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What is This?

Control or change? Developing dialogues between desistance research and public protection practices

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Abstract
This article aims to scope out some of the implications of desistance research for the community management of high risk offenders. Acknowledging the limited empirical research exploring this interface, this article outlines the evolving evidence base and what this tells us about the process of desistance and what supports it. The evidence as to whether 'high risk offenders' desist and what we know about this process is discussed prior to a consideration of the orientation of current practice approaches which can be located in the community/public protection model. Potential dialogues between desistance research and public protection practices are discussed to explore ensuing implications and opportunities for practice.

Keywords
desistance, MAPPA/public protection, offender management, probation, reintegration

Understanding desistance

This article cannot elaborate on the ever burgeoning theoretical and empirical literature on desistance in any depth, not least in view of the sheer diversity of pathways to desistance that this body of work has revealed, whether through spirituality (see for example Giordano et al., 2002, 2007; Maruna et al., 2006), marriage

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(see for example Bersani et al., 2009; Monsbakken et al., 2012a; Sampson et al., 2006; Savolainen, 2009), parenthood (see for example Bersani et al., 2009; Edin and Kefalas, 2005; Kreager et al., 2010; Moloney et al., 2009; Monsbakken et al., 2012b; Savolainen, 2009), or employment (see for example Owens, 2009; Rhodes, 2008; Savolainen, 2009; Uggen, 2000; Uggen and Staffs, 2001). Even within these many pathways, significant divergences of experience have been reported across ages, gender, ethnicities and religions (for an overview see Weaver and McNeill, 2010). Moreover, research has revealed some conditional interaction between these various transitional events and experiences – such as, for example, the links between employment and investment in significant intimate relations and/or parenthood (see for example Bianchi et al., 2005 cited in Bersani et al., 2009; Edin et al., 2001; Laub and Sampson, 2001; Owens, 2009; Rhodes, 2008; Savolainen, 2009). The nature of these interacting life transitions influences the various impacts they exert on people's identities, behaviours and social contexts. Employment can, for example, provide the economic resources that facilitate both marriage and family formation (Lichter et al., 1991 in King et al., 2007) and, in turn, the realization or animation of the assumed social role and identity as a provider (Bersani et al., 2009). Similarly, providing for one's family can be a powerful motivator to obtain and sustain employment (Edin et al., 2001; Edin and Kefalas, 2005; Savolainen, 2009). In turn, the absence of employment can generate financial pressures on families who may alleviate these pressures by resorting to illicit activities (Moloney et al., 2009; Shannon and Abrams, 2007; Wakefield and Uggen, 2008 in Savolainen, 2009). What emerges from a critical reading of the research on desistance, then, is that it is the complex and contingent interaction of various opportunities for change, mediated through the lens of an individual's personal priorities, values, aspirations and relational concerns that (sometimes) imbue these events or experiences with significance and which directly influence their potential to enable or constrain processes of change, at different stages in a given individual's life (Weaver, 2012).

Modelling the desistance process

Notwithstanding this level of diversity, a number of desistance scholars have sought to delineate models to illustrate the process through which people come to desist. There are important theoretical divergences between the models discussed below which are beyond the scope of this discussion to elaborate upon. These departures inform the relative emphasis placed on interactions between individual agency, cognition and emotion and the personal, relational, situational and socio-structural contexts. Generally, however, these models are broadly compatible for comparative purposes (see Table 1).

Capturing the first stages of desistance, Bottoms and Shapland (2011)[1] found that shifts in offending were often linked to a triggering event such as the importance of new and strengthening social relationships, which influenced individual's desires, and thus motivation, to change. This is consistent with Giordano et al.'s (2002) assertion that people must experience a shift in their 'openness to change'.

Table 1. Three models of desistance processes (adaptation of Weaver and McNeill, 2010a).

