ADVANCING CORRECTIONS
Journal of the International Corrections and Prisons Association

13TH EDITION OF ADVANCING CORRECTIONS

WHAT else WORKS..

Volume 1

ICPA International Corrections & Prisons Association

What Else Works ...
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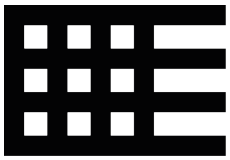

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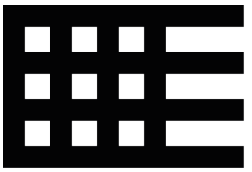

ADVANCING CORRECTIONS

Journal of the International Corrections and Prisons Association

ADVANCING CORRECTIONS JOURNAL: EDITION#13-2022

Editor: Dr. Frank J. Porporino, Chairperson, ICPA Research & Development Network

EDITORIAL REVIEW BOARD

CONTENTS

What Else Works ...

Frank J. Porporino, Ph.D., Editor ICPA Advancing Corrections

This 13th Edition of Advancing Corrections exploring 'What Else Works ...' has received an unprecedented response. We attracted more submissions than ever before for any other theme, from both the research and practitioner community, showcasing some quite varied and interesting examples of recasting correctional efforts. The response has been such that this Edition of Advancing Corrections will be the first of a two-volume exploration of the theme, with the 2nd volume scheduled for release in October, 2022.

It is interesting to speculate why the theme may have attracted so much attention. Of course, it is clear that the mantra of 'What Works', a movement that has steadily penetrated the world of corrections over the last half century, has led to some fundamental altering of correctional practice. But to every upside there is also a downside. As I noted in the Call for Papers for this Edition:

"There is no doubt that implementing What Works has given corrections some clear evidence-informed direction. On the other hand, the impact of these strategies on re-offending has been varied, often only modest, and frequently exposing some of their limitations and constraints. It can be argued as well that the singular focus on What Works and offending-behaviour programs may have seriously limited creativity and innovation in exploring the potential of alternative strategies ... sometimes perhaps too quickly dismissed by What Works proponents as 'correctional quackery."

Could it be that our theme of *What Else Works* has inspired such a considerable response because the standard formula of 'What Works' is now being perceived by corrections professionals as getting a bit tired, limited in its scope and reach, and needing a 21st century refresh. Without wishing to diminish or dismiss the real advancements that have been made in trying to apply 'What Works' principles, perhaps what corrections needs is a renewed spurt of energy and creativity to also explore *What Else Works*. This Edition of Advancing Corrections will hopefully contribute to a thoughtful conversation about how we might go about doing that. In the often-quoted advice from one of the greatest hockey players of all time, *"You need to skate to where the puck is going, not to where it's been" (Wayne Gretzky).*

This Edition # 13 begins with three examples of doing something different in order to 'engage the dis-engaged', a phrase I'm borrowing from the Authors of the first paper describing a truly impressive initiative within Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). The three papers explore the potential of sports, creative writing and art, each in way that aims to awaken and energize a new sense of purpose and hope among participants, but more through subtle influence rather than direct

intervention.[1]

The HMPPS Twinning Project has worked to channel the power of 'football' (what North Americans inappropriately refer to as soccer!) as a *hook for change*. Football is the catalyst used to engage initial involvement but the underlying aim is to encourage some level of pro-social 'identity fusion' with the football community and the values of hard work, teamwork, responsibility, honesty, and integrity. Beyond the influence of interacting with professional footballers (in many ways serving as respected 'sports heroes' for participants), the project also focuses specifically on helping create potential football-related employment opportunities post-release (with a recognized Coaching Qualification, or just simply in some capacity volunteering or working for a football club). In the span of just a few years the Twinning Project has brokered partnerships between 73 prisons and their nearest Premier League and English Football Leagues clubs, with over **750 'prison' graduates** of the programme so far, recent extension into the community with offenders on probation, and now with plans for promoting the project on a worldwide basis. The Twinning Project now operates as a fairly well funded, independent Charitable Organization. Twinning is a wonderful example of the breadth that can be achieved when a few like-minded and dedicated individuals get quickly behind a good idea and help translate it into practical application.

The next paper by **Robert Omita Okoth** and **Danson Sylvester Kahyana** is a powerful example from Africa of how a well-designed creative writing program can unleash emotional expression that has been kept hidden for years … what the Authors refer to as a 'pedagogy of hope' that aims to transform the use of the written word into 'a constructive way to begin to recover self-worth'. Implemented in conjunction with the Uganda Prisons Service (UPS) by Pen Uganda, a civil society organization and Chapter of PEN International (https://www.pen-international.org), the project was able to 'un-silence' participants and help them realize both a deeper level of self-awareness and acceptance of their circumstances. There are numerous examples of education programs in prisons, from basic literacy to advanced, university level instruction. Education of any type can open minds to new possibilities. Yet this Ugandan creative writing project seems to have connected in an especially meaningful way with both participants and staff members. As the Authors note, the project created a new community behind bars where 'three groups (facilitators, UPS staff, prisoners) worked together to make the project succeed'.[2] In commenting on the project, **Johnson Byabashaija**, the long-standing Commissioner General of the Uganda Prisons Service, highlighted how the project was able to reach 'very serious' criminals who would otherwise not be willing to 'talk to us' about their past. A Social Worker involved with the project emphasized how inmates' writings helped her "enter the mind and heart of the inmate in order to know what he or she is thinking, the kind of conflicts he or she is having, and the kind of dreams he or she has." How this new understanding of the person can support 'rehabilitative' efforts is clear.

There is truth to the old adage that crisis can create opportunity. **Dr. Helen Brown** and her colleagues

1 *There was enthusiastic response to presentations of all three projects during ICPA's recent Annual Virtual Conference (October 2021). This served to encourage the ICPA Board to establish a new Practice Transfer Taskforce that would work on helping champion broader application of these kinds of 'best' practice ideas. The ICPA Web site has further information on the aims of the Taskforce.*

2 *One end result of the project, an Anthology of prisoner writings titled 'As I Stood Dead Before the World', provides a unique window into the inner world of those individuals we often forget after we incarcerate. It is available from the Authors.*

at the University of British Columbia (UBC), Canada responded to the Covid pandemic by crafting an **ARTS-Justice** initiative that could "mitigate mental health harms and isolation for incarcerated people during the pandemic." The project involved gifting high quality 'art kits' across institutions in the Pacific Region and inviting the sharing of resulting artwork. Though simple in concept, the Authors discuss how the project became quite consequential in outcomes, evolving into a productive partnership among UBC, Corrections Canada and the community at large. There is now an ongoing focus on developing "partnerships to support reciprocity and community building ... including the launch of a public facing website to showcase ... incarcerated artists ... exploring ways to support digital connectivity and literacy for incarcerated people ... and partnership with local art galleries (for) in-person art-exhibits." The Authors outline some of the challenges that were encountered but also underscore the benefit of 'cross-sectoral collaboration and cooperation' in moving the project forward. They highlight as well the impact of the 'no strings attached' gifting from the outside, an in-reach design that led participants to conclude "*...we haven't been forgotten by the outside world.*" Importantly, as one of the reviewers noted, the project demonstrated how we can keep "narrowing the distance from prison to the outside."

The next four papers in this Edition address how the potentially far-reaching contribution of volunteers in corrections is being increasingly recognized and supported, but also how more still needs to be done. The first paper by **Rhianon Williams** and her European colleagues outlines the origin, design and rollout of the VOLPRIS initiative, a significant European Union (EU) funded project that aims to "professionalize the volunteer response to rehabilitation and reintegration." The Authors review the regional and European policy and legislation that is calling for "more effective connections between prisons and the communities which surround them." They argue as well, however, that there is a continuing need to embed volunteer initiatives and make them self-sustaining. The paper gives us an informed perspective on how VOLPRIS is working towards "better training, greater recognition of volunteering and sustained investment in improved relationships between prison staff and volunteers." Incidentally, VOLPRIS is among one of many EU funded initiatives exploring aspects of *What Else Works*.

Volunteer initiatives often begin locally in a small way, gain attention as they show some proof of concept, and the best examples then get embraced and further expanded as a correctional agency recognizes their worth. The next paper by **Alicia Mora**, a Junior Project Officer with Correctional Services Canada (CSC), **Tina Evans**, a Community Volunteer Coordinator, and **Katherine Cole**, CSC's Director of Citizen Engagement, tells the story of how a few energetic and dedicated young people were able to change the narrative of how students could (or should) contribute. Founded by a small group of undergraduate students in 2015, The Queen's (University) Correctional Services Volunteers (QCSV) *student club* has evolved into a national CSC project to expand partnerships with post-secondary institutions and student groups across the country. Particularly well received, by both offenders and staff, was the emphasis on providing practical assistance; the students developed curricula for offering a range of life skills workshops (e.g., interview etiquette, resume/CV creation, financial literacy ...etc), and during the pandemic period, turned their attention to developing some helpful virtual content (managing stress, staying active, healthy eating, a guide to community resources ...etc). Over a few years, the QCSV has grown into a team of 25 highly skilled students of all ages, from a variety of different faculties and personal backgrounds. It has culminated recently with development of *Best Practice Guidelines* that CSC is making use of in an outreach strategy to student

bodies across the country "to raise awareness about CSC as a place to volunteer and encourage the replication of the QCSV model." Consistent with our theme of *What Else Works*, the Authors outline in what ways (and how) this bottom-up innovation has benefited not just offenders, but CSC staff, the student volunteers, the broader community and even the culture of the organization.

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) is Canadian-originated volunteer program that has received wide international attention. Founded on restorative justice principles, CoSA offers 24/7 community support to individuals convicted of a sexual offence (i.e., core members) through what is called a 'circle' format; a group of trained volunteers who work together to both support and influence the individual towards continued pro-social living. The Authors of the paper, **Kelly Richards** and **Otto Driedger**, give us a detailed description of how CoSA operates, review the impressive scope of evidence confirming its success, and address some of the ongoing operational challenges for sustaining the program. Volunteer driven initiatives often struggle to secure the modicum of financial funding needed to keep them going. CoSA is thoughtfully underpinned by an evidence-informed restorative philosophy, it has demonstrated both breadth of relevance (implemented in multiple countries) and clear impact on risk for reoffending, and it does all of this at modest cost. Sadly, despite these features, CoSA Canada is unfortunately experiencing continued funding challenges. As I write this Foreword, it appears it may become a success story that disappears in its own country of origin. I hope it doesn't.

