

With a little help from my friends: Exploring the perceptions and utility of partners in drug crime

By

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Abstract

Co-offending and drug crime scholarship have rarely crossed paths. Whenever co-offending and drug crime are investigated together, the work is almost always quantitative. Thus much remains unknown about why drug dealers cooperate criminally. To provide a modest contribution to what is otherwise a noticeable void, I investigate the decision making processes among a sample of 8 drug dealers who regularly partner up with others. Findings suggest participants believe co-offenders increase the overall success of drug crimes by either providing access to criminal capital, or by providing strength in numbers. Trustworthiness and skill were two factors that heavily weighed on a decision to co-offend with another drug dealer. While participants acted instrumentally with regards to co-offending, they were not greedy or impulsive. Gains were usually split equally among all partners. Interestingly, the gains of drug crime were occasionally donated to a partner who was perceived to be in need.

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Chapter one: Introduction

The field of co-offending and drug crime have rarely crossed paths. This fact is surprising given that drug offences have been found to occur more frequently in pairs and groups than either property or violent crimes (Carrington, 2001). Morselli (2009) contends that market crimes like drug offences are transactional in nature, and therefore, are likely to involve networks of co-offenders. Despite these observations, research into drug offending has largely overlooked the collaborative dynamics of co-offending in favour of illicit network structure and organization. To be fair however, researchers in co-offending have also overlooked the collaborative processes inherent in criminal partnerships in favour of exploring various aspects of a co-offender's relation to larger criminal networks (Felson, 2009; Morselli, 2009). Thus while much is known about the redundancy and stability of co-offending networks, little is known qualitatively about the agreements forged between co-offenders, or what offenders look for in potential partners in crime.

To date, only a few studies have explored the role of decision making and co-offending, and none of these studies utilize a sample of drug offenders. I provide a modest contribution to what is otherwise a void in the drug dealing and co-offending literature alike by interviewing drug dealers about the decision to co-offend with other drug dealers..

Layout of thesis

Chapter two is dedicated to synthesizing the literature on drug dealing and co-offending. The two fields are not connected in any meaningful way, although there is overlap with regards to social network analysis. In chapter two I highlight a few popular misconceptions about drug dealing, namely the amount of money earned, the prevalence of violence, and the stability of

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hierarchies throughout the supply chain. I then highlight how drug dealing and the decision to co-offend are both empirically linked to homelessness and situational adversity. I proceed with a review of what is known about co-offending with a focus on age and crime type. It is here that I highlight the relative lack of knowledge on the decision-making processes associated with drug co-offending.

In Chapter 3, I highlight my proclivity for standpoint epistemology and my use of grounded theory. I highlight the process I used to code my data. In Chapter 4 I describe key findings. In this chapter I provide some of my sample population's demographics. I then proceed to document how the types of co-offenses my sample committed in their youth and early adolescence differ markedly from the types of co-offenses committed later in their lives. These delinquent acts are mostly spontaneous endeavours committed out of boredom or the search for thrills. With age however, the participants became embedded in illicit drug markets. Rather than jettisoning co-offenders and beginning an increasingly solo offending trajectory (which as discussed in chapter 2 is the norm among adolescent co-offenders transitioning to adulthood), sampled participants discussed utilizing co-offenders in late adolescence and early adulthood for drug deals. It is within this context that my three main research questions are answered.

First, sampled participants overwhelmingly believed that dealing drugs with close acquaintances and peers was a good idea. They believe peers provide strength in numbers and access to new customers and suppliers. Not surprisingly, the qualities sought out in potential co-offenders centred on trustworthiness and criminal capital (criminogenic skills and experience). Lastly, sampled participants described working in mostly egalitarian terms. Individual drug dealers seemed to be accept forfeiting up to half their illicit gains when partnering with another

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individual for the execution of a drug crime. Interestingly, it was found that under specific circumstances, drug dealers would be willing to forfeit the entirety of their gains for the benefit of their partner in crime. This was usually the case among individual drug dealers who were facing adverse economic circumstances like the prospect of homelessness or large debts.

My discussion section and limitations comprise chapter five. With regards to my discussion, I focus on two main areas: epistemology and public policy. More effort should be made to increase job opportunities for young people as well as tackle the issue of homeless. Epistemologically speaking, my findings provide an exploratory glimpse into the decision making processes associated with drug dealers on the topic of partners in crime. These findings suggest the role of social exchange and game theory should be investigated further in future co-offending studies. I also call attention to the need for moving towards an agreed upon definition of co-offending as there are currently two distinct forms of co-offending which follow in separate traditions of inquiry. I provide a brief overview of these two concepts below.

What is a co-offense?

Co-offending scholars appear to be divided into two schools of thought about what constitutes the 'essence' of co-offending. Depending on the unit of analysis (crime rates versus offenders) co-offending and co-offenses alike can be measured two ways: simultaneously or sequentially (Felson, 2009; Morselli, 2009; Pourheidari & Croisdale, 2010; Tremblay, 1993; Weerman, 2003). While not as problematic as definitional issues that exist in gang research (see Esbensen, Winfree, He & Taylor, 2001), scholars working in the field of co-offending are still confronted with the question of definitional inclusion and exclusion. A consensus on what

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constitutes a co-offense has yet to be reached. I discuss both definitions of co-offending below and highlight the need for more a more fluid understanding of co-offending in Chapter 5.

Simultaneous co-offenses

The majority of scholars publishing in the field of co-offending analyze 'simultaneous co-offenses' (Andresen & Felson, 2010; Andresen & Felson, 2012; Carrington, 2002; Carrington, 2009; Reiss, 1986, 1988; Reiss and Farrington, 1991; Stolzenberg & D'Alessio, 2008).

According to Andresen and Felson (2010), students of co-offending who investigate simultaneous co-offenses follow in the work of Reiss (1986,1988) and Reiss and Farrington (1991) who were the first scholars to investigate the phenomenon of co-offending even though the relationship between peers and crime has been documented for almost a century (Breckinridge & Abbot, 1917; Erickson, 1971; Erickson & Jensen, 1977; Shaw & McKay, 1942; Warr, 2002). Simultaneous co-offenses are group crimes where all participants are together at the moment of transgression. In other words, co-offenders must occupy the same time and space in order to be labelled a 'co-offense'. The list of co-offenses which are simultaneous in nature include mainly property crimes like break and enter, robbery, vandalism, auto theft, etc. While the sequential definition is the most precise, many crimes involving co-offending networks are shunned because co-offenders are not operating simultaneously. A good example of this is group related drug crimes where co-offenders are not required to be present for every drug sale but are none the less active as a group.

Sequential co-offenses

Rather than relying on the simultaneous occupation of time and space as a prerequisite for measuring a co-offending event, sequential co-offenses are based on levels of intimate

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criminal cooperation and resource sharing among partners in crime (Morselli, 2009; Pourheidari & Croisdale, 2010; Andersen & Felson, 2010). As such, sequential co-offenses differ quite markedly from simultaneous co-offenses. Sequential co-offenses occur most often in 'market' crimes where other offenders rely on one another for successful execution of crime. These crimes are often times complex and planned out well in advance and are sometimes accompanied by a division of labour (Felson, 2009). Tremblay (1993) was the first scholar writing in the field of co-offending to call for a more inclusionary definition of co-offending. Surprisingly, only a minority of scholars and students of co-offending utilize this concept of 'extended co-offending' (Felson, 2009). The open ended nature of this definition could be problematic given the possibility of over inclusion. Put simply, some extended co-offenses may be viewed as solo offenders working in tandem, rather than as a group entity. While it is true that many market crimes are instrumental and individualist, the amount of collaboration and decision making involved in transactional market crimes should not be passed over.

Having provided a glimpse into two unique forms of co-offending, I now turn the attention of the reader to Chapter 2, where I highlight the literature on drug crime and co-offending. The majority of studies in the field of co-offending, which are discussed in the second half of the review, rely on 'simultaneous' definitions. Consequently, most studies of co-offending overlook the nature of drug co-offenses. It is for this reason that I supplement Chapter 2 with some key findings from research on drug crime.

Chapter two: Literature review

In this literature review I highlight the extant research on drug crimes, criminal networks and co-offending. A synthesis of these topics remains elusive as few co-offending studies investigate drug crimes, choosing instead to focus on property and violent crimes. Conversely, most research on drug crime overlooks the social dynamics and processes of co-offending in favour of understanding the hierarchy, structure and organization of criminal networks (Felson, 2006). Consequently, much remains unknown about drug co-offenses. I attempt to fill this void modestly with a synthesis of the separate literature on drug dealing and co-offending. I begin with the literature on drug dealing and continue with what is currently known about co-offending.

Drug crimes and co-offending

Studies of drug-based criminal networks suggest co-offenders are commonly used in the execution of drug offences (Heber, 2009). Carrington (2001) suggests drug crimes are more likely than non drug crimes to be committed by pairs or groups. He goes on to note that the majority of drug co-offenses are drug supply crimes, rather than drug consumption crimes (Carrington, 2001). This point is reinforced by qualitative studies of drug dealers which suggest partners in drug crime are utilized throughout the drug supply chain in various roles (Pearson and Hobbes, 2003, 2004). Indeed, drug dealers who isolate themselves are not likely to find much success. Given the complex nature of many drug crimes, drug dealers are likely to cooperate with other individuals for access to new markets or supply stock. Criminal cooperation in drug crimes can occur vertically along a drug supply chain and horizontally among partners in crime.

Within each 'vertical layer' of the drug distribution system, criminal cooperation is of

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necessity and usually takes the form of a division of labour that is specialized, regimented and hierarchal (MacCoun & Reuter, 1992; May & Hugh, 2004; Pearson & Hobbs, 2003). Importers or drug mules smuggle drugs across borders where they meet with wholesalers who purchase large quantities of the smuggled drugs. Wholesalers then arrange sales to various mid-level dealers who eventually sell to retail dealers. Retail dealers represent the final cog in supply chain and are responsible for the end sale to consumers. According to May and Hugh (2004, p.572) mid-level dealers have recently "leap-frogged the importation-wholesaler hierarchy, and are now playing away in Europe." suggesting that drug supply chains are not static or ongoing despite the existence of a regimented division of labour.

Aside from vertical partnerships inherent to drug crimes, criminal cooperation is also necessary in horizontal partnerships between drug offenders. Drug offenders who partner together in a horizontal fashion at any level of the supply chain (e.g. two retail dealers who combine efforts) must also cooperate criminally together, albeit in less dramatic fashion than their vertical counterparts. For example, one dealer may opt to store the drugs and take care of finances while another dealer may be responsible for purchasing and transporting the drugs (Pearson & Hobbs, 2004).

Theories accounting for criminal cooperation throughout the horizontal and vertical layers of the drug supply chain are often overlooked in favour of understanding criminal networks (Felson, 2006; Morselli, 2009) or markets (Pearson & Hobbs, 2003, 2004). For example, Pearson and Hobbs (2004) detail the partnership of two drug co-offenders, Terry and Ron, who were roommates and had a shared drug trafficking enterprise. No mention was given to the social processes of their drug dealing partnership aside from the agreed upon division of

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labour. However, to their credit, the authors meticulously document rough estimates of the volume and price of their large-scale drug shipments (Pearson & Hobbs, 2004 but see also Pearson and Hobbs, 2003). The lack of research investigating the social processes of drug dealing is unfortunate, but there is nonetheless a rich body of empirical work that provides a rich description of drug dealing and is relevant none the less to the current study.

The social and economic realities of drug dealing

Scholars writing in the field of drug offending point to a few commonly held misconceptions about the realities of drug dealers operating through the supply chain. These misconceptions are pervasive and are likely the product of mass media which portray drug supply chains as comprising a few anonymous "Mr Bigs" and multiple - urbanized - "low-level retailers" (Coomber, 2010; Taylor & Potter, 2013; May & Hough, 2004). These supply chains are assumed to be hierarchically based networks of violent criminals who dominate every facet of their respective drug industries (Taylor & Potter, 2013). Of course, this narrative is largely the work of fiction. In reality, monopolistic drug dealing networks are rare (Reuter, 2000) and the drug dealing market itself is highly competitive and diverse (May & Hough, 2004). Additionally, while the drug supply chain is vertically regimented as far as division of labour (importer vs. retail dealer, etc), there is considerable room for "drift" as an individual's role within drug markets change with time. As such, it is the case that firm hierarchies within illicit drug markets are not as common as one may think (Desroches, 2007; Pearson & Hobbs, 2001; Taylor & Potter, 2013). This point is highlighted by Taylor and Potter (2013, p.8) who suggest some drug dealers operate on principles of "supply option maximisation" where the perceived need for adequate drug supply outweighs network based considerations like loyalty or patronage to a

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specific supplier.

