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**DESISTING IN PRISON: MYTH AND
THE COUNCIL FOR UNITY MODEL**

by

Kevin Moran

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

2017

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Desisting In Prison: Myth and The Council For Unity Model

By

Kevin Moran

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

DESISTING IN PRISON: MYTH AND THE COUNCIL FOR UNITY MODEL

**BY
KEVIN MORAN**

Advisor: Professor David Brotherton

This dissertation is a qualitative examination of aspects of the desistance process among incarcerated men in both prison and jail. Data collection for this project occurred in and around the correctional version of the Council For Unity program, which is also examined in this write up. The premise of this project is that a minority of men do desist whilst incarcerated and thus the research presented here analyzes how prisoners act towards their attempts to desist from crime in terms of the meaning this process has for them, their interaction with others during this process, and the interpretative progression by which meanings of self, other, and environment are handled and modified with the goal of becoming crime free, both behind and beyond bars. Data collection for this project consisted of eighteen months of ethnographic observation of the Council For Unity program sessions held at a local jail as well as an unstructured survey administered to twenty five program participants at a maximum security facility. The findings are as follows. Data from the unstructured surveys suggests that prisoners conceive of and orientate towards prison spaces and their occupants in the manner of an ecology, in which certain places – entrapment niches – forestall desistance, whereas others – enabling niches – promote and sustain desistance. Findings from ethnographic observation suggest that program participants, jail inmates, in discussing their attempts to desist, frequently evoked the role of “the streets” or streetlife in this process, both as a seductive force as well as an undertow associated

with drowning or submersion. Further findings that an orientation towards the streetlife can be challenged by three categories of events: the recognition of time as a diminishing force, the impact negative emotional events and the potency of disillusionment with criminal peers. This project also examined a series of generative exchanges within the program space. Findings here suggest that program participants are partially primed towards generative behavior and thought, although the ability to forward self as a deterrent is tempered by the need to maintain continuity of self in the change process.

Dedicated to my mother, father, and Aunt Frances (Fa-fa)

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH METHODS

I once thought there were no second acts in American lives
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *My Lost City*

Introduction

The study of how individuals move from habitual offending to desistance from crime has undergone a double mutation in the past twenty years. Evidence presented by Sampson and Laub in their 1993 study *Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points* posed a challenge to ideas that criminal propensity, once established, was a lifelong personal trait and orientation towards the world (see Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). They demonstrated that despite periods of serious, repeat offending, significant groups of offenders (male) ceased committing crime as they aged into their 20s and 30s. Their return to conventionality was associated with important social transitions such as securing employment, getting married, and military service. More specifically, Sampson and Laub argued that it was the informal control effects of these social transitions which accounted for desistance across these men's life-course (Laub and Sampson 2003; Sampson and Laub 1993; 2005). A second shift occurred after the publication of Maruna's *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives* in 2001, a study which presented evidence for the role of subjective in the cessation of offending, namely that desistance seemed to be associated with certain narrative identities. To explain, narrative identity theory holds that our conception of self is storied in form. Maruna demonstrated that successful desistees self-characterized through versions of a redemption narrative where they overcame a

past negative state to arrive at their current non-offending self. The discovery of the relationship between narrative identity and persistence/desistance has profound implications for the science and practice of rehabilitation (McNeill 2006). Maruna's work, as well as many other scholars in the US and UK researching the in subfield of desistance studies, has engendered a perceptual transformation (Kuhn 2012) in redefining the relationship between research and practice as one which the qualitative description of lives, not statistical models, serves as the datum grounding the design of rehabilitative interventions for offenders (Maruna and LeBel 2010). In following from this second shift, this dissertation is a qualitative study of the desistance process in prison from the perspective of the inmate both in and outside the rehabilitative space.

The subfield of desistance studies has mushroomed over the past fifteen years, the majority of works bearing the imprimatur of Maruna's findings on the association between desistance and narrative identity, more specifically individuals' sense of self-efficacy, an ability to making amends, and the perception of criminal pasts as a later boon (2001; Healy 2013; King 2013; Lloyd and Serin 2011). There is, however, an acknowledged lack of research into the impact of imprisonment on the desistance process (Liebling and Maruna 2013), a shortfall which in part stems from an ambient skepticism among penologists (whether desistance focused or not) that prison do little to reduce recidivism (Burnett and Maruna 2004; Cullen et al. 2011) and assertions that desistance occurs largely independent from the criminal justice system (Liebling and Maruna 2013). Nonetheless sizable cohorts of prisoners desist upon release. A recent study using Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) data found that roughly two of every three offenders who enter and exit prison will never return to prison (Rhodes et al. 2016). This finding complicates rather than contradicts other research demonstrating null or criminogenic effects of imprisonment on recidivism (Cullen et al. 2011). To explain, prisons are like hotels where the most beds are

occupied by repeat customers. However, onetime visitors, although occupying fewer beds on a given date, are cumulatively a much larger population than the repeat customers.

What occurs within the prison with these two populations to create such divergent outcomes post-release is not well explored by criminologists. This dissertation does not attempt to compare the experiences of desisting and recidivating former prisoners, but it does tackle two related questions: since individuals seem to desist in prison (i.e. do not reoffend on release), how does desistance emerge during the period of imprisonment? What changes at the level of self-understanding and subjective orientation occurs during this process? This dissertation attempts to answer these questions (within limitations discussed below) via a participant observation study of a prison rehabilitation program, Council For Unity, conducted at a county jail in a North Eastern state, as well as via a survey administered to inmates self-identifying as having desisted at a maximum security prison located in the same state. The Council For Unity program specializes in prompting cognitive changes among offenders via the re-interpretation of the participant's personal narrative through the reading of mythological stories, particularly the narrative of the hero's journey. Council For Unity sessions provide this research project the opportunity to observe and analyze how prisoners act towards their attempts to desist from crime in terms of the meaning this process has for them, their interaction with others during this process, and the interpretative progression by which meanings of self, other, and environment are handled and modified with the goal of becoming crime free, both behind and beyond bars (see Blumer 1998).

Theoretical Framework

Overall this dissertation's theoretical foundation rests on principles of naturalist research articulated by Matza (amongst others) that the process of becoming deviant (in this case, to desist) makes "little human sense without understanding the philosophical inner life of the subject as (s)he bestows meaning on the events and materials that beset (her)him" in the flow of life (1969, 176). To this end it undertakes as a research standard, Schutz's concept of the postulate of adequacy, that "a scientific model of human action must be constructed in such a way that a human act...indicated by the typical construct would be understandable for the actor himself as well as for his fellow-men in terms of a common-sense interpretation of everyday life" (1970, 279). In short, the constructs of the social scientist should be consistent, albeit in a more precisely articulated fashion, with common-sense constructs directing lay experience within a life world.¹ Doing so is an attempt to avoid the analytic distortions that arise from scholars' substitution of theoretical logics developed from a contemplative stance on human social life for the logics of ordinary practice employed those acting-in-the-world (Bourdieu 1997). To clarify by way of illustration, there is a more complex conception of human ontology to be derived from attention to the commonplace phrase "you need to take a long hard look at yourself" than is often yielded by sociological constructs who exist quite happily (since they appeal to, and are assessed by, other academics who have a common professional socialization) with little sense of the complexity of human interiority, and thus the capacity (unique to our species) for the human self to take itself as an object. The use of the ordinary as barometer of sociological constructs is perhaps a means by which the discipline may dispose itself of an academic aristocratism, reflected in the odd conceit by which sociologists apply models of human behavior to others which they themselves would find neither sufficiently expansive nor elaborate to explain their own movement in a life-world. A final remark on the general

¹ An exemplar, with little theoretical fuss, is Howard Becker's "Becoming a Marijuana User" (1953).

theoretical method employed by this dissertation can be made here. This dissertation takes a catholic approach to theory, in that in application sociological theories should serve as a tool-kit, a series of sensitizing concepts in that theoretical concepts permit (but do not determines) cognitive apprehension of otherwise inappreciable patterns within the texture of human social life. This is in contrast to an approach involving the imposition of preselected models of human behavior on to empirical processes, i.e. an *a priori* commitment to a given framework(s).

In more specific terms, this dissertation draws two overlapping theoretical corpora, that of interpretive sociology on one hand, and theories developed with specific reference to processes of desistance on the other. As for the first group, this includes both symbolic interactionist thought and the phenomenological tradition in sociology. These theoretical sets are germane to the examination of individual subjective change in terms of meaning construction and how selfhood emerges in interaction with other and environment. Originating in the works of George Herbert Mead, particularly his *Mind, Self, and Society* (2009), symbolic interactionist thought was developed by University of Chicago sociologist Herbert Blumer during the mid-20th century. At base symbolic interactionism holds that humans are active sense-making organisms. This is in distinction to other animals whose relation to the exterior world is governed by instinct and hence relatively uniform patterns of stimulus and response. Humans on the other hand, confront an exterior world not as a given, but interpretatively, in that they ascribe meaning to this world and the objects it contains. Human behavior is, in part, organized on the basis of these interpretations, and so too their interactions with others, as the actions of others are responded to in terms of the meanings they are given (Blumer 1998). The term “symbolic interaction” (as distinct from non-symbolic interaction) thus refers to human interaction which is mediated by the

use of symbols, i.e. the assessment and interpretation of the meanings of others interactions, in dialectical interaction within another's interpretation and response, and so on recursively. In short, to study human life from a symbolic interactionist perspective is to study how meaning organizes behavior from the point of view of the actor.

There is an additional sense which symbolic interactionist thought bears upon sociological research and this dissertation. Symbolic interactionist thought rejects the idea that humans beings possess pre-existing and self-constituting selves, i.e. the assumption that mind and consciousness exist as original givens (Blumer 1998, 61). According to symbolic interactionist thought, the socio-cognitive basis of human's interpretative capacity is the possession of "a self", i.e. the recognition and consciousness of being something. In Meadian philosophy a sense of self derives from the mental distinction between the "I" and the "Me" (Mead 2009). For Mead, the "I" is a locus of spontaneous activity, always out of sight of herself, a "running current of awareness" (Blumer 1998, 56), which becomes in a "me"² when objectified in self-contemplation (evaluation too). Importantly, a sense of self emerges, according to Mead, in interaction with others, from infancy via increasingly complex forms of play by which the child eventually acquires an and acts upon anticipation of the "generalized other". The "the taking of all those organized sets of attitudes gives him his "me"; that is the self he is aware of" (Mead 2009, 175). That the self is socially derived on a continual basis (as opposed to its initial emergence via socialization) was developed following Cooley's "looking glass self" concept generating an appreciation of the ongoing relational and interactional basis for self-conception (i.e. self as partly contingent on the imagined appraisal of others). This aspect of symbolic interactionism was most clearly developed by Erving Goffman. Goffman's account of the "moral career" in his seminal *Asylums:*

² The "me" is thus a cognitive object.

Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates (1961), where his major theoretical contribution (one of many) was that one's sense of self is contingent on a host of everyday routines, identity equipment, and reflected appraisals. Disruption of routines and dispossession of identity equipment leads to a partial degradation or mortification of the self, e.g. moral career transition from free-individual to mental patient.

However, whilst rejecting the notion of the sovereign, self-constituting subject, this dissertation's theoretical approach seeks to avoid overstating the dependence of human self-conception on factors external to the self, e.g. the perceptions of others. In following Goffman, Giddens notes that routinization (whatever is done habitually) is vital to sustaining a sense of ontological security in daily activities of social life (1984, xxiii) and this includes the reactions of others to oneself, whereby for example, repeated negatively perceived reactions (such as no one laughing at a joke) could eventually corrode an existing sense of self (as a funny person). However, there are enormous variation in the degree to which individuals' sense of self is plastic (even in Giddens example of extreme disruption of routines within Nazi concentration camps, some individuals protected a core self³). Humans can sometimes act as mere objects (i.e. be passively reactive) but they may also withstand, transcend, and reshape impingements on their self-conception (Matza 1969, 93), an assumption this dissertation makes in approaching its subject matter of desistance.

Phenomenological approaches in sociology append symbolic interactionist's concern with meaning-making, with a commitment to describing and analyzing the self as a phenomenological totality. This importantly includes an analysis of emotions and their relationship to meaning

³ For an example, take Victor Frankl, concentration camp survivor and the founder of logotherapy.

making often overlooked in symbolic interactionist thought. Reflecting perhaps the longstanding influence of Cartesian ontology, *cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am), sociology has not given emotions the priority in explanations of human behavior it has given to cognition. The inclusion of emotions, as is done in this dissertation, is an attempt to transcend the legacy of Weberian *verstehen* limits on “meaning” as mental processes alone. In the volume *The Social Life of Emotions* (2004), Tiedens and Leach propose that process of subjective meaning-making of the world is intimately linked to respondent emotional states, and reciprocally, it is the social world (via socialization) that allows individuals to know the social meaning of emotions. As Jasper similarly notes, emotions are key to understanding how meaning operates, they are “rough and ready appraisals of our current situation in the world” (2014, 26). And they are a constant, not simply the muzak of social life, not the occasional partner or opponent of cognition but an experientially melded form Jasper calls “feeling-thinking” (2014). For example, taste is a conditioned response pattern of emotional arousal, prior experience sedimented to internal, durable interpretative reaction structures (Bourdieu 1984). One’s taste for things-in-the-world is directed by underlying emotional responses, an opera may evoke pleasurable rapture or stupefying boredom, but the determination of preference (and hence meaning) is largely affective. Emotions thus infuse human meaning-making, both in terms of their evaluatory contribution to meaning, but also that cognitive or subjective change must cope with the partly autonomous force of affect. To this end, this dissertation takes emotions seriously in the study of desistance.

This section will conclude with a brief discussion of theories specifically developed to explain the desistance process. A number of overlapping frameworks for understanding desistance have

emerged, the most prominent of these being life-course (Sampson and Laub 1995; 2005), phenomenological (Giordano et al. 2002; Maruna 2001; Paternoster and Bushway 2009), and structural (Farrall et al. 2009). This dissertation principally draws upon the phenomenological framework developed in the desistance literature. This framework was most amenable to studying what is referred to here as “active desistance”, in that like Marx’s architect, the construction of a non-criminal self begins in the imagination of the prisoner, and slowly, but intentionally, acquires definite content as a new way of being-in-the-world. This is contrast to what might be called “passive desistance” (more evinced in life-course approaches), whereby desistance emerges as an ancillary as inducements to conformity accumulate, largely without active direction of the desistee. To this end, three overlapping phenomenological theory sets will be used throughout this dissertation: the Neo-Meadian framework of Giordano and colleagues (2007); the identity theory of Paternoster and Bushway (2009), and the internal narrative of desistance expounded by Vaughan (2007). These theories will discussed briefly here and they will elaborated in more detail in the literature review in chapter two. In contrast with stable emotion-crime linkages proposed by other criminologists (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990) and their previously cognitive focused analysis of desistance (2002), Giordano et al. (2007) adopt a Neo-Meadian approach in positing that the meaning and salience of both crime and desistance is partially reliant on associated emotional responses. For example, persistence is reliant in part on the meaning of crime for the individual (in a cognitive sense) but simultaneously to the arousal of unmanageable angry emotions. In Paternoster and Bushway’s identity theory, as with symbolic interactionist thought, desistance emerges due to humans’ self-evaluative capacity (the “I”-“Me” distinction) which facilitates a disassociation from current “working self” of criminal identity and the adoption of lines of action based on a projected “feared self”. Vaughan similarly

holds that desistance emerges when the actor upsets the synchronization of self and environment, and enters in to deliberation phase (via an internal moral conversation) from which a dedication to desist may emerge. The importance of self-talk to both persistence and desistance is an important element in the analysis presented in chapter five and six.

Research Statement

This dissertation seeks to understand how desistance (i.e. the move being crime-free) occurs during imprisonment among male prisoners. More specifically, this dissertation documents and analyzes the subjective experience of prisoners as they grapple with this process. To this end, this dissertation takes as a case-study, an ethnographic study of the Council For Unity rehabilitation program, consisting of observations of weekly group sessions with inmates at a county jail. In addition to the observational component, this study is also based on a survey of inmate members of the Council For Unity program at a maximum security prison. Whereas the observational component of the study examines the meaning constructs of individuals engaging in a desistance process, the survey component explores the development of the desistee across spaces or “niches” in the prison environment, as well as interaction with other inmate populations, both persisting and desisted.

Contribution to the Field

As stated above, concerted research attention to the desistance process is a relatively recent development in criminological and sociological scholarship. Engagement with this long neglected topic and has made a significant contribution to the understanding of why and how people cease offending. This dissertation seeks to add to sociological research in three ways.

First, it investigates the desistance process among incarcerated men, which only a handful of article length studies have examined thus from an explicit desistance perspective (see Maruna and Toch 2005; Maruna et al. 2004; Burnett and Maruna 2006). To this end, it seeks to contribute understanding processes of identity change behind bars. Second, more broadly speaking, it sheds light on processes of human change, of which desistance is but a subtype. It is perhaps only for historical reasons that an analytic rift exists between theories of offending and legal human behavior (Matza 1969), thus empirically a study of personal change among offenders has potential to illuminate changes in selfhood more generally. Third and finally, and as noted, research into desistance has potentially enormous implications for rehabilitative practices. This dissertation also makes a contribution to theories (and hence the practice, although I'm not holding my breath) of rehabilitation in its attention not just to the early and middle stages of desistance, but how selfhood and desistance is negotiated in the rehabilitative space (via a participant-centered strengths-based program). All in all, research into the desistance process has the potential to contribute to increasing public safety, as well as the social integration and well-being of former offenders.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Two consists of a literature review of existing research on desistance. The format of this chapter reflects the phenomenological orientation of this dissertation, in that the review of the literature is organized in a chronological sequence intended to capture (from the actor's point of view) composed of three stages: early, middle, and late. There is sufficient research on the exit from crime to construct an ideal typical model of the desistance process it unfolds across the life

course. Based on existing theoretical and empirical works, this chapter argues that desistance, as process, begins when discontent with the consequences of offending precipitates a reevaluation of life goals by the incipient desister. After this period of deliberation, although the desister may dedicate themselves to change even when the final outcome, the reformed self, may only exist vaguely in their imagination. Sustaining desistance in the middle phase, the chapter outlines, occurs in reciprocal interaction with “hooks for change” (such as employment, romantic relationships with prosocial others, education etc.) which inaugurate both cognitive and affective shifts which alter the meaning of both self and other. The final stage of desistance, the literature indicates, arrives when the desister views criminal behavior as negative and incompatible with their new selfhood and the social relations in which they now comfortably dwell. Attention will be given, as presaged in the preceding section, to evidence on the emotions that accompany each stage and the effect such emotions may have in hindering and/or helping the desistance process.

Chapter Three, “The Prison as Ecology”, presents an argument for the utility (and empirical validity) of conceiving the prison as a complex ecology composed of a variety of “entrapment” and “enabling” niches. The chapter argues that assessments of the prison’s effects on desistance (or its inverse, recidivism) suffer from a number of conceptual shortcomings. Primary of which is a tendency to regard the institution’s effects in either/or terms, one effect is to sideline an examination of the mechanisms that produce the significant, if minority, of inmates who do desist behind bars. The bulk of this chapter is dedicated to the analysis of twenty-five surveys administered to inmates, self-identified as desisted/attempting to desist, at a maximum security facility. Results indicate that although prison cuts off inmates from desistance supporting events and relations available on the outside, nonetheless weaker pro-desistance proxies exist across a

range of enabling niches in the prison environment, not least within the homosocial relations that exist between desisting or desisted inmates.

In continuing the focus on rehabilitation in prison, *Chapter Four* examines the prison program, Council For Unity, both as an example of a program which has developed a strengths-based approach to offender rehabilitation and because the final two chapters of this dissertation consist of observations conducted within this program space at a county jail. The Council For Unity correctional program is based on the writings of comparative mythologist Joseph Campbell, who held that myth, in particular the hero's journey, could serve as metaphoric guide to living a fulfilling life. This chapter examines how Council For Unity translated Campbell's ideas into a rehabilitation program, namely via the mythic Dragon Slayer story which participants read, interpret, and apply in group sessions. The chapter also argues that a focus on the antagonist as hero journeying towards personal fulfillment, does in terms of content, correspond well with themes of agency, redemption, and elevation through trial found to be associated with successful desistance.

Chapter Five analyses data from participant observation study of Council For Unity sessions at a county jail. In Council For Unity sessions group discussions were framed by the program's Dragon Slayer story. Observations discussed in this chapter reveal that a significant obstacle for participants in their efforts to desist was the lure of the "streetlife". For participants "the streets" was not only a spatial descriptor, but a signifier of a way of living within urban neighborhoods defined by cynicism, fierce competition, and ruthless self-interest – in short, a Darwinian survival of the fittest. Despite such negative portrayals, participants simultaneously described the

street lifestyle as a compellingly seductive force. In spite of, and perhaps in light of, its risks, participants described the streets as an almost irresistible temptation. Thus, the lure of the streets was experienced as centripetal force, pulling participants away from conventionality (i.e. desistance). This chapter additionally discusses the role of neutralizations in sustaining commitment to a street lifestyle, hence forestalling desistance. Findings here indicate that although participants expressed that neutralizing self-talk played a role in insulating their behavior from normative intrusions, discussions of persistence in program sessions revealed that neutralizations were intermittent, rather than ongoing in application. Mental processes contributing to persistence may be largely prereflexive in nature, an enduring dispositional indifference, rather than situationally induced forms of self-talk. This chapter also discusses participants' descriptions of the breakdown of the mechanisms sustaining their persistence and the adoption of active attempts to desist. First, participants expressed that appreciation of time as a limited resource, especially when large portions of their adult lives were spent behind bars, precipitated their desire to desist. Second, desistance also began among participants when events of sufficient emotional intensity are experienced (such as attending a family members funeral in prison uniform) which then reside and repeat in memory and which become difficult to dismiss or disavow (i.e. neutralize or ignore). Finally, one of the most compelling events prompting a reevaluation of commitment to a criminal lifestyle was a disillusionment with criminal peers following perceived betrayals. This chapter concludes with a brief discussion on the role the anticipation of personal disempowerment in the desistance process plays in retarding the movement to conventionality.

Chapter Six examines a series of generative interactions between participants. Generative

behavior, as outlined in the chapter, involves acting with care and concern for others. Generativity is held to aid the desistance process as caring for others can provide former offenders with opportunities to atone for past crimes, participate in a socially legitimate practice, and because supporting others can be empowering in and of itself. Findings here indicate that a generative orientation existed among participants prior to their incarceration. Generative interactions between group participants (primarily interventions intended to deter others from offending) were undertaken with gusto in group sessions, an enthusiasm resulting in part from program encouragement and with the suspension of ordinary exigencies of life that imprisonment involves. The chapter also discusses however, the need for the protection of the self during the desistance process. Observations reveal that many generative interactions followed a common format, generative scripts, which although drawing upon the interlocutor as a “feared future self”, often minimized or depersonalized the tolls of persistence. This chapter concludes that such face-saving maneuvers reflect a significant dynamic at the center of male habitual offenders efforts to desist: the need for continuity in selfhood amidst change. To this end, oblique approach to expressions of vulnerability nonetheless afforded participants with opportunities to experiment with care relations with others, generative risks that allow for safe expressions of emotional engagement on which a novel self, in part, can begin to be constructed.

Methods of Research

There were a number of factors guiding research design for this dissertation project. The research topic was first and foremost in directing methodological choices. The goal of this dissertation was to render the experience of desistance from the perspective of incarcerated men. In adopting

an “interpretative understanding of social action” (Weber 1947), this dissertation assumes that social reality is constructed reality composed of symbolic and cultural interpretations, webs of significance and meaning created and used by human actors. Methodologically speaking, qualitative tools which investigate the subjectivity of individuals are an extension of this perspective and thus are the primary research methods employed in this dissertation. An additional factor in selecting research methods for this project bears less on methodological suitability, but rather the practical demands of researching in the restricted environment of the prison. Although access was obtained to two correctional facilities, permission was granted to the researcher to observe group sessions of the Council For Unity rehabilitation program in a county jail, whereas only one round of surveys of program participants was permitted in the second facility, a maximum security prison. A more detailed discussion of the challenges of conducting qualitative research in prison will be provided below. Two research methods were selected and are discussed below: ethnographic observation and unstructured surveys.

Ethnographic Observation

Ethnographic observation is a research method common among studies of offender rehabilitation treatment programs (Cox 2011, Fox 1999a; Fox 1999b, Kramer et al. 2013, Waldram 2007; 2009). To define, ethnography is “a family of methods involving direct and sustained social contact with agents...the disciplined and deliberate witness-cum-recording of human experience” (Willis and Trondman 2000, 394). Ethnographic methods serve a triple function: they record behavior as it takes place in specific social situations, how behavior is shaped, constrained, and enabled by such situations, and actors’ interpretation of these experiences. Although in-depth qualitative interviews are sometimes used by researchers to evaluate *the outcome* of therapeutic interventions, assessing, for example, changes to individual cognitions

post-treatment (see Mason and Hargreaves 2001), ethnographic methods allow for the observation of *the process* of group treatment, including the application of treatment discourses and participant-facilitator interactions. The above cited ethnographic research of offender rehabilitation tends to follow in this line. For example, Fox's ethnographic study examines the employment of paradigms of cognitive distortions by group facilitators in a program for violent offenders, with a focus on participants' resistance to the representation of their offending as "errors" in thinking. However, whilst this dissertation examines processes of interaction and mean-making within rehabilitative spaces in the prison, it departs from the evaluative emphasis of previous ethnographic studies of offender rehabilitation, which tend to focus on the mismatch of program discourses and participant understanding of their own offending and hence rehabilitation (see Cox 2011 etc. above). Instead, this dissertation employs ethnographic observation inductively in which research processes moves from observations of program sessions to the development of general conclusions about the desistance process amongst prisoners. In this sense, this dissertation is more in line with Soyer's qualitative research on detained juvenile offenders (2013) in which her analysis of the experience of imprisonment developed an understanding of incarceration as a failed turning point in the desistance process, rather than as an assessment of program utility. Nonetheless, given that group interactions were observed during Council For Unity sessions, and indeed, articulations of meaning occurred via the framework provided by the program, it is difficult to avoid implicit evaluation of program effectiveness.

Data Collection

Ethnographic data for this dissertation was collected during Council For Unity program sessions run at a county jail in a north eastern state (average daily population of the jail was 1,200). Council For Unity was one of a range of cognitive, vocational, and therapeutic programs available at the county jail. Findings draw upon eighteen months of observation of the program's weekly sessions totaling roughly forty seven observed sessions. Sessions were held every Friday from 9.30am-11am with a group of on average twelve inmates in attendance and one program leader. Attendees sit in a circle of chairs in the facilities chapel with program facilitators. The researcher sat in on group sessions, but declined to take notes in case this would discourage participation among attendees. Notes were written after each session and the later typed up.

Entering the Field

Reiter observes that the empirical picture of American prisons (2014) is pixelated, in that the sum of data conveys a blurry image of the institution. This is in part due to the institution's inaccessibility: prisons can be time-consuming and expensive to reach, obtaining permission to conduct research can also be lengthy and subject to restriction, facility idiosyncrasies such as requiring interview requests be faxed, acquiring authorization to use everyday research tools such a recording devices, and overall indisposition of prison officials to grant entry to researchers. Compared to other researchers' access experiences, obtaining access to the field for the ethnographic component of this project was relatively easy. Contact was made with the president of the Council For Unity program, whereby the researcher conveyed interest in observing some group sessions of their correctional program run at a county jail. The researcher accompanied the president (who was group facilitator for the jail program) on two occasions.

Upon the decision to conduct dissertation research at the program's sessions, written permission to conduct observations of sessions was obtained from the facility's deputy sheriff. This permission was then included in the submission to John Jay College's Institutional Review Board (hereafter IRB). Nonetheless several of the factors Reiter identifies as inhibiting field research in prison worked to limit research access to the rehabilitative space, and thus, restrict data collection to that generated by observations (the effects of which on this study is discussed in the "Limitations of this Study" section below, and in more detailed fashion in the concluding chapter). First, the jail took roughly two and half hours to reach, and was inaccessible via public transportation. The researcher's inability to drive meant that, although it could have been possible to arrange, interviews with program participants were both financially and logistically impractical. Second, inmates' daily routines are high regimented meaning that additional time with program participants to conduct field interviews (one of the family of methods that compose ethnography, see above) was very limited.

Sample Selection and Composition

Due to restrictions on research access in the facility there was little scope but to conduct a convenience sample of participants in the weekly group sessions. Reflecting the composition of the broader inmate population, the remaining participants are adult inmates. The group was racially mixed with approximately with equal amounts of black, Latino/a, and white participants. Program participants were incarcerated for a variety of offenses: burglary, drug selling, gun possession, murder etc. As noted above, older participants were generally either accused or convicted of more serious offenses (particularly violent crime). A number of participants

(estimated about 40%) were currently or had previously been gang-affiliated. The program had a relatively high turnover, which reflected the transitional nature of the jail population. Participants frequently exited the group due to sentence completion, transfer, or were absent due to court proceedings. Nonetheless, roughly 60% of the group attended the sessions for more than six months. Three female inmates attended group sessions over the observation period, the rest of group participants were male and the observed sample was entirely male.

Coding

The write up of the ethnographic data followed the sequence outlined by Emerson (2011). To begin, ethnographic field notes were compiled as a body and read through chronological order. Recurring topics and themes of import were identified and coded, for example open-codes included “generativity” or “persistence”. Field notes were organized under coding headings. As recommended by Emerson, thematically coded field notes were then closely reread in order to delineate subtopics and subthemes. Once data had been organized in various topics and themes, with corresponding sub-entries, a more substantial, analytic narrative was composed which explored the link between coded observations. On the basis of this more integrated narrative more general analytic categories. Final write-ups then placed derivatives in relation to existing theories of desistance to form the empirical chapters of this dissertation.

Limitations of the ethnographic component

The advantages of the ethnographic method is that research sustains immersive exposure to the “key sites and scenes of other’s lives” (Emerson 2011, 2) by which a ethnographer constructs a richly layer and holistic account of subjects as they interaction within a natural social setting. As

noted above, a serious limitation of this study is that the ethnographic component was restricted to observations of group sessions. This limitation is reported by other ethnographic studies of prison populations, where researchers have employed the term “quasi-ethnography” in that structural barriers of the prison inhibit immersion in the lives and daily routines of the subjects under study (Owen 1998, 21). One significant problem arising from the restriction of this study to the observation of group sessions was that the program space was only a limited slice of the life of program participants, thus the totality of their experiences of incarceration and its relationship to the desistance process could not be explored, despite obvious relevance to this process. As a result the researcher had only indirect access to life for program participants beyond the program space, a rich society, as prison researcher Crewe notes, “that brims with discord and discontent, pulses with friendships and loyalties, and maintains its own subculture, economy, and status hierarchies.” (2006, 347).

