Chapter X

**Moral Career**

*Susie Scott and James Hardie-Bick*

**Introduction**

The moral career is a concept Erving Goffman used to explain the normative context of identity change. It is one type of ‘career’ that symbolic interactionists use to describe the socially negotiated process of identity transition over time. In this chapter we first provide a historical overview of the concept and explain how Goffman drew attention to its moral aspects, emphasising the impacts of social judgements on self-identity and relations with others. When a person’s character or conduct is (mis)aligned with norms and expectations, they may find their status changing through a sequence of interactions. We then outline the distinctive features of the moral career that Goffman explained in his influential studies of life in a psychiatric hospital and managing stigma. These features include the three stages of the moral career trajectory, the interactions and encounters that shape this process of identity change in institutional contexts, and the longer-term consequences for social selfhood. We argue that this model also applies to wider range of social settings in everyday life such as sports and leisure. We illustrate this with an ethnographic study of skydiving, showing how enthusiasts learned the symbolic meanings of this social role, performatively displayed their newly acquired self-identity, and negotiated feelings of belonging and solidarity within the skydiving community.

**Career trajectories**

Symbolic interactionism uses the concept of the career to describe the micro-social process of identity change. It belongs to the wider category of status passage, the regularised transformation of members within a social system (Glaser and Strauss 1971). The career involves a patterned sequence of movement along a series of stages, each mediated by social relations and encounters with others, which leads the individual towards a new sense of self (Strauss 1959). Careers have two sides: the objective events or transitions that can be externally observed, and the subjective experience of identity change (Strauss 1959). The individual makes a series of adjustments to their placement and positioning by others (Becker 1952), such as guardians, gatekeepers or informal peers, who may control access, entry to and exit from the role (Lindesmith et al 1999). Career identities were first observed in organisational and institutional settings, such as hospitals, prisons and workplaces, where there is a formal hierarchy of rank, status and prestige (Becker, ibid.) but have since been recognised in more everyday settings, such as leisure and education. Goffman (1968: 119) thus gave a broad definition of the career as ‘any social strand of any person’s course through life’.

Identity careers can take various different pathways, known as trajectories. There may be a simple, linear sequence of progressive steps towards the earning of new status, for example with occupational promotion. Alternatively, people may move erratically between different positions, such as in fluctuating states of mental health. Sometimes, the individual undergoes a sudden, dramatic change that radically disrupts their self-identity (Athens 1995), such as experiencing a traumatic illness or injury. This marks a turning point, or moment of epiphany in the person’s biographical life story (Strauss 1959), which can evoke a sense of revelatory awakening (DeGloma 2014). At other times, there is a more gradual realisation that a part of oneself is developing into something new, for example with gender transitioning or religious conversion. In any career trajectory, the individual is aware of how the significant others (Blumer 1969) around them perceive, define and respond to their alteration of status in more or less supportive ways.

Social reactions and appraisals, therefore, lend a normative dimension to identity trajectories. Goffman (1968, 1990) introduced the term *moral career* to classify those processes of self-change that are subjected to value-laden social judgements of (dis)taste, (dis)approval and (in)tolerance. People whose conduct is deemed inappropriate and who appear immune to what Tom Burns (1992: 169) calls the ‘ordinary normalising force’ of socialisation are physically or symbolically removed from the mainstream civilian world and subject to regimes of improvement. This is because they challenge the sanctity of established rules, norms and values, which threatens to disrupt the interaction order (Goffman 1983). For example, someone who rides the heteronormative ‘relationship escalator’ of coupledom, marriage and children (Gahran 2017) may win cultural approval while someone who pursues a lifestyle of ‘relationship anarchy’, such as solo-poly non-monogamy (Barker 2018), tends to face negative sanctioning. In the latter case, moral careers may coincide with deviant careers (Becker 1963), leading to role-identities on the margins of social acceptability.

