by confusion and contaminations sequences, there was also the mention of experiencing illness and injury within the life trajectories. Personality traits associated with the Victim role were being high in neuroticism which is similarly aligned with DS and having a high LOC. The Victim narrative blames external factors and the repeat negative events, overarching themes of negativity, and hopelessness experienced by the Victim can all be understood here as a reflection of the high DS.

Negativity in narrative accounts is associated with criminality (Canter, 1994; Maruna, 2001; Youngs et al., 2014). The role of the Victim is underpinned by a displeasurable, negative, emotional state which lends support to this narrative style being one more likely to be associated with criminality. The findings in this domain, in relation to the Victim narrative, reveal how underlying elements of criminal thinking are evident within the narrative theme. The underpinning criminal thinking aspects are also reflective of the overarching theme of the narrative which supports the role of the Victim revealed in the non-incarcerated sample.

This gives some understanding of how the victim narrative role can be associated with criminality and the underpinning cognitive functions that drive them to commit an offence.

#### **10.3.4 PICTS: Revenger's Mission**

Interesting findings emerged in relation to the Revenger narrative role with the non-offenders. The offending context of the Revenger narrative is a story of an individual who has been wronged and deprived, and they see their fate is to retaliate and avenge this hurt which manifests itself in the way they carry out their crime. There is a strong masculine theme dominating the narrative and a displeasurable emotional state. A Revenger narrative theme in the context of this study was also revealed with a similar theme. The Revenger in an offending context has a premeditated, calculating nature, in which the victims are 'waited for' by offenders ready to do harm and impose their will (Youngs & Canter, 2012).

The Revenger narrative was the lowest in Cognitive Indolence (CI) which is indicative of taking shortcuts and taking the easy way out. Being low in this, as the Professional narrative, represents an individual who possesses strong critical reasoning skills and is less likely to be characterised as lazy or impulsive (Walters, 1990). Given that in the offending context the Revenger is more likely to be calculated to avenge their wrong rather than impulsive, this highlights a link between the narrative and the criminal thinking styles. The narrative in both the offenders and offenders in this study is reflective of the Revenger role identified in previous research (Canter & Youngs, 2012), and will impose their will as they see it, having to do what they believe they must but this highlights how this is less impulsive and more premeditated.

As similarly found with the Victim narrative, the role of the Revenger was the highest in Discontinuity (DS) across the four narrative themes and was significantly higher than the Professional and of near significance with the Hero. As discussed with the Victim narrative role, individuals high in DS find it difficult to follow through on good intentions due to being easily distracted by external events. This can also reflect an individual who fails to complete started tasks and is likely to face punitive measures or experience behavioural problems due to the lack of personal focus or tendency to get side-tracked (Walters, 1990).

The role of the revenger in both the offenders and non-offenders is drawn on Frye's (1957) tragedy narrative, in which all is good and then an event happens which provokes some form

of revenge that is controlled by external fate. The Revenger was also associated with the Escapist imago, someone who is unwilling to take responsibility, living for diversion and amusement, and escaping everyday life. These reflect the finding of the Revenger having an underlying criminal thinking style of DS and support the research in offending behaviour that narratives linked to offenders are couched in a more negative theme (Maruna 2001, 2004; Youngs et al., 2014).

The findings of the criminal thinking styles seen here, reveal links to the psychological constructs that underpin the Revenger theme that has been found through the offenders and non-offenders in this thesis and previous research (Canter & Youngs, 2009). Nonetheless, these findings were limited and were exploratory in understanding on offending behaviour may relate to the narrative themes. It also highlights how these underpinning elements of criminal thinking could be the underlying dimensions in personality which make the Revenger more vulnerable to criminality.

#### 10.4 Results – Offenders

The mean ranks PICTS scores across each narratives are presented in Table 10.3. A Kruskal-Wallis test found no significant difference between the PICTS measures and the offenders.

**Table 10.3**

*Offender PICTS mean ranks and Kruskal-Wallis*

PICTS Item	Professional <i>M Rank</i>	Victim <i>M Rank</i>	Revenger <i>M Rank</i>	Hero <i>M Rank</i>	H, df(x)
MO	9.17	11.00	13.25	9.00	2.046, (3)
CO	8.75	11.92	13.00	8.50	3.137,(3)
EN	9.67	9.58	14.13	9.50	2.426,(3)
PO	11.17	10.00	11.50	9.25	.520,(3)
SN	10.42	7.83	14.75	10.38	4.243,(3)
SO	9.25	11.00	14.13	8.00	3.331,(3)
CI	8.50	13.17	10.00	10.00	5.086,(3)
DS	8.58	14.50	7.88	10.00	7.254,(3)
GCT	9.17	10.42	14.25	7.00	.877,(3)
Proactive	10.42	10.42	14.25	7.00	4.204,(3)
Reactive	10.00	12.17	10.75	8.50	2.018,(3)

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

No significant differences were revealed across the four narrative themes and criminal

thinking styles. It was noted that nearly half of the offenders were revealed to have general criminal thinking in comparison with 14% of the non-offenders. It was anticipated that there would be some deviation in the criminal thinking styles of the offenders across the four narrative themes. There could be no differentiation in the four narrative themes which could explain this finding. Previous research has revealed the four narrative roles across various crime types (Canter & Youngs, 2009, 2015; Goodlad et al., 2018; Spruin et al., 2014; Yaneva et al, 2018; Youngs & Canter, 2012), showing the versatility across crime types and different crime types have been found to have different underlying personality traits (Dennison et al., 2001, Egan & Taylor, 2010; Heaven, 1996), therefore this variation could be evident in this sample. The sample size in relation to the offenders was also small. In some roles, there were only four participants which are not diverse enough to glean a full understanding of the associated criminal thinking styles. Despite this, the narrative role of the Revenger did have the highest overall mean rank across the four narrative roles which does support previous findings in previous chapters that this role does appear to be more criminal.

## **10.5 Chapter Summary**

Criminal thinking styles have been revealed to be more evident in three of the narrative themes (Revenger, Hero, and Victim). Whereas the role of the Professional was deemed to be lower in cognitions in relation to criminal thinking. The roles of the Victim and Revenger were revealed through previous chapters in the thesis to be couched in a more negative tone, with more mention of criminality and devious behaviour revealed through their life stories and personality traits. This finding highlights how there are relevant underlying cognitions in narrative themes that show a bearing on offending behaviour. Life stories, as posited by McAdams (1993), are the way an individual integrates life events internally to give them meaning which forms their self-identity. Their life story, or narrative, and the components within it, reflect and shape an individual.

A three-factor approach by McAdams and Manczak (2015) considered how the internal characteristics that reside within an individual connected to their overall life story. This was done in such a way that these dispositional traits, embedded within an individual, revealed autobiographical accounts which identified how they made sense of their lives and key aspects of their individual self-identities.

The findings here revealed how the psychological disposition in relation to criminal thinking styles were uncovered by the LAAF procedure which reveals how elements of criminal thinking were embedded within the narratives and the way in which individuals constructed their self-identity, as revealed by the stories they told. The underlying elements of crime-supporting cognitive patterns identified within the sample do not necessarily mean that the criminality was acted on, just that there was a psychological disposition to this and should this criminality have been acted on, the traits that would have underpinned this. These findings relate to the themes adopted in an offending action by Youngs and Canter (2012), which gives support to them being significant themes utilised by offenders and giving a deeper perspective on the narratives they live by, and not just adopt in an offence. It also showed how they provide their lives with a sense of meaning.

These findings also highlighted how underpinning crime-supporting cognitive patterns, present within the narratives, could be a factor in an individual pursuing criminality because of how these criminal thinking styles were embedded with the narrative as dispositional traits. Yet interestingly, not everyone acted on these. Three of the themes (Hero, Victim, and Revenger) are the narratives identified that have criminal underpinnings in those who are high in attributes of these themes, yet Youngs and Canter (2012) identified four narrative roles. The Professional did not have an association with criminal thinking styles. This could mean that these themes have not been uncovered by PICTS (Walters, 1990), or the present sample just did not feature people with criminal tendencies in these narratives. Yet, it is likely that these offending narratives are just distorted versions of the narrative themes, as identified by Canter (1994), and do not have criminal thinking.

Interestingly, none of the four roles with the offending sample identified with any criminal thinking style, yet they are underpinned by a deeper element of general criminal thinking. As previously explained, there are limitations to this study with the offenders due to the small sample size, but this could be that offending behaviour is not linked to narrative themes as we know that the four narrative roles have been found in various crime types (Canter & Youngs, 2009, 2015; Goodlad et al., 2018; Spruin et al., 2014; Yaneva et al, 2018; Youngs & Canter, 2012), and in the general public. Just because people live by a certain narrative role does not mean that they have elements of criminal thinking, nor does it mean they will go on to offend.

## **10.6 Criminal Narratives Section Summary (Chapters 8, 9 & 10)**

As revealed within this chapter, elements of criminal thinking are present in the life stories of the non-incarcerated sample taken from the public with non-offenders but not with offenders. These three chapters aimed to identify if there were any underlying themes of criminality within an offending and non-offending sample, and how these differed in relation to the narrative accounts given using the LAAF elicitation procedure. A further task was to identify if the same thematic structure and personality dimensions were revealed in offenders as they were in the non-offenders, and lastly to identify if any of the four narrative themes were underpinned by elements of criminal thinking through the presence of crime-supporting cognitive patterns. This would aid in facilitating the understanding of how criminality, if identified, was embedded within the narrative, and how too, the components of the life narratives identified fitted into Youngs and Canters (2012) four NAS roles of offending action.

This chapter identified that three of the four narrative themes within this study have underpinning elements of criminality. Content analysis in a comparison of those who had committed a crime within the sample and those who had not, revealed differences in the accounts given by the participants. These accounts were distinct in their differences, but both centred around themes of negativity and criminality, as found by previous research (Maruna, 2001, 2004; Youngs et al., 2014), and how unresolved dissonance can still be present in the non-incarcerated narratives (Youngs et al., 2014). Criminality was a primary feature in the narrative accounts given by the Revengers, reflecting masculine behaviours and a crime-focused, energetic, fast-paced style. A narrative encompassed in negativity and hopelessness was revealed in narrative themes of the Victim, indicated by different LAAF components, whereas the narrative of the Hero was positive and happy reflected love and communion values, but mentioned overcoming struggles.

The findings through thematic analysis with the offenders revealed themes comparable to the non-offenders, these themes were just more dominant and the strength of the themes prevailed. The Victim was more tragic and negative, the Professional was more driven and masculine, the Revenger was wrapped in a more inherently criminal storyline, and the missions and overcoming struggles were more overriding in the Hero. Personality measures across the four narrative themes also reflected the findings of the non-offenders, but again, the findings were more extreme on the scale of comparison and more evident.

The links with criminality were further validated in the analysis of criminal thinking styles across the narrative themes, which revealed the Hero, Victim and Revenger themes, were significantly associated with crime-supporting cognitive patterns, yet there were only several thinking styles revealed across the narratives, despite this they did align with the narrative theme.

Canter and Youngs (2009) identified differences in the offending-action styles utilised by offenders in their narrative-action system roles, and Canter (2012) presented this in the roles sexual and violent offenders assigned to victims within their personal narratives. Although the study here highlights variation in several scaled of the thinking it styles, giving some support for the different cognitions of the narrative roles. The findings here do not fully support the narrative roles being associated with different offending actions. Personality differences have been associated with different crime types (Dennison et al., 2001; Egan & Taylor, 2010; Heaven, 1996), yet the NAS themes have shown relevance across different crime types (Canter & Youngs, 2009, 2015; Goodlad et al., 2018; Spruin et al., 2014; Yaneva et al, 2018; Youngs & Canter, 2012), there is no unity in the different roles being linked to a certain crime as they have been looked at within different offences and found validity. However, this study delves further into how these offending roles can form part of a wider life narrative, in aiding the understanding of how these offending narratives (Youngs & Canter, 2012) fall into the broader life narratives of individuals.

