

# A COMPARISON OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS IN JAPAN AND SCOTLAND ON WHAT WORKS TO REDUCE OFFENDING

Monica Barry

University of Strathclyde, Scotland



The Daiwa  
Anglo-Japanese  
Foundation



# Individual theories of desistance

- Prioritise the characteristics and motivations of individuals, for example:
  - Maturation (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990);
  - Burn out (Maruna, 2001);
  - Changes in attitude or identity (Giordano et al, 2002);
  - Deterrent effect of the Criminal Justice system (Farrall, 2002);
  - A reassessment of costs and benefits of crime (Cornish and Clark, 1986).

# Structural theories of desistance

- Prioritise the role of informal social controls and social bonds, so-called structural turning points such as:
  - Relationships with law abiding partners/ friends;
  - Employment;
  - Marriage.

# Integrative theories of desistance

- Attempts to overcome the structure-agency divide, for example through a focus on:
    - Cognitive change;
    - Alternative identities;
    - Moral values;
- in association with:*
- structural turning points.
  - 'Readiness for change'.

# GAPS IN DESISTANCE THEORIES

- The significance of disempowerment and marginality in youth;
- The significance of informal social networks;
- The significance of political and socio-economic considerations.

- Disadvantaged young people often only anticipate rather than achieve ‘turning points’;
- Relational support is crucial in the desistance process (Weaver 2016);
- Desistance requires political as well as relational support (Barry, 2016) in the form of ‘recognition’.

# DESISTANCE STUDIES IN SCOTLAND AND JAPAN

- Interviews in 2000 with 40 young people in Scotland aged 18-33, with a second sweep of half of them in 2010, then aged 29-43;
- Interviews between 2009 and 2012 with 45 young people in Japan aged 16-37;
- Common offences: drugs, theft, assault and driving offences;
- The majority had desisted from crime at the time of interview.

# WHY THEY STARTED OFFENDING

- Drink and drugs;
- Peer pressure;
- Seeking attention;
- Needing money;
- Boredom/seeking excitement (in Scotland);
- Pressure of school life (in Japan).

# WHY THEY STOPPED OFFENDING

- Normality as 'adults';
- Anticipated integration;
- Fear of the consequences of offending;
- Getting caught by the police;
- Feeling guilty/hurting their families.

# WHAT WORKS TO ENCOURAGE DESISTANCE

- Relational factors (Weaver, 2016)
  - communicating on their level,
  - respecting their views;
  - encouraging their integration.
- Probation was seen as the most effective means of encouraging desistance.

Of course young people themselves have to change, but adults should not treat them as a nuisance or with prejudice. Each person has her own reason for offending. If adults try to understand the reason and advise them with care and open-mindedness, they may change (16 year old female, Japan).

[T]hey lectured me properly and they listened to me properly. They also praised my good points but they told me my bad points too (20 year old female, Japan).

They didn't judge you at all.... They were there, they would listen to you... they give you every bit of advice they possibly can to show you what you're doing to people... and I think that's what kinda really hit me (20 year old male, Scotland).

[My probation officer] was good with us. He gave us a lot of chances and that, so I wanted to prove to him that I could do it (23 year old male, Scotland).

They put time and effort into sitting talking to you and working or attempting to work out with you what was going on, why you were doing these things... they wanted to find the root of the problem rather than gloss over the top (29 year old male, Scotland).

We just didn't get on so I didn't even want to go cos I was thinking 'oh, I have to go in here' and it was just a horrible atmosphere and I couldn't tell her anything and stuff like that. So I just sat there and let [the probation officer] speak and she's like that 'you'll need to speak to us'. And I was like that 'but I don't feel comfortable speaking to you, so can I not change my worker?' And she went 'no, you'll just stick with me'. So then I ended up just saying 'fuck it, I'm not going' and breached it, got the jail. (26 year old female, Scotland).

Because I have that experience too, I'm sure there is something I can do, by talking to them from their point of view... I have that experience so I can understand them (29 year old female, Japan).

