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Reeves, Carla

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### Original Citation

Reeves, Carla (2008) Experiences of sex offenders in a probation approved premises : neutralisation and normalisation. In: British society of criminology conference, 2008, University of Huddersfield. (Unpublished)

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# Experiences of Sex Offenders in a Probation Approved Premises: Neutralisation and Normalisation

Carla Reeves

University of Huddersfield

c.l.reeves@hud.ac.uk



# The Study

- Ethnographic study of the experiences of sex offenders living in a Probation Approved Premises (hostel): (21 months)

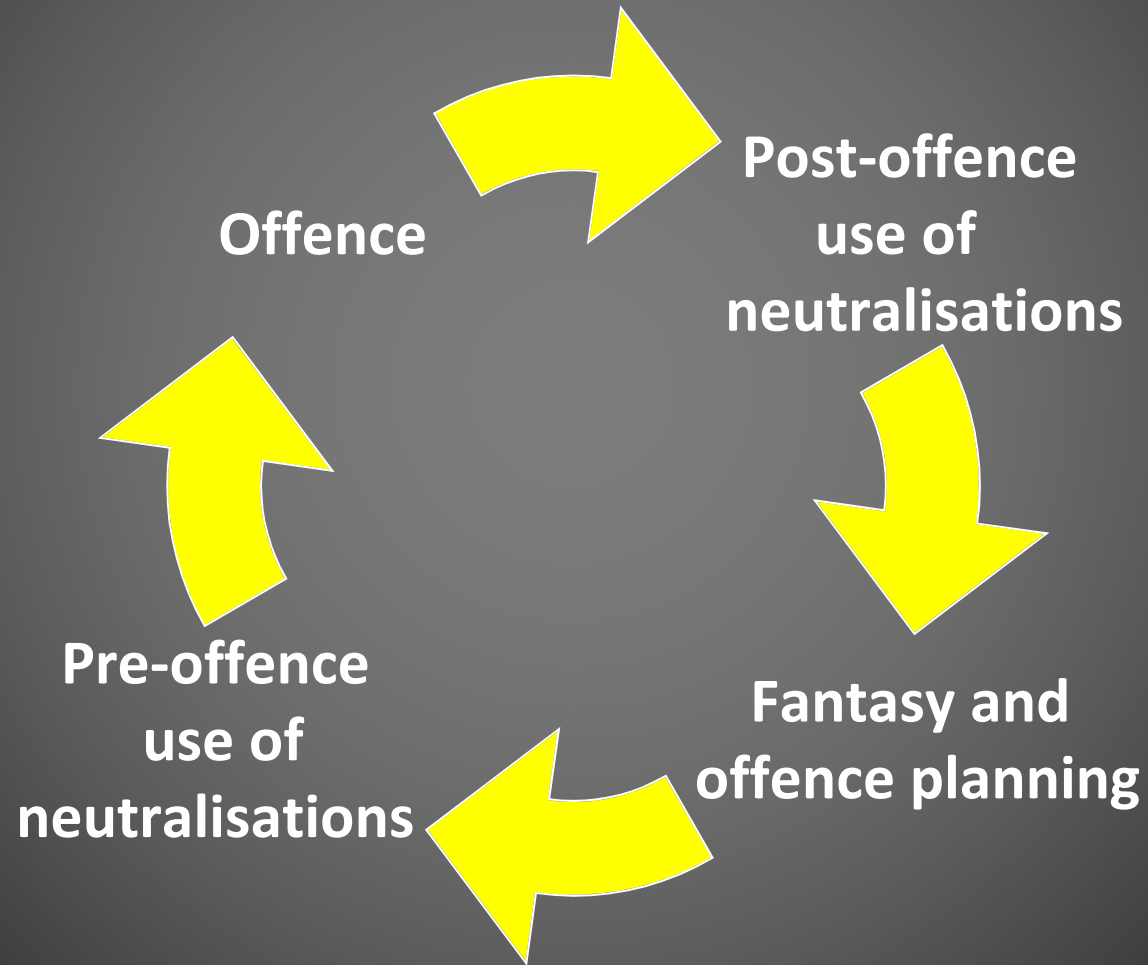
Type of data collected	Number of data collection points
Observation in hostel (including informal interviews)	57
Interviews with residents	24
Interviews with Staff	17

