

PRISON, PROBATION, AND HOOKS FOR TRANSITION

Implications of desistance research for practice and policy

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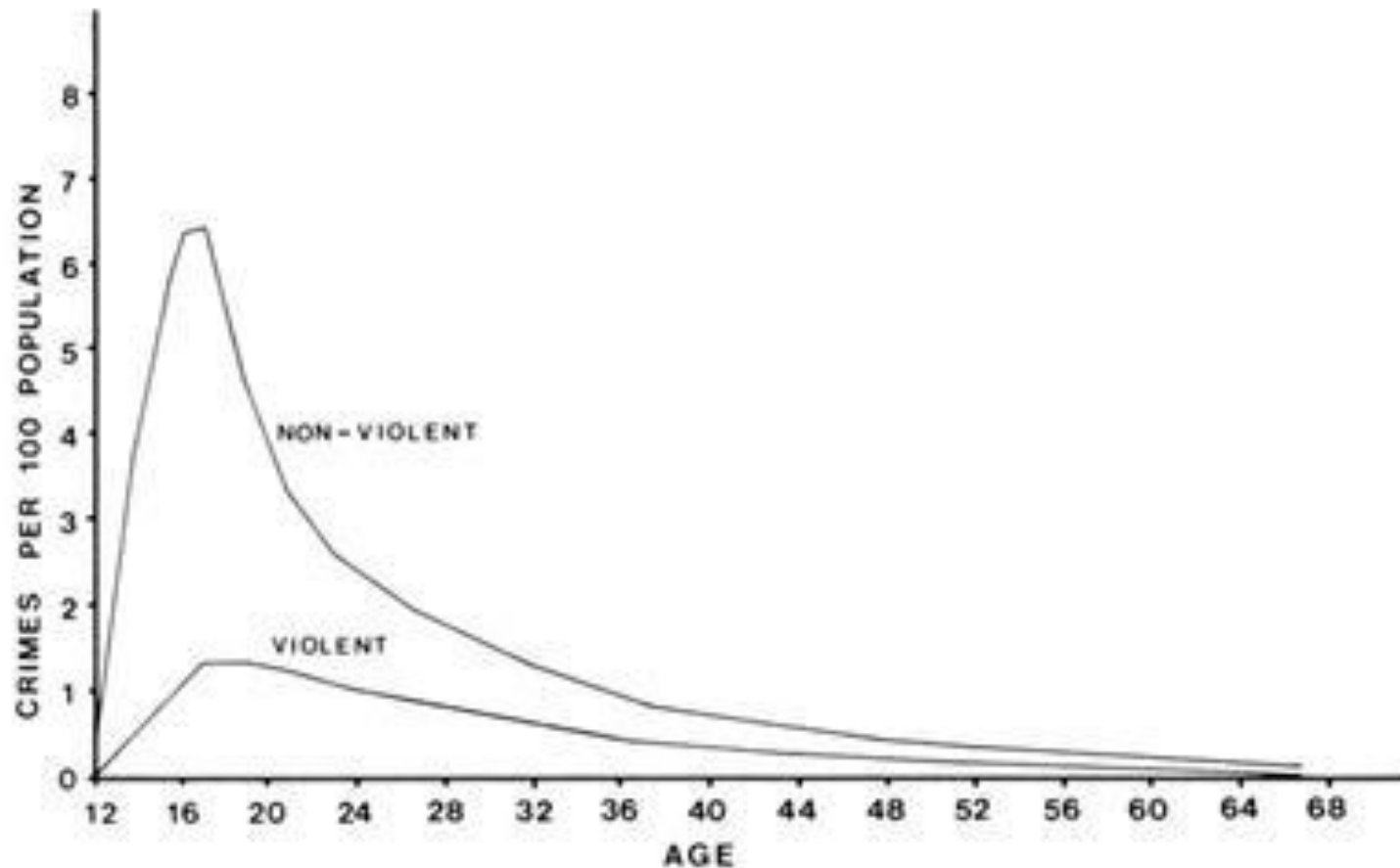
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Outline

- Overview of research into desistance from crime
 - Persisters and desisters
 - Desistance: when, why and how
 - Assisted desistance
- Implications for prison and probation services
 - Realism
 - Agency and self-direction
 - Organizational mission and inter-agency collaboration