I might be able to act like a bridge, helping offenders to meet people who can inspire them... I might be able to show that there is another way of living one's life (25 year old male, Japan).

I'd love to be a drugs counsellor, I really would. I'd love to be able to sit with a group of people and talk to them... I've been through it all myself (21 year old female, Scotland).

[Get] folk who understand what they're going through to talk to them... Having somebody there that's done it... folk who understand it can sit there and say to the kids: 'now look, I've been there, I've done exactly what you're doing and this is the way it will end up' (19 year old male, Scotland).

Probation officers [in Japan] often cannot act as a role model for young offenders. I think this is a very serious problem. I am very grateful for what they do, they are volunteers, aren't they. I respect them very much, but in my case my probation officer did not inspire me at all as a role model. Former offenders would make good probation officers. There are many who want to become a probation officer, but the law does not allow it (25 year old male, Japan).

It was great to talk to people like yourself who didn't talk down to you, they didn't judge you. They spoke to you like a normal person and they could relate to you (34 year old female, Scotland).

Some [probation officers] say to me, you have to open up. No, I don't have to open up. If I want to, I will. I've opened up to that many workers in my life, I can't be bothered meeting a new one to tell them my life story again... They should have like one worker that gets to know you and you can work with them and you can tell them things. But if you're getting passed from pillar to post... I'm not wanting to tell the [entire] social work department my life story (26 year old female, Scotland).

You find something to protect... young people, including myself, are looking for a place to stay... I want to be accepted, and I think it's the same for everybody (20 year old male, Japan).

I wonder if [young people] are likely to stop offending when they have found something that they want to protect, such as a child... Those with a family or friends who are dear to them... I realised how important these things were to me only when I had lost them (29 year old male, Japan).

Once [my son] was born, then I really put the foot down... Because I had someone else I had to look out for other than myself (24 year old male, Scotland).

Listen to them. Many of them feel lonely and isolated. They feel no one can understand them. Although they may look tough and rough, deep inside they feel they need someone to talk to (32 year old male, Japan).

[Agencies] need to listen to them properly to start with. They need to listen to them without becoming bossy... and speak to them from their point of view... and not to abandon them (18 year old female, Japan).

Sit and listen to what they're doing, what their day-to-day routine [is], what their background is, why they're doing [drugs], do they want to come off [drugs]... If you're offending, you're offending for a reason (21 year old female, Scotland).

# What works to reduce offending

- Respectful, non-judgemental and constructive communication;
- Education about substance misuse;
- Leisure and employment opportunities.

# Young people in transition

- Liminal beings:
  1. fall between the gaps of social structures;
  2. are on its margins; and
  3. occupy its lowest rungs (Turner, 1969).

# THE NEED FOR RECOGNITION

*“Recognition is... a vital human need”*

(Taylor, 1992: 25).

*‘Recognition is... the giving and receiving of  
acknowledgement, encouragement  
and affirmation*

*to promote social identity and respect’*

(Barry, 2016: 92).

# FACTORS INFLUENCING DESISTANCE

- Recognition;
  - Integration;
  - Normality.
- 
- Desistance came from relational support, self-determination and structural change;
  - Probation worked because of the personality of the supervisor, the relationship with the client, and continuity/consistency of approach.

- Many young offenders desist from crime *in anticipation of* recognition, integration and/or normality;
- Turning points do not always happen *before* desistance has occurred.
- Many young people live in hope of a better life.

# CONCLUSIONS

- The desistance literature needs to better acknowledge the marginalised status of young people in transition;
- Desistance often occurs in anticipation of normality and integration rather than because of it;
- Young people want to belong to a sub group of peers in the liminal phase of youth;
- Young people want to belong to the mainstream as they become young adults;
- The relationship with the probation officer is crucial;
- Recognition is a 'vital human need'.

# CONCLUSIONS (cont.)

- The UK must look to Norway and its 'reintegration guarantee';
- Crime is a lack of belonging to, and a lack of recognition from, the established community (Leonardsen, 2003);
- The 'reintegration guarantee' helps acknowledge the responsibility of society in the desistance process;
- Desistance is a two-way process.