# Sykes and Matza (1957)

## Techniques of Neutralisation

1. Denial of responsibility
2. Denial of Injury
3. Denial of a Victim
4. Condemnation of the Condemners
5. Appeal to Higher Loyalties

# Why are Neutralisations Important?



# It's not my fault

- “She was overly affectionate”
- “My girlfriend miscarried, that’s what prompted me”
- “She was having an affair”
- “She was a bad mother”
- “They were happy with it”
- “I’m being framed”

# Admission Without Responsibility: A matter of interpretation?

“ He is one of those that doesn't think it is wrong, so he doesn't need to justify it to himself” (police officer in MAPPP)

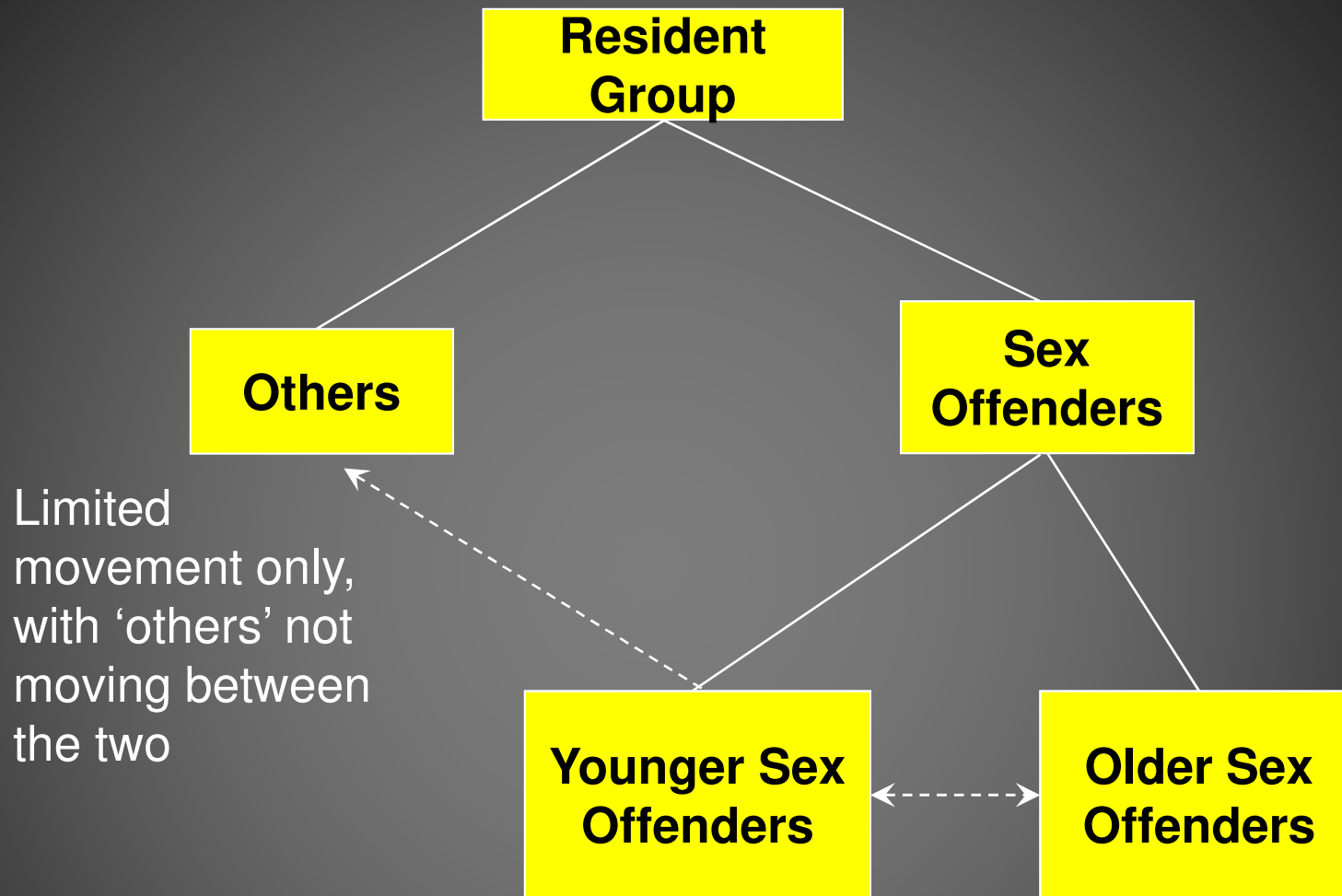
# Admission Without Responsibility: A matter of interpretation?