After having the privilege of lecturing in Japan a number of years ago, under the sponsorship of the United Nations Asia & Far East Institute (UNAFEI), I was left with a deep appreciation of the **Japanese Volunteer Probation Officer** (VPO) scheme. In both its breadth and depth of engagement with community, it is perhaps one of the finest examples worldwide of *What Else Works*. Increasingly recognized as a valuable adjunct to professional Probation Officer supervision, the 'Hogoshi' model has now been adopted in a number of other countries and the Japanese Ministry of Justice is spearheading a campaign for UN endorsement of an international *Hogoshi Day*. There is certainly merit in symbolic recognition of the role of volunteers in corrections internationally. However, I would argue that the contribution of volunteers, like the Hogoshi in Japan, should be recognized more substantively. I wrote the paper on *Learning from the VPO Scheme in Japan* in order to highlight how the VPO model in practice in Japan is not just a helpful adjunct but rather an approach that is fully consistent with the *evidence* about *What Works* in community reintegration.

Correctional practice has been significantly influenced in the last several decades by the calls for more appropriately tailored, women-centred programming. Though rates of incarceration of women have unfortunately continued spiralling unabated, innovation in programming has certainly gained momentum. The next three papers give us a few fine examples of this innovation in action. In their paper on 'Gardening Works', **Daniela Jauk-Ajamie** and **Andria Blackwood** nicely outline the rationale for introducing a Gardening Program in a Community-Based Correctional Facility for women. They point to how the program has benefited the mental and physical well-being of the women, helped develop social skills and soft job skills centred on horticulture, improved relationships with staff, and encouraged connections with the community. The Authors suggest that the *Garden* essentially provided a space "in which women could literally and metaphorically *grow* ... in a carceral environment that otherwise leaves them little space for agency and playfulness." As thoughtful criminology researchers, however, the Authors are careful to caution that despite the success of the program, it

should not be seen as a panacea. They conclude that no single program can "address the systemic racialized and gendered inequalities and marginalization women face in the American justice system ... and cannot substitute for trauma-informed correctional programming that centres on rehabilitation and recovery ... (or) the need for comprehensive community-based wrap-around services upon release." Program success should be celebrated but it should also generate rather than halt further program development.

The title of the next paper summarizes how an important gap in service for women can be addressed by mobilizing the right kinds of partnerships ... *Creating a coordinated system of care for mother-baby pairs transitioning from a prison nursery to their home community*. **Ashley Mager** and her colleagues note that though prison nursery programs have now become common practice, support for mother-baby pairs post-release remains spotty and difficult to access. They observe that the "challenges that a mother encounters leaving incarceration are multi-faceted and often unpredictable, making it impossible for one agency to solely address all of these challenges." There is also clear evidence suggesting that failure to negotiate some of these challenges can be a key factor leading to re-offending. The Authors go on to describe the creation of a model grounded in human rights and health equity principles that works in practice through a committed multidisciplinary network. Importantly, they explain how the perspective of women with 'lived experience' was respected in both the crafting and the evaluation of strategies in their **Mothers on the Rise** model. The paper concludes with some clear recommendations for how other prison nursery systems can replicate an effective, coordinated system of post-release care for incarcerated mothers.

Aboriginal women suffer from 'double' disadvantage, something that is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the shockingly high rates of incarceration for this vulnerable group. The last paper in this section on innovation in programming for women describes an Australian effort to design programming that could be both gender-sensitive and culturally-inclusive. As **Shawn Sowerbutts** and his colleagues explain, "Stepping Stones represents a new, gender-specific treatment approach that attempts to marry the strong evidence-base of the RNR model, with complimentary approaches that recognise women's unique pathways and experiences. It also applies a cultural lens to improve its relevance for Aboriginal women, drawing on the Aboriginal concept of *kanyini* to illustrate different ways of understanding the interplay of cognitions, emotions and personal agency." This is a wonderful example of how different streams of evidence can be integrated into a whole that is more than the sum of its parts ... in this case bringing together a reconceptualization of the RNR framework, important feminist criminology findings on pathways to offending, and what we know about the consequences of complex histories of trauma and victimization, including intergenerational trauma. Though delivery experience with the new program is still limited, it will be interesting to eventually hear more about the success of the program, especially in terms of the benefits of "placing more emphasis on rapport and on the need to establish emotional safety in the treatment room."

The last three papers in this Edition turn our attention to ways of positively transforming the prison culture. **Marietta Martinovic** and her colleagues argue from the premise that good policy and practice should be 'informed and shaped' by the people most affected by it. The Inside-Out model of Prison Think Tanks has become popular in the last number of years as a way to create opportunity for valuable exchange of ideas between incarcerated people and university students, encouraging dialogue on contemporary Criminal Justice System issues, allowing each side to learn from the other.

Building on the success of this 'commingling' of ideas, the paper discusses how the **Beyond the Stone Walls Advisory Collective** (BSWAC) was developed to capitalize on the lived experiences of three distinct groups of individuals ... ex-incarcerated people, practitioners and researchers. Led by an academic team from RMIT University's Criminology and Justice Discipline, BSWAC has evolved into an active group of 'passionate advocates and creative consultants' who propose practical, future-oriented solutions to challenges facing the CJS. The paper outlines some of the important 'consultation' products that have been produced and outlines how the approach has benefited both the governmental and non-governmental sector in processing these new and nuanced 'joined-up' perspectives of ex-incarcerated people, practitioners and researchers.

Raleigh Blasdell and her colleagues discuss introduction of the **Global Leadership Summit (GLS)** initiative in the prison setting. The GLS is an annual 2-day leadership event hosted by the Global Leadership Network, a network of Christian church leaders operating as a non-profit organization, and live-streamed to over 500 host-sites, reaching approximately 400,000 participants in 120+ countries annually. The GLS conference attracts numerous highly respected speakers, some from the religious sector but also from business, education, government, technology, and the entertainment arenas. The common theme is that speakers are chosen to provide "vision, inspiration, and practical skills to current and future leaders." First introduced in a Missouri prison in 2015, the initiative has now spread to a number of prisons in the U.S. and globally. The Authors outline the logistics for introducing this kind of 'virtual' event and they highlight a range of evaluative data suggesting there is beneficial, pro-social impact on the prisoner participants (towards what the Authors describe as 'servant leadership'). Most impressive however, even if certainly not definitive, is the suggestion that the GLS can impinge positively on the prison environment (e.g., reduction in use of force incidents). In the new world of digital, this is perhaps an initiative worth further study.

The last paper in this Edition discusses a more traditional way of impinging on the culture and environment of prisons ... through the vision and leadership that can be provided by prison Governors (Wardens) and other senior managers. **Rachel D. Crawley** and **Jesse Wiese** ask if Wardens hold the key to prison culture? They respond by describing an impressive and intensive **Warden Exchange** program designed to "equip corrections professionals to bring restorative change to their facilities" as transformative leaders. Now delivered successfully in the US for a number of years under the sponsorship of Prison Fellowship, the Authors review a range of evaluative evidence that all seems to point to some significant positive outcomes. Transformational leadership and concepts of 'vision planning guidance' are certainly not new, but the depth of engagement and participant involvement that this Warden Exchange program appears to be generating over time clearly seems to be having some impact. It is easy to agree with the Author's conclusions that "While the findings presented here do not lead to solid conclusions about leadership training for prison leaders, they do provide evidence that this is an area worth investing in more research and training development." It is an area that has been neglected and that should indeed receive more attention.

I close by giving my usual thanks to all of the members of our **Editorial Board** who are consistently responsive to my requests for manuscript reviews. The Journal is succeeding because of the support you are giving. For this Edition, because of the considerable number of manuscripts we received, I had to reach beyond the Editorial Board to gather enough reviews. I want to extend a special thank you to the other individuals who graciously offered their time to submit detailed reviews: ***Phil Wheatley***

(UK), Rob Allen (UK), Jennifer Oades (Canada), Michelle Carpentier (Canada), Julie Renaud (Canada), Paul Geurts (Netherlands), Marcus Harmes (Australia), Shawn Sowerbutts (Australia), Andrew Day (Australia), Doug Dretke (USA), Reggie Wilkinson (USA), and Bernie Warner (USA). Two of those reviewers have agreed to join our ACJ Editorial Board, Rob Allen and Andrew Day, and I welcome them to the team.

Commentary on this Edition of Advancing Corrections, or on any of the individual articles, is especially welcomed. We can consider including your views in Volume 2 of Advancing Corrections on *What Else Works* scheduled for publication in October, 2022.

Though it seems like an elusive dream in this rather troubled world, I end with my personal wishes for peace on earth!

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Featured Articles:

What Else Works ...

COULD THE 'GLOBAL SPORT' HELP SOLVE A GLOBAL PROBLEM? – USING THE POWER OF FOOTBALL TO REDUCE RE-OFFENDING

Jason Swettenham MBE & Jo Wickens
HM Prison and Probation Service

With contributions from David Dein MBE (Chair of the Twinning Project), Hilton Freund (CEO Twinning Project), Dr Martha Newson (Department of Anthropology University of Oxford) & Dr Chris Kay (Department of Criminology, Loughborough University).

Abstract

Desistance from crime involves not only the termination of offending (also referred to as "primary desistance"), but also some level of transformation of *self-identity* and self-worth (also referred to as "secondary desistance"). Such transformation is usually presented through a "narrative of change" (Gadd and Farrall, 2004) linked to taking on new roles (such as parent, employee, coach, etc.) that are no longer associated with offending. Avenues for transformation and pro-social role development are difficult to come by for many of those involved in the criminal justice system who are disproportionately drawn from socially excluded backgrounds. Coupled with the stigma attached to a criminal record, offenders also typically have low levels of pro-social capital (Kay, 2020), few positive relationships and limited employment prospects, all of which are required to support successful rehabilitation efforts (see Kay and Monaghan, 2019). Research has shown that a "catalyst for change" (see Maruna, 2001) is fundamental to successful desistance and rehabilitation efforts, and research is beginning to show that engagement in sport and physical activity can potentially act as such a catalyst (Meek and Lewis, 2014). The introduction of the Twinning Project in 2018 within the HM Prison and Probation Service, which aims to utilise football coaching to tackle the "revolving door" of offending (Padfield and Maruna, 2006), was therefore a timely and important initiative.

Introduction

The Twinning Project is a partnership between HM Prison and Probation Service and the "football family" in England and Wales with an aim to reduce reoffending. All 20 Premier League[1] and 72 English Football League[2] clubs, the Football Association (FA), League Managers Association[3], Professional Footballers' Association (PFA)[4] and the Referees Association[5] have endorsed the Twinning Project.