Unstructured Survey

Initially the researcher planned to conduct a second set of observations of the Council For Unity program sessions run at a maximum security prison. Conducting observations of their prison program was anticipated to yield richer data on the desistance process in prison. This was because, given that inmates had been sentenced and sentenced for long periods, the Council For Unity prison program could implement a curriculum over a six month cycle, with participants remaining in the group for the duration. In research terms, this would offset the difficulties of researching a relatively more transient group in their jail program, where turnover of program participants was much higher due to functions of imprisonment at a local level (i.e. for those serving short sentences or pretrial detention). Unfortunately, however, regulations at a maximum security facility are considerable stricter than at a local level, and research access to conduct an

observational study was not permitted by prison administration. The researcher proposed conducting a short survey of program participants, which was permitted by the prison administration. Thus the choice to conduct a survey was less due to methodological reasoning, and more as a compromise (one frequently made in prison research, see Goodman 2011) which allowed for data collection on terms agreeable to the institutional gatekeeper. In maintaining the focus on gathering qualitative data, the researcher opted to create a survey with open-ended questions inviting them to discuss their desistance process during their incarceration.

Data Collection, Sample Selection and Composition

A questionnaire containing six open-ended questions was administered to twenty-five Council For Unity program participants. Questionnaires were self-completed. A convenience sample of program participants was used, which although not representative of the wider prison population, nonetheless was suited to examination of the desistance process, as all program participants were actively seeking to desist, albeit at a variety of different stages in this process. The sample was entirely male, approximately 50% black, 30% Hispanic, and 20% white (race and ethnicity was not reported in the survey), and ranged in age from 22 to 58.

Analysis

Analysis of the data followed procedures recommended for the analysis of qualitative interview data (Kvale and Brinkman 2009). More specifically, answers to completed questions were coded for content and then grouped thematically. Although the yield of data was low (relative to what might have acquired via a qualitative interview), there was sufficient data to make some general statements about the experience desisting had for these men in prison, and the data gathered forms the basis of chapter three.

Reflexivity

In ethnography, “the participant researcher is the research instrument par excellence” (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). During the field observation period the observer makes hundreds, if not thousands, of *ad lib* decisions as to what is perceived and recorded, decisions to the prima facie interpretation of observations, the meaning imputed to action, its context and so on. That ethnographic data collection occurs chiefly via the often improvisatory mental action of the researcher, ethnography requires a greater degree of self-inspection (or self-objectification, Bourdieu 2003) than methods which can delegate, in part, such controls to protocol design, statistical tests of reliability, pilot testing etc. Of course the corrective action afforded by lengthy exposure, the intra-triangulation of repeat observation, is perhaps the primary check of the integrity of ethnographic data. The potential introduction of perceptual artifacts to data when self serves as research medium has, as suggested, translated into reflexive moves to make “the self visible” (Rowe 2014, 404). Reflexivity in qualitative research largely based on the (correct) assumption is that all knowledge is situated. Of all the distortions that can occur by virtue of that fact that the ethnographer (indeed any researcher) partakes in the social world (and risks pre-reflexively importing of the categories of perception of this social world onto itself) they are trying to study, the biases of standpoint, i.e. race, gender, sexuality, and region (and to a lesser extent class) have been given greater attention than is perhaps merited. Indeed the ritual confession and self-vitiation demanded exercises in standpoint theory have introduced analytic distortions when studying down, in that bias control is confounded with rendering “oppressed groups” stringently sympathetic terms, the assumption being discussion of unsavory or morally ambivalent aspects of such groups only reflects the contamination of ideology and serves in the

reproduction of social power inequalities. An implicit ethical imperative towards representing the marginalized in terms of moral purity in qualitative research is perhaps primary of the distortions this dissertation has had to resist. The remainder of the discussion on the success of this resistance is contained in the concluding chapter of this dissertation under “Limitations of this Study”.

A few additional remarks on emotions and research should be made here, as this topic features prominently in methodological discussions in prison research literature (Jewkes 2012; Liebling 1999; Rowe 2014). Some researchers have described prison research as “emotional edgework” in that because it is emotionally demanding, prison research challenges traditional distinctions between objective scientist and research object (Liebling 2014), and that emotions elicited in the field, itself constitute data for the ethnographer (Rowe 2014). Custodial environments can generate strong emotions, in that “prisons are raw, special places” (Liebling 1999, 152) which contain extremes of human social life in terms of state power, moral transgression, and physical violence. Indeed, as Earle (2014) notes, an existential chill is palpable in prison fieldwork, as was felt by this researcher, particularly in witnessing groups largely divested of normal adult sovereignty (the deprivation of liberty described by Gresham Sykes), the sense of collective and institutionally organized human pain, and the gulf in legal status, knowledge of which resides beneath every interaction with an inmate, no matter how equitable or sympathetic. There is nothing which quite expresses the awesome and indifferent power of the state as the prison: the checkpoints, the grooming to deposit prohibited items, the reflex apprehension at being searched, wearing an ID, having an escort at all times, the tight attention to maintaining a physical perimeter, all invariable routines serving to imbue prison visits with emotional tautness that

never quite leaves with familiarity. However, it is not clear from the methodological literature precisely what analytic benefits result from the acknowledgement of the researcher as an emoting subject. For example, a much cited article by Jewkes (2012) calls for writers to disclose and discuss the emotions generated in prison research, for two reasons – one, because it more honestly depicts the research process for novice researchers, and two, her identification with an inmate “acted as a catalyst for my personal quest for knowledge” (72). It seems that much of the discussions on emotions and the research process reflect the influence of post-structuralist thought, as a genre of writing, on academic writing, which greatly expands the mileage one can get from even trivial research encounters and the occasionally useful, but hardly profound, insights they can generate.

However, both points on standpoint theory and emotions in prison research have a bearing, methodologically speaking, on this dissertation research in so far it impacted rapport building in the field. According to Spradley, data generation in field research is reliant on the development of a basic sense of trust between the ethnographer and research subject(s) (1979). From a standpoint perspective, a harmonious research relationship overcomes more than simply developing rapport between strangers, but is complicated by power differentials and social distance between researcher and researched (Bourdieu 1992), although in a non-linear fashion (social distance from dominant groups, i.e. being white but European can work in the researcher’s favor, see Wacquant 2006). In recognition of the combination racial/ethnic (which cue social power differences in America) and class differences between himself and the majority of program participants, attempts such as wearing casual clothing and non-verbal signaling of empathy, were made (sometimes unconsciously) to establish rapport with program participants.

It is noted that good participant research involves a reflexive balance between intimacy with, and distance from, the individuals under observation (Hume and Mulcock 2005). The most difficult and methodologically relevant issue however, concerned the ambivalent role of the researcher within group. It was established that field research was being conducted during the consent process, i.e. I was identified as a researcher. However, that the researcher sat within the group circle but was not a group facilitator lead, over a period, to feelings of embarrassment as there was a sense that the status of an accepted outsider was not achieved because the researcher wasn't clearly occupying any particular role. Thus during the early stages of field research the researcher adopted a "peripheral membership" role, which although there was close and frequent interaction with field subjects, the researcher did not participate in activities at the core of group membership, i.e. do not assume functional roles within the group (Adler and Adler 1987). In order to overcome the sense of relational distance stemming occupying a non-role in the group as the field research period proceeded the researcher did begin to assume an "active membership" role, in contributing to group sessions as a facilitator. This was aided by the researcher's growing familiarity with program curriculum and methods. It is not clear, however, what effects this methodological compromise between integration and contamination of the field, had on the data produced.

Ethical Issues in Prison Research

Research involving research with human subjects involves two important ethical considerations, respect for persons (the protection of individuals' autonomy and dignity, requirements of informed and voluntary consent) and justice (fair treatment of persons and/or groups). Due to

prisoners' confinement in a tightly controlled institutional setting in which their ability to act autonomously is restricted, extra attention must be given by researchers to ensure that research is conducted ethically, especially given the potential for coerced research participation (Gostin et al. 2007). A consent protocol was developed in correspondence with John Jay College IRB to ensure that participation in this research project in both components, ethnographic observation and unstructured surveys, was done voluntarily and with disclosure to the use of the data collected. Research participants' were anonymized in the write up of this dissertation. In line with research on inmates' perceptions of the benefits and harm of research participation (Copes et al. 2013), the researcher found that inmates viewed research participation positively expressing that they hoped their experience could be of benefit to others and that the project ("the book") would go some way to altering the negative perceptions they believed the public held about the incarcerated.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter consists of a literature review of research on desistance from crime. Within the burgeoning subfield of desistance studies, to study desistance is to study the trajectories of chronic offenders as they move away from crime. As implied, the phenomenon is best understood as a process (verb) than a discrete event (noun). Drawing upon existing research, chiefly the works of Giordano et al. (2007), Paternoster and Bushway (2009), and Vaughan (2007), this chapter organizes the “active” desistance process into ideal typical sequence of changes in selfhood which is then later applied to the process of change in prison discussed in later chapters (3, 5, and 6). More specifically, this literature review organizes what is known about the desistance process into a chronological sequence consisting of early, middle, and late phases. The dynamics specific to each stage are examined in drawing upon the work of desistance scholars but articulated in terms of a phenomenological view of the human subject as composed of multiple territories, the conscious mind, the subconscious, emotions, in dialectic interaction with an external world.

Defining Desistance

The general meaning of the term to “desist” in criminology is to permanently cease offending and other anti-social behavior (Kazemian 2009). The term is frequently used by researchers in a more specific sense, referring to desistance

from chronic offending. Although of interest to criminologists, low-rate offending, situational or contingent crime, and adolescent limited criminality, whose cessation develops undemandingly and spontaneously, such as tends to occur to most law-breaking behavior as individuals age or enter into conventional adult roles, (see Farrington 1986; Moffitt 1993), is of less concern to desistance scholars tasked with explaining the exit of habitual or career criminals over the life course (Laub and Sampson 1993). Although there is a loose consensus that habitual offenders constitute the subfield's appropriate research subjects, scholars nonetheless disagree on the mechanisms by which the gradual movement towards zero offending occurs. The primary contention is to whether the pathway out of crime develops situationally as a by-product of significant life events such as employment and/or a good marriage, largely without conscious or committed direction of the desistee (see Sampson and Laub 2005) or involves more agentic, deliberate efforts by reforming-offenders to actively reconstitute their lives (see Maruna 2001; Healy 2013).

To elaborate, research derivative from Sampson and Laub's seminal works in life-course criminology (Schellen et al. 2012; Lyngstad and Skardhamar 2013; Skardhamar and Savolainen 2014), hold that desistance emerges as the result of transitional life events, marriage and employment, which, independently from the conscious commitment of the offender, introduce systems of restraint and obligation which accumulate to significantly raise the cost of further criminal activity. For example, marriage induces significant changes in everyday routines, introduces the individual to new pro-social family and friends, and institutes new systems of supervision regulating potential criminal relapse (think routine activities theory). As Sampson and Laub articulate, "short-term situational inducements to crime, over time, redirect long-term

commitments to conformity” (2005, 51), eventually inaugurating underlying changes in self-conception but as an ancillary product of the drift to conventionality. This desistance trajectory may be term “passive desistance”. By contrast, desistance research closely associated with the work of Shadd Maruna (see 2001), follows that desistance is the result of fundamental shifts in identity, which nonetheless interact with opportunities for employment and pro-social relationship formation, but which is initiated and actively maintained by the individual, via narratively ordered forms of self-talk, by which the reforming offender eventually becomes an “ex” or “changed person”. This desistance trajectory may be termed “active desistance”.

Contention as to whether desistance emerges “passively” or “actively” too often suffers from "either/or" thinking characteristic of much social science, encumbering research with an unspoken rule that *one* social process model can adequately explain a phenomenon. Such logocentrism undermines the sociological endeavor to understand the human social world in all its complexity, and implicitly, to improve it too!⁴ To counter, this dissertation intellectually breaks with the doxa implied in the little word “or”, the conjunction “and” is far better⁵ and assumes significant heterogeneity in the human life course, and thus variance in how and why individuals cease serious offending. Similar conclusions have recently been reached by other desistance scholars, who have urged a more catholic appreciation of the diverse pathways out of crime (see Farrall et al. 2014, 38). In terms of this dissertation, the analytic dividend of this break is to free mental energies from fruitless intellectual to-and-fro (with agency *or* without?), a debate this dissertation will now leave aside, as well as that which might come from forwarding

⁴ That the mental images of the desistee presented above are viewed as competing and not simply different, is partly because such visions map on to divisions familiar (i.e. natural rivalries, natural at least to whose mental structures operate in *illusio*, i.e. socialization to the field) to social scientists: quantitative vs. qualitative, objectivist vs. subjectivist, conservative vs. liberal, structuring (plaguing) the field.

⁵ See, Deleuze and Guttari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987).

a more complex vision of the kaleidoscope that is human social life for the discipline more broadly.⁶

As suggested by others (see Giordano et al. 2007), rather than rival truth claims, divergent research findings may reflect variation in role-exit within the desistance genus, related to historically variable or biographically stochastic supply of change catalysts, i.e. employment and marriage. So for example, Sampson and Laub's research sample – 500 white male offenders born in Boston in the 1920s and 1930s – who ceased offending in the relatively affluent post-War years, may have involved less upfront, agentic work because of the strong socially integrative institutions such as secure, well-paid employment available to this demographic during this period. Conversely, the post-industrial era, 1970s onward, affords objectively lower supply of secure, well-paid, entry-level employment, coupled with relatively more interpersonal turbulence associated with the rise of affective individualism in family formation (see Stone 1979), to add significant racial and ethnic obstacles to social integration/reentry, and relatedly, the long shadow of a felony conviction in America, may necessitate more active, desistance as project, maneuvers, relying on relatively weaker social supports and requiring a greater marshaling of personal resolve, of course, a fortunate few may still drift towards desistance.

The “Active” Desistance Process

Roughly speaking, in this form of agent lead desistance, or “active desistance” change takes the form of an *arc* in that the conscious efforts to go straight are bookended by “at rest” selfhoods,

⁶ This diversity is expressed, in part, in this chapter via the frequent use of modal verbs denoting possibility (can, could, may etc.).

where habit dominates. Three rough stages mark this process: early, middle, and late. Often prompted by a growing dissatisfaction with the negative consequences of a criminal involvement, the early phase is inaugurated via the offender's reflexive reappraisal of their life trajectory (Paternoster and Bushway 2009; Vaughan 2007). Dedication to change assumed, the individual moves into a middle period of conscious alteration of former habits, outlook, income sources and interpersonal relations (Giordano et al. 2007). Gradually thus, this period of deliberate self-alteration closes with the late stage, the interiorization of a new modality of the self as a "changed person" or ex-offender incongruent with future offending (Farrall et al. 2014).

Early Phase - Beginnings

Researchers (Vaughan 2007) have posited that the initial motivation to desist arises out of a period of self-objectification in which the offender begins to consciously reflect on rather than simply participate in their present *modus vivendi* i.e. shifts from an absorbed to a contemplative apprehension of themselves. In other terms, this audit period involves a suspension in the "relationship of immediate adaption" of the habitus or subconscious to itself and environment (Vaughan 2007, 392). What seems to prompt this exercise in self-evaluation is a growing dissatisfaction with crime in which accumulated failures or disappointments and

a sense that being an offender is no longer financially beneficial, that it is too dangerous, that the perceived costs of imprisonment loom more likely and greater, and that the cost's to one's social relationships are too dear (Paternoster and Bushway 2009, 1105)

are difficult, or have become increasingly difficult, to ignore or disassociate from offending, triggering a shift in which one's "life" enters into the foreground of conscious appraisal.

Paternoster and Bushway term this dissatisfaction with crime as a precipitant the “crystallization of discontent” (2009). Self-examination is accomplished primarily via an internal moral conversation (see also Archer 2003) in which the offender begins to reassess their current life trajectory, a taking-stock of ultimate concerns of what is truly valued, stable employment, physical safety, liberty, romantic relationships, family, and so on, now called on for more deliberate reflection and more active prioritization in light of the adjustment in the meaning of crime for the offender. In more precise terms, as Paternoster and Bushway propose, this suspension involves the self-estrangement from the “working selves” as a criminal offender, an articulable master status valuing certain lines of action over others, but which is largely directed subconsciously as a system of internalized preferences (Paternoster and Bushway 2009).

Research into persistent offenders (Maruna 2001) has revealed that persisters often referred to their crime disassociatively as an “it”, as if their purposive selves were not the locus and origin of their own action. Although one can attribute this, in part, to face-saving evasion of responsibility for their offending, this linguistic ceding of agency is an articulation of the experience of extra-reflective dynamics such as subconscious dispositions, like the underlying master status of the working criminal self, and emotions that are, although *of us*, are not entirely directed *by us* bearing their own momentum in the flow of life (see Katz 2001), and thus are experienced phenomenologically as partial external to the self. The willingness to change, may simply involve a shift in stance from *absorbed coping* to *detached contemplation* (Heidegger’s terms), is a change in perception which amounts to a switch in the relation of the conscious mind to the self: the self takes stance vis-à-vis itself. It is this self-reflexive capacity which allows for the beginning stages of “active desistance”, when meaning-frameworks, by virtue of the

crystallization of discontent, move from seamless, yet directing, immersion in the flux and flow of life, to conscious examination and evaluation.

One aspect of this period of deliberation in which the offender takes stock of the negative consequences of their past criminality, is also a mental register of potential courses of action, imaginatively projected on to the future in which continued offending, now viewed as increasingly costly, leads towards an undesirable “feared self”, lengthy prison sentence, further alienation from family, injury, destitution, death (Paternoster and Bushway 2009). Posed against this bleak future state, is the “desired self”, an often vaguely sketched picture expressive of the individual’s ultimate concerns, for example, “I want to do the 9-5 thing”, “I want to reconnect with my daughter”, now given new license to order one’s life in its service, i.e. a newly valued, but as of yet untested and unaccomplished, status set (Farrall et al. 2014). As shall be discussed in chapter four, phenomenologically speaking, humans experience time as an irreversible movement from a closed and determined past towards an open and indeterminate future (Schutz 1970). Until experienced, our future exists only in our imagination. The detail in which we can envision our futures relies in large part, to borrow Schutz’s term, from our existing “stocks of knowledge”, i.e. the already experienced or known from which we supply our mental imagery (1970). To follow, Farrall et al.’s recent study of British probationers found that at this early stage in the desistance process, after years as a stranger to conventional life, respondents’ plans for the future can be rather formless, either emphasizing what they do not want to be, apropos the “feared self”, or a vague aspiration, “I want make a proper go of it”, involving an as-of-yet delineated future self (2014, 194). Novel experiences of a fairly simple, discrete nature may be undertaken without requiring detailed mental pre-visualization, but with distal goals, i.e. long-

term and multi-component, as is termed in goal setting literature (see Locke and Latham 2002) such as desistance, the contours of the new conventional lifestyle may be faint, or importantly so, the practical steps needed to realize this desired “future self” subject may be broached with uncertainty and doubt (see Harris 2011 on the offenders’ construction of possible “clean” future selves). In the American context, offenders’ assessment of their prospects most likely occur in recognition of the sheer difficulty of reentry for men with few credentials or work experience, coupled with the often dual stigma of race and a felony conviction (see Pager 2003), especially in light of past experiences of limited opportunities

What about emotions? Literature on emotions is as sprawling and indeterminate as the phenomenon itself, so the following discussion shall be limited to aspects of affect most salient to the framing work undertaken by this chapter. As noted above, emotions are an important relay between the formation that is the subconscious or the habitus, which are non-other than the sediment of all past experiences, and the conscious mind. Emotions are heavily implicated in purposive action, “cognitions of themselves are incapable of triggering an instrumental process, unless they first generate an emotion that mobilizes a motivational state capable of recruiting action” (Forgas 2001). As emotions scholar, Jack Katz, notes emotions have their own, only partially manageable (take Hochschild’s work on emotion management), autonomous energies – they are subjective and personal, yet they can possess us as an alien force (2001). To combine both points, emotions are implicated in action projects (desisting), yet not entirely ours as they too are the sedimented product of past socialization which we only sometimes consciously direct, the rest we inherit, and thus, as shall be examined below, an important source of discordance or non-synchronicity of change across the domains of the self. In short, emotions can act as an

important drag or spur to action by imbuing such action with a pleasure or pain valence, often independent of more rational, conscious cost-benefit appraisal of one action project over another.

Several emotions are present during this early period. A point as yet not fully explored in desistance literature, despite forays in to the emotional dynamics underlying persistence/desistance (see Giordano et al. 2007), is that a necessary affective corollary which renders cognitive openness to change meaningful, and hence motivating, is a corresponding emotion-cognition of hope (Lazarus 1999). Hope is a positively toned emotional state, which varies in intensity, in which an imagined happy future state vicariously tinges our mood in the present, like a small deposit of positive affect yielded by anticipation. Farrall et al.'s research (2014), cited above, is the most explicit engagement with emotions and the desistance, charted the various emotions expressed by their respondents, finding that hope terms are more prevalent at early stages in the desistance process than others. Additionally however, the process of stock-taking may engender a feeling of guilt or remorse, guilt occurs when behavior is perceived as at variance with a given moral value to which the individual feels obligated to conform, say over their violent victimization of others, the harms caused by drug-selling, family suffering and shame (King 2013). It is also important to appreciate the complexity, non-linearity of this affective process: the development of negative emotional associations with crime, i.e. guilt, may engender an additional emotional dynamic, depression, which in turn may inhibit the actor's ability to make a concrete move away from criminality.

Indeed the conflict present at this point between the past, prolonged commitment to a criminal working self, and current aspirations to conventionality, which imply the possibility of reform, may find reconciliation in the forms of redemption narratives revealed in qualitative research on

desistance (see Maruna 2001; King 2013). Much of this research has developed from Maruna's seminal work, *Making Good: How Ex-convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*, relationship between narrative identity and desistance (2001), which has been hugely influential to research on the subjectivity and desistance. Maruna draws directly from scholarship on narrative identity (see Bruner 1987) in viewing identity as a form of self-story or "life-script" which guides and organizes individuals' behavior and their relation to their lifeworld. Successful desisters possess a "redemption life-script", a story of self in which a meaningful conventional life emerges from the ashes of criminality. Maruna asserts that ex-convicts need "a logical self-story" (2001, 55) to help them make sense of their criminal past and convincingly assert their capacity for self-reform to themselves as much as others. Redemption scripts contain three elements: an optimism about one's agency and capacity for self-determination, a motivation to contribute to the greater good, and a belief in one's fundamental decency (2001). Such life-scripts may, as perhaps only implied in Maruna, possess a prospective causal influence as a form of fortifying self-talk which aids to credibly sustain motivation, i.e. provide a coherent narrative but also necessary affective sense of hope, to change in the face of long histories of offending, very limited forms of conventional capital, and the general unknown that is the *deroulement* of life-projects of unpredictable duration and outcome. For example, one powerful form of self-talk galvanizing the desistance process Maruna uncovered, which is somewhat unique to former-offenders, is an empowering perceptual alchemy whereby the offending past is viewed not as a liability, but as an asset (albeit a hard won one), a necessary prelude to a more fulfilling life, than the average person, a kind of elevation through trial (see 2001, 87). This finds reflection in an almost missionary confidence, found largely in the late stage, as will be discussed below, arising from ex-offenders' experiential capital and applied, frequently by "professional exes" in the fields of rehabilitation, social work,

drug counseling and so on, as well as in the role of criminal justice reformer, whose direct experience of “the system”, and by extension one’s personal authority, cannot be acquired by proxy or substitution.

Thus to conclude, the yield of the early stage of self-reflection is simply, as Giordano et al. in their four part model of “cognitive transformations” underlying the desistance process hold, a subjective, tentative openness to change (2002) and the corresponding motivational affective state of hope (even if of a desperate type). One can surmise that this stage closes when openness to change anneals to a dedication to “going straight” (Vaughan 2009), now given practical implementation as a project. Whether such aspiration translates to desistance, of course, is a wholly another question.

The Middle Phase – Sustaining Desistance

A look at desistance researchers Giordano et al.’s concept of “hooks for change” (2002) will be helpful to frame this middle phase of desistance, marked by the movement from mental dedication to desist to the implementation of this goal via a selected course(s) of action, acquisition of legal employment, renewing pro-social relationships, undertaking drug rehabilitation etc.. The concept of “hooks for change” is central to Giordano et al.’s four-stage model of the “cognitive shifts” occurring during the process of desistance. They define “hooks for change” as “potentially pro-social features of the environment as catalysts, change agents, causes, or even turning points” (2002, 1000) which include, legal employment, a good marriage, education, a trusted mentor, pro-social peers and so on. According to Giordano, hooks for change

play an important role in securing cognitive transformation (i.e. meaning shift), spurring a movement from; 1) a basic openness to change, the cognitive-emotional outcome of the early stage in desistance, which is then further galvanized by; 2) exposure to a particular set of hooks for change, from which; 3) the envisioning and fashioning of a “replacement self” becomes increasingly feasible, which develops to the point that finally; 4) the actor views criminal behavior as negative, unviable, and personally irrelevant (2002). Point 2) and 3) are of primary importance to this uncertain middle stage, although further clarification of the relationship between experience and identity is necessary, and point 4) will be discussed in the final “late” section.

Giordano et al. contend that successful hooks influence the actor to make a particular type of cognitive connection, a reflexive feedback in which a non-deviant identity reciprocally emerges in the interaction between self, i.e. self-conception, and lived experience. Importantly Giordano et al. conceptually distinguish this process of identity transformation arising from participation in a hook for change from control effects posited by Sampson and Laub (1993). As noted previously, Sampson and Laub, although belatedly acknowledging that subjective changes do accompany the desistance process, hold to the idea, basic to all control theories, that to a point the individual’s motivation to offend is assumed to be constant. What is variable is the density of social ties in which the individual is enmeshed, which coagulate to produce desistance, and, as a model, does not require active, deliberate maintenance by the reforming-offender. To clarify, Giordano et al. in a later article (2007), in adopting a Neo-Meadian framework assert that rather than encasing the individual in a system of obligations – really a more expanded notion of rational actor theory, i.e. motivation to remain crime-free is the result of the increasing costs of offending not for the meaning or intrinsic value of desisting – they posit a symbolic interactionist

framework in which participation in a hook for change (when mostly positive) fosters *a shift in meaning*. New positive associations with a hook for change are now available in memory and not simply imagination as in the early phase, which include new *affective* attachments, lend motivational weight to the individual's commitment to novel, pro-desistance, priorities, i.e. continuity with particular course of action. It is a shift or deepening in meaning salience and the emergence of an association with positive affect by which a hook for change energizes the desistance process.

A clearer picture of the relationship between hooks for change and identity formation can perhaps be presented, however, Wenger's social theory of identity formation is useful here (1998). According to Wenger, our identity is not simply how we talk and think about ourselves, nor just what others talk and think about us (as assumed by Meadian concepts of the subject), but in the way one's identity is lived day-to-day. In a cognitive sense we identify, and are identified, with certain social categories, roles etc., but it is *competent participation* in the lived experience of that identity or role that anchors the role or identity in self-conception. To expand, it is when our performance of an identity or role reaches, or descends, to evoke a strata analogy, to the level of habit, i.e. the subconscious, and that, that fluent dwelling is consistent over time that a durable sense of self as "regular guy" or "good father" emerges, nonetheless requiring maintenance. In research studies successful desistees frequently recount their delight at accomplishing even relatively minor conventional goals, such as getting an "A" or receiving a pay stub, which, aside from progress towards a larger goal, is viewed as evidencing, to one's self, membership in a hitherto distant social category, e.g. "I never saw myself as someone who could do well at university". (Opsal 2012). In later stages, one may "catch" one's self in the flow of habit, and it

is often the consciousness of the now subconscious direction, i.e. ongoing practical mastery as signal of internalization, that a truly robust and authentic self-conception is grounded. In other words, identity formation and maintenance is accomplished via practice (in Bourdieu's sense), corporeal hexis, i.e. somatization, *and* our reflexive awareness of our competencies in both domains, perhaps plays a more important role than is hitherto acknowledged in sociological conceptions of the self and self-identity.

This understanding of the relationship between identity and the ways in which that identity is lived day-to-day can be found in Goffman's account of the "moral career" in his seminal *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Sociology, more broadly, has yet only really viewed the relationship between self and routine in degradative not generative ways. As noted in Chapter 1, Goffman held that one's sense of self is contingent on a host of everyday routines and identity equipment. Disruption of routines and dispossession of identity equipment leads to a partial degradation or mortification of the self, e.g. moral career transition from free-individual to mental patient. However, the self-implicative qualities of routine action should also bear on the *construction* of identity. In short, competent participation in a role *precedes solid identification with that role*, i.e. there is an important experiential cum practice basis for identity. This is why, when speaking to reformed-offenders about their new lives, they often (with pleasure), list the various signifiers of their new way of being-in-the-world, as revealed in Opsal's research on women recently released from prison. For example:

TO: What kinds of things do you have to do [to be a self-sufficient adult]?

Freesia: Just working for a living, paying your own bills, buying yourself stuff, taking care of yourself, feeding yourself, being happy...(Opsal 2012, 389)

To offer a further example, enrollment in a university is perhaps only good for a shallow assimilation to the “I” of self-conception as a student. It is understanding how to register, easy use of the library, successful completion of courses, knowledge acquisition, adoption of argot etc. i.e. competent day-to-day participation in “student” activities and the consciousness of the subconscious nature, i.e. automatization, somatization, of such activity on which an “I am a student” self-conception durably rests. To borrow once again from Heidegger, it is awareness of our absorbed coping that cues the authenticity of an adopted identity/role, i.e. the awareness of one’s non-awareness, one’s spontaneous coordination of action and thought that cues to our mind the action of the habitus. In short, identity is as much a practical accomplishment as a cognitive or relational one.

The affective dimension the offender’s practical engagement with change can be examined by looking at when the relationship between action and being breaks down. For it is *satisfying* competent participation, to use our desistance terms, in a hook for change that renders the effects on the self as durable and lasting. Opsal’s research on work and female ex-prisoners (2012) supports this claim. In her interviews, women who disliked the conditions of their work were most likely to reconsider not only desistance as a project, but their own capacity, ontologically speaking, to be different, i.e. a conventional citizen. Another example, Moran (2015) discusses the emotional dynamics which may frustrate attempts by offenders to maintain legal employment. More specifically, he argues that when work fails to provide for positive emotional returns, typically due to the menial nature of most legal work available to former-criminals, and produces feelings of shame, this may provoke a “this is not for me” assessment and thus role-exit. Self-exclusion demonstrates that individuals can be just as driven by proximal affective

dynamics than as by longer term strategies of social mobility. Part of the lure of the illegal labor market thus, is that it affords work routines which provide for a satisfying, i.e. prideful, sense of self, as, despite affording considerable danger, such work affords self-determination, allows for displays of competence, and are sometimes well-paid. This, as Giordano et al. assert (2007), partially explains why some individuals, despite moving towards a more conventional way of life, including securing legitimate employment, fail to “stick it out” in contexts where self and environment fail to achieve full and unproblematic congruence.