Regardless of their positive or negative direction, Goffman argued that moral careers had long-term consequences for the individual’s sense of self. Labels and attributions could be ‘fateful’ to the extent that they define one’s moral character and affect one’s social standing. They serve as an index of inner value and worth, marking a person’s (ab)normal status and thus their right to belong to civil society. Occasionally, the new identity becomes a ‘master status’ (Hughes 1945), which takes dominance over all other aspects of identity. For example, being labelled as a criminal, athlete or celebrity means that one is always seen in this role and expected to act in accordance with it. It then becomes difficult to break out of the prescriptive mould and express any other aspect of identity. Thus Goffman (1968: 128-129) defined the moral career as, a ‘regular sequence of stages that career entails in the person’s self and in his framework of imagery for judging himself and others.’

Goffman presented his model of the moral career in an essay within his book *Asylums* (1968). This reported an ethnographic study of St Elizabeths, a psychiatric hospital in Washington, DC, where Goffman had worked for a period as a staff assistant. *Asylums* was an influential text within the anti-psychiatry movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which challenged the medicalised view of mental disorder. Although he did not personally identify with this movement, Goffman shared its political concerns with the power dynamics implicit in labelling patients as mentally ill. He uses the psychiatric hospital to exemplify his concept of the total institution: a place of residential segregation and confinement, where the identities of ‘inmates’ are changed and reconstituted, often against their will. Although total institutions may cite benign motivations of rehabilitation and moral improvement, Goffman argued that the ‘authoritative imposition of consequential identities’ (Dennis and Martin 2005: 191) was an abusive act of violence. Criticising the popular conception of psychiatry as a disinterested, mechanical ‘tinkering trade’, he sought to demonstrate how power is embedded in the system’s ‘institutional arrangements’. In a chapter discussing ‘the insanity of place’, Goffman (1968) argues that processes of shaming, humiliation and abasement serve in the delivery of deeply immoral treatments (Burns 1992). The moral career had three sequential stages through which the inmate’s identity was processed and transformed: pre-patient, in-patient and ex-patient. While illustrating these with events that unfolded in the hospital, Goffman’s point was that this model could be found in any institutional setting.

Goffman revisited the moral career in his later book, *Stigma* (1990), which explores the fate of those living with ‘blemishes of character’. A stigmatising attribute is one that discredits an actor’s claim to a desirable social identity by revealing incongruent facts about their real, backstage self. Goffman explains how this ‘spoiling’ process is socially mediated through interaction and shaped by normative moral judgements. He charts the transition from being a ‘whole and usual person’ to one who is ‘tainted, discounted’ (1990: 12) and no longer deserving to belong. Drawing on the attitudes that s/he perceives towards him- or herself, the stigmatised individual makes a ‘sequence of personal adjustments’ and changes in his or her conception of self (Goffman 1990: 45). This may involve withdrawing from the public, mainstream world with its majority of ‘normals’ and establishing new networks of sympathetic others, whom he calls the ‘own’ and ‘wise’.

**Negotiation and interactional contingencies**

The individual’s journey along a career trajectory is mediated by their interactions, encounters and social relations. ‘Career others’ (Lindesmith et al 1999) are the significant people who influence whether or not the individual begins on the pathway, encourage or discourage them to take further steps, shape the direction of travel and permit or block exit routes. As Howard Becker (1963) explained, the process of becoming a new identity is interactionally *contingent,* which makes each individual’s experience unique. For example, patients’ decisions about whether to visit the doctor and seek a diagnosis depend on the advice they receive from family and friends in their ‘lay referral network’ (Freidson 1988). Two symbolic interactionist concepts are relevant here. Firstly, the group of actors create a ‘definition of the situation’ (Thomas and Thomas 1928) in which they believe, such as that the individual is sick, deviant, troubled or limited. Secondly, they work together to negotiate the meaning of this, as an identity that needs to be changed.

In the pre-patient phase, Goffman (1968) described how micro-dynamics of power operated within the ‘circuit of agents’ who defined the person as mentally ill. They decided that something was wrong that needed correction and called on the doctor for professional help. Family members colluded to trick or persuade the individual to go into hospital just for a rest without any mention of their plans. They formed an ‘alienative coalition’ (Goffman 1968) by excluding the patient himself or herself from these discussions and denying them the right to express their views. Dorothy Smith (1978) similarly observed how a young woman, K, was defined by everyone around her as mentally ill, while her own testimony was dismissed as irrational. Goffman (1968) highlights the helpless passivity of the individual who falls down the ‘betrayal funnel’ and ends up alone on their path.