Drug dealers are also commonly assumed to be predatory and violent criminals (Coomber, 2010). For the most part, this assumption of the wider illicit drug market is false. Empirical research by Pearson and Hobbs (2003, 2004) and others suggests that violence is almost always avoided in the drug market in favour of cooperation (see also Desroches, 2007). However, these studies note that violence is "...implied if someone stepped out of line or failed to deliver on debts (Pearson & Hobbes, 2004, p. 572)." To this point Desroches (2007) conducted a review of largely qualitative analyses of drug traffickers, and suggests violence is frowned upon at the upper echelons of the drug trade.

While operators of drug markets may generally eschew violence, criminologists have long suspected that increases in violent crime, specifically increases in youth homicide rates during the 1980s, were the result of proliferating urban drug (crack) markets (Blumstein, 1995; Farrell, Tilley, Tseloni & Mailley, 2010; Levitt, 2004). Indeed, the connection between drug markets and violence may seem obvious. A dramatic illustration of this connection being Mexican cartels who are currently fighting one another in a deadly turf war over regional control of valuable drug trade routes. Thus while the average drug dealer may strive to avoid conflict, violence is heavily concentrated in certain layers of the drug supply chain.

Another misconception about drug dealing and drug markets involves the requisite level of pay. As Coomber (2010) notes, there is an assumption that drug dealers extract high levels of profit by cutting their high grade drugs with inferior substitutes. While it is likely the case that drug dealers are innovative with regards to increasing their rate of return, the profitability of drug dealing is not as pervasive as media portrayals let on. A combination of skill, and position

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matter within the drug supply chain hierarchy with regards to level of commensuration (Levitt & Lochner, 2001; MacCoun & Reuter, 1992). Levitt and Venkatesh (2000) report that the gains of drug crimes are largely skewed upwards as drug-selling gang leaders have been found to make upwards of 10-20x the amount of the average foot soldier (Desroches, 2007; Levitt & Lochner, 2001; MacCoun & Reuter, 1992). This point is buttressed by the fact that research suggests low-level retail dealers tend to make minimum wage (Bourgois, 1995; Coomber, 2010; Levitt & Venkatesh, 2000; Reuter, 2000). Furthermore, a majority of low-level drug dealers are "helpers" or "jugglers" who operate in the realm of "social supply" (see Caulkins & Reuter, 2006; Coomber, 2010; Sandberg, 2012; Taylor & Potter, 2013). Social suppliers are believed to be more concerned with helping friends than profiting from drug sales.

Drug dealing and homelessness

Given the low gains for the average retail drug dealer, selling narcotics may not seem like a worthwhile venture for most people, especially given the prevalence of robbery and risk of harm (Jacobs, Topalli & Wright, 2000; Levitt & Venkatesh, 2000; Pearson & Hobbs, 2003). However, drug dealing may be one of few opportunities available to young people living on the margins of mainstream economic and social life. For example, many homeless people lack proper identification or fixed addresses which serves as a barrier to legitimate employment. Logically then, informal markets like drug dealing become one of few options available to homeless youth (Alvi, Scott & Stanyon, 2007; Auserwald & Eyre, 2002).

Much is currently known about the relationship between homeless street youth and street crimes like drug dealing. Alvi and Scott and Stanyon (2007) provide qualitative data supporting the notion that drug dealing is a way for some homeless youth to generate extra income. Baron

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(2008) found that Canadian homeless youth who experienced anger over their unemployment, who had dropped out of the labour market, who experienced monetary dissatisfaction and who lacked state support were most likely to engage in drug dealing activity. Other research by Baron (2006) found that street youths with strong monetary goals were more likely to engage in drug dealing. Indeed, the 'situational' impact of homelessness on street crimes like drug dealing has been well researched in a Canadian context. Specifically, McCarthy and Hagan (1992) found that almost half of their Canadian sample of homeless youth sold drugs (46%). To contextualize this figure, only theft of goods valued up to 50\$ was more prevalent (49%). The effect of homelessness on rates of drug dealing is apparent when you contrast these figures with statistics from the general population of domicile youth, around 17% (Levitt & Lochner, 2001).

Aside from drug dealing, situational variables like homelessness and hunger may increase the likelihood that street youth - or any individual for that matter - will agree to co-offend with another individual. As Hagan, McCarthy and Cohen (1998) note, situational adversity increases the likelihood of cooperation if an individual facing adversity becomes more willing to trust others. Homelessness represents a particularly intense form of adversity for young people who are often living precariously without basic necessities (McCarthy & Hagan, 1992a, 1992b). As such, homeless youth who are embedded in illicit social networks with other homeless youth may be more willing to cooperate criminally in some crimes (Hagan et al, 1998), perhaps even drug crimes. Research investigating the conditions under which drug dealers become most likely to partner up and collaborate have not been explored in the drug dealing literature. This void extends to the co-offending literature too. However, as with the drug crime literature, a rich body

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of co-offending literature exists that can assist in understanding the nature of criminal partnerships in general.

Co-offending and criminal networks

When observing drug crimes many scholars assume that drug dealers at various levels of the supply chain cooperate together simply to "execute a crime in the quickest and safest way possible" (Morselli, 2009, p.53). Consequently, many criminologists and other scholars pass over interesting social processes inherent in co-offending and criminal cooperation in favour of better understanding network structure and hierarchy (Morselli, 2009). While unfortunate that so many scholars overlook the social processes of criminal partnerships, viewing criminal cooperation and co-offending through the lens of criminal networks offers valuable insights into the composition of criminal networks. Currently, the majority of researchers analyzing criminal networks of co-offenders use large scale datasets which cover a variety of co-offenses rather than specific offense types of like drug crimes (Bright & Delaney, 2013; Heber, 2009; Malm, Bicher and Nash, 2011 are notable exceptions). Because drug co-offending studies are so few, the rest of the literature review covers co-offending *broadly* although I highlight data on drug co-offenses and drug networks wherever possible. Despite the lack of co-offending research on drug crimes, Lochner and Levitt (2001) report a moderate, positive correlation between property crimes and hard drug sales in their analysis of juvenile crime suggesting that the two crimes may have etiological similarities.

Social network analysis and co-offending

Network analysis can provide some interesting information about criminal partnerships. Specifically, scholars have investigated the stability and redundancy of criminal networks and

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arrived at some interesting conclusions concerning the nature of co-offending.

Findings suggest that most individuals who co-offend have low rates of co-offender stability (McGloin & Nguyen, 2011; Sarnecki, 2001). As Warr (1996) notes, most delinquent groups are not durable or long lasting. That co-offenders rarely re-use their co-offending partners confirms Weerman's (2003, p. 401) assertion that co-offending patterns occur within ever "changing constellations" of pairs and groups (see also McGloin, Sullivan, Picquero & Bacon, 2008; Reiss & Farrington, 1991; Sarnecki, 2001). McGloin et al (2008) found that frequent offenders and those who offended in larger groups showed the highest amount of co-offender stability, although overall stability was low. Similar results were arrived at by Heber (2009) who found that a Swedish drug trafficking network of co-offenders were rarely committed more than one offense together before shifting toward a new co-offending partner. Additionally, Bright and Delaney (2013, p.256) found that many individuals were brought into a drug-based criminal network for their "specialist skills" and that network stability was contingent on only a few core actors.

Social network analysis has also shed light on the role of network redundancy within co-offending networks. Specifically, McGloin and Piquero (2010) found that individuals with less redundant co-offending networks committed a wider variety of offenses than individuals with more redundant co-offending networks. Conversely, individuals with redundant criminal networks tended to specialize in a specific co-offending niche.

Social network analysis has also helped dismantle drug supply chains, and breakup criminal networks, by identifying central actors who intimately connect others within a co-offending network (Malm & Bichler, 2011; Tayebi, Bakker, Glasser & Dabbaghian, 2011). Law

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enforcement has also used social network analysis to identify and target "core" members of a Canadian west coast street gang (Bouchard & Konarski, 2011).

The benefits of social network analysis for understanding co-offending and criminal networks are apparent in the realm of theory and policy (see McGloin & Nyugen, 2011 for a full review). However, there are limits to what SNA can provide for the study of organized crime, street gangs and co-offending groups. As Felson (2006) notes:

The network approach should not be dismissed, and has offered a good stopgap way to study criminal cooperation and organization. But the network approach has not solved the problem. It does not tell us which way influence flows as a general rule – even if it might assist a particular study. Network analysts have offered important empirical work, and some genuine findings. But that's not a *theory* of criminal cooperation and organization.

Felson's quote resonates with scholars like Carrington and van Mastrigt (2013) who suggest that testable theories of co-offending are rare. Weerman's (2003) theory of social exchange perhaps best theorizes the social dynamics inherent to co-offending. However, some scholars have long ago suggested that economic and psychological models of social exchange are tautological because they take utility maximization as a given (Crosbie, 1972; Emerson, 1976). According to the principles of social exchange, the true value of resources exchanged can only be known *ex-post*, or after the exchange has taken place. As such, any theory of social exchange - Weerman's social exchange theory of co-offending included - are subject to logical fallacies surrounding the value orientated nature of each exchange.

Instead of readily testable hypotheses, empirical works on co-offending tend to lend support for two broad based paradigms (Andresen & Felson, 2012). The paradigms are often referred to as developmental and functional/instrumental paradigms of co-offending (Carrington,

2002; Carrington, 2009). These two broad based perspectives dominate the field of co-offending and are rooted in competing explanations of co-offending and are discussed below.

Correlates of co-offending

Developmental perspective: The age/co-offending curve

One of the most robust predictors of co-offending is age. Multiple studies highlight how co-offending events are heavily clustered in the early years of offender's criminal careers (Andresen & Felson, 2012; Carrington, 2002; Carrington, 2009; McCord & Conway, 2002; van Mastrigt & Farrington, 2009; van Mastrigt & Carrington, 2013; Warr, 2002; Warr, 2009). On an aggregate level, rates of co-offending closely mirror the age/crime curve (Piquero, Farrington & Blumstein, 2007). Multiple studies demonstrate how rates of co-offending ascend sharply in childhood and early adolescence until late adolescence and early adulthood where rates of co-offending taper off. Lending broad based aggregate support for the developmental perspective of co-offending, Carrington (2002) found a near perfect correlation between age of offender and number of co-offenders present. Specifically, the number of co-offenders peaks at age 10 - with 2.34 co-offenders present on average - and begins falling afterward. These age-graded findings of co-offending have been dubbed 'fundamental regularities' by Andresen and Felson (2012).

Similarly, McCord and Conway (2002a) suggest that over two thirds of offenses first committed before age 13 were committed with at least one other person. The authors also found that age of first offense is negatively correlated with co-offending. In other words, as the age of criminogenic onset increases, the likelihood of an individual's first offense being a co-offense decreases.

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Support for the developmental perspective is even more pronounced when comparing onset of co-offending with criminal severity and persistence. McCord and Conway (2002b) found that co-offending was linked to participation in more violent crimes. Also, co-offenders who begin at a younger age were also found to commit more violent crimes with more counterparts later on in their adolescence (McCord & Conway, 2002a). Early onset co-offenders were also found to persist further into adolescence than those who did not begin co-offending early in life (McCord & Conway, 2002a). Moreover, Sarnecki (2001) found that 62% of individuals linked to at least two other co-offenders were recidivists compared to only 37% of solo offenders. These facts suggest that early onset co-offenders are on a life course trajectory categorically different from their later onset, and solo offending, peers. Recent research by Ouimet, Boivin, Leclerc, & Morselli (2013) suggest that co-offenders were more likely to be re-arrested than solo offenders. In other words, individual co-offenders are more likely to persist offending beyond their solo offending counterparts.