Since its inception in October 2018 the Twinning Project has brokered partnerships between 73 prisons and their nearest Premier League (PL) and English Football Leagues (EFL) clubs, and despite nearly 2 years of forced regime restrictions in prisons due to Covid 19, there have been over **750 graduates** from the programme. The project is now an independent charitable organisation.

Background to the Twinning Project

The Twinning Project was the brainchild of David Dein MBE (former co-owner and vice-chairman of Arsenal FC). The idea came from his experiences in delivering motivational speeches in prisons.

David Dein has long been a keen supporter of the UK Charity "Speakers for Schools" and has delivered motivational speeches to over 650 secondary schools (11–16-year-olds). On seeing the positive impact his talks, based on his own 'rags to riches' story, were having on school children he decided to expand the reach. His thinking led him to approach Her Majesty's Prison Service. Over the following 2 years he visited each of the 117 prisons in England and Wales sharing his experiences in running one of the world's most successful football clubs, tips for success and critically encouraging prisoners to consider their own potential.

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1 *Premier League is the top level of the English football league system, contested by 20 clubs.*

2 *English Football League (EFL) is the largest single body of professional clubs in European football.*

3 *League Managers Association is the trade union for the Premier League, English Football League, and national team managers in English association football.*

4 *Professional Footballers' Association is the trade union for professional association football players in England and Wales.*

5 *Referees' Association offer help and support via training, development, welfare, and support with around 180 local associations involved.*

Reflecting on the visits, Mr Dein was of the view that despite the best endeavours of the Prison Service, many prisoners appeared disengaged and reluctant to take advantage of the interventions on offer to help them address the root causes of their offending behaviour. There was however a shared love of football highlighting a common interest between prisoners and staff.

> *"The power of sport and recreational activities can never be underestimated in life and particularly in the prison environment." Martyn Oxley – HMP Downview*

In March 2018, Jason Swettenham MBE, Head of Industries, Retail, Catering and Physical Education for Her Majesty's Prison Service, was introduced to David Dein. They discussed Mr Dein's desire to help instil hope across the prison population through football. Mr Dein felt that football clubs, and in particular the club charitable foundations (CCOs)[6], could help reduce reoffending. The simplicity of Mr Dein's proposal was for the Twinning Project to twin every prison with their nearest professional football club, delivering a football-based qualification. The next step was to develop a model that could be replicated across the prison estate. Michael Spurr CBE, the then CEO of Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, saw the potential benefits from football coaches helping rehabilitate offenders through the sport and gave approval for the Twinning Project development to commence.

On the 31st of October 2018, The Twinning Project was formally launched at an event held in the Royal Suite at Wembley Stadium. The event was hosted by former Arsenal and England striker and TV personality, Ian Wright MBE.

To secure 'buy-in' at establishment level, Governors, and a Prison Officer from the Physical Education Department from each of the 117 prisons in England and Wales were invited to the launch. There was also a representative from each of the 20 Premier League and 72 English Football League Clubs and senior figures in football which included Arsene Wenger OBE[7], Baroness Karren Brady CBE[8], and the late Gerard Houllier OBE[9]. The reaction from delegates to the presentation was very positive with a number of football clubs signing up there and then.

An ambitious target was set to twin 20 prisons and football clubs by 1st April 2019. By February 2019, 30 prisons had begun partnerships with their nearest professional football club, largely due to the tenacity of the Twinning Project's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Hilton Freund and of prisons to work in partnership.

Although this is not the first-time that clubs have delivered football-based programmes in prisons, prior to this project engagement differed substantially across sites, and the content varied from club to club. Coupled with the fact that delivery was on a small scale and sporadic, it would have been impossible to monitor and measure any tangible outcomes. By facilitating the partnerships on

6 *Club Community Organisations (CCO) are the charitable arms of the football clubs, delivering a range of initiatives to support their communities.*

7 *Arsene Wenger OBE, former Arsenal football manager (1996-2018) and current FIFA Chief of Global Football Development.*

8 *Baroness Karren Brady CBE, former Managing Director of Birmingham City Football Club, and current Vice Chairwomen of West Ham United Football Club.*

9 *Gerard Houllier, professional football player and former manager of Paris Saint-Germain, Lens and Liverpool football clubs.*

a national basis, the Twinning Project has managed to broker and coordinate the relationships with professional football clubs to use the experience of their coaches and referees, and the power of their brands, to deliver a tailored course which engages the disengaged. Critically, by delivering the same course to all eligible participants, regardless of the age, gender and layout or location of the prison, the intervention can be monitored and evaluated to discover what works well – and why.

The Twinning Project Course

Many prisoners have had a poor educational experience and developed a resistance to learning and exercise. Consequently, many Twinning Project participants have limited educational qualifications and can also be reluctant to take advantage of the core education offer. A key aim of the Twinning Project is to act as a gateway to engagement in mainstream education and in turn improve their life chances and opportunities to gain employment on release, using football as a catalyst for change.

The Twinning Project course is a bespoke, football-based intervention designed by the Football Association for use in the criminal justice environment specifically for this project. It is delivered over 36 hours and the course content is the same across the prison estate. The subject matter is mostly practical and leads to participants obtaining an accredited FA Level 1 Coaching Qualification – Developing Leadership in Football award. It is a vocational course that provides participants with the opportunity to develop an awareness of both the practical and theoretical aspects of football coaching. The delivery is flexible depending on the regime of the prison and therefore can either be delivered in modules of 3 hour blocks each week, over 12 weeks, or condensed to a shorter term. Each establishment can deliver the programme up to three cohorts per year.

The course is designed to allow professional coaches, football club staff and prison Physical Education Instructors to co-deliver accredited coaching and employability-based qualifications. By using the experience of professional clubs, the power of the club brand can be the 'hook' to engage the disengaged.

Custodial Delivery

The very first delivery of the Twinning Project Course took place in April 2019 at HM Prison Downview, a women's prison in Sutton, a town on the outskirts of London, in partnership with Arsenal FC.

There was a conscious decision to deliver the first Twinning Project course in a women's prison to coincide with the Women's World Cup which was to take place in France, in June of that year. The delivery was successful and was supported by the presence of former Arsenal and England International full-back and now TV personality and respected pundit Alex Scott MBE. All 12 participants graduated from the inaugural 12-week course and one woman went on to support an Arsenal FC coach in the delivery of a football-based course for children with learning difficulties at the "Arsenal Hub"[10] whilst released on temporary licence (ROTL) from prison.

> *"It was a good experience. The skills such as team building, and leadership are transferable to other aspects of life. My favourite parts of the programme were learning new techniques and meeting new people, and I will carry the skills forward with me." Nicola – participant at HMP Downview*

The Programme Specifics

- Level 1 FA Accredited Coaching qualification on completion of the course
- Up to 16 participants per cohort enrolled on the course and registered with the FA (by the Twinning Project)
- Access to, and training by, professional coaches from the Football Club Community Foundations
- 35 guided learning hours including FA tutor time
- Full Twinning Project branded professional football kit (including boots) which the participants can keep
- Course delivery is within the prison and co-delivered by the prison Physical Education Instructors (PEIs)
- Each participant must have at least six months left to serve
- Participants should not be transferred to another prison unless for security reasons

Exclusion Criteria

The Twinning Project Charity has mandated that anyone convicted of a sexual or terrorism related offence will not be accepted onto the course. This is in line with the Football Association's

10 *Arsenal Community Hub is the home of Arsenal in the Community (CCO)*

safeguarding position. There is limited delivery within the Long-Term High Security Estate[11] as much of this population will not meet the eligibility criteria, have complex offending behaviour needs, and not be at the stage of their sentence to benefit from the project.

Recruitment & Selection

The Twinning Project welcomes participants who have an interest in football and coaching, and a desire to develop their leadership and other personal skills in an interactive way. Apart from the above exclusions, the project is available across the prison estate - male, female, and young people. Applications to take part are encouraged from the participants themselves. Applying for the course demonstrates a level of commitment and motivation to engage, which can be particularly powerful in a custodial environment when a prisoner's own perception of agency can be limited.

> *"The Twinning Project has instilled a team spirit among the groups that wouldn't have been possible to build with such a diverse group of individuals from all corners of the prison" Mark Poole – HMP Sudbury*

Once the required suitability checks and risk assessments have been undertaken, selection is prioritised on length of time left in custody; those with longer left to serve will be placed on a waiting list for future cohorts. Maximising engagement just prior to release is important and enables the participant to achieve a formal qualification and support their preparation for a return to the community. Participation also enables the individual to demonstrate socially desirable skills and behaviours, including motivation, respect, communication skills, teamwork, and regular attendance, all of which are valuable when facing the challenges and opportunities of resettlement.

The importance of the local link between the club and establishment is critical to support post-release engagement, and to dovetail with local initiatives and through-the-gate support. It is also unrealistic to suggest that all participants will be released into the local area of the prison, however because of the collaborative network that the Twinning Project has developed with the community foundations, there are opportunities for graduates to be supported by the club closest to their release area.

> *"The opportunity to work with .... prisoners and provide them with the education and skills that could influence the reduction in reoffending once released and provide them with the necessary qualifications to be able to get work post sentence made this project a perfect fit for Burton Albion Community Trust." Paul Gaskin - Burton Albion Community Trust*

Probation Delivery

The Director General of Her Majesty's Probation Service is interested to see if the gains made from participation in the Twinning Project in custody could be matched by people serving sentences in the community. This was a natural progression for the Twinning Project, as at any given time in England and Wales there are circa 240,000 people being supervised by the Probation Service in the community

11 *Long Term and High Security Estate is a directorate within Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, made up of 13 prisons that work with complex and high-risk prisoners.*

- either on a community sentence or on licence following release from custody.

Senior leaders in the Probation Service are keen to prove the concept of the project for their cohorts, therefore a community pilot was developed in collaboration with West Midlands Probation, Aston Villa FC, and Birmingham City FC Community Foundations. The community pilot 'stayed true' to the custodial methodology and delivered the bespoke Twinning Project/FA Course. The West Midlands community pilot commenced in May/June 2021 with two participant cohorts. The courses were delivered on club facilities and the last sessions and graduations took place on the main pitches at St Andrew's, home of Birmingham City FC, and Villa Park, Aston Villa FC's ground. Despite the small scale of the initial pilot, the outcomes and participation were significant, with one participant being employed by Birmingham City as a fitness instructor. It has been agreed that a further four probation regions should be included within the pilot to gather more participation and outcomes data to assess impact and potential for a wider roll out.

Academic Research

The project is being evaluated by the University of Oxford's Centre for the Study of Social Cohesion and experts in Criminology and Sport Management from Loughborough University. The evaluation will continue through 2022 and beyond, evaluating the impact of the course from both an anthropological and a criminological perspective, offering a scientific view on what works and why.