“ He is one of those that doesn't think it is wrong, so he doesn't need to justify it to himself” (police officer in MAPPP)

- A technique of normalisation?

“[...] everyone in the hostel is a criminal, and 99% of the population are too.” (child sexual abuser)



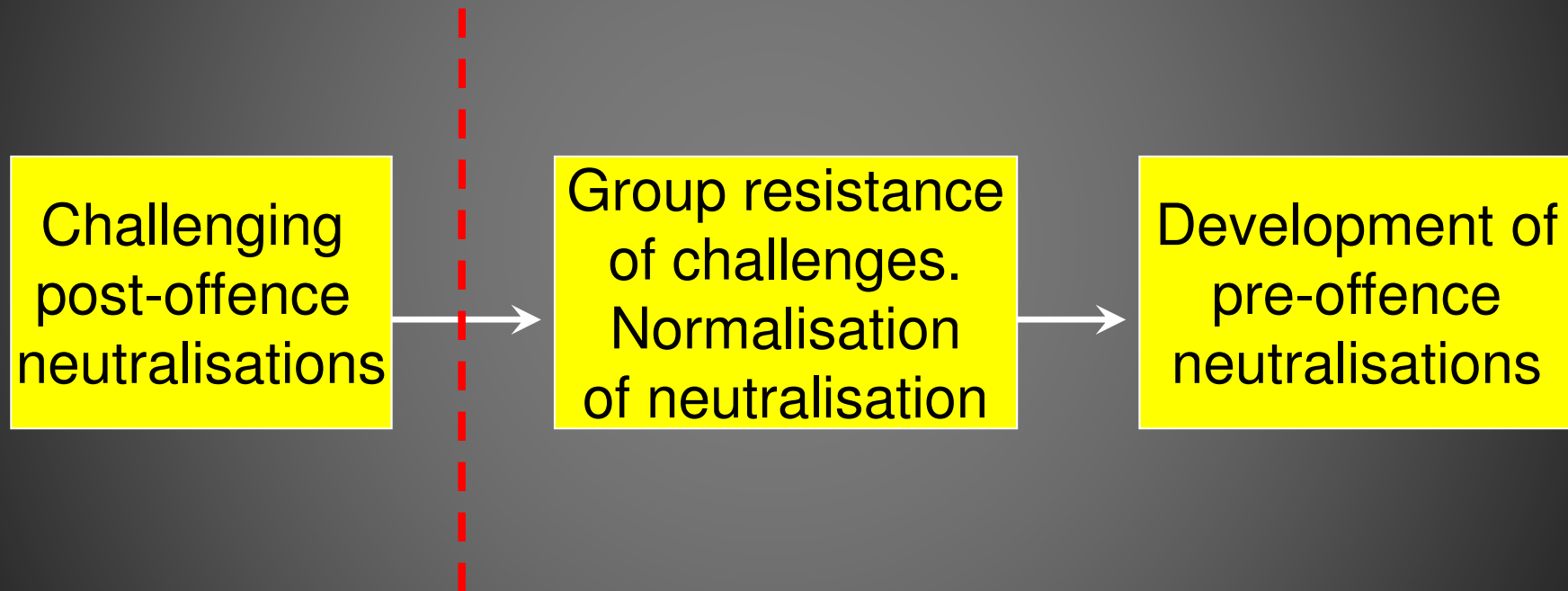


A solid line denotes additional membership of other groups.  
A dotted line denotes potential movement between groups.  
Arrows denote the direction of movement on dotted lines.

# The Power of Peers

“The thing is you listen to these men, they’ve been offending for years...what do you call it?...justifying it to themselves all this time. And they’re much more convincing than the psychologists [...] and they are there all the time.” (Child sex offender)

# Resisting Rehabilitation



# But... Grouping Can Support Rehabilitation

Challenging  
post-offence  
neutralisations



Group challenges.  
Supportive of  
offence work



Admission &  
acceptance of  
responsibility

# What can be taken from this?

- If grouping were managed in residential settings it could be a powerful mechanism to support RSO and PO work
- If not, the negative effect of grouping needs to be acknowledged
- Neutralisations are used to construct identities – survival technique?

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