As found by McAdams (1993), life narratives encompass the whole picture, and people can play different roles within this. People can personify different imagoes, and the construction of the life story communicated includes the dispositional traits of the individual (McAdams & Manczak, 2015). Canter (1994) posits that criminals live by the same narratives as those who do not offend, yet these are constructed wrongly which leads to an ill-formed narrative. Certain elements of distortion have been highlighted in this study supporting Canter (1994) that there are deviations in narratives and underpinnings of criminal thinking are related to the narratives of non-offenders, with dispositional traits identified, even if they are not acted on. Despite this, the life trajectories of offenders and non-offenders are different, as are the events they experience therefore there would be some recognised differences in the stories they tell.

The behaviours and psychological constructs that underpin these different narrative roles, whilst not necessarily deviant, possess the same behaviours and have the same psychological

underpinnings as those adopted within offending action (Youngs & Canter, 2012). The offending narratives are distillations of full life narratives, yet ill-formed, as Canter (1994) posits. Yet the psychological constructs underpinning them are of the same nature.

Presser (2009) states that narrative accounts can be tainted because of the environment they are obtained in, but the findings here show how criminality is, in fact, more so embedded within the narrative and the self and not just a factor of external circumstances the narrative account was given in. These narrative accounts shed light on the self-identity of the participants, and the stories they live by and show how these are underpinned by a psychological disposition to criminality. The accounts given were not always real-life accounts of offending behaviour, but also fictional accounts, giving an insight into how the core constructs shape an individual, showing how they perceive life. They show how they may develop a sense of meaning, centred on criminality, and they may have an underlying criminal thinking disposition, yet they do not act on it.

Although this gives a key insight into how offending behaviour fits within the life narratives of a non-incarcerated sample and validates the LAAF procedure and the NAS themes, there is a lot of scope for future research in delving deeper into how the narrative accounts are aligned with criminality and are comparable across non-offenders and offenders when research already alludes to stark differences in their personality and narrative themes.



## Chapter 11: Discussion

The narrative approach has been a fruitful development within psychology for aiding the understanding of human behaviour, identifying themes and roles utilised by both offenders and non-offenders (e.g., Canter & Youngs, 2009; Hunt, 2020; McAdams, 1993, 1995; Sandberg, 2013). Despite this, these roles lack an integrative basis and have centred on offending and non-offending roles individually, not as a whole. This means a lack of an integrative narrative theme framework that aids in the understanding of the narratives of non-offenders, allowing insight into how offending narratives are embedded, via distillation of those full life self-narratives.

The present research investigated the life narratives of a non-incarcerated sample in an effort to bridge the gap in understanding what narratives a non-incarcerated sample held. The primary aim of the present research was to uncover what narratives the non-incarcerated sample from the general population lived by. It also aimed to show how these compared with an offending sample and in doing so, to provide a number of specific contributions to knowledge in this area.

The research contributed to knowledge in this area by revealing four key themes within the narrative accounts of a non-incarcerated sample, elicited using the LAAF procedure. It resulted in the development of a model of narrative themes present within both offenders and non-offenders in the sample, enhancing the Narrative Action System (NAS) for offending behaviour (Canter & Youngs, 2009; Youngs & Canter, 2012). The themes revealed were consistent over the life narrative accounts of both samples, with subtle differences, and was revealed that little demographic differences were revealed in their universal applicability.

Secondly, this research provided a deeper account of understanding by providing an innovative technique, drawing on McAdams' (1995) theory of there being three levels of personality needed to fully 'know' a person. In drawing on this technique, it deepened the understanding of the four narrative themes by integrating them with personality traits and personal concerns to understand the underlying components in personality associated with the themes. Trait theories have previously explained personality differences (Eysenck, 1990; Jung, 1961), yet did not encompass the dynamic and evolving movement of an individual's identity which the narrative approach captures (Crossley, 2000; McAdams, 1993, 1995). This

study also aimed to support McAdams and Pals' (2006) need for a fully integrative framework to fully know and understand a person, in which this research provided the initial basis for such framework and uncovered significant findings that supported the narrative themes yet highlighted their universal ability across samples.

Thirdly, the research identified that elements of criminality and criminal thinking can be embedded within the narrative accounts as posited by Canter (1994), and that certain narrative themes have a predisposition towards offending behaviour and criminal thinking. This research was novel in its kind as no such previous research had thematically analysed LAAF responses of a non-incarcerated sample to identify the narrative accounts they live by to reveal themes that have only been previously empirically linked to an offending sample across numerous crime types in robbery, arson, stalking, rape and serial homicide (see Canter & Youngs, 2009; Youngs & Canter, 2012), contract killers (Yaneva et al., 2018), mentally disordered offenders (Spruin et al., 2014), offenders with personality disorders and psychopathy (Goodlad et al., 2018). Despite this, SSA has shown prevalence in non-offending samples revealing the same narrative themes (Hunt, 2020).

To enhance this, these findings were then supported by personality measures with the same approach being replicated on an offending sample to provide a contribution to how criminal narratives differ. Despite such revolutionary and significant findings, it is important to note that these findings related to a non-incarcerated sample with some disclosing committing an offence and others disclosing no offences which were taken at face value. Although differences have emerged in relation to criminality and offending behaviour within this study, several noteworthy limitations will be discussed and further research is needed to fully comprehend the differences.

### **11.1 Narrative Themes**

An important contribution of the present research revealed clear narrative themes in the life stories of a non-incarcerated sample from members of the general public. The overarching narrative theme demonstrated that the sample typically portrayed life stories with more positivity and optimism than offending samples (Youngs et al., 2014), and the events described were supported by the LAAF items that underpinned the narrative theme presented, yet distinct sub-themes also emerged. Thematic content analysis revealed key narrative themes present within the life trajectories presented by both the non-offenders in the

incarcerated sample (Chapter 4) and offenders (Chapter 9) using the innovative LAAF technique.

To uncover differences, thematic analysis of the LAAF content variables presented a structure that extended Youngs and Canter's (2012) NAS, which had previously only been utilised within the roles offenders draw on in offending action (Canter & Youngs, 2009), and within the life narratives of offenders (Canter & Youngs, 2015). The structure of an SSA plot supported the four themes of the Professional, Hero, Revenger and Victim that were revealed by Youngs and Canter (2011, 2012) within their narrative action system for offending action, providing the groundwork of an innovative model for differentiating the life stories of a non-offending sample that stemmed from key psychological research. SSA and narratives have proved fruitful in the study of both offenders and non-offenders finding support across robbery, arson, stalking, rape and serial homicide (Canter & Youngs, 2009; Youngs & Canter, 2012), contract killers (Yaneva et al., 2018), mentally disordered offenders (Spruin et al., 2014), personality disorders and psychopathy (Goodlad et al., 2018), young offenders (Ioannou et al., 2018), female offenders (Ciesla et al., 2019), and missing children (Hunt, 2020). This was further supported by thematic analysis on those within the sample who disclosed committing an offence, termed for the purposes of this study as offenders. This research is novel and a significant contribution to research as through an elaboration of these narrative themes it provides a deeper basis for differentiating an individual's life stories and comprehending their self-identity through a non-offending sample.

In Youngs and Canter's (2012) NAS model of offending action, the Professional narrative reflects an offender who strives to master the environment whilst gaining success and rewards. The findings from this non-incarcerated sample revealed individuals who presented a life narrative that reflected the same psychological components of being happy, determined, and focused on achieving success stemming from McAdams' (1993) agentic themes. Replicated with the offenders in the sample, the same themes emerged, yet the narrative was stronger and more dominant.

The Hero in the offending sample is reflective of an individual who personifies manliness and bravado, on a righteous mission. This theme was identified in the non-offending context. However, differences emerged in that it stemmed from the quest narrative of Frye (1957) in pursuit of a happy and joyful ending, and yet here the Hero portrays an individual searching and striving for love and happiness although the overall pursuit was for the happy, joyful

ending just via communal means. A combination of the two themes emerged in the offenders within the study, the overarching theme of love and happiness were revealed yet the focused mission in achieving the objective was revealed, the narrative was more dominant. This reveals the differentiation between the Hero in the offending context through possible distortion (see Canter, 1994) is revealed in a non-offending sample yet still underpinned by Frye (1957)'s comedy narrative.

The Victim, in the offending experience, is an individual whose life story is negative with a sense of impotence and hopelessness. The Victim narrative theme was reflected in both the offending and non-offending samples in this study with the participants presenting a bleak sense of life and weak self-identity. The overarching theme of tragedy was more prominent in the non-offenders' life trajectories with deeper traits of sadness. This provides deeper insight into the same narrative themes being revealed, but how they could be intertwined with the more deviant narrative. Similarly echoed was the narrative theme of the Revenger, which depicts an individual out for revenge, displaying masculine behaviours, with a weak self-identity. Again, the narrative role was replicated in the sample in both offenders and non-offenders.

These findings gave significant support to the narrative roles and the components and behaviours that underpinned them, and also supported the notion of them being distillations of a full life narrative as previously asserted (Canter, 1994; Canter & Youngs, 2009; Youngs & Canter, 2012). This aided the understanding as to how the offending roles could be distorted versions of an overall life narrative despite the psychological themes underpinning the roles being similar. The enhanced strength of the underlying themes of the narrative in offenders highlights how there is a more prominent theme of narrative underlying. Yet, the LAAF variables provide insight into how the individuals in the narrative roles provide their lives with a sense of meaning.

Research has previously suggested that individuals live by a dominant narrative (McAdams, 1993; Canter, 1994), and that these dominant narratives are underpinned by certain psychological ideas (McAdams, 1993; Schutz, 1992; Youngs & Canter, 2011). It was hypothesised that these four narrative themes would be present, given that Canter (1994) asserted that criminals lived a distorted narrative account. The findings of this innovative application of the LAAF revealed the four narrative themes which offered a way of perceiving how criminal behaviours could be embedded within an individual's life stories, as

hypothesised by Canter (1994). Despite this, it is important to note that the coding framework is derived from the four narrative roles and underpinning elements revealed within them. Therefore despite these highlighting significant findings and providing initial insight into how offenders could misconstrue a narrative leading them to criminality, it also adds some bias to the four narrative themes being revealed.

McAdams (1985, 1993) argued that life stories were representations of an individuals' self-identity, with these stories being constructed by social and cultural influence (Adler & McAdams, 2007). With life stories having been a method used to relay and provide information throughout history and for generations and core themes and underpinnings of identity derived from them (Bakan, 1966; Erikson, 1968; McAdams, 1993). Such research highlights the significance of such a technique to understand human behaviour and how storylines have become a key approach within psychology. Despite such benefits, the value of the narrative approach has been criticised in relation to the vague measurement process, instability of the narratives, the impact of external factors influencing the narrative, the credibility of the protagonists' accounts, and it lacks fundamental causation answers. In such, do narratives cause changes in self-identity or does self-identity cause changes in the narrative (Doekhie & Van Ginneken, 2019; Maruna & Liem, 2020; Sandberg, 2015; Strawson, 2004; Ward, 2011).

Although strong criticisms of narrative research have been identified, its fruitfulness as an approach to understanding self-identity, in particular offending behaviour, has been supported in depth through various studies that include drinking (Tutenges & Sandberg, 2013), cannabis use (Sandberg, 2012), crack cocaine use (Copes et al., 2008), drug trafficking (Fleetwood, 2015), drug dealing (Sandberg, 2008, 2016), violence among incarcerated drug dealers (Sandberg et al., 2015), carjackers' decision-making (Copes et al., 2015), violent offenders (Brookman, 2015; Brookman et al., 2011), white-collar crime (Klenowski et al., 2011), mass murder (Presser, 2012), and terrorism (Joosse et al., 2015; Sandberg, 2013), alongside the LAAF. To overcome such limitations and criticisms, it has been identified that narrative research should focus on enhancing current knowledge through replication and theory development, "in addition to highlighting the predictable differences in story patterns of different groups with different backgrounds or circumstances, narrative research should also seek to establish generalities across diverse research samples in the hopes of establishing predictable relationships between narratives and action." (Maruna & Liem, 2020, p. 16).

This study therefore considered the limitation of narrative research and endeavoured to replicate previously revealed narrative themes through replication of the study with a different sample. This in turn brings validity and strength to the four dominant narrative themes that were revealed within the life stories of this non-incarcerated sample. The narrative themes presented similar psychological constructions to the underpinning themes and in turn, added support to the psychological consistency of the use of storylines in understanding human behaviour and criminality.