The middle stage of the moral career unfolds during the in-patient phase, through the ‘daily round’ of institutional routines (Goffman 1968). In the psychiatric hospital, staff and inmates together enacted a series of interaction rituals, which propelled the patient’s movement. Upon admission, they underwent a process that Goffman calls the ‘mortification of the self’ in that it symbolically destroyed their former identity. These kinds of degradation ceremonies (Garfinkel 1956) often occur in total institutions and serve as initiation rituals, introducing members to their new life. For example, some military training camps and boarding schools inflict hazing rituals to humiliate new recruits and break their will (Hale 2008). Back in Goffman’s asylum, the patient was commanded to surrender their personal possessions and issued with standard institutional equipment, such as hospital pyjamas. They were forced to give up on the freedom and autonomy that they had enjoyed in the civilian world and required to comply with the institutional schedule. A third aspect of mortification occurred with respect to privacy, as intimate matters like sleeping, eating and toileting were subjected to public scrutiny.

Personal information was kept on the patient’s ‘case record’ and could be used to justify treatment decisions by the staff. Through a privilege system, good (compliant) behaviour was rewarded while bad conduct (intransigence) was punished. Goffman suggests that the selection of ‘evidence’ was arbitrary and its real purpose was to exercise social control. He remarks that it would be possible to dredge up enough material from anyone’s life to justify an account of progress or decline (Goffman 1968: 146). Hence, the inmate would take incremental steps up or down the ward hierarchy until they were deemed ready for release. This meant that at any point during their stay, an inmate’s moral worth and status could be read from their marked position on the treatment trajectory.

However, Goffman was not entirely pessimistic. He emphasised the strength and unity of the patients’ ‘inmate culture’, which made gestures of resistance to the power of the staff. Observing the subterranean world of the hospital ‘underlife’, Goffman described how established members created a buddying system for new members: peer socialisation occurred through the practices of teaching, mentoring and ‘showing the ropes’. Over time, inmates made ‘secondary adjustments’ to life in the institution, learning how they could play the system, innovate and bend the rules to get away with deviance. For example, they would sneak extra food from the dining hall to eat in their beds at night or take the bus into town for shopping under the guise of a therapy appointment. Weary, long-term inmates might succumb to the ‘shameless game’ of ‘moral loosening’ (Goffman 1968: 151), whereby they ceased to care about their pride or dignity and would do whatever it took to escape. For example, Caudill (1968) describes a patient called Mr Esposito, who realised that protesting and voicing frustration were getting him nowhere, and so began acting compliant, calm and submissive. The staff praised his efforts and supported his claim to be making a genuine recovery. As Goffman (1968: 143) drily observes, the inmate ‘must ‘insightfully’ take, or affect to take, the hospital’s view of himself’ in order to be released.

**Identity transformation**

The moral career can have lasting effects on an individual’s sense of self and social identity. This begins during the in-patient (or its equivalent) phase, when actors are deeply immersed in a culture and committed to their newly emergent role. In residential or long-stay facilities there is a risk of institutionalisation, whereby inmates become so accustomed to that way of life that they become dependent upon the local habits and routines and feel unable to function without them (Wing 1962). One consequence of this is release anxiety, whereby residents who are soon to be given permission to leave (e.g. prisoners approaching the end of their sentence) indulge in self-sabotaging behaviour in order to extend their stay. Final year university students may similarly register for a ‘panic Masters’ degree rather than face going out into employment.

However, organised groups can generate more positive symbolic meanings of belonging. Dunham and Weinberg (1960) emphasise the friendships and solidarity that can develop between members, particularly when they have chosen to seclude themselves together. When actors’ role immersion (Goffman 1959) is voluntary rather than imposed, they may feel more self-consciously committed to the identity and performatively claim it. For example, serious leisure identities (Stebbins 1992) are built upon prolonged participation in an activity enclave, where members cooperatively train, rehearse and compete in a social group. This has been demonstrated in studies of surfing, skateboarding and kayaking clubs (Kane and Zink 2004) and goth subculture (Hodkinson 2002). The social milieux of sports teams, music bands and hobby enthusiasts create intense, focused atmospheres of emotional energy (Collins 2005) that reinforces members’ motivation. Even in solitary pursuits, such as running (Altheide and Pfuhl 1980), adherents may feel a sense of belonging to an imagined community (Anderson 1983) and cite motives of moral character-building. The career trajectory of serious leisure therefore involves some key features (Stebbins 1992): the systematic pursuit of goals through incremental improvement; an attitude of effort, perseverance and dedication; and the appreciation of durable benefits, such as physical fitness and stamina.

