



Identity Change and Desistance from Crime

the journey

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In 8 minutes or less

- What is the role of identity change in desistance?
- What are the conditions that influence positive identity change?

Suggested 4 slides

What is Identity?



“Individuals form an identity by integrating their life experiences into an internalized, evolving story of the self that reconstructs the past and anticipates the future in such a way as to provide a person's life with some degree of unity, meaning, and purpose over time” (Dan McAdams, 2008)

FORMULATION:

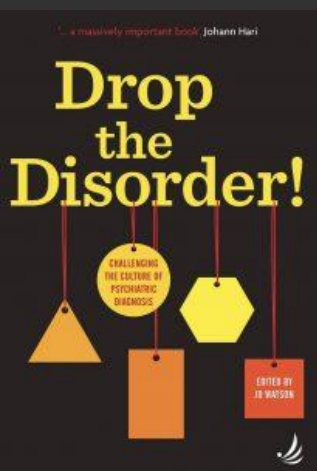
From 'What's Wrong with You?' to
'What Happened to You?'



Assume that everyone has, not a
label, but a story

Formulation is the process of
making sense of a person's
difficulties in the *context* of their
relationships, social circumstances,
life events, and the sense that they
have made of them. It is a *bit like a
personal narrative*

(Lucy Johnstone, 2018)



'The past is never dead. It's not even past.'

The Challenge of Congruence

“How can an apparently discontinuous life trajectory be made a related, meaningful train of events? What kinds of perspectives most easily integrate and *make meaningful* a life that is experienced as discontinuous, radically changing and full of shame and guilt and that is felt or feared to be worthless?”

(Lofland, 1969)

- *Do you have any reflections on your life you'd like to share?*
-

- “What a waste! There have been good points like me kids and women but most of it has been a waste. I would like to start again – but you can't” (male, 40 yrs old)

- “It's been a f----- waste! That's all, a waste.” (male, 46 yrs old)
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Do you have any reflections on your life you'd like to share?

“Um, I wish it had never happened. There was some exciting times, don't get me wrong, very invigorating and the adrenaline pumping and things like that. But I want to know who I really am. And when I know who I am, I want people to know who I am, where I come from, ... That's basically it (male, 44 yrs).

(Shadd Maruna & Derek Ramsden, 2004)

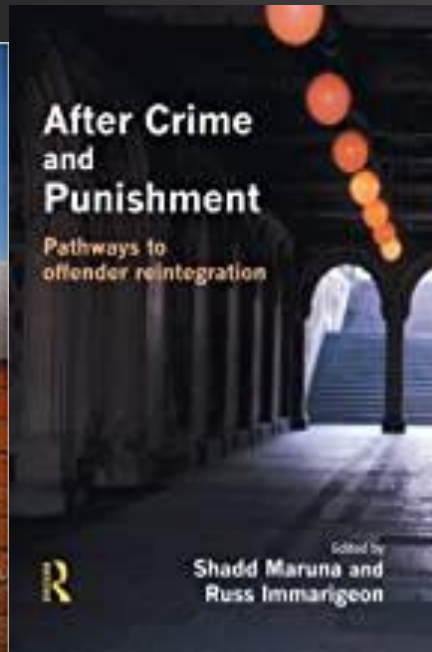
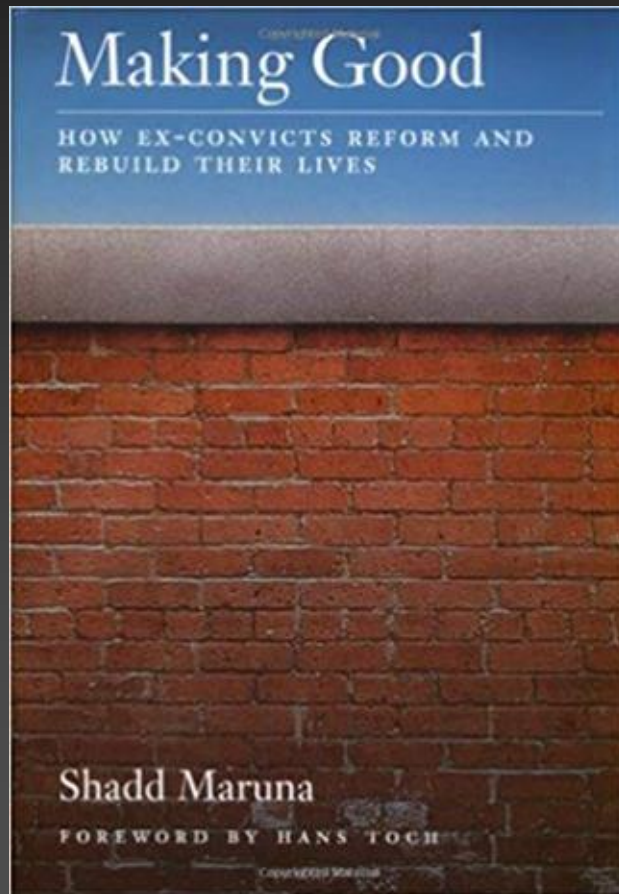
What it would take to keep you from offending again?