At the centre of the age/co-offending curve are two explanatory variables: psychosocial maturity (Goldweber & Cauffman, 2012; Goldweber, Dmitrieva, Cauffman, Picquero, & 2011; Moffit, 1993; Moffit, 1994) and time spent in the company of peers (Stolzenberg & D'Alessio, 2008; Warr, 2002, 2009). I provide an overview of how these variables relate to the developmental perspective of co-offending below.

Confounding variables in the age/co-offending relationship

Psycho-social maturity

Carrington (2002) best describes the developmental perspective and how it relates to age graded offending. He suggests the developmental perspective...

"... explains group crime as an expression of psycho-social development of the offender. Children and teenagers are said to be more likely to commit crime in group because they carry out most of their leisure activities in groups, and are most comfortable planning and carrying out crimes, like other activities from the social support that a group, or at least an accomplice, provides..." (p. 301)

Central to the developmental paradigm of co-offending is the idea that other peers provide social support, encouragement and the techniques of neutralization required to rationalize criminogenic behaviour (Goldweber et al, 2011; Warr, 2009). As such, there is an implicit acknowledgement that differential association and social learning play a role in fostering instances of co-offending (see Hochstetler, Delisi & Copes, 2002 and Warr, 2009 for a discussion of the role of social learning theories and peer/group delinquency). Research into the relationship between psycho social maturity and co-offending have yielded interesting results, namely that exclusive co-offenders were found to be more anxious than their exclusive solo-offending counterparts (Goldweber et al, 2010). Solo offenders were found to have higher levels of psycho-social maturity and self control than their mixed and co-offending counterparts (Goldweber and Cauffman, 2012; Goldweber et al, 2011).

Moffit's (1993) dual taxonomy of adolescent limited (AL) and life course persistent (LCP) offenders is commonly cited when addressing the developmental perspective's explanation of the age/co-offending curve (Carrington, 2009; McCord and Conway, 2002; McGloin et al, 2008). Moffit's (1993,1994) seminal work did not specifically address co-

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offending, but a few scholars have applied Moffit's taxonomy to the study of group crime (Carrington, 2009). These scholars suggest the age/co-offending curve is indicative of larger behavioural patterns for the majority of delinquent co-offenders who are adolescent limited offenders. Accordingly, wholesale desistance from co-offending as witnessed by the sharp drop in aggregated rates of co-offending in late adolescence and early adulthood occur because the majority of adolescent limited co-offenders desist from crime in early adulthood (Moffit, 1993; Piquero & Moffit, 2005). This logical extension is referred to as the "selective attrition" hypothesis and broadly suggests that offenders who persist are LCP offenders and are already orientated towards solo-offending (McGloin, Sullivan, Piquero & Bacon, 2008; Piquero & Blumstein, 2007; Reiss & Farrington, 1991). According to the taxonomic theory, the remaining life course persistent offenders, who continue committing crimes into adulthood are largely independent minded and tend not to offend in groups due to higher levels of psycho-social maturity. This assertion is supported by Piquero and Moffit (2005, p. 60) who note: "among LCPs, for whom co-offending is largely irrelevant, adulthood brings continued crime without the need for co-offenders".

Applying Moffit's (1993, 1994) dual taxonomy to the age/co-offending curve is compelling, but there is evidence to suggest that persistent offenders (LCP) co-offend at relatively the same rate as they offend alone (McGloin & Stickle, 2011). In some cases, persistent offenders (who may be labelled as LCP by Moffit and others) were found to co-offend more often than they offended alone (Conway & McCord, 2002). Furthermore, Reiss and Farrington (1991) found that changing offense patterns explained the observed decrease in co-offending with age, rather than a selective desistance of co-offenders who presumably made up

the ranks of adolescent limited offenders. Put simply, decreases in the aggregate co-offending rate were found to be the result of individual offenders switching from co-offenses to solo-offenses, rather than a wholesale persistence of solo offenders or a mass exodus of adolescent limited co-offenders.

A dichotomous approach to understanding co-offending appears to discount the fact that a majority of young offenders are hybrid offenders who commit a range of solo and co-offenses. Similarly, the psycho-social approach to the developmental paradigm ignores the fact that exclusive solo offenders make up a small minority of all young offenders (Goldweber et al, 2011) and are not likely to account for the entirety of offenders who persist into adulthood.

Companions in Crime and Co-offending

Warr's (2002) companions in crime hypothesis provides a competing developmental account for the aggregate age/co-offending curve. Warr (2002) suggests the relationship between age and crime [solo or co-offending] is rooted in the overwhelmingly "social nature of juvenile delinquency" (Stolzenberg & D'Alessio, 2008, p. 67). According to Warr (2002) the age-crime relationship is explained by the monumental role that peers play in almost all facets of social life during adolescence. Similarly, youth place a much stronger emphasis on the attitudes and beliefs of peers during youth and adolescence. The ties that bind peers, who in turn are usually co-offenders, peak in adolescence when delinquent offender's time spent together also peaks (Warr, 2002). As such, individuals are most susceptible to techniques of neutralization (Sykes & Matza, 1957) and internalizing definitions favorable to crime, particularly in the form of peer pressure (Warr, 2009). With this in mind, the largely age graded nature of co-offending is readily apparent - opportunity for group crime is at its highest point when time spent with already deviant peers is

also highest.

Warr's (1998, 2002) companions in crime hypothesis explains the wholesale desistance from co-offending in early adulthood as a result of weakened social ties with pro-delinquent peers. Specifically, desistance from crime [or co-offending] occurs when significant life course transitions are undertaken that limit an individual's time spent interacting with criminogenic peers (Warr, 1998). In this sense, Warr's (1998, 2002) thesis is almost a mirror image of the desistance based life course theory put forward by Sampson and Laub (1993). Warr's thesis departs from Sampson and Laub's account of life course criminality in the direction of influence (Stolzenberg & D'Alessio, 2008). Sampson and Laub (1993) suggest desistance from crime in early adulthood is rooted in the strengthening of specific pro- social bonds familiar to adulthood like work, community, marriage and post secondary education. For Warr, however, desistance from crime in early adulthood is rooted in the inevitable weakening of previously held strong ties to delinquent peers. Ties to peers are weakened because the amount of time spent together is reduced with the onset of marriage, employment, etc. Support for Warr's (2002) hypothesis as it relates to co-offending was not found when tested by Stolzenberg and D'Alessio (2008). Instead, the authors argue that co-offending is etiologically insignificant because the original (solo) age crime curve persists even subtracting co-offending events from the analysis (Stolzenberg & D'Alessio, 2008). Furthermore, cross national research suggests solo offending is the modal form of offending at all ages (Carrington, 2002; van Mastrigt & Carrington, 2013). These findings lend weight to the notion that co-offenses are largely happenstance activities which are the result of gregarious youngsters coming together for co-offenses rather than the result of peer influence or pressure.

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While the developmental perspective may be well suited for explaining the largely age-specific nature of co-offending, the perspective as a whole cannot address other important aspects of co-offending. For example, the developmental perspective is ill equipped to explain why some co-offenders persist into adulthood while others switch to solo-offending. Similarly, the developmental perspective cannot explain why some crime types, regardless of age, show consistently higher rates of co-offending than other crime types. Many violent co-offenses like homicide are not clustered in youth, and the number of co-offenders do not decrease with age like other offences. For example, Andresen and Felson (2012) found that violent crimes like homicide, aggravated assault and sexual assault depart from the standard age/co-offending curve. The authors suggest that variables other than age may better explain aggregate co-offending rates. To this point, Carrington (2009, p. 1317) notes

Although a decline with age in co-offending is evident for some offense categories, there are several exceptions. Co-offending *increases* with the offender's age for incidents of robbery, which are infrequent before the age of 10 years. The same pattern holds, to a lesser extent and at a lower level of co-offending, for drug offenses and for other offenses against the person. There is practically no change with age in the proportion of arsons that involve co-offending.

Thus while the developmental paradigm can explain the empirical regularities co-offending as they pertain to age, the *functional* paradigm of co-offending is perhaps better suited to explain co-offenses which persist into adulthood, and co-offenses that do not fit the standard age/co-offending curve.

Functional perspective: Co-offending and offense type

The functional paradigm of co-offending attempts to account for the strong relationship between co-offending and crime type (Andresen & Felson, 2012; Carrington, 2002; van Mastrigt

& Carrington, 2013). Contrary to the developmental perspective, the functional perspective of co-offending explains group crime as the result of certain crimes that are believed to be more prone to, or require, elements of co-offending. Findings from van Mastrigt and Farrington (2009, p. 566) suggest that crimes most likely to implicate partners were also crimes that benefitted greatly from having multiple offenders (e.g. burglary, theft of motor vehicle, robbery, etc). Indeed, it appears that overall support for this perspective rests in the fact that so many studies highlight the propertied nature of co-offending (Andresen & Felson, 2010; Carrington, 2002; Carrington, 2009; van Mastrigt & Carrington, 2013).

From a functional perspective, co-offending is the result of a decision making process that assumes co-offenders will be recruited whenever necessary. As such, some crimes show higher rates of co-offending into adulthood because they are perceived to require, or benefit from, co-offenders. These calculations do not take place in a vacuum however, as Hagan et al (1998) found the willingness to cooperate criminally is often related to both access to networks and individual experiences with situational adversity. In times of adversity and desperation, the perceived rewards of crime may be harder to resist (McGloin & Nyugen, 2011). This point is reinforced by Tremblay (1993) who suggests some offenders may be more willing to co-offend with individuals they would not normally co-offended with (e.g. untrustworthy individuals) and may also settle for a smaller portion of illicit gains than they would normally accept when faced with personal economic downturn or misfortune (Tremblay, 1993, p.21).

The functional perspective of co-offending has been referred to elsewhere as an 'instrumental' perspective (Bijleveld, Weerman, Looije & Hendriks, 2007; van Mastrigt & Farrington, 2009; Weerman, 2003). Instrumentalism, as a general view of human behaviour,

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prefaces rational decision making processes and purposeful behaviour. This view assumes co-offenders come together because doing so, as mentioned above, makes for "an easier, more profitable or less risky execution of a crime" (Weerman 2003, p. 403). That a functional perspective of co-offending accounts for individual offender's decision making processes is perhaps its strongest point. In this view, co-offending is deemed *profitable enough* when the perceived rewards of co-offending outweigh the perceived risks including any risks associated with co-offender betrayal (Hagan et al, 1998; Free and Murphy, 2013; Weerman, 2003). A functional perspective can also explain the processes by which co-offending partners are selected (Tremblay, 1993; van Mastrigt & Carrington, 2013). With regard to decisions and co-offending, the search for suitable co-offenders rests on a prospective partner's access/availability, skills/experience and also on "generalized social tastes" (Tremblay, 1993, p.24).

Empirical support for a functional view of co-offending is evidenced by Free and Murphy (2013) who found that over half of all fraudsters interviewed reported co-offending with others to minimize risk and maximize the gains of their crime. Alarid, Hochstetler and Burton (2009) found that some robbers co-offended for instrumental reasons like helping a friend out or because the illicit proceeds could be used to sustain a party or purchase drugs. Lastly, Carrington (2002) found some support for a functional perspective of aggregated co-offending rates because rates for some crimes (e.g. illicit gambling) are higher than all other crimes regardless of age. Similarly, co-offending rates for property crimes are higher than assault and 'other' crimes in adulthood suggesting that some offenders may recognize the utility in co-offending in adulthood (Carrington, 2002).

A functional account of co-offending is not without its faults though. To begin, offenders,

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like most people, rarely ever operate with complete information and as such conduct their affairs with 'limited' rationality (Hagan et al, 1998). Co-offending is likely not an exception to the rule of limited rationality. It is possible that little calculated thought and/or consideration is given to the cognitive facets of co-offending (e.g. suitability of co-offenders; gains splitting, etc).

Hochstetler (2001) suggests that collaboration among co-offending burglars is largely improvised in the moment with a significant amount of 'cajoling' and encouragement taking place. This assertion dilutes the theoretical significance of choice and instrumentalism in favour of peer influence and psycho-social development. Additionally, minimal levels of planning were found to take place between co-offending groups and partners suggesting that co-offenses may be the result of social selection and convenience rather than any sort of function of crime (Alarid, Burton & Hochstetler, 2009; Weerman, 2003).

