

Desistance, victimisation and offending: the lives of young adult men from the Sheffield Desistance Study

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Victimisation and offending

It has been known for a long time that there is an 'overlap' between those who are victimised and those who offend (both in youth and as adults – Lauritsen and Laub 2007):

- Bottoms and Costello (2010) distinguish between childhood victimisation and concurrent victimisation for offenders (within, say the last year) – I am referring to the latter
- For 'personal offences' (assault, theft from the person etc.), the Edinburgh Youth Transitions Study and the Offending, Crime and Justice Study in the UK show a considerable 'overlap'
- Bottoms and Costello found 'offender households' on police records had a much higher victimisation incidence for residential burglary, criminal damage and taking cars, but not for shed and garage burglary (which may be about which dwellings have sheds/garages) or thefts from motor vehicles (ditto)



But why might there be a connection?

There could be a **direct causal relation**:

- a) 'Retaliation thesis': - offending leads to retaliation by the victim
- b) 'Vicarious retaliation thesis' – retaliation by those associated with the victim (family, group, gang)
- c) 'Recouping thesis' – being deprived of stuff by the offence, the victim turns to offending to make up the loss (relative deprivation)

Or an **indirect effect through the environment one lives in**:

- d) 'Deprived environment thesis' - both O and V live in deprived neighbourhoods with a higher crime rate
- e) 'Routine activities thesis' – both frequent places with higher risk of victimisation (e.g. bars/clubs)
- f) 'Lifestyle thesis' – Os are more likely to put themselves into high risk situations for victimisation

Or all of these. If there is a connection, it may also link to desistance



Desistance

- Desistance we see as the process of stopping committing criminal offences
- Desistance is clearly age-related:
 - Generally, the age-crime curve shows increases in criminality in adolescence, with a peak in the early 20s
 - Even persistent offenders are likely to desist, especially in their 20s
 - Though some are still offending in their 60s and 70s
- Re victimisation, persistent offenders are likely to have offending mates
 - But do those mates offend against them?
 - So one might think desistance might lead to less victimisation ...



The Sheffield Desistance Study (SDS)

- 113 young men, aged 19-22 at first interview, with recent prison or probation experience, with two plus conviction occasions
- Interviewed up to four times in total over four years
- About their lives, families, mates, self-reported offending, work, victimisation and experiences with criminal justice
- Plus looking at their official convictions and cautions.

On average they had 8 convictions for standard list offences at first interview, comprising on average 18 offences



Did they desist over those four years?

- As would be predicted by their group reconviction score (OGRS2), 80% were reconvicted
- But their frequency of reconviction significantly reduced
- A minority self-reported an increase, but the majority did not
- There was considerable bifurcation of the frequency of self-reported reoffending by the end – and more specialisation in offending. So we have those whose offending decreased ▼ and those whose offending increased ▲



The overall amount of victimisation at each interview (%)

	Any victimisation	n	Domestic burglary	Shed burglary	Theft dwelling	TW OC	Theft from car	Theft from person	Criminal damage	Assault	Fraud
Int 1	66	112	14	4	12	18	6	10	16	38	4
Int 2	37	97	11	2	5	4	5	6	9	20	3
Int 3	38	88	8	1	9	0	5	6	13	19	1
Int 4	41	88	9	2	3	3	2	7	10	24	1

High but decreasing rates – featuring particularly assault and criminal damage



Comparing with the British Crime Survey 2004-5

- In the BCS, the average population risk of being a victim of a BCS-asked crime was 24% (Nicholas et al. 2005)
- This compares to 66% at interview 1 for the SDS, 41% at interview 4. So much higher risks for the SDS
- For violence, SDS is even more extreme. The BCS risk of being a victim of some kind of violent incident was 3.6% (14.6% for young men aged 16-24), but it was 38% at interview 1, dropping to 24% at interview 4
- BCS risk of criminal damage was 7.1%, whilst it was 9-16% in interviews 1-4
- So, SDS rates are much higher, particularly for burglary and assault – but it may be where you live and who you are, to some extent.



Repeat victimisation in the SDS (same type of offence)

	Any repeat V BCS	Any repeat V SDS	Domestic burglary repeat V BCS	Domestic burglary repeat V SDS	Assault repeat V BCS	Assault repeat V SDS
Int 1	7	40	0.4	2	1	17
Int 2		20		2		9
Int 3		19		0		8
Int 4		24		1		13

So this population is not only more likely to be victimised, but also to experience repeat victimisation for the same type of offence, esp for assault

- and the same holds for multiple victimisation (more than one type of incident)



So is victimisation directly linked to amount of offending or desistance?