**Skydiving as a moral career**

James Hardie-Bick’s (2005, 2011) ethnographic research on skydiving provides a detailed example of how serious leisure can generate a sense of identity, commitment and belonging. His research focuses on both the social and moral experiences of becoming a skydiver and uses Goffman’s analytical concept of moral career to illustrate the participants’ changing perceptions, attitudes and abilities in relation to their skydiving. Rather than attempting to discover the factors that motivate a ‘high-risk’ personality, the research suggests that it is precisely the gradual process of career transitions that can be sociologically revealing.

Whereas the moral aspects of the career of psychiatric patients ‘typically begin with the experience of abandonment, disloyalty, and embitterment’ (Goffman 1968: 125), the skydiver’s moral career typically begins with a sense of curiosity, adventure and excitement. The inquisitive novice enters an unfamiliar and exciting social world full of new challenges, commitments and opportunities. Rather than restricting or degrading individuals within the context of a total institution, the rites of passage for this recreational pursuit celebrate success and encourage individuals to complete each of the progressive stages in their skydiving career.

As skydiving occurs outside the realm of ordinary experience, this leisure pursuit provides a meaningful contrast to everyday routines and experiences (Goffman 1974). However, the expectation that the neophyte will be provided with an ‘extraordinary experience’ (Arnould and Price 1993: 24) caused problems for the instructors. Some of the students who had enrolled to do a parachute jump were too impatient. They were frustrated by the hours of training and just wanted ‘to get out there and jump’. Such ‘hedonistic consumers’ (Cova and Cova 2009) were considered to be interested in parachuting for the wrong reasons. The regular skydivers at the centre commented on how people can be attracted to skydiving because it is seen as a ‘mad’ or ‘dangerous’ pursuit. This was considered to be a misconception by the regular skydivers and instructors.

The parachute training was designed to challenge such stereotypical views and to make people take parachuting seriously. The training set the emotional tone for ‘serious leisure’ (Stebbins 1982). An important technique involved the instructors emphasising how dangerous parachuting can be if you ‘get things wrong’. The students were informed that they could be seriously injured and even killed if they failed to follow the correct procedures. Before their first jump students were required to watch videos of disastrous scenarios, including being tangled in the parachute lines, having a malfunctioned parachute as well as the terrifying ‘static line hang up’, which involved being suspended under the aircraft. Students were instructed how to respond to a wide range of life-threatening situations and had to learn and memorise a set of safety drills so they could automatically respond to these scenarios if they occurred. The training purposely induced particular feelings to produce ‘the proper state of mind in others’ (Hochschild 1983:7). Learning to regard skydiving as a serious leisure activity was one of the typical transitions that occur as individuals progress through the early stages of becoming a skydiver.

The majority of Hardie-Bick’s informants started their skydiving journey by enrolling on the Ram Air Progression System (RAPS) static line course. Rather than completing a one-off parachute jump, this course is specially designed for those who are aiming to become a skydiver and requires the student to complete eight progressive stages. The stages ranged from completing a static line jump (a cord is attached to the plane and automatically opens the canopy for the student), to free fall (the student is now responsible for deploying their own canopy) and dive exits (diving head-first out of the plane), as well as having to master a range of increasingly difficult and sophisticated manoeuvres during free fall including turns and back loops. The RAPS course takes people through each of the sequential stages until they achieve their ‘Category Eight’ and become a qualified skydiver. At an early stage of their skydiving career, student parachutists became increasingly aware of the different progressive stages and would regularly compare their own progression to other student parachutists. Students who had never jumped before were often surprised to be training alongside those who had nearly completed the final stage. Conversations between students often focused on how many jumps they had made and what stage they were at. Students were determined to progress and demonstrate their abilities and commitment to other students and their instructors. After each jump their instructor would also provide individual feedback. The feedback sessions allowed the students to comment on their own concerns and to reflect on how much they had improved.

