




Towards a process theory of Re-Entry in Romania

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What do we know about what impacts on reentry?
Desistance and reentry literature

Age <small>(Blau, 1987; Sampson and Laub, 1992; Farrington, 1998; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990)</small>	Employment <small>(Sampson and Laub, 1995; Loeber, 1995; Uggen, 2000; Visher et al. 2006;)</small>	'Good marriage effect' <small>(Laub et al. 1998; Horney et al. 1999)</small>	
Family and informal networks <small>(La Vigne et al. 2004)</small>	Identity <small>(Maruna, 2003)</small>	Hope <small>(Burnett and Maruna, 2004)</small>	Community features <small>(Hipp et al. 2010)</small>
Cognitive transformation <small>(Giordano et al. 2002)</small>	Financial aid <small>(Hallar and Thornton, 1997; Beck et al. 1998)</small>	Stigma <small>(Petersilia, 2005; CPO, 2007)</small>	

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The research

- Aim – to develop an advanced understanding of the re-entry process from the prisoner's perspective
- 'man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun' (Geertz, 1973:5)
- 58 participants released from Jilava Prison
- Data collection:
 - Questionnaires
 - In-depth interviews – prior, after one week, after one month, after three months, after six months, after one year
 - Observations
 - Scale – problems, hope, citizenship
 - PhotoVoice

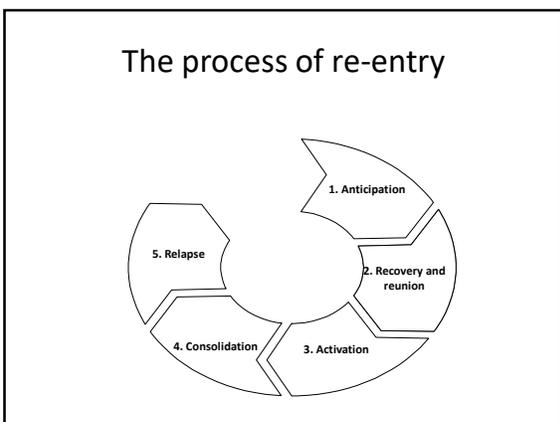
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Some findings

- 58 participants – (28)Roma and non-Roma
- After one year

Pre-release First week First month First three months First six months After one year

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Pre-release – Anticipation

- **Hope, Anxiety and Uncertainty** – regarding the date of release
- **Identity** – Second class man but also Average John or a Changed man
- **Expectations** – family reunion, getting a job and dealing with issues – also no expectations/plans
- **Super-optimists** but few Ambivalent and Skeptic – not real ethnic differences

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The day of release

- Welcome rituals:
 - **The heroes** – especially Roma and only those with large families
 - **The family man** – 1-3 people waiting from the family
 - **The 'lone crusader'** – one relative or friend waiting (most deprived participants – both Roma and Romanian)

ALL – Super-optimists and willing to start a NEW LIFE !!!

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First two weeks – Reunion & Recovery

- The **centrality of the family** – priority – reunion with different forms of family– 'more time with the family, the kids ...', 'I feel very good. I am among my family' – strongly **emotional, family re-assessed !!**
- **Prolongation of the prison behaviours** (prison syndrome) – 'waking up hours', prison language, throwing the phone, looking for the escort etc. (maybe helped by the routine talk) -form of PTSD
- **Confusion and disorientation** – mental adaptation (feeling dizzy, getting tired when many people/cars around)
- **Limited mobility** – 'I don't feel like going outside', 'I stayed around the house' etc. (self confinement !!!)
- **Rejoining the social networks** – visits to and from family or friends – to receive hope and help – it seems to follow the welcoming ceremonials
- **Avoiding trouble** – avoiding 'old friends' or 'risky places'
- **Dealing with social isolation** – no help, no hope
- **Fear of failure** – knowing that you can go back at the first small mistake.
- **Super-optimists** – if not isolated !!
- **Medical checks** - some

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Week 3 and 4 – Activation

- Priority – **developing economic autonomy**
- Family still important – for both Roma and Non-Roma but in different ways !!!
- Roma – wide family and community support (if social capital !!!)
- **But in severely deprived geographical areas !!**
- Romanians – individual / family project
- Social networks become crucial for employment
- **Lots of obstacles and problems:** anxiety and disorientation, building good relationships with the kids, dealing with temptations, fighting bureaucracy, criminal record, the absence of state, avoiding old friends
- **Plans:** find a job, emigrate, move from the area, some vague
- **Optimisms** – more obstacles -----more pessimism

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After week 4 – Consolidation or Relapse

- Employment and social network – new identity (non-offender), new concerns, new friends, new daily structure, new perceptions of the prison – consolidation of the ‘virtuous citizen’ status.
 - See Work as a Drama (2019) – for the micro-management of employment
- No social network – no employment – no financial means to survive – the presence of ‘old friends’, overwhelmed with difficulties, no hope
➔ romanticize the prison life, relapse

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Conclusions

- Although personal and social factors identified in the literature are confirmed (especially family, employment, hope, identity), **they seem to play different roles at different moments** in the post-prison journey.
 - The re-entry journey seems to have a **significant ethnic and cultural component**.
- **Geography** plays also an important role that should not be overlooked.

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The process

- Only an outline – helicopter view
- Individual journey - very complex and individual
- Not linear and not unidirectional – e.g. some participants changed jobs, experienced different crises,
- Many oscillate between consolidation and relapse – fragile lives

- Consolidation is not always consolidation forever !!!

- But stress on different priorities at different times !!!!
- Similar in principle for both – Roma and non-Roma – but some particularities !!

- Discussed and confirmed with some participants and other ex-prisoners

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Policy implications

- Ex-prisoners are to be considered a **vulnerable group** with dedicated legal procedures and budget (e.g. fast track procedures for the first two-three months from release).
- Ex-prisoner's **needs are numerous, complex and acute** – need for integrated services that act in a coordinated and timely manner – role of the probation or welfare services.
- The emphasis should be placed more on **welfare and practical help** rather than on surveillance – of course, with exceptions!!! (consider **sheltered employment, re-entry grant** – conditioned by some services)
- Interventions should not target only the ex-prisoners but also their **families and their communities (especially among Roma)**. Focus on concentrated areas of poverty and crime – at least four such areas in Bucharest – with no pro-social opportunities, few opportunities for spending quality time, with too much and too easy access to drugs and other illegal activities (e.g. urban regeneration).
- Local authorities should support **geographical mobility** for those who want to start fresh.

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Practice implications

- More focus on the **pre-release programs** – more relevant for the prisoners.
- **No release after 15.00 o'clock** or over the weekend without real arrangements for accommodation and food.
- More **awareness** among the prisoners about the available State services – connecting these services to the prisoners while in detention.
- More **awareness** among State agents about the needs of the ex-prisoners.
- More **'front loaded' interventions** – the importance of the first two-three months.
- Probation or welfare services should ensure the **coordination role**
- **Inter-agency cooperation** on a time basis !!!
- Ex-prisoners should leave the prison with **minimum resources** to survive the first two-three months of release – accommodation; employment or release grant – especially those socially isolated. The decency package !!!
- **Decent Employment** should be the first priority after week two of release !!!
- **Family and community** interventions should be promoted especially for Roma ex-prisoners.

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For more, please watch 2 let 60 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8d0Qz0uK4E>

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Thanks !!
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