We can compare total victimisation against:

- Whether people had made a definite decision to desist (no difference: e.g. at int 1 victims 33%, not victims 35%)
- Whether self-reported offending went up or down between interviews 1 and 4: no significant difference
- Self-reported offending for the same or following periods, using Spearman's correlation: no significant difference
- Official convictions for the same or following periods, using Spearman's correlation: slight negative effect ints 2-3 (more victimisation leads to less convictions) but none thereafter



- Every which way we look at victimisation and offending (self-reported or officially convicted), or even decisions to desist at one time, **there is very little difference between those desisting and those continuing to offend**, whether at the same time or subsequently
- Is there any lagged effect over time?
 - If we look at total victimisation – or household victimisation (burglary, theft, criminal damage) - no, there is no difference
 - BUT, if we look at personal victimisation (assault, theft from the person, fraud) then a decision to desist at ints 1, 2 or 3 led to less victimisation at int 4 - *but not before then* (correlations of 0.23-0.29).

It seems complicated.



A clue – knowing who did it and how people reacted

- We can find out more by seeing how people reacted to the victimisation. Did they know who did it? Did they report it to the police?
- For burglary, did SDS victims know who did it?

Domestic burglary	N	Yes/definitely (%)	No (%)
Int 1	14	43	50
Int 2	10	50	50
Int 3	7	43	43
Int 4	8	25	75

- A high proportion did (much higher than most burglary victims – but this dropped by interview 4



- For assault, did SDS victims know who did it?

Assault	N	Yes/definitely (%)	No (%)
Int 1	37	70	30
Int 2	17	88	12
Int 3	17	76	24
Int 4	21	67	33

- A very high proportion did – again dropping at interview 4



- But knowing who did it did not affect the effects of victimisation. SDS victims, though offenders, felt similarly upset to other victims
- What did they do about it? Well, on burglary 50% told the police – the same as in the BCS (no change on different interviews)
 - This is not a subculture with different moral views – and Bottoms and Costello (2010) found the same [of course, it could be to do with insurance]
 - But a few confronted the offender, or got the property back with violence
- On assault, few told the police (like the BCS), about 55% did nothing, but 28% (higher in later interviews) confronted their assailant. So on assault, victimisation could lead to offending
- Yes, there is evidence for the Retaliation thesis



Another clue – lifestyle

- Wittebrood and Nieuwbeerta (1999) in their major Dutch study found those who engage in violent crime and vandalism are at greater risk of being victims, but this could only partially be explained by lifestyle.
- We looked at whether victimisation related to where one lived: sleeping rough, on mates' floors or in a flat/house:
 - At interview 1, a major effect of sleeping rough (82% victimisation for those sleeping rough) and a drifting lifestyle (73% victimisation) – compared to neither (59%) (significant for assault)
 - After interview 1, few slept rough or on mates' floors (but some did, e.g. after being released from prison), but their likelihood of victimisation was lower (they kept themselves safer?)
 - The weight of crime shifted towards property victimisation later on (and more worked)



Changing lifestyles over the four years

- A typical **Friday daytime** (arrows mean desisting - ▼ or offending increasing - ▲)

%	Int 2	Int 3	Int 4
Hang out with mates/girlfriend	30	19	30
Watch TV/stay around house	19	17	15 ▼
Grafting (offending)	13	6 ▲	5 ▲
Work	8	21 ▼	22 ▼
Drinking	8	4 ▲	5 ▲
Do drugs	8	0	8 ▲
With family members/children	2	15	5
Shopping/gym/snooker	8	8	7
Other	5	11	3
n	63	53	74



And Friday night

- A typical **Friday night** (arrows mean desisting - ▼ or offending increasing - ▲)

%	Int 2	Int 3	Int 4
Go out drinking	35	42	32
Stay in with family/partner	32	34 ▼	32
Go clubbing	21	9	12 ▲
Grafting	5	2	5
Stay in on own	0	8	3
Go out for meal/work	0	0	4
Stay in with mates	0	0	7
Other	8	6	4
n	66	53	74



So what is happening?

Without doubt, persistent offenders are more likely to be victimised – by all kinds of crime

- There is no simple relationship with desistance - those desisting are, rather later on, less likely to suffer personal crime but no effect on household crime

Several elements seem to come into play:

- Retaliation thesis: Offenders are more likely (than the general population) to think they know who has offended against them - and for assault and sometimes for burglary, will go out and confront them
- Little evidence in this population of Vicarious retaliation thesis (the family retaliate) or Recouping thesis (the deprived turn to crime)
- Deprived environment thesis is important - extreme lifestyles (sleeping rough) create significant vulnerability; those desisting are still living in areas with active burglars (desisting means less money; not able to move) – and the burglars still know them (reputation, not as friends)
- Lifestyle and Routine Activities theses - more sedate lifestyles create more opportunities for property crime, but less for assault





GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON DESISTANCE

Reviewing what we know and
looking to the future

Edited by Joanna Shapland,
Stephen Farrall
and Anthony Bottoms

ROUTLEDGE



Some references to the SDS:

Bottoms, A.E. and Shapland, J. (2016) 'Learning to desist in early adulthood: the Sheffield Desistance Study', in J. Shapland, A.E. Bottoms and S. Farrall, S. (eds) (2016) *Global perspectives on desistance: reviewing what we know and looking to the future*. London: Routledge.

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