



Book reviews

Shadd Maruna, *Making Good: How Ex-convicts Reform and Rebuild their Lives* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2001) ISBN 1-55798-731-9, 211 pp. (hardback)

Making Good: How Ex-convicts Reform and Rebuild their Lives is concerned with the subject matter – desistance from crime. On the one hand, it seeks to investigate how ex-convicts make sense of their lives and manage to ‘go straight’ after several years of persistent offending. On the other, it also investigates why some choose to continue their criminal careers after serving several spells in jail. As set out in the introductory chapter, “[t]he premise of this book is that to successfully maintain . . . abstinence from crime, ex-offenders need to *make sense* of their lives” (p. 7). Shadd Maruna thus argues that allowing ex-offenders to tell their stories is the best method of capturing the processes involved in their recovery and understanding how they create new lives for themselves. Indeed this book has many amazing and touching stories about how ex-prisoners overcame a life of crime and drugs. It also offers readers a glimpse of hope in that there are successful cases where criminals manage to make a difference in changing from a chaotic lifestyle to a life of decency, thereby repudiating the common saying – “Once a criminal, always a criminal”.

A number of researchers such as Leibrich (1996), Devlin and Turney (1999), Farrall (2000) and Laub and Sampson (2001) have recently sought to analyse the reasons for desistance from crime from the perspectives of offenders or ex-offenders. Likewise, Maruna has been very successful in exploring why people go straight by listening to the voices of a selected group of British ex-convicts. His qualitative study is certainly a valuable contribution to the theoretical understanding of desistance, and its findings shed light on how support services can be delivered to facilitate personal reform and achieve effective offender rehabilitation. For instance, institutionalizing the redemption ritual or “more formalized and systematic mechanisms for recognizing reform efforts might be worth considering” (p. 162) to reward pro-social behaviour. In other words, one clear message conveyed in *Making Good* is that criminal justice policy and practice should not solely focus on the negative aspects of an individual which is disintegrative and disempowering but

should pay more attention to acknowledging positive things that ex-offenders have finally achieved which is reintegrative and empowering (see Braithwaite, 1989).

The book is structured into three main parts as a research monograph. Part 1 consists of two chapters. Chapter 1 summarizes what the concept of desistance is by reviewing existing criminological and criminal justice research literature. Readers may find this chapter useful as it discusses the current theoretical debate and conceptualization of the elusive term *desistance*. For instance, while some see “desistance as a termination event” (p. 22), it can also be regarded “as a maintenance process” (p. 26). Positivist approaches explain desistance as the process of ageing out of crime whereas phenomenological approaches emphasize the importance of lived experience of going straight. This chapter contends that these two approaches are not mutually exclusive but complementary in enhancing our understanding of desistance. Chapter 2 details the research methodology, sampling procedures and methods of data analysis of the present Liverpool Desistance Study (LDS). The data in the form of self-narratives were obtained from both desisting ex-offenders and a matched sample of persistent offenders. An additional methodological note is attached in the Appendix to discuss how rich qualitative data were analysed and presented.

Part 2 contains three chapters which report major findings generated from the interview data. Chapter 3 analysed the reasons for repeat offending according to three themes, namely criminogenic traits, criminogenic backgrounds and criminogenic environments. There is evidence that there are not many differences in these three themes between the two groups of participants, that is the desisting ex-offenders and active offenders. For example, personality traits such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, extroversion, neuroticism, and openness to experience did not differ significantly. Regarding the background factors, the frequency of participants who reported the experience of growing up in economically disadvantaged circumstances, poverty, being abused or neglected, having low educational attainment, drug or alcohol addiction and past criminal behaviour is similar between two groups. At the outset it must be emphasized that these findings are not meant to be conclusive given the subjective nature of qualitative research. Chapter 4 primarily examines how 20 active offenders constructed their identity factors to account for their continued involvement in criminal behaviour. Their self-explanations are many, and some examples are the cycle of poverty and stigma, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, lack of opportunities, lack of self-efficacy and little personal control over their future and fate. On the other hand, Chapter 5 looks at how the reformed ex-offenders constructed their desisting self and defined their lives without crime or drugs based on a number of recovery

stories. While the author acknowledges the uniqueness of the self-narratives of each participant, he attempts to conclude that besides motivating to change, an individual 'needs a logical, believable, and respectable story' about who he/she is, to allow for desistance and to make desistance a necessity (p. 86). In general, the process of making "good from the bad" involves learning from the past choices as deviants, relinquishing an old self, finding a meaning for going straight, and finally accepting conventional values and generating new goals and plans.