Giordano et al. (2002)	Vaughan (2007)	Bottoms and Shapland (2011)
1. General cognitive openness to change	1. Discernment: review of possible lifestyle choices	1. Current offending is influenced by a triggering event
2. Exposure to 'hooks for change'	2. Deliberation: review of pros and cons of various options (a comparison of possible selves)	2. The wish to try to change
3. Availability of an appealing and conventional self	3. Dedication: commitment to a new non-criminal identity	3. Begins to think differently about self and surroundings
4. Reassessment of attitudes to deviant behaviour		4. Takes action towards desistance
		5. Attempts maintenance – the individual may encounter obstacles, temptation or provocations which trigger relapse
		6. The individual finds reinforcers
		7. Realizes crime-free identity as a non-offender

Vaughan (2007: 394) similarly suggests that this initial stage can be described as a period of 'discernment' where the person reviews the possible alternative lifestyle choices available to them, in contrast to their current lifestyle. So here the person is at 'least willing to consider different options'. Giordano et al.'s (2002) second stage in the sequence of desistance suggests that being exposed to an opportunity or 'particular hook or set of hooks for change' is particularly significant (Giordano et al., 2002: 1000). Critically openness to change itself is not sufficient; what also matters is how the person receives and responds to a given opportunity for change. Such 'hooks' are conceptualized by Bottoms and Shapland (2011) as the individual's (changing) social capital, which, in addition to individual dispositions, influences the individual's progress towards desistance at different stages.

In Vaughan's second stage of *deliberation*, a person reviews the pros and cons of potential courses of action against sticking with what they know. 'What ultimately emerges is a comparison of selves – who one is and who one wishes to be' (Vaughan, 2007: 394) or, as Giordano et al. (2002: 1001) put it, the envisioning of 'an appealing and conventional replacement self'. Vaughan, like Bottoms and Shapland (2011), emphasizes the emotional component to this comparative process which involves thinking about the reactions and feelings of others, developing empathy and envisaging how one's current self or identity is perceived by others.

Stage five of Bottoms and Shapland's (2011) model crucially suggests that despite taking action towards desistance, failure to maintain these changes in the

face of obstacles, temptations or provocations may lead to relapse, although not necessarily back to the individual's starting point, resonating with Prochaska et al.'s (1992) 'spiral of change'. This is because giving up crime, like any process of change, is often very difficult; it can mean for some people changing their lifestyles and friendship groups – as well as changing their values and beliefs. There are also particular structural challenges that can impede the process of change (Farrall et al., 2010). People have numerous disadvantages and inequalities to contend with around poverty, education, employment, health and so on. But it is not just the manifestations of social exclusion that make it hard for people to change, it is the marginalized, stigmatized status itself that many people inhabit that can prove particularly difficult to overcome (see LeBel, 2007, 2012). All these factors are particularly pertinent for high risk offenders (McAlinden, 2005). Bottoms and Shapland (2011) thus emphasize the need for reinforcing factors – perhaps emerging from an individual's (changing) social relationships. In many accounts of desistance, the person experiences a shift in their identity, as suggested by the final stage of the Bottoms and Shapland's (2011) model, which is where Vaughan's third and final stage of 'dedication' also comes in. He argues that individuals must regard their commitment to their new identity as incompatible with ongoing criminality, and regard criminality as 'morally incompatible with whom they wish to be' (Vaughan, 2007: 394). At this point the individual experiences the fourth stage in Giordano et al.'s (2002: 1002) formulation: 'a transformation in the way the actor views the deviant behavior or lifestyle itself'.

Dynamics in the process of change

Hope plays a key part in the process of change – particularly in the early stages. Hope can give people an increased sense of confidence that they can exercise choice and control over their lives and overcome the challenges they face in trying to give up crime (Farrall and Calverley, 2006; Lloyd and Serin, 2011). With hope, a person may be more inclined to take advantage of positive social opportunities, such as employment. They might also feel more resilient when they encounter disappointments or setbacks, so long as the problems they encounter are not excessive (LeBel et al., 2008). Too many disappointments and obstacles and, as Bottoms and Shapland's (2011) model suggests, people can feel overwhelmed, which undermines any hope they have (Burnett and Maruna, 2004). High risk offenders can face additional barriers including personal shame, stigma, damaged personal and social networks, community hostility and distrust and, not least, exclusionary public protection strategies and criminal justice policies that actively inhibit access to integrative opportunities (Burchfield and Mingus, 2008; Levenson and Cotter, 2005; McAlinden, 2005; Mingus and Burchfield, 2012; Robbers, 2008) and which, in turn, send a message that they are irredeemable (Kemshall, 2008).

In this vein, fostering different kinds of connections between people has emerged as central to practices oriented to supporting lasting change, not least because relationships of different forms are often the vehicle through which newly forming identities (such as worker, partner, or parent) are realized, solidified and sustained.