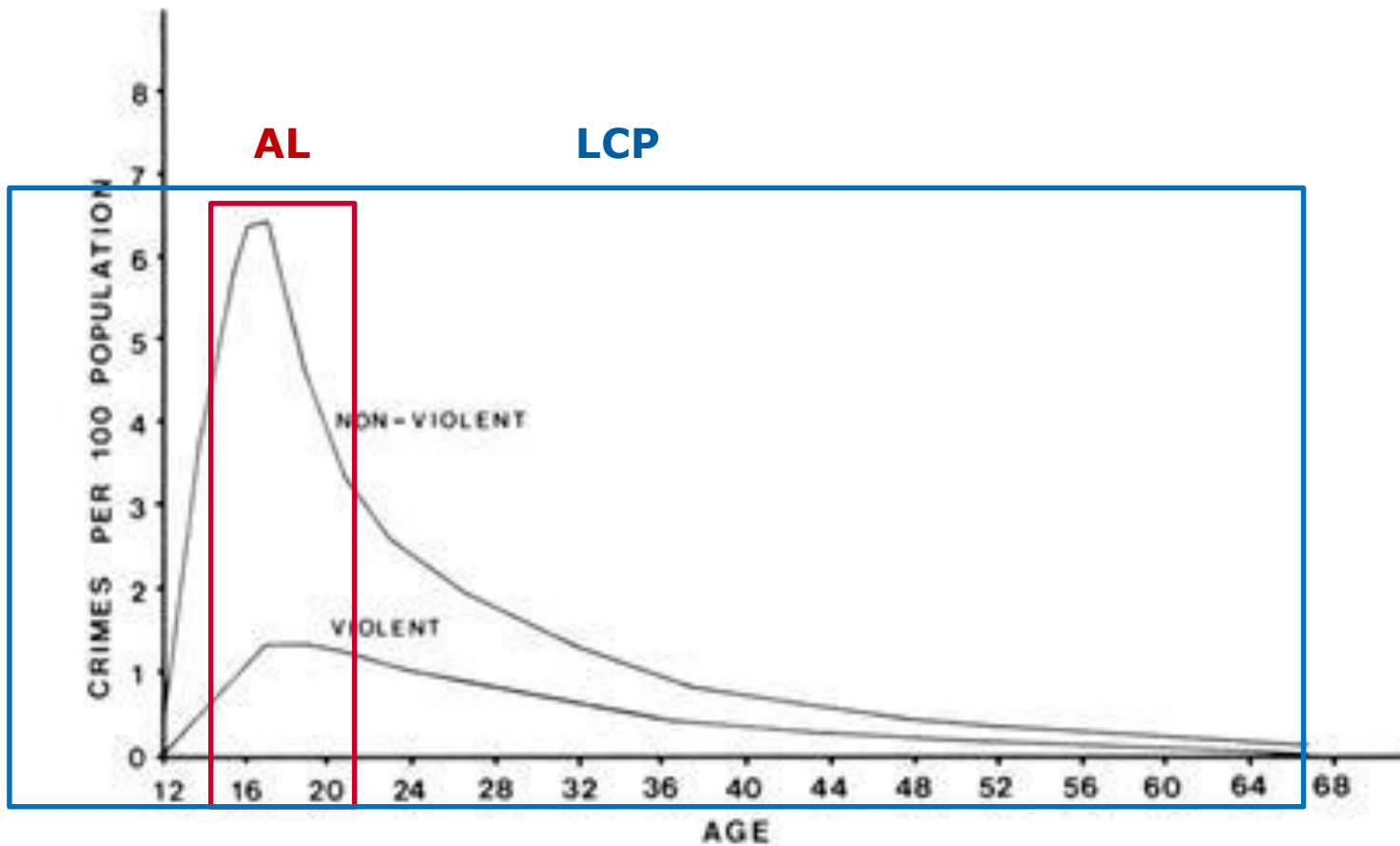
Age-crime curve



Explaining the onset & persistence of crime

- **Development of self-control** (Hirschi and Gottfredson 1987)
 - influence of important life events?
 - different opportunities for crime?
- **Criminal careers** (Moffitt)
 - Adolescence Limited (AL)
 - maturity gap
 - Life Course Persistent (LCP)
 - neuropsychological deficits + less self-control
 - difficult childhood behavior
 - severe parenting problems

Age-crime curve



Explaining the onset & persistence of crime

- Crime as 'justified' solution (Uggen 2010)
 - missed opportunities for transition into adulthood
 - reinforced by drugs and being stigmatized
 - + kicks / addiction to lifestyle (Laub)
 - condemnation scrips / "escaping the burden of choice" (Maruna 2001)

Desistance research

- **Desistance** is...
 - ... a zig-zag process into a crime-free lifestyle,
 - ... a struggle with inner and outer obstacles,
 - ... with support from maturation, experiences and opportunities, so that
 - ... *desistance becomes more and more a possibility* (King 2014)
- **Hooks for change** are...
 - ... available, often in culturally defined life-transitions
 - ... welcomed, and acted upon (Giordano 2002)
 - → reasons for desistance differ with age (Jamieson 1999)
 - 14-15: negative evaluation of crime and justice interventions
 - 18-19: maturity, linked to life-course events
 - 22-25: assumption of new roles

From a general idea to answers about...