“Impossible, impossible. ...It’s the system. The system won’t let you out.” (male, 44 yrs)

“Take away my past! I know you can’t take away the past, but I need to learn how to cope with it.” (male, 41 yrs)

(Shadd Maruna & Derek Ramsden, 2004)

20 Years Down the Road





Routledge Studies in Crime and Society

MOTHERING AND DESIDENCE IN RE-ENTRY

Venezia Michalsen

Critical Criminological Perspectives



REENTRY, DESIDENCE, AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STATE

Let Them Back In

Stephen C. McGuinn

● ● ● EMERALD POINTS



GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON DESIDENCE

Reviewing what we know and
looking to the future

Edited by Joanna Shapland,
Stephen Farrall
and Anthony Bottoms



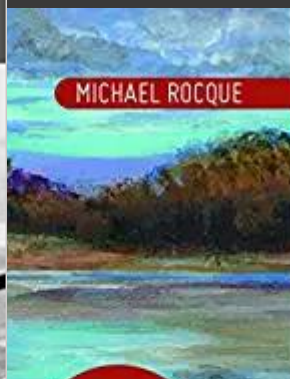
Desisting Sisters

Gender, Power and Desistance in the
Criminal (In)Justice System

Una Barr



MICHAEL ROCQUE



DESIDENCE
FROM CRIME
NEW ADVANCES IN
THEORY AND
RESEARCH

PALGRAVE'S FRONTIERS IN CRIMINOLOGY THEORY

EVERYDAY DESIDENCE

The Transition to Adulthood Among Formerly Incarcerated Youth



LAURA S. ABRAMS and DIANE J. TERRY



OFFENDING AND DESIDENCE

The importance of social relations

BETH WEAVER

ISODR



Labelling Theory: Criminology's Strongest Identity Research

- Apprenticeship/Initiation
- Ceremony to Recognize the Rite of Passage
- Credential
- Re-naming
- Social Inclusion/Exclusion
- Internalisation of new identity

Same process used in becoming a doctor, a priest, a soldier, an academic, etc.

The Criminal Identity Process

STEP ONE: Initiation and Apprenticeship

Social learning, peer effects, family influence. Criminality is mostly committed in groups of peers (Warr, 2002).



STEP TWO:

Status Degradation Ceremony

Ceremony – the courtroom ritual as a “status degradation ceremony” – Labeling imbued with the highest authority and legitimacy

The person becomes “literally a different and new person. ... He is not changed, he is reconstituted. ... The new identity is the ‘basic reality.’ What he is now is what, ‘after all,’ he was all along” (Garfinkel, 1956, pp. 421-422).

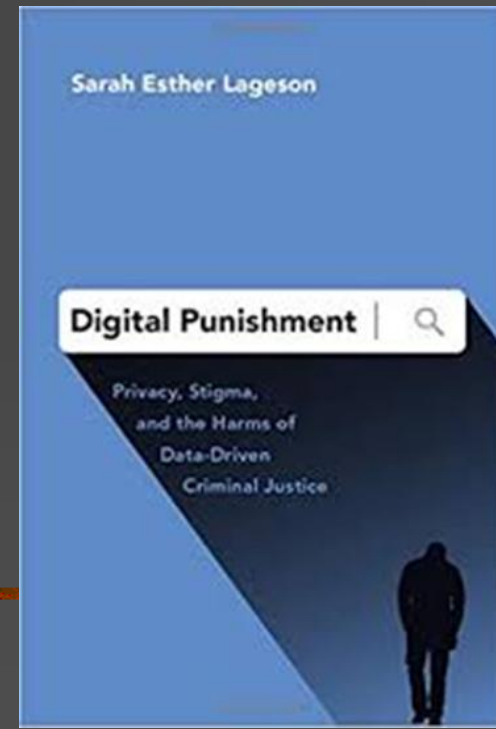
“Mortification” and the Total Institution (Goffman)

“Prisons are places that demean humanity, destroy the nobility of human nature, and bring out the worst in social relations among people [with a] destructive impact on self-esteem, sense of justice, and human compassion” (Zimbardo, et al 2000)



3) Credentialism

“The criminal credential constitutes a formal and enduring classification of social status, which can be used to regulate access and opportunity across numerous social, economic and political domains” and is therefore “an official and legitimate means of evaluating and classifying individuals” (Pager, 2007).



STEP 4: RE-NAMING

The individual who has gone through steps 1-3 is given a new title (“offender”). This label is hard to shake and constitutes a master status



STEP FIVE: EXCLUSION

5) Exclusive Subcultures: Exclusion from mainstream opportunities; Inclusion in deviant subcultures (most obviously, prison)

“The [stigmatized] young person is liable to reject his rejectors, and in the worst scenario, find comfort and symbolic distance from his rejectors in the world of a delinquent subculture” (Braithwaite, 1992)

Structural Impediments and “Cumulative Continuity”

Convicted felons are often denied employment opportunities, and prohibited from obtaining student loans, gaining licenses for various occupations, accessing education/training, etc.