Another important hook for change, whose dynamics unfold somewhat differently from employment explored in the literature on desistance, concerns the relationship between pro-social interpersonal relations and the desistance process, particularly that of romantic partnerships. The impetus for research attention to relationships formation stems, in part, from Sampson and Laub’s findings, in which a “good marriage” served as an important turning point, redirecting offending life trajectories towards conformity (1993; 2009; see also Laub et al. 1998). Whilst acknowledging a role for informal social control, Giordano et al. argue that love, for a pro-social other⁷, is a critical role taking experience for offenders. Intimate partnerships effect the process in several ways. First, they allow for “positive reflected appraisals” (2007, 1615) that contribute to the envisioning and hence enactment of a more worthy future self (“she saw something in me”), potentially rendering a broader range of courses of action subjectively available to the desistee (“I never would have gone to college without him”). Second, pro-social spouses may also serve as an “emotional role model” affording proximate observation of novel, to the desister, emotional reactions to situations both new and old. There is an element of social

⁷ To clarify, research has found that although marriage to a “non-convicted spouse” is associated with a reduction in offending, whereas marriage to a spouse with a criminal history has no effect on criminal behavior (Rakt et al.. 2012).

learning theory here, whereby intimate relationships serve as an entrée for the normative orientation of others into an actor's definitions of the situation (i.e. meaning-making). Third, what in the language of functionalism is called *personality stabilization* (Bales and Parsons 2014), pro-social intimate relationships can serve as a source of emotional support as desistees cope with their own affective processes evoked in the process of desisting. Finally, however, Giordano et al. hold that a love relationship which "elicits positive emotions, buffers negative ones, and fosters a more positive sense of self" can frequently be experienced as deeply satisfying (2007, 1615). To explain, emotions, rather than cognitions, may occupy the forefront in the microphysics of change, in that positive affective associations to a partnership, as they develop in intensity, engender a shift in the meaning of not only the partnership itself, but the attendant pro-social patterns on which the relationship is sustained, maintaining legal employment, for example. Thus a valued romantic partnership may inject a positive emotional valence, i.e. gives the desistee a greater stake, but on an affective level, in practical accomplishments which we have argued are the experiential basis for identity (i.e. self), and thus reinforce this process, an observation which perhaps accounts for the strong association between employment and marriage and desistance found across a variety of research samples (Schellen et al. 2012; Potter 2011; King 2013; McGloin et al. 2011).

It is important to note the nonlinearity of this process. Desistance research has also found an important courtship effect whereby offending decreases significantly in the years prior to marriage (Lyngstad and Skardhamar 2013). This can be, in part, explained by the shift towards affective individualism, assessment of family formation in terms of personal satisfaction, (see Stone 1979) in which dating and cohabitation constitute an important trial period, i.e. a selection

process, now normatively permitted, at least in Western societies. Thus marriage may also be the *outcome* (2013) of a gradual movement towards desistance, necessitated in light of an appraising potential spouse. Thus marriage can serve as both an independent and dependent variable in the desistance process. Let's add that relationships may differ on a range of important dimensions, two of which include relationship status, dating, non-marital cohabitation vs. formal union of marriage, and quality. Some research has indicated that dating alone, even with a prosocial partner, does produce a strong influence on the desistance process (McCarthy and Casey 2008). In terms of relationship quality, however, "being in love" strongly predicted a reduction in delinquency. Similarly, Giordano et al. (2007) found that intimate relationships alone was not significantly associated with a change in crime, but self-reported "happiness" with a relationship had a significant moderating effect – suggesting an important effect affective valence, as noted above, has on mediating the effect of partnerships.

But there are also cognitive elements to this process. For example, Simons and Burt (2011) have postulated that offenders possess a composite cognitive schema, they refer rather clumsily to as "criminogenic knowledge structure" composed of three components: the pursuit of immediate rewards, cynicism regarding conventional morality, and a hostile view of people and relationships. Such criminogenic knowledge structures emerge, they assert, from exposure to cumulative adversity. The first of these is perhaps more dispositional in nature, and related to the finding that low self-control - robustly associated with offending – suggesting the action of habitus, possibly more occasioned by working class hedonism (for a good fictional account see, *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning* by Alan Sillitoe) emerging from cultures of manual labor and a "live for today" or "You-Only-Live-Once" (see Smiley 2015) short-termism associated with

financial instability, more so than simply bad parenting as some assert (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). Consistent with their proposition, Simon and Burt found that the quality of romantic relationships were associated with a significant decrease in each of the components of the criminogenic knowledge structure. They surmise that relationship with a conventional other, in fostering a new sense of trust within this relationship, may by proxy extend to a newfound respect for conventional rules of conduct, indeed conventional society at large, previously viewed with cynicism. They further venture that this shift in cognitive schema occurs subconsciously overtime as exposure to new rules of conduct, subtly conveyed by the new relationship, gradually shapes both perception of others and self.

As Farrall et al. found, feelings of pride are expressed more frequently at this middle stage than either earlier or later stages in the desistance process (2014). As Giordano et al. posit (2002), positive outcomes in these domains, may precipitate a more comprehensive shift in identity, actors are able to envision and begin to fashion an appealing and conventional replacement self, a broader more encompassing personal construct than cognitive orientation, and thus imagined form of the desired future self is given fuller content. Underpinning this process may be an increased certainty that such endeavors bear positive emotional content, i.e. are directly rewarding or provide positive emotional return via what Becker terms “side bets”, such as the pleasure of being able to afford Christmas presents to one’s children, which may serve to positively cathect employment net intrinsic affective compensation of working. Experiencing positive affect likely furthers commitment to a course of action and the self it entails and elaborates. To end, as past accomplishments accumulate they may also serve to interpretatively color present failures or relapses, which now may be read as situational or contingent rather than

characterological (Giordano et al. 2007). This perhaps marks entrance to the final late stage in the desistance process which we shall now discuss.

The Late Phase – Lasting Change

As Farrall et al. note: “What characterized...this phase is that their desistance, as a project requiring conscious effort, was now complete” (2014, 208). The final stage in the desistance process results when the actor views criminal or deviant behaviors as negative, unviable, and irrelevant to their person. Desistance may not be initially pursued for in-of-itself moral reasons. At first, crime is to be avoided for instrumental reasons, unwillingness to tolerate the risk, danger, threat to life and limb, insecurity etc., and as an obstacle to achieving what is truly valued (being a father for example), freedom from disapproval (by family and generalized others), and the stability of a conventional life (legal employment). However, at the final phase the underlying motivation to remain straight has become a moral-subjective categorical imperative, a constant largely independent of changes in circumstances, such as losing work or encounters, with old criminal acquaintances, which may have previously engendered a return to offending. What makes desistance resilient, however, is the practical accomplishment of social integration.⁸ To explain, practical accomplishment coupled with subjective fit, confirmed by a capacity to dwell within new life practices, produces what Erikson termed an “accrued confidence” in the compatibility, with ourselves, of the undertaken change and the novel roles on

⁸ To return to our very first point, this means that the ease to which social re-entry may be accomplished by former offenders (this point is made in reference to changes in the fields of employment, families and housing, and criminal justice policy in the UK, by Farrall et al. 2009), may effect the degree to which this process remains a conscious project.

which this change can be secured. Long periods of successful participation in legal employment, for example, join existing “stock of knowledge”, i.e. memory, and can serve to fortify actor’s resolve, when moments of doubt or reconsideration emerge, more completely than projected ability raised in the imagination. Incorporated as part of the “me” of the individual and executed with “cognitive ease”, i.e. familiarity, indicating spontaneous direction by the subconscious. But what does this look like? One of the linguistic markers of late desistance is the consistent and largely spontaneous use of the past tense to describe former lives, i.e. “how I used to be.” Maruna additionally notes that passive voice descriptors of past behavior fade to be replaced by the “I” of the agentic subject (2001, 150), thus a sense of agency and self-determination characterize this late phase among successful desistees. Frequently, the sense of self-efficacy finds expression in career choice among former-offenders, in that many become “professional-exs” (Brown 1991) with the self-assurance that their past experiences of offending specially equips them with the ability to help others via work as social workers, youth therapists, addiction counselors, community organizers etc.

Although some people may desist miserably, it seems the accomplishment of social integration is additionally stabilized by the affective dividends such integration affords, i.e. a satisfying life. Farrall et al. (2014) document the emotions described by long-term desisters, 7+ years without relapse, are happiness and pride. That being said, remaining crime-free diminishes as a source of self-pride as time progresses, and is eventually replaced by a hope for, and orientation towards, the future, especially in terms of post-desistance goals. Part of the affective buttressing of a conventional way of life probably additionally arising from what scholars have referred to as “tertiary” desistance (McNeill 2014): a sense of belonging, i.e. the acceptance by others of one’s

identity as a “changed person”. So, although desistance is defined as the permanent cessation of offending, in a logistical sense a crime-free state is, for most, indissoluble from the practical accomplishment of social integration in economic terms as well as in the sense of belonging to a moral community. Research has shown that desistees describe their current state less in negative terms, i.e. in terms of their capacity to avoid reoffending, but in more positive terms as the achievement of “a normal life” (Farrall et al. 2014). From the perspective of the desistee, social integration or reentry and giving up crime may in fact be an experientially and in a practical sense, inseparable. The durability of desistance, to summarize, thus may rest on a) practically accomplished social integration, b) corresponding identity as a “normal person” as a master status organizing all strata of the self, and finally, although this is probably not always a necessity, c) acceptance of this master status by others, family and generalized other, i.e. continuity in meaning of self-perception and meaning for others.

CHAPTER THREE: THE PRISON AS ECOLOGY

Introduction

Emerging in the early 19th century (De Beaumont and De Tocqueville 1833), modern American corrections were conceived as radical experiments in institutionally orchestrated human reform, one drawing heavily on disciplinary techniques successfully applied in the military, the school, and manufacture (Foucault 1991). Prison designers of the 19th and early to mid-20th century expressly organized the built environment of the prison for rehabilitative ends via inmate isolation and surveillance within spaces whose spartan quality encouraged contemplation of the divine and hence Christian repentance (see Rothman 1997). Declining faith in reformative potential of enforced solitude, as well as religious-based moral instruction, allowed therapy-based rehabilitation efforts to displace these practices during the mid-20th century (see Garland 2001). A further shift in penal goals from rehabilitation to incapacitation and expressive punishment from 1970s onward saw a greater stress in prison administration on maintaining internal and external security, and less on encouraging or engineering reform (Ditchfield 1990). Critical accounts of the American criminal justice system (see Wacquant 2001; 2009), have in foregrounding developments towards incapacitation and expressive punishment in correctional policy discourses, have probably overstated the decline in rehabilitation as an objective of penal practices and as a potential outcome of the prison experience (see Phelps 2011). Among more conventional, quantitatively orientated penologists there is, correspondingly, a consensus that the modern prison acts as a behavioral “deep-freeze”, i.e. prison constrains behavior but does little to encourage change in either toward criminality or conformity (Zamble and Porporino 1990).

Although a statistical minority, year after year substantial cohorts of prisoners nonetheless cease offending in prison and do not reoffend on release (BOJ 2015). Concerns with the aggregate effects of imprisonment have served to divert research attention from the diversity in sub-environments and inmate groups within the prison environment, thus shirking the study of the genesis of this non-recidivating population. By contrast this chapter attempts to account for the social fact of desistance in prison and does so by drawing upon ecological perspective forwarded by Hans Toch (1977) which regards the prison environment as composed of a series functional sub-settings containing “objects, space, resources, people, and relationships between people” called “niches” (181). As argued here, experiences, activities, and interactions with other individuals within a niche can work as a whole to influence persistence or desistance across the *durée* of a sentence. To this end, this chapter analyses data from surveys administered to twenty-five male inmates at a maximum security prison. Findings suggest that inmate reform is partly independent from sanctioned rehabilitative spaces and can take on a self-directed, do-it-yourself character, where reforming offenders engender their own moral career (Goffman 1961) across a patchwork of contributory spaces and social interactions (niches): the cell, the visitation room, the program space, the law library, the chapel etc. Within these “enabling niches” pro-social change among the imprisoned is sanctioned, rewarded, and sustained.

By contrast participation in “entrapment niches”, the primary being “the yard” a space in which the extramural culture of the street is most closely reproduced, may serve to inhibit the desistance process. Enabling niches, where existing, are weaker proxies for desistance supporting life-events, “hooks for change”, available to the outside custody, full time employment, family

formation, and love partnerships (Maruna and Toch 2004), weak, in part because they are essentially *anticipatory* or *preparatory* in nature and bear a degree of uncertainty as they are yet applied “for real” in the world on release: the ultimate test of inmates’ change. The focus, thus, of this chapter is on the middle phase of the desistance process, whereby the inmate having committed (even if temporarily) to self-change, begins to fashion an alternative self via interaction with opportunities for reform found in their environment. This chapter concludes by forwarding that, from a desistance perspective, prison communities contain two distinct value orientations – street and desistant – and that improving post-prison outcomes might better proceed by fostering the growth, and hence influence, of inmates bearing the latter value orientation within the walls of the institution.

Ignoring the non-recidivating former prisoner

Frameworks deployed in debates on the deterrent and/or rehabilitative efficacy of the prison – prisons either work or they don’t – evidences what Chancer has termed in other contexts as “partialization”: a the tendency towards “either/or” thinking in academic and journalistic discourses (2005). High recidivism rates have been held as evidence for the failure of American corrections (Durose, Cooper, and Snyder 2014) and indeed there is good reason to be pessimistic. A recent Department of Justice special report examining patterns of recidivism among state prisoners released in 2005 across 30 states (2014) found that within three years of release about two-thirds (67.8%) were arrested for a new crime and three-quarters (76.6%) were arrested within five. The tendency for arrest statistics to underestimate the level of offending

(and thus may do so among this recidivating population) must be tempered with an acknowledgement of the extent to which re-arrest occurs among former-prisoners as a result of a probation or parole violation, not fresh criminality. For example, the majority of released prisoners were arrested for a public order offense (58%) of which 25.3% were for a probation/parole violation and 39.9% for an “other” public order offense “which in some jurisdictions may be the legal response to probation and parole” (9). Other studies of recidivism employing an offender-based sample found that after twelve years 33% of the sample returned to prison, a “more accurate reflection of the penal system” than recidivism rates calculated using event-based samples (Rhodes et al. 2016, 1020). Rhodes et al. further note that a focus on statistics from Pew, the Bureau of Justice Statistics and other sources “may fuel a pessimistic view that nothing works or at least nothing works well” (1090). Significant cohorts of inmates do not return to prison, whether for or in spite their experience of incarceration, studies of penal effects either ignore or significantly underestimate non-recidivating former-inmates.

Resultantly a passive consensus has been reached among researchers of criminal careers that the experience of imprisonment has minimal or a null effect on subsequent patterns of offending (2005, 139). (Bonta and Gendreau 1990). Some within this perspective conceive of prison as a behavioral “deep freeze” in that prisons, by and large, constrain behavior but do little to encourage change in either toward criminality or conformity. Others similarly describe the effects of imprisonment on individuals as “impermanent and situational” (Zamble and Poporino 2013, 148). If anything, the “dead time” of prison socially suspends the inmate, even when change is desired, fostering a painful sense of postponement, whilst exposing inmates to more hardened criminals (i.e. prisonization). This has lead some researchers to conclude that

alternatives to imprisonment such as probation as preferable since extramural penalties do not sever connections likely to benefact the desistance process (Farrell and Calverly 2006). Prison most obviously obstructs the occurrence of important life events, events empirically shown to reinforce the often protracted, halting process of desistance, namely family formation, pro-social intimate partnerships, and employment (Sampson and Laub 2001; Giordano et al. 2007; see also Western 2006). Nonetheless weaker surrogates of pro-desistance relationships and life-events also exist within the prison: educational training, vocational experience, homosocial relations, as well as family visitation. Thus what best describes the prison experience from the perspective of desistance is perhaps more “social refrigeration” in that, to varying degrees, prison hampers or retards the development of middle phase prosocial bonds, but not completely. Argued here the categorical simplification of whether prisons work or not conceals a far more complex, layered process of intramural identity change, in which the inmate plays an active role. As Maruna and Toch further note, in quoting Worwith and Porporino, that the prison itself does not do anything: “What really matters are the subtle specifics of each prisoner’s participation in prison life” (2005, 150).

The Prison as Ecology

How then can prisons serve to support, if weakly, the process of personal change? As a significant and negative life event, as qualitative research has shown, incarceration is often perceived as a positive turning point for the offender, i.e. “the last time” (Cusson and Pinsonneault 1986; Gadd and Farrall 2003; Soyer 2013). According to Soyer’s research on juvenile detainees, the shock of incarceration can encourage a commitment to and belief in self-

transformation, an “imagination of desistance”, even if this ambition is not realized on release. Similar self-reevaluation has been found to exist among adult offenders, where the experience of prison belatedly induces a desire for reform (Gadd and Farrall 2003). For example, qualitative research on ex-robbers document how some offenders grow tired of doing time in prison (Cusson and Pinsonneault 1986). For some researchers, this process is akin to “burn out” a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism (Maslach and Jackson 1981). Perceptions of this subjective reorientation as fanciful or situationally contingent (which for many offenders it may be), overlook that failure for desistance proper to emerge, may have more to do with the lack of opportunities to make good on the initial desire for change, whether within or without the prison walls (Soyer 2013). Surveys of prisons suggest that this, at least subjective orientation towards “going straight” is more widespread than is typically acknowledged. For example, Zamble, Porporino, and Kalotay’s research on Canadian prisons found that fully half their sample considered self-improvement to be the main objective of their prison adjustment strategies (1984). A study on the impact of life in a program rich, medium security facility found that 84% of inmates interviewed reported they had changed for the better, with follow up survey finding that 72% of this cohort had not returned to prison after three and half years (Megaree and Cadow 1980), evidence that, given the proper support, this desire to change can translate into permanent shift in behavior.

Understanding how inmates move navigate the middle phase of desistance beyond the dedication to desist, necessitates understanding how complex and variegated the prison environment is, a composite and differentiated space composed of a variety sub-environments and sub-populations some which may retard the desistance process, some which may aid it. As Toch proposes,

prisons are diverse ecologies composed of a variety of niches (1977). “Niches” are defined as “the environmental habitat of a person or category or persons” (Taylor 1997) whose qualities determine the achievements and quality of life of the inhabitants (Rapp and Goscha 2011). Niches in prison “may be work assignments, living units, or programs, and they may feature any combination among privacy, safety, structure, freedom, support, [and] emotional feedback” (Seymour 1977, 181). Appreciation of the existence of niche variety in total institutions can be found in sociological literature. For example, Goffman’s term “total institution” should perhaps be renamed *near-total institutions*, the largest chapter in his *Asylums* is dedicated to the “underlife” of the institution, where both staff and inmates take advantage of the uneven purview of official authority, exploiting this potential for “secondary adjustments”: “habitual arrangements by which a member of an organization employs unauthorized means... getting around the organization’s assumptions as what he should do and get and hence what he should be” (1961, 189).

The shift in institutional priorities from rehabilitation to containment, although far from eliminating rehabilitative resources within the prison, as was discussed above, has nonetheless lent prison management a *laissez-faire* approach to inmate reform (separate from specific deterrent effects). This coupled with the public culture of the prison serves to check the desistance process. The concluding sections of this chapter elaborate on this understanding of the prison as an ecology and its relation to desistance in analysis of twenty five surveys completed by male inmates at a maximum security facility. Respondents were selected during their participation in the facilities rehabilitation, educational, and vocational programs at the facility and self-identified as desisted or desisting.

Entrapment Niche – The Yard

Several respondents reported that their patterns of offending, indeed their underlying orientation towards the world, as this respondent notes, a certain ruthless self-interest overlapping with a nihilist indifference to others and, ironically, self, changed little upon their incarceration:

“When I first got incarcerated I was still doing the things I was doing in the streets. I had lost all my humanity, when I first came through still (sic) selling drugs not caring about nothing. Just being a total fuck up. Drinking alcohol, selling drugs, just getting money by any means necessary”

Although the opportunity to continue some version of a criminal career on incarceration is afforded across the institution’s spaces to varying degrees, respondents made references to “the yard” as primary locus of persisting criminal activity: “I learned the hard way by engaging in most of the nonsense the yard has to offer. I excelled at the negative, and I wasn’t raised to seek glory in that”. On both official (i.e. manifest) and literal levels the yard is an outdoor recreational space within the prison, containing, if available, a range of sporting and leisure amenities: most frequently basketball courts, sometimes handball courts, increasingly less so weight lifting equipment, tables for chess and dominos, seating, and pay phone stations (Zoulis 2004). “Yard time” is a privilege providing temporary respite of an hour or two from the pressed conditions of facilities’ indoor life, where inmates spend the majority of their sentence.

Yet as a result, the yard additionally functions as, what Goffman termed, a “free place”:
“bounded physical spaces [within the total institution] where ordinary levels of surveillance and reduced were markedly reduced, spaces where the inmate could engage in ranged of tabooed

activities with some degree of security” (1961, 230). In the prison’s space, yard time is the only part of the day where all prisoners are out of their cells at the same time (Uglevik, 2014), an opportunity for like-minded inmates to congregate under relaxed scrutiny, and thus a space where the conduct and culture of the street is most clearly intramurally reproduced, as has been noted elsewhere (see Johnson 2006; Tregoe and Lamour 2009, 33). As one guide to surviving prison life describes, the yard is where the prison’s *sub rosa* economy flourishes and where the planning and refinement of future criminal activity, persistence, is imaginatively sustained: “the yard is where all the action is. They’re wheeling and dealing on every corner. Drugs are being sold in one corner while gambling in another. All sorts of mischief is being planned” (Mitchell 2009, 18). For respondents the yard likewise afforded opportunities to sustain patterns of offending, most commonly reported was the purchase and consumption of drugs, but importantly, as a space for socializing with other criminally intransigent, i.e. as a space in which the “the negative” as a value orientation and practice was communicatively sustained. In this sense the yard is what is described as an “entrapment niche” (Rapp and Goscha 2011). Entrapment niches are, among other characteristics, insular, self-contained environments where there are few interpersonal incentives to set and work towards personal development and thus little opportunity to learn the skills and expectations that would facilitate escape (35-6). In short, entrapment niches reproduce social modes (in this case, the criminal), which can be described as harmful to self and other.

Several respondents noted that initial entry into prison was accompanied by a sense of interpersonal disorganization, as imprisonment extracted the inmate from relatively stable primary group relations, pitching them into a society of strangers. This sense of insecurity, as

several respondents intimated, was resolved by following “weak tie” relationships of locality, kin, or friendship networks, a social thread most easily followed in the free place of the yard: “I heard somebody was from the same place upstate [Rochester], so I started hanging with that group...They knew people I knew and that was it. It was easier to get back into that groove”.

One respondent reported that such links contributed to the consolidation of racial and ethnic group distinctions within the prison, as they largely followed (even if tenuously and indirectly) the inmate’s existing, racially homogenous stock of networks born into the institution. Thus convenience becomes the basis for reconnecting to peer groups socially analogous to those found in the external world, convenience directs the inmate through a period of initial disorganization, beyond the potential for such disorganization to serve as a basis for the exploration of alternatives, and toward their confirmation into the world of persisting inmates (of course this process could work in reverse, depending on the orientation of the inmate). It is worth stressing, however, that this process can occur more actively than mere convenience. Other respondents indicated that they associated with other inmates after a period of sifting through inmate groups for compatibility of personality and lifestyle (taste is a matchmaker, as Bourdieu has noted, see 1984). This sifting has a gendered character, as inmates cue their investment in the criminal through in the projection of what some prison researchers refer to as the “yard face” (Caputo-Levine 2013), a hypermasculine identity position (Jewkes 2005) comportmentally expressed (and thus acts as a mechanism for differential association) in a stoic suppression of feelings of vulnerability, the conveyance of a readiness for violent, and less so (as these are quotidian to inmate life), irreverence and hostility toward correctional staff. Conversely, one respondent noted that during induction he had been exposed to “good brothers”, namely volunteer inmates who ran the orientation programs for new arrivals, but that their company was unappealing, “[it]

wasn't for me", i.e. incongruent with his then disposition to persist. It is by such means, from a range of alternatives, the inmate arrives at the symbolic home of male convict culture that is the yard (Johnson 2006) as both place and world-orientation.

Respondents also used the term "the yard" in a metonymic sense (a metonym is a figurative stand-in, for example, "The White House announced" refers to the president and their administration), when referencing their dedication to desist and inauguration of their move towards associating with other pro-growth inmates. Although respondents did not mention whether they abandoned the yard in the move toward desistance in its entirety (i.e. avoidance as a location) their use of the term suggests that their departure was less from a physical space, rather "the yard" referenced more so a way of being, "the negative", i.e. continued criminality: "If I wanted to do something positive with myself, I had to get out of that yard" (see quote above for reference to "the negative"), the exploitative, the self-destructive, (a zone of harm not care): "I left the yard to go where there are brothers who are striving for change, I want to be part of that team". As will be discussed later, this involved the trading of homosocial bonds of one type for another. Consistent with Wenger's theory on the experiential basis of identity, reduced participation in the yard was also seen as evidence for change, indeed spontaneous avoidance signaled a robust a change in selfhood, i.e. the "me" core. One respondent "caught" himself in the realization that avoidance of the yard as a project requiring conscious effort had passed: "I knew I had changed because on my 32nd birthday I realized I wasn't out there in the yard chasing that bag [marijuana]". As with Van Gogh's masterpiece, *Prisoners Exercising*, the yard represents circularity and personal stagnation, defection from, as much on a mental and social

level as a spatial one, releases the inmate to begin pursuing their development towards desistance and the preparation for a non-criminal life on release.

Enabling Niches

The prison space is also composed of a variety of pro-desistance spaces; the cell, the gym, the school, the visitation room, the program, the chapel, the barber shop, in which noncriminal aspirations may be valued and cultivated. Taylor terms small scale growth environments in a community as “enabling niches”, i.e. those which cultivate and reward skill development and progress towards positive goals (1997), as well as affording the simple company of the likeminded in which inmates may exercise a more relaxed version of themselves. Within enabling niches inmates can orient (and find support for this orientation) towards successful reentry and in doing so, fashion intramural analogues to conventional life on the outside effecting forms of anticipatory socialization before going “for real” on release. As Giordano et al. would posit (2007), positive outcomes in these enabling niches, may precipitate a more comprehensive shift in identity occurs, actors are able to envision and begin to fashion an appealing and conventional replacement self (a broader more encompassing personal construct than mere cognitive orientation). Vacant aspirational frames become occupied by vivid experiences, and thus imagined form of the desired future self is given fuller content, as this dissertation holds occurs during the middle phase of active desistance. Enabling spaces also constitute an emotional hinterland, a transient escape from the emotionally taut public life of the prison (Crewe 2014) governed by the hypermasculine (see above). One ethnographic study of a men’s prison (Crewe et al. 2013) in depicting the emotional geography of the prison, details that

liminal spaces “permitting a broader emotional register than was possible in its main residential and most public areas” (14). In these places men were allowed to express kindness, intimacy, and emotional candor as well as undertake acts of generative care towards other inmates. Such niches and the relationships they afford are explored, assessed, accumulated by inmates overtime (see Toch 1977 on “niche search”).

The Chapel

Several respondents reported that the discovery and development of their spirituality, primarily Christian and Muslim, was an important turning point in their moral career towards reform, and that their faith functioned not only to direct and sustain this process but to insulate themselves from the privations of confinement and surrounding convict culture: “My turning point came when I found God. When I let God into my life, things began to change for me for the better”. Surrendering the self to a higher power, as some respondents indicated, was understood to place their crimes beyond the judgment delivered by secular institutions of the criminal and penal systems. Prayer was viewed as a means of atonement in which the private communication of contrition and avowals of faith exhibited their reformed character to the divine, superseding worldly consignment to the status of a felon. Religious faith was also reported as allowing respondents to view their incarceration and the accompanying pains of imprisonment as part of a, albeit somewhat inscrutable, grand design or purpose expressing benevolent godly will. Although, empirically, the development of a sense of agency or self-efficacy (in pro-social terms) is linked to desistance, respondents seemed to find comfort in shifting the locus of control of their life trajectories to the external divine, to be in “God’s hands”. Religious proscriptions

also added a new valance to the prospect of reoffending as “temptations”, imbuing relapse with the added stain of the “sin”, a dual transgression of both secular and divine law, where the latter was inescapably exposed to the omniscient deity. One respondent explained that his conversion led to the discovery of his vocation as a minister and he had made detailed plans for a youth ministry he intended to establish on release. Entry into a community of faith was linked to the space of the institution’s chapel, although respondents did not describe their experiences in the chapel in great detail, there were references to the space in their responses concerning religious conversion. The function of the chapel as an enabling niche is evident in the following response, in which the chapel space is contrasted to the yard space in terms of its role in the change process: “A great help to my change came by going to the chapel instead of the yard”.

The Law Library

Two respondents expressed that utilizing the facility’s law library was an important component of their reform. Decision to study the law was initially motivated by a desire to work on their cases, having exhausted the legal counsel afforded by public defenders or the financial means to hire private attorneys. The prospect of reducing their sentences, although initially daunted by the breadth of legal corpus of criminal and appeal law especially given their limited educational background, was expressed a significant source of hope and was seen as a productive activity filling the “dead” time of their custodial sentence: “I had to make a change...that there is always hope and that nothing lasts forever so work on my case” Achieving lay mastery of a complex and esoteric field was also viewed as evidencing and underlying conventional competency, unfairly submerged by criminogenic circumstance, but which eventually found expression in the role of the jailhouse lawyer: “Once I got my GED, I started reading up on the law to try and help my case. Now I am a “go-to” in here when somebody has questions about the law”. For one

respondent the enjoyment of this legal work lead to his contemplation of, what might be called, a desired past self, an alternative, if squandered, life-course as a legal professional. Participating in the law library activities was recognized as an opportunity for the assistance of others: “I spend alot (sic) of time in the law library helping with cases...explaining the law, filing petitions, appeals...anything and everything”. Jailhouse lawyers serve as important gatekeepers for that which is most valued in inmate culture: freedom. The same respondent reported that learning the law was politizing force, translating inchoate sense of injustice that is a staple of inmate perceptions of institutional illegitimacy, into a more encompassing socio-legal critique, in his case prison as form of unconstitutional slavery. In this regard, a sense of injustice becomes no longer individual, a “sociological imagination” is achieved linking personal problems to wider social forces. Such connections of personal pain to social injustice may serve to provide moral legitimacy to the believer, in which a sentence can be affirmed and articulated to the conventional world, i.e. civil society actors, with a sense of legitimated grievance and claims to unwarranted suffering. In this case, the respondent remarked that his understanding of the prison lead to a greater sympathy for other inmates, which catalyzed this own movement towards desistance as he found increasingly difficult to victimize in light of his perception of their common suffering cum social oppression: “I said to myself I couldn’t do this anymore...it’s like the slave beating down [sic] a slave”.