Additionally, while desistance may be one of the *ends* (or objectives) of penal practices, for the would-be desister, desistance seems to emerge rather as the *means* to actualizing their individual or relational concerns, with which continued offending is more or less incompatible (Weaver, 2012). In short, supporting desistance seems to require the development of 'social capital' (Barry, 2006; 2010; Farrall, 2004), which is the network of social or relational connections that exist between people, based on norms of reciprocity and mutual helping, through which we achieve participation in society (Fukuyama, 2001). The development of social capital among people who persistently offend is particularly important as this population tend to have very limited legitimate social capital. Their damaged ties to friends and family mean they may also have limited access to new pro-social networks and may remain embedded in criminal networks or experience social isolation (Webster et al., 2006). However, being tied into social capital does not itself produce desistance in any passive sense; it is about what those networks and relationships *mean* to the individual (Weaver, 2012). In practice then, interventions and initiatives could and should focus on supporting '[networks of] relationships to produce changes in both context and in behaviour through the modification of existing relations; … [practices should] activate the natural potential of social networks and make use of innovative forms … of relationality' (Donati, 2011: 95). This would imply that attempts to support desistance should focus on maintaining, protecting and developing the ties that matter to the individual and enhance their capacities to sustain positive roles and relationships or support them to build networks and contexts in which shifts in identities can be embedded, nurtured and sustained (McNeill and Weaver, 2010; Weaver, 2012).

Desistance from high risk offending

High risk offenders are no more a homogeneous entity than the general population itself (Kruttschnitt et al., 2000). Indeed, they engage in a diverse range of offending behaviours, for different reasons; they offend at different rates and pose different levels of risk to different types of people and they respond in diverse ways to various treatment strategies (Brayford et al., 2012; Farmer and Mann 2010; Harrison et al., 2010; Laws and Ward 2011). Psychological theoretical accounts of the aetiology and maintenance of sexual offending behaviour in particular imply a lifelong propensity for offending and this perspective is echoed by professionals, media and the public alike (Laws and Ward, 2011). Although there is evidence of desistance among high risk offending populations, this is an area that remains comparatively under-explored compared to the wealth of literature on risk and recidivism rates among these populations, and the refinement of risk assessment and management tools, processes and procedures.

Nonetheless, it is something of a truism that sex offenders are less likely to recidivate than most other groups of offenders (Harris and Hanson, 2004). The problem remains, however, that while some people may present a low risk of re-offending – or likelihood of offending – they may nevertheless pose a risk of serious harm. Notwithstanding this, there appears to be some consistency across research that, as

with the general offending population, age leads to reductions in offending behaviour, with younger people recidivating at a higher rate (see Laws and Ward, 2011 for a comprehensive review). In general, the age crime curve for sex offenders reflects a trajectory closely resembling the broad shape of the age crime curve for the general offending population (Laws and Ward, 2011). Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest variations in age-graded trajectories by offence-type and differential rates of recidivism within these categories. For example, people convicted of rape have a higher rate of sexual recidivism than people convicted of child molestation (Quinsey et al., 1995), but their offending trajectories peak earlier (between 25 and 29) and they are more likely to desist by the age of 50 (Hanson et al., 2002). The aggregate trajectory of people convicted of extra-familial child molestation shows a peak in offending around the age of 32 and progression towards desistance by 60. Late onset of offending is found in those convicted of incest sexual offences whose offending peaks in their late 30s and progresses towards desistance by age 60 (Hanson et al., 2002). Relatedly, those convicted of incest sexual offences recidivate at a lower rate than those convicted of child molestation (Quinsey, 1986; Hanson et al., 1993). It remains unclear, however, whether this reduced recidivism rate can be attributed to age or informal social controls reducing opportunities to offend. As Laws and Ward (2011) observe, both forensic psychology and the criminological literature have contributed little to our understanding of desistance from high risk offending beyond identifying the relationship between age and recidivism, although relatively isolated examples do exist.

