COUNTERING THE MASTER

‘Storied Selves in not doing crime’

European Society of Criminology (ESC)
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[Narrative Criminology]

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Resistance to crime...

Explorative narrative (lifestory) research based on understanding what contributes to NOT developing a criminal career while being raised in or being exposed to a dominant criminal environment (resistance to crime). > resisters
Life stories as ‘Storied Selves’

‘Stories are examples of the performative work individuals do to themselves and their surroundings.’

(Presser, 2010)

‘A persons identity is not found in behaviour, nor- important though this is – in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going.’

(Giddens, 1991:54).

Positioning theory

(Davis & Harre, 1990)

Storied ID: Narrative identity means a plurality depending on context/surroundings

‘Master & Counternarratives’
Focusing on…

How do resisters position themselves in their lifestories regarding different context specific (master/counter)narratives?
Data collection...

- Two personality tests
- Two Interviews, 1 - 2.5 hours
  Lifestory interview inspired by McAdams (1996)
- Bars, restaurant, home, work
  > Life-line
  > Memo’s
  > Taped & Verbatim transcribed
Data Analysis...

‘Studies of narratives in general and narrative criminology in particular should analyze self-narratives as agency conditioned by culture and context, and as attempts at coherency and unity drawing on a wider variety of cultural narratives and discourses.’ (Sandberg, 2013:81).

Thematic Analysis ‘fragmenting’ the (total life story) data looking for emerging themes [horizontal]

Storyline Analysis ‘unifying’ the (single life story) data, looking for coherency and purpose [vertical]
Storyline Analysis - **Positioning levels**

1. **Vis-a-vis others**

2. **Interactional**

3. **Wider: societal, cultural context**

Preliminary findings [Level 1]

HOW DO RESISTERS POSITION THEMSELVES IN THEIR LIFESTORY?

“ I was always kept out somehow..(..) Sometimes It literally was told that I was some kind of ... Torchbearer of the family you know.. Like: you are one of the smarter ones, you came a long way, so now you must continue on the road to succes...” (Maarten, 32 years)

Resisters ’storied selves’...

are positioned as being ‘the (‘good’) other’ (urge/pressure to achieve)
Preliminary findings [Level 2]

HOW DO RESISTERS POSITION THEMSELVES IN INTERACTION WITH ME?

“When I was driving home that evening I kept thinking.. “Wow, I actually am talking to someone about it! [lauging]… I noticed I felt some kind of..liberation, I mean you know more about me than my wife does!”

(Maarten, 32 years)

Resisters ’storied selves’…
are positioned as being a confessional self
(telling a secret story/talking taboo)
Preliminary findings [LeveL 3]
HOW DO RESISTERS POSITION THEMSELVES IN A WIDER, SOCIETAL CONTEXT?

“I had 1 one good friend, and he still is one of my best friends.. Eehm, someone to have good conversations with, someone who understands me en made some effort. The rest was all prejudices…” (Maarten, 32 years)

Resisters ’storied selves’ …
are positioned as being viewed as ‘the (‘bad’) other’ (dealing with stigma)
Positioning levels: concluding remarks

1. Vis-a-vis others

2. Interactional

3. Wider, societal context

... > Being ‘the GOOD Other’ vis-a-vis others’ (urge/pressure to achieve)

... > Being ‘the CONFESSIONAL self’ telling a secret story (‘talking taboo’)

... > Being ‘the BAD Other’ (dealing with stigma/label/)

Level 1:
... > Being ‘the GOOD Other’ vis-à-vis others’ (urge/pressure to achieve)

Level 2:
... > Being ‘the CONFESSIONAL self’ telling a secret story (‘talking taboo’)

Level 3:
... > Being ‘the BAD Other’ (dealing with stigma/label/)

Avans Centre for Public Safety and Criminal Justice
What does a Storyline Analysis bring in regarding narrative criminology?

- It is a relative new way of an *in-depth analysis* according to a flexible but at the same time structured way: what is this story about? Searching for consistencies but also inconsistencies (breach), looking at stories as a ‘film’ (pentad).

- It takes into account two more levels of analysis (interactional & societal) which enriches the narrative data in a coherent way, based on positioning theory.

- It provides insight in meaningmaking and opens up the opportunity to position the narrative self in coherent and meaningful way. This can provide a basis for strengthening personal development (here resistance) and shape future actions.

Narrative Research Functions as Finding Stage and Giving Voice...
What to do if you or your interview sessions become a (start of a) meaningful part of a person's life story (researcher in a 'mother' confessor role)? Keep professional distance? Or…?

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Figuur A: Kwadrant van theoretische analyseraanwerken van levensverhalen (‘self narratives’) in narratief onderzoek (Sandberg, 2013:71).
Reference list

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