A skydiver’s moral career involves completing each level of the progression system. The discussion of stages between the students was therefore an important indicator for determining their level of experience and commitment. Certain stages of progression were seen as especially important and were celebrated in ritualistic fashion. Completing their first dummy pull (pretending to pull the rip cord), five, ten and fifteen second delays (time delays before deploying the canopy), and the unstable exit (being pushed out of their aircraft by the instructor) were all important stages, but the most celebrated stage for students to pass was their first free fall. This stage demonstrates the student’s progression towards becoming a skydiver. Achieving what skydivers refer to as ‘hop and pop’ represents a milestone in the skydiver’s career. After this stage they are considered to be a novice skydiver, rather than a static line student parachutist. Here Karl describes how the regular skydivers and instructors reacted after he had completed his first free fall:

Everyone makes such a big deal about it when you’ve done your first free fall. The instructors and skydivers have so much admiration ‘cos you’ve got to that level. ‘Cos they say that if you haven’t done a free fall you’re not a skydiver, you’re a parachutist. It’s the fact that you’ve jumped out of the plane and opened your own parachute, and that’s what it’s all about.

(Hardie-Bick 2005: 155-156)

Students were congratulated by their instructors after successfully completing different stages, but the first free fall is a turning point in the student’s skydiving career. Once the student has completed their first ‘hop and pop’ they are considered to be a legitimate skydiver rather than just a student who enjoys parachuting. The qualifying apprenticeship has been successfully completed. Karl was proud to no longer be considered a ‘dope on a rope’ (static line student) by the regular skydivers. The instructors and skydivers also make a ‘big deal’ when students pass their Category Eight and achieve the status of a licensed skydiver. On such occasions the student would usually wait until the evening to celebrate their success in the bar and ‘get the beers in’. These social rites of passage mark the acceptance of the student into the skydiving community and provide a powerful sense of belonging and solidarity.

As the novice skydiver progresses, they enter a new social world and negotiate new meanings. Unfamiliar terms are now understood and topics of conversation that once would have been considered mundane (such as weather conditions) are now of serious importance. As the novice associates increasingly with other skydivers, their aspirations are reinforced, reflected and substantiated by other enthusiastic members of the skydiving community. Skydiving constantly provides a wide range of new challenges to conquer and master, but the process of becoming a skydiver involves far more than learning a series of new technical skills. This trajectory is not merely practical but also symbolically meaningful. The progressive aspects of the skydiving career, therefore, are both objective and subjective.

As the learner gains more experience, they acquire reciprocal perspectives and learn to adapt to their new roles in the skydiving community. Individuals acquire new attitudes, commitments and abilities. Individuals start to watch films of world class skydivers, read the major skydiving publications, purchase specialised equipment, visit skydiving websites and participate in online chat rooms. Students internalise the skydiving ethos, generate new friendships and gradually forge a new identity by differentiating themselves form novice parachute students and those outside the skydiving community. They learn about specialised skydiving equipment, adopt particular styles of clothing and familiarise themselves with new technical vocabulary shared by other skydivers. Having a shared understanding of an extraordinary experience provides individuals with feelings of solidarity and belonging; this sense of togetherness is further reinforced by the socially negotiated rites of passage. Goffman’s analytical concept of moral career is particularly useful for examining the techniques, procedures and social processes an individual goes through in order to successfully become a skydiver and provides a stark contrast to the ‘humbling moral experiences’ (1968: 137) originally described by Goffman.

**Research on moral careers**

Hardie-Bick’s research provides an example of how the concept of moral career has been used to examine the processes of becoming in a dramatically different context to Goffman’s original study. As Stanley Cohen and Laurie Taylor noted, we may be ‘caught up in the career of our marriage’ or ‘involved with the educational career of our children, our leisure career’ and even our ‘sexual career’ (1993: 38). Goffman recognised that the term career can be useful for describing and analysing any form of social progression; his work in *Asylums* and *Stigma* successfully highlighted the moral aspects involved in such transitions. The individual may acquire a new desirable social identity or they may feel like a personal failure and judge themselves to be incompetent. The internalisation of external attributions provides a meaningful framework to justify both positive and negative self-evaluations and has a dramatic and powerful effect on an individual’s sense of identity.