Desistance and sexual offending

In particular, Farmer et al.'s (2011) research on ten people convicted of child molestation revealed pathways to desistance similar to those among the general offending population; those desisting had involvement with a social group or network and had also undergone a revision in their attitudes, values and beliefs, some of whom attributed turning points to participation in treatment, which they perceived as an opportunity for change. They disclosed enhanced feelings of optimism or hope and agency which enabled them to feel that they could exercise some command over what happened in their lives, experiencing an overall increase in and acceptance of responsibility for their actions. Those classified as actively offending were less agentic than those classified as desisting, tending to attribute their behaviour to external factors, exhibiting a much higher external locus of control, viewing themselves as having little control of both their own behaviour and events that happened in their lives. While men in this group had attended treatment programmes, they did not receive or respond to this in the same way. Moreover, they all described a life of social isolation and alienation reflecting their disconnectedness from social supports. This study broadly resonates with an earlier study by Kruttschnitt et al. (2000). Their study of 556 probationers convicted of sexual offences – largely child molestation – revealed that job stability significantly reduced probationers' probability of re-offending and identified a positive correlation between engagement in treatment, stable employment and reduced recidivism

which the authors related to the combined effects of both the formal and informal controls they respectively engendered. Precise explanations for this correlation are speculative and may be attributed to the role of stable employment in reflecting or enhancing responsivity or amenability to treatment or may be the result in shifts in routine activities and social networks.

Desistance and violent offending

Haggard et al. (2001) identified self-imposed social isolation, an orientation towards family and reduced physical abilities as protective or restraining factors in a study of four violent and chronic offenders who had not recidivated. All participants identified 'negative' turning points in connection with criminal acts or experiences of imprisonment, for example, which triggered a reflexive evaluation of their lifestyle, which led to a decision to try to change and which preceded behavioural lifestyle changes prior to cessation of offending, a process broadly resonant with Bottoms and Shapland's (2011) model (see relatedly Fagan, 1989). Restraining factors apprehended as critical in maintaining desistance seemed to be embedded in commitments to family life and social avoidance strategies; three participants lived socially and geographically isolated lives. While all four described living an ordinary life, albeit influenced by risk avoidance, two participants indicated that they lived under restricted circumstances and a sensitivity to societal stigmatization, provoking self-imposed isolation in anticipation of recriminations, shame and perceived stigma, and which contributed to the maintenance of a spoiled identity (on which see Hudson, 2005, 2012).

Exploring desistance from intimate partner violence, Quigley and Leonard (1996) identified divergences in rates of recidivism over three years related to the degree of initial severity of violence. Where participants desisted, this was attributed to improvements in marital and emotional functioning. A more recent study by Wilkinson (2009) sheds further light on the process of desistance from intimate partner violence drawing on the experience of five men. Wilkinson identified this process as beginning with communicating experiences of trauma through counselling, and engagement with the emotional aspects of desistance. This initial stage was held to be integral to the process of self-relabelling as a desister and critical to identity transformation. Accessing counselling increased participants' sense of agency, self-efficacy and empowerment. Feeling strong and confident to access substance abuse rehabilitation services was the next step, followed by gaining employment. Anxieties about maintaining desistance reflected a perceived absence of practical day-to-day coping skills.

Desistance and extrication from gangs

As with research into sexual and violent offending, risk factors for gang membership tend to dominate the interest of research at the expense of developing insights into desistance from gangs, although notable exceptions exist. Decker and Lauritsen's (2002) study of 24 former St. Louis gang members focused on processes of

extrication from gangs and this generally eliminated or reduced typical criminal opportunities. Their research suggested that the process of gang desistance was characterized by an accrual of perceptions running opposite to the gangs' purpose (e.g. victimization of friends, age-graded maturation, increasing commitment to family). This process parallels Vigil's (1988) findings for gang members in Southern California. Vigil found that the desistance process is marked by a 'succession quality' that included a 'combination of reasons or series of events' acting in concert with one another, pushing or pulling the individual away from the gang. Such events culminate in a decision to leave the gang. This departure usually involves the individual gradually reducing time spent with the gang by attending to family or getting a job. However, Pyrooz et al. (2012) found that the likelihood of desistance from gangs is variously enabled or constrained by an individual's level of immersion within the gang. Highly embedded individuals (Hagan, 1993 cited in Pyrooz et al., 2012) – measured in terms of status within the group, identification with and ties to the group and involvement in their offending (see also Klein and Maxson 2006) – tend to have limited human and legitimate social capital in terms of education, employment and alternative social contacts, which can inhibit or delay processes of desistance.