Previous research, primarily McAdams (1993), has revealed narrative themes present within individuals life stories. These roles provide differentiation and understanding into the roles individuals adopt that personify the self and give a sense of meaning to researchers and the outside world into how that individual perceives themselves through the stories they tell. McAdams' (1993) imagoes, derived from themes of agency and communion, are transient roles in which during the life course individuals moved through different imagoes in the different events they experience through the life course. Such transient, specific roles, fail to provide a dominant overarching meaning of character and focus purely on the agentic and communal values limiting their significance in understanding the role an individual assigns to themselves.

This thesis provides a new approach, within the field of narrative psychology, to interpret human identity through underlying psychological constructs in a narrative role model which has not been previously explored. Canter (1994) posited that criminals live by a distorted life narrative, and significant research has taken place to understand the narratives that offenders adopt in the commission of an offence (Canter & Youngs 2009, 2012), and the narrative roles offenders assign to their life trajectory (Canter & Youngs, 2015). Albeit significant research in the field of offenders, the value of such narrative identity and roles adopted during offending behaviour hold little value if the way in which they differ from, or have been distorted from a legitimate narrative, is not understood. This study, therefore, allows the understanding of what differentiations occur between offending and non-offending narratives and how offender narratives may be distortions of non-offending narratives.

Despite being significant research in revealing four narrative themes with a non-incarcerated sample, there are limitations to the findings. Criminal histories of the sample could not be verified to ascertain the legitimacy of having committed or not committed an offence. Information had to be taken at face value during the interview process which may have

influenced the results. The sample size was also small across the four narrative themes which were not evenly distributed and the offenders in the sample were not comparable in size to the non-offenders, although a small sample size can still elicit core narrative themes (see Presser, 2009). The versatility of these narratives and their validity in a wider sample is not therefore ascertained.

A greater, more varied, sample size would have provided more validity of the findings and could have unveiled further differences or similarities across the four narrative themes. Narrative research is time-consuming and elicits rich data which can be cumbersome and limits a researcher's ability to source extensive data sets (Maruna & Liem, 2020). The elicitation method of the LAAF is derived from key themes in the NAS which could influence the findings being more swayed to the four narrative themes. Therefore, further research is needed to underpin exactly how differentiations occur between offending and non-offending narratives, but this research has highlighted an opening in what is a key research area to further develop.

## **11.2 Integrative Narrative Model**

Youngs and Canter (2012) identified intimacy and potency distinctions within their four NAS roles. This is an adapted version of McAdams' (1993) themes of agency and communion which he argues are the polarising facets of narrative themes, with three components within this. The findings of this research support the intimacy and potency distinctions within the narrative accounts by Youngs and Canter (2012), which in turn gives support to the four narrative roles.

Intimacy and potency stem from agency and communion, but their meaning has been re-interpreted to help understand offending behaviour. Agency and communion have previously been revealed in the life stories of non-offenders (McAdams, 1993), and also in other distinctions too: dominance/submission and love/hate (Leary, 1957), control and openness/inclusion (Dancer & Woods, 2006; Schutz, 1992), and strivings for superiority and power and strivings for contact and intimacy (Herman, 1996). Therefore, it is not surprising these themes have been revealed especially because there are components of them analysed within the LAAF elicitation procedure. However, intimacy and potency extend further, revealing differences in relation to an individual's self-awareness, affective components of

the narratives, and cognitive interpretation. This deeper understanding of the underlying components of the four narratives is supported here and highlights the validity of the LAAF procedure across diverse samples.

These differences are presented in the way in which the individuals act, such as taking responsibility and the imposing of will. Their emotions (Russell, 1997), and Youngs and Canter's (2012) NAS findings, are all reflected here with the non-incarcerated sample, but presented in different non-deviant ways with the same underlying meaning. The narrative accounts here are for non-incarcerated persons, therefore, the events discussed within the narrative accounts are more varied, legitimate, and optimistic. Research has previously highlighted that life stories are derived and drawn from life experiences and significant events (McAdams, 1993). If criminality has not been experienced in a life trajectory, then it would be less likely to be relayed in the narrative, and if it did feature, would reveal underlying elements of that individual's self-identity.

The behaviours and events presented in an offender's script would be expected to be more negative and focused on different, more criminal events, as these are life experiences of offenders which has been supported by previous research (Maruna, 2001, 2004; Youngs et al., 2014). Given this, differences are inevitably going to be observed in the content of the narratives, but what is interestingly revealed through this study, is that the underlying behaviours, emotions, and personality constructs, although presented in different ways, are reflected.

Interestingly, although drawn from a non-incarcerated sample, two positive narratives and two negative narrative accounts were revealed in this research, which was aligned with the four narrative themes previously revealed through the use of the NAS (Canter & Youngs, 2009). These four themes revealed differences in the underpinning elements of the narratives which differentiated aspects of the individuals' self-identity. These differences reflected what drives and motivate the individual. Negative narrative accounts have been associated with incoherence and offending behaviour. The finding of negativity within the narrative accounts here aids some support to Maruna (2001, 2004) in negative accounts being more aligned with mentions of deviant behaviour, and how underpinning elements of confusion are aligned with incoherence and negativity (Fivush et al., 2007).



Therefore, this study also contributes to an understanding of how the negative narrative accounts of the NAS are not solely centred on the offending experience the offender adopts. These narratives are also representative of the whole-life narrative as they are also revealed in a non-offending sample. That, in turn, can assist in the comprehension of how criminal narratives can be derived from these negative life accounts. It also reveals a deviation in the strength of the negativity in the narrative accounts of the offenders in comparison to non-offenders. Which stresses the negativity in the accounts as being related to offenders (Maruna, 2001, 2004; Youngs et al., 2014)

### **11.3 Personality: An Integrative Framework**

Further aims of the present research were to interpret differences within the narrative themes identified, in comparison with demographic information and life outcomes. This was to examine whether the narrative themes were significantly associated with certain demographics, or whether they were perhaps a reflection of a general narrative theme that was not specific to circumstances, such as age or gender.

Little demographic differences between the four themes emerged except for gender. The female protagonists in this sample were more likely to be associated with the Hero and Victim narrative themes. This supports research with adult narratives which demonstrates that females were more likely to give communal and intimacy orientated narratives than males (McAdams et al., 2004, 2006), and Bischooping (1993) who found women were more likely to reminisce in their accounts given in relation to intimacy and relationships. The Hero was the most communal, intimacy-based narrative, and although associated with both male and female participants, adds support to other research (Fivush, 2003; McAdams, 1993) in that some narratives are universal in their nature.

The Victim, however, was a negative narrative account with negativity more associated with criminal narratives, more so of offenders which was a significant finding. This supports research into female offenders (Ciesla et al., 2019) in that females are more likely to adopt a Victim based narrative and highlights a difference in trajectory between the narratives. Despite this, there was a subset of female offenders who did have a Revenger style narrative, so this does highlight the need for further study in this area. In contrast, adolescent males were found to tell memories for entertainment, more so than adolescent females (McLean,

2005). This was reflected by the Revenger narrative role which was also found to be associated with male offenders. Agentic narratives were also more likely to be associated with male life trajectories which were fundamental in the role of the Professional (McAdams et al., 2004, 2006).

This does bring some dispute to McAdams' (1993, 1995) claim in that life stories and personalities were similar in their central themes, irrespective of the gender and lifestyle of the sample. And Fivush (2003), who argued that gender and identity were defined in the process of interacting with one another, therefore insinuating that narratives were a combination of the core elements, and not purely restricted between genders. However, there is a small sample size within this study across the four narrative themes, in particular the roles of the Revenger and Professional. Therefore, future research with a greater sample size could identify that this is just underrepresented in the sample it presents.

No other demographic differences emerged across the four narratives these finding that the themes were universally applicable across age and academic and professional achievements. Life outcomes were also not significantly associated with any narrative role, although the role of the Revenger scored lowest across the narrative themes in relation to more pessimistic life outcomes. This did reveal an underlying theme in the role of the Revenger which is an underlying weak self-identity and not optimistic for the future. This adds support to negativity in life trajectories being centred on more pessimistic life outcomes (Erikson, 1950, 1968; McAdams, 1993, 1996). Yet despite this, the narrative role of the Victim is centred on a theme of negativity and hopelessness, and there were few findings of negative outcomes with the narrative which highlights a key difference between the two narrative accounts. Despite the narrative role of the Victim being underpinned by a dominant role of hopelessness, it reveals that there is a hidden subset of psychological underpinnings in that narrative role which is somewhat optimistic for the future.

With the exception of the gender difference, which both contradicts and supports research into narratives, this study does add some support to the four narrative themes being universally applicable amongst demographic differences and future life outcomes. This finding is crucial in the understanding of life narrative accounts because it adds a contribution to individuals living by the same finite narrative themes which are not restrictive of certain demographic differences or future identify differences. This adds some validity to the life

narratives and understanding of the four narrative roles in being universal irrespective of demographic details.

#### **11.4 Personality Correlates**

A further aim of the present study was to identify if different personality traits related to the four different narrative themes in both offenders and non-offenders, to provide an integrative framework. McAdams (1995) posited that three levels of personality are fundamental to fully know a person. It was highlighted by McAdams and Pals (2005) that an integrative framework for understanding an individual's identity is lacking, which this thesis aimed to provide and contribute a novel finding to the study of human identity and criminality. Findings from the personality measures correlated well with the four narrative themes, supporting the underlying psychological underpinning of the LAAF variables.

In relation to the Big Five personality traits, few significant differences emerged. Nonetheless, there were interesting findings revealed which were reflective of the overarching themes that underpin the narrative roles. These findings were similarly replicated with the LOC, which despite no significant differences emerging, interesting results emerged.

Despite there being interesting findings, contrary to predictions, there were few significantly associated traits in the level one tier of personality which provides the outline of personality, and no significant associations in level two tier of personality which can provide an individual's motivations alongside the four narrative themes with the non-offenders. Similar findings were previously found by McAdams et al. (2004), and this finding reflects variations found in offending behaviour (Dennison et al., 2001; Marsa et al., 2004; Samuels et al., 2004).

Narrative accounts are dynamic. As such, static measures such as the BFI and LOC may not necessarily provide enough nuance to reflect this and how personality evolves over time (Doekhie & Van Ginneken, 2019; Sandberg, 2015). Such broad traits are not fully comparable to the fluidity of a detailed narrative, yet some interesting findings are still revealed in personality traits that directly link to the narrative themes.

Further research with the offenders in the sample revealed further differences in personality traits alongside the personality measures. Such findings were comparable with the non-offenders and aligned with those variations found in offending behaviour (Dennison et al.,

2001; Marsa et al., 2004; Samuels et al., 2004), but were on the higher end of the continuum scale with the BFI. This again, as found with the narrative roles of offenders, highlights how the narrative accounts of the offenders are slightly more dominant in themes than the non-offenders. A hidden level of inner conflict was also revealed supporting research by Youngs et al. (2014).

Literature that addresses conflict within narratives draws on Canter, Youngs and Carthy (2014), who found conflict in the narratives of offenders, and Raggat and Weatherly (2015) who asserted that there was an element of conflict within certain narrative accounts. This conflict is representative of the tone of the narrative not being reflective in the events described, supporting that there is the presence of unresolved dissonance within a non-incarcerated individual's narratives as this was similarly revealed here.

These findings are significant in the area of narrative psychology and criminality as it provides a deeper understanding of the construction of certain narrative accounts and how they differ which can result in turning to deviant activities. This basis will allow further study into the conflict identified to uncover why this occurs and how it leads to personality and self-identity.

Research has highlighted the need for an integrative framework for narrative themes, as asserted by McAdams and Pals (2005). The combination of traits and personal concerns in this thesis, alongside a narrative approach, has proved the best way to know a person (McAdams, 1995). McAdams et al. (2004) studied dispositional traits and life narrative, in relation to their agentic and communal aspects, with two levels of personality that had not been previously empirically linked. However, the results were inconclusive, revealing some aspects of personality and life stories were related in predictable ways, and others were not - highlighting the need for further research in this area, and with a focus outside of just communal and agentic values. This study provides such research and expands on this previous research, incorporating a more diverse narrative theme with elements of personality which is more predictable.