Goffman’s belief that the concept of moral career is useful for understanding any form of social progression has influenced a wide range of research in the social sciences. For example, the moral career concept has been used to examine football hooligans (Marsh 1978), wheelchair runners (Patrick and Bignall 1987), ice hockey supporters (Crawford 2003), motherhood (Liamputtong 2006), drug treatments (Radcliffe 2011), and hate crime victims (Funnell 2014). This selection of research demonstrates how the concept is useful for studying a diverse range of social identities. Research on the moral career has also addressed the most extreme forms of identity change. Suraj Lakhani’s (2014) insightful research on radicalisation provides a pertinent example. Lakhani views radicalisation as a moral career and his research specifically explores how people become terrorists. The research employs Goffman’s approach as an overarching framework to understand the complexity of radicalisation. Lakhani argues that radicalisation is ‘essentially about a change in people’s perceptions of ‘self’ and ‘social identity’ (2014: ii) and involves radical shifts in how the radicalisees view themselves, significant others as well as their own society. Identifying similarities to Goffman’s (1968) mortification of the self, Lakhani draws attention to how perceptions of self-identity are destroyed and reconstructed:

As with the prepatient phase of Goffman’s (1968) moral career, radicalisers aim to make susceptible individuals believe that their previous lives were false. Thus, the radicaliser explains that whilst the susceptible individual may have felt part, however small, of society, they were in fact in a state of normlessness, and although they may have felt accepted by society, this has never been the case. This enables the radicaliser, usually through the extreme group, to provide radicalisees with a new sense of identity and belonging, and this strengthens the bonds between the two. (2014: 129)

The radicalisee is expected to make sacrifices. Personal relationships with those who do not share their new ideology are discouraged and replaced with a new set of morally approved relationships that reinforce and consolidate their newly acquired beliefs and values. Lakhani’s approach is important in demonstrating how changes in self-identity can alter personal beliefs, values and actions. His focus on the radicalisee’s moral career moves the well-known debates on radicalisation away from religious explanations to a focus on the social and moral processes affecting meaningful identity change. His research shows the potential of the moral career concept for understanding how people come to engage in a wide range of violent and deviant behaviour.

**Endings and Role Exits**

Other research on the moral career concept has focused on negotiated endings and role exits. In institutional contexts there may be formal mechanisms for assessing whether or not an individual has met the required standards to be discharged (Strauss 1959). Students pass exams to graduate, athletes qualify in championships, and people in addiction recovery programmes take their twelfth and final step (Denzin 1987). Authority figures, such as doctors or legal professionals, may ceremoniously bestow a new identity to mark the journey’s end, but equally, can block the exit path by refusing recognition. In more informal settings, such as friendship groups, subcultures and faith communities, the process of exit negotiation can be more subtle. The dynamics of exclusion (Lemert 1962) are tacitly agreed upon rules for sanctioning members who deviate from local norms. Micro-social power operates here in the flow of interaction. For example, the practice of ‘ghosting’ involves ignoring and withholding contact from a dating partner to end the relationship’s development. Finally, some individuals may decide themselves to step off a career trajectory. Helen Ebaugh (1988) describes the process of role exit, through which people remove themselves from situations and surrender past identities. This can be long, protracted process, involving further stages such as doubt, realisation, experimentation and decision (ibid.).

