

Sociology: how and why people stop offending: discovering desistance

Terminology:

Desistance

Agency

Labelling

Crime vocabulary:

Juvenile offenders

Probation officer

probationer

General academic vocabulary:

Verbs:

- Illuminate
 - E.g. Studies of desistance illuminate the processes of change associated with the age-crime curve.
- Cement
 - E.g. cement the bond
- Envision
 - Envision a future
- Foster
 - E.g. foster desistance
- Deter (sb) from (e.g. committing crime)
- Shed considerable light on
- Strive

Phrases:

- Testable theories
- Empirical evidence
- It is confined to
 - E.g. (period of committing crime is confined to adolescence in the biological model of crime)
- Deterrent from (crime)
- Substantive findings
- A body of scholarship

Adjectives:

- Equivocal

Parts of text to analyze:

- Studying desistance forces us away from static models of people as ‘offenders’, ‘criminals’ or ‘prisoners’ and encourages an understanding of change(s) in personal identities.
- It also brings to our attention the fact that today’s ‘young offender’ is more likely to become tomorrow’s ‘new father’ than tomorrow’s ‘habitual criminal’.
- As such, it implies valuing people for who they are and for what they could become, rather than judging, rejecting or containing them for what they have done. (p.
- “Perhaps slightly surprisingly, there is relatively little evidence about how probation or social work supervision helps probationers cease offending.” (p. 7) – Why do you think it might be?

Questions:

- 1) Which model of crime do you consider more likely:
 - a. Biological or volitional?
- 2) Is desistance from crime a similar process to any other changes, e.g. undergoing a therapy/coaching in the event of depression/auto-aggression/insecurity and low self-esteem? The ability to envision a future is crucial in both cases?
- 3) How do you approach the implications formulated on pages 8-9?
- 4) What is your view on rethinking criminal justice? Some suggest that prisons should be abolished. Is it a conceivable measure?