The Visitation Room

Most respondents described reconnecting with family as both a goal and component of their change process during their incarceration: “I’m tired of doing negativity. As a son I missed out on childhood, as a father I missed out on fatherhood”. Although letters and phone calls are

important nodes of contact for inmates to the outside world, the visitation room is one space where the boundaries of the prison are permitted a limited social porosity. Visitation time was viewed by several respondents as one of the few means in which to evidence the *bona fides* of their personal change to significant others and to mitigate and overcome the cynicism of their intimates which they had engendered over years of offending and incarceration:

It's a struggle to keep positive and stay in productive mode in this environment...I take the certificates and accolades I have earned and I show my family when they visit...People outside can't see change, words are not enough, no one believes just talk of changing, so I strive to show my progress!

Boden and Molotch refer to this as the *compulsion of proximity*, the need for individuals to meet with one another in situations of co-presence or face-to-face interaction, i.e. the social valuing of direct communication. Face-to-face interactions afford opportunities for more authentic communication than is provided by words alone, as speech can be given corporeal context and thus can be indexed to facial expressions, gestures, and body language, a communicative package which conveys a more holistic, and hence believable reflection of internal states and intentions. As described above the visitation room provides opportunities for exhibitions of authentic change, to have that change recognized, and for inmates to witness the effects of this recognition. Several respondents described that an important motivation for their reform was to repair the emotional toll their offending they perceived they had caused their families, especially their mothers: "It broke my heart when I realized that I made my mother cry more times than I made her smile...So I made it my obligation to give my mother a reason to smile". Sampson and Laub posit a "good marriage" effect as an important life event directing an offending life-course towards conformity. Perhaps there also exists a "good mother" effect arising from the sheer constancy of maternal love, which gradually comes to contrast with the undependable and

frequently untrustworthy relations with offending others. Compounding the experience of the *longue durée* of maternal loyalty is perhaps also the eventual realization of the soundness of once dismissed and discounted advice, as events unfold over the life course which gradually accumulate to confirm the trustworthiness of a mother's forewarnings, whereby her "definitions of the situation" then assume a more powerful directing force in the inmate's life. As another respondent remarked: "If I was to do anything different, I'd listen to my mother. She hasn't been wrong yet!".

One respondent recounted how one event in the visitation room exhibited his personal change to his family, as well as allowing him to assume the role of fatherly protector to his daughter:

For example, one time with my daughter when she was visiting with her mother. This guy was pushing my buttons with his language around my daughter. I could have gotten in the guy's face, but I asked him to quit all that street talk around the kids and he did...my daughter never seen me deal with a situation like that. It made me feel good that she saw her daddy be like that.

Schmid and Jones report that adjustment to prison can result in a feeling of ambivalence towards outside contacts: they may remain or become very important to the inmate, yet he/she has little or no control of their standing in these relations nor the events impacting contacts beyond the prison (1990, 202). As Tripp also notes in relation to incarcerated fathers, even the little contact afforded with their family during visitation, balances between the desire to interact with their children as fathers and to minimize their children's familiarity with and exposure to the criminal justice system (2009). From this respondent's perspective, despite his change incarceration afforded only an intermittent exposure of his daughter's to his pro-social orientation, and thus his ability to effect positive impression management in terms of his role as a good father. This

episode afforded the respondent an opportunity to adopt a protective role towards his daughter, one that exhibited in clear terms his ability to successfully employ non-violent forms of conflict management, which was of sufficient import and positive affect to be reported at a later date (and one could surmise, without too much speculation, that this episode was recollected with some frequency prior to survey questioning). Interestingly one respondent recounted how his turning point developed negativistically from an interaction with his son in the visitation room: “My turning point my was then my oldest son ask me to plug him in with my connects, my contacts ‘cause he wanted to hustle”. Although the respondent did not elaborate further in his response, it could be argued this event became a turning point in his rehabilitation because his son’s request for assistance with his initiation to serious criminality was viewed as a perversion of the generative parental role. To add, it may have been shocking to the respondent that the impact of his incarceration on his son, despite its immediacy, was so weakly deterrent, a confrontation with evidence to the failure of his parenting.

The Cell

As Toch notes some niches may be crowded, interpersonal, active and stimulating, another “may be almost invisible, a personal and private space carved from an impersonal structure” (1977, 182). For respondents, the cell afforded such a personal and private space. Several respondents alluded to the cell in discussing their efforts towards desistance. Enforced idleness of the prison as well as the confinement to individual cells at night, meant that the cell was a site of extended deliberation, affording a (frequently painful) degree of contemplation and self-interrogation whose analogue was not found in the outside world: “I spent a lot time thinking about my life

and my past in my cell...I never had time to think when I was out". Cells were also described as an important space for individuation, especially of private intimacies too delicate for exposure in the public culture of the prison, such as correspondence with family, especially with sons and/or daughters. Goffman refers to such items as "identity equipment", an important means by which the mortification of the self that occurs on imprisonment is mitigated. One respondent noted that he hung a poster in his cell with a circle containing the aspects of his life that he valued, placing that which he rejected outside the circle. For him this poster served as a daily reminder, a focus point for the renewal of commitment to change, visually representing the change he sought to realize, a private consolidation and buttress for the will.

Several respondents reported that solitary confinement play a pivotal, almost epiphanic turning point in their dedication to change: "Going to the box for the fourth time for a year when I had been in pop for only 60 days", "Awaking in prison in 2004! In knowing that nothing was there but me, so had good tears, went to the box and said that shit is over, time to develop myself and bring forth growth". Solitary, or "the box", is an administrative confinement typically employed to punish violations of prison regulations. Given that solitary confinement is administered for bad behavior, from the responses above, it would seem that the experience may expedite or compress the movement from persistence to deliberation to the dedication of change.

Respondents expressed that, almost in the language of the mathematical equation, that solitary confinement forced an appraisal of their normal functioning in-the-world in that its denouement *in toto*, whatever its other merits, resulted in a undesirable and painful experience, and not simply discountable as misfortune or caprice of others:

In the box and realized a reactionary don't [sic] usually think...a more proactive approach gave me options to consider the pros and cons of my actions...I guess I realized no results were beneficial to my formula or approach to life.

The Program Space

Evaluations of the prison's ability to reform criminals have tended to overlook the survival of rehabilitative efforts within the modern prison. A study by Phelps found "no major changes in investments in specialized facilities, funding for inmate services-staff" throughout the 1970s and 80s (2011, 33). A recent census of state and federal correctional facilities recorded that 88% of correctional facilities under state or federal authority provided inmate work programs, 85% provided educational programs, and 92% ran counseling programs of various types (BOJ 2008). Several respondents expressed that although they had participated in rehabilitation programs during the course of their incarceration and in previous stints of imprisonment, that, contrary to official rationales for offender rehabilitation, the self-change process was largely external to program experiences: "I've been in other programs. But they obviously didn't work for me, maybe I wasn't ready", "Change starts outside of any class room...". Desistance, at a minimum, requires an "openness for change" (Giordano et al. 2007), a subjective investment in the reform process, one which is initiated and sustained by more meaningful shifts in the relation to self and other which spontaneously/organically arise during the life-course, which may be difficult to induce in the meta process (i.e. via reflection alone) that is purview and limit of rehabilitative interventions in prison. The modal offender rehabilitative model, RNR (Risks/Needs/Responsivity) whose primary focus is on sundering the causal link between cognitive distortions and offending patterns, couched in the language of deficiency, offers little in the way of intrinsic motivation to change to offenders still committed to a way of being which

orbits criminality and a defiant “rejection of the world” (Weber 1958), especially that of distant and adversarial officialdom.

One respondent, a long-term inmate, expressed the cynicism that may underlay prisoner perceptions of rehabilitative programs as mechanisms of conformity induction, rather than meaningful attempts to rehabilitate:

Most rehabilitation programs are really nothing more than “surrender programs” where the prison system encourages you to surrender any legitimate grievances you may have and just join the “enterprise” and go along with a rehabilitation process which abuses your humanity.

As is expressed here, rehabilitation programs, when neither in accord with nor generating responsiveness to improvement, may suffer from perceptions of illegitimacy by participants, as by conflating objections to prison conditions with intransigent criminality, serving to mute concerns whose reception would indicate reciprocity and mutuality of status rather than paternalistic imposition or mere security interests. Discussion of the role of correctional staff in the change process has been conspicuously absent from the analysis presented here. Although not strictly a niche, two respondents suggested that their perception of rehabilitation programs was colored by what they perceived as staff indifference to their well-being which had manifested across their experiences of, for example, delays in approved transfers, lapses in the administration of programs, the penalization of inmates due to staff error or caprice, and the inconsistent application of rules. One respondent noted that volunteer run programs were viewed with less cynicism, although this was tempered by the relative inexperience and naiveté of volunteer staff, as organizers’ motivation was seen as separate from the interest of the institution in maintaining order. As extensions of the regulatory/disciplinary aspects of the institution, one

which may entail punitive responses to non-cooperation, experiences in rehabilitation programs may further alienate participants by obligating to be visibly engaged in the activity of the organization (“exhibiting engrossment”, which serves, by extension, as a proxy indicator of one’s nature as Goffman describes it, 176). Putting a “face on” in the program space, as another respondent described the performativity of compliance, could be experienced as “emotional labor” (Hochschild 1979), as a cost of an estrangement from the self and thus the official rehabilitation process, “being *on* them, not *of* them” as it were (319).

That is not say that rehabilitation programs do not play a role in the reform process in prison, and can be included in the tally of enabling niches, but perhaps in a manner different from their manifest function. As several respondents expressed, when the use of rehabilitation programs did occur, it did not entail their surrender to program direction as an object, but rather, once commitment to change had been assumed independently, respondents approached program offerings as a *subject* discerningly and in an instrumental manner, adopting aspects of programs which were tailored to their own, self-directed, change process: “So far, every program I’ve taken in the past has equipped me a tool to deal with myself first. I took a tool for my growth from each one”, “I have experience in academic programs as well as attitude and behavioral programs. My impressions of these previous programs is that there there [sic] to assist you in accomplishing your goal, not to do it for you”. As has been noted by prison researchers (see Liebling 2012), and as shown in responses, the term “rehabilitation” was not used by respondents to describe their own reform process, potentially because the term connotes pathology or recovery from injury, but also because of the impersonality of term is associated with official reform efforts did not reflect the experience of the change process as agentic and self-

determining, better captured by terms closer to the Meadian “me” of the core self such as “growth”, “development”, “becoming”: “I participate in this culture for new experiences and productive energy towards my own rise and development”. Thus it might be said that programs are viewed as augmenting, rather than originating the desistance process, with the participant selecting, like a *bricoleur* from programs to cater to their own, self-selected needs. No doubt, as some respondents expressed, the instrumental approach to rehabilitative programs reflected the looming prospect of reentry in the inhospitable world of American society for the prisoner on release: Nonetheless, change was also viewed a good *sui generis*, a movement sustained by a subject moving towards self-fulfillment.

Desistance and Homosocial Bonds

It is worth exploring briefly another component of the change process in prison raised by respondents: their homosocial relationships with other pro-desistance inmates. One of the secondary functions of rehabilitative and vocational programs is to coalesce like-minded inmates in a niche in which group norms toward personal development govern and are adhered to, at minimum superficially. As one respondent noted, coming to program sessions allowed him to “[be] with brothers who are doing the right thing”. Another forwarded a prognosis, claiming the need for greater cohesion and solidarity within and beyond program spaces was important component of encouraging desistance in the facility:

“A bond in the brotherhood is warranted, a greater sense of unity in & out of programs is needed for total growth to evolve”. Although change is an individual accomplishment, it is accomplished collectively. Respondents reported that one of the (if occasionally irritating) supports for their

change was the informal reinforcements of others. Drifting away from the enabling niche had others “getting on my back all the time about coming down to the school building”, a pressure to continue when motivation was flagging, and to offer approval when small goals had been accomplished. Positively reflected appraisals from other inmates served to diminish fear that the adoption of a pro-social role in the prison would result in a loss of status, and conversely, to provide validation for the undertaking: “I was teaching the Spanish classes and I noticed that I had changed and I was scared at first because I thought I that I was going to be vulnerable but instead I was getting more respect from my peers”. Others reported that belonging to a positive peer group afforded opportunities for what is termed *personality stabilization* in literature on family functioning, in providing emotional assistance helping to alleviate daily hassle, stress, or negative emotions that might overtax individuals’ coping abilities and thus predispose them to relapse (Coppotelli and Orleans 1985), i.e. form of naturally occurring support relationships. This was especially true of anger management. As one respondent noted “it’s hard to keep your sanity in this environment”, adding other “brothers” allowed him to constructively vent his emotions which would otherwise resulted in self-destructive violent behavior. So too the modeling of behavior was cited, one of the means of attrition of persisting groups in prison was the defection of high status members to desisting groups, who served, for some respondents, as evidence of the cul de sac of persistence.

The use of the term “brother” which was found in transcripts eight times, had a specific meaning in the sample of prisoners. Although the term “bro” has grown in popularity as a term of homosocial endearment among white males in the U.S. (Martin 2013), the usage of the term “brother” to refer to non-kin grew during the civil rights movement as an expression of black

racial solidarity (Malady and Fatsis 2014). From here the term secured a place in black American vernacular as a term for fellow blacks (Shelby 2002). The term “brother” is thus a linguistic expression which reflects and reproduces an imagined community. Likewise respondents use of the term also seemed to refer to an imagined community, but one which was not bound by racial lines, but rather seemed to reflect a distinction in value orientation within the prison. Brothers were those “striving for change”, “doing the right thing”, “being positive”, i.e. are the reform orientated, conversely it can implied that non-brothers are those persisting in a criminal orientation to the world. In Elijah Anderson’s *Code of the Street* he posits that poor inner city minority communities contain two poles of value orientation, street and decent (2000). Along the lines proposed by Anderson for categorizing residents of urban ghettos, perhaps a similar taxonomy of prison communities along lines of value orientation can be proposed: *street* and *desistant*. On the one hand street residents have internalized the code prescribing commitment to violent campaigns for seeking respect. Street residents exhibit a lack of consideration for and civility towards others, bear longstanding bitterness and anger, have little hope for the future and thus engage in self-destructive behavior: drugs, alcohol, and abusive relationships (2000). On the other, decent residents accept and harbor (albeit limited) confidence in mainstream idea of social mobility, value hard work and self-sacrifice, are dedicated to family, and share an obsessive concern with avoiding “trouble” (2000). Although street residents are in a minority, the value system, the code of the street, dominates public areas of the communities. As discussed above, street cultures are reproduced within the prison, they differ however, in that street communities and decent communities exist in inverted proportions: the value orientations of the streets are the majority, whereas the decent orientation are the minority. As will be discussed in greater depth in the concluding chapter, efforts to encourage desistance in prison might be better conceptualized,

and thus better served by promoting restorative forces as they naturally occur in and around the would-be desistee on an individual level, by seeking to consolidate and expand on naturally occurring communities of the desisted existing in prison. Rather than focusing on efforts to encourage reform among persisting offenders, or facilitate growth where desistance is nascent and emerging, perhaps rehabilitative efforts might be better understood as stemming from the activities of the desisted and dedicated minority, as medical treatment might approach disease by encouraging the body's immune system by fostering protective abilities rather than tackling pathology unilaterally and directly.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE COUNCIL FOR UNITY MODEL

Introduction

This chapter outlines, in ideal typical fashion, the basic components of the Council For Unity (hereafter Council) approach to offender rehabilitation, whose sessions at a county jail were the location for the field observations discussed in chapter five and chapter six. The Council model's rehabilitative philosophy is based on the scholarship and essays of comparative mythologist Joseph Campbell. Campbell held that the imagery and motifs elementary to world mythologies, such as the hero's narrative, could be applied as principles of living guiding the achievement of personal well-being or flourishing⁹ (1973; 1991; 2008). Campbell's writings are based on the psychoanalytic theory of Carl Jung and have significantly influenced contemporary practitioners of Jungian psychotherapy (Feinstein 1979; Feinstein and Krippner 1997). The Council model adapts and applies these ideas to offender rehabilitation. The model is delivered in the form of weekly group sessions with incarcerated men using both civilian and inmate facilitators, the latter consisting of former program graduates. The Council curriculum is based around a short mythic story developed by the group's founder called "The Dragon Slayer Myth". During sessions participants read, interpret, and apply the story to the (uncertain and unfolding) course of their own desistance and personal development, reimagined as stages in an ascendant heroic journey. In addition to the use of mythological stories, the Council model is also based in training group (T-Group) or laboratory educational methods, first developed in the 1940s in the U.S. designed to facilitate psychological growth using group interactions. Central to the application of T-Group methods in Council is the use of the group setting to experiment with

⁹ Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment* makes a similar argument with regard to the psychic benefits (for children) of fairy stories (2010).

novel or neglected interpersonal behaviors (one's which facilitate healthy interactions and positive personal development). A final component of the Council model is the employment of ex-offenders (wounded healers) as group facilitators. The Council model holds that ex-offenders are best suited to guiding reforming offenders. In addition to outlining the Council For Unity curriculum, this chapter draws upon phenomenological accounts of the actor's experience of time to argue that the application of a hero's journey to personal change relies on the self modifying potential of metaphors. Metaphors function as cognitive aids bridging mythic imagery with modes of perceiving, and hence acting on the world as it is encountered in the flow of experience.

Myth: Joseph Campbell and Carl Jung

Campbell's basic argument is that the repetition of elementary themes and imagery (the motif of the hero's journey or the reoccurrence of serpents, deluges, sacred trees, spiritual guides etc.) across the mythologies of temporally and geographically separated cultures, is evidence that mythic stories reflect and reflected enduring and essential principles of human, i.e. species wide, life.¹⁰ Following Jung, Campbell asserted that the commonality referenced in mythological imagery is the deeper, inner world of psyche and its movements. Under every "odd disguise of civilization" (Campbell 2008, 8) mythic narratives lend public form to underlying, more or less universal, psychic structures. These unconscious processes are not easily given direct articulation nor manipulation, but can be harnessed for the achievement of well-being by either culturally or consciously following myths as allegorical guides:

¹⁰ This, as Campbell notes, involves the rejection of competing theories explaining the basis of myth e.g. myth as expression of the natural world – vegetal cycles, astronomical movements, bodily functions, etc.

They [myths] are telling us in picture language of powers of the psyche to be recognized and integrated into our lives, powers that have been common to the human spirit forever, and which represent the wisdom of the species by which man has weathered the millenniums (Campbell 1991, 17)

In traditional societies myths functioned to validate and maintain local social systems and were frequently attached to formalized rites of ascension (e.g. from childhood to adulthood) assuring the accordance of individual subjective dispositions and the external social arrangements of a defined cultural group. In the contemporary world local and ethnocentric horizons (i.e. of gods and their enemies) have been replaced with a planetary outlook in which the human individual, and her capacities, has displaced the supernatural profound as the new center of secular awe (Campbell 1973).¹¹ The function of myth in modernity is to lead individuals to a more fulfilling and authentic life: myths are guides on how to “follow your bliss”.

Campbell suggests it is the “hero’s journey” that provides an elementary framework on which to sequence such personal transformation and eventual self-realization. The heroic cycle contains three generic phases: *separation – initiation – return*. The hero separates from the world of the known, ventures into a region of supernatural wonder, through the hardship of the trial the hero is empowered and returns to the known with the capacity to bestow the earned boons on his fellow man (Campbell 2008, 30). Figuratively speaking, the hero’s journey leads outward to unknown zones (down into the depths or outwards to distant lands or up into regions of the sky). In literal terms, the analogy is the journey inward into the recesses of the mind – the quest is none but our own psychic fulfillment – and myths suggest behaviors and modes of thinking to guide such personal metamorphosis. As Campbell puts it:

¹¹ Campbell cites the moon landing in 1969, particularly the view of earth, as a key point in the emergence of this planetary outlook.

The agony of breaking through personal limitations is the agony of spiritual growth. Art, literature, myth and cult, philosophy, and ascetic disciplines are instruments to help the individual past his limiting horizons into spheres of ever-expanding realization. As he crosses threshold after threshold, conquering dragon after dragon, the stature of the divinity that he summons to his highest wish increases, until it subsumes the cosmos (Campbell 2008, 163).

The narrative arc of the hero's journey is ongoing metaphor, an interpretive schema through which an individual biography may be read. At base, the heroic narrative suggests that for an individual to accomplish personal growth, the movement to living more vitally, they need separate from the known and the familiar and that the uncertainty this entails is an inevitable component of change.

Some small caveats are perhaps necessary at this point. Readers might balk at the universalism uncritically expounded by Campbell and Jung, especially universal characteristics identified by two "dead white men" (one of whom Campbell, could rightfully be described as an orientalist). So too, readers may raise objections to the high sounding but rather vague proclamations on the flowering of human potential unleashed by myth, which in our more skeptical moment, might ask "potential as defined by whom?" Or additionally, "where's your data?" So too might readers point to the biases that arise from those writing from a position of material comfort and social privilege in which self-realization or the releasing of individual potential would seem to rely on personal conversion rather than social reform. This dissertation does not seek to support or refute claims to the basal commonality of human existence/socio-psychic structures nor to expose unrecognized class or race basis for discourses on the flowering of "universal" human potential. Rather such objections are raised and observed as questions for another study. In so far as it does engage with these broad (potentially problematic) claims, it does so in a far narrower fashion, seeking to examine how heroic stories can be adapted and applied to men's rehabilitation as

guiding frameworks on an often long, difficult, and uncertain journey to desistance and social integration.

Myth and Desistance

But how does one translate the rather high-sounding claims about “the power of myth” into offender rehabilitation, and more so, should one undertake such a transposition? Before proceeding, it will be useful to recall the ideal typical process of active desistance outlined in chapter two. As noted in chapter two, desistance begins with a simple openness, a subjective readiness to change which emerges from a growing disenchantment with a criminal lifestyle. After a period of stocktaking, the desistee proceeds to assume a conscious commitment to avoid old habits and an affirmative choice to change one’s self (Mulvey et al. 2004). Desistance as a project, however, involves not only a purposive decision to change, but additionally relies on the desistee’s uptake of pro-social “hooks for change”: employment, romantic partnerships with a conventional other, familial relationships, and friendship with pro-social peers. Experiences with a hook for change catalyze the desistance process in that they not only facilitate social integration (especially employment), they additionally inaugurate a shift in meaning on both cognitive and affective levels, in which a conventional life acquires greater and greater subjective value. This process ends when a role or identity of a non-offender or “changed person” incompatible with future offending is durably assumed. The content of former-offenders emergent or entrenched pro-social identity, detach but yet frequently respond to past-offending, in that they seek to “make good” on past harms (Maruna 2001). Desistance is an active, untidy process, one which often coheres around the discovering and manifesting a latent, but more authentic “good self”. Accompanying and assisting this retrieval are personal narratives investing

in making amends, redeeming one's self, and "giving back" to others (generativity) (McNeill and Maruna 2007).

The Self and Time

Understanding how mythic metaphors of the heroic journey may be mapped onto and thus guide this sequence requires a closer look at the phenomenology of time. As noted, desistance is less commonly a discrete and final life-decision, but rather a process which unfolds temporally. All human action in the world appears as a temporal stream of events (Schutz 1970, 59) which bear the following characteristics:

- Human experience and action moves from the already experienced (the closed and determinate) via a present "now" in movement towards an open and indeterminate future.
- Each person encounters their present via interpretative systems which are a function of their stocks of knowledge, i.e. accumulated past experiences aggregated in memory.
- Projects, which extend forward in time, rely on activity in the "now" but orient towards an imagined future state.

In the conventional world the process of personal change (i.e. identity change) in adult life (Becker 1964) often develops in well-defined contexts, domains of education and work, where the direction and sequence of one's new moral career, i.e. progressive changes in "me" self-conception is institutionally structured across time. Changes in self-concept occur incrementally in reaction to immediate concerns in "the now", which *in toto*, result in their acquisition of a new identity. Within institutions such changes are supported by various forms of sponsorship and

systems of evaluation in which incremental challenges to and augmentations of existing stocks of knowledge are often delimited by secular rituals of admission, advancement, and inauguration (Becker 1961).

Other adult life events in which a reconstruction of self is called for, after divorce, job loss or retirement (and aging more generally), the adjustment to disability, migration to a foreign country, radical changes in lifestyle or diet and so on – individuals, like the *bricoleur*, must initiate and sustain self-change employing a diverse, more idiosyncratic, range of available (and discovered) personal resources: well-intended advice, relationships, self-help guides and, only occasionally, professional supervision and direction. As a subset of this second form of change, chronic offenders, like all adults in a culture, can differentiate between criminal and conventional behavior in a lumpen sense, but often must discover or struggle with how to translate the desire to change into actual personal transformation. They, like all embarking on new or unforeseen of zones of experience face the significant challenge of establishing a new sense of self in a new, often foreign, social environment, a self and context not easily indexed with that already experienced. Thus they approach their potential future self remotely, and although aware of what a “good person” does, possess a basic outline, “a vacant frame” as Schutz would put it, into which they have yet learned to fill in with a meaningful, personalized new way of being-in-the-world.

The Self, Metaphor, and Change

Gay Becker in her *Disrupted Lives: How People Create Meaning in a Chaotic World* (1997), a study of individuals' self-reconstitution after a disruptive event (divorce, loss of fertility, diagnosis of terminal illness), argues that metaphors function as a resource to mediate the movement between old and new self-conceptions. As is more fully articulated in anthropological literature metaphors are abstract images or primitive abstractions, which refer to "a set of concrete relationships in one situation for the purposes of facilitating the recognition of an analogous set of relations in another situation" (Beck et al. 1978, 83). Metaphors, by analogy, reveal and organize relationships lying underneath the assemble of experiences that constitute everyday life. Metaphors thus can, "provide...new sudden and striking collocations of references" (Ogden and Richards 1960, cited in Beck 1978), which can serve as the basis for action. Metaphors are critical to this process in that the use of metaphor is a "moment in which the known field of reference is suspended and a new, more comprehensive picture is invented" (Becker 1997, 60).

Across the temporal *durée* of self-directed change, which is experienced as a flow of successive "nows", metaphors, and in specific, mythic metaphors, function to perceptually order the immediate in ways which *consciously* substitute for existing, often automatically applied, frames of reference or stocks of knowledge. In the case of the desistee, mythic metaphors provide ready-made substitutes for older criminogenic or self-defeating frames of reference, especially in the early period of change, when a course of action may not easily be given by existing stocks of knowledge. Thus, metaphoric imagery "X is a Dragon" organizes the perception of self, other, and environment in ways which imply certain lines of action for an individual. For example, interpreting the self as hero-protagonist and living blissfully as quest, stimulates a perception of

self as the center of action (indeed the only possible center of action) in the unfolding movement towards psychological growth. Following the heroic monomyth, the limits of personal experience appear as confines in which growth cannot occur, boundaries of the known must be identified and crossed. Recasting adversity as the *sin qua non* of heroic self-reconstitution, facilitates the interpretation of conflicts and traumas as transitions and opportunities for growth. Thus the heroic motif temporally organizes personal change.

Research suggests that reforming offenders spontaneously conceive of their desistance in heroic terms: “The life experience of pivotal deviance, of disorientation, of discontinuity and of shame and guilt appear to create in human beings the need for heroic identity. Heroic moral identity serves to make acceptable, explicable, and even meritorious the guilt-laden, “wasted portions of an Actor’s life” (Lofland 1969, 297). Indeed, the structuring of self-conception via “personal myths”, a largely unconscious schemata (or template) consisting of beliefs, feelings, and rules which operate to structure our perceptions and direct behavior is common to most adult humans (Feinstein 1998). Metaphors, as suggested here, are the means by which new self-narratives can find pragmatic application in the flow of experience, they are the steps by which one may move to a larger tune. As Combs and Freedman describe: “Within the new stories people live out new self-images, new possibilities for relationships and new futures” (1996, p. 16).

The Council Model: Mythic Aspects

All theories of rehabilitation are, in part, theories of crime. If a rudimentary theory of crime causation exists in Council thinking it is that crime develops from the fundamentally anomic and impersonal character of contemporary society, much of the Council follows from this

understanding. In contrast, the basis for the most common form of offender rehabilitation model, the Risk, Needs, Responsivity (RNR) framework, is a view of offenders as aberrations, individual departures from conventional social values and moral reasoning (rooted in a medical model based on concepts of illness). Underlying this medical-pathological model is a neat distinction between “deviant” and “conventional” social values, the latter misrecognized as monolithically and self-evidentially “good.” Rather than assuming that offending is a departure from conventional social mores however, Council philosophy starts with the premise that crime expresses, if indirectly, the core values of contemporary society.¹² According to Council, contemporary society’s dominant values are not those of deferred pleasure, selflessness, and moral virtue (i.e. middle class asceticism) but rather these values exist, and indeed are overshadowed by, a stress on materialism, hedonism, self-interest, superficiality, etc. Such cultural injunctions are continuous with the values expressed in criminal behavior and lifestyles:

What do materialistic societies value more? People or money...love or sex...getting involved or minding your own business...working hard or making easy money...who you are or what you look like? (CFU Facilitator’s Manual 16).

At the individual level the Council model proposes that the offender’s inculcation into the values of conventional society that has, in part, led to their offending and incarceration. Therefore the goal of rehabilitation is not to restore the offender to the orderly values of convention, but rather to extricate them from cultural injunctions toward anomic self-interest. Clearly there are similarities between the Council model and Good Lives Model (GLM) of rehabilitation promoted by, amongst others, Tony Ward (see 2002; Ward and Marshall 2004). GLM holds that the end-goal, but also an important motivational component, of rehabilitation is the construction and implementation of a *good life* obstructed by understandable, but yet self-defeating criminal

¹² In this respect the Council model views offending in similar to strain, as well as feminist and cultural criminological theories.

behavior. So too in Council, the objective of rehabilitation is the extraction from the unhealthy imperatives of contemporary society, freeing the individual to live a fulfilling, authentic, connected life, the end goal of the mythic endeavor: "...the challenge in modern myth is, are you going go over to an impersonal system? Or are you going find a way to hold on to your humanity" (Interview with B, god knows when).