Apart from summarizing what has been discussed in preceding chapters, Part 3 explores three broad themes: generative motivations (Chapter 6), shame, blame and the core self (Chapter 7), and the rituals of redemption (Chapter 8). It also points some directions on how direct practice can be improved with the aim of providing support to offenders in effecting and maintaining their changes. To be more specific, Chapter 6 reports that "criminal behaviour might be used as a way of filling a void or emptiness in a person's life" (p. 118) and argues that employment and generative pursuits are instrumental to successful offender reform. Some of the desisting ex-offenders in this study said that they gained insight about their deviant lifestyle and were more determined to go straight by acting as a counsellor, volunteer, and youth worker. By helping inmates or offenders on community sentence, they not only found roles in society but also had high expectations of themselves to remain clean in order to convince others that they had changed. Therefore, the author explicitly points out that a reintegration programme should provide ex-offenders with tangible help with finance and accommodation and at the same time should give them opportunities to experience productive activities. In Chapter 7, implications for therapeutic work with ex-offenders are discussed. It appears that the author is in favour of some approaches such as narrative therapy, cognitive self-change, and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) which encourage ex-offenders to reconstruct life histories and exchange new life stories. However, empirical evidence is much needed to prove whether these recommended approaches really work in practice. The final chapter supports the use of compensatory model to understand desistance from crime. The compensatory model usually sees that "people do not blame themselves for their problems but hold themselves responsible for the solution to their own problems" (p. 148). The interview data show that some ex-offenders excused themselves for committing crime but were committed to making changes. In order to facilitate them to change, rewards and positive acknowledgement should be given to recognize their motivation, pro-social behaviours, rehabilitation efforts and accomplishments. This finding is very similar to Trotter's (1999) pro-social modelling that seems to work well with involuntary clients in the fields of child protection and probation.

Generally speaking, this book will be most suited to people who are being introduced to the areas of offender rehabilitation, for example social work, criminal justice and law students and of course to a wide range of practitioners who are involved in legal and welfare work with offenders as well as serving prisoners and ex-offenders. On the one hand, there is a great deal for us to learn from the ex-offenders' self-narratives. On the other hand, we should not only show an appreciation of those who make efforts to go straight but also continue to look for better ways to address the fundamental structural issues such as poverty, unemployment and inequality which have an impact of people's criminal careers.

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L. Graig Parker, Jr., *The Japanese Police System Today: A Comparative Study* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 2001) pb ISBN 0-7656-0762-X, 284 pp, \$22.95.

Works on Japanese law and society in general either assume or suggest, according to a leading authority in the field (Johnson, 2000), that Japan possesses a unique legal (and police) culture, which is extraordinary in its effect. Graig Parker, Jr. is to be congratulated for producing a remarkable textbook on the Japanese Police system, a distinctive system in the world po-

lice scene, which is, however, gradually changing. The book divides into twelve chapters. In the first chapter the author provides an overview of crime in Japan and the United States, serving as an integrated introduction. Here Parker focuses on the issues of safety, public reporting of criminal activities, the compilation of statistical data on crime, and specific offences such as homicide, and gun possession and use.

In chapter two the focus is on the historical and legal framework. Parker identifies the tendency of the Japanese towards “ethical resolutions” of disputes, and describes the historical trends having influenced the formation, structure, and features of the modern Japanese police force/service. The next chapter, which is rather descriptive, provides an overview of the Japanese police force/service. Apart from its structure, useful information and insightful details are given about entrance in the police academy, standards, training as well as salaries.

In chapter four the *Koban* system of policing is highlighted. The *Koban*, the mini police stations in various areas of urban centers, constitute the meeting point between the police and the community, and a place where the public input in crime prevention and detection is offered. Although, the *Koban* policing system has been considered as one of the most important elements of crime prevention in the country (Mawby, 1990), things appear to be changing. Mistrust against the *Koban* system is growing, and as a *Koban* officer put it: “. . .today some people are tempted to abolish the *Koban* system because of the decreased level of cooperation” (p. 57).

In chapter five the author is concerned with the issue of Japanese police officers’ attitudes towards their work, police crimes, and future prospects. The Japanese police officers have had the same source of interest for policing as their western world counterparts, most notably investigating serious crime and chasing criminals. Although they do not find *Koban* policing, which opposes the hardcore police work, as a glamorous part of their profession, they “seem to find fulfillment in what they do” (p. 89), including the interaction with the public.