Despite this, personality is seen as a continuum of five aspects of personality. This study lacked the different facets of the BFI, instead of looking at the five traits separately. Incorporating all traits together alongside the narrative themes which together could provide a deeper understanding of how facets of BFI could link to narratives and be empirically linked.

The sample size in this study is relatively small in comparison to the four narrative themes, future research with a bigger sample size could be more fruitful and reveal significant differences in line with the interesting themes that emerged.

The present research addresses the research gap in an integrative model and produces a novel way of providing a deeper insight into personality, and the findings add some support to McAdams (1995) that there is some relation between the underlying narrative themes and the components of the LAAF. Whilst supporting these, this also gives other avenues to explore and provides a deeper insight into the differences in narratives. This also gives support to the four narrative roles and the LAAF as being a key tool for eliciting strong psychological narratives, underpinned by personality correlates.

There is a lack of an integrative framework for narrative themes within the general population. The NAS has proved fruitful in understanding criminal behaviour, however, it has not yet been beneficial in understanding non-offenders and the relationship between the two. Aligned and supported by personality traits, this study has filled that void whilst providing further personality measures to deepen the understanding.

### **11.5 Criminality**

One of the primary aims of this research was to establish non-offender narratives, to draw a comparison with the narrative roles of offenders to establish how they differed. It aimed to see if criminality was embedded within the self, and the findings of this study contributed to the knowledge within this area. Several participants had confessed to committing offences, and therefore an analysis between those who had, and those who had not, revealed noteworthy differences and associations. Interestingly, the themes of the Victim and Revenger are the ones that are couched in a more negative theme within this study and did reveal criminal thinking associated with them. However, it is important to note that the following discussion is a descriptive comparison between the offenders' and non-offenders' results that were identified and that additional inferential statistical analyses are needed to explore these associations further.

A comparison of the narratives of the offenders and non-offenders in this study revealed similarly structured narratives to previous research earlier explained using the NAS, providing support to the model of narrative differentiation. The narratives of the offenders

however were more driven and hostile and on the more extreme scale of the narrative. They were a combination of Youngs and Canter (2015) and the non-offender narratives. The personality measures associated with the offender narrative roles also supported research into BFI and offending (Dennison et al., 2001; Marsa et al., 2004; Samuels et al., 2004). Given that the LAAF enabled people to recount their life events, it could be that those within the study who had committed an offence and had a more significant, eventful life, than those who had not. Or, this finding could be represented of the offenders constructing their accounts differently to the non-offending population, aiding support to Canter (1994) in offenders constructing the same narratives as non-offenders but wrongly which leads to some distortion in the narrative.

The findings highlighted that there was a subset of criminal narratives within this sample, which supported the Youngs et al. (2014) distinction of how the narratives of offenders differed by four features, in comparison to a non-offending sample. This revealed that the narratives of those who had committed an offence were dominated by criminality, and inherent negative relations with others, being a theme of negativity and was typically problematic. That also highlighted that there was, as Canter (1994) stated, a distorted narrative present in their life trajectories that was part of a fuller, unfolding story, yet the underpinning themes and psychological constructs were somewhat different and more contaminated by nature, as found by Maruna (2001).

The comparisons revealed that films described by both offending samples were dominated by their involvement in crime and criminality, with the repeated mention of doing crime. Although the emphasis on criminality was likely to be a product of the prison context, as argued by Presser (2009), this study showed that the predominance of crime and that criminality was embedded within their life stories and was not just a feature of the social situation in which the study was conducted.

The negative undertone prevalent within these narrative themes was a concept reinforced by Maruna (2001), who found offenders made sense of their lives as a series of blocked opportunities, seeing life as a bleak and hostile experience, with a sense of hopelessness. Notably, in contrast with the offender narrative themes identified, the non-offenders' accounts were distinct in their life stories, being typically positive, with an optimistic nature and events. This provided a contribution that enabled a deeper understanding into how offenders' narratives can be a distillation and a distortion of full life narratives, giving

support to previous literature on offender narratives that draw on the negativity embedded with them (Maruna, 2001, 2004; Youngs et al., 2014).

Nonetheless, these do add support to the integrative model of personality with certain personality traits more likely to be associated with certain narrative roles in both offenders and non-offenders. It is important to note that due to studies finding differences between offenders' and non-offenders' personality traits, this could account for differences observed. These studies also revealed higher levels of certain personality traits with different offence types, predominantly violent/sexual offences, and acquisitive crime. There is an underlying intimacy element of the narratives, and their focus is on more agentic and communal goals, which could explain some of the differences revealed here.

Despite the interesting findings, there are some limitations to this study. Firstly, the sample size is relatively small and not comparable to the non-offending sample. When comparing offenders and offenders research has found that there are comparable differences (Maruna, 2001, 2004; Youngs et al., 2014), and in comparison of narrative themes with gender (Ciesla et al., 2019). Despite this, the overarching theme and main components of the narrative themes are the same which does add support to the integrative model of differentiation with the non-incarcerated sample. It can also not be proven through this study that the offenders have committed an offence. Given that committing an offence was self-description, there could be an element of falsification by participants in disclosing that had committed an offence and also in not disclosing committing an offence.

This study also contributes by highlighting how the psychological dispositions in relation to criminal thinking styles were uncovered by the LAAF procedure, revealing how elements of crime-supporting cognitive patterns were embedded within the narratives, and the way in which individuals constructed their self-identity, as revealed by the stories they told. A three-factor approach by McAdams and Manczak (2015) considered how the internal characteristics that reside within an individual related to their overall life story which this study supports.

This was done in such a way that these dispositional traits, embedded within an individual, revealed autobiographical accounts which identified how they made sense of their lives and key aspects of their individual self-identities. The underlying elements of crime-related thinking identified within the sample, do not necessarily mean that the criminality was acted

on, just that there was a psychological disposition to this and should this criminality have been acted on, the styles that would have underpinned that. Despite such findings, further research needs to be done on this area, to fully decipher how those narrative accounts differ.

### **11.6 Summary of Findings**

In summary, this research provided a novel approach to understanding the life stories of a sample of the general population, typically non-offending, using a method that has previously been used on non-offenders. It drew on a finite set of narrative roles, identified and adopted in many offences within criminal action (e.g., Canter & Youngs, 2009), to provide an understanding of offenders' behaviour. Yet, there had been no comprehension or model available to understand how these narrative themes were connected to a full life narrative which this study provided.

The uncovering of these four narrative themes in both offenders and non-offenders, therefore, has provided a deeper insight into the link between the life narratives of offenders and non-offenders and how they possess the same underpinning psychological elements, a significant contribution. Differences did emerge between offenders and non-offenders in the dominance and pursuit of goals, or the core themes of tragedy within offenders' narratives. This could reveal how those individuals narrative accounts have been distorted, probably prior to adulthood (as most narratives are said to be formed then), and these distorted narratives have resulted in their flawed lives, as Canter (1994) posited.

Taking it a step deeper, to see what underpins these narratives, personality correlates of the narrative themes were analysed. Again, this was an innovative approach to deepen the understanding of what underpins the life stories of the offenders and provide a fuller picture.

As McAdam's (1995) proposed, there are three levels to personality and awareness of these three levels of knowing a person gives one the fullest picture one can perceive. Differences within the three levels were identified, and that corroborated the core underpinning themes of the narratives providing greater knowledge and understanding of the narrative themes and the personality that underpins them and can enable greater insight into how these could be distorted. And also enhances knowledge and understanding of the underlying personality traits of offenders and non-offenders.



Due to some offenders confessing to committing an offence, further study focused on their narratives and how they were different. Key differences emerged in the narratives in relation to offending behaviour and underlying elements of criminal thinking styles in the narratives of non-offenders. These findings presented a key insight into how different themes were more likely to possess criminality enabling an understanding of how criminality can be embedded within the self and opening up a door into how a distortion of these narratives occurs.

### **11.7 Theoretical Implications**

The present thesis provides an advance into the study of narratives and the themes individuals adopt. It also advances the use of the NAS (Youngs & Canter, 2012), to delve further into how the roles offenders adopt in criminal behaviour are a reflection of their self-narrative, which demonstrates complementary findings of the NAS in more readily understanding criminality.

Previous research has primarily focused on the narratives that offenders hold, and how they differ in relation to each other (Canter & Youngs, 2009; Maruna, 2001, 2004; Presser, 2009). It has proved fruitful in understanding the themes individuals adopt, and how their life stories differ. The findings of the present research have resulted in a more comprehensive technique for understanding how these themes and behaviours are ingrained in an individual's life stories, not just centring on the offence or desistance from crime.

The findings here demonstrate that key research in differentiating offending behaviour can be interpreted in a non-offender's life story. It has assisted in the understanding of how criminality is motivated in an individual, through it being embedded within the life story.

Dominant narrative roles have established psychological consistency over time, being present in all individuals. This thesis has provided a theoretical framework enabling an understanding of how to differentiate the life narratives of non-offenders using specific themes to do that, and it has shown how the offending action can be embedded within the life stories people use to give their lives a sense of purpose.

The LAAF procedure has also provided a new way of uncovering life narratives, a technique that has previously been used solely on offenders, demonstrating how individuals use a story-like approach to provide insight into their lives which can be drawn on to reveal implicit and

explicit aspects of the self. Yet this also adopts personality measures, which move beyond the trait-based approach and incorporate the narrative approach provided that fully integrative model of understanding self-identity.

These are both key dimensions in understanding human behaviour and have produced an innovative model for understanding the self. Having recognised the absence of a framework that fully understood the narrative themes individuals lived by, and enabling a comparison to offenders, this thesis has provided a theoretical approach (presented in chapter 5) with a framework for differentiating life narratives. The impact of this on future theoretical work opens doors for future research to fully understand the pivotal moment in the life narrative which changes the non-offender to the offender, previous research has highlighted flaws in the narrative accounts in relation to the dynamic nature (Kirkwood, 2016; Maruna & Liem, 2020). Yet this study directly impacts the understanding of narratives of offenders in highlighting that they do live by the same narratives and that something in their life path, alongside other actions, drove them to their illegitimate behaviours.

### **11.8 Methodological Contributions**

Providing a narrative approach for exploring the themes adopted by non-offenders that could be interlinked with offending narratives, was a key contribution of the use of the LAAF Procedure. Previous uses of the LAAF procedure had been on offending samples (Canter & Youngs, 2015; Youngs et al., 2014), but this research highlighted the significance of the LAAF as a tool for eliciting narratives in a semi-structured content in a non-offending sample with it being universally applicable whilst revealing the same four narrative themes that have been previously revealed.

Whilst allowing individuals to provide a detailed narrative account, it adhered to a structure that enabled accounts to be comparatively analysed. Once coded, the LAAF also revealed thematic structures, demonstrating its robustness and its fruitfulness despite being applied to a sample that it was not necessarily intended for.

The present study is the first to use the LAAF approach on a non-incarcerated sample to deconstruct their narratives, and this tool has demonstrated that it has the ability to do so. As well as this being the first application with a non-offending sample, the LAAF was also combined with other personality measures and demographic information. That approach was

innovative, being the first use of these measurements combined to understand the personality and the life stories lived by individuals. The LOC, PICTS and BFI have shown their fruitfulness alone (e.g., Dennison et al., 2001; Walters, 1990), but this combined method was the first to delve deeper into non-offenders' accounts and personalities, providing an innovative framework in which the findings have been supported, thereby demonstrating its validity.

### **11.9 Practical Contributions**

Knowing the shape of a non-offender's self-narrative, and of an offender's self-narrative, allows an understanding into how the offenders' narrative account differs and may have been distorted. The revelation of such here means that this study has practical contributions.

Narrative accounts are constructed by individuals to make sense and purpose of their lives. Every individual constructs them differently, yet similarities have been identified with the four different themes. Understanding the theme an individual adopts can assist in the intervention and rehabilitation of an individual, particularly in relation to offending and preventing re-offending. The ability here to utilise the core components of the LAAF and the underlying themes present within the narrative to work with incarcerated offenders. For example, in a group faced setting within the therapeutic interventions, a simplified questionnaire could be drawn. Understanding the underlying narrative the individual holds could then aid in reforming the individual through looking at the deviant narratives and the legitimate narratives and understanding the differences. This then will aid in understanding and addressing the psychological cause of the offending behaviour but also endeavour to reduce the reoffending through the construction of a new, legitimate self-narrative rather than the illegitimate.