The Council Curriculum

The Council curriculum is adapted directly from Campbell's scholarship on mythology, in particular, the motif of the heroic journey. The Council model, in large part, rests on the "Dragon Slayer" myth (hereafter DS). Under the guidance of facilitators, participants read DS, interpret the meaning of the symbols of the story, and finally use the ascendant heroic narrative as a means to remodel their own lives. The DS story can be summarized as follows:

The story is set in a fantasy region. The central character, a young man, lives at the margins of the story's village. Shunned as an outcast by the villagers, the young man ventures into surrounding forest encountering various spirits. Each time he emerges from the forest he has acquired a new skill or strength. A powerful dragon begins terrorizing the villagers and the King issues a call for heroes. Taking up the quest the young man ventures once more beyond the borders of the village. Upon his journey he encounters a wolf who he befriends and who guides him to a cave. In this cave the hero finds a sword and a mask and proceeds to the dragon's lair. The hero confronts and slays the dragon. Upon returning to the village he is named the King's successor. The hero's final act in the narrative is to lead the villagers' children to the cave, where he distributes the dragon's hoard.

Each character in the story symbolizes an aspect of the *eudaimonic* journey. Naturally the hero represents the program participant, with whom the participant is expected to identify (raising some problems perhaps if you are a woman). The forest, an important symbol in the story, represents the unknown, the novel, etc. exploration of which serves to empower the hero. The wolf of the story represents the unlikely ally (external aid). On the other hand, the mask and the sword represent the hero's inner powers, which he must marshal in order to defeat the dragon. The dragon itself symbolizes the problems faced by the hero, which he must overcome to ascend to a higher existence. Finally, the giving away of the gold represents the completion of the heroic cycle whereby the hero moves away from an ego-centric existence and begins to live for others.

The curriculum is designed so that participants first read, discuss, and interpret the various symbols and the roles they represent in the text. Secondly, participants then apply the various stages of the heroic cycle to their own biographies. How is this done? Each stage or task in the heroic journey forms a section in the curriculum. Here are the seven steps to becoming a dragon slayer:

1. Do not accept the negative perceptions of others
2. Overcome the boundaries that limit your possibilities
3. Be open to those who can guide you
4. Discover your inner powers
5. Face your Dragon
6. Serve Others

7. Leave a Legacy for Others

1. Do not accept the negative perceptions of others

In the Council curriculum, the hero's first heroic act is to be himself. In terms of the narrative, the hero refuses to accept the villagers' negative perception of him as an outcast. The lesson is that in doing so, the hero, as self-fulfilling prophecy, allow others to determine who he is. He is not, thus, self-determining or self-creating, but rather voluntarily cedes this capacity to others. Within this metaphoric system participants face a choice: be a hero, individuated, self-directing or be a villager, part of conforming aggregate who wait upon a force beyond themselves for salvation. Encouraging offenders to "be themselves" might seem to have little rehabilitative value. After all, haven't these men spent much of adult lives defying the desires of the generalized other? This inducement to self-direction however, bears more directly on the role responses to the more immediate and burdensome perception of valued peers in blocking the participants' personal development. In particular, Council emphasizes the masculine injunction to maintain a "tough" presentation of self, sacrifices more feminine attributes such as compassion and emotional expressivity. In Council terminology, this masculine front is referred to as "the mask."

2. Overcome the boundaries that limit your possibilities

An important metaphor in myth and by extension the Council curriculum is that of the boundary or threshold. The monomyth, the nuclear heroic unit, involves the departure from the known world of the familiar into an unknown zone of peril and potential, the *sin qua non* of heroic maturation. By contrast the villagers are too frightened to enter the forest. Similarly in the

Council story, the boy frequently crosses the bounds of the village zone by entering “the forest” from which he returns with increased stature. As the Council manual describes: “[the forest] represents the unknown, that place in life that has yet to be experienced, the place beyond the familiar where all the possibilities lie.” Participants are encouraged to reflect the boundaries, both physical and psychological, in their lives. Boundaries were frequently discussed in interpersonal terms, where crossing into the unknown involves connecting with estranged children or family members. The overall message is that one cannot expect to change using the old, familiar patterns of thinking and acting: “you cannot get a different result from the same formula” as one facilitator would emphasize. Acceptance of this insight in abstract or discursive terms is then supported by T-Group practices (discussed below), whereby participants can, given the limitations of the prison, can experiment with new forms of being and interacting with others. In this sense, the T-Group experience is intended as a microcosm of wider interactions and relationships, one which however, one can make mistakes, find confidence in their adoption of new *modus operandi*.

3. Be open to those who can guide you

The third step in the Dragon Slayer sequence focuses on the symbol of the wolf in the story. In the narrative the hero encounters a wolf who befriends him and leads him to the dragon’s lair. In mythic terms, the wolf represents the “supernatural aid” as Joseph Campbell terms it, a benign, protecting power. Often such guides appear to hero in ambivalent terms as an threatening image (the spider woman in Navaho folklore, or the inscrutable Pan, the goat-god of Greek legend) intending to test the hero’s reliance on stereotypic responses associated with older, to be shed, perceptions. In this encounter, the wolf, an animal associated with predation, viciousness, and even evil, if trusted, becomes a vital ally in aiding the heroic undertaking. Translated to real-life

terms, the wolf draws attention to the stereotypic thinking that may have prevented participants from accessing the support necessary for personal growth. The invitation here is to be “open to those who appear different or unlikely helpers” (Council Manual n/a, 16). Participants are encouraged to identify “types” of people they tend to shun and or avoid, and that by prematurely, indeed subconsciously, excluding, may have missed many opportunities to make or at least benefit from, fructifying personal or professional relationships.

4. Discover your inner powers

Mythic systems orientate readers/listeners to regard challenges as opportunities, defeats as learning processes, tragedy as insight and catalyst. Narratively, one’s dormant potential is signified by the symbol of the cave, where the boy-hero discovers the weapon he uses to defeat the dragon. As in the monomyth, although the cave, in symbolic terms, is at a distant geographic point, the journey outward is in fact a journey inward. This segment encourages participants to recognize their strengths (much like in Good Lives Model of rehabilitation), often requiring they recast past adversity as potentially restorative but also to view the obstacles on their own journey as opportunities for self-knowledge and fortification.

5. Face your dragon

Although not the final point in this sequence, a very important stage in this process is the defeat of the dragon. The dragon, in Council terms, represents the criminogenic influences on one’s life. Participants are encouraged to identify their “dragons”, both internal and external that have lead to their incarceration. The creation of a dragon, the externalization of a problem is similar to that employed in narrative therapeutic methods (Murdoch 2012). Externalization allows client and therapist to expose and confront the problem driving the unwanted behavior or state. In the

Council model, the externalization of participants' problems in the mental image of the dragon encourages a separation of the participant's identity from their past destructive behavior. This lies in contrast with responsabilization inherent to cognitive behavioral methods. Maruna and Mann suggest that a certain degree of 'excuse-making' is in fact conducive to the rehabilitation process as it allows offenders to construct and maintain a 'true' non-offending self (2006). Although past offending is attributed to the influence of a variety of dragons, Council forwards a model of "active responsibility" (see Braithwaite and Roche in Bazemore and Schiff 2001) in that it is participants who are ultimately responsible for confronting their dragon: "The goal of all Council members is to confront and defeat the Dragon so they are in charge of their lives and not the beast...only you can defeat your dragons" (DeSena 2013).

6. Serve Others/Leave a legacy for others

According to the mythic trajectory, the hero complete the heroic cycle when he stops living for himself, and begins to live for others, representing a movement away from ego-centric existence to where the "awareness of the other bring him to love of the other through service" (Council Manual, ??). Thus in the story, the hero, having defeated the dragon, distributes the horde to the rest of the village. Dragons, in this sense, are metaphors for the dangers of avarice. They horde both money and princesses, never spending the former, never mating with the latter. They symbolize sterile accumulation, unproductive gain: a death principle. By contrast, the mythic hero evolves to a higher plane of existence, his generative capacity is his final source of personal fecundity. Participants are encouraged to identify their potential for generative action, whether within the T-Group setting or beyond. Serving others is a heroic, elevating and ennobling act.

The T or Laboratory Group

Another important feature of the Council method, and an key area in the operationalization of storied self-change, relies on what are known as training group or T-Group approaches (also known as laboratories) to personal development. The T-Group method was first developed during the 1940s as an approach to learning, one which employs small group dynamics. The basic principles, as maintained and applied by Council, are as following. The broad goal of T-Groups are to facilitate psychological growth or self-actualization as well as accompanying behavioral changes (particularly in terms of greater empathy and openness). T-Groups are self-contained units in which the data for learning are not outside individuals or remote from their immediate experience. Rather self-analysis and change emerges from transactions between members – whereby individuals’ thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are publicly expressed and collectively appraised. New forms of being can also be experimented with within the safe environment of the T-Group, whose guiding ethic directs participants to stimulate and support one another’s learning and growth (Bradford et al. 1964).

Early clients of T-Group practice were not offenders, but social workers, students, managers, and the like. As it stands T-Group methodologies assume a basic degree of motivation or openness to change. In T-Group philosophy effective learning requires the examination and assessment by participants of value systems, conceptual frameworks, prejudices and stereotypes, ways of judging and deciding which they have developed before entry into the T-Group. In short T-Groups invite participants to subject brick-a-brack patterns of habit subject to varying degrees of consciousness, preconscious categories of thought and influences on behavior in express assessment and dialogue. This process allows for the discovery and resolution of unrecognized

problems. For example, often male offenders suffer difficulties in transitioning to new, “conventional” environments, the prime example being that of the workplace. Part of this difficulty lies in shedding older presentation of self requiring the maintenance of manly demeanor, a readiness to aggression. Although engaged in rehabilitation, some offenders unconsciously comport themselves in this manner, even if it diverges from their goals and internal affective states. Failure to recognize this residual of a former way of being-in-the-world can lead to complications, as this street mien can be misrecognized for aggression. Group feedback, potentially, allows others to respond to that which is invisible to the participant, in a context in which one’s impression of self is open to conscious, yet respectful, deliberation – a scenario not often found in the routine of ordinary life.

Relations among peers in T-Groups are thus of paramount importance for two reasons. Firstly, disclosure and freedom from defensive action are vital to the health of any T-Group. Thus T-Groups attempt to operate with a climate of permissiveness and inquiry in which thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (both old and new) can be expressed without the fear or threat of punishment. Second, group participants serve as a mirror to others as they do so for them. As a group member contributes to group action he receives reactions from the rest of the group which may help him assess and improve his perceptions and behavior. Non-judgmental, non-adversarial feedback, helping relationships, is and are central to the T-Group process and Council methodology. A basic condition for self-change is the surmounting of anxiety about the unknown and the untested. Leaving known patterns of thought and behavior, as inadequate as they may be – ‘better the devil you know than the devil you don’t’ as the old adage goes – for the unknowns of change must be met with support without saddling the individual with additional

dependencies. Therefore T-Groups serve as forums (or laboratories) in Bradford et al. learning becomes integrated into the total pattern of behavior of an individual when they have the opportunity to experiment in clearly defined ways with novelty (1964). Individuals, they pose, will be hesitant to behave differently ‘when the chips are down’ in real-life situations, unless she has tested and assessed in situations where she is no ‘playing for keeps’ and can reflect, remodel, or discard a new behavior without consequence other than an increase in self-knowledge. In this sense, to return to our specific population, offenders have the opportunity to experiment with behaviors hitherto only explored in the imagination, to discover limitations and dormant abilities, and to undertake the process of consolidation that will allow her to function with comfort and fluency in non-group setting.

Thus at the heart of T-Group is a dialectic: “Out of these [experiences] he develops new images of potentialities in himself and seeks help from others in converting potentialities into actualities” (Roberts 1967). Through this process the participant undertakes the arduous process of achieving some valuable and viable synthesis between the old and the new.

The Use of Ex-Offenders

Council, for the most part, employs former offenders to staff their various, including correctional, programs. In this practice they are not alone – Alcoholics Anonymous, for one prominent example, employ recovered alcoholics in counselling roles. (look for updated figures) In 1987 approximately 72% of the professional counselors working in over 10,000 substance abuse centers in the US were former substance abusers (NAADAC 1986). There a number of

reasons why Council, amongst other rehabilitation programs, employ professional-exs in their frontline staff. Some of the reason for this special capacity is explained by social learning models of criminality. Differential association theory posits, as is known, that crime occurs when an individual possesses an excess of definitions conducive to committing crime. Definitions accumulate as a function of the frequency and intensity of relationships with pro-social or pro-criminal others. Most influential are ties with intimates – individuals with which they have a close emotional relationship. This too has been found as the basis for ‘role-exit’ among former offenders – who cite their symbolic (i.e. strangers who are yet of the same community) and emotional identification with the various professional-exs encountered on their route to desistance a key to their successful transition out of, as opposed to in to, criminality (Brown 1991).

The capacity to former offenders to stir such feeling of identification rest on several factors. One, is that through first-hand experience professional-exs develop special sensitivities and skills in helping others experiencing the same adversity. They are enriched by the datum of direct experience – the complexity of the feelings, thoughts, and circumstances – which allows them, in theory, to competently guide offenders in navigating their own journey towards their new way of being-in-the-world. Secondly and relatedly, professional-exs are accorded a high degree of trust – their statements are supported by legitimacy of direct experience – they are an authority. But this is not only in the case of their crimes and subsequent punishment (which is one powerful one) – but to a broader range of social cum biographic commonalities gender; race/ethnicity; class; geography – which translate into visible similarities in comportment; language or argot; dress necessary for the “like me” identification. As viewed during the course of this research –

‘code-switching’ or the movement between different linguistic registers, usually with instrumental purpose – is often employed, a reversion to past modes of speech (different from the more formal, standard, in this case, English, acquired via professional socialization) – an exemplifying their initiate status.

In a final sense ‘professional-exs’ also serve as living examples of not only the possibility of reform, but also the continuity in reform. As noted in the introduction, purposive human action proceeds, like Marx’s architect who raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality, with the imagining of future selves or states. Desistance literature, in specific, that of Paternoster and colleagues, have surmised that offenders begin or approach subjective readiness for change as a result of a growing dissatisfaction with criminal lifestyle (or more so attendant negative consequences). In doing so offenders anticipate a ‘feared’ future self, one to be avoided (i.e. death, injury, drug addiction, social isolation etc.), as well as desiring a ‘future’ self which is to be achieved. Paternoster’s picture is incomplete. Coeval to the “feared” criminal self is also (often) a “feared” conventional self – the square – which given the gender dynamics, translates into the emasculated self. As shall be discussed later, the reorganization of the self-required by desistance tends to proceed along line which maintain continuity in sense of self (stature), but transposed into conventional behavior. Professional-exs can not only the possibility of reform but the retention of valued personal qualities – manly charisma or “swag” – at the conclusion of the desistance process and successful integration into conventional society. They evidence the co-existence of masculine command with not only non-offending patterns, but more open, expressive ways of being.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CALL TO ADVENTURE

Introduction

This chapter analyses data gathered from field observations of weekly Council For Unity sessions at a county jail. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Council model employs a myth-based approach to offender rehabilitation in which the process of personal change (both the movement towards desistance but also an *eudaimonic* good life) is discussed and developed via the metaphor of the heroic journey. As identified in Campbell's scholarship on comparative mythology, the hero's journey (whose pattern of departure and return is generic to all world mythologies) involves a series of stages which Council For Unity staff developed into a short narrative, *The Dragon Slayer Myth*. The motifs within this story served as framework for organizing discussions of personal change among group participants. As discussed in chapter four, metaphors function by posing a set of concrete relationships in one situation, the narrative of the heroic sequence, for the purpose of facilitating the recognition of an analogous set of relations in another situation, the various dilemmas faced by participants as they struggled to sustain their desistance process. The cognitive reframing resulting from the transposition of the mythic schedule of the hero's journey on to life experiences in the flow of time, provides, or at least suggests, corresponding lines of action more clearly recognizable and actionable (at least this is intention) when articulated via metaphors. For example, one master metaphor, the crossing of threshold (from the known to the unknown), the basis the successful heroic quest, invites participants as the heroic protagonist, to consider the boundaries or limits structuring their lives whose crossing would contribute to their personal growth (for example, exploring the emotions

involved with reconnecting with family or taking steps towards higher education or vocational training).

Given that observations took place at a jail, in which most if not nearly all participants had been recently arrested for a variety of offenses, this chapter and the next concerns the “early” phase in the desistance process, the point at which the would-be desister begins to critically reflect on, rather than simply participating in, their present *modus vivendi*. In light of this, and following the theoretical outline provided in chapter one, this chapter examines and analyzes group discussions framed by the various elements of the Council model. First, in discussions using the imagery of the dragon, symbolizing the obstacles hindering participants in their movement towards desistance, participants revealed that a powerful centripetal force drawing them into persistence and/or relapse was what Katz might call the seductions of “streetlife”. Participants expressed that the attractions of the streets took on various forms, providing opportunities for establishing and maintaining “a name”, the satisfactions of a reputation and a sense of autonomy and self-determination little afforded by income generation in the legal labor market. Second, this chapter examines the different types of neutralizing self-talk (Sykes and Matza 1957) which served to inoculate such a lifestyle from moves towards desistance. In following, it is argued here that the neutralizations seems to proceed less as an ongoing moral rationalization, but rather, as other researchers have suggested (Topalli 2005) as a disposition of indifference to conventional generalized others, which only occasionally requires explicit (i.e. conscious) maintenance being an enduring, if implicit, orientation to the world. Third, this chapter examines how the neutralizing mechanisms that facilitate offending are compromised and whose breakdown may result in the individual dedicating to desist. Finally, this chapter concludes with

a brief observation on the role of relevant generalized other, offending peers, for participants, as a retarding force in the development towards desistance and the public assumption of a conventional self. All in all, although this dissertation's focus is on desistance, this chapter finds that offenders on the invitational edge of desistance are "b'twixt and between" various competing forces which they must negotiate and which research on desistance should appreciate in their relevancy for the process of going straight.

The Seductions of the Known: Lifestyles

It has been repeatedly shown in criminological research on street crime in industrialized societies that a small minority of habitual offenders are responsible for about half of recorded crime (see Moffitt 1993). Arguably, the population of most concern to researchers of desistance – chronic offenders – are those whose offending most closely bears the force and impetus of a lifestyle or life project as Schutz would term it, where offending is not an isolated incident or series of incidents, but one symptomatic of a context whose momentum must be understood for its implications for the early stages of desistance as an extractive process. The would-be desister at the invitational edge of conformity, confronts not only the loss of the rewards of the streetlife, but a selfhood attuned to everyday functioning in the streetlife across the various strata of the self: discursive justifications for continued participation, subconscious cognitive and perceptual alignment, and incorporated forms of bodily *hexis* (see Wacquant 2006 on processes of somatization).

In these discussions on personal obstacles to reform, one dragon participants frequently referred to was that of “the streets”. Emotions scholar Jack Katz has long noted that criminology has neglected the “often wonderful attractions within the lived experience of criminality” (1988, 3) that render various forms of criminality as a seductive, sensually compelling ways of being (1988). Criminological accounts of homicides he further comments, rarely contain accounts of “the slaps and curses, see the pushes and shoves, or feel the humiliation and rage that may build towards the attack” (3), attacks which, contrary to instrumental readings of killing, often persist after the victim’s death. What Katz directs attention to are the warp and woof of emotions as directing energies which bearers can partially shape or manage (Hochschild 1979), but in which they often experience themselves as the object of seeming irresistible forces phenomenologically exterior to the self (Katz 2001). To take the role of emotions in crime seriously (and by extension, desistance) is to take the metaphors (2001) by which social actors discursively articulate an aggregate being experiences.

For participants, in the most nonfigurative sense, the streets referred spatially to the preponderantly outdoor character of life in low income neighborhoods, as one participant noted: “In my neighborhood, being in the streets was the norm, even as little kids we were always out there on the block” (Field Notes). This reflects what Lareau has described as “the accomplishment of natural growth”, whereby the play of children of low-income parents is largely unsupervised and consists of seeking amusements afforded by features of the physical landscape and peer groups found in their neighborhood (2011). In the emerging experience of the streets as a lifestyle, participants found what Schutz calls a “synthesis of recognition” between childhood and early adolescent street-centered play activities and the later street-centered adult

lifestyles, a “same but modified” (1970, 75) relationship easing transition between two ways of orientating towards public spaces in their neighborhoods. As one participant, Slim, expressed: “Man, I been in the streets since I was little kid, you know, hustling, getting money, doing this, doing that...all that other stuff, school, um, working straight that wasn’t, I mean I knew about that stuff but that was for somebody else” (Field Notes).

However, whilst the shared experience of poverty, dilapidation, and social exclusion can serve to foster a communal sense of we-ness, depicted in other research into urban life as an ambient sense of solidarity (Sanchez-Jankowski 2008) and proud sense of place attachment (Moran 2015), contrastingly streetlife was characterized by participants as a way of living within urban neighborhoods defined by cynicism, fierce competition, and ruthless self-interest: a Darwinian survival of the fittest. This *bellum omnium contra omnes* in part reflects the extra-legal nature of income generation in the *sub rosa* economy, whereby state protection of property and the enforcement of contracts delegates to threats of retributive violence, an observation that was noted by program participants: “Ain’t nobody got your back on the streets, you can’t go calling no police ‘bout a brick you lost, you gotta take that shit into your own hands” (Field Notes).

The Siren Call of the Streets

Despite the description of the streets as war or animal survival, participants also described the streets as a compellingly seductive force. In spite of and perhaps in light of its risks, for participants the streets were described as an almost irresistible temptation, an abiding siren call,

exhilarating yet perilous. One can be “lured”, “seduced by”, “drawn into” the streets as if by a magnetic force of attraction. As participants expressed:

To tell you the truth, what’s been difficult to me about this process [desistance] was leaving the life style behind...the rush of the fast life, the money, the clothes, the cars, mad love wherever you go, females hittin’ you up. It’s hard to resist when it’s right there in front of you. It sure as hell was a whole lotta fun to me, it gets under your skin ‘n it pulls you in...it’s not easy to back off of once you get a taste of that life. (Field Notes)

I was a gang member drug dealing individual who lived off adrenaline and the life style that came with it. (Field Notes)

You wouldn’t believe it but I didn’t grow up in a bad home. I had two parents, both working good jobs, we were like the Cosby kids in the neighborhood (laughs). But I don’t know there was something in me that attracted me to it all. I didn’t need to get into all this, but I did. (Field Notes)

Research into desistance has only occasionally examined the motivation for persistence in reference to the hedonic seductions of the street. Burnett’s study examined motivational patterns for criminal behavior, finding that the draw of hedonistic experiences accounted for persistence and relapse. For “hedonists” the motivation to offend arose from a sense of well-being afforded by aspects of criminal involvement. These included the challenge of crime, “the buzz” of adrenaline generated by successful crime commission, and the prospect of financial gain (2000, 14). Similar to other studies, Burnett’s respondents stated that the proceeds of criminal activity were used to finance extravagant social lives including partying and drug taking (14). One inmate facilitator referred to the visceral thrill of being on the street as follows: “I know that feeling when you’re on the block, your blood’s percolating” (Field Notes). Autobiographical accounts of criminal lifestyles abound with descriptions expressing a similar enthrallment. For example, in his autobiography *Monster: The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member*, the author Saniyka Shakur notes “My relationship with mother soured continuously as I was drawn deeper

and deeper into the streets and further away from home and school” (2004, 25). Luis J. Rodriguez’s *Always Running: La Vida Loca* notes, “My life on the streets involved stealing, shootings, stabbings, arrests, homelessness, and drug overdose...I felt too far gone to be redeemed...I didn’t have plans for a future, for a career or the dreams to take me there” (2005, xiv). Despite efforts at reform, the streets calls one back: “the drugs, the homies, the homegirls, the excitement, the violence often called me back. For so long they were all I knew” (104).

The Streets as Undertow

The centripetal force of the streets was also described in negative metaphors, particularly that of the undertow, less a fascinating force, but rather a downward movement associative with drowning and submersion. As participants expressed, one can also be “sucked into”, “pulled back”, “caught up in”; the voluntarism of “giving into” temptation or happy surrender is replaced by a sense of the streets as negative force to be resisted, one which some participants described themselves as an object caught in the momentum of a unrelenting current. For example, one participant Martin recounted a relapse after over a year of being crime-free working as a landscaper, where pressure from his partner for money drew him back into drug dealing:

I caught this bid from cos’ I sold an ounce to an undercover cop. I was out, out of the life, I had a job, I was doing the right thing. But it’s always there, it’s so easy to fall back in, next thing you know you’re back out there doing all the negative stuff you said you’d left behind. Just like that. (Field Notes).

Other participants expressed that over the course of their gradual immersion in the street life, non-criminal peers had begun to disassociate themselves from them, both by choice and that the routines of work, post-secondary education, and eventually family life began to occupy the

relatively free time of adolescence. Estrangement from family was particularly acute when participants were battling with drug addiction. One participant described how his constant relapse into usage, his theft and exploitation of family members gradually wore down reserves of sympathy. The one phrase, he disclosed, that he used the most as a junkie was “I’m sorry”. Failure to make good on expressions of contrition eventually resulted in cynicism among his family members, who came to regard him as characterologically insincere and dishonest. As a result of this process, some participants expressed that their peer groups were almost entirely composed of others “who were mixed up with all kinds of trouble”, as Chris expressed, “My dragons are being with friends that get me into trouble I don’t do anything at all. I don’t rat on them but they sure as hell don’t get me out of the problem”. Even though, as one participant Paul recounted, he had begun to feel ambivalent about the life he was leading, his social groups inevitably placed him in situations where he was caught up in the streets, namely that he would often discover that someone in his company was carrying a weapon, drugs, or stolen goods. Norms of friendship, however, prevented him from easily exiting these situation. As Goffman describes, face-to-face interactions involve a series of tacit rules prescribing that parties cooperate in maintaining “shared definitions of the situation” (1990, 96). Most powerful of these tacit norms is the avoidance of open contradiction of the working consensus of the interaction. Paul expressed as such when he recounted how, although expressing disapproval was tolerated, complete exit from the scene would be tantamount to reneging on the friendship bond: “what am I gonna do, just get out of the car?! Just turn around and walk the other way?!”. Eventually he would be incarcerated on conspiracy charges because someone in he was riding with had a gun.

Sustaining a “Rep”

The seductive allure of the streets took on various other forms. Primary of which was as an arena in which one could cultivate reputational prestige. This was spoken of as a long term project of reputation management or building “a name”. Building a name, as expressed by participants differed little from other sociological accounts (see Anderson 2000), consisting of establishing a reputation for toughness of mind or indomitability of the will, the ability to “get over” someone, a readiness for violence, stoicism, and a commitment to criminal codes, especially ones proscribing cooperation with the police:

My dragons are infamy and sinful pride. The need to prove myself in a negative manner has always overwhelmed me. The need to uphold a meaningless reputation has always been a priority. (Written Note)

I’ve lived up to my name through the reputation I’ve built, which has been nothing but destruction from my anger and the things I’ve held in. That gave me a lengthy prison term and nothing but my name in return. (Field Notes)

Participants, particularly those involved in drug-dealing, had spent years building a name, which was viewed as an investment in or accumulation of symbolic capital (i.e. honor, prestige, respect deference) (Bourdieu 1986), which then could be converted into economic capital via successful participation in the drug trade. Discussions on the nature of reputation maintenance revealed, perhaps unsurprisingly, its transactional nature. Like all symbolic power, “a name” in large part achieves value relationally in its recognition and observance by others (Bourdieu 1999).

Facilitators, ex-offenders themselves would often describe this as the “Do you know who the fuck I am?” syndrome, whereby insufficient deference, most notably in terms of a failure to recognize the status of the bearer in the world of the street, demanded a corrective violent response. The strength of the response was partly determined by the status difference between the offending and offended parties. The larger the social distance in street hierarchies the more

punitive, more debasing the response required to restore one's name its expected accord. As Hans Toch wrote of self-defending violent men, reputation maintenance involves a constant vigilance, and acute sensitivity to, even minor interpersonal cues of status injury from others: "a man who is extremely sensitive to the implications of other's actions... violence arises in the form of responses to challenges, retaliation to slights, or reactions against aspersions to his advertised self-conception" (1992, 141). The necessity of status defense reaches a particularly acute form in custodial settings. As Juan, a participant explained, status encroachments by other inmates often serve as tests of character, where failure to respond aggressively is viewed as weakness, thus exposing the victim to escalation to further harassment or physical violence. Within the self-contained custodial environment there is little opportunity for exit or avoidance, and in a Catch-22 dilemma, reporting imminent or actual violence to the authorities risks labeling one as a "snitch", that is to suffer a serious status demotion and more general condemnation hazarding a greater exposure to violent victimization as a legitimate target by the wider jail population for violations of the convict code.

In group sessions on reputation participants often discussed the affective dimensions of the seduction of "a name" euphemistically, a by-product of demand for masculine stoicism and indifference, which ironically prevents acknowledgement of the emotional basis for emotional impassivity. For example, Charlie spoke of his entrée into the streetlife: "We lived in a squat and me and my sister used to wash from a fire hydrant... I didn't go to school, other kids didn't want to hangout with me because I stank to be honest and because I was different from them... I used to hang with the prostitutes, the pimps and drug dealers, I'd look out for them, they didn't care, they accepted me" (Field Notes). His assertion that what eased his entry into the streetlife was

the sense of acceptance he felt. What was proffered, one facilitator observed, was not simply acceptance, but emotional well-being, to which he responded, “Yes, yes, that’s it”. Nix, another participant, in similar terms expressed his pleasure at an encounter that exhibited the promulgation of his reputation. He described how another man at a club had claimed he owed him money. However, once Nix gave his name the man backed off because he had heard that Nix was involved in an armed robbery. Nix expressed that he felt this indicated the end of his apprenticeship in the world of the street, akin to moving from amateur to professional, he was now, as he wistfully recalled, proudly “doing it for real”.

The Streets as Career

In contrast to the pallid, dreary world of legal employment, participants expressed that successful execution of crime was often thrilling, an “adrenaline rush”, accompanied by a sense of victory in defiance of the wider society, namely a well-resourced criminal justice system discriminatorily focused on the crimes of the poor. It also afforded a sense of competency, as one participant expressed in terms of his past robberies: “when I saw some dude, I could size him up right there, I could know if this guy is weak and I can take him. I can do that just like that, it’s easy for me” (Field Notes). For some, especially those previously involved with street gangs, an important attraction was the power seniority in a gang gave them over more junior members. In gangs, OGs or original gangsters occupy the apex of internal gang hierarchies, they are afforded the most deference, and their enjoyment of the monetary gains of gang activity come with often minimal involvement in the risky business of generating these funds. Senior gang members also control ascension through the ranks of more junior members, and thus, may demand that

commitment to the group be displayed by a range of activities from conducting violent acts against enemies to performing menial duties for more established members.