Chapter six constitutes an extensive presentation of the Hokkaido and Okayama prefectural police forces with specific reference to the *Chuzaisho*, the rural version of the *Koban*. This presentation is very successfully backed up by the author’s narration of his visits in the *Chuzaisho*, as well as the conversations he had with the *Chuzaisan*, the community policing officers in these rural areas. Moreover, Parker provides pictures, figures, and crime prevention cartoons, which are one of the most popular methods of approaching young people when it comes to the prevention of specific offences in Okayama.

In chapter seven the main focus is on the investigation of criminal activities in Japan. Firstly, Parker provides some characteristics of the Japanese society that distinguish this country from the rest of the industrially advanced world, as well as some information about crime and victimization. Then the author focuses on the investigation of financial crime, computer-related crime, violent crime as well as on the role of Japanese public prosecutor in the whole process, an issue very poorly researched and documented so far (Johnson, 2000).

In the next chapter the Japanese legal system, which obtained its current form from General Douglas MacArthur and the American Occupation Force immediately after the end of World War II, is presented. Although the trial process in Japan and the western world have many common characteristics, in Japan there are no jury trials, and the defendant cannot plead guilty as the additional evidence beyond confession is of great importance for the Japanese system. What is very interesting about the trial process in the country is the extremely low acquittal rates. On page 148 there is a figure with the process in a criminal trial that allows the reader to fully understand its stages. Information about the Japanese prison system, which has received rigorous criticism by international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, is also given. Finally, a subsection of this chapter is dedicated to probation, parole, and community-based treatment. Although these services exist to help the offenders rehabilitate or divert them from the prison system, something desirable, they neither receive the attention they should nor the funding as the police, courts, and prison, which suggests the punitiveness of the Japanese legal system.

Chapter nine focuses on the criminality of foreigners, one of the most widely researched issues in criminology. Innumerable questions regarding the relationship between foreigners and crime have been raised, and several links between them and specific criminal activities have been made. In Japan, a generally homogeneous society, the same situation is present as public, media, and criminal justice agencies' perception of foreigners is not the best. The way the media use language creates (and reinforces) the *zeugma* foreigners-criminality, which appears to be well-established in the Japanese social consciousness. Of all foreigner groups it is the Chinese that have caused a "moral panic".

Chapter 10 is dedicated to the issue of youth crime in the country. The Japanese youth who experience tremendous pressure for academic success resort to delinquent and criminal activities that are considered to undermine traditional values, and especially groupism, the cornerstone of the Japanese culture. These activities take the form of *Boso-zoku* (motorcycle gangs), vi-

olence against the teachers and adults in general, truancy, alcohol and drug abuse, and, sometimes, even murder.

In chapter eleven Parker focuses on the relationship between the police and the community, and to a limited extent goes back to chapter four, where he engaged into an analysis of the *Koban* policing system. Here, however, the author provides a detailed account of the family counseling that the police officers offer to the public, something showing how close the police is to the community and vice versa. The last is one of the functions of the Japanese police that have created a situation in which some citizens bring the community officers gifts (Bayley, 1991). The author also provides information on the lower social strata of the country, suicides, crime prevention, private security, the opinion of the public for the police, the *Aum Shinrikyo* Sect (the cult that released lethal poison in the Tokyo subway killing and injuring a large number of people), as well as organized crime. Finally in the last chapter Parker synthesizes his data and attempts at identifying the lessons that can be learned from a distinct police system such as this of Japan.

The Japanese Police System Today: A Comparative Study is a book of great qualities. The first one is that it catches the changes that have occurred through time. As a kind of longitudinal study, Parker's work is able to show the reading audience whether, and to what extent, the Japanese police system has changed. Although the author is American, he seems to be quite familiar with his research topic. This is something that works in favour of the reading audience, which gains a vast amount of detailed insights and information of such a distant – to the Western world – culture. Some chapters are a real treasure for researchers. For example, chapter nine on crime and foreigners in Japan is probably the only English written piece of work available on the particular issue. Moreover, another quality lies on the inclusion of a combination of current and older, thorough bibliography something that certainly can help prospective researchers on the topic. Parker has made use of relevant textbooks, scientific journals, reports, and newspaper articles that cannot be easily found, and has probably written the most updated text on the Japanese police system. There is only one point of criticism, which, however, is very small and cannot detract from the overall value of the book. In my opinion the author should expand a little more when providing an account of the organized crime in the country; in fact a whole chapter should be dedicated to this issue. In general terms, the book is well-written, accessible, extremely interesting, and affordable to students. It is a book that not only the comparative criminologist but also the reader with an interest in the Japanese culture will find an invaluable addition to their bookshelf.

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