This also has practical contributions with young offenders. The NAS has been revealed in young offenders (Ioannou et al., 2018), and given that narrative identity is usually shaped by adulthood, this provides a key intervention period for desisting young offenders from crime. Youth offending teams in England work with young offenders to reduce recidivism and direct them into positive activities. Youth offending teams complete individual assessments on the young people with whom they work, incorporating simplified life narratives within the assessment could help to bridge that gap in knowledge early enough to help reform the young

person. As such, understanding their life narrative helps to understand their motivations and what is important to them and what drives them.

As this research identified, criminality is ingrained within the life story, and offenders distort a non-offenders narrative account. Therefore, being able to understand and interpret how this distortion has happened and how it embeds within the overriding narrative theme, will enable a preventative technique to be adopted based on the individual's personality.

Storylines have been shown by Maruna (2001) as a way in which people desist from offending, through the reconstruction of a coherent and positive self-narrative. This study has shown that two of the four narrative themes have negative narrative accounts. Therefore, an understanding of this prior to the rehabilitation process would enable a clearer picture of the individual, and how best to shape their treatment.

Narrative approaches to therapy are a significant approach. Utilising an understanding of individuals, by the narrative themes identified here, alongside the different personality measures which focus specifically on key elements within their self-identity, enables a more thorough approach to their rehabilitation or management.

This also has relevance for police investigations. Having a better understanding of how offending behaviour stems from a normal narrative account can help them to narrow down lines of enquiry and conduct a better interview of suspects. That could be achieved if they were to understand the different narrative life stories that individuals may use and how these behaviours manifest through crimes. Awareness of the NAS themes developed by Canter and Youngs (2009), alongside their life narratives, could help them to understand the person being interviewed better and the reasoning for their criminality.

## **11.10 Limitations and Future Directions**

The study has several limitations which could be amended in future research and implications that have arisen which could be built upon in future research.

### **11.10.1 Sampling Issues**

Overall, 71 participants took part in the study. When broken down into offenders and non-offenders, the numbers were 51 and 20 respectively. This means that the results obtained,

whilst significant, could limit the generalisability. As such, although these narrative themes are deemed universally applicable from this research, a greater sample size may reveal different results. There is also the limitation of sampling bias, in which the sample may not be representative of the wider general population which is what this study set out to achieve.

The small and unequal sizes of the narrative groups could also have impacted the study results with some narrative themes being low in frequency in comparison with other narratives. Despite this, the effect of the small sizes of some narrative themes and disparity of sizes across the four narratives in both offenders and non-offenders was somewhat counteracted by the statistical analysis methods used.

The participant divide between males and females was also uneven in both the offending and non-offending samples. The non-offending sample was female-dominated and this gender disparity could reflect differences in the narrative themes (Ciesla et al., 2019; McAdams, 1993). In contrast, the offending sample was male-dominated which again, could impact the findings as male narratives have been revealed to have differences in comparison with female narratives (Fivush et al., 2000; Fivush & Buckner, 2000, 2003; McAdams et al., 2004, 2006).

The diversity of the sample was also predominantly Caucasian and not fully representative of the generalised public. Including a more diverse participant sample may reveal significant differences as culture has been found to impact narratives revealing different storylines and self-identity. The limitations above need to be addressed in any future LAAF studies to ensure the reliability of findings.

### **11.10.2 Methodology**

Prior to being involved in the study, participants were informed the study would be exploring narratives of non-offenders and that these findings would be compared to offender narratives. Although a prompt sheet was used in asking participants to describe their life as a film, having the knowledge that the study was a comparison of offending behaviour could have influenced the narrative accounts given. This then brings doubt to whether the LAAF procedure elicited individuals' life narratives or the individuals understanding of the overarching theme of the study influenced the narrative accounts in their discussions around or lack of mention of crime and criminality. This has been previously revealed as a criticism of narrative research with the causality of narratives (Maruna & Liem, 2020).

Despite the doubts, content and thematic analysis of the narrative accounts revealed rich and psychologically intricate life trajectories with strong storyline features and underlying components with rich ideas and events which were not centred on criminal activity and did provide a rich picture of the participants' life narrative. This supports the use of the LAAF with its coding methodology to elicit psychotically complex and structured narrative accounts, with the underlying constructs found central to narrative psychology that are comparable to other narrative methodology. The central themes that underpinned the narratives revealed in the non-incarcerated sample also demonstrate its fruitfulness as a technique in the wider research of narrative psychology. Variations in the narrative accounts were revealed across the narratives of offenders and non-offenders but this was to be expected due to the different life experiences faced. However, the underlying components of the narratives remained the same and this was the aim of the present research.

The LAAF is a relatively new tool for eliciting life narratives and has proved fruitful in studies of offending behaviour (Canter & Youngs, 2015). Despite this, limitations have been raised in that combining the tool with other narrative methodology reduces the effect criticism (Kang et al., 2017), and it was derived for an offending sample. Considering this research was centred on a non-incarcerated sample and aimed at non-offenders, there were certain components of the LAAF that failed to account for elements of the life narratives of a non-incarcerated sample.

The LAAF focuses on specific broad genres that are drawn from Frye (1957), which do not account for all film genres currently used today. One of the overarching film depictions used by the sample were films of a motivational nature in which the protagonists overcome adversity within the life narratives which does reveal a key psychological component to the narratives of a non-incarcerated sample, and the world today is more inclusive of motivational behaviours. Participants also used film depictions of adventure and sporting activities, which again could reveal underpinning elements of the self that the LAAF fails to include. Future research including a wider variation in film genres in the content analysis could provide a richer narrative understanding of a non-incarcerated sample.

Another limitation of the LAAF was the inclusion of justifications and neutralisations. Bandura (1999, 2002) distinguished three sets of moral disengagement practices. The initial set of moral disengagement practices relates to the inhumane behaviour itself being reconstructed and redefined to justify such acts which are absent from the LAAF coding

framework. The LAAF incorporates the other two sets of practices that relate to the agency of action in the offence and how the individual views the victim. Given that the LAAF was designed for offending action, the latter two in offence models of moral disengagement are more applicable as the LAAF procedure itself addresses the reconstruction of events to understand the internal narrative the individual holds. Yet emitting them from the LAAF does draw limitations to the content framework.

Similarly, given that justifications and neutralisations are derived from rationalisations of offending behaviour or controversial subject matters which initiate the need for a justification (Graça et al., 2015), and although there was some evidence of these within the life trajectories of the non-incarcerated sample, they failed to account for certain aspects of the narratives as the participants here were not necessarily rationalising or justifying inhumane behaviours or justifying things at all. There should also be a wider mention of events discussed that are not central to offending behaviour within the content analysis, which will enhance the understanding of what underpins the narratives of a non-incarcerated sample whose life narrative has not centred on offending behaviour.

The inclusion of McAdams' (1993) imagoes also revealed a high number of imagoes that were not mentioned within the narratives. The content dictionary includes 17 imagoes in which McAdams (1993) has asserted that individuals move through in life in a dynamic nature. Given that individuals in one life narrative can describe surviving bad experiences in their early life (survivor), pursuing academic and career success in the youth and early adulthood (maker/arbitrator), and starting a family becoming a 'caregiver' in later life, features three vastly different roles which are all reflective of different self-identity but do not personify the individual as they view themselves at the time of the narrative account. A more inclusive list within the content dictionary or a specified overarching role would be more sufficient.

Another limitation of the LAAF is the life trajectories which were fictional and dramatized. Some individuals discussed narrative accounts which featured hypothetical scenarios that were far from revealing important aspects of their lives. This raises the question of how these fictional, dramatized accounts, relate to underlying aspects of self-identity. Research has previously revealed that males are more likely to provide fictional accounts than females (Fivush et al., 2000; Fivush & Buckner, 2000, 2003; McAdams et al., 2004, 2006), and that an individual's imagination is representative of the individual's self-identity (Sarbin, 1986).

Therefore, it is proposed here that these fictional accounts provide underlying psychological context and meaning that reveal hidden aspects of the respondents. Previous research (Youngs et al., 2014) has revealed underlying unresolved dissonance in the life narratives of offenders, therefore the LAAF has elicited underlying concealed identity previously. Future research should look at what differentiates the fictional accounts from the more non-fictional life narratives.

Finally, the LAAF content dictionary was derived by Canter and Youngs (2015) for use with offenders. Given that the same content dictionary was used here does pose the question of whether this research would inevitably find similar themes due to the similarities or that the researcher is looking for the four themes therefore finds them. However, SSA looks at the co-occurrence of the variables therefore despite the same variables being used the co-occurrence of these variables, as such the way in which they are presented in the plot, could be different which would, in turn, reveal different themes. Therefore the findings of similar overarching themes within this study supports the model. Additionally, previous research using the same NAS themes has sometimes only revealed two of the three narrative themes, not four (Canter & Youngs, 2009; Ciesla et al., 2019; Ioannou et al., 2018), meaning that there was a possibility of not all four themes being revealed highlighting that there must be some prevalence here with the use of the LAAF and such themes draw on those that have been found to be central to narrative research (McAdams, 1993, 1995). To test such a phenomenon, future research could devise a new content dictionary drawing on different elements to see if similar themes emerge.

Another limitation of the content dictionary is that some variables represent the same process or underlying behaviour such as 'Victim', 'Victimisation' and 'Assuming the role of Victim', which could inflate the four narrative scores and duplicate variables of the same meaning. Future research could condense similar themes and variables within the content analysis to avoid this.

### **11.10.3 Interview Process**

The interviews and questionnaires were conducted by four different researchers which were positive in that they enabled a richer data set, yet does draw criticisms due to the possibility of differences in the manner of the interviewers during the data collection process potentially having an impact on the participants' responses. Different researchers could have been more



engaging with participants influencing their responses in the interview process which has been previously revealed as a criticism of narrative research (Maruna & Liem, 2020). In defence of this limitation, all researchers used the same LAAF manual and protocol for the interview processes to neutralise any drastic variation in extraneous effects.

The current study was also both qualitative and quantitative research, and thus it bears the limitations of both approaches. Qualitative interviews bring issues in such some respondents do not freely engage information which can bring doubt to the study. A consistent prompt sheet was provided to try and counteract this issue but most respondents did engage well with the interview process and they were informed of there being an interview beforehand to try and limit this. It is also important to note that sometimes a low complexity narrative is indicative of underlying constructs of personality so sometimes a factual basic account could be fruitful.

The coding process of the interviews is also influenced by the researcher's understanding of the psychological constructs and elements within the content dictionary and is limited in the lack of ability to verify results objectively through a quantitative means. To try and reduce this, all transcribed interviews were blind coded and there was no identifiable information within the narrative accounts that would skew the analysis or lead the researchers' decision. The data was also inter-rated by a fellow researcher who had knowledge of the content dictionary to ensure consistency and reliability. Should there have been significant disagreements in variables between researchers, a conversation was held to understand the individual's perception of the variable.

#### **11.10.4 Self Report Studies**

The study features several self-report questionnaires which were relied on to accurately understand the personality traits and criminal thinking styles across the four narrative themes and therefore brings potential weaknesses associated with such approaches. Such limitations of the self-report measures are with social desirability, with participants answering more social acceptably rather than truthful. Given that the LAAF was used alongside such personality measures, this limitation could potentially have been counterbalanced with the LAAF eliciting the inner narratives. However, future research should use further supportive measures using substantiated personality scales to compare with narrative material to observe if the same findings emerge.

Some questions could have been confusing to participants, especially those in the PICTS. Therefore, researchers' ability to explain to an individual could have biased the result through a misconstrued meaning. Memory deficits could have hindered the results alongside bias responses. To counteract the limitations, as previously mentioned, the LAAF balanced the findings through the elicitation of inner narratives which are central to the understanding of an individual. The personality measured supported the findings to enhance the themes.

The findings of the study could have also been limited by ordering effects through the self-report measures. Ordering effects can occur within any research in which the results are influenced by the ordering of tasks, in this circumstance, the order of the questionnaires and LAAF elicitation procedure. The participants may have experienced fatigue or boredom with the latter questionnaires and could have been influenced in latter questionnaires by the LAAF procedure which impacted the results. The questionnaires were different in their nature so this could have reduced potential ordering effects, however, future studies should consider ordering effects by varying the order of the questionnaires and LAAF for some participants to control any order effects implicating the research or increasing the time between each condition.