For some participants the *laissez-faire* quality of streetlife was an attraction. Unlike the formal economy, for those without educational credentials or money resources, entry costs were few, and primarily reliant on personal characteristics of grit and resourcefulness: “Sometimes all you got is your hustle, makin’ something out of nothing. I could go to X with nothing in my pocket, do my thing and make myself a few dollars, it’s like magic, Houdini shit!” (Field Notes). Some participants reported that observing the tedium and toil of their parent’s or other relatives’ employment in menial, poor remunerated work was factor in their embrace of the streets. Phil, a participant, described witnessing his mother crying over bills, when his father’s salary as a janitor, despite working long hours, could not meet the household’s financial needs. Phil described this experience of poverty as “pain”. He noted that some have an ability to tolerate pain, whereas he described that he found this difficult to endure, “some have a different threshold for pain. I wasn’t going to absorb that. I couldn’t” (Field Notes). The pains discussed by Phil increased sharply in American minority communities from the 1970s onward (Wilson 1997). The relative decrease in the availability of jobs congruent with, for men, cultures of working class masculinity, i.e. those that are well paid enough and manual (reliant on physical rather than emotional labor) to afford a sense of personal autonomy and self-direction, may have contributed, as suggested by participants, to the turn to the street life as a more fulsome source of self-affirmation.

The sense of personal autonomy afforded by street life contrasted starkly with the obligations entailed in participation in the legal economy, as expressed by participants. One participant, Smooth, in recounting a relapse after an attempt at desisting, spoke of how he had managed to secure a decently paying job as a manager. Eventually, however, the monotony of the daily work routine began to chafe and he began taking sick days, to the point that he eventually lost his job. He explained his tenuous attachment to conventional work and by extension the lifestyle on which it was reliant, was in part due to the attraction of being able to decide when to work afforded by drug dealing activity. This loss of autonomy was coupled with the relative loss in earning power. To illustrate he explained that it took him months to furnish his apartment on his salary from legal employment. Drug-dealing, on the other hand, he could afford to buy furniture in a matter of days – a financial power he wistfully recalled while working legitimately.

The Refusal of the Call: Remaining in the Known

Parallel to the range of relationships participants had to streetlife discussed above, i.e. varying degrees of commitment from determined engagement to troubled and reluctant participation, participants advanced other mechanisms which functioned to sustain persistence, and inversely, forestall desistance, namely forms of neutralizations (Sykes and Matza 1957). Neutralizations consist of forms of fortifying self-talk which primarily serve to inoculate offenders against feelings of guilt and shame arising from their partial socialization into conventional mores, which, as intrusions of conscience, occasionally threaten continued criminal/delinquent activity. Neutralizations such as the denial of victim where violent victimization of another is justified as an act of rightful retaliation against an intolerable slight, serve to induce state of indifference referred to as “moral disengagement”, whereby the individual, in an ongoing fashion, separates

moral reactions from inhumane conduct and furthermore, disables mechanisms of self-condemnation (Bandura 1999).

Neutralization as Self-talk

Such neutralizations took various forms among participants. One component of this recursively generated world view was a steadfast indifference to the negative consequences of criminal activity, family disapproval, truncated opportunities, the harm to others, all of whose apprehension was warded off by various personal aphorisms (For example, “I’m gonna get mine”; “to try is to fail”; “ain’t no one gonna diss me”). Although simple, such aphorism served as baselines directing and synchronizing perception, behavior, and orientations towards others across various situations as inviolable personal principles. Other forms of self-talk warding off the interruptions of conscience took the form of a resigned fatalism: “It is what it is”. Such maxims of conduct were woven into more complicated narratives justifying continued offending. A state of moral disengagement was facilitated in this sample by a *victim survivor discourse* in which the participants articulated their continued engagement in criminal activity as a brute necessity given the restricted life opportunities afforded to men of their social cum racial status as well as the demands of immersion the highly competitive and ruthless world of the street, in which relations to others are framed as a zero-sum. As one participant Corey expressed: “So the way I was thinking was it’s either me or them, I got to take care of me and I got to take care of my family. That’s it” (Field Notes). Whereas Tyrone, in one group session, described his continued offending thusly: “I tried going out and getting me a job, but ain’t nobody got work for a black man in this society. What am I gonna do? I gotta live” (Field Notes).

The most complete examination of the concept of neutralizations is provided by Maruna and Cope's review of research on neutralization over the past five decades (2005). Their conclusion was that neutralization theory was less a theory of criminal etiology, but had a role in persistence and desistance. Whilst neutralization probably play a role in the maintenance of offending and thus conversely, procrastinate desistance, responses in this study suggest that rather than an ongoing moral rationalization for crime, such neutralizations occupied a more peripheral, intermittent role in sustaining offending. As noted in chapter two, although humans are self-aware and self-monitor continuously while conscious, for the most part actors adopt a posture of "absorbed coping" as they interact with a familiar life world, i.e. the self only intermittently takes an observer stance vis-à-vis itself. As expressed in the quotation below, neutralizations may only be called forth, and thus exert influence, in circumstances where the gratuity of the situation calls for temporary contemplation of action. As Jay expressed:

Sometimes I'd stop, and think 'what the hell am I doin' when I was doing dirt, messing around, I'd think this ain't me, this ain't what I am. I always had an answer: 'I need to survive'. So I kept going, I took advantage of people, I robbed, dealt drugs (Field Notes)

As Jay later explained, a jolting sense of awareness and conscious moral apprehension of his continued offending was afforded when very shortly after release from prison, he was driving to drop off a quantity of drugs. The realization, he recollected, was his own sudden cognizance of the ease by which he had reassumed the role of the offender, how casually he had placed himself in danger of a further prison sentence so soon after release. The effect of his own survival self-talk was to bracket off this episode of contemplation and continue which only moments before had prompted a "what the hell am I doing" appraisal.

Neutralization as Habitus

The submergence of intrusions of conscience is perhaps not limited to forms of exculpatory self-talk, even if, as suggested above, neutralizations among chronic offenders may be of a more intermittent rather than ongoing in application. One can be distracted by absorption in other tasks and thoughts, whose own immanent necessities draw attention away from the interruptions of guilt and/or remorse. In short, indifference to the victimization of others, as suggested by participants, may have the quality of an underlying, automatically applied disposition, not necessitating more conscious, cognitive reassurances of moral integrity as suggested by theories of neutralization. Intrusions are held at bay, at a distance by the habitus “a system of lasting and transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perception, appreciations, and actions” (Bourdieu 1977, 95). The constant refrain from mothers, relatives, conventional friends, teachers, parole officers, social workers, correctional officers, program leaders, reformed offenders, representing in various forms of officialdom, society’s “ban”, may not “bedevil” or intrude on the chronic offender’s self-conception. Topalli et al.’s research on hardcore criminal suggests: “understanding the extent to which neutralizing is a stable enduring part of one’s personality...rather than merely a situationally induced strategy may prove useful for expanding our understanding of neutralization theory” (2013, 555). That the mental processes contributing to persistence may be largely prereflexive in nature was suggested by group discussions in which the most common way participants described their persistence was as the result a street “mindset” or “mentality”. This “way of thinking” (as it was additionally described) primarily characterized as a state of “non-thinking” or “recklessness” an

enduring indifference, rather than situationally induced by forms of self-talk, to the consequences of offending to self (imprisonment, death etc.) and other (selling drugs to addicts, damage to their communities etc.):

I am no longer as reckless as I was but I want to have more patience and mature. I should be caring about others and not just myself. Definitely need to become humbler towards others. (Field Notes)

Yeah man I just didn't give a fuck 'bout no one and no thing, ain't nothing nobody could tell me, I just did me 100 percent. (Field Notes)

Short-term thinking has been found to be characteristic of the street offender (see Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Walters 1990) in research associated with self-control theory. A more compelling argument is made by researchers who have attempted to examine the relationship between social circumstances in their totality (not simply parenting, but the main activities recurrently comprise an individual's day-to-day experience) produce enduring, transposable categories of perception and accompanying dispositions favorable to the commission of crime. For example, take Simons and Burt's research on the relationship of adverse conditions in the domains of family, peer groups, and community and what they awkwardly call "criminogenic knowledge structures" (2011, 6). Experiences of scarcity thus engender a collection of interrelated schemas of perception: a hostile, mistrusting view of relationships, an orientation toward immediate gratification, and a cynical view of conventional norms, all which accumulate to a distal sense of the "generalized other", neutering, in a tacit, quasi-automatic fashion, pangs of empathy without explicit or conscious rationalization. To follow, in describing their crime (or past crime) participants expressed a distant sense, bordering on irrelevancy of the perceptions conventional generalized others, and in some cases, struggled with assuming an empathetic relationship where it concerned the victimization or mistreatment of others (whether via crime or

the consequences of offending for intimates). For example, in one group discussion a participant, Andrew, recounted how he had burglarized the home of the parents of a woman he was dating. Upon his eventual apprehension and prosecution, the victim, a wealthy woman, constantly appeared in court, publicized his crime on social media, and initiated civil proceedings which resulted in a heavy restitution fee. As a result the young offender felt he was being persecuted by a vindictive “bitch”. The program leader (a former offender) pointed out that the anger this man felt towards his persecutor stemmed from a lack of empathy for how affected this woman was by the burglary and his betrayal, in short, her private world was violated. It was only when the program leader pointed out that when ‘a normal person’ calls police because you have been drug dealing or shooting, you can’t blame them: “Were you sharing the stash with her?”

Neutralizations were more so for coping with the negative consequences of criminality – prison time and alienation from family were the primary costs – rather than reconciling crime with a moral self by evading guilt. This extract from field notes illustrates the capacity of some participants by cognitively segregating their own behavior from their self-conception, thus impair their ability to understand reactions of the generalized other:

Darren is new to the group, he speaks up today after remaining silent for his first two sessions. After introducing himself he begins bitterly complaining about his mother-in-law, who contacted the D.A. about his probation violation. As a result he was incarcerated in the jail. He makes out that he was doing well, keeping on the straight and narrow, and that his mother-in-law’s motivation to report his probation violation (minor in his eyes) was vindictive, bafflingly unreasonable in light of his attempts to go straight. We hear the full story when Mr B. joins the group (a C.O. who knows the participant from the community). Mr B. asks, “but weren’t you in trouble for fighting three times over the holidays?”. Mr B. also adds that Darren had been drugged addicted for years and that he should not expect his family forget this history because he had been trying for a few months to go straight.

Darren's inability to empathize with his family's long accumulated frustration and disappointment at this continued drug taking and dealing, reflected a subconscious, or at least automatically applied, sequestering of own behavior and any causal effect it may have had on family's perceptions. That his family's action took open contradiction and required a slow reasoning, a weaning from the more readily expressed resentment, in his dialogue with Mr B. to comprehend, perhaps indicates the degree to which persistence is reliant on submerged moral logics, a mental sense making calling only for articulation with explicit justification when interrogated, that tacitly directs thought and action until perturbed by events of sufficient force or by naked contradiction with a moral self.

Departure: The Commitment to Change

Despite the various mechanisms sustaining offending in the lives of participants, whether the seductive allure of the street, the inertia it exerts, the forms of neutralizations employed, and evidence of dispositional indifference to others, participants nonetheless had, by the voluntary participation in the Council program, signaled their dedication (even if temporary) to desisting. It seems that the internal balance of forces maintaining persistence can be disrupted by events or a series of events that leads to the contemplation and commencement of change. As noted in the introduction, some have termed the growing dissatisfaction with crime as the "crystalization of discontent". This growing dissatisfaction with crime occurs when accumulated failures and disappointments become increasingly difficult to ignore or disassociate from offending. As noted above, the hero's journey begins with the call to adventure. As a rite of passage, desistance begins when a relationship of immediate adaptation to a criminal *modus vivendi* is suspended

inaugurating a phase of self-evaluation, in which the offender contemplates, rather than simply participating in, patterns of offending. In the language of Council For Unity, the initial decision to desist is metaphorically linked to the first stage of the hero's journey: the departure. The departure may come as a "transformative crisis" a sudden, traumatic change in our lives. Or it can develop gradually, with the first perception being a vague sense of discontent, imbalance, or incongruity in our lives. In mythic terms the heroic journey begins with a summons, in which "reveals an unsuspected world, and the individual is drawn into a relationship with forces that are not rightly understood" (Campbell 2008, 42), typically indicated by the arrival by a herald, a frog, dragon, or more general calamity. In group discussion under the rubric of the departure, three categories of events were found among participants which were of sufficient force to intrude on the reconciliation of self and offending: an appreciation of time as a finite resource, specific negative emotional events, and abandonment by criminal peers.

Time as Diminishing Resource

Efforts to desist began for some participants as a rational choice based on an emergent awareness of the escalating costs of criminality, particularly for those awaiting trial and potentially facing lengthy sentences: "Next time I go in, it's for letters not numbers, that's it game over". One participant Mark expressed his sense of time via a sporting metaphor:

The way I see it, life is like a football game. Football has four quarters. Right now I'm coming into my third quarter. I'm losing the game right now and the clock is ticking. But I got almost two quarters left to get ahead and win. It's not over, but I have start picking up my game now. (Field Notes)

Other participants described their own perception of the finitude of time, “messing up is getting more expensive” as one participant noted, indicating that as he aged, time spent in prison was consuming an increasingly diminished stock of biological time available to him. Surprisingly little attention has been given to subjects’ experience of time, especially as a motivation for change in desistance literature. The criminological “social fact” of the age-crime curve, namely the gradual diminishment of offending over the life-course, is found even among persistent offenders. Of all living creatures human are the only species conscious of their mortality, i.e. the finitude of the lifespan: “temporal consciousness cannot be divorced from the awareness of death” (Routledge and Arndt 2005, 59). As expressed by participants, humans comprehend personal time in terms of the *durée* of their physiological being. “Life” time is thus understood as biologically irreversible (although the effects of aging may be postponed) and a resource of limited quantity. The anticipation of death must be included in understandings of the crystallization of discontent (and desistance more generally), as an awareness that unhappy periods consume an increasingly dwindling quantity of time – as noted above, especially true if an individual faces the prospect of lengthy prison sentence (a sentence is a modality of punishment indexed by time).

A growing awareness of time can be prompted by changes in numericalized age, whose phases bear an age-graded social meaning, i.e. an individually malleable, but nonetheless common referent to age-appropriate thought and behavior (to simplify). On occasion participants would make reference to their age, particularly in comparison to the accomplishments (often requiring considerable investments of time) of non-offending peers:

My brother, he's only two years older than I am. He has his college degree, a good job, his own place. My cousin he's getting married soon. I'm 30 what do I have to show? Nothing, but a bunch of time behind bars. (Field Notes).

Some participants expressed prison time as wasted time in the sense that time is a resource which can be expended in productive and unproductive ways. Comparisons were often made between the time spent in prison and what could have been achieved had that time been used productively. In one case, a participant Scully, lamented that by this age he could have earned a degree. Additionally, the signs of physical aging can cue the aging process for the individual. As Fraisse notes, humans are “witness to constant changes where he himself is the point of reference”, which accumulate and presage one's eventual death. Thus enfeeblement can be related to desistance, not in terms of a direct relationship between physical vitality and offending (as the two only very loosely temporally overlap), but as a series of physical changes cueing a greater consciousness of the passage of personal time, i.e. biological finitude: “I'm 50 (points to his greying hair) and back wearing the green [prison uniform]”. Calculations of age on release were frequent. So too were discussions of concurrent time, namely that of participants' children. Not only did further incarceration raise the prospect of additional wasted time, incarceration separated participants from an important period of limited duration: childhood. There was frequent talk of the ages of children and the missing of important childhood milestones: “I'll miss her first steps, first boyfriend, her graduation”. Ages of children were also painfully calculated in terms of participants' potential release: “He's gonna be XX by the time I get out.”

Emotional Force

The breakdown or a compromising of the offender's internal conversation or habituated insouciance can occur when events of sufficient emotional intensity are experienced, events which then reside and repeat in memory and which become difficult to dismiss or disavow. For some participants, their efforts to desist began when the internal balance of forces which maintained offending become disturbed in light of some triggering event. One could describe this as an emotional tipping point, whereby accumulated discontents eventually cross a threshold of tolerance forcing a reevaluation of one's existing *modus operandi*. For example, one participant Sal, described how the experience of his mother's death precipitated his dedication to desist and his program participation:

My mother was sick in hospital and the doctors were saying she was close to dying. I was in the box at the time but they let me visit her on compassionate leave. I had to go the hospital in my box uniform [red and white stripes rather than green for those in general population]. I was in shackles and with a bunch of guards saying goodbye to my moms. It was the worst day of my life. I'll never forget it. (Field Notes)

Based on group discussions it seemed as if the free association of the mind, the ability to insulate one's thoughts or to shift them away from jeopardizing appraisals of one's offending, becomes with a triggering event, increasingly difficult to do so as the event is too present in memory and too emotionally weighty for easy dismissal. Another example, a participant Diego recounted how it was his trial, particularly victim testimony which involved residents of his neighborhood who had been effected by the drug trade, whether by addiction or violence, which formed an irrepressible memory conflicting with moral distancing from his offending. As he explained, it wasn't that he had not been aware of the "suffering I caused my family and my community", but rather this recognition had been temporally dispersed as moments across with sufficient intervals of immersion in the rewards (economic and emotional) and demands of street living, to exert

only a weak effect on his perception. It was only when the accumulated damage of his actions were presented in concentrated form via testimony that recognition found solid foundation in memory and association sufficient to intrude on thought and thus creating a shift in empathy and entry into a seemingly irreversible position of empathy, i.e. the affective state of that stems from vicarious apprehension of another's emotional state.

Some participants in this study, however, expressed that change occurred without reference to a specific triggering event. Or more so that the causal relationship between a revealing event and internal emotional state was reversed. For some, desistance began with the (often disconcerting) realization that an emotional shift which was incompatible with the emotional stance required by their lifestyle had occurred without express deliberation or specific mental association. What evidenced this shift was a triggering event, but one which called attention to or revealed an unrecognized internal change, rather than serving to precipitate one. For example, one facilitator, a former offender recounted how his change began with a growing, but easily dismissed sense of discomfort with "how things were". The episode that brought this mismatch between personhood and lifestyle to his consciousness and provided concrete confirmation of his dimly sensed changed was when he saw a young man get shot in his neighborhood. Rather than reacting with indifference, his normal response and general to life in high crime areas, he experienced empathy, concern, sadness, emotions he was unaccustomed to feeling, such that he went to the aid of the young man and remained with him until an ambulance arrived. That his sense of empathy was experienced as an external, indeed foreign force, separate from explicit reasoning was indicated in that after the event he recalled that he made mental moves to disavow his sympathy with the shooting victim as it he took it as an indication he was getting soft. Although

it is unclear without further data how or why such a shift in emotional responses occurs, however, other participants expressed similar experiences with an unanticipated shift in emotional valence:

One day, I don't know what it was, I just decided I ain't doing this anymore [hustling]. I mean I couldn't pick on the little guy anymore. Why don't I be on the little guy's side, instead of ripping him off?

Research has suggested that as adults age so do they undergo a personality shift in which concern for others assumes greater prominence in their orientation towards the world (see Erikson and Erikson 1998). This care and concern for others, also known as generativity will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Disillusionment

One of the most compelling events prompting a reevaluation of commitment to a criminal lifestyle was a disillusionment with criminal peers. More specifically this tended to occur during periods of incarceration, whereby despite expressions of solidarity and avowals of support prior to imprisonment the incarcerated found that over time they were slowly abandoned by their street peers. For example, one participant described that peers on the outside would often refer to the incarcerated in the past tense, as if the imprisoned were deceased. Another expressed that “of all my homies, only one visited me once” and that the only person who seemed to care was his mother: “Everytime I got locked up she was at every court date, she sent damn near every package and the ones I thought had genuine love for me were never seen!”. Among participants, “misplaced loyalty” as it was commonly referred to, was highly damaging to their commitment to offending and indeed, a street life in its totality. To understand why, it is necessary to grasp

the centrality of loyalty in street subcultures. For example, Moran (2015) argues that street subcultures mine the moral properties of loyalty, to both peers groups and place, which in itself is an extension of a more general parent culture of ambient solidarity found in poor neighborhoods. Central to this is an “I got you” ethic, a virtuous communality contrasting with the perceived individualism of more affluent, middle class society, which akin to the exercise of neutralizations, affords offenders a sense of moral self. Thus abandonment by criminal peers is difficult to dismiss, minimalize, or excused. In following, among participants abandonment did seem to be met with sense of disappointment localized to an individual or small group, rather it often contaminated the entire offending enterprise, an observation that seems to attest to the importance of loyalty in providing a core justification, even if indirectly as evidence of the hidden virtue underlying persistence. It could be otherwise, as indicated by other responses to betrayal by criminal peers. For example, one participant, Calvin, reaction to his co-defendants testifying against him was not to cast doubt on his continued offending, but rather worked to sustain his persistence via feelings of revenge that were directed towards individuals.

The Feared Future Conventional Self

One final retarding factor in the desistance process perhaps should be mentioned before concluding with this chapter: the fear other’s reactions. This dilemma is expressed in the dragon slayer narrative – the first task is to refuse to let other people’s opinions define you. Inmates would often resist describing their dependence on the opinions of others – “I don’t give a fuck what anybody thinks”. However, when pressed, most embarrassingly admitted they paid close attention to the opinions of others, especially in terms of being seen as weak. In part this raised the specter of the feared conventional other, i.e. that desistance would involve personal

disempowerment. One participant recalled that one visit from a relative were expressed several symbols of his reform, he wore glasses and spoke properly “not like a thug”. The reaction was that “you think you are better than us now” and “you’ve gotten all high and mighty”. Other inmates expressed the fear of being regarded as “soft” or a “square” and that their desistance reflected weakness of character or will, an inability to withstand the demands and difficulties of “the life”. Not only does the imagined “feared future self” consist of feared criminal self, one suffering the unpleasant consequences of a criminal lifestyle, but also a “feared conventional self”. This is probably primarily true of male offenders. To explain, an important retarding factor in the movement from discernment to dedication, i.e. openness to commitment, is an apprehension of the emasculated conventional self, “the square” or to “go soft” both in terms of self-identity, but importantly in terms of the perceptions of relevant generalized other. Contemplation of change, probably involves a calculus incorporating an anticipated (imputed) judgment of others as a potential cost of conformity, whose relative weight may influence the movement to stage two actualization of the desistance as project.

CHAPTER SIX: GENERATIVITY AND THE REHABILITATIVE SPACE

Introduction

This final empirical chapter discusses a series of generative interactions within the program space both among participants and between participants and group facilitators. The concept of generativity – “the concern in establishing the next generation” – was first introduced by psychologist Erik Erikson (1963) as a central element in the seventh of eight major developmental stages in the life-course (McAdams and Aubin 1992). The activation of generative orientation, according to Erikson, occurs after the adult has established and consolidated a sense of self, and thus, psychosocially, is prepared to contribute to the wider society in the adoption of mentorship roles which may manifest in both private (as a parent) and public (as a volunteer, community leader, etc.) domains. Research into the desistance process has recognized the role of generative pursuits in the lives of desistees (Maruna 2001). Generative acts, it is argued, contribute to the desistance process by providing reforming offenders with opportunities to discover alternative sources of meaning for their lives, atone for past crimes, to expedite their social acceptance by participating in a socially legitimate practice, and because the act of supporting others can be empowering and therapeutic in of itself (118-119). By extension, desistance researchers have proposed that, despite the tendency of contemporary prison environments to induce generativity’s opposite, personal stagnation, providing prisoners with opportunities to make amends, to demonstrate their value, and experience success in support and leadership roles, it is asserted, might work effectively to encourage lasting pro-social reform

behind bars (Maruna et al. 2004). More specifically, some argue that prisons could and should be modeled as a *generative society* – an environment where generative commitments are recognized, nurtured, and rewarded (133).

The observations of generative interactions in the custodial setting discussed here are largely confirmatory of these previous findings, both in the sense that generative acts are spontaneously and actively pursued within the custodial environment and generativity seems to be supportive of the process of desistance. During group sessions a total of thirty seven acts were observed and coded as generative. Generativity among this sample of incarcerated men functions as it does elsewhere, as a source of atonement for past offending, a vehicle for the construction of a conventional self, and as a form of therapy. The majority of observed generative acts consisted of interactions between participants, generally among participants with an age difference, which by extension, reflected relatively longer periods of criminal involvement and accumulated negative consequences (i.e. lengthy periods of incarceration, victimization, estrangement from family, restricted employment opportunities and so on). None of the participants observed in this research study had past experience or training in the rehabilitative field (although many had aspirations to do so on release), and as a result their generative contributions consisted primarily of drawing upon what Bourdieu terms “symbolic capital” (deference to an authority socially recognized as legitimate) afforded to them on the basis of lengthy criminal involvement (exhibited in various ways as will be discussed below). The ease to which reforming offenders assume generative roles as “professional-exs” in part relates to their capacity to draw upon a wealth of criminal experience, which in spite of their shortcomings in terms of education and work experience vis-à-vis other rehabilitation practitioners, they can bring to bear the hard won experiential resources only available to the former initiate (Maruna et al. 2004, 120). In this

sample such contributions often came in the form of what is termed here “generative scripts”. In content, most such interventions drew upon, in Paternoster and Bushway’s terms (2009), the self-characterization of the interlocutor as a possible feared self, not simply imaginatively constructed, but rather as a living example of “what a person *does not want to become*” (1107, emphasis in original), i.e. a deterrent message.

However, this chapter also suggests that such contributions have limitations and these limitations are related to the need to protect a core sense of self (Mahoney 1991), particularly that of masculine identity within the custodial environment. In projecting themselves as a feared future self, participants’ employment of their pains of persistence as a rhetorical move was tempered by the form of delivery in which such costs were minimized or expressed in an abstract, depersonalized fashion, typically via a generative script. Several episodes suggest that this oblique engagement with the emotional toll of their offending was due not only a desire to save face in a semi-public forum, but also because too direct an acknowledgement risked a sense of identity nakedness (Lofland 1969), i.e. existential disorganization. Thus painful emotions were approached tentatively by participants in the form of taking small generative risks in exploration of a novel way of being-in-the-world.

Explaining Generativity in the Program Space

The frequency of generative acts observed during program sessions is in part due to the centrality of generativity to the Council model and its cultivation during sessions by program facilitators. In the Council model the embrace of generative concern and commitment completes the heroic

cycle, representing the move from egoism to living for others: “the turning point in the hero’s life is the moment when he no longer lives for himself and begins to serve others.” The T Group space, in Council terms, provides an opportunity for offenders to acquire a taste and talent for generativity (Maruna et al. 2004), as part of their wider project of self-change both during and beyond incarceration.

Rites of Generativity

The importance of generative relations for framing interactions in program sessions was communicated in various ways, but significantly in the ritual salutation conducted at the beginning of each meeting:

As Bob and I enter the Chapel, the group who were sitting in a circle of chairs near the altar, all stand up. We walk down the pews and as we reach the group Bob goes left and I go right. We greet each member of the group in turn with each a handshake or a “dap” (which I am terrible at!). Pleasantries “How’s it going?”, “What’s good?”, “What’s shakin?” are exchanged as we make our way around the circle. Bob cracks a joke about somebody’s new haircut – “You look five years younger!”. We cross over each other as we continue around the circle. Once everyone has been greeted Bob and I take our usual seats at the halfway point of the circle on the good (padded) wooden seats. There is an unspoken rule that these are reserved for us. As we sit, the group follows suit. We begin. This ritual has been observed by the group at every session I have attended so far. (Field Notes)

According to Collins (2014), ritual interactions serve to summon and affirm collectively held values and by synchronizing group activity, function to create a sense of common experience, and hence, membership boundaries and group cohesion. Such focused activity correspondingly serves to elicit shared emotions, uniting group members in a collective affective posture, whose tenor is determined by the content signified by and enacted through the ritual. Aside from the

creation of group bonding as a product of coordinated activity, the practice of “the dap” served to (or at least sought to) establish, semiotically, the generative as a group norm. “The dap” was originally a symbol of racial solidarity which arose among black G.I.s during the Vietnam war as a substitute for the black power salute prohibited by the military (Hamilton 2016), but which has since promulgated to American male culture more generally. This gesture belongs to a family of communications known as “phatic communion” a mode of action or speech in which “ties of union are created by mere exchange of words” (Malinowski 1936, 315), i.e. instances of pure sociation whose performance achieves and exhibits mutual recognition. This ritual thus served to imbue sessions with an air of fraternalism and conviviality, the outcome of the process of ritualized co-salutation. The informality of the greeting ritual also mirrored spontaneous forms of greeting observed among group participants, locating group facilitators within the boundaries of the in-group and in contrast to interactions with facility staff. To illustrate, after several months of group observations, group participants who had attended regularly over this time informed the researcher his more formal handshake was “sterile”, stiff and incommunicative, and was instructed in the appropriate gestures to be more in accord with norms of group membership.

Although in literal narrative terms, generativity appears once the heroic quest has concluded, in practice generativity is promoted at all stages in the Council rehabilitative process and explains, in part, the frequency of generative interactions in program sessions. More specifically, Council philosophy holds that generativity serves several interrelated purposes. It allowed participants to positively recast their pasts, make amends, and as source of purpose and meaning. Group participants, whose offending resulted in severed relationships, missed educational and employment opportunities, and shortened via spells of incarceration frequently expressed what

McAdams et al. (2001) describe as a “contamination script.” In a contamination sequence something positive has been irrevocably spoiled or ruined to the point that cannot be undone by the protagonist. Council reversed these terms, in that it encouraged participants to alchemically recast their criminal past (putative past) and the “tragedy, pain, and suffering” it caused them as a resource for authentic generative action:

Taking the degrading, minimizing experiences of your life...and out of that create this incredible compassion and empathy for the other poor bastard who is on the same journey. (Field Notes).

Rather than assuming guilt for their past offending, much like in Maruna’s desisters (2001), Council participants were encouraged to view their pasts as tragic, but yet precursors of a special generative capacity. Their experience with crime and the criminal justice system lent them a unique competence and credibility, a hard won insight into the context, feelings, and obligations faced by those still within a criminal lifestyle.

