Parole and Beyond
International Experiences of Life After Prison

Edited By
Ruth Armstrong and Ioan Durnescu
"Finding oneself released from imprisonment is akin to an animal escaping a trap only to discover it had left a piece of itself behind. In this framework I found Parole and Beyond: International Experiences of Life After Prison a compelling and humanistic portrayal of how prison affects those confined and how those released struggle to readjust in a vast and impersonal world. To read this book is to read the story of how each of us has made mistakes, accumulated regrets and attempted to piece together the remains of the day in order to mend, heal and ultimately recover."

—Dempsey Hawkins, served 38 years in prison in America before being deported to England, his country of birth

“Transition from custody to the community is a critical, risk-filled and life-determining process for every individual. It is a complex process with many inter-related variables, still under-researched and not fully understood or addressed. Supervision can help or hinder successful transition.

This timely collection of papers provides a most welcome and invaluable review of where we are now and an insightful pointer to the challenges ahead in making that transition work better for everyone. Parole and Beyond: International Experiences of Life After Prison is a must-read for criminal justice researchers, policy-makers, practitioners and the wider community to understand our present and plan for our futures together.”

—Gerry McNally, Assistant Director, The Probation Service, Ireland
This is a unique and innovative series, the first of its kind dedicated entirely to prison scholarship. At a historical point in which the prison population has reached an all-time high, the series seeks to analyse the form, nature and consequences of incarceration and related forms of punishment. Palgrave Studies in Prisons and Penology provides an important forum for burgeoning prison research across the world. Series Advisory Board: Anna Eriksson (Monash University), Andrew M. Jefferson (DIGNITY – Danish Institute Against Torture), Shadd Maruna (Rutgers University), Jonathon Simon (Berkeley Law, University of California) and Michael Welch (Rutgers University).

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“Every transition in human lives encourages the development of carefully orchestrated rituals to manage the inherent trauma. Few transitions in contemporary human experience are as extreme and fraught as the one from prison to the community. As such, it is surprising (and rather dismaying) how little social science has contributed to our understanding of this remarkable experience.

This outstanding collection of original research from a new generation of voices from around the world could not be more welcome. There is genuine wisdom and insight about the human condition to be found in the accumulation of these international experiences of institutionalisation and redemption.”

—Shadd Maruna, Professor of Criminal Justice, University of Manchester, UK

“This book deals with the difficulties and challenges ex-prisoners face in desisting from crime. An impressive feature is that it portrays the desistance process from the point of view of those who are struggling to change. With more than two million people in post-release supervision in Europe alone, managing the supervisory process is a major challenge. In that regard, this book also provides helpful insights into how can parole agencies enhance this process. In all, it makes a major contribution to understanding an aspect the penal process that is overlooked too often.”

—Elena Larrauri. Professor of Criminology and Criminal Law, University Pompeu Fabra
Ruth Armstrong • Ioan Durnescu
Editors

Parole and Beyond

International Experiences of Life After Prison
Ioan and Ruth dedicate this book to the millions of people who leave the prisons of the world every year. Without their generosity in sharing their stories with us, this book would not be possible.

We would also like to dedicate it to Jill Corcoran and Claire O’Sullivan, two brilliant probation officers who represent the many criminal justice professionals working hard to do good in this arena.

We express our gratitude to our families for their incredible support in life and work.
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A Note From the Editors

Ever since we have had prisons, most people held in them have been released back into society. For over 100 years people leaving prison have been supervised by probation services or other organizations, but little has been written about how those who are supervised experience this process, or how supervision interacts with experiences post-release. The term ‘parole’ derives from the French meaning ‘spoken word’—the idea being one of promise and trust—of taking someone at their word, and allowing them to complete part of their custodial sentence beyond the confines of the prison,
dependent upon them keeping this promise to do well. The practice of supervising people after release from prison has grown out of this gesture of hope. As this collection shows, practices of supervision in the community vary widely in different economic and cultural realities of different countries, while the realities of life after prison have some striking similarities. Where post-release supervision is more established (in Western European countries and North America) its practices have steadily moved away from an orientation to support people as they try to rebuild their lives after prison, towards a more law enforcement (USA) and risk management (England) emphasis. These changes in practice have led scholars to suggest “current parole practice scarcely resembles the classic model of parole developed a century ago” (Travis and Lawrence 2002:24).