- When?
 - What point in time?
- Why?
 - Reasons to act upon hooks for change?
- How?
 - Can we influence life-choices and assist desistance?



When – how do we define and measure desistance?

- Measure depends on definition (Kazemian 2007)
 - One year without self-reported crime?
 - Two years without reconviction?
 - Three years without rearrests?
- Desistance is both a process and some “sort of ending point” (Maruna 2001)
 - Desisters reoffend, but with caution (Healy 2013)
 - Desisters can return to crime (King 2014)
 - Asking “when?” leads to a useless discussion
- Process definition: Desistance is a **transitional phase** instead of a static point (Bushway 2003, King 2014)
 - Desisters are in transition, persisters not yet.

When - Desistance as transitional phase

- Primary and secondary desistance
- It is not a crime-free gap in time (primary), but the **movement** from the **behavior** of non-offending to the assumption of a **role or identity** of a non-offender or crime-free person (secondary) (Maruna & Farall 2004)
- New identity:
 - Desistance is a form of commitment
 - New 'ME' is both *incompatible* with crime, and helps you *distance* from your old criminal identity (Vaughan 2007)
 - Generativity and agency (Maruna 2001)

Comments on identity change

- Idea of serial process denies many obstacles (King 2014)
- “Intermittent desistance” might be a better reflection of reality (Carlsson 2012)

Why and how?



Why: life transitions and events as hooks

- Culturally defined turning points (Sampson & Laub)
 - marriage
 - starting a career
 - disconnection from antisocial friends
 - connecting to a new network
 - moving to another area / city
 - becoming a parent
- Sudden hooks
 - negative, shocking events (Maruna 2001)
 - positive, empowering events (Kooijmans 2014)
- Age and gender differences

How: identity change

- "... the desistance literature has pointed to a *range of factors* associated with the ending of active involvement in offending. Most of these factors are related to *acquiring 'something'* (most commonly employment, a life partner or a family) which the desister *values* in some way and which initiates a *reevaluation* of his or her life, and for some sense of who they 'are' " (Farall 2002, p.11)



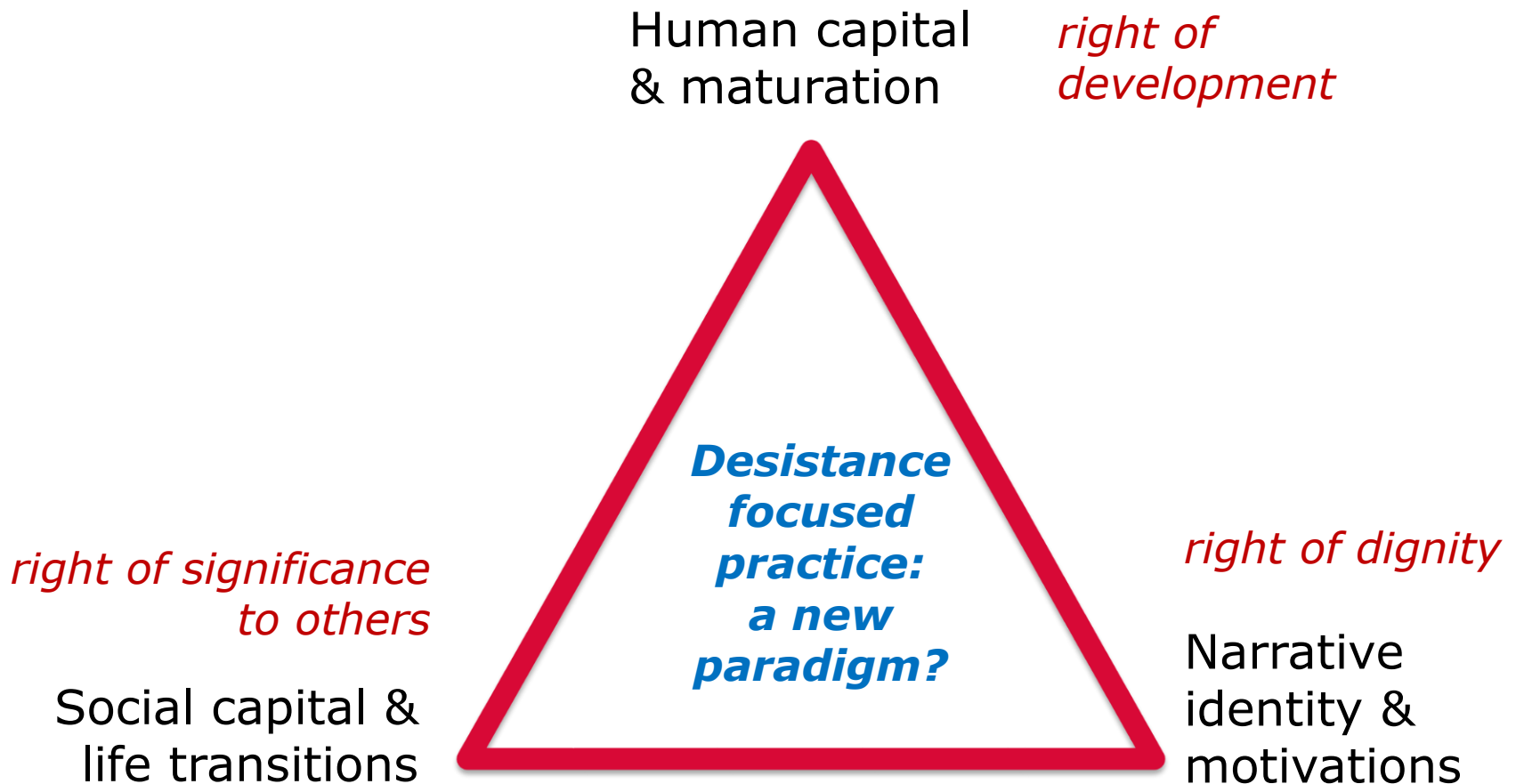
How: outside and inside effects of hooks for transition