Social cohesion

Dr Martha Newson and Professor Whitehouse are leading quantitative research into the social bonds that may underpin the programme's successes. Early suggestions from the pilot phase of their custodial evaluation found that a significant number of participants experienced a powerful bond to the Twinning Project, to the extent that their identities became 'fused' with it. Identity fusion is a well-established psychological construct explaining some of humanity's most impactful pro-social behaviours, including extreme football fandom (Newson, 2019), giving blood (Buhrmester et al., 2015), or even being willing to fight for your country on the frontline (Whitehouse et al., 2017). As such, those participants who became fused to the Twinning Project – and internalised its positive values - had significantly improved positive prisoner case notes (recorded on NOMIS, the Prison Service recording system) over a six-month period, which appeared to be true for both men and women. In addition, fusion to the Twinning Project was also associated with significant increases in activity/work attendance across other areas of the prison regime.

A critical element of the ongoing research is exploring the cognitive mechanisms underlying these bonds to the project, so that the programme can be tailored to its diverse participants and made as bonding an experience as possible. Oxford's quantitative analysis will combine longitudinal surveys with prison behaviour and an array of reoffending and reconviction data to understand the nuances of desistance in this population, compared to control groups.

Supporting desistance from crime

The criminological research led by Dr Chris Kay from Loughborough University, is investigating the

impact of engaging with the Twinning Project on the early desistance efforts of incarcerated people. It is currently undertaking narrative interviews with a sample of Twinning Project participants to develop an understanding of the individuals who engage in the project, along with the role of the programme in the construction of their "narrative of change". Data is also being collected from the coaching and PEI staff who deliver Twinning courses to understand their attitudes and beliefs surrounding their engagement with the process, the ways in which they see the course delivering upon the overarching project aims, and the operational realities of delivering the courses.

Early findings have shown that engaging with the programme, while beneficial in itself, can also act as a vehicle through which soft skill acquisition and employability-based learning can be undertaken. It has also been found that brand association with the club plays a key role in enhancing recruitment and retention on the project, while also establishing a link to the outside world for participants. All of these are important in promoting the development of a desisting identity.

Reflections and what's next for the Twinning Project?

Since its inception, the Twinning Project has received strong support from HMPPS and Ministry of Justice leadership. This is of course partly due to the influential network that the Twinning Project has attracted, via David Dein's continued efforts to underpin the project and the scale of football clubs involved, but fundamentally it is the power of football and its ability, whether at grass roots or at elite standards, to bring people together. The project has demonstrated its alignment to HMPPS' strategic objectives: particularly the value of working in partnership with other organisations to enhance the provision of services and interventions; and how to capitalise on the expertise of partners to provide training, education, and skills development. These partnerships are also an important part of strengthening links between formerly incarcerated people and their local communities. Football Club Foundations are firmly embedded within their local areas, delivering a variety of community programmes, which is why the transition to working inside the prison wall has been a successful extension to the vital work they already undertake, with an established framework to enable continuation through the gate.

The engagement from football club foundations has been very supportive, clubs that did not feel able to support the project cited either work within criminal justice not yet being included within foundation strategic plans or being unable to fund the provision at that time. There was some initial hesitance from some clubs due to a lack of experience of working with prisoners, however they were supported by the Twinning Project and HMPPS colleagues to improve their knowledge and were included in the delivery planning, working in collaboration with their twinned establishment and building on experience of their work in the community.

The support received from prisons for the Twinning Project has been overwhelmingly positive, evidenced by the number of sites already signed up. The ability to mobilise and implement the project within agreed timescales was due to the simplicity of the delivery model with the flexibility for each establishment to roll out the programme in line with their wider regime. Prison Governors and their staff are committed to supporting prisoners to engage in activities that have a positive purpose and that support the fundamental objective of reducing re-offending. This has been particularly pertinent over the past two years where prisons, like the rest of the world, have been impacted by the Covid

19 pandemic. Restrictions to regimes have been necessary to reduce the spread of the virus to keep prisoners and staff as safe as possible. At points where Twinning delivery has had to be paused, prisons and football club foundations have been committed to recommencing the project when safe to do so; recognising the value of the work and the positive impact on the prisoners who participate.

The project has been cognisant of public opinion and the potential perception that prisoners are receiving opportunities that law abiding members of the public are not. The Twinning Project are utilising the basis of a course that is already available to members of the public and the fact that football club foundations offer support across their communities. The Twinning Project are not enabling prisoners to "jump the queue" ahead of others; the purpose is to help reduce barriers that they are likely to face on release, improving their employability which in turn will help reduce re-offending.

At the design stage of the project, careful consideration was given to the design of the football kit. A football fan's loyalty to their football club is often made visible by wearing the club kit, therefore a neutral, green football kit with the Twinning Project emblem was selected, as there was only one lower league team that had (a different shade of) green as their kit colour. The decision for a neutral kit was two-fold: to not prioritise any club over another; and, importantly, to reduce any potential barriers around fan loyalty if a participant was enrolled in a programme run by a club typically considered a rival to the team they usually support. Indeed, the pilot research suggested that participants navigate these existing football loyalties by forming close bonds to the Twinning Project itself - above and beyond any bonds they form with the club running their programme. The Twinning Project is therefore becoming a powerful brand in the eyes of participants. This research has now evolved to further investigate the roles individual coaches or PE officers have as mentors or attachment figures for participants.

The next steps for the project are focused on recovery from Covid 19, mobilising existing twinned sites to prepare for ongoing delivery, and to continue to plan for further eligible sites and their respective clubs to begin their Twinning journey.

The international application of the Twinning Project is an exciting opportunity to be explored. Football is an international game with a global fan base and the core principles of the Twinning Project have the ability to be applied to other criminal justice systems and professional sports clubs where social bonding is present.

CASE STUDIES

Club and Foundation
Arsenal Women FC

Prison
HMP Downview

Overview of delivery
Arsenal Women FC were the first club to deliver a Twinning Project programme, launching in April 2019 in the company of Arsenal and England player Alex Scott. The programme lasted 6 weeks.

Feedback

Club and Foundation	Prison	Participant
Tom Hartley, Arsenal Women FC Coach	Martyn Oxley, PEI HMP Downview	Ms N Twinning Project participant
"Delivering the Twinning Project at HMP Downview was full of memorable moments, some of which were big and some of which were small but had huge impact on individuals. Building close and meaningful relationships with the women involved in the learning was incredibly powerful. Over time, creating an environment where some of the most vulnerable in our society felt like they could trust you (the coach) was an absolute privilege."	*"The participants on the course have shown a real increase in their confidence. This has been particularly visible when delivering sessions in front of the peers, from initially being sunk into a chair, leading them to delivering sessions and finally a tournament. The power of sport and recreational activities can never be underestimated in life and particularly in the prison environment."*	*"It was a good experience. The skills such as team building, and leadership are transferable to other aspects of life. My favourite parts of the programme were learning new techniques and meeting new people, and I will carry the skills forward with me."*

Following Ms N's participation and graduation of the course, she then helped to deliver a coaching session to children in the North London area, supporting Arsenal coach Tom Hartley at the Emirates Stadium.

Club and Foundation
Burton Albion Community Trust

Prison
HMP Sudbury

Overview of delivery
The accredited FA football-based course was delivered into HMP Sudbury during 2019. The course was an accomplishment for both prison staff and residents of the prison. Sixteen individuals successfully completed the course in the classroom and on the field, and as well as providing them with the knowledge and education it also brought improvements in their behaviour and abilities. The close working relationship between PE staff and the Foundation team at Burton Albion Community Trust was fundamental to the success of the course.

Feedback

Club and Foundation	Prison	Participant
Paul Gaskin, Burton Albion Community Trust (BACT)	Mark Poole, PEI HMP Sudbury	Mr S Twinning Project participant
"When the opportunity to take part in the Twinning Project was presented, we felt that it fitted with our ethos of making a difference to the community we live in through the power of sport. The opportunity to continue to work with HMP Sudbury and the prisoners and provide them with the education and skills that could influence the reduction in reoffending once released and provide them with the necessary qualifications to be able to get work post sentence made this project a perfect fit for Burton Albion Community Trust."	*"The Twinning Project has instilled a team spirit among the groups that wouldn't have been possible to build with such a diverse group of individuals from all corners of the prison. The prisoners had an identity courtesy of the Twinning Project football kit. The programme took prisoners out of their comfort zone with some coaching and officiating and this improved their confidence while giving them an appreciation of the challenges that coaches and referees face."*	*"The impact BACT and the Twinning Project had on me was life changing. I'd always wanted to work within football, and I didn't think it was possible for me because of my criminal record. When the opportunity arose for me at BACT I didn't think it would change my life as it has. Through the qualifications and experience I gained I have now managed to secure permanent full-time employment at Tranmere Rovers FC. It's encouraged me to turn my life around for the better I never want to return to prison, and I feel that had it not been for BACT and HMP Sudbury I wouldn't have my job now at Tranmere."*

Mr S is now working at Tranmere Rovers FC as a football coach for the Tranmere education programme, where he oversees 39 sixteen-year-olds on a daily basis, ensuring they get the best education football experience.

Club and Foundation

Newport County – County in the Community

Prison

HMP Prescoed

Overview of delivery

The accredited FA football-based course was delivered into HMP Prescoed during 2019. The course was an accomplishment for both prison staff and residents of the prison. Sixteen individuals completed the course both in the classroom and on the field and whilst providing them with the knowledge and education, it also had a wider impact with improvements in their behaviour and abilities. The close working relationship between PE staff and the Foundation team at County in the Community was fundamental to the success of the course.

Feedback

Club and Foundation	Prison	Participant
Norman Parselle, County in the Community	Ian Moore, PEI HMP Prescoed	Mr C Twinning Project participant
"The highlight of the programme was definitely the buy-in from the participants. When we met them all on the Monday morning, they were fully engaged and wanted to be there. The other staff and I were treated really well by everyone at Prescoed throughout the project delivery."	*"I have been involved in the running of two Twinning Project courses. The prisoners who participated found the course to be of great benefit. Their confidence grew, and as the course developed the prisoners were required to stand up in front of their peers and deliver aspects of the course."*	*"Personally, I feel I have benefited from participating in the Twinning Project with County in the Community. This reinforced my passion for wanting to pursue employment within the football coaching sector in the future. In addition, the course played an influential part in me wanting to complete my coaching badges in order to gain employment within the industry."*

Mr C is studying towards a Foundation Degree in Community Football Coaching and Development with County in the Community. The programme is a partnership with the English Football League Trust and the University of South Wales. The course develops the skills and qualities that are required to work within professional football clubs' community departments or national governing bodies in areas of growth such as social inclusion, community coaching and football development.