Bannister et al,'s (2010) study of 77 gang members in Scotland suggested a range of explanations for exiting gangs. Some had simply grown out of gang fighting; it no longer held the excitement that (at least in part) attracted them in the first instance. Others were increasingly aware of the negative consequences of gang fighting and other violent behaviours. The physical dangers of a violent encounter and the prospect of (a return to) imprisonment had grown in significance for these individuals. Crucially, a seemingly successful exit strategy rested on the establishment of new social and economic experiences and relationships within and outwith their immediate communities. The development of long-term relationships and the securing of employment created ties that former gang members did not want to endanger through continued gang membership and violent behaviours.

Current practice under MAPPA

There are, then, broad correlations in the pathways to desistance among both high risk and general offending populations, which broadly relate to internal attitudinal changes and enhanced capacities to self-risk manage and external, socio-economic opportunities to realise change. Similarly, the aspects of supervision that high risk offenders subject to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) value correlate with the findings of evaluations of community supervision undertaken with the 'general' offending population. Wood and Kemshall (2007) found that MAPPA eligible offenders valued and benefited from attention to their personal and social problems, and to their personal goals, needs and desires. Participants saw a balance between internal and external controls as key to their effective risk management. While some participants saw external controls as intrusive, where they could understand the relationship between such controls and the management of their behaviour they were more likely to accept and comply with them. Correlative

with similar findings emerging not only from the desistance literature but evidence emerging from legitimacy (i.e. Digard, 2010), compliance (i.e. Farrall, 2002; Robinson and McNeill, 2008; Ugwudike, 2010) and effectiveness studies (i.e. Dowden and Andrews, 2004), this means engaging and working with offenders, not on them (McCulloch, 2005). In this vein, MAPPA eligible offenders were more likely to engage and comply with supervision if the role of MAPPA and supervision requirements had been properly explained to them. Indeed many saw MAPPA as having a legitimate role in helping them avoid future offending and reintegrate into society. Offenders were able to articulate the techniques helpful in changing behaviours and these included: self-risk management including the use of contracts and self-reporting to professionals if they believed they were about to offend; clear articulation of victim issues including recognition of the impact on children, and the use of distraction techniques to avoid inappropriate thoughts when seeing children. This seems to emphasize the importance of work oriented to enhancing self-efficacy and internal loci of control; to the development of agency and to methods maximizing their participation in the process of change.

MAPPA is the key operational structure framing the community management of sexual and violent offenders in England and Wales and Registered Sex Offenders and Restricted Patients in Scotland. In this context the prediction, management and prevention of risk is a core preoccupation of professionals and policy makers. Accordingly, some commentators have portrayed MAPPA as illustrative of a system of differential justice, enframed by a distinct legislative and policy context relating to specific categories of offender, reflecting divergences in conceptions of offenders by offence type, and a shift in offender management practices for these categories of offender which depend primarily on mechanisms of control and sanctions in the event of non-compliance (Kemshall, 2008; Robinson and McNeill, 2004; Stone, 2012). This implies a morally informed distinction between those who are considered capable or deserving of being socially included and integrated and those who are not, differentiated more by the nature of their offending and their potential to cause harm, than the likelihood of their recidivism.

MAPPA in Scotland has not been subject to evaluation or inspection, nor has it inspired much commentary or critique in the way that the English and Welsh MAPPAs have (HMIP and HMIC, 2011; Home Office, 2006; Kemshall et al., 2005, Maguire et al., 2001, Peck, 2011, Wood and Kemshall, 2007). MAPPA in England and Wales, however, has generally been characterized by the use of restrictive conditions to enforce control-focused risk management plans as part of an overall community protection approach to risk management (Connelly and Williamson, 2000; Kemshall, 2008; HMIP and HMIC, 2011), although there are some examples of change-focused approaches evident in the emergence of Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) and Good Live Model (GLM), pro-social supervision, community awareness and education (Brayford et al., 2012; Kemshall and Wood, 2012). The community protection approach is characterized by compulsory conditions, surveillance and monitoring, enforcement, compulsory engagement in treatment and an emphasis on victim and community rights over those of offenders (Kemshall, 2008), all of which are intended to constrain opportunities for offending.