Despite operational prevalence in many countries, and growing moves towards its implementation in others, post-release supervision is a relatively under-researched area of criminal justice jurisdiction. Some of the existing research takes a rather descriptive approach to the legislation or the arrangements around parole (Petersilia 2009; Padfield et al. 2010; Hucklesby and Hagley-Dickinson 2007). Another part of the literature focuses on resettlement theory and practice (see for example Maruna and Immarigeon 2004). Research on compliance and co-production (see McCulloch 2005; Weaver 2011) suggests that the success or failure of supervision in terms of reoffending may be related to how it is experienced. Limited research focusses on the experiences of general criminal justice supervision (Davies 1979; Kyvsgaard 1998; Healy 2012; Kawamura-Reindl and Stancu 2010); the subjective experience of offenders under drug treatment (Colman et al. 2011; De Wree et al. 2008); the difficulties experienced by probationers under electronic monitoring (Hammerschick and Neuman 2008; Stassart et al. 2000; Jorgensen 2011); and experiences of community service (Mclvor 1992; Bramberger 2009; Dantinne et al. 2009; van den Dorpel et al. 2010).

More outcome-oriented scholarship on parole tends to sideline how parole practices interact with the realities of life after prison. This is arguably foolhardy, because if parole is irrelevant to these realities, or makes them more difficult to overcome, it risks being tainted with the traits of illegitimate power. Theoretical and empirical studies link perceptions of procedural relevance and fairness with attributions of legitimacy,
and attributions of legitimacy with compliance and decreased re-offending (Digard 2010; Tyler 2003; Paternoster et al. 1997). It follows, therefore, that the processes of parole and the perceptions of parolees may play an important part in understanding parole outcomes. The lack of attention to the parolee’s voice in the last 40 years of scholarship on parole has permitted a gap in analysis of the orientation and perceived legitimacy of parole supervision. In his ethnography of parolees’ experiences Werth (2011, see further chapter 5 in this collection) addressed this point and argued that the interesting question on legitimacy arising from his data was not the more researched analysis of why people may comply with systems and institutions they consider lack legitimacy, but rather why, when parolees demonstrate a commitment to reform and self-betterment, they still resist compliance with the rules imposed by an agency with these aims.

However, studies that directly scrutinize experiences of parole or conditional release are quite scarce (see for instance Werth 2011; Halsey and Deegan 2015) or quite dated (Irwin 1970 and Erwin 1987). From more recent research (see Gunnison and Helgott 2013) we know that ex-prisoners tend to face many difficulties in dealing with the new responsibilities of the ‘free’ society. Transportation, finding a job or accommodation, coping with new technology and so on are often mentioned as challenges for those released. Meeting parole supervision conditions is almost always mentioned as a pain of life after prison. Exceptions to this include when the parole officer is trusting, listens, understands, motivates and gives parolees ‘a break’. Where parole officers have a humane orientation to supervision this pays dividends. ‘Intelligent flexibility’ (128) was often mentioned by parolees when describing an effective way to deal with parole violations. In contrast, being unnecessarily punitive or suspicious contribute significantly to a negative experience of supervision and as Petersilia (2009) puts it, usually backfires on success in reentry.

The last forty years has also seen the growth of research on the processes through which people rebuild their lives after being convicted of a criminal offence, and move away from crime. Desistance research establishes that several factors interact to help people move into more positive futures. Individual factors matter: age and maturation play a role, as do a sense of individual agency and the establishment of a non-criminal identity. But social and situational factors are also important: employment and living
arrangements can support pro-social aims and identities, just as having friends and family one wants to please can help to bolster the necessary resilience (for an excellent overview see Bottoms 2014).