The transformative effects of a moral career upon self-identity can hold many different meanings. Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1971) point to various factors that may create positive or negative valence: the centrality of the role or status, its voluntariness, inevitability and (ir)reversibility. When an actor has made significant ‘side investments’ (Becker 1952) in the new identity, they feel more committed to it and are less likely to give it up as there is more at stake to lose. For example, embarking on a new occupation may require moving home, leaving family behind and making new friends. It is difficult to go back, and by then we may not want to. Alternatively, the moral career may be heavily stigmatised, something that we wish to shake off. Relic identities (Gross and Stone 1964) are formed when a newly emergent self remains tainted by the traces of its own history. Goffman (1990) documented how ex-patients and prisoners tried to hide their stigmatised identities by passing as members of the ‘normal’, civilian world. Finally, moral careers may be incorporated into biographical self-narratives: people compose stories, tell tales and give accounts of their experiences in an effort to make sense of them.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter we have introduced Goffman’s concept of the moral career, explaining what makes this distinct from other symbolic interactionist theories of identity change. Whilst Goffman’s original research focused on relatively marginal forms of deviant identity, we have shown how the model can be applied more widely to everyday social settings outside of the institution. In our discussion of skydiving, we examined the sequential stages of becoming a full member of the community, reflecting on the social encounters that shaped the overall process and the negotiated meanings that accompanied self-change. In addition to the earlier stages of the moral career that Goffman addressed, we emphasised the importance of the later stages of role exit and transition out of a closed setting. This is an interesting area that invites further research. In her theory of the ‘sociology of nothing’, Susie Scott (2019) presents a negative, reverse mirror image of the moral career, in which actors move progressively away from rather than towards a potential role-identity. Interactions with others may dissuade and discourage the individual’s progression, creating pathways of ‘unbecoming’. This can take two different forms, based on acts of commission or omission. In the first case, rejecting or leaving a role leads to ‘becoming a non-‘, while in the second, a lack of opportunity or motivation leads to passive ‘non-becoming’. Whether we envisage a process of becoming or unbecoming, therefore, the moral career concept provides a useful tool for understanding the interaction dynamics of identity change.

**References**

Altheide, David L. and Erdwin H. Pfuhl (1980): ‘Self-Accomplishment through Running.’ *Symbolic Interaction,* 3, 2, 127-142.

Anderson, Benedict (1983): *Imagined Communities.* London: Verso.

Arnould, Eric. J. and Linda L. Price (1993): ‘River Magic: Extraordinary Experience and the Extended Service Encounter’, *Journal of Consumer Research* 20 (June), 24 - 45.

Athens, Lonnie (1995): ‘Dramatic Self-Change.’ *Sociological Quarterly,* 36, 3, 571-586.

Barker, Meg-John (2018): *Rewriting the Rules: An Anti Self-Help Guide to Love, Sex and Relationships.* London: Routledge.

Becker, Howard S. (1952): ‘The Career of the Chicago Public School Teacher.’ *American Journal of Sociology*, 57, 5, 470-477.

Becker, Howard S. (1963): *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: Free Press.

Blumer, Herbert (1969): *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method.* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

Caudill, William (1968): ‘The psychiatric hospital as a small society.’ In H. Silverstein (ed.) *The Social Control of Mental Illness.* New York: Thomas Y- Crowell. pp. 124-170.

Cohen, Stanley and Laurie Taylor (1993): *Escape attempts: the theory and practice of resistance to everyday life*. London: Routledge.

### Collins, Randall (2005): *Interaction Ritual Chains.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Cova, Bernard. and Véronique Cova (2009): ‘Faces of the new consumer: A genesis of consumer governmentality’, *Recherche et Applications en Marketing* [English edition], 24(3), 81 – 99.

Crawford, Gary (2003): ‘The Career of the Sport Supporter: The Case of the

Manchester Storm’, *Sociology* 37(2): 219–37.

DeGloma, Thomas (2014): *Seeing the Light: The Social Logic of Personal Discovery.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dennis, Alex and Peter J. Martin (2005): ‘Symbolic Interactionism and the Concept of Power.’ *British Journal of Sociology*, 56, 2, 191-213.

Denzin, Norman K. (1987): *The Alcoholic Self*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Dunham, H. Warren and S. Kirson Weinberg (1960): *The Culture of the State Mental Hospital.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

Ebaugh, Helen R.F. (1988): *Becoming an Ex: The Process of Role Exit.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Freidson, Eliot (1988): *Profession of Medicine: A Study of the Sociology of Applied Knowledge.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Funnell, Corinne (2015): 'You're a Victim, Don't Become a Perpetrator': A Study of the 'Moral Career' of Racist Hate Crime Victims. In Nathan Hall, Abbee Corb, Paul Giannasi and John. G. D. Grieve (eds.). *The Routledge International Handbook on Hate Crime*. New York: Routledge. pp. 367-380.

