*Everyday Resistance: The Transition to Adulthood Among Formerly Incarcerated Youth* L. Abrams and D. Terry. Rutgers: New Brunswick, NJ (2017) 237pp. £26.50pb £85.95hb ISBN: 978-0-8135-7446-2

It is well-established that youth justice systems fail children. So many of the children who enter those systems return to them, or adult prison, later in their lives. We also know of the devastating social harms that involvement in juvenile justice systems wreak on the lives of children and their families. Laura Abrams has spent a number of years conducting research about the experiences of young people inside of the U.S. juvenile facilities. In this latest book, Abrams has partnered with social welfare scholar Diane J. Terry to investigate the experiences of young people who have *left* those facilities. They examine the lives of 25 impoverished young men and women living in Los Angeles and facing the complex challenges of living in a city that has profound social and wealth inequalities, a robust law enforcement apparatus, and a limited social safety net. Their book zeroes in on what they call the *everyday* attempts at managing to live a life outside of the criminal justice system net.

The scholarship on desistance from crime has almost overwhelmingly focused on the experiences of adults, with some recent exceptions (Soyer, 2016; Fader, 2013, Halsey and Deegan, 2015; Bottoms and Shapland, 2010). Abrams and Terry contribute to this literature by drawing from their backgrounds in social welfare scholarship and work to engage in 70 in-depth interviews over time with a small group of young people as they manage their lives after confinement. Their sensitive appraisal of the intersecting social forces and social institutions, as well as the internal struggles that young people face, shines through in this book.

Abrams and Terry argue that desistance for this group of young people is not a linear process, but rather is one that involves a great deal of struggle. They point to the indelible impact of incarceration on young people’s lives – and the ways that their contact with the system perpetuates the ‘turmoil and trauma’ (p. 50) that exists in their lives outside of the facilities.

Although the trajectories of the young people they follow are different, what is clear is that young people’s efforts to achieve stability are impacted by their self-concepts and by socio-structural realities. The barriers to employment for formerly incarcerated people are well-established. Only five of the young men in the study sample had full time jobs that generated enough income for them to live independently (p. 67). Abrams and Terry point to the importance of the ‘confluence of positive influences’ (p. 67) that are required for young people to get and sustain paid employment – from social support, mentorship, to personal commitment. They also point to ways that young women in particular struggle to balance the demands of a minimum wage job with those of caregiving.

Abrams and Terry strikingly point out the ways that what they call ‘little mistakes’ (p. 178) – such as being at an old friends’ house when the police raid it – can result in very serious consequences, such as eviction. Young people’s sense of safety was impacted not only by their sense of threat by people they knew in the community, but also from the police. The overcriminalisation of young people in Los Angeles is revealed in striking empirical detail in this book.

The participants’ sense of self was directly affected by their relationship to the criminal justice system; some feel, for example, that they are not ‘normal’ enough to hold down a regular job. Abrams and Terry also document the ways that a young person’s consciousness of their outward appearance – which include their hairstyles or tattoos – impact on the ways that they are ‘marked’ on the streets, both by law enforcement and community members. And these ‘marks’ impact on where and how they live, their ability to move through space, but also their attachments to their past and their hope for the future.

Perhaps most striking is the way that the authors reveal that young people often inhabit ‘in between’ (p. 175) spaces, where they have neither moved completely beyond their previous engagements with risk-taking but are also meaningfully engaged in a strategy to build a new life beyond offending. The authors provide some important policy recommendations and urge readers not to think of young people as either simply ‘success stories’ or ‘failures’ and instead take a more nuanced perspective on the complicated lives of young people who have been criminalised and punished. The question remains about whether the criminal justice policy apparatus is equipped to take on this understanding of young people’s lives that challenges us to think outside the ‘offender’ box.

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