He also has a part-time job with the local authority assisting others that have just been released from prison to find employment.

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About the Authors

Jason Swettenham MBE: Co-founder of the Twinning Project, Jason Swettenham is the Head of Prison Industries, Retail, Catering and Physical Education Services in HM Prison and Probation Service. He joined as a Prison Officer in 1992 and now manages a large team with an annual budget of £145 million. His remit covers all the internal work and occupational training for prisoners in each of the 105 public sector prisons across England and Wales. His team ensures that the Prison Service is largely self-sufficient as they make all clothing, furniture and infrastructure used in all prisons. Training includes all the major manufacturing, engineering, woodwork, textiles, laundries, plastic injection moulding and land-based activities (horticulture and farming). Jason is also in charge of all the prison kitchens and the food served to the 80,000 prisoners, equating to over 92 million meals a year. He is responsible for Physical Education in prisons and is overhauling the delivery of physical education nationally. He is on a personal mission to improve the mental and physical health of those in custody via exercise and a nutritious diet.

Jo Wickens: Jo joined the National Probation Service in 2003 and trained as a Probation Officer, supervising individuals serving their sentences within the community and those released from prison on licence. Jo then became a Senior Probation Officer, managing Offender Management Units in the community and latterly in three prisons in the South East of England. Jo's extensive operational experience led her to join the national change project - Offender Management in Custody (OMiC). The vision of the project was to make transformational improvements in the way HMPPS support, and case manage prisoners through their sentences. As a Design Manager she was able to shape elements of the model and support prisons and probation regions to prepare for implementation. Jo

now works in Jason Swettenham's central team and one of her responsibilities has been to lead on the roll out of the Twinning Project pilots in the community.

David Dein MBE: Founder of the Twinning Project. David joined the Arsenal Board in 1983 and was made Vice Chairman in the same year. He rose to Vice Chairman of the Football Association and has served on numerous UEFA and FIFA committees. David was an early proponent of women's football having been President of the hugely successful Arsenal Ladies Team. These days David spends much of his time speaking in businesses, schools and prisons including students of the well renowned Harvard Business School in Boston. David was awarded an MBE by the Queen in recognition of his achievements.

Hilton Freund: Hilton Freund joined the Twinning Project prior to its official launch in October 2018 and has been fundamental to the growth and success of the initiative. Hilton ensures a sustainable dialogue and relationship is created between the prisons and local football clubs. He also serves on the funding committee of the Charitable Foundation overseeing grant applications and educational benchmarking. Together with David Dein, Hilton encourages prisons to use the social power of football. He has over 20 years of corporate experience, having served in senior marketing and marketing communications roles.

Dr Chris Kay: Dr Kay is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology at Loughborough University. His research focuses on the lived experience of criminal justice (with a specific focus on imprisonment and probation supervision) along with the ways in which such experiences impact upon the immediate and long-term desistance and rehabilitation efforts of people with convictions. Currently, his research focuses on the power of sport and physical activity in supporting the early desistance efforts of incarcerated people, both during their sentence and upon release.

Dr Martha Newson: Dr Martha Newson is a research affiliate at the Centre for the Study of Social Cohesion, University of Oxford, and a UKRI Future Leaders Fellow at the University of Kent. Dr Newson's inter-disciplinary research draws from psychology and anthropology to tackle questions around group bonding, ritual, and community. She has worked with football fans extensively in the UK, Australia, Brazil, and Indonesia to understand group loyalty, intergroup violence, perceived kinship, stress, and co-operation.

RESTORING DIGNITY IN PRISONS THROUGH A CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM: AN EXPERIENCE FROM UGANDA

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Abstract

This article discusses a creative writing project for inmates conducted in two Ugandan prisons by Pen Uganda in partnership with the Uganda Prisons Service. It details the project cycle from conception through to evaluation and discusses the project's implications for the dignity of the beneficiaries and the potential inroads it presents to their rehabilitation process, as well as for prison staff and the Uganda Prison Service's (UPS) rehabilitative programming. It also suggests "what else works" for people deprived of their liberty.

Keywords: Prison, dignity, rehabilitation, inmates, creative writing.

Introduction

This article is based on the evidence of a two-year creative writing project at Luzira maximum security prison (for males) and Luzira women's prison, implemented in conjunction with the Uganda Prisons Service[1] (UPS) by Pen Uganda, a nongovernmental organization (NGO). The UPS has for a while appreciated the important contribution NGOs can make, particularly in promoting inmates' access to justice, social welfare, rehabilitation and reintegration. It has, for instance, partnered with the Paralegal Advisory Services (UPS - SIP IV, 2016: xix) and Advance Africa (2015) to ensure timely access to justice and to offer skills training for reintegration, respectively. The creative writing project therefore sits in the ambit of the UPS's deliberate programming in collaboration with NGOs. It was financed by PEN International, a world association of writers, headquartered in London.

Structurally this article begins with a description of the creative writing project, and then relates it with other prison programs, particularly with formal education. It then analyses the impact of the creative writing approach against major themes which include dignity, hope and rehabilitation.

The article reflects on the project cycle and evaluates the program's success with regard to prison pedagogies, for instance how engaging inmates in the literary arts enhances their sense of self-worth/dignity, and how to translate the insights gleaned from their writings into resources that can enhance humane practices as well as design robust rehabilitation intervention plans. We further explore intriguing outcomes of the project such as how the work has informed prison officers at the UPS with regard to enhancing their approach to improve the process of social rehabilitation of prisoners.

Rationale for the Creative Writing Approach

The creative writing project was premised, amongst other things, on the belief that every human being, regardless of circumstances such as being in prison, is creative. In addition, the need to positively harness creative energies in such a situation of deprivation of liberty was a motivating factor. We also believe that every day is an opportunity to discover the self, for example, the potential one doesn't know one has, say the potential to write poetry, short stories, and short plays, in this case; and to use it in a positive way to improve or develop oneself.

Furthermore, by striving to develop powers of expression, emotional awareness and critical thinking, the project sought to work towards restoring dignity and hope to those incarcerated and often reviled by society at large as criminals and as not contributing to a society's or nation's development. This attitude towards persons deprived of their liberty is prevalent in many regions, including in Europe and North America where some of them have felt that the society judged them as people that "should be thrown on the scrapheap" (Tett et al, 2012: 179).

1 *As of December 2021, the UPS had a prison population of 67 318. Prison population rate is 140 per 100,000 of the national population, estimated at about 48,000,000. Pre-trial detainees / remand prisoners are 51.8% of the overall prison population. The Service has 254 Prisons, majority of which are small and medium capacity prisons holding 100 to 500 prisoners. Occupancy level (based on official capacity) is 336.8% (World Prison Brief, 2022). In its Strategic Development Plan V (2020: 68-69) the UPS aims at rehabilitating offenders into law abiding and productive citizens through effective rehabilitation and reintegration programs and various interventions to enhance their productivity, competitiveness and better quality of life for all.*

The key social actors in the life of a prisoner in a Ugandan prison are mainly the family, relatives, lawyers, religious organizations, local governments, prison staff, medical workers, prison social workers, NGOs, among others. In an action-oriented research done by the UPS and the United Nations Africa Institute for the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders (UNAFRI), it was observed that the more social actors were involved in the rehabilitation and reintegration process of a prisoner, the higher their likelihood to successfully reintegrate into society (Omita et. al 2011: 30; Sita et. al 2005: 13, 83).

It was also anticipated that the inmate would benefit from constructive interaction with the workshop facilitators (the teachers), since they were from outside the prison or prison school system. The positive relationship between the writing teacher and the learner is a mutually beneficial one, when both make sense of what is going on, that is to say, the exercises being given, and the work being written. Correctional practitioners and experts widely concur that involvement of prisoners in constructive activities offers a humanizing experience to the beneficiaries and could contribute to their social rehabilitation and reintegration (Coyle & Fair, 2018: 92-102).

How the project was designed and organized

PEN Uganda developed a concept paper on the project which it presented to the UPS, through the Department of Rehabilitation and welfare. Upon approval, the two parties signed a memorandum of understanding, which clearly indicated the duties and responsibilities of each partner.

The Responsibility of the UPS

The responsibilities of UPS included permission for entry and implementation of all project related activities according to an established timetable; monitoring the writing of creative works in the absence of the facilitators; and ensuring that the inmates turn in their work for further guidance. They also contributed guidance on specific technical and operational aspects in a correctional setting, as well as ensuring that the ideas were consistent with sound penological theories.

The Responsibility of PEN Uganda and integrity of the project

As the initiators, PEN Uganda was responsible for designing the curriculum and training the inmates. A clear, well-designed curriculum was emphasized in order to ensure proper design and delivery of the project according to the plan[2]. The responsibility included teaching inmates the key elements of a good poem, short story, and short play; providing writing materials; correcting the participants' work in a dialogic fashion; and ensuring that the regulations governing prisons were adhered to. The workshops covered three genres of creative writing (poetry, short plays, and short stories), with each of them having an expert who taught the basic characteristics of the genre in question and introduced them to examples of good writing[3]. Thereafter, the facilitators gave them exercises to try on their

2 *The curriculum contained the basics one will find in any writing course: Sources of story ideas; key elements of a poem, short story or play; key stylistic strategies employed by writers; proofreading and editing; and performing a literary work on stage.*

3 *Volunteer experts were recruited from the literary community in the surrounding area of Kampala.*

own. The prison's social workers collected the drafts and handed them to the facilitators for review and feedback. Thereafter, discussions took place between the facilitators and participants on how their work could be improved. Selected pieces were then performed, usually to the applause of every member present.

Mid-way through the project, a newsletter was published in order to give participants the motivating feeling of appearing in print. Readings were organized in the two prisons, to the joy of the participants who could not believe that their writing was now in black and white. At the end of the project, selected works comprising 31 poems, 9 short stories, and 5 short plays were published in an anthology[4].

Launch ceremonies of this anthology were organized in the prisons, with selected authors reading some of their work in the presence of top UPS officials and the facilitators of the workshops. One of the poets successfully turned his poem into a song and performed it at the launch in the men's prison.

Enrollment according to need

PEN Uganda ensured that participants enrolled into the project on a voluntary basis, according to their interest. They were also afforded the option of not attending the writing workshops in case they felt that they were not benefitting from them. The facilitators selected whoever volunteered to attend the workshops irrespective of gender, ethnic origin, educational background, or the length of the sentence being served.