Sampson and Laub (1997) argue that criminality is a kind of ‘chimera’ that ‘mortgages one’s future’ by blocking opportunities for achieving success in employment, education, and even in marriage.

STEP SIX: INTERNALIZATION

“Secondary Deviance”

(Lemert, 1951)

Accepting that one is nothing more than “an offender.” It is a limiting of horizons, a sense of hopelessness or acceptance of one’s fate.

Internalized Stigma



- “You are labelled as a felon, and you’re always gonna be assumed and known to have contact with that criminal activity and them ethics. And even when I get off parole, *I’m still gonna have an “F” on my record*” (Uggen, Manza, and Behrens 2004, 283).
- “No matter how much time we do, *everyone always thinks it’s like once a criminal always a criminal and that is how people see me* and it’s very hard to deal with” (Dodge & Pogrebin 2001, 49).

A Formula That Works

- Apprenticeship/Initiation
- Ceremony to Recognize the Rite of Passage
- Credential
- Re-naming
- Social Inclusion/Exclusion
- Internalisation of new identity

Same process used in becoming a doctor, a priest, a soldier, an academic, etc.

In 8 minutes or less

- What is the role of identity change in desistance?
 - **What are the conditions that influence positive identity change?**
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STEP ONE: Apprenticeship

Apprenticeships in Desistance?

“How do you get through a mine field? There is only one way: Follow the person in front of you” (A ‘wounded healer’, Maruna & LeBel)



Wounded Healers: Apprenticeships in Reentry

“Our greatest resource, largely untouched, to aid in the rehabilitation of offenders is other offenders. ... Only a skilful guide can encourage a person to go straight. I suspect that the best guide is the one who has himself gone through it” (Eglish, 1958, p. 621).

STEP TWO: RITUALIZE REDEMPTION

- 1) Apprenticeship/Journey
- 2) Ceremony / Ritual

What would rituals of redemption look like?

Erikson (1966) on Stigma Rituals

“An important feature of these (degradation) ceremonies in our culture is that they are almost irreversible [The deviant] is ushered into the special position by a decisive and dramatic ceremony, yet is returned from it with hardly a word of public notice. ... From a ritual point of view, nothing has happened to cancel out the stigmas imposed upon him by earlier commitment ceremonies. ... a "self-fulfilling prophecy"

What would reintegration rituals look like?

“Some recognised member(s) of the conventional community must publicly announce and certify that the offender has changed and that he is now to be considered essentially non-criminal”
(Lofland, 1969).

“Judicial Rehabilitation”



In France, “judicial rehabilitation” rituals take place in the same court rooms that sentence individuals to prison and “resemble citizenship ceremonies” (Herzog-Evans, 2011)

This “judicial rehabilitation” benefits from “the respectability that the judiciary enjoys in society”

(Love, 2011: 783).

Courts “can state what the truth is.” This ‘judicial truth’ (*vérité judiciaire*) or “legal magic” carries real weight.

STEP THREE: CREDENTIALING

- 1) Apprenticeship/Journey
- 2) Ceremony
- 3) Credential

Can we erase criminal credentials?

Is there a non-criminal credential?

The *un*-criminal credential: “Wiping the Slate Clean”

The American Bar Association (2007)
recommends “**certificates of good conduct**” or
“**certificates of rehabilitation**” issued by state
authorities to law-abiding ex-prisoners.

Opportunity to earn the right to have statutory
bars to jobs or other services lifted, as well as to
have civil rights and public benefits reinstated.

STEP FOUR: RE-NAMING

- 1) Apprenticeship/Journey
- 2) Ceremony
- 3) Credential
- 4) Re-naming

When is an offender no longer an offender?

If not “offenders” then what?

- Personal name-changes (e.g., Malcolm Little) common among those who undergo religious conversions.
 - But the language lacks a name for desisting ex-offenders
 - If the desisting role does not have a name, do we recognize it when we see it?
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STEP FIVE: INCLUSION

- 1) Apprenticeship/Journey
- 2) Ceremony
- 3) Credential
- 4) Re-naming
- 5) Social Inclusion

This one we know more about

Social Inclusion Theories

(Laub and Sampson, 2003)

“A Steady Job and the Love of a Good Woman”

Trasler (1980)

“(A)s they grow older, most young men gain access to other sources of achievement and social satisfaction—a job, a girlfriend, a wife, a home and eventually children—and in doing so become gradually less dependent upon peer-group support”

A Formula That Works

- Apprenticeship/Journey
- Ceremony
- Credential
- Re-naming
- Social Inclusion (containment with similarly labelled others)
- Internalisation of new identity

Same process used in becoming a doctor, a priest, a soldier, an academic, etc.

In 8 minutes or less

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