To review, most drug dealing ventures occur in small entrepreneurial based partnerships that personally eschew violence (Coomber, 2010; Desroches, 2007). The amount of money a drug dealer makes is largely contingent on their role within the drug supply chain as well as their level of skill. Furthermore, drug markets are not as monopolized or as vertically rigid as media portrayals suggest. Instead, there is considerable drift between different drug dealing roles and the modal form of drug distribution is 'social supply' and 'supply optimization'. Lastly, much has been gleaned about the structure of drug markets and the prospective earnings of drug dealers, but little is known about the social and decision making processes of drug dealers who combine their efforts and co-offend together. Adding to this void, drug offences are largely ignored in the co-offending literature which instead favours property and violent crimes. These crimes are most likely to be counted as a co-offense by official sources because of the 'simultaneous' nature of

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these crime's execution. Drug co-offenses largely operate sequentially, and as such, are rarely counted as co-offenses. Thus, while much is known about co-offending, drug crimes that involve co-offenders remains understudied. Ideally, my exploratory research can fill this void even if only modestly by investigating how co-offenders chose partners for their trade, how they split their gains of crimes and why they favour cooperating criminally over drug dealing alone. I first outline the research methods used to obtain data.

Chapter three: Method

In the last chapter I reviewed the extant literature on drug crimes, co-offending and criminal networks. While the co-offending literature is thorough, almost all of these studies rely on quantitative methods. Currently, the over-reliance on official datasets like the UCR, UCR2 and other official data are subject to a "dark figure of crime" which tend to underestimate apprehended co-offenders (Carrington, 2001, 2002) and overestimate young offenders (Cesaroni & Doob, 2004). Furthermore, co-offenses are likely over represented in official datasets because of what is commonly referred to as the "group hazard hypothesis" (Hindelang, 1976; van Mastrigt & Farrington, 2009). Furthermore, many drug co-offenses occur sequentially which may lead to only one offender being apprehended at a time. If this were the case, it is possible that co-offenders are actually counted as solo offenders and are consequently excluded from official data sets.

Despite the obstacles noted above, much has been gleaned about co-offending. However, there remains much to be desired with regards to co-offending especially when one takes into account the relative lack of knowledge on drug co-offenses. To complicate matters, the literature on drug offending sorely overlooks the dynamics of drug partnerships in favour of understanding drug dealing markets and networks. Because of this fact, I took up an exploratory analysis of drug based co-offending using qualitative methods. My methods are rooted in a standpoint epistemology which seeks to highlight the lived experiences of individual actors. In doing so, my sampled participants, described below, become authority figures on the subject of drug dealing partnerships. I begin the chapter by discussing some characteristics of my sample population. I also discuss the procedure, measures and data analysis I used for this study.

Sample

In total, I interviewed 9 participants. One participant was dropped from the analysis because of a lack of experience co-offending. The remaining sampled participants ($n=8$) were young adults with an average age of 20.5. At the time of the interview, the oldest individual interviewed was 24 and the youngest was 17. While I did not ask questions concerning race/ethnicity, all my participants appeared Caucasian. Only one of the eight participants was female, a ratio I attempted to improve upon but was unable to for reasons of access. While none of my participants seem to live in absolute poverty, the majority of my participants were either unemployed at the time of the interview, or were participating in the peripherals of the service sector economy. In total, I conducted 10 hours of semi-structured interviews with participants.

Procedure: Snowball and chain-referral methods

A convenience sample of participants ($n=8$) were obtained using largely snowball and chain-referral methods. According to Biernacki and Waldorf (1981), these methods are used when a sample population is "closed" or hard to access. Because of the closed nature of my sample, I enlisted the services of two gatekeepers who I have known for quite some time. Gatekeepers are individuals who have special or privileged access to samples that may be seen as hard to access by a researcher. During two separate conversations, the gatekeepers suggested knowing young people who would qualify for the study. I gave the gatekeepers each a onetime payment of \$ 30.00 to introduce my research agenda to potential participants. The REB suggested paying my gatekeepers a lump sum so as to not unintentionally trap my gatekeepers into providing me with participants. I stressed to my gate keepers that all participants had to be active co-offenders who were over the age of 16. I reiterated this point many times to protect

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against false starts--where an individual is set to be interviewed, but is later revealed to not meet the necessary criterion (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). I provided my gatekeepers with extra consent forms so they could easily canvass friends who they thought might agree to participate.

Overall, the two gatekeepers introduced me to 4 participants. A few participants mentioned that they thought their friends would benefit from sharing their stories. One other participant was garnered in a rather serendipitous manner. Of these 4 participants, 2 referred me to a peer of theirs whom they believed fit the criteria to be interviewed accounting for 6 participants in total. During a small barbeque at a friend's house in August of 2010 I was discussing my prospective research with some old friends from my old high school. A person I did not know- but was invited none the less to the barbeque event -over heard my prospective research agenda and offered to participate. He was able to refer me to a close peer of his who agreed to be interviewed as well.

Measures

Because I employed qualitative interviews, I asked a series of questions to my sampled participants that were used to glean information on social issues. Questions were broad based and designed to help me best understand the lived experiences of my participants. For example, I began all interviews by asking simple and unthreatening questions about where the participant was born and raised, how many times (if at all) they had moved. I inquired about the relationship they had with their parents, and friends. Afterwards, I established some basic information about the participant's life circumstances.

Once rapport had been established, I began asking questions about how long each

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participant had been criminally active for. I asked participants to recollect about some of their more recent experiences co-offending with others. I made it quite clear that I wished to know about crimes that involved at least one other person. After a response was given I asked basic follow up questions to find out (among other things):

- 1.) who the participant had co-offended with (size of group, relation to the individual) ,
- 2.) was there a pattern of co-offending among those mentioned (frequency, crime type), and
- 3.) how long they had known the other person(s) for.
- 4.) what circumstances brought them to co-offend?

Upon gaining valuable insight into mostly drug based co-offenses, I asked questions concerning how participants began cooperating criminally with others. I was particularly interested in how participants arrived at decisions to co-offend. Were co-offending partners selected? If so, on what grounds? How were the gains of co-offenses split? Do sampled participants prefer co-offending to solo offending? Last, I sought to understand how individuals view their co-offending behaviour. Was co-offending beneficial? Do participants feel like they gained from their experiences cooperating criminally with others? The most recent narratives provided by the sample involved their participation in the illicit drug market. Some offenders committed other crimes too, but often times these property crimes were used to finance a drug dealing venture (e.g. fencing).

Data Analysis

In the planning stages of my research, semi-structured interviews seemed like the appropriate form of qualitative research to conduct. Open ended interviews could pose problems for coding and close ended interviews can stifle discourse, allowing little room for further

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inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Berg, 2004). In sum, employing semi structured interviews as a method of inquiry leaves room for organic growth in discussion without creating a messy 'hodgepodge' of standalone qualitative data. Semi-structured interviews also allowed me to highlight the lived experiences of individual actors on a topic as specific as co-offending without narrowing my scope of inquiry to the point where valuable insights were lost. In doing so, I fulfill an underlying methodological task of placing the authority on the topic of co-offending with those who have experienced the phenomenon first hand - the essence of standpoint epistemology. While tangential to the original study, narratives of homelessness and adversity appeared quite frequently. As such, I spend a considerable amount of attention to this fact in the discussion section of chapter five.

The data were first coded using a broad grounded theory approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1994) by listening to the interviews for any mention of co-offending partnerships. Any discussion of co-offending was analyzed more in depth and separated by crime type. For analytical reasons, I mainly focus on cooperative drug crimes because the sample suggested being most embedded in illicit drug networks. I transcribed verbatim all discussion relating to instances of co-offending including: 1.) the initial impetus/motivation to co-offend, 2.) the subsequent the decision to co-offend, and 3.) the perceived benefits of co-offending. These findings represent the majority of my findings discussed next chapter.

Limitations

While I am confident in my findings, exploratory research of this kind is not without limitations. Most notably, my sample size is small because of the difficulty in reaching the target

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population. Because of my small sample size, I cannot make causal or demographic inferences on the co-offending partnerships uncovered. Future studies exploring co-offending in a qualitative manner should seek out more participants.

Another limitation of my study is the obvious lack of demographic diversity among my sample. My findings do not account for the lived experiences of female co-offenders, and co-offenders who identify themselves as racial minorities. There is no doubt that my data would be better off with increased diversity among the sample population, especially with regards to gender and co-offending which is beginning to be explored in much greater depth (see Pettersson, 2005; Vandiver, 2006; Vandiver, 2010; van Mastrigt & Farrington, 2009). Future research on co-offending should investigate whether motivation to co-offend can be delineated based on gender.

Another limitation centers on my ability to accurately reflect the narratives of my sample. I was unable to employ methods of "transactional validity" because my sample was so closed in nature (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 321). These methods include member checking and triangulation (Cho & Trent, 2006). I was unable to go over my work with participants or gain feedback, and understand their narratives more fully. One way to get around this is to sample young people who are currently involved in desistance programs or who reside in open custody. Furthermore, much of my data on partnerships only involve a single partner. While I trust their judgement, future studies researching co-offending partnerships should strive for obtaining data from more than one member. It would be interesting to interview two members from a co-offending dyad separately and compare their perceptions and understanding of criminal cooperation.

Finally, while undergoing any qualitative exploration, researchers must be cautious of

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"deception and self-serving rationalizations concerning the subject matter" (Hochstetler, 2001, p. 742). It is possible that my participants could be constructing their co-offenses in socially desirable ways. I sought to remedy this by reiterating that there is no "right or wrong" answer to the questions asked. I suggested that I had no vested interest in obtaining controversial data. Thus, there was no need for exaggeration or hyperboles in the interviews. Most my participants replied by suggesting they had no reason to lie about their co-offenses.

Chapter four: Results

In the following chapter I analyze the narratives of youthful drug dealers who purposefully combine their drug dealing efforts. Overall, my findings are categorized into three sections including demographics, participant's history of co-offending and lastly, decision making processes associated with cooperative drug crimes. To date, no research exists in either field of co-offending or drug dealing that explores why drug dealers combine their efforts and partner with other dealers.

With this in mind, my research seeks to explore two sets of research questions. The first set explores the relationship between age, crime type and co-offense. For example, what early co-offenses did the sample population participate in? Who were these crimes committed with? How do participant's retrospectively account for these early co-offenses? The second set of research questions focus on the sample's current use of drug based co-offenders. First, do drug dealers recognize any potential benefits of cooperating criminally in the illicit drug market? Second, what criteria, if any, do drug dealers look for in potential co-offending partners? Third, how are the gains of cooperative drug dealing ventures divided?

The crux of my analysis hinges on the reader understanding that my participants, who are largely drug-specific offenders, commit both "simultaneous" and "sequential" drug co-offenses (Andersen & Felson, 2010; Tremblay, 1993; McGloin et al, 2008; Morselli, 2008). Drug co-offences committed by the sample population are diverse, and like any other transactional crime, are best understood as a fluid process involving multiple offenders cooperating together. Sometimes drug co-offences require or benefit from multiple offenders being present at the moment of transgression [simultaneous co-offense] while other times co-offenders are operating

behind the scenes ensuring the successful execution of drug sales in other ways [sequential co-offense] .

Demographics

In order to obtain data, I interviewed 9 Canadian born drug dealers. One participant's interview was dropped from the analysis because of a lack of experience involved with co-offending. This participant identified herself as strictly a 'solo' offender. Therefore the current study's sample is comprised of 8 individuals (n=8). As briefly stated last chapter, the average age of the sample population is 20.5 with two participants listed as 'young offenders' (<18) at the time of the interview. The sampled age range of the participants varied from 17 to 24 at the time of the interview.

I did not ask participants questions related to race or ethnicity, but the entire sample population appeared to be of mixed European descent (e.g., Anglo-Canadian). There was no mention of race or ethnic heritage in my participant's narratives.

The participant's socio-economic conditions are discussed more in chapter 5 but I provide a quick overview here. All my sampled participants seemed to be living on the peripheries of mainstream economic life. Only three participants held full time jobs at the time of their interview and all three were working at - or close to - minimum wage. The other 5 participants had mentioned working 'under the table' from time to time with family and friends. Five participants mentioned experiencing periods of prolonged couch surfing and homelessness. Not a single participant was enrolled in - or had completed - post secondary education. Only half the participants had their high school diplomas. All participants had been arrested at least once by the police and six participants had spent time in custody. Two spent prolonged periods of over 6

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months in provincial prison.