Remarkably, nobody dropped out from the project – an indication that the participants greatly valued the lessons that they were getting. In fact, with time, they requested that the trainers increase the number of meetings per month so that they could write more and more. Even after the project had officially ended, some of the participants continued turning in work for assessment through their social workers or rehabilitation officers, and some have continued to ask for a second project.

Creative writing *vis a vis* prison programs

The project viewed creative writing as aligned to correctional education. In the institutional programming of the UPS, correctional education is given great significance as a rehabilitative program. The Uganda Prison Act (2006: sec. 4) provides that 'the main objective of the Service is to contribute to the protection of all members of society by providing reasonable, safe, secure and humane custody and rehabilitation of offenders in accordance with universally accepted standards.' It further states the functions of the UPS to be, among others; 'to facilitate the social rehabilitation and reformation of prisoners through specific training and educational programs' (sec. 5(b)); and 'to facilitate the re-integration of prisoners into their communities' (sec. 5(c)). The UPS strategic development plan significantly emphasizes promotion of education (UPS 2021: 69-72). The Uganda Prison Act (2006: sec. 57) considers education of prisoners as a right, stating that a prisoner is entitled 'to take part in cultural activities and education aimed at the full development of human personality.'

4 *We told all the participants whose work was not published to work harder so that they could get into the next newsletter and book.*

The above mentioned national instruments are well aligned to the UN standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners – The Nelson Mandela Rules (2015) – which tasks prisons to provide education (Rule 4(2)), books and library services (R64), as well as resolution 1990/20 of the UN Economic and Social Council addressing education in prisons, that provides, among others, that 'creative and cultural activities should be given a significant role since they have a special potential for enabling prisoners to develop and express themselves' (1990: 20(g)).

With the consideration that education for prisoners is not only a right but also one of the main facilitators of the rehabilitation of prisoners as earlier referenced, the UPS has made significant effort to enhance its promotion over the past decade. This has involved obtaining government grant aiding of some prison schools and recruitment of government paid professional teachers, thereby leading to improved compliance with the national curricula. Furthermore, the UPS increased funding and administrative support to the program and allowed other actors such as NGOs to contribute to related activities. These measures significantly increased coverage and enrollment in the formal education program[5].

The relative success of formal education in the UPS goes to confirm that correctional programs can work when well designed and implemented as planned. The creative writing program too, as an allied activity to prison education, has achieved a great level of positive impact on the beneficiaries. The success of the creative writing project thus far, invites a more focused study relating it to existing knowledge in the criminological field, such as the theory that has been advanced that many correctional 'programs fail to work because they either are ill-conceived (not based on sound criminological theory) and/or have no therapeutic integrity (are not implemented as designed)' (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000: 133).

Ensuring dignity

The project exhibits a case where an NGO partnered with a prison service to ensure the respect of the dignity of persons under the latter's care. The authors of the poems being examined here underline how much they learnt and rebuilt their confidence, esteem and dignity from the project (Kahyana & Omita, ICPA, 2021). All the prisoners' writings reveal how this helped them to feel alive, to hope, to feel human. These are intriguing outcomes which need to be subjected to further research to explore possible relationship with criminological theories such as the Good Lives Model (GLM) and the concept of positive psychology[6] and how these can be used to further enrich the program.

5 *According to the UPS (2021) Strategic Development Plan V (2021), 39, since 2017, prisons offering formal education (Primary and Secondary) programs increased from 11 to 17 due to enhanced partnership & collaboration with Ministry of Education and Sports; 8,744 inmates were enrolled at various levels.*

6 *The GLM assumes that human beings are goal directed organisms, who are predisposed to seek a number of primary goods. In this model, primary goods are described as states of affairs, states of mind, personal characteristics, activities, or experiences that are sought for their own sake and are likely to increase psychological well-being if achieved (Kekes, 1989; Ward & Stewart, 2003a; Ward et.al 2007). Some of the at least ten groups of primary human goods identified by the GLM school are; life (including healthy living and functioning), knowledge, excellence in play and work (including mastery experiences), excellence in agency (i.e., autonomy and self-directedness), and inner peace (i.e., freedom from emotional turmoil and stress). Others are; friendship (including intimate, romantic, and family relationships), community, spirituality (in the broad sense of finding meaning and purpose in life), happiness, and creativity (Ward, et al. 2007).*

The participants also assert that participation in the project helped to reconstruct their dignity. It is a fundamental claim, and further research needs to be done to establish to what extent this relates to existing research, for instance the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2006, 1562). This theory highlights the importance of autonomy and the dangers of heteronomy for well-being, healthy development, performance, creativity, and social integration. There is perhaps an opportunity for a much bigger transformation in confined places, that can be achieved by other approaches such as the use of creative writing.

That said, the claim that it helped its beneficiaries to regain dignity places creative writing in the domain of contributing to ensuring respect for international human rights standards. The ICCPR (1966: Art 10), for instance, provides that, 'All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.' Respect for the inherent dignity and value of human beings is also underlined not only in Rule 1 of the Nelson Mandela Rules, but in more detail inherently in the rest of them, as it is the embodiment of the UN Bill of rights regarding prisoners, setting out what is generally accepted as being good principles and practice in the treatment of prisoners and prison management.

From a review of their writings and narration of their experiences, we reckon that the project also significantly contributed to the psychosocial wellbeing of the beneficiaries. ICRC (2018: 49) defines basic human needs as not only those elements required to sustain life physically, but also those required to support mental health, personal growth and connection with society.

The writings further paint a relationship between dignity and freedom, particularly how a feeling or enjoyment of freedom asserts one's dignity. It is clear from their writings that the program enabled the prisoners to feel a unique freedom which negated the impact of high walls and fences on their humanity and freedom. UPS education and chaplaincy services are also cited as contributors to this. Ratzinger (1987:199) has referred to this as "freedom of the spirit." Recounting her experience in a Chilean prison, Sheila Cassidy (1980: 81-91) sheds more light on this:

> "*We discussed the whole concept of freedom and came to the conclusion that the freedom of the spirit that we had was a very real thing and that although we were surrounded by ten-foot walls, barbed wire and men with machine guns, really we were quite free…*"

Novelist Namukasa (as cited in Kahyana et.al 2018: xi) has argued in the same vein, staking the claim that 'In this rich anthology, Luzira prison inmates "stand alive before the world" and proclaim that the power of creative imagination surpasses high walls and closed doors.' It has also been observed that 'every life counts and literary work like *As I Stood Dead Before the World* helps us to remember that this will always be true.'[7]

Through the poems, the writers get the opportunity to focus their minds and emotions to their situations, past, present and future. This helps them to deal with the big questions in their life, for instance the pathos of prison life owing to its routine, the welfare of their families, and the hope of release in the future, among others. It also helped them to feel valued since they had the capacity to

7 *Tade, as cited in Kahyana et.al (2018). 'As I stood dead before the world: creative writing project in Uganda Prisons' Kampala: Pen Uganda. xii*

express themselves skillfully through the medium of poetry, short stories and plays, and since they were capable of producing aesthetically beautiful work. What Tett, Anderson et. al (2012: 17) say of the success of creative programs in Scottish prisons is true of what PEN Uganda and UPS witnessed in Luzira Prison:

> *"For many prisoners, participation in the arts projects constructively challenged and disrupted the negative identities that they had internalized. Their public successes in performances before audiences of significant others opened up new personal and social identities (as artists or performers) that helped them to begin to envision an alternative self that in turn motivated them towards future desistance from crime."*

Indeed, many participants kept asking the facilitators where they could get help, upon release from prison, to perfect their writing and to publish their work – evidence that the project enabled them to imagine, in concrete terms, a positive life after prison, and to prepare for it as creative writers.

Communication and expression

In the assessment of the project outcome, it was noted that the project provided the participants with the skills to express themselves freely and has encouraged the use of the written word as a constructive way to begin to recover self-worth. In this vein, the project helped them learn to communicate in a responsible, mature, and clear way.

The writings gave the inmates an opportunity to express themselves through the medium of poetry, short story writing, and playwriting, for as Okello Oculi observes, a writer is "a public confessor of what is going on inside himself" (Okello Oculi, 1974: 24). When the newsletter and the anthology were published, some of them wept with joy at the thought that their family members and friends were going to read the work they had written. This certainty that they were going to be read made them feel important given the fact that inmates are usually considered nobodies, or *subalterns*, to use the term popularized by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1996: 287-308), to refer to situations of powerlessness that make it difficult, if not impossible, for subordinate groups to participate in public discourses. Spivak's conclusion – that the subaltern cannot speak, since there are several impediments that make this speech belabored and not listened to – is not supported in the case of the inmates at Luzira Maximum Prison, because the project empowered them to speak and be listened to in the form of the newsletter and the anthology.

The project highlighted that through creative writing inside prisons, inmates could communicate to the world messages of value; it revealed the inmate-writers' role as teachers. This is in line with Chinua Achebe's suggestion that writers have the duty to undertake "the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done" (Achebe, 1990: 40-46), for indeed in their work, the reader learns from the inmates many lessons not just about life in prison, but also about the fact that every human being yearns for love, beauty, and happiness.

In the poem "Redeemed in the dock"[8], Nayiga expresses the experience an accused person undergoes on the days of judgment and sentence. This poem is what gave the title to the published collection of

8 *All the poems quoted in this article are from the anthology: Kahyana et.al (2018).*

the prisoners' creative writings; *As I stood dead before the world.*[9] It powerfully captures the pathos of being found guilty and the horror of being sentenced to death. This is the state and mind of the person the prisons court orderlies, gate keepers and documentation staff are receiving back in prison custody:

My mind raced on hearing:
"Guilty as charged!"
Another nail in the coffin:
"You are condemned to death!"
All about me collapsed.
The knell of condemnation
Tolled louder and harsher
As I stood dead before the world.
...

The prisoner's dignity and humanity has been so wounded already that she considers herself "dead." The poem also affirms the assertion that rehabilitation and reintegration processes should start as soon as the sentenced person is admitted in prison (see Sita et. al, 2005: 16). It is clearly illustrated that on this first day of the sentence, the correctional officers have a very intricate task in their hands; a fragile, helpless, gloomy and hopeless person that needs a professional and helping relationship, rather than a militaristic and mechanistic reception.

That said, the poem also enables the inmate to look beyond what she has just gone through (being found guilty and sentenced to death) by imagining a helper who is close by:

Yet in the dark gloom all around
You shone your hope at me
Your affection calmed my fears
With the blessed assurance:
'Fear not, my beloved one –
I myself will redeem you!'
(Nayiga, in Kahyana et.al, 2018: 21)

Viewed critically, the writings emphasize the importance of a person to constructively relate with; a helper or mentor in prison. Is there a void in this area? Are the systems in place in prisons inadequately playing this role? Can the prison officer be this person that Nayiga's poem imagines above, that is to say, someone who shines a torch of hope at her? The Singapore prison service implements a system where correctional officers are assigned responsibility over about 10 prisoners. These are referred to as "captains of life" for the prisoners. The creative writing program exposed the possible need of a closely implemented case management and mentorship system.