Saving “The Youth”

However, there was also evidence that program encouragement and staging of generative interactions was congruent with tendencies towards generativity amongst participants which were exercised prior to program participation. Indeed the frequent evocation of “the youth” and their current troubles (a constant in group sessions) is suggestive of the ease at which a generative posture was adopted by participants, even if just nominally. Unlike perhaps more socially typical sermonizing on the moral dissolution of the next generation, “the youth” was evoked by participants as an object of sympathy, implicitly the term referenced young people from underprivileged communities. Variously troubled by violent victimization, betrayed by drug addiction, and confounded by a lack of mentorship and indifference by political elites, “the

youth” occasionally elicited strident calls for urgent intervention, bordering as they were as implied, on some form of imminent social extinction. Although limited in scope, participants expressed they had undertaken generative acts before admission to the jail. The majority of participants who did so reported engaging in interventions attempting to dissuade younger, typically male, family members from continuing their mounting participation in street life. Participants expressed that they found the social reproduction of their own life trajectories which they held to inevitably result in periods of incarceration, drug abuse and addiction, the victimization and death of friends and family members, one which they too risked serious victimization and death, troubling to witness in kinship groups:

I got a nephew, he’s coming up, not paying attention to his moms, not paying attention to school, he’s in the life full blown. I tried talking to him, but he don’t listen, he’s young n’ hardheaded, ain’t no talking to him. (Field Notes)

Most who engaged in such generative interventions admitted they were unsuccessful. This was in part due to the contradiction between their own continued criminal involvement and their appeals to intimates to go straight, a contradiction that was difficult to conceal due to the visibility of their involvement which was either directly observed, implied by their routines, or circulated as gossip among mutual social networks: “OK, you’re right, I was givin’ mixed messages. Do what I say, not do what I do”, as one participant Rob expressed. However, some saw their ongoing criminal involvement as an advantage in their efforts to persuade others to desist. One senior gang member, although he had renounced criminal activity himself, was attempting to utilize the access continued membership afforded and his stature within their gang to convince other member to desist, not in exiting the gang, but via a return to the political principles which motivated the emergence of racial/ethnic minority gangs as groups for self-protection and community empowerment.

Prison Time and Generativity

Although prisons would seem ill-suited to enabling generative acts given that they “knife-off” relationships with friends and family; render inmates financially dependent; and can be generally violent and exploitative places, research indicates that inmates spontaneously (i.e. independently from behavior mandated by treatment programs) express generative concern and, with limited means, attempt generative acts (Benedict 2009; Halsey and Harris 2011). Participants expressed that their time in jail afforded them an opportunity to undertake generative acts. What perhaps accounts for this counterintuitive finding is that, despite separation from primary group others, and frequently, the risk of predation within modern prisons, prison environments can also constitute “marginal situations” where everyday patterns of life are altered and individuals are rendered open to new ways of perceiving themselves and organizing their lives (Musgrove 1977, quoted in Maruna et al. 2006). This lends support to the following idea: although prisons are environments that truncate generative relationships, they are also an environment where normal exigencies are lifted and experimentation with new forms of identity are possible. As Calvin, a participant, expressed:

Life outside, it's chaos, just chaos especially this life. You don't have no time to think. In here, that's it's own stress [laughs], but it's different. I don't have to worry about hustling all the time, putting a roof over my head, this and that. Here everyday is pretty much the same. Gives you time to think about giving back some, you know to the next generation so they don't make the same mistakes I did, like here in this program. (Field Notes)

Research on probationers in the UK and Ireland (Healy and O'Donnell 2008; King 2013) at a comparable stage in the desistance process found little evidence for the existence of generativity in the early stages of the desistance process. And although bland institutional fare consists of one

of the “pains of imprisonment” (Sykes 1958), on the outside ex-prisoners and/or the criminally involved are perhaps too preoccupied/daunted by immediate demands of reentry: finding employment, housing, rebuilding relationships, or persistence: securing an income, socializing, dealing with vicissitudes of streetlife to allow for generativity. Generativity on the inside may be aided by the degree of material stability found in prison environments, “three hots and a cot”, and in later, more socially integrated, (i.e. late) stages of desistance where it has been documented (see Maruna 2001). For some participants the lull in offending and at least a stated commitment to desist produced by their confinement to the jail (most participants had an interest in remaining crime free for risk of extending their short “bid” or to avoid complicating their upcoming trial) freed them from the contradiction between generative exhortations for others to desist and their continued offending, as well as placing them in contact with other offenders who were not familiar with their previous offending, as intimates were in the discussion above. This was additionally true of the program space, where norms against emotional expressivity operating in the street and the public spaces of the jail are relaxed, where evasion or distraction by small talk or banter were tacitly discouraged:

I like coming down here, just talking. I get things off my chest, talk it out amongst the brothers. You sure as hell don't get this in the street, guys just sitting around talking about things like this. (Field Notes)

Despite participation of a limited duration in group sessions (this was in part due to the transience of jail populations, where inmates serve short sentences or are awaiting trial or transportation to state prisons), participants readily adopted the role of mentor, confidently employing their knowledge and experience with the world of the street to convince other inmates, typically when there was an age difference, to desist. This was sometimes conducted in

explicit contrast to conventional actors in the rehabilitative process such as social workers, youth counselors, therapists etc. The following Socratic format was common to generative interactions:

PrF: So what would be a good amount of money for you to make, selling drugs?

PrS: I dunno, about a mill...two hundred thousand a year

PrF: Oh yeah? That's \$15,000 a month, who the hell you know making that much money?

PrS: Uh...

PrF: That's right, no one. I know, I ain't no social worker I been in that game for a long [emphasized] time. Ain't nobody making that kind of money. And if you're working the streets that much, you're gonna get caught. Period.

Fake it 'til you make it

There is, however, the possibility that group participants were “faking it” during program sessions by adopting program requirements in a fashion described by Fox (2011) and Soyer (2013) to satisfy program facilitators by merely performing acquiescence to program expectancies, providing facilitators with what they want to hear, without this reflecting a deeper, more sincere commitment to change. Desistance scholars have referred to this stage (although not necessarily always present), in borrowing from Edwin Lemert's formula, as primary desistance – whereby, although offenders have temporarily ceased offending, and perhaps have at least superficially expressed a desire for reform, but which has not been accompanied by more meaningful shift in identity, a superficial and provisional intention to “go straight” perhaps lying in between primary and secondary desistance, akin to Giordano et al.'s (2002) first stage in cognitive shift: “openness to change” – but which has yet to manifest, and be galvanized by

experiential confirmation nor change in role or identity. Although sullen defiance and outright rejection were rare during program sessions, going through the motions were more common but were referred to by participants as “frontin’” and were typically reprimanded by other participants:

I’m not gonna share my counsel with people who don’t want to change...other guys in the group listen and take it to heart, but I ain’t giving counsel if a quarter of the group aren’t willing to change and just jokin’ around (Field Notes)

This has been building up for a while, but I’mma tell it as it is. Down here guys act all serious about changing, but up on the tiers they’re acting out, and then COs put us on lock-up behind that (Field Notes)

On several occasions respondents referred spontaneously to their enjoyment of group sessions, “Council For Unity day [Friday] is my favorite day of the week”, expressing that they looked forward to group meetings. The cancellation of group sessions upon return, participants expressed disappointment “Where were you guys?”. Although it is difficult to determine, based on available data, the truthfulness of such expressions, and if sincere, their cause. However, participants rarely challenged group facilitators during discussions and most resistance to program requirements seemed to occur as the result of self-consciousness (as discussed below) rather than a questioning of the merit of program itself.

By contrast, although qualitative research on the rehabilitative programs is limited, where existing they evidence that programs which commonly emphasize offenders’ deficits are often experienced as paternalistic, adversarial, and disempowering. As a result such programs are frequently met with resistance, withdrawal, or superficial compliance from inmate participants (Cox 2011, Fox, 1999a; 1999b, Kramer et al. 2013; Laursen and Laws 2016). Fox’s ethnography examined a ‘Cognitive Self-Change’ treatment program for violent offenders, which was largely

based on altering cognitive distortions allegedly leading to criminal conduct. According to Fox, program participants frequently contested program tasks as disciplinary interventions, rejecting the implication that their thoughts were errors, voiced concerns that relinquishing violence would put them at risk, and expressed that the program presented little positive alternatives to the masculine values the program required they shed. The fact that program participation was partly coerced, with punishments for insufficient participation, lent a lurking adversariality to the program interactions. As an example of interactions Fox (1999a) found between facilitators and inmate participation, a quotation from her study is reproduced below:

Calhoun: You're forcing us into doing something that's senseless. I am supposed to base my problems, my past on this fucking list [of thinking errors].

Facilitator: We're not forcing you....

Calhoun: Yeah but if we don't do it, we don't pass and we don't get out! (98)

Kramer et al's (2013) observational study of a cognitive treatment program found that tenets of neoliberal ideology suffused program precepts, whereby the correctional officers facilitating the program consistently emphasized the power of (rational) individual choice, which dismissed inmate participant's claim that there were structural barriers to leading a conventional life based on legitimate employment. Cox's ethnography of juvenile treatment program at a secure residential facility found that program participants performed program compliance ('fake it 'til you make it' response), maintaining a split between mechanistic expressions of self-discipline required by the programs and the "Me" of their authentic selves. Cox also found that program protocols afforded participants little opportunity to exercise agency in the change process.

Laursen and Laws (2016)... Whilst some might view such reactions as evidence of offenders' intransigence, recent research suggests such disengagement occurs because of the considerable

diverge between the precepts of CBT and the actual process of desistance (Maruna 2001; Maruna and Mann 2006).

Generativity as Self Building

Some participants had had opportunities to engage in formal interventions with school age groups in what was akin to less abrasive version of a “Scared Straight” program provided at the jail. Participants reported that they began these events with an air mimicking the disciplinary atmosphere of the jail by barking orders and responding harshly to non-compliance, but then segued into recounting their personal histories with the aim of dissuading the young audience of engaging in criminal activity:

They have a program here where school kids come in and we get to talk to them, try to influence them to stay away from negativity and all that. I love doing that. I start off real tough, acting real mean to show them what it can be like on the inside. Then I show them it’s not all about that and basically go into how acting foolish has consequences. People see me as a con, but then I get to be a mentor. It helps me, giving back like that, it’s something I can do” (Field Notes)

Inmates reported that their participation in this program assisted in their change process, primarily because it gave them the opportunity to partake in a socially legitimate role, one which they could do with competency. Of particular enjoyment was the role reversal they performed in taking the position of the correctional staff, which having experienced extended periods as an inmate, vicariously afforded a delightfully contradictory role as at once objects (as inmates in jail uniform) but also as subjects (as enactors of jail discipline). Their participation additionally demonstrated their familiarity with the jail’s rules and, given that program participation was a

privilege, exhibited their reform and the acknowledgement of their rehabilitated status by staff and management in their temporary role as quasi-employees of the institution. The role of facilitator, a public exhibition of “making good” was thus understood as what is described as “relational desistance”: the recognition of one’s change by others (Nugent and Schinkel 2016) – particularly “normals” to borrow Goffman’s term, not only by correctional staff but by the school students and staff in attendance, in that participation was viewed demonstration of their individual change, not simply in being crime free, but in exhibiting competency in their new roles as mentors. In terms of identity change, recall that identity is grounded not only in self-conception and the recognition and acceptance of that self-conception by others, but lived day-to-day (Wenger 1998) in that identity is sustained in its successful enactment. Adopting the role of the mentor, participants reported, made their own change more believable to themselves as a durable personal trait, manifested and confirmed in its successful application in a setting in which they were regarded as having specialized, worthy knowledge.

Other program participants’ experiences more clearly reveal the affective dynamics present in the public adoption of a generative role and its recognition by others. One participant, Cesar, who had previously participated in the Council program (but who had relapsed subsequently) reported one of his “happiest moments” was when he participated in the induction ceremony to the organization as a “founder” (he had help establish the chapter in the jail). The event, held at a large hotel in Long Island is attended by about 1,000 people, mostly students from various Council For Unity school chapters across the state, including teachers, parents, Council staff, police officers, correctional staff, program alumni, and many others involved with the organization. The public acknowledgement of his status at the head of the procession that inaugurates the induction, he reported, had left his mother buoyant with pride. This “positively

reflected appraisal” as Giordano et al. (2007) would describe it, was not only achieved relational desistance with an important intimate, it also engendered a shift in meaning in that the event was imbued with positive affect for the participant, and hence acted as an important motivational spur for further generative action and experimentation/success in a conventional role. Recalling the inauguration to others also served as a proxy indicator of Cesar’s change, a conversational shorthand for a much longer protracted movement towards a conventional self ill-suited to easy communication, but which could be evidenced in his recounting of his role in the induction ceremony.

Atonement through helping others

Participants also referred to the redemptive or atoning quality of generative work, intimating that aiding others would allow them to come to terms with their harmful and harming pasts and a sense of defeatism that accompanied what might be called the pains of persistence. Often participants would refer to generative work in metaphors of divine judgment or moral balancing-sheet in that they could atone for harmful behavior by saving others. For example, one participant who crashed while drunk driving killing his two passengers was encouraged at length to use his experience to dissuade others from doing the same:

Dre: The pain you carry on your shoulders, I wouldn’t wish on my worst enemy, but you know what?

Jake: ...What? (desolately)

Dre: Maybe you can use it to stop some other guy from doing the same. When you meet your maker you’ll be able to hold your head and say: ‘I took two, but I gave you twenty’

Although group sessions were not openly religious, the use of metaphors of divine judgment suggested that a person's worth should be viewed as a retrospectively determined totality rather than at some irreparable intermediate point. In this sense, recasts the offender's identity as an open-ended process, a more future-orientated model of responsibility, what Bovens (1998, cited in Maruna and Mann 2006) terms "active responsibility", which focuses on what needs to be done in order to make amend, i.e. "make good."

GF DJ: The question is "what is our legacy?" We got ours, caused a lot of pain and suffering, we were the legends of the street. But what legacy do you want to leave? That? Or that you gave more to your community than you took.

This is consistent with previous research on the self-narratives of successful desistees, mostly ex-prisoners, in which themes of generative amendment abound (Maruna, 2001).

Generativity as Therapy

Generativity towards others was also undertaken because it provided participants with a curative sense of purpose, i.e. could serve as a form of self-therapy. Although group facilitators (as will be discussed in greater detail) believed that minimization of the toll criminal lifestyle had taken was unhelpful for the process of desistance, too ready submission to dire prospects (lengthy prison sentences; severed relationships; wasted years) could actually be overwhelming – leading to a depressive nihilism, which counterproductively, could result in future offending. This in part reflects the ambivalence of the crystallization of discontent in the custodial environment in that accumulated dissatisfactions in a context where there is little scope to actualize change can lead to feelings of hopelessness and a sense impotency. One participant, Deano, who, facing a life

sentence in prison, spoke despondently of his three children and how he had missed their upbringing.

My daughter she's eighteen, she doesn't know her father. My daughter, she's thirteen, she don't know me either. I'm forty and I'm facing an asshole of time, I'm flipping that calendar, my life is over...my life is over, I ain't got nothing.

The group facilitator responded by pointing to the participant's generative capacity as a means of giving both succor and purpose: "Brother, one thing you can do is give back to others, that fills the void, the emptiness inside." During a later program session, another group facilitator when discussing the same participant's truncated relationship with his children began the following exchange:

GF DS: you can't be a father to your own children, but...

P Dean: I can be a father to those in here (nodding emphatically)

At this point, group participants individually each expressed their appreciation for Deano's participation in the group, primarily in terms of his contribution to their own efforts to desist. At each declaration Deano stated "that gives me another ten days...another two weeks...another month", and indicated that these generative expressions allowed him to endure the despair (with accompanying suicidal ideation) he was currently experiencing. This reinterpretation of the filial multiplied the objects of generative concern now expanded to an inherited family and thus allowed this participant a psychologically sustaining fatherhood role among a non-kin grouping.

Generative Scripts

As noted in the introduction, most generative interventions among participants drew upon, in Paternoster and Bushway's terms (2009), the self-presentation of the speaker as a possible feared self, as living testimony of the personal toll the accumulated consequences of repeat offending had wrought. Within the program space this type of generative concern was most typically expressed by more experienced offenders toward offenders serving shorter sentences for relatively minor crimes. Generative members were generally further along in their offending career and were either awaiting trial or transportation upstate to a prison to serve their, usually heavy, sentences. According to facility management, the group is expressly mixed for the purpose of providing opportunities for positive mentorship between inmates. During the research period, several different types of generative interactions were observed, such as the Socratic dialogue presented above, along with a range of encouragements, expressions of support, advice etc. of various durations and emotional intensity (of the speaker). What initially seemed like another variety of generative action amongst others, albeit a more elaborate one, emerged as a consistent format which was repeated despite changes in group composition. The most frequent form of generative actions by participants consisted of contributions to group discussions in the form of what is called here "generative scripts". The term script is deliberately used here for its performative connotations. These generative scripts tended to follow the following form:

Introduction: These generative interactions began with the speaker introducing themselves, a gambit which functioned to indicate the contribution was evoking some personal authority or symbolic capital, as well as signaling that an extended and general generative address was under way. Examples: "Hi my name is (street name), but my real name is (birth name)", "I come out of Central Islip, on the northside".

Establishing Credentials: This generally consisted of giving the age of criminal onset and/or first incarceration, total amount of time the speaker spent in incarceration, and the listing of offenses and/or correctional facilities the speaker had served their sentences in: “you name it, I’ve done it all.” This section can also include gang membership and rank. This section sometimes finishes with the speaker’s current sentence or potential sentence. This portion served to establish the credibility of the speaker, as well as to authenticate the prescriptions of the remainder of the script. Victimization was occasionally mentioned in this portion, not as a deterrent, but rather to indicate the speaker’s close contact with and endurance of the perils of the street.

Presentation of the Feared Self: Having established authority, the next stage in the generativity script is the cautionary: “You don’t wanna end up like me”. This segment involves listing the cost of the speaker’s lifestyle. The opportunities missed, the severed ties (esp. if there is children involved), the sheer length of sentence faced. This can also involve expressing disillusionment with “the life”, particularly in terms of betrayal by their peers and realization of wrongful choices: “Yo, I done my wrong.”

Exhortation/Advice: The concluding segment generally consisted of life recommendations, typically couched in non-specific, sometimes platitudinal language: “you have a choice, don’t make the same bad decisions I did”, “get your head on straight” etc. This also involves the presentation of a potential future-self: “Go to school, get a good job, be there for your family.”

Cosmetic Generativity vs. Sincere Generativity

Participants' role as mentors in this context was mixed. They were both positive role models by virtue of their expressed commitment to changing (often extricating themselves from heavy criminal involvement and commitments) and their endorsement of the value of desisting, which they voice from a position of experience. According to program facilitators, however, the adoption and manner of exercising generative roles in the group also served as a proxy indicator of the participant's development towards desistance. In program terms desistance was considered an ongoing process, with initial stages involving mere lip service to desistance evolving into a fundamental shift in identity. So the adoption of a mentoring role was seen as important evidence of the participant's engagement with the group process and their own self-change. However, the *type* of generative script expressed by participants was also taken as a gauge of the degree to which the participant was changing (i.e. moving towards desistance). Concern was over whether generative scripts were genuine or "cosmetic" – either indicative of relatively shallow "openness for change" (see Giordano et al. 2002) or signaling a deeper identity transformation. Key in this assessment is the degree to which self-aggrandizing aspects of the interlocutor's narrative were forwarded and the toll of the criminal lifestyle minimized or abstracted. Key in this assessment was the participant's expression of the second and fourth items of the generativity script:

Establishing of Credentials and *Expressing Costs*. In the first case, establishing credentials were taken to demonstrate a relatively superficial change in identity depending on the demeanor of the speaker. Speakers who retained an aura of toughness or who spoke of their previous crimes, incarceration, and gang affiliation in boasting terms were taken to have progressed the least. In Goffman's terms participants could also "give off" or signal an adherence to a criminal identity. For example, one program leader pointed that the body could indicate lack of development and

remaining commitment to ‘the life’, i.e. the exposure of tattoos, jewelry, hair style etc. For example, nearly all group participants had a “street name”. Street names typically reflected some personal characteristic, for example “Money” who was named after his ability to hustle (Field Notes). The adoption and usage of a street name might be viewed as an element in secondary deviation (Lemert 1999) the assumption and internalization of a deviant identity. Conventional names were associated with officialdom or the domestic/familial sphere. Frequently group participants could not name other participants’ conventional name. The rejection of street name was viewed by some as a key element of assuming a normal identity: “My name is Robert Chapman, that’s my name. I ain’t “Trouble”, that’s ain’t who I am no more” (Field Notes). By contrast the maintenance of a street name, it’s usage in generative exchanges was viewed a reflection of the continuity of an underlying criminal identity.

Frequently “cosmetic” generative scripts only superficially dealt with the costs of criminal lifestyles, often describing them in vague, almost clichéd, terms and giving few personal examples. This included an emotionally detached delivery. Such speeches kept personally denigrating experiences to the back stage. One group member expressed this in a contribution to a discussion:

John: We talk about this and that, how being in prison is real, how the lifestyle is real, but other stuff we never talk about. We never talk about lying in bed getting the sweats where your leg is kicking out from under the sheets, we don’t talk about sleeping behind Walmart, we don’t talk about crying in your cell at night by yourself.

One program leader, whose own biography included a total of twenty-two years in prison and who spent many years as a high level drug trafficker, described that in recounting his story of change (which he frequently does for his work) he intentionally omits glamorous aspects of his

previous criminal lifestyle. He recognized that such speeches were an opportunity to project an impression which was continuous with the working identity of the offender: that of emotionally detached, stoic street criminal, “advice without suffering” as one facilitator put it. Instead he intentionally focused on aspects of his biography in which he experienced pain or vulnerability, namely the loss of his brother and the tearful forgiveness of his brother’s killer. Genuine generative scripts were said to provide biographic detail, reveal vulnerability, and express emotional pain. Program leaders pushed for these genuine unself-promoting revelations: “But what did this cost you? It cost me the trust of my family”. The importance of the quality of these performances in evidencing the participants’ progress in the extent to which they break with the working identity of the offender by displaying vulnerability and a willingness to present the more shameful, ignoble features of criminal lifestyle has been noted above. “Cosmetic” generative performances also undermined the deterrent effect intended (as was acknowledged by a number of older offenders, when the issue was raised in the course of program sessions) because they maintained the stature of the performer as exerting manly control, dispensing wisdom with detachment gained from their elevating experiences of prolonged engagement with the trials of a criminal lifestyle in short, a shallow “feared self”, which would have little deterrent on less experienced participants.

The Feared Self and Identity Nakedness

The ritual avoidance of expressing costs, i.e. public displays of emotional vulnerability can be understood as expressing a dialectic revealed in recent studies into the desistance process, namely reforming individuals’ need for continuity within change. As is observed in

psychotherapeutic literature, despite the plasticity of the human self, too rapid or dramatic a change can jeopardize a person's sense of psychological order, a challenge to the *core processes* of one's experience of reality, self, and control (Mahoney 1991, 18). Adherence to a generative script, despite its ambivalent effects, perhaps represents a self-protective move reflecting the centrality of personal coherence to the individual. Departures from a familiar sense of self run the risk a sense of intolerable exposure what Lofland called "the horrors of identity nakedness" (1969, 288). In this case one of the reasons why mentorship roles were so readily adopted among participants, even at such an early stage in the desistance process (i.e. most participants had offended within the past few months), was because the role of the mentor provides for a key personal dividend: it assumes and asserts the value of the mentor in that the mentee is in a position to imitate and benefit from the knowledge and experience of the mentor (Tolan et al. 2008). So mentorship roles afford an exploration of a novel desisting self whilst publically and personally sustaining a coherent self-image: both change and continuity. That generative scripts were frequently constructed so as to depersonalize the costs of sustained criminal activity, despite the rhetorical sacrifice such minimization entailed in a message that was primarily deterrent in nature, attests to this dialectic of self-affirmation and self-abnegation within the change process. The sense of subjective disarray that accompanies the removal of the existential shield of a familiar, if problematic, deviant identity is illustrated in the following extract from field notes:

Roland is next to talk to the group, I think he is going to into the cosmetic, especially from how gets up, languidly tossing his dreads. He starts off talking about how long he is in, about how he had problems being in the same room as someone from the other side. He's a Crip and grew up in the blue. But at one point he seems lost for words, he tries again, looks to others in the group and then turns back to Carlos [inmate facilitator/group leader] and tries to continue, he looks like he is about to cry and sits down, motioning that he is done. I ask

Sean later what he thought and Sean says Roland spoke to him, he didn't have the words to express what he was doing, revealing himself like that to others (Field Notes)

Prison Masculinity and Generative Risks

Offenders are not alone in their exposure to self-disorientation and the need to maintain a coherent self-image during periods of significant personal change. As noted previously, Gay Becker's research on the reparative maneuvers undertaken by individuals suffering from a major life disruption (such as coping with a life-threatening illness, sudden infertility or paralysis, and physical impairment resulting from the aging process) demonstrates humans' need to create a sense of order and existential continuity (1997). Indeed Goffman's work on the presentation of self points to the ongoing potential for subjective disarray permeating social life, a social fact of adult human interaction (see 1990). However, offenders, or more so, male offenders, face a stricter set of interactional requirements demanding stoicism, indomitability of the will, unflappability, which is honed (whose development on which successful participation in street culture is dependent) over the course of numerous testing encounters, for example, in responses to threats of physical violence or the risk of conducting illegal activities. Within the custodial setting the social pressure against emotional expressivity is greatly increased due the prevailing culture of hegemonic masculinity that operates in acute form in correctional institutions (Toch, 1998; Evans and Wallace, 2007). As one author characterized it: "Prison is an ultramasculine world where nobody talks about masculinity" (Sabo et al. 2001, 3). Hegemonic masculinity demands that men be "tough, never crying when hurt, standing up for yourself...never admitting to fear, sympathy, or *sensitivity*" (Newburn and Stanko 1994, 35). Other research has

documented the existence of what is termed “generative signs... concrete attempts to practice or narrate the experience of generative conduct” (Halsey and Harris 2011, 77), even if only truncated and “precarious experiments” in concern and caring action towards others within prison life (2011). In Council sessions there were two primary strategies for overcoming normative obstacles of masculinity to the facilitation of generativity. First, participants were encouraged to take *generative risks*, experiments in expressions of affection or concern towards other participants. Second, group facilitators themselves modeled *positive masculinity*, examples of how the expression of emotional vulnerability and generative concern could co-exist with self-respect and a sense of masculine stature.

For group facilitators the ongoing efforts to project an impression of a masculine self is expressed allegorically through the image of the “mask”.¹³ It was recognized that “masks” originate in masculine street culture in poor urban neighborhoods, and that in that environment a “hard” demeanor is functional in the short-term, providing both psychic and physical protection, but argued nonetheless that “masks” ultimately destructive for the individual (see also Anderson 2000). Whilst group facilitators acknowledged the functional qualities of “masks” for participants in the tooth-and-nail environment of the jail, they were also represented as a source of misunderstanding, an obstacle to the navigation of non-street environments and interactions, and an impairment to self-understanding and growth. Group facilitators sought to establish the group as a space for trust where masks can be removed without fear of shame or reprisal – by encouraging generative risks undertaken as a step toward experiencing a more authentic self:

¹³ According to Council, masks are inherited from the broader culture’s denigration of ‘feminine’ emotional expressivity, nurturance, and intimacy.

“lower the mask you have on the street”, “you can take off the mask in this group and be yourself.”

Generative Risks

To this end program facilitators frequently encouraged participants to experiment in expressing affection or concern (where existing) to other group members. The group facilitators’ efforts to encourage empathetic exchanges were aided by their credibility as models of positive masculinity, i.e. have legitimacy in that they “have been through the same stuff” and were respected for their fluency in the speech and demeanor of the street (Fletcher and Batty 2012).

The following exchange between a facilitator and two participants illustrates a typical generative risk:

GF DS: tell Ben how you feel.

CA: well, um, you know when he got...

GF DS: no, tell him, ‘when you got...’, and don’t look at me, look at him!

CA: ah, oh, ok (looks sheepish and awkwardly turns toward Ben), when you were transferred, I got worried about you man...(turns away and laughs embarrassingly) I can’t do this!

GF DS: go on (gently)

CA: (turning back) um, when you transferred I was um worried about you man, cos you know we hung out a lot and talked...laughing, and you know there’s stuff I feel I couldn’t tell no one else that we talked about, I respect you man. I want you to be ok.

GF DS: (to Ben) did you know he felt that way?

P Ben: um, no, no I didn’t.

Program facilitators praised participants for their risk-taking as such exchanges were framed as beneficial for the group as they enabled other comparable affective exchanges. The degree to which emotional empathy is skirted is expressed in the oblique manner of the following exchange in which a participant reveals to the group that his grandfather is sick (lung cancer):

John starts to breakdown sobbing, I put my hand on his shoulder and say “it’s OK buddy”. Rob comes over too, Tina gets tissues and sits beside him. Glen also reaches out, said he had to go up against a judge who wouldn’t let him out for his grandfather’s funeral. When he did eventually attend he admitted he cried, as he was so moved by the eulogy. What was funny about this is that he didn’t connect his emotional display and admission of vulnerability to John’s crying – he just left it implicit, presented it as if it were an unrelated comment in a separate conversation, even though the content and timing it was clear he was attempting to sympathize with and comfort John. (Field Notes).

Such guided exchanges of affection and sheltered vulnerability were often encouraged when participants were in rival gangs. These exchanges had the added import as reconciliations (“quashing beefs”) between rival gangs:

P Jose: We beefin’, but it’s like for what? Cos of some bullshit. Nah, man this here, this is real, and it takes a man to know it.

Despite the fact that the expressions of emotion encouraged by program facilitators were in disagreement with masculine norms of stoicism or evasive bantering, resistance to the process were rare, which as indicated above, primarily took the form of sheepish awkwardness and linguistic reversions to the third person. Conversations with participants revealed that such exchanges, however stilted, were regarded positively and as authentic expressions, and on some occasions, revelatory and profoundly moving.

Modeling Positive Masculinity

Secondly, program facilitators themselves modeled forms of *positive masculinity* (Kiselica and Englar-Carlson 2010), as a desired future self (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009). Kiselica and Englar-Carlson argue that although traditional norms of masculinity, competition, status, toughness, and stoicism can lead to problems such as violence, homophobia, misogyny, and neglect of health – therapists should work to accentuate the positive aspects of masculinity in their male clients such as caring roles, self-reliance, humor, and positive male heroism as means for encouraging men and boys’ strengths. They further argue that focusing on negative aspects of masculinity can alienate male clients and sabotage the nascent therapeutic relationship. Program facilitators would frequently draw upon their criminal pasts in relating to the current situation of participants, their own issues with anger, the seductive quality of street life, and the toll of emotional self-censorship.

GF DJ: I used to have a case of ‘Do you know who the fuck I am?’...I didn’t feel right unless I was on the block with my hammer [gun]. Now, if someone tries me, I walk it off, I know who I am and I know that dude is some damned fool, a fool in his own mess.