#### **11.10.5 Future Directions**

The present study highlights an innovative technique for uncovering narrative themes within the life stories of offenders. Although this is the first application of the technique on a non-offending sample, it reveals significant potential in understanding how individuals provide their lives with a sense of purpose and how the life narratives of offenders are embedded within these life narratives.

The study here did compare the narrative themes of offenders and non-offenders, but the samples were not comparable in size. Future research looking at a more diverse sample and encompassing some of the highlighted criticisms of the LAAF approach and coding framework would be more valuable in unveiling further differences across the two samples of offenders and non-offenders enhancing these findings. A similar study on a greater scale counteracting the limitations of this approach could further strengthen the findings here and reveal more significant differences.

As Canter (1994) posits that offender narratives are ill-formed, and Habermas and Bluck (2000) finding that narratives are not formed until adulthood, further analysis with young

people and young offenders to allow a deeper insight into the construction of narratives to help identify if the four narrative themes are revealed in an adolescent sample and the turning point in which deviant narratives form.

Overall, this research has highlighted a clear distinction in narrative themes adopted by members of the general population through the four narrative roles which have previously only been revealed in offending action (Canter & Youngs, 2009, 2012). Despite some differences emerging and differences observed due to the lack of criminality involved. And further corroborated these themes with individuals who have purported to have committed an offence previously. The underpinning elements of the role have been further supported through the use of personality measures aiding in neutralising a limitation of narrative research (Maruna & Liem, 2020), and identifying a more integrative model of differentiation (McAdams & Pals, 2006). This therefore provides a model for understanding and interpreting individuals' self-stories which provides an explanation into their personality, and how crime may be embedded. That provides a powerful source of information for future research.

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Appendix 1  
**THE LIFE AS A FILM (LAAF) TECHNIQUE - EXTENDED  
VERSION**

**LIFE NARRATIVE INTERVIEW**

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT**

I want you to tell me about a significant event in your life that you can remember very clearly. It can be anything at all. Tell me in as much detail as you can what happened.

- (Tell me more, what happened)
- Tell me why it was significant
- Tell me what impact it had on your life

**LIFE IN GENERAL: FILM NARRATIVE**

**THE LIFE AS A FILM (LAAF) TECHNIQUE (CANTER & YOUNGS 2013)**

If your life were to be made into a film, what type of film would it be?

What would happen?

Who would the main characters be?

What would the main events that might happen in the film?

How do you think it might end?

**The Main Scene of the Film**

What happens in the most exciting scene in the film?

Where is it?

What is going on?

Who else is there? What are they doing?

How are you acting?

How do you feel?

## **How the Film opens**

When does the film start?

What is going on?

What are you like then?

*Now tell us in as much detail as you can what happens between this Opening scene and the Main Scene*

## **You in the film**

What sort of person are you?

Who do you have good feelings about and why?

Who do you have bad feelings about and why?

What do other people think about you?

What mistakes do you make?

How do you change during the film?

## Appendix 2

### LIFE NARRATIVE QUESTIONNAIRES

Here are some words that people sometimes use to describe themselves. Please indicate the extent to which each of the following words describes you.

	Not at all	A little	Some	A lot	Very Much
1. Hero	1	2	3	4	5
2. Comic	1	2	3	4	5
3. Tragic	1	2	3	4	5
4. Worthless	1	2	3	4	5
5. Courageous	1	2	3	4	5
6. Just a clown	1	2	3	4	5
7. Unfortunate	1	2	3	4	5
8. Insignificant	1	2	3	4	5

Here are some statements that people sometimes use to describe life. Please indicate the extent to which each of those statements describes you.

	Not at all	A little	Some	A lot	Very much
1. Life is meaningless	1	2	3	4	5
2. Things usually turn out for the best	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am fated to fail miserably	1	2	3	4	5
4. If I try hard enough I will be successful	1	2	3	4	5
5. There is not much point to life	1	2	3	4	5
6. Overall I am an optimist about things	1	2	3	4	5
7. I can be a winner if I want to be	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel there is no hope for me.	1	2	3	4	5

Below are some statements that people sometimes use to describe their feelings or actions. Please indicate the extent to which each of the statements describes how you feel.

	Not at all	Just a little	Some	A lot	Very Much
1. I do try but things always seem to mess up in my life	1	2	3	4	5
2. It is important in my life to have a good time	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am trying to get my own back for things that have happened	1	2	3	4	5

4. In my life I've managed to do things others thought I could not do	1	2	3	4	5
5. In my life more bad things have happened to me than most others	1	2	3	4	5
6. Life is hard but I'm a winner, I get what I need out of life	1	2	3	4	5
7. I suffer a lot but I carry on	1	2	3	4	5
8. It is important in my life to have lots of different experiences	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have done wrong things in the past but I am decent underneath, it will all work out well	1	2	3	4	5
10. I tend to get myself noticed	1	2	3	4	5
11. I am just trying to make the best of myself	1	2	3	4	5

### Appendix 3

## THE BIG FIVE INVENTORY (BFI)

Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. For example, do you agree that you are someone who *likes to spend time with others*? Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which **you agree or disagree with that statement.**

**I am someone who...**

	<b>1 Disagree Strongly</b>	<b>2 Disagree A Little</b>	<b>3 Neither Agree Nor Disagree</b>	<b>4 Agree A Little</b>	<b>5 Agree Strongly</b>
1. Is talkative					
2. Tends to find fault with others					
3. Does a thorough job					
4. Is depressed, blue					
5. Is original, comes up with new ideas					
6. Is reserved					
7. Is helpful and unselfish with others					
8. Can be somewhat careless					
9. Is relaxed, handles stress well.					
10. Is curious about many different things					
11. Is full of energy					
12. Starts quarrels with others					
13. Is a reliable worker					
14. Can be tense					
15. Is ingenious, a deep thinker					
16. Generates a lot of enthusiasm					
17. Has a forgiving nature					
18. Tends to be disorganized					
19. Worries a lot					
20. Has an active imagination					
21. Tends to be quiet					
22. Is generally trusting					

23. Tends to be lazy					
24. Is emotionally stable, not easily upset					
25. Is inventive					
26. Has an assertive personality					
27. Can be cold and aloof					
28. Perseveres until the task is finished					
29. Can be moody					
30. Values artistic, aesthetic experiences					
31. Is sometimes shy, inhibited					
32. Is considerate and kind to almost everyone					
33. Does things efficiently					
34. Remains calm in tense situations					
35. Prefers work that is routine					
36. Is outgoing, sociable					
37. Is sometimes rude to others					
38. Makes plans and follows through with them					
39. Gets nervous easily					
40. Likes to reflect, play with ideas					
41. Has few artistic interests					
42. Likes to cooperate with others					
43. Is easily distracted					
44. Is sophisticated in art, music, or literature					

Appendix 4  
**PSYCHOLOGICAL INVENTORY OF CRIMINAL  
 THINKING STYLES (PICTS)**  
 LAYPERSON EDITION (Version 4.0) Walters (2001)

**Directions:** The following items, if answered honestly, are designed to help you better understand your thinking and behaviour. Please take the time to complete each of the 80 items on this inventory using the four-point scale defined below:

- 4= strongly agree (**SA**)
- 3= agree (**A**)
- 2= uncertain (**U**)
- 1= disagree (**D**)

		<u><b>SA</b></u>	<u><b>A</b></u>	<u><b>U</b></u>	<u><b>D</b></u>
1	I will allow nothing to get in the way of me getting what I want...	4	3	2	1
2	I find myself blaming society and external circumstances for the problems I have had in life...	4	3	2	1
3	Change can be scary...	4	3	2	1
4	Even though I may start out with the best of intentions I have trouble remaining focused and staying "on track"...	4	3	2	1
5	There is nothing I can't do if I try hard enough...	4	3	2	1
6	When pressured by life's problems I have said "the hell with it" and followed this up by doing whatever I want to do...	4	3	2	1
7	It's unsettling not knowing what the future holds	4	3	2	1
8	I find myself blaming people who are hurt when I behave badly by saying things like "they deserved what they got" or "they should have known better"...	4	3	2	1
9	One of the first things I consider in sizing up another person is whether they look strong or weak...	4	3	2	1
10	I occasionally think of things too horrible to talk about...	4	3	2	1
11	I am afraid of losing my mind...	4	3	2	1



		<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>D</u>
12	The way I look at it, I've paid my dues in life just like anyone else, and am therefore justified in taking what I want ...	4	3	2	1
13	The more I get away with in life, the more I think there's no way I will ever be caught...	4	3	2	1
14	I believe that breaking the law is no big deal as long as you don't physically hurt someone...	4	3	2	1
15	I would not hesitate to get money in any way (legally or illegally) if my friends or family needed help...	4	3	2	1
16	I am uncritical of my thoughts and ideas to the point that I ignore the problems and difficulties associated with these plans until it is too late...	4	3	2	1
17	It is unfair that bank presidents, lawyers, and politicians get away with all sorts of illegal and unethical behaviour every day and yet I could still be arrested for a much smaller crime...	4	3	2	1
18	I find myself arguing with others over relatively trivial matters...	4	3	2	1
19	I can honestly say that I think of everyone's welfare before engaging in potentially risky behaviour...	4	3	2	1
20	When frustrated I find myself saying "screw it" and then engaging in some irresponsible or irrational act...	4	3	2	1
21	New challenges and situations make me nervous...	4	3	2	1
22	If I was ever caught committing a crime, there's no way I'd be convicted or sent to prison...	4	3	2	1
23	I find myself taking shortcuts, even if I know these shortcuts will interfere with my ability to achieve certain long-term goals...	4	3	2	1
24	When not in control of a situation I feel weak and helpless and experience a desire to exert power over others...	4	3	2	1
25	Despite any bad things I may have done, deep down I am basically a good person...	4	3	2	1
26	I will frequently start an activity, project, or job but then never finish it...	4	3	2	1

		<b><u>SA</u></b>	<b><u>A</u></b>	<b><u>U</u></b>	<b><u>D</u></b>
27	I regularly hear voices and see visions, which others do not hear or see...	4	3	2	1
28	When it's all said and done, society owes me...	4	3	2	1
29	I have said to myself more than once that if I didn't have to worry about anyone "snitching" on me I would be able to do what I want without getting caught...	4	3	2	1
30	I tend to let things go which should probably be attended to, based on my belief that they will work themselves out...	4	3	2	1
31	I have used alcohol or drugs to eliminate fear or apprehension before doing something risky...	4	3	2	1
32	I have made mistakes in life...	4	3	2	1
33	I sometimes think that I would be willing to do anything, even something illegal, in order to live the life I have coming...	4	3	2	1
34	I like to be on centre stage in my relationships and conversations with others, controlling things as much as possible...	4	3	2	1
35	When questioned about my motives for making poor choices, I have justified my behaviour by pointing out how hard my life has been...	4	3	2	1
36	I have trouble following through on good initial intentions...	4	3	2	1
37	I find myself expressing tender feelings toward animals or little children in order to make myself feel better after engaging in irresponsible behaviour...	4	3	2	1
38	There have been times in my life when I felt I was above the law	4	3	2	1
39	It seems that I have trouble concentrating on the simplest of tasks	4	3	2	1
40	I tend to act impulsively under stress	4	3	2	1
41	I should not be made to appear worthless in front of friends and family when it is so easy to take from others ...	4	3	2	1
42	I have often not tried something out of fear that I might fail...	4	3	2	1