- **Outside:** psychological potentials (Farall 2004)
 - structuring effect of time and locations
 - more social control
 - more social opportunities
 - moral and practical support
 - opportunities for new skills (work, parenting, etc.)
- **Inside:** interplay with subjective evaluation
 - positive evaluation of hooks offered by prison, probation, ngo's, etc.
 - experiencing citizenship and social inclusion
 - victim attitude / self-pity and self-blame
 - structuring effect of emotions
 - → **increased self-control**(Farall and Calverley 2006)

Chicken or egg?

- Start working on desire, motivation, and self-control?
- ... or arrange and watch what comes along?
- What do offenders tell us?
 - Motivated ... but 60-75% reoffend (Farall 2004, Burnett 1992, Leibbruch 1993, Dhoekie 2015)
 - Only the very determined succeed,
 - especially if combined with strong belief of the probation officer (Farall 2004, Dhoekie 2015)
- How can we evoke and assist existing desire to change into strong determination and link this with the 'life transitional hooks' that offenders value most?

Summary of when, why and how



Assisted desistance: what (ex-)offenders tell us (1)

- Active participation (Rex 1999, Liebling 2012, 2013, 2015)
 - Shared assessment, goal formulation, decision making
 - Self-direction...
- Support in social and relational issues (a.o. Barry 2007)
 - Difficult 'terrain' for prison and probation staff
 - Families often ready and willing (Van Halderen c.s. 2015)
 - Practical help instead of attitude & behavior (Shapland 2012)
 - Inclusive, not intrusive
 - RIC's in Dutch Prisons

Assisted desistance: what (ex-)offenders tell us (2)

- Positive working alliance (a.o. Skeem 2015, Menger 2010)
 - Fairness, skillful use of authority
 - Meaningful conversations about change
 - Encourage, assist and applaud
- ... instead of:
 - Vague and useless (Bottom & Shapland 2011)
 - Insignificant (Farall 2006)
 - ... probation staff agrees: out of our span of control,
 - ... prison and probation are probably only good for *improvements*, but never for *resolutions* (McCulloch 2005),
 - ... and long-term seeds (Farall 2013)

Realistic recommendations

- Prison and probation under pressure
 - Budget / caseloads
 - Changes and implementation never stop
 - Public and political scrutiny / blaming culture
- What works:
 - too heavily focused on challenging deficits and individual responsabilisation (**Whitehead 2007**)
 - managerealized
 - accredited programs as isolated interventions
- ... desistance research evokes a sense of urgency for change / new professionalism...
- ... that needs a realistic approach

Changes building on existing strengths (1)

- Adopt a **transition based mission**
 - All clients are emergent desisters
 - Dignity, development and significance
 - Desistance focused practice: 4 forms of rehabilitation: psychological, moral, social and judicial (McNeill 2012)
- Self-direction (VanMontfoort & Slot 2013, 2015):
 - services are always focused on maximal autonomy of offenders, their networks, family and other citizens
 - planning, support and supervision are co-regulated

Changes building on strengths (2)

- Solution-focused approach (Kim Berg 2004, DeShazer 2011)
 - Risk-based approach is a means, not a goal
- Training in positive working alliance
 - MI, solution focused work, encouraging reflection (King 2014)
 - Attitude focused on self-direction, supporting maximum autonomy and retreat

Changes building on strengths (3)

- From organizations to networks
 - Desistance is “both a personal journey and a social project”
 - Rights and obligations in citizen roles
 - From an “institutional and silo paradigm” towards a “network and support paradigm”
(Kröber and Van Dongen 2011).
- Shared excellence management
- Network skills training

Thank you!

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