This research establishes that over time most people desist from crime, and that many of them do so on their own initiative. The kind of change that underpins the ‘promise’ of parole suggests that the ‘trust’ shown to parolees should be a good bet. However, research on the early stages of desistance shows that while the majority of people convicted of criminal offences desire to leave a life of crime behind, despite their conformist views, many people commit offences along the way (Shapland and Bottoms 2011, 2006). Desistance is difficult. A wish to try to change one’s life is a common first step (Farrall et al. 2010), but is not, in itself, sufficient. Moving from ‘contemplating change’ to ‘achieving change’ is a problem (Shapland and Bottoms 2011:272). As with any journey, both the landscape and the voyager change as they travel, so that at its inception the desistance process, and any non-criminal identity, may be far more tentative than that projected on reflection in years to come (Weaver and McNeill 2010, Maruna and Farrall 2004; Bottoms et al. 2004). Our understandings of the process can therefore be influenced by whether we study desistance contemporaneously or retrospectively. Studied as it happens desistance is a slow, faltering, precarious struggle, involving episodes of relapse and recovery (Burnett 1992, 2004; Bottoms and Shapland 2011).

For recidivist young men in the UK, Shapland and Bottoms (2011) found desistance involved “significant changes in routine activities and different patterns of socialization and friendship” (272, see also Bottoms and Shapland 2011, and Farrall et al. 2010). Most had opportunities or invitations to reoffend, but those who had decided to desist said they had declined this temptation not because of the risk of detection or sanction, but for ‘moral’ reasons: because they no longer wanted to commit crime. Offending went against their sense of self, what they wanted to achieve in life and would upset people they cared about. Those committed to desistance then organised their lives to avoid situations where such temptations arose. Shapland and Bottoms call this “diachronic self-control” (2011:274). This involves subjective agency in actively trying to change the course of one’s life through what Emirbayer and Mische (1998) call the ‘projective and practical evaluative dimensions of agency’. Projective dimensions of
agency involve imagining possible future trajectories of action and reconfiguring ones actions to correspond with one’s hopes, fears or desires for the future. Practical-evaluative dimensions of agency involve appreciating possible alternative trajectories of action and making practical and normative judgements in response to present and emerging situations.

Desistance, then, is not just about wanting to change. It involves opportunity to change, what Giordano and colleagues (2002) called ‘hooks for change’. There is an interplay between ‘internal’ (personal/cognitive) elements of desistance and ‘external’ (structural/environmental) aspects (Farrall and Bowling 1999, for an overview see Kazemian and Farrington 2010). Where an optimistic outlook and self-belief are important (Maruna 2001), these elements are sustained through positive associations with non-deviant others through which change can be supported. Desistance involves an interrelational dynamic. Research shows that marriage (Laub and Sampson 2003; Sampson and Laub 1993; Laub et al. 1998; Farrington and West 1995), employment (Laub and Sampson 2003; Uggen 2000; Wright and Cullen 2004) and religion and spirituality (Giordano et al. 2007) can all benefit desistance through bolstering self-belief, providing meaning and pro-social identities as well as through changing routine activities and restructuring social networks (Warr 1993, 1998; Wright and Cullen 2004; Shapland and Bottoms 2011). Porporino (2010) neatly summarises how the changing self-perception involved in this process is both cause and consequence of the process:

... as cause it leads to the taking on of new pro-social roles (of responsible partner at home, productive citizen at work and active participant in the community) and as consequence the experience of new pro-social roles (when experienced satisfactorily) might lead to even stronger and lasting redefinitions of self. (2010:71)

However, Weaver and McNeill (2010:45) argue “it is not enough to locate the offender in the change process; it is also necessary to locate the process in its social and cultural context”, and they note that in desistance research limited attention has been paid to questions of class, culture and ethnicity, gender, and religion and spirituality (but on ethnicity see Sharp et al. 2006; Deane et al. 2007; Calverley 2009; Savolainen 2009 and chapter 10 of this collection; on gender see McIvor et al. 2000; Giordano et al. 2002;
Rumgay 2004; Gadd and Farrall 2004; Barry 2007; Gelsthorne and McIvor 2007; Wright 2015 and Halsey et al. 2016; and on spirituality and religion see Maruna and Mann 2006; Sharp et al. 2006; Giordano et al. 2007; Marranci 2009 and Armstrong 2014). Where these issues have been addressed, different social structures and cultural contexts were found to influence how, when and where desistance mechanisms operated (Calverley 2009; Savolainen 2009).