		<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>D</u>
43	I tend to put off until tomorrow what should have been done today...	4	3	2	1
44	Although I have always realized that I might get caught for doing something, I would tell myself that there was "no way they would catch me this time"...	4	3	2	1
45	I could justify doing illegal activities such as selling drugs, burglarizing homes, or robbing banks by telling myself that if I didn't do it someone else would...	4	3	2	1
46	I find it difficult to commit myself to something I am not sure of because of fear...	4	3	2	1
47	People have difficulty understanding me because I tend to jump around from subject to subject when talking...	4	3	2	1
48	There is nothing more frightening than change...	4	3	2	1
49	Nobody tells me what to do and if they try, I will respond with intimidation, threats, or I might even get physically aggressive...	4	3	2	1
50	When I act irresponsibly, I will perform a "good deed" or do something nice for someone as a way of making up for the harm I have caused...	4	3	2	1
51	I have difficulty critically evaluating my thoughts, ideas, and plans...	4	3	2	1
52	Nobody before or after can do it better than me because I am stronger, smarter, or slicker than most people are...	4	3	2	1
53	I have rationalized my irresponsible actions with such statements as "everybody else is doing it so why shouldn't I"...	4	3	2	1
54	If challenged I will sometimes go along by saying, "yeah, you're right," even when I know the other person is wrong, because it's easier than arguing with them about it...	4	3	2	1
55	Fear of change has made it difficult for me to be successful in life...	4	3	2	1
56	The way I look at it, even if I've done bad things, it's okay, because I never intended to hurt anyone...	4	3	2	1
57	I still find myself saying, "the heck with working a regular job, I'll just take it"...	4	3	2	1

		<b><u>SA</u></b>	<b><u>A</u></b>	<b><u>U</u></b>	<b><u>D</u></b>
58	I sometimes wish I could take back certain things I have said or done ...	4	3	2	1
59	Looking back over my life, I can see now that I lacked direction and consistency of purpose...	4	3	2	1
60	Strange odours, for which there is no explanation, come to me for no apparent reason...	4	3	2	1
61	I think that I can use drugs and avoid the negative consequences (such as addiction) that I have observed in others...	4	3	2	1
62	I tend to be rather easily side-tracked so that I rarely finish what I start...	4	3	2	1
63	If there is a short cut or easy way around something, I will find it...	4	3	2	1
64	I have trouble controlling my angry feelings...	4	3	2	1
65	I believe that I am a special person and that my situation deserves special consideration...	4	3	2	1
66	There is nothing worse than being seen as weak or helpless...	4	3	2	1
67	I view the positive things I have done for others as making up for the negative things...	4	3	2	1
68	Even when I set goals I frequently do not obtain them because I am distracted by events going on around me...	4	3	2	1
69	There have been times when I tried to change but was prevented from doing so because of fear...	4	3	2	1
70	When frustrated I will throw rational thought to the wind with such statements as "screw it" or "the hell with it"...	4	3	2	1
71	I have told myself that with a better job, I would never have had to do irresponsible or questionable things...	4	3	2	1
72	I can see that my life would be more satisfying if I could learn to make better decisions...	4	3	2	1

		<b><u>SA</u></b>	<b><u>A</u></b>	<b><u>U</u></b>	<b><u>D</u></b>
73	There have been times when I have felt entitled to break the rules or behave poorly in order to pay for a vacation, new car, or expensive clothing that I told myself I needed ...	4	3	2	1
74	I rarely consider the consequences of my actions...	4	3	2	1
75	A significant portion of my life has been spent trying to control people and situations...	4	3	2	1
76	There are times when I have done bad things and not gotten caught, and sometimes I feel overconfident and feel like I could do just about anything and get away with it...	4	3	2	1
77	As I look back on it now, I was a pretty good person even if I've done irresponsible things...	4	3	2	1
78	There have been times when I have made plans to do something with my family and then cancelled these plans so that I could hang out with my friends, and behave irresponsibly...	4	3	2	1
79	I tend to push problems to the side rather than dealing with them...	4	3	2	1
80	I have used good behaviour or various situations to give myself permission to do things that may be irresponsible or dangerous...	4	3	2	1

Appendix 5  
**THE NOWICKI - STRICKLAND LOCUS OF CONTROL  
SCALE (LOC)**

Locus of control is a personality dimension that measures one's belief about whether events are controlled internally or externally. Answer the following questions based on the way you feel. There are no right or wrong answers. Don't take too much time answering any one questions, but do try to answer them all. One of your concerns during the test may be, "What should I do if I can answer both yes and no to a question?" It's not unusual for that to happen. If it does, think about whether your answer is just a little more open one way more than the other.

**THE SCALE**

- \_\_\_ 1. Do you believe that most problems will solve themselves if you just don't fool with them?
  
- \_\_\_ 2. Do you believe that you can stop yourself from catching a cold?
  
- \_\_\_ 3. Are some people just born lucky?
  
- \_\_\_ 4. Most of the time, do you feel that getting good grades meant a great deal to you?
  
- \_\_\_ 5. Are you often blamed for things that just aren't your fault?
  
- \_\_\_ 6. Do you believe that if somebody studies hard enough he or she can pass any subject?
  
- \_\_\_ 7. Do you feel that most of the time it doesn't pay to try hard because things never turn out right anyway?

- \_\_\_ 8. Do you feel that if things start out well in the morning that it's going to be a good day no matter what you do?
- \_\_\_ 9. Do you feel that most of the time parents listen to what their children have to say?
- \_\_\_ 10. Do you believe that wishing can make good things happen?
- \_\_\_ 11. When you get punished does it usually seem it's for no good reason at all?
- \_\_\_ 12. Most of the time, do you find it hard to change a friend's (mind) opinion?
- \_\_\_ 13. Do you think that cheering, more than luck, helps a team to win?
- \_\_\_ 14. Did you feel that it was nearly impossible to change your parent's mind about anything?
- \_\_\_ 15. Do you believe that parents should allow children to make most of their own decisions?
- \_\_\_ 16. Do you feel that when you do something wrong there's very little you can do to make it right?
- \_\_\_ 17. Do you believe that most people are just born good at sports?
- \_\_\_ 18. Are most of the other people your age stronger than you are?
- \_\_\_ 19. Do you feel that one of the best ways to handle most problems is just not to think about them?
- \_\_\_ 20. Do you feel that you have a lot of choice in deciding whom your friends are?
- \_\_\_ 21. If you find a four leaf clover, do you believe that it might bring you good luck?

- \_\_\_22. Did you often feel that whether or not you did your homework had much to do with what kind of grades you got?
- \_\_\_23. Do you feel that when a person your age is angry at you, there's little you can do to stop him or her?
- \_\_\_24. Have you ever had a good luck charm?
- \_\_\_25. Do you believe that whether or not people like you depends on how you act?
- \_\_\_26. Did your parents usually help you if you asked them to?
- \_\_\_27. Have you felt that when people were angry with you it was usually for no reason at all?
- \_\_\_28. Most of the time, do you feel that you can change what might happen tomorrow by what you do today?
- \_\_\_29. Do you believe that when bad things are going to happen they just are going to happen no matter what you try to do to stop them?
- \_\_\_30. Do you think that people can get their own way if they just keep trying?
- \_\_\_31. Most of the time, do you find it useless to try to get your own way at home?
- \_\_\_32. Do you feel that when good things happen they happen because of hard work?
- \_\_\_33. Do you feel that when somebody your age wants to be your enemy there's little you can do to change matters?
- \_\_\_34. Do you feel that it's easy to get friends to do what you want them to do?



- \_\_\_35. Do you usually feel that you have little to say about what you get to eat at home?
- \_\_\_36. Do you feel that when someone doesn't like you there's little you can do about it?
- \_\_\_37. Did you usually feel that it was almost useless to try in school because most other children were just plain smarter than you were?
- \_\_\_38. Are you the kind of person who believes that planning ahead makes things turn out better?
- \_\_\_39. Most of the time do you feel that you have little to say about what your family decides to do?
- \_\_\_40. Do you think it's better to be smart than to be lucky?

## Appendix 6 DEMOGRAPHICS

Now please tell me about yourself....

Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title/Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity (please tick)

White	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black- Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black – African	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: Please State	<input type="checkbox"/>

Marital Status:

Married	<input type="checkbox"/>
Single	<input type="checkbox"/>
Divorced	<input type="checkbox"/>
Separated	<input type="checkbox"/>
Widowed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cohabiting	<input type="checkbox"/>

Qualifications:

GCSE	<input type="checkbox"/>
O Levels	<input type="checkbox"/>
CSEs	<input type="checkbox"/>
A/ AS Levels	<input type="checkbox"/>
College/Apprentice	<input type="checkbox"/>
Undergrad Degree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Masters	<input type="checkbox"/>
PhD	<input type="checkbox"/>

Write down any other qualification or training (e.g. NVQs, military training or sports skills)

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**Criminal**

Have you talked to the police as either a victim or offender? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

In what capacity? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you committed a crime? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If so, what? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any convictions? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

Do any of your family have convictions? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what for? \_\_\_\_\_

**Upbringing/Family**

As a child did you live? (If you lived in different places please tick all those that apply):-

Mum and Dad	<input type="checkbox"/>
One Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mum and Step-Dad	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dad and Step-Mum	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Relatives	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foster Parents	<input type="checkbox"/>
Children's/Community Home	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please state)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Did any brothers or sisters (or step brothers or step sisters) live with you?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, how many lived with you? \_\_\_\_\_

If you know, please tell me what job your parents (or step-parents) do, if they are unemployed tell me about their most recent job:-

Father/ Step-father: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother/ Step mother: \_\_\_\_\_

## Life Outcomes

Please indicate the extent to which each of those statements describes you.

	Not at all	Just a little	Some	A lot	Very Much
Do you regularly experience positive emotions? e.g. peace, gratitude, satisfaction, inspiration, hope, curiosity, love	1	2	3	4	5
Do you hope for the best, see the upside and learn to take great opportunities when they come along?	1	2	3	4	5
Do you have a tendency to expect the worst, see the downside and avoid taking risks?	1	2	3	4	5
Do you regularly engage in activities that excite/inspire/interest you i.e. personal strengths, and, when doing so become absorbed and lose track of time?	1	2	3	4	5
Do you have and build meaningful and positive relationships with others? E.g. family, friends', co-workers.	1	2	3	4	5
Do you feel that your life has a sense of direction and you lead a meaningful life doing what you feel is valuable, worthwhile and consistent with your personal values and beliefs?	1	2	3	4	5
Do you strive to better yourself, create and work towards goals and look back with a sense of accomplishment?	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix 7

# **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

### **Research Title: Exploring non-offenders' narratives using the Life as a Film (LAAF) procedure.**

You are being invited to take part in this PhD research project. Before you commence it is important that you understand why this research is being carried out and what it involves. Please take your time to read the following information carefully and ask if there is anything you are not clear on or if you require more information.

#### **What is the purpose of this project?**

This research will formulate part of a PhD project with the International Research Centre for Investigative Psychology (IRCIP). The way individuals deal with experience by the construction of stories - narratives, has become a fundamental part of psychology and increasingly used to explore criminality.

This study will look at the life narratives of the general non-incarcerated population in an attempt to gain a richer understanding of how these shape an individual. Interviews will be conducted using the Life as a Film (LAAF) protocol; an engaging projective technique which asks individuals to describe their lives in terms of a film. Alongside the LAAF, the interview also consists of several self-report questionnaires.

Findings will be compared to incarcerated offender narratives in order to determine what the essence of offender narratives are, aiding the knowledge of what underpins criminality within narratives and assist in specific intervention and rehabilitation approaches.

#### **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen to take part in this study as you fit the target sample of being a non-incarcerated member of the general public over the age of 18.

#### **What do I have to do?**

Taking part in this research will involve an audio recorded interview which will explore your life narratives. To gather a detailed narrative account this interview will look at your particular experiences and how you feel about them, you will be asked to describe a significant life event, your life as a film and answer a set of questions which relate to your life experience and feelings towards these.

This will also include the following self-report questionnaires; the Nowicki- Strickland Locus of Control personality measure, the Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles and the Big Five Inventory personality questionnaire. In addition to the interview you will be asked to complete a demographic information sheet, this is to obtain general background information about each participant such as age, gender and details of occupation. The interview should last up to one hour (no longer than an hour and a half).

#### **Will all my details be kept confidential?**

All information collected will be strictly confidential and anonymised in compliance with the Data Protection Act and ethical research guidelines and principles. Following the interviews the audio recording will be transcribed for analysis, at which point any information which

may allow identification to the participants, or any other persons discussed within the interview will be omitted.

If you give permission, once the current research is finished, the anonymised interview transcript obtained from this interview will be stored in the archives at the IRCIP for additional study and research purposes by me, or another member of the team. If you do not want your interview protocol to be stored after the current project is finished please state on the consent form.