9 *This anthology is available for sale in Uganda at the cost of 30,000 Shillings (about 8 USD). For orders, write to dkdan76@gmail.com or blamwaka@gmail.com.*

Empathy and individual consideration

The participants' writings brought out scenarios that could remind the prison officers of the pre-eminence of empathy and attention to each inmate as an individual. It is a clarion call for the officer to treat each day as a fresh encounter with their work and clients, each client as an individual. In short, correctional officers have to get out of the routine, blanket and mechanistic approach that many retreat into as they gain years in their prison careers. The anthology showed that words and stories are an essential means of building empathy, forging understanding and imaging a better world. The inmates use the medium of poetry, short stories, and short plays to dramatize their individual lives in prison (mostly their fears, anxieties, and hopes), thereby making those lives more accessible to others. Achebe affirms this when he argues that literary texts make possible "human connectedness at its most intimate" by calling "into full life our total range of imaginative faculties" thereby giving "us a heightened sense of our personal, social and human reality" (Achebe 1990: 151).

Retrospection

The project gives the participants the opportunity to revisit their life experiences, especially as it relates to their conflict with the law and their incarceration and seek meaning out of them. In assessing the prisoners' writings, Cacchioli has observed that despite inmates often being regarded as people of no value by the public because of the crimes they have committed, '[their] creative writing has proved a cathartic journey of self-reflection, of exploring experiences and for some, imagining a future upon their release' (Kahyana et.al, 2018: vii). The poems and stories the inmates wrote were good, touching, and unsettling; speaking of pain, loneliness and loss from their incarceration, of regret, and finally of hope.

To revisit the case of Nayiga cited earlier, she engages in a retrospection of her conviction and sentencing. These are moments that are fresh to her; she had never had the chance to speak them out to the world, nor a chance to release the pent-up pathos and the bottled emotions, including anger. However, writing gives an opportunity to revisit her life, which is what helps her realize that despite the judge finding her guilty of the crime she was charged with and condemning her to death, not all is lost: her redemption in different ways is close by. The same is true for Elizabeth Kyomuhangi who uses the medium of poetry to reflect on what being incarcerated means for her: she feels like a chopped stump "Useless and hopeless / helpful to no one", but she is aware that this feeling is not all there is about being in prison, upon choosing to look at her state with optimism:

I will rise
And sprout like the felled tree
That has smelt water.
I will smell the Spirit
Of the living God
I will sprout again
My spirit will stay hopeful
I will bear fruit again
And shelter many in my shade
I will have a second chance.

An introspective poem like this one is important in many ways. First, it serves as a gauge of what emotional state the writer is in. Second, the poem is a kind of evaluation tool in the sense that the sentiments contained in it give an idea of how far the prison social workers, rehabilitation officers and significant others have gone in helping the inmate move from a position of desolation (comparing the self to a felled tree and a chopped stump) to a position of positivity (being certain that she will sprout again and bear fruit). Finally, it can serve as a heuristic guide to the prison rehabilitation officer on what additional services or programs the inmates may need in order to make their continued stay in prison more meaningful.

The centrality of hope

Their writings also clearly underline the centrality of hope in building their resiliency in the face of prison life and positivity to the future. This is highlighted throughout the book as the writers imagine the day they will taste their parents or spouses' cooking, hug and talk to their children, and start to live in a new way after release from prison. It is hope that enables majority of these inmates to imagine different amazing and touching scenarios, for instance meeting and having conversations with their children (in Aisha Nakasibante's short story, "Woman to Woman" and siblings in Moses Busobozi's play "Home Again"), or having wrongdoers, like parents who force their young daughters into early marriages, apprehended, leading to the victory of reason and right over greed and wrong - in Elizabeth Kyomuhangi's short play, "No Longer A Honeymoon." In the imaginative works of these inmates, some of whom claim to have been given wrong convictions, there is the hope that one day, the truth will be revealed so that they gain their liberty. This is the case in the poem "Letter to Aber" (by Jackson O.), the short stories "A Secret" (by Rachael Pearl Orishaba) and "The Dream that Came True" (by Elizabeth Kyomuhangi), and the play, "What If It Wasn't Kato?" (by Jennifer Janette).

In assessing the importance that the participants attached in their writings to 'hope', it was clear that further effort ought to be invested in developing a pedagogy of hope in prisons. Hope invites the possibility to look to the future with positive expectation, with promise of the good, with the possibility of avoiding harm. Rhett, Rust et. al (2006: 301) observe that hope indeed can prevent "depression, suicide and a sense of helplessness."

Hope is a uniquely important emotion for persons deprived of liberty, precisely because none wishes to be incarcerated, and most desire to get out of this situation. Giussani states that hope is "to recognize a certainty for the future that is born of the present" (Giussani, 2008: 8). What in the present of an inmate in prison, living as the wretched of the earth, can give him hope? It is common to see inmates who have surrendered; are aimless, dehumanized, institutionalized and warehoused. For a correctional system to succeed, the epic task of offering people deprived of liberty fresh opportunities to make progress in prison and on release should be accomplished. Constructive prison programs greatly contribute to this role. While the pedagogy of hope should be spearheaded, as it is currently in the UPS, by the rehabilitation department that embodies rehabilitation and reintegration officers, as well as the subordinate chaplaincy and other religious groups, we argue that it is a role that all prison officers have to embrace and deliberately play as part of their job responsibilities.

Further inroads into rehabilitation

We observe that further elements can be discerned and picked up from the creative writing program under discussion, to feed into prison rehabilitation and reintegration planning and case management.

Among others, the project has demonstrated how creative writing is a powerful tool to understand prison conditions from the perspective of the inmates; and a great support to the prison officers to anchor rehabilitative initiatives. Through creative writing, a rich vein of information and opportunities emerge that could inform the social rehabilitation process. In a workshop organized by UPS to discuss how the works written by the inmates could enrich their work of rehabilitation held on 5th February 2020, a prison social worker observed thus:

> *"Reading the poems, short stories, and plays enables me to enter the mind and heart of the inmate in order to know what he or she is thinking, the kind of conflicts he or she is having, and the kind of dreams he or she has. This provokes me in at least three ways: First, I am moved to talk to the inmate in order to understand his or her life better, with the creative work as the springboard of this communication; secondly, I am moved to try all I can to help the inmate so that his/her life in prison is comfortable; and finally, I am moved to take whatever he or she writes seriously. All this provokes me to become a better prison social worker, whose passion is the welfare and rehabilitation of the inmate (Pen Uganda, 2020)."*

The social worker is able to come closer to the inmates because their writings help him to identify with them imaginatively since in literary texts things are "not merely happening *before* us; they are happening, by the power and force of imaginative identification, *to* us. We not only see; we *suffer* alongside the hero" (Achebe, 1990: 144).

Several writings give valuable insights into what else can work in enhancing the chances of successful offender reintegration into the community. For instance, in his poem "Twenty-Two Years", Sebuuma Gadafi gives great insights when he chooses to engage with his mother in a hypothetical dialogue. In the first part of the poem he asks his mother, 'have you forgotten me?' In the second part of his poem the mother responds, 'I am the one. Have you forgotten me?' In other words, he engages in a virtual exploration of his mother's side of the story. What does this achieve? As will be seen in the poem, poetry helps him to explore his inner self; to clarify his mind, to attain inner freedom. This exercise has the potential to contribute to setting one along a reformative trajectory. This is consistent with conclusions from the "from prisons back home" program implemented by the UPS (Omita et.al, 2011: 20) that asserted that 'a successful social reintegration is only possible when the prisoner is reconciled with him/herself and also with the community receiving him/ her back.'

The first part of Sebuuma's dialogue with his mother runs thus:

Have you forgotten me?
I am the son you gave birth to
Twenty-two years ago
The one you said you loved
With all your heart

The one you say brought shame
To the entire family
The one whom you never believed
And was taken to jail
Even when he vehemently swore
He had not committed the crime
The one you abandoned in prison
All those years
The one who wrote several letters to you
Which went unanswered
The one who cried out to you for love
And you responded with indifference.

With the clarity and conviction of a mother, the inmate imagines her response:

I am the one.
Have you forgotten me?
I am your mother
Who bit her lip
And rent her body
To give birth to you
Those twenty-two years ago.
The one you shamed
The one who doubted your innocence
Even though you wanted her to believe you
The one who never visited you in jail
But for a reason
The one who loved you
More than anything in the world
The one who prayed for you
Before the sun rose and after it set
The one who longed to see you again
The one you belong to.
I am the one.

Through the poem, he travels a virtual journey of his conviction and incarceration, and a virtual experience of release, and the life after. As novelist Tindyebwa in her review of the writings puts it more succinctly, writing gave them 'a chance to fly on the wings of their pens, and they have done it with unusual frankness, creativity and style' (Kahyana et.al, 2018: x). The poem helps the persona to deal with the big question; should he or should he not confront his mother? He chooses to engage his mother in a dialogue in order to find what her side of the story is. When the time comes in real life, chances are that mother and son might talk things over and be reconciled. The exercise helps him to choose dialogue, not violence or revenge, and this disposition could contribute to his successful reintegration in the community upon release.

Conclusion

The creative writing project demystified the notion that prisoners are merely criminals who should be treated harshly because of the crimes they committed, and not as human beings who deserve humane treatment, empathy, and respect for their innate worth despite the mistakes they made in the past. It also debunked the thinking of inmates as incapable of contributing to societal wellbeing and development in a constructive and productive manner. Instead, it demonstrated that despite the crimes they are accused to have committed, majority remain rational and creative human beings who, if trained well, can be productive, in writing, in this case, high quality literary works that contribute to national development in various ways, for instance by imagining solutions to certain problems and giving diverse visions of the future that policy makers and politicians can translate into reality. The project also highlighted the fact that every human being has a talent that can shine if nurtured, and an inherent beauty that glows if 'lit' into action. This was evidenced by the fruitfulness of the inmates (they wrote more than 400 drafts in two years) and by the sense of community that developed during the workshops between the facilitators and the prisoners on the one hand, and the prisoners and the prison social workers on the other, as the three groups (facilitators, participants, and UPS staff) worked together to make the project succeed. Finally, the authors felt appreciated and valued when they wrote work that was beautiful and touching. This made them look at themselves as creative people whose works were to be read not only within Uganda, but by humanity at large. It also made it possible for them to see themselves in a new light – not just as prisoners, but as creatives whose visions of life, of humanity and of the future are to be shared with other people. The program affirms hope as a formidable factor in positively channeling the energies and aspirations of prisoners.