Gahran, Amy (2017): *Stepping Off the Relationship Escalator: Uncommon Love and Life.* New York: Off the Escalator Enterprises.

Garfinkel, Harold (1956): ‘Conditions of Successful Degradation Ceremonies.’ *American Sociological Review*, 61, 420-424.

Glaser, Barney G. and Anselm L. Strauss (1971): *Status Passage.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Goffman, Erving (1959): *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Goffman, Erving (1968): *Asylums.* London: Penguin.

Goffman, Erving (1990): *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity.* London: Penguin.

Goffman, Erving (1974): *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organisation of Experience*. New York: Harper and Row.

Gross, Edward and Gregory P. Stone (1964): ‘Embarrassment and the Analysis of Role Requirements.’ *American Journal of Sociology,* 70, 1, 1-15.

Hale, Hannah C. (2008): ‘The Development of British Military Masculinities through Symbolic Resources.’ *Culture & Psychology*, 14, 3, 305-322.

Hardie-Bick, James (2005): ‘Dropping Out and Diving In: An Ethnography of Skydiving.’ Doctoral thesis, University of Durham. E-Theses Online. http://etheses. dur.ac.uk/2734/

Hardie-Bick, James (2011): ‘Skydiving and the Metaphorical Edge’ in Dick Hobbs (ed.) *SAGE Benchmarks in Social Research Methods: Ethnography in Context*. London: Sage. pp. III183-III205.

Hochschild, Arlie (1983): *The Managed Heart: Commercialisation of Human Feeling*. Berkley: University of California Press

Hodkinson, Paul (2002): *Goth.* Oxford: Berg.

Hughes, Everett C. (1945): ‘Dilemmas and Contradictions of Status’. *American Journal of Sociology*, L, 353-359.

Kane, Maurice J. and Robyn Zink (2004): ‘Package Adventure Tours: Markers in Serious Leisure Careers.’ *Leisure Studies,* 23, 4, 329-345.

Lakhani, Suraj (2014): ‘Radicalisation as A Moral Career: A Qualitative Study of How People Become Terrorists in the United Kingdom.’ PhD dissertation, Cardiff University. E-Theses Online. http://orca.cf.ac.uk/59779/

Lemert, Edwin M. (1962): ‘Paranoia and the Dynamics of Exclusion.’ *Sociometry*, XXV, 2-20.

Liamputtong, Pranee (2006): ‘Motherhood and ‘Moral Career’: Discourses of Good

Motherhood among Southeast Asian Immigrant Women in Australia’, *Qualitative Sociology* 29(1): 25–53.

Lindesmith, Alfred R., Strauss, Ansellm L. and Norman K. Denzin (1999): *Social Psychology.* Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Marsh, Peter (1978): ‘Life and Careers on the Football Terraces’, in Roger Ingham (ed.) *Football Hooliganism*. London: Inter-Action Trust. pp. 61-81.

Patrick, Dwyne. R. and John, E. Bignall (1987): ‘Creating the Competent Self: The Case of the Wheelchair Runner’, in Joseph. A. Kotarba and Andrea Fontana (eds.) *The Existential Self in Society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. pp 207-221.

Radcliffe, Polly (2011): Motherhood, pregnancy, and the negotiation of identity: The moral career of drug treatment. *Social Science and Medicine* 72: 984–991.

Smith, Dorothy E. (1978): ‘K is Mentally Ill: The Anatomy of a Factual Account.’ *Sociology,* 12, 1, 23-53.

Stebbins, Robert (1992): *Amateurs, Professionals and Serious Leisure.* Montreal: McGill-Queens University.

Strauss, Anselm L. (1969): *Mirrors and Masks.* London: Martin Robertson.

Thomas, William I. and Dorothy S. Thomas (1970 [1928]): ‘Situations Defined as Real are Real in their Consequences.’ Reprinted in Gregory P. Stone and Harvey A. Farberman (Eds) *Social Psychology Through Interaction*, Waltham: Ginn-Blasidell. pp. 154-155.

Wing, John K. (1962): ‘Institutionalism in Mental Hospitals.’ *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 1, 38-51.