Situational factors in desistance should not, therefore be overlooked (Farrall et al. 2010), and if parole practices were designed to support routes out of crime, desistance research would suggest they may need to be socially and culturally relevant. Desistance “is not undertaken in a social vacuum” (Shapland and Bottoms 2011:276). While research has shown that a positive mindset pre-release, supported by social networks post-release, can have an indirect positive effect on the approach to difficulties in reentry, desistance for ex-prisoners is unlikely when the difficulties faced post-release are insurmountable (LeBel et al. 2008). With all the desire and self-belief in the world, desistance is more difficult for those who have fewer perceived and practical alternative trajectories. Put simply—unsupported agency will only get you so far. The ‘obstacle strewn’ path of reentry is harder where individual and social capital are weaker (Shapland and Bottoms 2011) and where social structures inhibit reintegration (Farrall et al. 2010). While desistance is individually a movement from criminal action to inaction, socially it is a movement from exclusion to inclusion (Farrall et al. 2010). Shapland and Bottoms (2011) found that individuals in their sample of prolific offenders moved towards desistance because they wanted to be included in mainstream society. How likely this is depends upon what counts as ‘inclusion’, which in turn depends upon what counts as ‘mainstream society’. Drawing on Burchardt and colleagues’ (2002) definition of social exclusion, Farrall et al. (2010) address the first of these, outlining how would be desisters emphasised three key social dimensions important to inclusion:

- **Consumption:** the capacity to purchase goods and services;
- **Production:** participation in economically or socially valuable activities
- **Social Interaction:** integration with family, friends and community

(adapted from Burchardt et al. 2002: 31)
They argued that social exclusion is not being capable of participating in these key activities in the society in which one lives for reasons that are beyond one’s individual control. Thus the “reduced rights and capacities of ex-offenders to attain full citizenship” (Uggen et al. 2004: 260 emphasis in original) can present obstacles to social inclusion and thereby undermine commitments to conformity. Therefore, in order to understand the potential for structural impediments to desistance (Farrall et al. 2010), how these operate and how they may be overcome, it is vital to understand ‘the mainstream’ - the landscape over which would be desisters are embarking, how far they can determine the terms upon which they travel, and the terrain they will traverse.

What social and penal structures are ex-prisoners returning to? What ‘projected trajectories’ might be ‘practical trajectories’, available routes of action and aspiration for people leaving prison? And what role could parole agents play in making it more, rather than less, likely that people leaving prison can act on their desires to leave crime behind and not return to prison? This collection examines the realities of life after prison and some of the routes of aspiration and action available to ex-prisoners across the world. In so doing, where parole supervision is part of the state’s criminal justice machinery, it considers how experiences of parole processes and personnel interact with these post-prison realities.

While other collections have considered a more limited international range of reentry experiences (Ekunwe and Jones 2011), there is no other book that compiles research on post-prison experiences from different jurisdictions across the world in order to learn lessons from experiences. Despite this lack of grounded knowledge, post-prison supervision continues to grow, with more than 2 million people currently under supervision only in Europe and a forecasted yearly growth rate of between 1–2 percent (SPACE II Statistics [1]). However, this trend is more visible in some countries than in others (for example Switzerland where the community service orders increased between 1996 to 2007 by 400%, and England and Wales where supervision for 12 months post-release has just been extended to all prisoners serving more than two days in prison). As we shall see later in this collection, these trends are not isolated to jurisdictions
in Europe. Realities in other countries such as Sierra Leone and Chile seem to conform these trends.