The sampled participants had a rich history of both offending alone and with others. The majority of participants are "mixed" offenders - committing both solo and co-offenses, representing the aggregate modal form of criminal style known as 'hybrid' offending (Goldweber et al, 2011). For the purposes of my analysis, I asked participants to focus on their criminal histories of co-offending. Co-offenses described by the sample were seemingly diverse, and included simultaneous co-offenses like destruction and defacement of public property, break and enter and theft under \$5,000 as well as sequential co-offenses like fencing, possession of narcotics with intent to distribute, simple possession, etc. All participants reported dealing drugs at the time of the interview, and each participant was currently operating within the 'retail' layer of the drug market. Only two participants suggested ever taking part in larger scale drug operations. As such, the majority of my analyses focuses on the horizontal partnerships between groups of drug dealers rather than on the vertical partnerships between different layers of the drug supply chain.

Chronologically, my sample's narratives of co-offending highlight an interesting divide with regards to what types of co-offenses are committed over the life course. Instances of co-offending described in youth and early adolescence are markedly different from instances of co-offending described in late adolescence and early adulthood. I expand on this finding below.

Criminal histories: Co-offending throughout the life course

As highlighted in the literature review, age and crime type are etiological pillars of co-offending scholarship that any co-offending study should account for. While I cannot infer my

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findings onto a general population, I am able to provide an exploratory analysis of age, crime type and offense type using qualitative methods. To date, qualitative research has been underutilized in the field of co-offending (Free and Murphy, 2013; Hochstetler, 2001 are notable examples).

To begin, all 8 participants appeared to follow a general trend of converting from 'simultaneous co-offenses' like property crimes to increasingly 'sequential co-offenses' like drug crimes with age. This transition is part of a larger transition that participants underwent in their criminal careers, switching from spontaneous delinquent offenses with few material gains in their youth to more planned and profitable market crimes in late adolescence and early adulthood. With this transition, the role and utility of co-offenders change. I highlight this transition by juxtaposing narratives of early spontaneous co-offenses with later planned crimes. In order to gauge my sample's early history of co-offending, the sample population was asked to provide anecdotes about some of their earliest and most notable memories co-offending as youth. Issues of memory recall are recognized and are noted in the limitations section of next chapter.

Happenstance property crimes and early co-offending

All 8 participants shared early experiences of participating in co-offending events. For the most part, these co-offenses were described as spontaneous endeavors that were void of planning or material gain. However, according to the sample population, co-offending in youth served two distinct purposes, namely the strengthening of (already existing) social bonds and serving as an outlet for "sneaky thrills" (Katz, 1988, p.52). Narratives of early co-offenses listed below lend some support for a *developmental* perspective of co-offending as participants

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recalled committing delinquent co-offenses with largely the same peer group, suggesting a degree of co-offender stability. This finding challenges the results from previous studies (discussed in literature review) that highlight the "ever-changing constellation" of co-offending pairs and groups (Weerman, 2003).

Boredom and the search for thrills

Four participants (n=4) described instances where they - along with childhood friends - would vandalize, deface or destroy public property. Retrospectively, these participants believed their co-offending behaviour served as a venue for alleviating boredom. For example, one participant suggests: "*When I was little my friends 'n' I used to get on our bikes and ride...we'd end up at the park and of course like we'd always go break things there.. Bottles, old junk like vcrs or whatever.*" The participant goes onto note that "*[it's] what you get for bein' in <small town Ontario>, you go kill time with friends doing whatever seems cool in the moment*"

The quest to kill time, or to neutralize boredom at least, is echoed by the next participant who describes his typical Saturday afternoon:

Well, my two friends <name> and <name> used to always come over on the weekend and like if my parents were around obviously we couldn't have any 'fun' so we'd tell my parents we were going for a walk when in reality we were going to the park to light matches all on the jungle gym and slide. Sometimes we'd get lighters and singe all plastic pieces on the gym.

After this remark, I followed up with a query asking how old he was when the aforementioned group delinquency occurred, he replied: "*It went on from, I guess, grade 7 to 8. Later on we obviously found other things to do, we grew up kind of*". Interestingly, the participant associated his prior delinquent behaviour with his young age and the maturity of his peer group. He

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suggests that vandalism became increasingly less desirable as his peer group aged. A third participant discussed how at the age of 12 he and his older sister used to pop out the back window of various neighbor's unattended houses. Interestingly, the participant suggests that items were rarely ever stolen. Instead, entering people's houses was constructed similar to Katz's (1988) "sneaky thrill" - a youthful activity that alleviates boredom but is void of acquisition or material gain:

Yeah we [my sister and I] would go into any house on the street without a car in the driveway. All you have to do is pop the back window - my sis showed me that at a really young age. It was something to do when you're young and really just trying to pass the time. It was kind of for kicks too because we never stole much. Maybe gum, candy...cookies, but nothing major. It wasn't for money, we were too young for that life.

Each of the three quotes provided (out of four participants total) suggest a pattern of continuity and stability among co-offenders. In two separate instances, participants suggested they inevitably wound up at a local park with a delinquent peer group where they would vandalize and deface public property together. The third quote I provided highlights the thrill seeking endeavors of a delinquent sibling pair. These quotes suggest that early co-offenses are primarily committed with close peers who may provide the necessary amount of encouragement and anonymity required for co-offending. Aside from alleviating boredom, participants also suggested that early instances of co-offending brought about strengthened ties. More on this below.

Bonding and trust-building

Three participants (n=3) attributed some of their early co-offenses to bonding and trust-building. These participants believed their experiencing co-offending with otherwise close peers

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served to strengthen their trust and bonds in one another. As one participant notes: "*My boys and me used to always get in fights with other groups of kids. At hockey games, or the park, any and everywhere.*" When I probed him further on the subject of his group fights and why they occurred, he speculated: "*I think we fought to prove that we were closer than all those other friends out there. I know we did everything together so really this was just another bonding thing, I think?.*" Another participant believed his time painting graffiti throughout a small downtown core with his two best friends at the age of 14 was also a trust building exercise, which he perceived as a mechanism for strengthening already existing bonds:

Participant: *I got my two friends into it [graffiti] and we would always go out and compete to do the best 'graffs' - especially around the town.*

P.I: *You all went together?*

Participant: *Yeah, [we] graffed together to make sure we could trust each other. It brought us all closer being able to say 'hey man, we did that together!'*

Finally, a third participant suggests arson was an activity that lead to increased time talking and "hanging out" :

Well, from like grade 8 to 9 all we'd [schoolyard friends] ever do is start fires when we were together. The four of us would just stand around and watch things burn, talk and hang out together. We didn't care where...the school, a backyard, a forest, a park.

Overall, the data presented from this section highlight the peer orientated nature of early co-offending. These rudimentary co-offenses are largely peer-group activities which stymie boredom and strengthen bonds between friends. Unfortunately, I was unable to assess whether these early co-offenses were the result of group processes or spontaneous offender convergence (McGloin & Picquero, 2010). Despite this, I suggest rudimentary instances of co-offending like

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the kinds described above are best understood using a developmental paradigm similar to Warr's, (2002) (see also Stolzenberg & D'Alessio, 2008). I suggest my sample's early co-offenses are etiologically grounded in a developmental paradigm because most narratives of early co-offenses were conducted in relatively static delinquent peer groups as opposed to "ever changing constellations" of co-offending groups described by Weerman (2003) and others. While it is entirely possible that a maturity gap, or deficit of psycho-social maturity may account for these early co-offenses, the sample population are almost assuredly not adolescent limited offenders (given the average age of participant is 20 years old and active in the illicit drug market).

The early co-offenses discussed by the sample population appeared to required little - if any - forethought and seemed to occur spontaneously without any discernible motive aside from thrill seeking. The narratives suggest that early motivations for co-offending were not acquisitive in nature. However, the types of crimes committed and the motivation to co-offend appear to change with age. Co-offenses committed later in a participant's criminal career are perhaps better explained by a functional/instrumental perspective of co-offending rather than a developmental perspective. More on this below.

Later criminal careers and co-offending: cooperative drug crimes

At the time of data collection, participants described being fairly active criminal offenders who committed mostly acquisitive drug crimes. While participants did commit property crimes on occasion, the sample population was mostly involved in retail drug dealing. Logically, a transition from spontaneous property crimes in youth to more planned drug crimes in adulthood involves a transition in the role and utility of partners in crime too. No longer are co-offenses seemingly the byproduct of youthful exuberance and peer influence. Instead, co-

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offending in later adolescence and occur after weighing carefully considered options, namely the benefits and drawbacks of cooperating criminally with other drug dealers. Participants also had a moderate list of qualities which they sought out in prospective partners lending support for Tremblay's (1993) functional explanation of co-offender selection. Furthermore, participants mentioned having pre established agreements about how their profits from cooperative drug sales would be divided up. Anecdotes of social exchange are also present in the narratives of gains splitting suggesting a game theoretical compromise and trade off exists between profit, sharing and co-offenders. The decision making processes associated with co-offending in the illicit drug market represents the final and most important section of my findings.

Decision making processes associated with co-offending

Benefits of drug dealing partnerships

Participants framed the need for drug co-offenders in largely *instrumental* terms and hedged their decision to sell drugs with others based on the perceived benefits and drawbacks of criminal cooperation. Although drug dealers operate with imperfect and incomplete knowledge, the sampled pool of drug dealers believed co-offending provided more benefits than drawbacks overall. Only three participants noted any drawbacks of cooperating criminally with others in the illicit drug market. All three participants believed partnering with other drug dealers carried an inherent risk of betrayal. Despite these objections, the overall consensus among participants was that co-offenders provided a net benefit to drug crimes.

Participants believed partnering with co-offenders for drug crimes was beneficial for two reasons: co-offenders were perceived to provide strength in numbers and also perceived to increase overall group access to criminal resources. According to the sample population, the

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efforts of co-offending peers aided in the successful day to day operations of drug dealing.

Broadly speaking, co-offending peers ensured drug product and/or cash were not stolen and were expected to assist if they witnessed theft or hostile activities. Participants framed the belief that co-offending was beneficial by providing specific anecdotes of how co-offending in the drug market was beneficial to them. Belief in the utility of co-offenders lends support for an *instrumental* perspective of co-offending which explains co-offending as the result of a decision making process that weighs the advantages and disadvantages of criminal cooperation (Hagan et al, 1998; Weerman, 2003).

Strength in numbers

Committing drug crimes with co-offenders was primarily seen as beneficial by the sample population because of the increased protection they afford. A total of four participants (n=4) cited increased protection as a benefit of dealing drugs in a group setting. Participants suggested that bringing peers along for drug deals assisted in both bulk pick up and individual sales. Having peers present was perceived to deter potentially hostile groups or individuals looking to steal cash or drugs. Participants mentioned feeling secure when dealing drugs with other peers and did not believe they would be betrayed by their peer group. Specifically participants believed their drug crimes were more safe, and consequently, more successful as a result of having friends accompany them. As one participant notes, keeping in the company of other trusted drug dealers offers added protection by virtue of strength in numbers: "*You can hustle [sell drugs] alone, but I think it's a lot riskier. I always keep other people around because its good protection..especially if you're all carrying bags [of weed].*" Clearly, this participant sees the benefit in keeping other friendly 'hustlers' around. Another participant suggests dealing

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drugs alone makes a drug dealer vulnerable to ambush or attack. As such, he usually deals drugs with a couple of friends *"I deal drugs with friends mainly for the security aspect. You're way more vulnerable [dealing] by yourself."* The next participant I cite described in detail why he insists on having his friends around daily while he sells drugs:

When I sell [drugs] I want my boys with me. They got my 6 [back] checked if anything goes down or if someone comes running up in here and tries to pull fast moves. I think for that reason alone it is way better to sell with friends than to go in alone.