**What will happen to the results of the research?**

The primary use of the data collected in this study will be for the current PhD research project and PhD thesis; however it may also be used for future research by the team at the centre. The results of this research will be written up and presented in a PhD thesis in 2016, if you would like a copy please contact the student.

**Supervisor details:**

The project is supervised by Professor David Canter and Dr Donna Youngs. The main supervisor for this project is Dr Donna Youngs, who can be contacted at the University of Huddersfield, [d.youngs@hud.ac.uk](mailto:d.youngs@hud.ac.uk).

**Researcher contact details:** This research is part of PhD project conducted by Laura Harris, University of Huddersfield. If you have any questions or concerns about the project please email the main researcher: Laura Harris, [Laura.Harris@hud.ac.uk](mailto:Laura.Harris@hud.ac.uk).

## Appendix 8 CONSENT FORM

**Project Title: Exploring non-offenders’ narratives using the LAAF procedure.**

**Researcher contact details:** This research is part of PhD project conducted by Laura Harris, Teila Clift, Loren Parton & Kathryn Hughes from the University of Huddersfield.  
The project is supervised by Professor David Canter and Dr Donna Youngs.

Please take your time to read the following information carefully. Please ask if there is anything you do not understand or if you would like more information, it is important that you understand and sign the consent form. Your contribution to this research is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged in any way to participate. Please read the following information and circle the boxes to complete the form.

If you have any questions or concerns about the project please email the main researcher: Laura [Laura.Harris@hud.ac.uk](mailto:Laura.Harris@hud.ac.uk).

I have read “Participant Information Sheet” and I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research.	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
I have had the opportunity to ask questions.	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
I consent to taking part in this study.	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
I understand that my participation is voluntarily and that I am free to withdraw at any point during the interview process and three months afterwards without giving a reason. I understand that if I withdraw from the project my data will not be used in the study in any way.	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
I agree to take part in the study and for my interview to be audio recorded for the purposes of the research	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
I am aware that the study might take up to an hour, and I can ask for a break at any moment and if I experience any distress	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
I understand that all the information collected will be kept in secure conditions for a period of ten years at the University of Huddersfield and the data may be used for future research.	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>

I understand that only people that will have access to any information obtained from the interview will be qualified researchers.	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
I agree to the use of anonymous quotes in publications and reports following the research and understand that my identity will be protected by the use of pseudonym with no information that could lead to my identification or any persons mentioned will be included in the study.	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
I understand that personal information provided in the interview will be kept anonymous and confidential.	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
I understand that my name will only appear on this consent form, and this form will be kept separate from the material obtained from my interview.	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>

**Please, mark your response circling it:**

I give permission to store the anonymised interview transcript obtained from this interview in the archives at the International Research Centre for Investigative Psychology for further study and research purposes after the project “Exploring non offenders’ narratives using the LAAF procedure.” is finished	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
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I confirm that I have read the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had my questions answered satisfactorily.

Signature of Participant: _____ Print: _____ Date:	Signature of Researcher: _____ Print: _____ Date:
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Appendix 9  
**LAAF CODING SYSTEM\* FOR NARRATIVE THEMES IN  
LIFE AS FILM INTERVIEWS**

• **REMIT: IMPLICIT PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTENT**

**1.Descriptives**

a.Content

Genre Comedy- Yes-1 / No-0

Genre Romance- Yes-1 /No-0

Genre Crime- Yes-1 /No-0

Genre Action- Yes/No

Genre Tragedy - Yes/No

Genre Thriller- Yes/No

Events -all Yes=1/ No=0

Doing Crime

Imprisonment

Victim of Crime

Birth

Death

Material success

Relationship problem

Relationship success

Message (cf Sandberg, 2009)

It was my own choice

I'm decent

We're the same

I'm interesting

I'm smart

I'm dangerous

Happy Ending/ Sad Ending

Positive tone/ Negative Tone

Passive / Pro-active

**2. EXPLICIT PROCESSES USED TO ORGANISE CONTENT**

Agency themes (all Yes=1/ No=0) from McAdams (2012)

Self-mastery

Status- Victory

Achievement/Responsibility

Empowerment

Communion Themes (all Yes=1/ No=0) from McAdams (2012)

Love/ Friendship

Dialogue  
Caring/ Help  
Unity/ Togetherness

Change type (Adjusted from McAdams et al) see <http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/foley/For>  
definitions

a.Redemption (all Yes=1 No=0)

General Redemption: Movement from negative situation to positive

Specific Themes: Enjoys a special advantage

Specific Themes: Witnesses suffering or injustice in lives of others during childhood

Specific Themes: Development of sense of moral steadfastness

Specific Themes: Repeatedly encounters negative events that are transformed into redemption sequence (ie become good/ obtain positive results from)

Specific Themes: Sets forth prosocial goals

b. Contamination

General Contamination: Movement from positive to negative

Specific Forms of contamination : (see <http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/foley/> for more detail) yes=1; no=0

Victimisation

Betrayal

Loss of significant others

Failure

Physical or psychological illness or injury

Disappointment

Disillusionment

Sex guilt, humiliation

Classic Narrative themes

Mention of following ideas (all Yes=1/ No=0)

Overcoming Struggles/ Obstacles/ Mission

Wrong done to them/theirs

Impotence/ Hopelessness

Effectiveness/Skills/ competencies

Victory/ Proving Self/ Success

Revenge

Fate

Tangible Rewards/ acquisitions

Masculinity/ Bravery

Compulsion

Confusion/ misunderstanding

Fulfilment/ satisfaction

### **3. PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPLEXITY**

Length in words

Number of people cited

Presence of distinct roles for 'characters' Yes-1/ No-0

Number of distinct events cited

Number of distinct psychological ideas

Presence of contingent sequences- Yes-1/No-0

Presence of distinct beginning, middle and end components to story Yes-1/No-0

Presence of coherent theme (s)- Yes-1/ No-0

#### **4. AGENCY**

Behaviours described by interviewee (all Yes=1/ No =0):

Locus of Agency

Proactive

Reactive

Avoidant of others

Confronting others

Imagoes- Characterisations of self in terms of following Imagoes: (all yes=1; no =0) see mcAdams (1993) p124 for definitions

Healer

Teacher

Counsellor

Humanist

Arbiter

Warrior

Traveller

Sage

Maker

Lover

Caregiver

Friend

Ritualistic

Escapist

Survivor

Characterisations of others in terms of following Imagoes:Imagoes-: (all yes=1; no =0) see mcAdams (1993) p124 for definitions

Healer

Teacher

Counsellor

Humanist

Arbiter

Warrior

Traveller

Sage

Maker

Lover

Caregiver

Friend

Ritualistic  
Escapist  
Survivor

Self identity as Stronger or Weaker than others  
Others as Significant or Non Significant to them (self-identity)  
Empathy for others  
Hostility towards others

Emotions from Aroused- Positive Quadrant  
Emotions from Aroused- Negative Quadrant  
Emotions from Non-aroused- Positive Quadrant  
Emotions from Non-aroused- Negative Quadrant

Justifications of general types used (all Yes=1/ No=0) see Sykes and Matza (1956) and Bandura (1990) for definitions :

denial of responsibility,  
denial of injury,  
denial of the victim,  
condemnation of condemners,  
appeal to higher loyalties  
displacement of responsibility,  
diffusion of responsibility,  
distorting the consequences of an action,  
dehumanising the victim,  
assuming the role of victim for one's self

Incentive (Bandura 1986)  
For Material/ Financial gain  
For Sensory gain (pleasure based, sensation, stimulation, boredom avoidance)  
For Power/ Status gain  
For Social (approval, advancement) gain

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## Appendix 10

### ETHICS

Prof Rachel Armitage, SREP Chair, has asked me to contact you with regard to your SREP application as detailed above.

**Your application has been approved subject to amendments (for Chair approval).**

Please address the following issues:

#### **Essential Amendments:**

*Researcher details* - You include 5 names here. Could you clarify what involvement the additional researchers have and be specific about your involvement in this study as this is your PhD/research.

*Methodology* - You state that all data will be collected from members of the general public, but the aims seem to focus on offenders (or a comparison between offenders and non-offenders). Could you clarify this.

*Access to participants* - Could you include some additional detail regarding your inclusion/exclusion criteria for the sample. Also clarify sample size.

*Information sheet* - This should include a University of Huddersfield logo. Could you also explain abbreviations in full. Add some explanation as to why they have been chosen to take part in the study. Could you also include supervisor details.

*Consent form* - This should include a University of Huddersfield logo.

*Researcher safety* - Could you clarify where the interviews will take place.

*Data storage* - Clarify how long you will be storing data for. You say 10 years on the consent form but three months on the application.

**Prof Rachel Armitage (SREP Chair) has asked me to confirm that you have addressed the issues raised to her satisfaction and full ethical approval has now been given.**

## Appendix 11

### LAAF Items and SSA Abbreviated Item

LAAF Item	SSA Item
Action	Action
Comedy	Comedy
Romance	Romance
Doing Crime	Doing Crime
Victim of Crime	Victim
Birth	Birth
Death	Death
Material success	Material
Relationship problem	R'ship Probs
Relationship success	R'ship Succ
It was my own choice	Own Choice
I'm decent	Decent
We're the same	The Same
I'm interesting	Interesting
I'm smart	Smart
I'm dangerous	Dangerous
Happy Ending	Happy End
Positive tone	Positive T
Negative Tone	Neg Tone
Passive	Passive
Pro-active	Proactive
Self-mastery	Self Mastery
Status- Victory	Victory
Achievement/Responsibility	Achievem
Love/ Friendship	Love/Friend
Caring/ Help	Caring/Help
Unity/ Togetherness	Unity/Together
General Redemption: Movement from negative situation to positive	Redemp Seq
Specific Themes: Enjoys a special advantage	Spec Advan
Specific Themes: Witnesses suffering or injustice in lives of others during childhood	Suffering
Specific Themes: Development of sense of moral steadfastness	Moral Stead
Specific Themes: Repeatedly encounters negative events that are transformed into redemption sequence (i.e. become good/ obtain positive results from)	Rep Neg Events
Specific Themes: Sets forth prosocial goals	Prosocial
Victimisation	Victimisation
Betrayal	Betrayal

Loss of significant others	Loss Other
Failure	Failure
Physical or psychological illness or injury	Illness/Injury
Disappointment	Disappoint
General contamination	Contam Seq
Overcoming Struggles/ Obstacles/ Mission	Overcome Strugg
Wrong done to them/theirs	Wrong Done
Impotence/ Hopelessness	Impotence/Hop
Effectiveness/Skills/ competencies	Effectiv
Victory/ Proving Self/ Success	Victory/Prove
Fate	Fate
Tangible Rewards/ acquisitions	Tang Rew
Masculinity/ Bravery	Masculinity
Compulsion	Compulsion
Confusion/ misunderstanding	Confusion
Fulfilment/ satisfaction	Fulfilment
Proactive	Proactive
Reactive	Reactive
Avoidant of others	Avoidant
Confronting others	Confronting
Warrior	Warrior
Traveller	Traveller
Maker	Maker
Lover	Lover
Caregiver	Caregiver
Friend	Friend
Escapist	Escapist
Survivor	Survivor
Teacher	Teacher Oth
Warrior	Warrior Oth
Lover	Lover Oth
Caregiver	Caregiver Oth
Friend	Friend Oth
Self-identity as Stronger than others	Strong ID
Self-identity Weaker than others	Weak ID
Empathy for others	Empathy
Hostility towards others	Hostility
Emotions from Aroused- Positive Quadrant	Aroused Pos
Emotions from Aroused- Negative Quadrant	Aroused Neg
Emotions from Non-aroused- Positive Quadrant	Non Arous Pos
Emotions from Non-aroused- Negative Quadrant	Non Arous Neg
denial of responsibility,	Deny Respons
denial of the victim,	Denial Victim

assuming the role of victim for one's self	Self Victim
For Material/ Financial gain	Financial
For Sensory gain (pleasure based, sensation, stimulation, boredom avoidance)	Sensory
For Power/ Status gain	Power
For Social (approval, advancement) gain	Social Gain
High Complexity	High Complex
Low Complexity	Low Complex

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