Group facilitators evidenced their own journey for the possibility of change, reintegration, and success, an attractive “future self” to which participants could aspire to, evidence of the possibility of maintaining masculine stature which at the same time express emotional vulnerability. As one participant put it: “If D can come through and still keep his swag, well then so can I.” Thus group facilitators circumvented some of the more inhibiting norms of male conduct without alienating participants. The daunting process of adopting a new identity with

accompanying fears of being perceived as “going soft” or self-emasculation could be assuaged, thus opening up participants to undertake generative risks and begin or continue the journey of desistance which seems so closely linked to the emergence of care in an individual.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

Introduction

This dissertation on the prison and desistance has not hitherto addressed the process of leaving prison and returning to society, otherwise known as reentry (Travis 2005). According to recent figures, over 700,000 individuals are released from state and federal prisons each year (West et al. 2010). The concern for these prisoners' "return to society" (were they ever out of society?) is primarily a concern with their reintegration, which in turn could be described as stable law-abiding functioning in a society. With a population equivalent of a Seattle, a Denver, or a Boston leaving prison each year what occurs in the prison and jail system is of enormous societal importance (so too is what occurs on parole and probation but that is beyond the scope of this discussion) both in terms of the integration and well-being of the released as well as their impact on the communities and wider society in which they must live. In terms of individual level change prisons are perhaps better considered as a form of social refrigeration rather than a deep-freeze. Although confinement checks the cultivation of familial and romantic relations and the acquisition of job experience, training, and education (our hooks for change), change is nonetheless possible behind bars and seems to rely on abbreviated forms of care relationships (generative acts among inmates, the family contact afforded by visitation) and intramural analogues (such as vocational training or rehabilitation programming) even if employed for rehabilitative or reentry ends by only a minority of prisoners.

Despite an understandable skepticism that rehabilitation or desistance can occur in prison, as argued in this dissertation, “going straight” is possible behind bars and not simply for a trivial number of inmates nor in a stochastic fashion unamenable to policy formulation. This change is largely a function of how prisoners spend their time during confinement and their engagement with the sub-environments and sub-populations of the prison. With that being said, it seems like the process of desistance in prison occurs largely *in spite of* rather than *because of* or *with the aid of* how prisons are organized. One potential source of improvement of post-prison outcomes might come from recognizing and understanding the desistance work that does occur in prison and that the emphasis should be placed on cultivating and expanding these largely spontaneously occurring changes processes. This, of course, is the lesson and promise of desistance research since Maruna. As a recent book on the pathways to reintegration noted, “correctional interventions should recognize this ‘natural’ process of reform and *design interventions that can enhance or complement these spontaneous efforts*” (Maruna, Immarigeon, and LeBel 2004 in Maruna and Immarigeon 2004, 16, emphasis in original).

The stress on what happens in prison as a research and policy-orientation is not to suggest that post-release factors are unimportant to successful reintegration post-release. As with most human behavior, desistance emerges in the interplay of subjective (endogenous) and social (exogenous) factors (see LeBel et al 2008). So too does reentry, which is a product of individual characteristics and circumstances, family dynamics, community characteristics and state policy (Visher and Travis 2003). Secular changes in Western society, however, have meant that employment prospects and earning potential are increasingly stacked against those without demanded skills and credentials (see Pew Research Center 2014), much less those with a felony conviction. The modal pathway towards desistance for chronic offenders in the late 20th and

early 21st century is probably what this dissertation has called the “active desistance” process given that meso- and macro-level structural changes have significantly altered the environment in which successfully going straight occurs (Farrall, Bottoms, Shapland 2010). That being said, given that reintegration consists of stable, law-abiding functioning in a society, it seems only reasonable that although reintegration occurs across various domains, the attainment of economic self-sufficiency is probably the basis for successful reintegration (my god look at regular transitions to adulthood, they all orbit securing employment). A strong subjective orientation towards “staying straight” is the bulwark against the penury that meets most prisoners at the gate in a country where gate money typically consists of \$50-\$100 and a one way bus ticket to the county of conviction or the state border (National Institute of Corrections 2004). So although the changes in self emerge from the dialectic of subjective and social factors, one whose dynamic nature resists easy temporal or causal ordering (Shover 1983 quoted in LeBel et al 2008), nonetheless as Visher and Travis note, “at the heart of a successful transition [to society] is a personal decision to change” (2003, 98). That decision can be fostered in prison.

Can the state level the playing field for former-offenders? Reform advocates often point to European systems as exemplars given that, internationally speaking, recidivism rates are lowest in the Scandinavian social democracies (Norway’s recidivism rate is about 20% compared to America’s 70%+). Should American simply repeat the reentry policies of actually existing social democracy? Part of the reason for such favorable post-release outcomes is that Scandinavian prison systems rest on the principle of “normality”, prisoners are denied liberty, but nothing else received by free-citizens; access to education, healthcare, time with family, and opportunities for creative self-fulfillment must be provided (Larson 2013). In the short to medium term such

moves towards a robust state support for inmates and former prisoners are likely to be politically untenable in America, given that any pre- and post- release support for prisoners is likely to invite comparisons with state support for the non-criminal population. One conversation I overheard between a volunteer and a prison official while in the waiting area at the gate one evening went something as follows:

V: There should be more college programs for prisoners. You know that if prisoners get a college degree they don't come back?

PO: Yes ok, but you have to understand that regular people will think "why do I have to work for years for my kid to go to college and someone who broke the law gets their degree for free?"

As Durkheim noted, one of the functions of punishment is to sustain the morale of conforming citizens by demonstrating that their personal sacrifices are justly rewarded and vice versa. Some inroads have been made, for example, in reinstating Pell Grant funding for prisoners (Wexler 2016), state support for reentry is not likely to go much above and beyond the limited public assistance available for the general population in the American quasi-welfare state. Thus a focus on prisons and reentry must be a focus on subjective level change.

Summary of Findings

This section reviews the findings of this dissertation. Overall, this project sought to understand how desistance occurs among male prisoners. More specifically, this dissertation documents and analyzes the subjective experience of prisoners as they grapple with the desistance process across niches in the prison environment as well as in interaction with inmate subpopulations, with a particular focus on meaning constructions and interactions in a particular niche: the program space.

Chapter three of this dissertation developed upon the concept of the prison as an ecology forwarded by Hans Toch in his study *Living in Prison: The Ecology of Survival* as well as scholarship on social niches in social work literature. Broadly speaking, Toch's perspective is that the prison is composed of a variety of subenvironments whose composition significantly influences how prisoners relate to and cope with their stay. From a desistance perspective, (not merely survival) social niches in prison can be loosely categorized as either entrapment niches or enabling niches. Entrapment niches, such as the yard, are places in which a criminogenic orientation towards the world can be cultivated and/or sustained. Enabling niches, on the other hand, places which cultivate and reward progress towards positive goals, in this case, desistance. Inmates select into environments and then also select from groups within an environment in ways which yield the most congruity with either criminal persistence (even if mostly via deviancy talk) or vice versa, desistance efforts. Survey data from one sample of inmates on their change process found that respondents ranged across a number of different enabling (i.e. desistance supporting) niches in the prison: the chapel, the law library, the visitation room, the cell, and the program space. For example, several respondents referred to visitation room as a space in which they had reestablished connections with their families, and frequently, their estranged children. Although not termed as such in the chapter discussion, the visitation process was a mechanism for inmates to achieve what others have called "tertiary desistance", the recognition that one has changed by others, something which both enables and is the outcome of the desistance process. Importantly, the chapter additionally explored the role that homosocial bonds with inmate subpopulations may play in the desistance process. All in all, albeit within the limitations discussed below this chapter's analyses hold that the prison is a variegated

environment and that desistance, in part, emerges in the prison across a variety of contributory spaces and interactions with other inmates.

Chapter five, which was based on observations of Council For Unity program sessions, examined inmates on the threshold between the contemplation of “going straight” and actual dedication to desist (once again, see Vaughan 2007), i.e. the early phase of desistance as identified in chapter two. During Council For Unity sessions participants were invited to articulate their experiences via the metaphors contained in the program’s *Dragon Slayer* narrative. One such metaphor, that of “the known world”, invites participants to discuss the starting point of the heroic journey. An oft discussed “known” was that of “the streets”. The street life was variously described by participants as a Darwinian survival of the fittest, an almost irresistible temptation, as well as an undertow associated with drowning or submersion.

Sustaining a criminal lifestyle also required a variety of interior moves, namely neutralizations. In departing from original formulation of neutralizations as ongoing moral rationalizations for deviance, this chapter added that neutralizing self-talk may more often occur when situations of gratuity generates a temporary contemplation of self. The evidence from this study also suggests the mental forestalling of intrusions of conscience may occur automatically, as a disposition and less a manner of discourse with the self. This chapter also examined the decomposition of this orientation to the world. Three categories of events were found among participants of sufficient force to intrude on the reconciliation of self and offending: the recognition of time as a diminishing force, the impact negative emotional events (which operates through intrusions memory on neutralizing efforts), and the potency of disillusionment with criminal peers. All in all, whether experienced as positive or negative, respondents’ discussions expressed their

immersion in a lifestyle whose momentum must be understood for its implications for the early stages of desistance as an extractive process.

The final empirical chapter in this dissertation concerns a series of generative interactions observed between program participants and between program participants and other individuals and groups. The primary of which consisted chiefly of mini-speeches (termed “generative scripts”) aiming dissuade others from persistence by drawing the authenticity of the speaker in their depiction of themselves as a feared future self. Additional analysis of session discussions revealed, or at least suggested, that the observed generative interactions reflected tendencies towards generativity amongst participants which were exercised prior to incarceration. For example, frequent references to saving or doing something for “the youth” during group sessions reflected a more general generative orientation and action, such as that towards young, male family members, undertaken by some participants before incarceration. In following from other research which showed that prisoners spontaneously (i.e. independently from behavior mandated by treatment) express generative concern and, with limited means, attempt generative acts (Benedict 2009; Halsey and Harris 2011), findings here suggest that although prisons are environments that truncate generative relationships, it also an environment where normal exigencies are lifted and experimentation with new forms of identity are possible. This, it seems, is in large part attributable by the degree of material stability in the prison environment (and it might be fair to say, for the want of more diverting distractions). Generative pursuits, such as working with visiting high school groups also served to as building blocks of a conventional self-conception, one which straddled and melded their criminal pasts and current aspirations. As is observed in psychotherapeutic literature, despite the plasticity of the human self, too rapid or

dramatic a change can jeopardize a person's sense of psychological order, a challenge to the *core processes* of one's experience of reality, self, and control. Further analysis of generative scripts revealed a tension between the recruitment of the speaker's criminal past as authentic testimony and the rhetorical stress on the personal toll of criminal involvement. In regards to the latter, avoidance of emotional expressivity, it was held, was illustrated in potential for the arousal of negative emotions to result in subjective disarray. All in all, the most important point made in this chapter, one which underlies much desistance research, is reforming individuals' need for continuity within change.

This final theme of the dialectic of continuity and change within the desistance process is worth discussing briefly in the content of the chapter four discussion of the Council For Unity model. If anything, this dissertation conveys that for chronic offenders the movement to desistance is one from one way of living to another, experienced phenomenologically as a movement from the known to the unknown. The functionality of heroic stories for this process lies in the metaphors (dragons, forests, caves, villagers, kingdoms) embedded in the narrative. Metaphors function to mediate the movement between old and new self-conceptions in that metaphors are abstract image (the hero) which refer to a set of concrete relationships (the hero slays the dragon to win the quest) for the purpose of facilitating the recognition of an analogous set of relations in another situation (I am the hero, what are my dragons and how shall I overcome them to achieve my goals?). Narratives (the heroic quest) bridge between existing frames of reference (I am a prisoner) via metaphor (I am the hero, I slay dragons) leading to a new state (I have overcome that which holds me back, my dragons). As noted previously, across the temporal *durée* of self-directed change, which is experienced as a flow of successive "nows", metaphors, and in specific, mythic metaphors, function to perceptually order the immediate in a manner which

suggests but also maintains a give line of action. Just as suggested in chapter two in regard to the middle stage of desistance, the stock-taking period of the desistance process can result in a reorganization of the individual's priorities which in turn is a perceptual reorganization. Objects in the environment once perceived as "fun" now may become re-viewed as "trouble" in alignment with the new system of priorities, which suggests different modes of reaction. Mythic stories provide a system for this process story-perception-action, but one which is grounded in a heroic moral identity which offenders otherwise seem to spontaneously adopt in understanding their desistance process (Lofland 1969). More on this topic will be discussed below in the "Suggestions for Future Research" section below.

The Limitations of this Project

This section shall now consider some of the limitations of this project. Most obviously the findings and analysis presented here have but a limited claim to generalizability due to the project's sampling procedures. A small convenience sample – eighteen months of observation of a single program and twenty-five surveys – does not permit confident generalization to wider experiences of prison or correctional programs across America. However, the unit of analysis here is not a population, but rather a concept: individual level self change. From this perspective the utility of a small scale qualitative project lies in its contribution to the refinement of theory such as is suggested by grounded theory methodologies (Straus and Corbin 1990). The contributions to theories of desistance these findings suggest were outlined in the previous section and shall not be repeated here.

However, even the more modest claim to theory modification must be tempered in the acknowledgement of issues with the data collected. As was noted in the introduction,

ethnographic studies of prison society are sometimes termed “quasi-ethnographies” in that the structural barriers of the prison inhibit immersion in the lives and daily routines of the subjects under study (Owen 1998, 21). Researching in total institutions can mean you can be in this particular room on this particular day and time, and no other. Thus this project captured only a limited slice of the life of the inmate. The difficulty with non-ambulatory ethnography is that the totality of their experiences of incarceration could not be studied despite the relevance this experience has, as claimed here, for the desistance process. Another difficulty involved in observing rehabilitation programs in *jail* settings specifically, is that jail populations are transient in that inmates leave because they have completed their sentences or are transported to another facility. This meant that program composition was constantly shifting, which in turn meant that program discussions were often reset to introductory stages in order to accommodate new arrivals. To add, court dates and even the occasional trip to “the box” meant that program participation was frequently interrupted, even when participants remained at the facility. Overall, this turnover built repetition into program sessions and affected the depth of group discussions and in situations where observational data cannot be supplemented by field interviews meant participants’ interiority was accessed by proxy across many speech instances, a problem for a project examining changes in selfhood and self-conception.

Importantly, and this issue was broached in chapter six, although demands for stoicism made by male convict culture were relaxed in the program space, program interactions were nonetheless guarded, even when considerable trust had been established. This extent of this reticence was revealed to me after the data-collection period was completed at the jail. After the field work period I spent another eighteen months volunteering with Council For Unity in their program at the maximum facility. Initially it was hoped that additional observations could be done at their

program there, which follows a six-month curriculum and group participants are fixed for the duration thus avoiding some of the problems noted in observing jail programs. Permission to study this program was not permitted, however, but nonetheless I remained to help facilitate several program cycles. At one point towards the end of a cycle I managed to sit down alone with one inmate and I used this opportunity to ask him about his change process. He immediately directed conversation to his romantic relationship with woman: how they knew each other, her commitment to him, and their future plans together. This was after six months of group sessions through which the importance of cultivating relationships was a constant theme and frequent subject of discussion – and this inmate was an active participant. As another example, there were often fathers in the group, families were a frequent subject of session discussions, yet I rarely heard anyone give their children’s names.

Yet there was constant talk during program sessions. Albeit divided among program facilitators and the dozen or so participants in room. Was this speech content not data? At the time I regarded much of what was said in the group as evasion (“the cosmetic” as one program facilitator would call it) in that, as explored in chapter six, most talk would skirt “realer” issues and was impersonal, abstract, and very frequently platitudinous. In fact it often astounded the author (and frustrated him too) how lengthily and energetically participants could elaborate upon simple homilies like “who you hang with is who you will be”, unselfconsciously evoking cliché after cliché in what were essentially improvisations whose content was derived in the moment and could often self-contradict within a single speech episode. The decision to regard this speech content as an obstacle to this project’s goals was for two reasons, one minor, one major. The minor reason was due to the nature of the access to the program space. Given that access was granted by the program’s founder (and indeed a personal relationship developed between us over

time) translated into a sense of obligation to represent program interactions in a positive light, i.e. to ignore much of the avoidance occurring in the group. Although the author thinks highly of Council For Unity, in the future, the author recognizes the strong need for their research to be independent.

The major reason is as follows. These evasions were not the right thing to be looking at. Why? An unspoken ethic that sociologists should to represent marginalized research subjects in morally favorable terms. This is the primary analytic distortion arising from normal research procedures this dissertation has had to resist. The ethical imperative in sociology is best expressed in Becker's question to the field: "whose side are you on?" (1967). All "good" sociologists side with the marginalized it is implied, however, a question less often posed is "what does it mean to be on someone's side?". In sociology it often means that research is viewed as having a secondary (or is it primary?) function to exonerate the character of dishonored social groups, a function which often takes precedence over empirical efforts to dissect the mechanisms and meanings that govern their practices, warts and all (Wacquant 2002, 1470). So for example, one of the sacrifices in objectivity made in the name of rhetorical force for those most vocal in calling for prison reform (indeed abolition) have been in the direction of minimizing moral transgressive qualities of the prisoner, typically by recasting the modal prisoner as a *mala prohibita* delinquent rather than a *mala in se* criminal. This imperative has resulted in and defined a small library of research and theory on mass incarceration based on an empirical falsehood: that drug sentencing caused the massive increase in the American prison population since the 1970s. Inmates serving sentences for drug offenses are only a minority of the prison population. To be more specific, as of 2013 17% of the state and federal prison population were incarcerated for drug offenses (BJS 2015). Statistics on the composition of institutional

populations however, cannot be legitimately disputed within the framework of social science – how is then that such a mistruth circulates at the highest level among paid social scientists?

Moral psychologists have forwarded reasonably strong evidence that moral judgments occur on an intuitive level. Moral intuitions arise from the automatic, subconscious part of the self and precede conscious cognition. Moral judgments, for the most part, arise suddenly in consciousness and are accompanied by affective valence (good-like, bad-dislike), without any conscious awareness of having gone through steps of searching, weighing evidence, of inferring a conclusion (Haidt 2001, 1029). The intuitive dog wags the rational tail it seems, not the other way around. Moral psychologists have additionally examined, frequently building on Durkheimian insights into group cohesion, the role of sacred values in group formation. One of the distinguishing features of the human species is the ability to form large-scale non-kin cooperative groupings. Other primates cannot do this, but some insect species can like ants, bees, termites etc. (this is probably why several popular animated films choose ant society as an analogue to human society. Thousands of tigers cooperating with each other requires a little more set up). For humans the mechanism of group cohesion is not instinct, but the circling around commonly held sacred values (Haidt 2016). Once a common sacred is established (that which you do not defile) the rationalizing, conscious part of the mind is engaged to defend the value when judgments of transgression have been made. Arguably something akin to this process has and is occurring in academia. Of course one of the common sacred the university system is the truth. Increasingly, however, there is another sacred: the victim. It is hard to present evidence gathered over thousands of pages of reading, hundreds of conversations, dozens of classes and conference sessions, the evidence of personal experience that has led to this claim, but I will stand by it nonetheless. Many of the major errors in social science research (one maddening error

in criminal justice topics is the comparison of distributions of enforcement or imprisonment with baseline population demographics, and the claim that any differences must be the result of discrimination, a claim made and circulated by salaried thinkers) point in the same direction: sacrifices in empiricism for defenses of the victim. A sense of “rightness” or “fitness” of evidence, I argue, is frequently the result of a moral intuition with the resulting analysis proceeding *ex post facto* fashion after this judgment to select, ignore, or reject has been made. There isn’t enough space to detail here, but I believe that Weberian value freedom (*weirtheitfreit*), in that values orient us toward what should be studied but are separate from methods by which subjects are studied, has been lost in much of the social sciences. The border between social values and methods of social research has become blurred, in part, because efforts to speak truth to power have become in themselves an orthodoxy, in turn, because there were no morally appropriate checks on compassion for the victim within the field. I am a product of this situation, and while dimly conscious of my own intuitive moral reasoning in studying a highly marginalized group (leave out the evasions, never talk or ask about their crimes), the lengthy reflection afforded by the long period of time spent on this dissertation has afforded some insight into the cognitive processes shaping my own research. As the Ancient Greeks used to say: γνῶθι σεαυτόν.

Suggestions for Future Research

This section shall sketch some areas of potential development in the study of desistance, and as will be seen, the sociology/criminology of human behavior more generally.

A previous draft of the chapter two literature review contained a section which attempted to outline an ideal typical model of selfhood, one which drew heavily on Giddens' stratification model of the acting self (1984). This outline was an attempt to answer the question: if this dissertation examines changes in the self, then which model of self should one use? In sum, Giddens forwards that the human self is composed of multiple strata. The stratum most commonly enlisted in sociological accounts of human refers to what Giddens describes as "discursive consciousness" involves the articulable "I" of the human subject, involving self-conception and narrative identity ("I am a student", "I am a good father"). Underlying the conscious thought processes lies the subconscious or "practical consciousness" which consists of "stocks of unarticulated knowledge" or social know-how that social actors use implicitly to orient to, interpret, and act in the world. The concept of practical consciousness overlaps considerably with Bourdieu's concept of the habitus. An important relay between discursive and the practical strata are emotions. Let us recall, emotions are key to understanding how meaning operates, they are "rough and ready appraisals of our current situation in the world" (Jasper 2014, 26). And they are a constant, not simply the muzak of social life, not the occasional partner or opponent of cognition but an experientially melded form Jasper calls "feeling-thinking" (2014). My contention in the draft was that changes in the self do not always synchronize across these various strata and this may be an important source of variance in the desistance process as well as relapse. Giddens's claims have been independently confirmed by research in other fields such as cognitive psychology (see Kahneman 2013). However, interest here is more in the methodological implications of the stratified self model, namely that the design of qualitative interviews should consciously incorporate measures of these strata. This is not a confident claim but it seems that interviewers often do not ask respondents how they feel but rather focus on

what they think, which is only one slice of the mind and thus only motivator for behavior. Much more research into interview design is necessary for this author, however one post-dissertation project is to begin thinking what might be called “the phenomenological interview” designed to capture human experience in a domain as a totality, yet composed of multiple strata.

Respondents themselves often do not have direct access to parts of their mind, but yet they think and feel with these parts thus the challenge would be to design instruments which elicit the unarticulated beneath surface behavior and thought.

Secondly and relatedly, it is the author’s belief that developmental models best capture the emergence of criminality and hence desistance over the life-course. It is with some satisfaction that some prominent scholars in the field of desistance have begun discussing longitudinal qualitative research (called QLR), in-depth qualitative interviews conducted over time (Farrall, no date given). As Farrall notes, this approach is particularly useful if one is studying “career” phenomenon such as desistance, which develop over time and which involve subjective processes. Further research into this method will be conducted after this dissertation. This approach may have advantages over the narrative interview techniques popular in desistance research since Maruna. Narrative ordering of experience can arise, in addition to *post-hoc* self-characterizations, as an artifact of chronologically organized life history protocols which narratively structure interview subjects’ responses, i.e. can we separate its influence from the effects of recall and method? Although it is plausible that particular life-scripts cohere at points in life, one difficulty is that it is difficult to parse out how such schemas exert a *prospective* causal influence, whilst also bearing in mind that such scripts may be *composed* as opposed to *recounted* in retrospection. As was noted in Maruna and Matravers: “we are forever re-scripting our pasts, making sense of the things that happened in light of subsequent events” (2007, 428).

Of course further research on desistance in prison is necessary. As noted in the introduction there are few book length studies on the prison from a desistance perspective. This dissertation will hopefully add to remedying this in a small way. During the writing of this dissertation (many things have happened) Marguerite Schinkel published *Being Imprisoned: Punishment, Adaptation, and Desistance* (2016) which explores the way criminal punishment is interpreted and narrated by offenders, and examines the meaning offenders ascribe to their sentence and the consequences of this for future desistance. To add, Mark Halsey and Simone Deegan published *Young Offenders: Crime, Prison and Struggles for Desistance* (2015) which contains important chapters on prison experiences. These books were not available to the author, but a post-dissertation reading will occur and these works (along with others) are a good foundation for understanding and improving the outcome of prison experiences. Dealing with and reducing the prison is one of key policy tasks facing social scientists in America. This next section shall discuss this issue.

Policy Considerations

As with any ethnographically based research project, the merits of this dissertation project lie in depth not breadth. As such, this project does not in itself, lend towards making strong policy recommendations. Nonetheless, a few suggestions on some areas for consideration in terms of prison policy shall be discussed here. This discussion is based on a blend of the findings of this project, as well as the author's experience of volunteering in prison, and a more general and lengthy contemplation of the American prison system over the course of the author's doctoral studies.

In following from the general conclusion this dissertation draws; that closer research attention should be given to desistance in prison, policy initiatives for increasing the rehabilitative effect of prison should also give greater attention to subpopulations of desisted inmates. Further research is needed to identify the specific mechanisms that generate this population, as argued in this dissertation, hooks for change most likely perform similar functions for inmates, if perhaps weaker as change catalysts, as they do offenders on the outside. Prisons vary considerably in terms of the availability and quality of in-house hooks for change such as education or vocational opportunities and rehabilitation programs as well as those which rely on outside contacts such as with family and romantic partners. This is, of course is known to inmates. For example, one inmate told me that the prison was known as “the Swing”, namely a place where one could do an easy bid. The easiness of a bid is in part a function of the level of safety in the prison (from what the author can tell, inmates in this state correctional system regard prisons “up north” as more violent), but also as a function of the facility’s proximity to a metropolitan area. Most prison programs are run by volunteers or staff of non-profits both of which tend to be based in metropolitan areas: travel distance is crucial in terms of the density of supports available to prisoners.

Two suggestions might be made here in regard to increasing prisoners’ interactions with hooks for change. In terms of family visitation, one remedy to the distance issue might be found in internet technology in that it may be possible increase the quantity, and by extension the quality, of family interactions by employing forms of internet visitation. Contact with the outside world is hugely importance for inmates, especially in regard to their children (being a father). Yet traveling to prisons can often be time-consuming and expensive. For example, Attica which

houses many inmates from New York City is 350 miles from the city and takes about seven hours to reach. Family visiting their incarcerated family member often cannot afford to stay overnight and must complete the round trip in the same day. Prison administrators are understandably weary of allowing inmates access to the internet. Nonetheless, internet visitation via communications software could easily be modified as to restrict outgoing internet usage. One advantage of internet visitation is that it completely removes the problem of contraband, one of the main concerns when the outside world crosses the prison perimeter. Facility administrators could find that a privilege such as internet contact with designated family members, by incentivizing good behavior, may serve to increase safety in the facility. Additionally, such an initiative falls under family values, and coupled with the low cost may be politically feasible for decision-makers.

What of rehabilitation programs themselves? Unfortunately as the write up of this dissertation has progressed the Council For Unity program has moved from the foreground of this project to the background. This is not a reflection of this author's esteem for the program. It was noted in chapter one that the Council For Unity program resembled the Good Lives Model in that they are both strengths-based approaches. However, the Council For Unity has a number of advantages over the Good Lives Model. The primary of these is that the change structure is embedded in narratives and is only expressed symbolically. Why is this an advantage? Well firstly reading fictional narratives has been found to involve processes of identification and self-implication (Djikic et al. 2009a) and experiments have shown that reading fiction can change individuals' emotions and thus seems to circumvent psychological defenses (Djikic et al. 2009b). Why is this? In part is because individuals supply part of the meaning of a story, thus the meaning in stories is a shared construct. Plus "How does one defend against a structure or a rhythm of a

short story? How does one defend against a juxtaposition of images or thoughts?” (15).

Rehabilitative efforts based on stories may be more effective in that they direct but nonetheless avoid the paternalism implicit in many rehabilitative interventions. Secondly, *mythic* stories have a gravitas (GLM is a little bit like change via spreadsheets) that is perhaps reflective of their intra-psychic origins. As Campbell noted, “myth is a projection of the depth wisdom of the psyche...by participating in the myth, you are being, as it were, put in accord with that wisdom, which is the wisdom that is inherent within you anyhow. Your consciousness is being re-minded of the wisdom of your own life” (1973, 52). The highest compliment program participants could give of program features was “that’s deep”. An attraction to transcendent meaning and ritual of a quasi-religious nature by lower-class or working-class groups is found in gang scholarship (Brotherton 2004). Rehabilitative interventions may work better if they draw upon existing cultural orientations. Myth-based programs like Council For Unity do this, they need more financial support in the work that they do.

A related point can be made here. Reentry is rendered all the more difficult due to formal restrictions on employment and access to public assistance. Informally speaking, the stigma of a felon conviction also follows the inmate post-release. One potential solution is to build into the release process what, in borrowing from Garfinkel, might be called an elevation ceremony conveying legal and social recognition of restoration of the inmate to society. If the trial was the formal rite which conferred the status of “felon”, might not we also ceremonialize the return to status of the “citizen”? Legal equivalents of citizenship restoration already exist. For example, felons in New York State may apply for a Certificate of Relief from Disabilities (CRD) or a Certificate of Good Conduct (CGC) to restore some of their rights lost in their conviction. Most state restrictions also expire after a period, however, this may be years after release. This process

should begin before the prisoner is released and should be conditional on continuous good behavior. The restoration of rights should be marked formally and publically – rituals do precisely this, communicate symbolic transitions in status.

Let us return to the beginning. Reentry ultimately balances two concerns: public safety and integration, i.e. the protection of citizens but also relief from de jure punishments that prevent reintegration. Those who rail against post-release restrictions often do so from the comfort of a position in which they are not responsible and accountable for the maintenance of public safety. Therein lies the problem. Often legislative decisions increasing the punitivity of a criminal justice system (let's say state level) have the quality of a ratchet: it is easy to go forward, difficult to go back. Part of the issue is that decision-makers are implicitly assuming risk (to their careers) in proposing and implementing softer on crime policies – to be associated with leniency with regard to a population who have already demonstrated that they are willing to repeatedly break the law is not an easy thing. Fear of unpredictability probably guides much more decisions on criminal justice policy than we think. Why voluntarily assume risk? This country absolutely needs to downsize its prison system, the hugely costly experiment in using sentencing to reduce crime needs to end. I have deliberately left discussion of American prison population statistics until the end, it is imperative that we begin to bring down that figure of 2.3 million (the third largest American city) and create a much, smaller more progressive system – all this will require creating an environment where decision-makers can break the ratchet without risking their careers. Argued here in this dissertation is that the desisted in prison are a bridgehead into the wider prison population. A frequent refrain of program participants was that “we need to get the younger guys in here” into the program space. We could do a much better job of reducing recidivism by training and supporting this subpopulation to perform outreach work within the

prison and to reward them by recognizing the debt they have paid to society. If anything, I think this is what I have taken from my experiences in the course of my doctoral work: the centrality of “the fellas” in transforming American corrections.

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