These restrictive interventions essentially control where someone can go, where they can live, what they can do, whom they can approach, contact or otherwise. Such exclusionary and controlling measures can reinforce or communicate a sense of being different, an outsider, someone to be kept away from other people (Hudson, 2005; Kemshall, 2008; Laws and Ward, 2011; McAlinden, 2005). The offender then becomes subject to an ever-growing awareness of what they cannot do but has limited opportunity to develop a more positive alternative, leaving little incentive to change. It also betrays an erroneous perception of the offender as someone permanently at risk of re-offending, who is unable to change and who must be managed (Kemshall, 2008). Moreover, those subject to restrictive conditions may struggle with social isolation and experience difficulties with community reintegration precisely because of the restrictive conditions in place which enforce distance from families and social networks and other social and vocational opportunities (Burchfield and Mingus, 2008; Levenson and Cotter, 2005, McAlinden, 2005, 2009; Robbers, 2008). Given the emphasis placed on agency, responsibility, hope, identity, supportive relationships and social capital in offenders' own accounts of giving up crime, this sense of permanent marginalization is concerning, not least when such short term containment measures pose a threat to people's longer term reintegration, may increase the likelihood of re-offending (Levenson and Cotter, 2005; Robbers, 2008), and may discourage practitioners from prioritizing the strengths, goals and aspirations of would-be desisters.

Wood and Kemshall (2007), amongst others, note the increased enforcement of licence conditions and of the sex offender register since the inception of MAPPA, which is construed by some as evidence of effectiveness. In this vein, some would argue that professional compliance with the process and procedures in managing risk has become more important than promoting the longer-term desistance and reintegration of 'high risk offenders' (Barry, 2007; Hayles, 2006). Others (i.e. Digard, 2010, Ugwudike, 2011) have observed that rigid or incomprehensible enforcement practices can undermine the perceived legitimacy of agencies' and offenders' commitments to both short and long term compliance and desistance, impacting negatively on offenders' attitudes, well-being, openness to collaborate and disclose, and intentions for future behaviour.

Control *and* Change: Alternative directions

Kemshall (2008) analyses two strategies for the management of high risk offenders – the protection strategy which aims to protect through risk control – and the reintegration strategy which aims to reduce risk and protect through integration, reflecting a distinction between short-term incapacitation-based, control-focused approaches and long-term change-focused approaches (Kemshall, 2008). Kemshall (2008) contends that although different discourses of risks, conceptions of the offender and justice underpin the protection and reintegration strategies, they can and should be blended – in a protective integration strategy, providing both safety for victims and offenders and greater long term efficacy of interventions and self-regulation.

Essentially, then, in addition to the imposition of external, restrictive measures of control, risk management plans and interventions need to take account of offenders' capacities to exercise or acquire internal controls. Internal controls refer to those strategies that focus more on developing the offenders' own ability to avoid and manage risk situations. Self-risk management is promoted through programmes of intervention that seek to address offenders' readiness to change and help develop skills and strategies for avoidance, diversionary activities and cognitive skill development. Treatment can be effective and those based on Risks, Need, Responsivity (RNR) are generally considered to be more effective than others, but the results are modest and do not dramatically cut re-offending rates (Laws and Ward, 2011; Lösel and Schmucker, 2005; Raynor and Vanstone, 1997; Raynor, 2004). Indeed, it is widely recognized that the quality of the relationship that exists between practitioner and probationer (Dowden and Andrews, 2004; Rex, 1999), the social and environmental contexts of change (McCulloch, 2005), offender motivation (Raynor, 2004; Ward and Maruna, 2007), and help with personal and social problems (Raynor and Vanstone, 1997) are also critical variables influencing the achievement of outcomes. However, while the evidence suggests that treated sex offenders recidivate at a lower rate than untreated sex offenders, as Laws and Ward (2011) point out, it is unclear what mechanisms are operating to enable (or constrain) desistance and reintegration because offenders are not followed up for long enough, and in particular, rarely in their personal and social contexts, which may have an influence on the outcomes.

The imposition of external controls and the risk-focused orientation of treatment programmes, geared to the development of internal controls, may be important but they are not in themselves sufficient to support long term change. The effects of treatment could be improved if practice incorporated desistance research and united these approaches with broader integrative strategies promoting social inclusion and the development of social capital and opportunities to expend it (Barry, 2006). Desistance research can illuminate the relational and psychological mechanisms involved in the process of giving up crime, and lends support to some of the identified protective and promotive factors that can serve to mitigate negative influences. It is increasingly recognized that interventions for high risk offenders should aim to strengthen and develop these protective and promotive factors alongside other measures to promote external and internal controls. However, as Gadd and Farrall (2004) suggest, practitioners need to consider what these factors mean to a given individual, as well as how they might correlate with reduced recidivism at the aggregate level. This means understanding how mechanisms of control might enable or constrain change for a given individual *in situ* and how change focused approaches may enhance internalized self-control and support the development and maintenance of informal social controls.