This book is timely because of the current expansion and adaptation of post-prison supervision but also because recent years have seen a shift in the focus of this supervision. Indeed, it seems that supervision nowadays goes far beyond the traditional rehabilitative aims. We now have medical, psychological or substance misuse treatment, electronic monitoring and GPS monitoring. Therefore supervision is not only expanding but also adapting to new social and political demands. Garland (2001) has described the late twentieth century probation service as one in which “the management of risks and resources has displaced rehabilitation as the organisation’s central aim” (177). It has been argued that supervision after prison has moved from a more tripartite structure of support, surveillance and sanction (Simon 1993; Lynch 2000) towards one of law enforcement (McCulloch 2013). The resulting rises in the prison population over the late 1990’s and early 2000’s have been attributed in large part to the increased number of recalls and resentences as a result of these tougher enforcement strategies (Robinson and Ugwudike 2012). However, the high costs of imprisonment and reoffending have led to renewed interest in rehabilitation in some jurisdictions and have been ‘key drivers’ in the diversification and proliferation of supervision in the UK and Europe (Grant and McNeil 2014). Despite its expansion, research on post-release supervision is still largely dependent upon accounts from practitioners, rather than those subject to supervision. This book will address this gap, providing a description of contemporary life on parole in the social and economic climate based on the experiences of those who are the subjects of this growing and changing form of penal power.

More specifically, this book is an attempt to contribute to existing knowledge methodologically, theoretically and practically through: examining life after prison from the standpoint of those living it; through illuminating the complex realities of every day life and highlighting the place of supervision in this; and refocusing our practical and theoretical vision of post-release supervision through the lens of these grounded realities. Individually and together the chapters in this book cover what life after prison feels like emotionally and socially, situationally,
economically and legally. In Chapter 2, Joanna Shapland and colleagues look at service users on licence and those on community sentences and conclude that there is no significant difference between these groups in terms of how supervision is conducted and lived. According to them, training can really make a difference in the way service users experience supervision especially in terms of what they consider to be ‘good supervision’. It seems that for service users ‘good supervision’ means good relationships, modeling good behaviour, building motivation and structuring supervision. Probationers only appreciated times when supervisors challenged anti-social behaviour and engaged them in cognitive work when this was done constructively. Service users were very appreciative when their supervisors tried to solve their problems. This observation is very useful for practice as many supervisors around the world are not always able to deal directly with practical problems. Instead, they refer or signpost the problems to other agencies in the community. In light of the desistance literature, Shapland and colleagues stress some areas where more effort is needed: togetherness in terms of setting up goals; planning for life after the supervision period; and focusing on one problem at one time and so on. Overall, the chapter provides data that supports desistance based training and practice for supervision in the community.

Chapter 3 describes the subjective experiences of parolees in one welfare country that implements the generous concept of ‘good release’. In spite of the general assumptions, Olesen and Stogaard demonstrate that in Denmark there is still a huge gap between ‘law in books’ (the concept) and ‘law in practice’ (the reality). Although the concept of ‘good release’ expects the reentry process to be a well-organized, coordinated and resourced process, parolees, accounts describe a different reality where bureaucratic chaos and a lack of vision are common. Informal supervision provided by police or tax authorities makes the supervision experience even more irritating and irrelevant, often frustrating desistance. The authors conclude that the debt stemming from conviction and incarceration can contribute to augmenting the difficulties of reentry.

Maaike Beckmann, in Chapter 4, reminds us that release is part of the re-entry process. In her chapter, she explores the way 33 prisoners in the Netherlands understand and experience the decision making process around
conditional release. One of the main findings in this chapter is that although discretion was introduced in the parole decision-making process to individualize decisions based on merit (Gelsthorpe and Padfield 2014), prisoners tend to perceive it as something threatening that is used against them. Due to the vagueness of the criteria to determine ‘considerable misbehavior’ prisoners feel that the ‘expectations are unclear, unattainable, unrealistic and unreasonable’.