The participant suggests his peers would intervene on his behalf should they witness theft or encounter any hostile rivals. This narrative highlights the role of staying in the company of a trusted peer group at all times when dealing, namely that peers serve an important function of deterring potential threats- *real or perceived*. Unlike other participants, the last participant's peer group did not have a monetary investment in the drug stock being sold. This participant is a more peer orientated solo dealer whose peer group openly serves as a buffer between valuable illicit commodities and hostile others. The group's protective function suggests they operate as 'extended' co-offenders. In exchange for receiving continuous protection during drug sales, the participant suggested having to occasionally provide free drugs as payment to his loyal friends. It could be the case that the participant's peers recognize that by assisting their drug dealing peer they are actually aiding in the continuity of their own party lifestyle - similar to findings by Alarid et al, (2009). This process represents a social exchange of protection for a payment or a share of the 'catch' (Weerman, 2003, p. 406). This payment for protection is likely far easier to come to terms with than the anxiety or fear of being "taxed" [have your illicit drug supply stolen] by robbers or other drug dealers (Jacobs, Topalli & Wright, 2000).

The last participant who discussed utilizing co-offenders for the protection afforded by

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strength in numbers suggested that the benefits of protection applies to all crimes equally, rather than simply drug deals: "*Just having someone watch your back makes any crime go way smoother. Knowing that if shit goes down you have someone watching your back is key*" (my emphasis). This quote supports the notion that the functional benefits of drug co-offenses can be logically extended to other crimes. There is every reason to believe the benefits of co-offending extend into other crime types. It is likely the case that burglars, thieves, etc benefit from having look outs as much as drug offenders do.

Criminal capital and resource sharing

Another instrumental benefit to having co-offending drug dealers present is the diversity of resources and criminal capital perceived to be offered. Three participants (n=3) described these benefits as integral explanations as to why they cooperate criminally with others in the underground drug market. Although specialized offenders like drug dealers often have overlapping and redundant networks (McGloin & Picquero, 2010), some participants believed partnering with other specialized drug dealers would provide additional sources for criminal capital. Co-offending peers can also provide more conventional resources like housing, food, consumable drugs, etc. One participant states how he and his partners combined efforts to more effectively sell drugs by reaching the widest possible audience:

Getting customers and money together by yourself can be hard. Partners help with that, right? I never go on my own for that reason. I've always got buddies that I help, and who help me with whatever I need to make a deal happen.

The instrumental benefits provided by co-offending peers may be the difference between success and failure in the drug industry, as a participant quoted below believes his peer group would

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have been unsuccessful as solo drug dealers. He suggests that drug crimes often require more resources than any single offender can functionally provide (cash, contacts, safe place to sell and store drugs, etc). As such, individuals partner up and pool shared resources and criminal capital in order to effectively sell drugs :

I think none of us would have made it on our own because we just didn't have what it took by ourselves... but it was easy to hustle dope with the people in our group. Everyone was on their cell phones making [drug] deals happen for us or doing something to get the word out.

Lastly, a participant suggests that the ultimate benefit of selling drugs with peers is the increased access to supply and consumption markets: "*Whenever I sell with someone I make sure of one thing..they gotta already have their own contacts already man...that way I meet new people to buy off of and to chop to.*". Interpreted differently, the quote above suggests the participant in question will only partner with dealers who are already established, and who can increase group levels of criminal capital. Perhaps this participant recognizes that criminal capital gleaned from a co-offender can prove valuable even after a partnership ends. Of course, this possibility is two sided, as any potential partner is likely to benefit from the participant's expertise, resources and contacts.

As the quotes above suggest, drug dealing partners have the capacity to bring in criminal capital and access to new supply/customer markets. Cooperating criminally with others is supposedly also beneficial because of the ability to advertise new product. Coupled with the fact that co-offenders were viewed as providing protection, these findings lend weight for an instrumental perspective of co-offending because partners in crime were perceived to help increase the success rate of drug sales in two ways, through protection and increased access to

criminal capital (usually in the form of access to new markets and contacts). While I have just documented some of the perceived benefits of co-offending from a sample of drug dealers, I now focus on the selection process that drug dealers undertake.

The selection process: picking partners

The perceived 'benefits' of co-offending discussed by the sample population in the last section closely mirrored the qualities they sought out in potential drug dealing partners. This finding reaffirms exploratory support for a 'functional' and 'instrumental' perspective of co-offending. With regards to choosing drug dealing partners, two themes emerged from my participant's narratives. First, and perhaps unsurprisingly, trustworthiness was the single most important variable with regards to picking a partner to deal drugs with. Second, the skills and expertise associated with dealing drugs was found to also be of critical importance when faced with co-offender selection. It should be noted however that the variables discussed by the sample population are constrained by obvious network factors. Not surprisingly then, participants picked the most skillful and trustworthy drug dealers available to them from a larger network of friends and known acquaintances.

Trustworthiness

All 8 participants (n=8) suggested they would only cooperate criminally in the illicit drug market with others unless there was a pre-established level of trust between everyone involved. If you recall earlier in this chapter, trust-building was perceived by two participants to be an outcome of co-offending with others in youth and early adolescence. Interestingly, in late adolescence and early adulthood, social bonds of trust become an apparent precondition for co-

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offending together in the illicit drug market. As one participant notes: "*I only deal [drugs] with friends who I know I can really trust*" suggesting that trust is crucial for drug dealers who wish to combine efforts.

The already established rapport between co-offending drug dealers appears to dissuade partners against betrayal or other double-crossing behaviour. It may simply be too costly to betray co-offending partners who are also close friends. Affective ties of these kinds, as mentioned by Murphy and Free (2013) promote co-offender stability. With regards to potential co-offender betrayal, three participants within the larger sample (n=3) described trustworthiness specifically as a measure to protect against co-offender betrayal. As one participant notes: "*With so much cash and drugs and shit lying around my place, I only have friends I can trust around...it's like insurance against being screwed over.*". The next two participants frame their views on trust similarly. While their views on the role of trust in criminal partnerships are generalizations toward all crime, there is little doubt their views on trust are applicable to drug partnerships as well as other group crime. As one participant notes:

You see...trust was never an issue with us. We were like brothers, you know? We all had each other's best interest in mind because that's how everyone gained. We wanted more than what we had and the best way to get that was to stick together. There's no need to screw each other over, ever.

Oh [trust]- it's everything man. If I'm putting all my money and time in this [drug dealing] I need good friends that won't double cross me or stick me up. Like we all help each other out and really there's not much point in screwing each other over.

Trust is not always conditional upon a long lasting friendship or fraternity like the participants above suggested. As the next participant suggests, trust can be earned through moderated trials:

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You can do [illegal] things with the person....simple shit. If they don't flip ya out [double cross/betray] then, you know...maybe they're more trust worthy than someone you've known for 3-4 years. It comes down to what's in it for them I think." He goes on to note " If you have a decent amount of trust for 'em [after the trial run] ...it's good enough, you don't need to know them forever.

In other words, while pre-established rapport and trust may be what promotes criminal cooperation and dissuades betrayal, trust can be earned rather than established over long periods of time. In some instances (perhaps moderated by levels of adversity or desperation) a potential partner can be vetted quickly by doing rudimentary tasks related to drug crime (e.g. make a solo deal on behalf of the group).

Experience, skills and criminal capital

Similar to how a benefit of entering illicit partnerships is the increased access to networks and resources relevant to drug dealing, a few participants (n=3) also suggested partnering with another drug dealer was contingent on the partner having a fair amount of expertise and skill. As the first participant suggests: "*Normally I'd chose someone based on their skill and what they bring to my crime[drug dealing]."* He goes on to note "*You want to be successful and the right person can make that happen"*. Another participant describes how he only accepts a co-offending partner with equivalent experience selling drugs:

...Someone who knows what they're doing...someone who has a backup plan.....like they have their trade down. If you hustle [sell drugs] you need to be good at it so why would I hustle with someone who doesn't know what the fuck they're doing.

A third participant echoes this point and suggests: "*I'm in the drug game with <two names> for a reason... they can teach me stuff I don't already know. They're older than me and show me a lot*

of tricks." He makes sure to note, however: "*Don't get me wrong, I've been on the block awhile, but these guys are pro*".

It is clear from narratives above that the three sampled drug dealers prefer a partner with equivalent or higher levels of skill and experience selling drugs. This is likely the case for instrumental reasons. By partnering up with equivalent, or more talented drug dealers, the sampled population is able to increase their own levels of criminal capital and better position themselves for future endeavours in the illicit drug market. Veteran drug dealing peers are accompanied by a wealth of knowledge and past experiences which can increase the effectiveness and profitability of drug crime. The last quote in particular highlights the role of tutelage in the commission of drug crimes. Specifically, veterans can teach younger drug dealers new techniques and rationalities favourable to drug crimes. Accordingly, the prospects for a high rate of success/profit and a low rate of detection are increased with the assistance of seasoned veterans who can serve to further embed drug dealers in criminal networks.

In the next section, I discuss how the gains of drug dealing partnerships are divided.

Gains splitting: Social and economic rationalities

Fifty - Fifty: equal gains splitting

The most common form of gains splitting discussed involves splitting the proceeds of illicit market sales as evenly as possible. This finding is more in line with ideas of social exchange than pure instrumentality. Sharing the illicit gains of crime did not dissuade any participants from cooperating criminally in the illicit drug market. In fact, gains splitting almost seemed natural to the participants which suggests they may see their illicit ventures as '*profitable enough*' (Weerman, 2003) even after sharing in the gains of crime. Simply put, gains splitting

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appeared to be just another variable to be considered by the sample population when deciding whether to co-offend or not.

Overall, all 8 individuals (n=8) suggested equal gains splitting was the modal form of payment. As one participant states "*I don't usually have product, but I know a lot of fiends man... a lot! So, if I bring my boy [close friend] a customer wanting pills or snow I'd get a 50% cut of the profit.*" I continued by asking if the aforementioned arrangement was planned in advance to which he replied "*Yeah we've been doing it [planned drug deals] for a while.*" The fact that his commission is half of the profit suggests his co-offending peer recognizes this participant's contribution to his drug dealing efforts, and values his partnership.

Another participant recalls an assumed agreement he had with his friends who he regularly sold drugs with. This sampled drug dealer in particular represents a minority of participants sampled who described actually earning a sizable income from their drug sales:

I was sellin' a few 8 balls[3.5 grams of cocaine] every day. Get it for cheap 'n' re-sellin' it for like 200\$ a day- profit... like every day of the week. You'd be crazy not to. I did it for two years with my boys straight and each of us made a lot of money.... I'd do anything to get back to that.

He continues, "*We'd constantly just do 50/50 or split [profits] three ways depending on who was in at the time.*". Again, the above narrative suggests the participant and his drug dealing peers are on equal footing with regards to contributions and investments in their cooperative drug dealing enterprise. It is likely the case that sampled participants doled out equal shares of the gains of drug dealing because their members deserved equal shares. This suggestion corroborates my earlier finding that participants preferred to sell drugs with individuals with relatively same (or higher) level of skills, experience and networks.

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While purely speculation, dividing out equal portions of the gains from drug deals could serve as a mechanism for protecting against free riding members who seek out the rewards of partnership without providing the necessary input (Faschamps, 1992). Free riding members would almost certainly be uncovered in intimate drug dealing groups by virtue of their being few members. The issue of free riding was actually a common theme in my research. Participants described a desire to be fully squared up with their friends who doubled as their co-offending partners. For example, one participant described how he used his share of illicit drug revenue to pay rent to his partner whom he was staying with.

I ended up moving in with a friend of mine who lived close to my sister and her husband. He knew lots of people looking for dope and I had the connections for it. It started out being really fun, but I felt like I was using my friend whose place I was crashing at.

We agreed I'd start paying rent. It felt good paying rent, you know? Finally, I wasn't dead weight. Half the money made from dealing was mine and I used it to buy the things I had always wanted: my own TV, my own bed, my own clothes, my own groceries (my emphasis).

While the majority of drug dealing partnerships discussed by the sample population are premised on equality of gains earned, sometimes the profits of drug dealing ventures have more temporary and social uses. In these instances, most or all of an individual share of gains are forfeited for the benefit of a partner in need. More on this below.

Ad hoc gains splitting: helping friend's in need

I found multiple instances where a drug dealer's earned gains were willfully given to their drug co-offender(s) who were perceived to be considerably more in need of monetary assistance. In this sense, giving up one's stake in a drug dealing enterprise (even if only temporarily) is akin to a gift (Mauss, 1990) or social exchange described by Blau (1964), Weerman (2003) and other

social exchange theorists and is discussed at length next chapter.