Building on the evidence reviewed here, developing change-focused approaches to work with high risk offenders implies looking at how processes and practices are co-constructed in relationships between practitioners, offenders and those significant others that matter to them. Indeed, practitioners have a role in supporting the development or maintenance of a probationer's positive

social relationships, with friends and families as well as engaging them, where appropriate, as part of the change process, perhaps pursuing family-focused work where appropriate and providing family support, mediation and education. Working with and through families, voluntary, community and faith-based organizations to develop inter-connected communities of support, and, in that, to co-produce desistance and promote community integration and engagement, is likely to enhance the capacities of criminal justice services (Weaver 2011, 2013). These social and institutional spheres can have particular contributions to make in supporting desistance, reintegration and in promoting citizenship (Maruna and LeBel, 2009) by assisting people to develop stronger ties with their families and communities. In this context, there is increasing interest in the role of volunteers and the role of volunteering in supporting desistance (see Maruna and LeBel 2009; Uggen and Janikula, 1999; Uggen et al., 2004; Weaver 2011). An obvious example is COSA (see Bates and Wilson, 2012; McAlinden, 2005; 2007). COSA entail the development of informal networks of support and treatment involving the individual, the wider community and state or voluntary agencies. They can meet the rehabilitative needs of some individuals; reduce re-offending; address public concerns and support community engagement in supporting reintegration (Armstrong et al., 2009). Essentially, by building positive ties to and roles within communities, faith based and justice agencies can work in partnership to create channels for people's reintegration into the community and, in so doing, enhance community safety by bolstering formal social controls with informal social controls, alongside strategies to promote internal self control. In particular, this can support the identity transformations central to the desistance process and can help people to see themselves as assets, as positive contributors to communities, rather than risks or threats to them, and therefore liabilities to be controlled and managed (Maruna and LeBel, 2009). In general, then, a constructive dynamic to public protection practice means that practice needs to balance restrictive, coercive approaches with integrative, strengths based approaches (Kemshall, 2008, Kemshall and Wood, 2012). It also means progressing beyond the current focus on the individual and therefore beyond, even, a focus on interventions or programmes designed to change the way people think, although these can still play an important part in helping people change – to what individuals and informal and formal networks contribute and to developing meaningful opportunities for change (McNeill and Weaver, 2010).

Conclusion

Much of the focus of research on practice with high risk offenders has been on how to change or improve risk assessment and management practices, programmes and processes. Perhaps, as McNeill (2012) argues, our preoccupation with the mechanics of risk assessment and management has led us to neglect to enquire into the dynamics of the change processes that they presumably intend to support. Desistance research prioritizes the change process as a central concern and considers these mechanisms as one component among many in supporting the

process of change (McNeill, 2012). This would suggest that the inward looking approaches of ever-increasing regulation and defensible processes, focusing primarily on the activities of practitioners and organizations, should be balanced by a more outward looking and long-term approach to supporting change, promoting offenders' active engagement in, and ownership of, this process. As the evidence reviewed here makes clear, high risk offenders are very different from each other, their needs are complex and their pathways to desistance are individualized. The challenge for practitioners, then, is to find new ways of promoting and supporting people's social participation, capitalizing on people's strengths, building capacities, recognizing and responding to the barriers people face, and creating meaningful and sustainable opportunities to live differently. This means progressing beyond the development and provision of services primarily focused on the assessment and containment of risk towards supporting the realization of meaningful lives. Desistance-supportive policies and practices and realistic measures to prevent and reduce the economic and social costs of crime and justice require more radical, longer-term approaches than we have at present, if they are to be effective and sustainable. It may be that those working alongside high risk offenders are uniquely placed to inform this discussion and to develop innovative and creative practices that can promote and support desistance, enhance public protection and facilitate community integration among high risk offenders, and inform this hitherto underexplored area.

Note

1. Refer to Bottoms and Shapland (2011) for a detailed discussion of their interactive model of the early stages of desistance, which reflects the complex and gradual process that people often progress through, influenced by the individual's dispositions (the result of his/her personal, social and criminal history) and the social capital available to them.

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