Chapter 5, draws on an ethnography of life post release for 48 men in a southern bible-belt state of the USA. Ruth Armstrong describes in detail the ways in which, and the extent to which, different aspects of the men’s lives post-release were shaped by their experiences with parole agents and procedures. It discusses the nature of these actions and interactions and their consequences. Through dividing the men according to reoffending outcomes, it examines the different means of engagement with and resistance to the aims and operations of post-release supervision. Finally, it looks at different strategies used by these men to cope with the demands of life on parole. Armstrong considers to what extent attributing legitimacy to an agency aiming to control one’s criminality involves accepting a self-identity that might induce temporary instrumental compliance but undermine longer-term normative compliance.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork with individuals on parole in California, USA, Chapter 6, explores how individuals navigate parole regulation and how this reflects the ways in which they understand, contest and rework the subject position of ‘parolee’ as lacking. Describing the process of parole as involving both responsibilizing and de-responsibilizing techniques of discipline, Robert Werth argues that those who consider themselves to be reformed or pro-social and competent individuals tend to resist and contest parole authority. The contradictory logics of parole which treats individuals as less capable in order to encourage them to become competent by providing control and supervision is questioned throughout the chapter.

Chapter 7, is based on three case studies with broadly similar antecedents and demonstrates how particular community correctional officer ‘styles’ (as well as attitudes of police and like) can contribute positively toward desistance among ‘clients’, as well as how particular
approaches can undermine that process. Based on these case studies, Mark Halsey argues that the key to good supervision is learning how to recognise and support the genuine efforts of those trying to desist in order that fragile situations are not made interminably worse.

Parole legislation, practice and experience is under scrutiny in Chapter 8, where Carolina Villagra and Catalina Droppelmann look at the beginnings of a system of parole in Chile through the experiences of practitioners and parolees. As in Chapter 4, the authors argue that parole starts with the release procedure, which is often opaque, unfair, and has almost no role for the individuals directly impacted. The authors discuss how parole in Chile is constructed around a ‘control narrative’ and in practice it risks hindering desistance rather than supporting it. The chapter finishes with some very useful recommendations towards desistance-focused parole practices which foster participation, assist identity-building, encourage agency and support social reintegration.

In Chapter 9, Marguerite Schinkel compares and contrasts the experiences of nine men on parole with 37 men and women who experience different forms of community supervision. An important difference between these experiences is timing: most of the accounts seem to suggest that community supervision came at the wrong time when people were not ready to reflect on desistance (early in the criminal career) while parole comes at the right time but the obstacles faced and barriers to employment are overwhelming. Due to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, parolees in Scotland see themselves rejected from the labour market and therefore have limited access to new identities. Other pains of parole identified by Schinkel are isolation, frustration and loss of hope. As parole supervision does not take place in a vacuum but in the full complexity of the personal and social life, participants in her study also mentioned trauma and drug addiction as other important obstacles to desistance. Due to these obstacles, some parolees start to feel nostalgic after prison life where ‘all things were simple’. Due to selection bias, Schinkel interviewed mainly those with positive supervision experiences, therefore, it comes as no surprise that most of them described good and helpful relationships with their supervisors. However, as supportive as these relationships seemed to be, they were not able to help ex-prisoners create and sustain new identities.
Andrew Jefferson, in Chapter 10, looks at the experience of life after prison in Sierra Leone by comparing it with experiences of imprisonment. It seems that poverty and the lack of opportunities after release characterize the Sierra Leone post war society and bring experiences of life in and after prison into close proximity, confirming Halsey’s claim that ‘incarceration is the medium for the exacerbation of deprivation rather than the means of deprivation per se’ (2007: 361). However, as most participants acknowledge, release means freedom and control over their own lives and this still makes an important difference from life in prison. Although there is no supportive or controlling post-release supervision, ex-prisoners experience many pains of release comparable to those in other accounts in this book, such as stigma, lack of employment, and temptation. A distinct lack of state power, rather than complaints of too much or the wrong kind of state involvement, marks out this chapter. As illustrated in the experience of those released from Scottish prisons, these pains are similar to those experienced inside the prison. Again, due to severe poverty, prisoners and ex-prisoners find themselves in impossible situations where they have to offer their bodies in exchange for food. The severe economic deprivation in Sierra Leone illustrates again, if it was necessary, that if not supported, experiences post-release could be only ‘a move from one site of confinement to another’.

In Chapter 11, Ioan Durnescu and colleagues reflect on the findings of their ethnographic research conducted in Bucharest with 60 ex-prisoners. After describing different stages of the release process, they focus on the differences between Roma and non-Roma prisoners. Their conclusion is that reentry is an ethnically diverse process. Their findings indicate that Roma ex-prisoners are more entrepreneurial in relation to employment and enjoy more family and community solidarity. They argue that these features should be integrated into ethnically informed resettlement policies and practices.