In total, six participants (n=6) provided specific anecdotes where they either forfeited their stake in a drug dealing partnership for the benefit of a partner, or charitably received the stake of their partner(s) forfeited earnings. Almost all of these examples are one time occurrences, suggesting this 'ad hoc' mode of gains splitting was more of a short term arrangement designed to meet specific ends for another person. For example, a participant below describes aiding a friend in eliminating a large drug dealing debt. The participant did this by selling large sums of his peer's marijuana for free. Any profit made by the participant was used to pay down his younger friend-turned drug dealing partner's debt.

One of my good buddies...he was chopping [selling weed] for awhile and a few months ago he smoked me up mad. He smoked so much dope in general that he fucked himself over hardcore and got into debt with the wrong people. He just turned 17 and he shouldn't be fucking up hard. So I'm like "I've sold enough weed, you don't need to go through that problem." I gave the money I made from selling the rest of his stash to him and he gave it to the guy. I don't even think it was all of it but he was happy he didn't just duck and dodge.

By forfeiting his 'earned' stake in the gains of his drug dealing venture, the participant assisted his friend in eliminating a sizable drug dealing debt. Principles of social exchange (Blau, 1964; Weerman, 2003) suggest the participant would receive increased levels of social rewards like esteem and respect in exchange for the forfeiture of his monetary rewards. Another participant recalls how she was the recipient of such charitable gains splitting behaviour from two drug dealing friends. The participant in question was provided with a large quantity of ecstasy pills from two friends who reportedly understood that she was facing eviction. Once again, trust is a central theme among co-offending drug dealers who decide to cooperate together.

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Well they knew my situation and they didn't have much money themselves to help but c'mon they're like my best friends and obviously trusted me so they just shot [fronted] me a big bag of pills for like next to nothing.

The participant's pill-selling enterprise would not have been possible without the intimate criminal cooperation from her two trusted friends. While her friends were not present for every individual drug sale, no drug sale would have been possible without their one time contribution of subsidized criminal capital [ecstasy pills]. By providing her with the criminal capital necessary to get started upfront, the sampled participant was able to raise a large sum of cash quickly that could be paid back over an agreed period of time at a discounted price. By providing the drugs at a substantially discounted price, the participant's two friends are essentially giving away the majority, if not all, of their profit margin. The amount of resource sharing and criminal cooperation involved in this social exchange suggest they have partnered up as sequential, or extended, co-offenders.

Another participant describes being given cocaine to sell to known acquaintances by two older peers. Again, the fluid nature of extended drug co-offending is highlighted as the participant mentions delivering drugs for these two older peers- who were themselves co-offenders. While the participant sold these drugs alone, he was given the drugs at a discounted price that allowed him to achieve a substantially higher rate of profit. Again, we see an example of co-offenders forfeiting their stake in drug crimes so a partner can more fully benefit.

I'd be chilling out at this place we called the batcave--it was a place where we'd all hang out with these older people. They sold a lot of coke--like a lot man. So, once in awhile I'd go deliver it for them if they were tied up. They let me keep any change or extra coke that was left over (I could sell that to someone).

The donation of criminal capital, which leads to the realization of drug profits is best understood as a social exchange. In the exchanges mentioned above, respect and appreciation are being

traded for material forms of criminal capital (e.g. drug product to sell). These gestures are charitable, but may serve as a sort of criminogenic 'starting mechanism' (originally described by Blau, 1964; 2002). Starting mechanisms serve to further embed an individual in a network or community by virtue of a culturally perceived obligation to reciprocate gifts both given and received (Blau, 1964; Mauss, 1990). This fact is discussed more in the next chapter.

Summary

The findings from my qualitative analysis were exploratory in nature and premised on decision making processes relevant to drug dealing partnerships. Research of this kind has not been undertaken in either the drug dealing, or the co-offending, literature. Currently, most co-offending studies utilize official datasets which sorely under represent the amount of drug crimes. In the drug dealing literature, a focus on the processes by which drug dealing partnerships are forged were not found. My research seeks to fill this void modestly, and in an exploratory way. By doing so, I have uncovered some interesting findings. Overall, my findings were three fold. First, drug dealers were found to have a rich history co-offending with others. However, the role and utility of co-offenders changed with age and type of crime committed. In youth and early adolescence co-offending appeared as a byproduct of peer influence and boredom. These offenses can be labeled co-offenses simply by virtue of occupying the same time and space as the crime being committed. Usually, early 'simultaneous' co-offenses [delinquent property crimes] were attributed to boredom or social-bond building. Upon recall of these early co-offenses, no consideration was apparently given to the skill set of each co-offender present, or their trustworthiness. Co-offenses of this kind are likely explained using a developmental perspective of co-offending described in the literature review. This fact changed with age and

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crime type however. By late adolescence and early adulthood, all participants became embedded in underground drug markets and the role of partners in crime changed. Now, co-offenders were utilized in order to make drug sales more effective and successful, as drug dealing partners were perceived to provide protection and access to criminal capital and networks.

Second, the sample population saw a necessity in teaming up with other co-offenders, despite some minor reservations about being double crossed. The best way to alleviate fear of betrayal was in cooperating with individuals where a high level of trust and rapport was already established. Despite the ever present risk of betrayal by a co-offender, participants seemed more than willing to cooperate criminally with others for instrumental reasons: partners in drug crime were perceived to help secure and improve the overall profitability of drug crimes.

With regards to partnering with other drug dealers, trust was the single most important trait or variable described by the sample population. The role of trust in late adolescence and early adulthood marks a departure from early co-offenses where trust was an outcome of co-offending, rather than a pre-condition. This likely has more to do with the type of crime being committed, rather than just a product of 'growing up'. Logically, there is more at stake for a 19 year old drug dealer who is betrayed than a 14 year old graffiti artist, or neighborhood vandal who is betrayed. So while a vandal or graffiti artist may learn to trust others as an outcome of co-offending, a drug dealer requires the trust already be present as a precondition to co-offend.

Last, the majority of participants were found to divide the proceeds of crime equally among all those involved. This is likely because, all drug dealers involved in (mostly) dyadic and triadic partnerships shared equivalent levels of skill and experience. As such, it would seem that an equal share of the gains of drug dealing is the result of an equal amount of input from all those

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involved. Aside from equal gains splitting, participants provided specific anecdotes of forfeiting their monetary gains so that a co-offending peer could benefit. These instances almost always revolved around eliminating previously held debts, or avoiding homelessness. This behaviour marks a departure from instrumental rationality and perhaps can be better explained by the processes of social exchange. While co-offenders may forfeit monetary gains in the present, it is entirely possible they are actually setting themselves up for reciprocal actions in the future.

Chapter Five: Discussion

In this chapter, I situate my findings in a broader context of epistemology and public policy. With regards to epistemology, I discuss how my findings relate to the literature of co-offending and drug crimes broadly. I also discuss the need for more qualitative research in the field of criminal partnerships and co-offending and highlight some of the limitations of what I see as an overly quantitative field. With regards to public policy, I discuss youth poverty and homelessness, which were salient issues in the lives of my sample population and seemed to be related to the decision to sell drugs and co-offend.

Epistemology

Defining and measuring co-offenses and co-offenders

Drug dealing partnerships occur in multiple ways from two dealers partnering up and dividing duties, to more regimented divisions of labour including buying, selling, storage, protection. Whether these partnerships are considered 'co-offenses' or not is a matter of debate. The majority of scholars publishing in the field of co-offending adhere to Reiss' (1986, 1988) and Reiss and Farrington's (1991) original definition of a co-offense. Under this definition, co-offenders must cooperate in a "simultaneous" manner. That is to say, they must both be present in the time and space of the criminal event. Consequently, any member of the group operating away from the crime event as it unfolds in real time is somehow existentially labelled a solo offender. In this sense, a hypothetical get-away driver aiding in a bank robbery would not constitute a co-offender if he or she is not present for the actual robbery. That being said, they may be guilty of a whole host of other crimes related to that criminal event. Many of the drug crimes my sample population discussed would not be counted as co-offenses using a

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simultaneous definition. The fact that drug crimes make up such a low portion of co-offenses in official datasets suggest that traditional measures of co-offending may inadvertently restrict some crime types. While drug crimes may be counted as mostly solo affairs as far as official datasets are concerned, my sample showed this is not the case. Co-offenders are often utilized in drug crimes - in diverse ways. In some instances of drug co-offending, multiple dealers are present at the moment of transgression, where as other times co-offenders are cooperating criminally behind the scenes supplying criminal capital and other resources.

Scholars working in the field of co-offending should move away from such a rigid concept of co-offending. Researchers could benefit from adopting a more fluid and expanded definition of co-offending that can account for the diverse forms of co-offenses that exist, especially in transactional crimes like drug dealing. How co-offenses are understood is directly related to what is known about co-offending, especially with regards to the prominent "age/co-offending curve" (Andresen & Felson, 2010; Stolzenberg & D'Alessio, 2008). Co-offending data using narrow [simultaneous only] definitions are likely underestimating the number of drug crimes that are actually co-offenses. This fact has wide ranging implications. Specifically, the distribution of the age/co-offending curve may peak later than what the current 'empirical regularities' (derived from simultaneous definitions of co-offending) suggest. Aggregate studies that are able to utilize Tremblay's (1993) and Felson's (2009) more fluid definitions of extended co-offending could go a long way to further what is known about the age/co-offending curve. Measures of extended co-offending should take into consideration levels of resource sharing and criminal cooperation.

Co-offending over the life course: from development to functionality

As discussed in the literature review, the field of co-offending is heavily invested in trying to account for the age/co-offending curve. This observed phenomenon takes the form of an inverted 'U-shape' which sees most instances of co-offending taper off in late adolescence and early adulthood (around ages 18-24). While I cannot generalize my findings, my data corroborate findings on early co-offenses in some ways and challenge them in others. To begin, my sampled pool of participants suggested committing a variety of co-offenses in their youth and the majority of these crimes were property crimes. Aggregate studies suggest property crimes are the modal type of co-offense in youth. However, my participants did not conform to a developmental paradigm of co-offending in their later years. Specifically, developmental perspectives suggest that offenders who persist transition toward an "increasingly solo trajectory" of crime (Goldweber et al, 2011). As has been suggested throughout, participants relied on the expertise, skills and resources to fulfill some of the functional requirements of drug crimes into adulthood. The fact that co-offenders were utilized in late adolescence and early adulthood for a variety of roles supports a functional paradigm of co-offending. Even the peers of more "solo" orientated drug dealers acted as co-offenders by routinely providing protection suggesting drug dealers will utilize close friends for purposive reasons.

Furthermore, the sample population appeared to have relatively stable bonds with their co-offending peers in both youth and as late adolescents / young adults. This finding departs from the majority of studies that find most co-offending partnerships are short lived affairs. Similar to what Free and Murphy (2013) suggest, acquisitive co-offenses like drug dealing may benefit more than other crimes from strong, affective, co-offending bonds. Rapport and trust are

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not easily obtained and as such, co-offender stability may be required for drug crimes to be executed. For example, specialized offenders like drug dealers may have redundant networks (McGloin & Picquero, 2010). Betraying a partner in drug crime may reduce a dealer's standing within a peer group or criminal network. If this is the case, individuals would likely experience difficulty partnering up with others if they are perceived as greedy or impulsive. Future research should investigate the qualitative components of co-offender stability. For example, little is known about what causes drug co-offending partnerships to dissolve. Research in co-offender betrayal would also be beneficial given my findings.

Drug crimes, co-offending and criminological verstehen

Currently, drug crimes are rarely discussed in the co-offending literature. Moreover, the extant drug crime literature often overlooks the collaboration and cooperation involved in drug dealing partnerships in favour of criminal organization structure and hierarchy (Morselli, 2009). While my sampled participants are obviously part of a wider drug dealing network, the social dynamics I investigate largely occurred in individual dyads, triads or larger groups should not be overlooked. As Felson (2006) notes, the use of social network analysis and the network perspective more broadly has been useful for understanding many aspects of how crime is organized and structured. However, analyses of social networks are largely void of theory and cannot answer questions of criminogenic influence, motivation, and how criminogenic partnerships are forged. While social network and other quantitative analyses are undoubtedly important, so is rich description and ethnography which can situate drug crimes and co-offending in a wider - structural - context. As it stands, few qualitative research studies on criminal cooperation exists which situate crime within larger structural forces. Perhaps this is where

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scholars in the field of drug crime can assist. For example, Bourgois and Schonberg (2009) show how a community of addicted bodies operate and exchange resources within the framework of a 'moral economy'. Similarly, Bourgois' (1995) earlier work situates the narratives of crack - cocaine dealers within a broader context of urban poverty and cultural conflict. Future work on drug crimes should highlight how structural and situational variables entice drug offenders to utilize the skills and labour of other offenders.

Instrumentality, social exchange and game theory

The decision making processes associated with my sample of co-offenders can be seen as instrumental in the sense that co-offending was a purposeful behaviour brought about by weighing benefits and drawbacks. The skills, experiences and contacts garnered by co-offending with others was recognized by the sample population as a benefit of engaging in criminal cooperation.

Despite making purposeful decisions, my sample did not operate with complete information. Instead, like most offenders, they operated with incomplete information and their decisions making processes are best described as being "limited" or "bounded" in terms of rationality (Cornish & Clarke, 2008; Hagan et al, 1998; van Mastrigt & Carrington, 2013). For example, only three participants suggested any fear of co-offender betrayal. Participants seemed to downplay risks which may not be wise, given the well documented "group hazard hypothesis" described elsewhere (Erikson, 1973). Of course, however, participants would only partner with individuals who they felt were already trustworthy suggesting participants do take some measures to decrease the chance of betrayal.

Despite the instrumental nature of co-offending, the rationality most closely linked to my

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participants does not mirror neoclassical models of *homo economicus* (Becker, 1968). First, and congruent with other works in drug crime, dealing in the lower echelons of the drug market does not pay well. Only two participants of eight described ever making a sizable income from drug dealing. Previous studies have found that lower end 'foot soldiers' like my sample rarely made more than minimum wage (Levitt & Lochner, 2001; Levitt and Venkatesh, 2000; McCarthy, 2002). It would be more profitable for my sample to seek out other criminal skills and diversify their criminal talents in an attempt to maximize profits and minimize network redundancy (McGloin & Piquero, 2010). Instead, participants tended to specialize in their respective drug trade.

Second, and further against the point of neoclassical models of decision making, the gains of drug dealing were equally divided among all co-offenders without any contention. The logic of equal gains splitting seemed almost natural to the participants who were invested stakeholders. If participants mirrored *homo economicus* more closely, they would likely expect a pay more commensurate to individual input. Countering this framework, equal gains splitting may actually serve as a form of mutual insurance or subsidy. In the event that a drug dealer performs poorly from time to time, they will be supported by the sales of their peers. A neoclassical model of co-offender decision making would suggest partners in drug crime would either attempt to sell as little as possible in order to reap the subsidies provided by others (referred to as free riding), or they would exit the peer group if they believed their profits went to subsidizing others. Neither of these possibilities occurred.

The fact that gains were so equitably divided suggests my participant's co-offending instrumentalism operates in a game theoretical way where the decisions of others are considered

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(Hagan et al, 1998; McCarthy, 2002). Participants may feel as though they or one of their partners will one day hit "the big score". If the sample population viewed this dream as a plausible scenario, it would be prudent to hold out on any short term gain associated with co-offender betrayal. Loyalty will one day pay off if drug dealers believe their peer group has a realistic chance at rising the ranks of the drug supply chain.

A game theoretical understanding of co-offender rationality may also account for why offenders are so quick to help out prospective co-offenders in need. Put simply, drug dealers may be subtly increasing their own chances of future success by ensuring the success of their peers in the present. This finding is most applicable to 'ad hoc' forms gain splitting. By forfeiting profit so that a friend can more fully benefit in the present, participants are able to secure favourable status for future co-offending negotiations. In other words, while their behaviour was charitable and premised on good intentions, co-offenders stand to gain from successfully helping a friend out as that friend will likely one day repay the favour, perhaps with interest. Research should be conducted on the motivations associated with criminal cooperation, especially when the incentives and benefits of co-offending are not immediately obtainable or clear. This research may uncover whether co-offender's assistance is genuine, or a stating mechanism designed to instigate future reciprocity.

Public Policy

Young people, poverty and opportunity

At the time of data collection, the vast majority of my sampled participants were living on the fringes of mainstream economic life . Only three of eight participants sampled had full time jobs. The three participants who had full time jobs were working for, or slightly above,

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minimum wage. While the sample population did not suggest having co-dependents to provide for, it was obvious to see their paychecks did not go far. Only one participant lived at home with parents. The rest of the participants lived in run-down units with friends and acquaintances. On top of the harsh economic climate participants were already faced with, only half the participants had a high school diploma. The sampled population will likely continue to live on the fringes of mainstream economic life unless efforts are made by all levels of government to provide funding and job opportunities for young people.

Youth unemployment and underemployment

At the time of data collection in 2011, the unemployment rate among young workers aged 15-24 was over 17%. As of March, 2013 the number of unemployed young people was at 14.2% (Statistics Canada, 2013). While some progress has been made, the current rate is almost twice the national average. While a direct correlation between youth unemployment and crime is illusive and often mediated by other variables like anger (Baron, 2008) and situational adversity, greater efforts should still be made to tap into the potential creativity and energy of young people. For example, two participants produced their own rap music but discussed lacking the capacity to produce and market their talents properly. Multiple participants discussed working informally in a number of skilled trades but lacked any certifications or formal training. Given the realities of the new service economy, training should focus on skills that can lead to opportunities for self-employment like general contracting, media production and culinary arts (to name a few). Training programs should also provide modules on financial literacy and planning. Given that my sample of young adults have shown a considerable amount of resilience

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and perseverance with regards to survival strategies (albeit illicit strategies) there is every reason to believe they could find reasonable success with the right amount of support and investment.

Education and training programs are not a panacea though. Even if youth receive education and training, levels of underemployment among youth aged 15-24 will likely continue given the high unemployment rate. Underemployment is a less visible issue than unemployment, but is detrimental nonetheless. According to the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada (2013, p.54) "The consequences of underemployment for an individual may appear through the erosion or loss of skills, knowledge and abilities, diminished current and life-long income, job dissatisfaction and emotional distress". Youth underemployment is an issue that ought to be tackled for multiple reasons, including is the fact that young people are a population at increased risk of homelessness.

Youth homelessness and couch surfing

Quite a few participants mentioned experiencing temporary periods of homelessness. While participants had extensive friendship networks they could rely on for food and shelter in times of need, couch surfing at a friend's house is obviously a short term solution to a long term problem. Interestingly, participants internalized the reasons for having to leave home in almost all circumstances. For example, one participant suggested he was kicked out of his house after his mother caught him doing "*stupid kid shit*". Another participant was caught stealing from department stores and was subsequently asked to leave. These anecdotes lend support for Currie's (2004) suggestion that parents and the larger culture in general are becoming increasingly reliant on a "sink or swim" ethos characterized by an inversion of responsibility (from parent onto child) and a strong intolerance for delinquency and rule breaking (Alvi, Scott

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& Stanyon, 2010). While parents are expected to set rules, social Darwinism as a parenting guide only serve to exacerbate the problem of youth crime and homelessness. Efforts should be made to provide safe public housing for youth who leave home. As Gaetz (2004) notes, homeless youth are more likely than their domicile counterparts to be victimized, suggesting that a safe residence for youth and young adults who are homeless could do wonders to reduce overall rates of victimization.

Participants who experienced homelessness all suggested turning to acquisitive crimes like drug dealing as a method of acquiring what they needed when homeless. The finding that homeless youth often resort to drug dealing and other acquisitive crimes has been discussed at length in the literature review and is congruent with the literature on drug dealing and homelessness.

Concluding remarks

The issue of social exclusion among young people in Canada should be addressed on humanitarian principles alone, given the higher rates of hunger, victimization and offending associated with homelessness (Alvi, Scott & Stanyon, 2007; Gaetz, 2004; McCarthy et al, 1998). On pragmatic grounds, however, targeting homelessness may decrease aggregate rates of crime by preventing drug dealing partnerships (among other co-offending partnerships) from ever forming. Homelessness has been linked to a willingness to co-offend (Hagan et al, 1998) and an increased propensity to sell drugs. Logically, individuals facing homelessness and hunger may partner with others and sell drugs. Partnering with others may be necessary especially given that drug dealing has inherent start up costs not found in other acquisitive crimes (e.g. burglary). When individuals partner together, they transfer skills and techniques of neutralization which in

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turn increases embeddedness in criminal networks. Thus, tackling homelessness and youth social exclusion in general may provide external benefits like decreased rates of co-offending, decreased embeddedness in criminal networks, and an overall lower rate of crime and victimization.

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Skeleton Introduction

- 1.) Thanks for participating in the study.**
- 2.) Ensure that the participant has read the consent form.**
- 3.) Verify that they understand that there is minimal risk attached with doing this research.**
- 4.) Reiterate that none of this information can be traced back to them, and that all safeguards are put in place to protect the data from being improperly accessed.**
- 5.) EXPLAIN THE IMPORTANCE OF NOT REVEALING NAMES OR LOCATIONS OF EVENTS BEING DISCUSSED.**
- 6.) Discuss how the researcher will start off with vague questions friendship and sort of "ease" into questions regarding crime & other "risky" or controversial/private topics.**

1.) Tell me a little bit about yourself growing up:

- Where were you born?
- have you ever moved?
- Where do you live now (city/region only)?
- How long have you lived in that area?

2.) Do you have an active relationship with your parents?

- do you live at home?
- have you ever been kicked out of your house? -->if homeless, inquire more about circumstances re: alone/with others, how long, did they couch surf? If so with who? Are these close friends? Begin inquiring about friends.

3.) Tell me about some of your friends:

- how long have you known them
- how often do you two see each other (outside of a potential school/work environment)

4.) What sorts of things do you do with your friends?

- if no discussion of co-offending: have you & the friends you mentioned ever committed any crimes together
- clarify that I mean crime as a cooperative endeavor, and not separate.
- Suggest to the participant that I'd like to focus in on these events
- open it up to the participant to tell me "story" behind the offense.

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On the subject of co-offending events, ask these questions if the participant has not answered them in the narrative

- How many people were involved? ; Were you close with these friends? ; How long did you know them?
- At the time, how close were you with the people you co-offended with?
- Did you plan the co-offense? Did it happen spontaneously?
- Looking back on it, was there a pattern of this? If so, was it the same crime or different crimes? Was it a onetime thing?
- Do you remember making a decision about this? and/Or
- Were there any circumstances, that you can identify, that brought you to co-offend?

5.) How did the event make you feel?

- Was it successful? Unsuccessful?
- Did anything happen as a result of the co-offense?



Date: September 30th, 2010

To: Joseph Cowan (PI), Shahid Alvi (Supervisor)

From: Raymond Cox, REB Chair

File #: 09-135

Title: Youth Crime and Co-offending

The University of Ontario Institute of Technology Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above research proposal. The application in support of the above research project has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board to ensure compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS) and the UOIT Research Ethics Policy and Procedures.

DECISION: Approved with Note

NOTE:

Please make these minor changes:

1. Consent form; “If you have any concerns regarding your right as a participant, please contact the Ethics and Compliance Officer at (905) 721-8668 ext. 3693 or compliance@uoit.ca”
2. Consent form: please un-bold the sentence “there is little – if any – risk to you for participating in this study”

COMMENTS AND CONDITIONS:

This project has been approved for the period of **September 30th, 2010 until September 30th, 2011 and is subject to full REB ratification at the Research Ethics Board's next scheduled meeting.** The approval may be extended upon request.

Please note that the Research Ethics Board (REB) requires that you adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB. The Board must approve any modifications before they can be implemented. If you wish to modify your research project, please contact REB Administration, to obtain the Change Request Form. Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants and the continuation of the protocol.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, a school, community organization or other institution it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols. Section F, Article 1.13, Review Procedures for Ongoing Research of the TCPS <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/policystatement/policystatement.cfm> requires that ongoing research be monitored. A Final Report is required for all projects, with the exception of undergraduate projects, upon completion of the project. Researchers with projects lasting more than one year are required to submit a Renewal Request annually. Contact REB Administration to obtain a copy of the Renewal Request/Final Report form.

Please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence. Thank you.

REB Chair Dr. Raymond Cox, FBIT raymond.cox@uoit.ca	80	Compliance Officer Sascha Tuuha, (905) 721-8668 ext. 3693 compliance@uoit.ca
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