The editors afterword provides a more analytic reading of these chapters together. We critically reflect on the practices of parole in light of some of the shared realities of reentry across the countries represented in this collection. We consider what kinds of supervision might be forged if the systems of supervision were designed by and for those they serve, and oriented towards supporting and sustaining elements that are key to the desistance process.
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**Ruth Armstrong** is a British Academy Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the Institute of Criminology and St John’s College, University of Cambridge. She has published on the role of trust in desistance from crime and on the role of faith communities working alongside people released from prison. Her current research involves the implementation and evaluation of ‘Learning Together’ and explores the individual and social consequences of curating spaces of connection through learning within secure environments and beyond.

**Ioan Durnescu** is professor at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work. He teaches and conducts research in the area of probation and prison fields. His special interest is comparative probation. He is one of the editors of the Probation in Europe (WOLF) and the Understanding penal practice (Routledge). Ioan Durnescu is also co-editor of the European Journal of Probation, a journal published by the University of Bucharest in partnership with SAGE Publishing.
Experiencing Supervision in England—On Licence and on Community Sentences

Joanna Shapland, Angela Sorsby, Stephen Farrall and Camilla Priede

The importance of understanding service users’ views on the service they are receiving has varied as the purpose of supervision has changed. Under a purely rehabilititional model of criminal justice, the key purpose is whether and to what extent offenders will reoffend or be deterred from reoffending. This top-down model, in which interventions, including supervision, are imposed on service users, has in the past predominated in relation to release under supervision on licence (i.e. early release from prison under conditions). Under such a model service user views have rarely been sought, because the key measures of success or failure were reconviction, recall to prison, and any risk-related problems (i.e. mostly outcomes).

More recently, however, supervision has become based on ideas regarding desistance from crime (stopping committing crime). Here, service user views become far more important. A desistance framework
for supervision on licence (or on community sentences) implies working
*with*, not purely *on* someone convicted of a criminal offence (Shapland
et al. 2012b; McNeill and Weaver 2010; Farrall et al. 2014). The task of
supervision becomes one not solely of mitigating risk, but of encour-
aging that person on his or her journey to stopping crime (desistance).
We know that desistance is often a fitful and slow process, with motiva-
tion to be maintained and practical obstacles to be overcome (Shapland
et al. 2016). On release from prison, people desisting from crime have to
learn to lead non-offending, or at least less offending lives, and create
new habits, so that they do not fall back into earlier, offending ways. The
role of the supervisor under a desistance paradigm hence also becomes
much more complex than purely trying to reduce risk and reoffending.

Paralleling changes towards less rigidly prescribed National Standards
in England and Wales, and hence the need for probation staff, par-
ticularly supervisors¹, to be enabled to use more discretion in how service
users and supervision were managed, the National Offender Management
Service (NOMS) developed a new programme of training for probation
staff: SEED. SEED was intended to be based on a desistance model of
supervision, and was for staff supervising both those released on licence
from prison and those supervising service users on community sentences.²
The SEED training programme for probation staff concentrated on one-
to-one supervision and how it was being delivered. It was for experienced
staff, so did not aim to teach many new skills or methods, but instead
aimed to enable staff to put together different elements into a coherent
package, as appropriate to that particular person and case. SEED training
took place over a full year, in which staff were trained in teams, including
their managers. It incorporated material on Cognitive Behavioural
Techniques (CBT), Risk, Need and Responsivity (RNR), Pro-social

¹ In this article, we shall use the term ‘supervisors’ to include all probation staff who took on the role of
supervising service users, whether probation officers or probation service officers, or managers with a
service user caseload. An equivalent term in England and Wales would be ‘offender manager’.

² Some probation areas (then Probation Trusts) separated caseloads so that some staff primarily
supervised people released on licence, particularly life licence, but most used relatively generic
caseloads, such that staff supervised both those released from prison on licence and those serving
their whole sentence in the community (community sentences).