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A.R.T. & JUSTICE: AN ARTS-BASED INITIATIVE TO SUPPORT THE HOLISTIC HEALTH & DIGNITY OF INCARCERATED INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN WESTERN CANADA DURING AND BEYOND COVID-19

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Abstract

COVID-19 has intensified social isolation and worsened mental health for people in Canada and around the world. In response, Correctional Service Canada (CSC) and an academic team launched an arts-based initiative to support the well-being of federally incarcerated Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. We gifted art kits across institutions in the Pacific Region and invited individuals to share resulting artwork. Preliminary results show the therapeutic benefits of art-making amidst reduced access to visitation, programs, and Indigenous Elders. We share these initial findings, their policy potential within other international contexts, and discuss how ART-Justice could be transferred and studied through partnerships to mitigate mental health harms and isolation for incarcerated people during the pandemic and beyond.

Introduction

Globally, incarcerated people continue to face differential risks and impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as disproportionate harms that increase risk of infection and social exclusion (Kinner et al., 2020; World Health Organization, 2020), and intensifying vulnerability and social discontinuity experienced within carceral contexts (Schmid & Jones, 1991), all of which continue post-release (McLeod et al., 2021). Measures to mitigate the risk of infection can have unintended adverse impacts on incarcerated people's mental health and well-being (Murdoch, 2020). Within this context, our interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral team has built upon previous research and programming, pivoting to launch an arts-based program aimed at supporting social inclusion, mental health and well-being for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people incarcerated in British Columbia (BC), Canada during COVID-19. This urgently needed intervention aims to support social inclusion and holistic health by supporting incarcerated people to create, share, and build community through art and storytelling. Building on an ongoing research partnership between the University of British Columbia, School of Nursing (UBC) and Correctional Service Canada (CSC), Pacific Region, this program - entitled Action, Reciprocity, Transformation (A.R.T.) & Justice - was launched in the summer of 2020. Using a mixed methods research design that included self-reported qualitative data and surveys from 50 incarcerated artists from two Federal prison in BC, we present preliminary findings that highlight the immense benefit of arts-based interventions within Canadian carceral settings, the importance of partnerships to facilitate program flexibility and impact, and the potential of art and storytelling to address acute social isolation during COVID-19 in a way that provides a roadmap to community building and de-stigmatization over time.

Background & Context

The COVID-19 pandemic has inequitably intensified impacts on mental health and well-being, and exacerbated barriers to social, economic, historical and political determinants which sustain population-level health inequities (Armitage & Nellums, 2020; Dorn, Cooney, & Sabin, 2020; Nassif-Pires, de Lima Xavier, Masterson, Nikiforos, & Rios-Avila, 2020). Specifically, COVID-19 has worsened harms for incarcerated persons given increased risk of infection, mental distress and correlated substance use (Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, 2020; Kinner et al., 2020; World Health Organization, 2020). The WHO and the UN Human Rights Commissioner highlight the need for human rights-oriented public health action in carceral settings, including focus on dignified engagement and need for physical and mental health programming to match quality and accessibility of community-based programs (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, 2020; World Health Organization, 2020).

In Canada, the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing mental health inequities for all peoples (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2021; Stewart, Cossar, & Stoové, 2020), and people living with mental illness are disproportionately represented in the carceral system given the linkages and correlates among trauma, systemic racism, ongoing colonial violence (Gauthier, Smith, García, Garcia, & Thomas, 2020; Power et al., 2020), crime, and entrenched health inequities and co-morbidities (Albertie, Bourey, Stephenson, & Bautista-Arredondo, 2017; Cutcher, Degenhardt, Alati, & Kinner, 2014; Fazel, Hayes, Bartellas, Clerici, & Trestman, 2016; Stewart, Nolan, Thompson, & Power, 2018). Even prior to the pandemic, studies have shown how incarceration often worsens existing mental health conditions as people have reduced access to social supports, family, and community (Caie, 2011; Eades, 2019; Wallace et al., 2016) and the natural world (Baybutt, Dooris, & Farrier, 2018; Moran, 2019), while also

facing substance use harms, depression and suicidality (BC First Nations Justice Council, British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, & First Nations Sumit, 2020; Johnson, Gutridge, Parkes, Roy, & Plugge, 2021; Kinner et al., 2020; Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2021). The Office of the Correctional Investigator (2020, 2021) reports that, in some Canadian regions, efforts to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus has led to higher levels of social isolation and increased cell time. In the Pacific Region, significant efforts have been made to mitigate some of the negative impacts of pandemic management. It is within this context that A.R.T & Justice, building on a pre-existing partnership between UBC and CSC, was created to support mental health and wellbeing, social inclusion and reciprocity through art with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in prison during the pandemic, and within the context of other concurrent public health crises such as overdose (BC First Nations Justice Council et al., 2020; McLeod et al., 2021; Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2020a; United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, 2020; World Health Organization, 2020).

CSC-UBC Partnership: Art Kits & COVID-19

CSC and UBC began collaborating in 2014 to study a Pacific Region initiative called *Work 2 Give*. Work 2 Give engaged incarcerated Indigenous and non-Indigenous men to make furniture, children's toys, star blankets, carved boxes & drums, and other handmade items, and to subsequently donate those items to rural and remote Indigenous communities facing significant socio-economic hardships and barriers to health and well-being. We studied the impacts of Work 2 Give on participating incarcerated men and the recipient Indigenous families and communities. Findings from that research have been published elsewhere (Brown & Timler, 2019; Brown, Varcoe, Taylor, Timler, & Jackman, 2017; Varcoe, Brown, Taylor, Timler, & Straus, 2020). The mixed methods research correlated with a reduction in serious institutional incidents among Work 2 Give participants, while also showing an increase in successful transfers to lower security for the study population (Varcoe et al., 2020). The participating men also spoke about the power of art, creativity and reciprocity to support community building, and to facilitate the building and sustaining of positive identities and relationships, through the creation and donation of art (Brown & Timler, 2019). While we did not study Work 2 Give as a 'desistance' intervention or practice, our results confirmed how focusing on the strengths and talents - rather than deficits – of incarcerated men, and creating opportunities for reciprocity through relationships with communities, provided a powerful context for men to have their worth recognized, feel hopeful, and experience a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives; all of which are factors associated with desistance (Maruna & Mann, 2019; Rocque, 2017).

Adding to the evidence generated from our past studies and the prison pandemic context, we drew upon our work with Indigenous Scholars, Elders and Peer colleagues with lived experience of incarceration within other projects to initiate ART & Justice. Specifically, we understand that artistic expression and storytelling have and continue to be used by Indigenous Peoples in Canada to support holistic and collective health and wellbeing (Archibald & Parent, 2019; Christensen, Cox, & Szabo-Jones, 2018; Goeman, 2008) and diverse art forms are linked to positive identity formation (Brown & Timler, 2019; Hapeta, Palmer, & Kuroda, 2019; Munday & Rowley, 2019), language and cultural reclamation (Brown et al., 2021; McCarty et al., 2018; Quayle & Sonn, 2019), and intergenerational healing (France, 2020); however, while mental health benefits of art in other contexts are recognized (Baker, Metcalf, Varker, & O'Donnell, 2018; Bosgraaf, Spreen, Pattiselanno, & Hooren, 2020; Carter & Panisch, 2021; Chiang, Reid-Varley, & Fan, 2019), limited evidence for long-terms impacts of arts-

based interventions to support holistic and collective mental health for incarcerated Indigenous Peoples in Canada exist. This gap is significant given the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in federal prison – with Indigenous Peoples accounting for over 30% of the prison population despite making up only 4% of the wider Canadian population (BC First Nations Justice Council et al., 2020; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019; Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2020b). Additionally, Indigenous Peoples face correlated and disproportionate burdens of mental illness due to historic, intergenerational, and ongoing colonial harms (Czyzewski & University of, 2011; de Leeuw, Greenwood, & Cameron, 2010; Ferrazzi & Krupa, 2016; Greenwood, De Leeuw, & Lindsay, 2018; Kirmayer, Gone, & Moses, 2014), including racism and criminalization across child removal (McKenzie, Varcoe, Browne, & Day, 2016; Milne & Wotherspoon, 2020), healthcare (Browne, Varcoe, & Ward, 2021; Turpel-Lafound (Aki-Kwe), 2020), education (Milne & Wotherspoon, 2020; Neeganagwedgin, 2013), and housing sectors (Christensen, 2016; National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2017). Together, the evidence of potential benefit through the initiation of A.R.T & Justice to support positive impact for incarcerated Indigenous peoples was compelling, both within the wider colonial Canadian and emergent pandemic contexts (Brewster, 2015; Brown, 2018; Brown et al., 2017; Gardner, Hager, & Hillman, 2014; Martin, Korchinski, Fels, & Leggo, 2014).

In the spring of 2020, UBC's research activities in federal prisons were suspended indefinitely; our team was not able to enter the prisons to either support the continued delivery of Work 2 Give, or to study how to evolve the initiative to maintain feasibility during the pandemic. Given evidence being produced early in the pandemic about the immense strain on mental health and well-being felt by people everywhere due to intense feelings of isolation, fear, and uncertainty (Wan, 2020; Pfefferbaum & North, 2020), we knew that people in prison were at exacerbated risk of experiencing mental strain in a more intense way, particularly given the suspension across the country of programs, visitation, Indigenous Elder and other spiritual services (Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2020). Given this, and without knowing what the full impact of COVID-19 management might mean for worsening isolation and disconnection from community, we designed ART-Justice to mobilize the creation and sharing of art across institutions. Additionally, we offered telephone-based discussion and engagement with the research team, providing opportunities for incarcerated artists to speak with us and provide feedback to improve the initiative. Our aim to support the mental health, creativity and dignity of incarcerated peoples during the pandemic through the gifting of art kits and sharing of art with the wider public aimed to support connections within and beyond the prison walls. Thus, we harnessed the findings of Work 2 Give and leveraged pre-existing relationships with CSC champions to launch an evidence-based, Indigenous-informed art intervention for social inclusion to support individual and collective resilience, well-being, dignity and mental health for incarcerated people with potential to mitigate pandemic harms (See: Figure 1 for schematic of ART-Justice development and processes). From our past studies, we confirmed the essential benefit of reciprocity between the men sharing their gifts with recipient communities and the relationships that evolved to bridge the 500-kilometer distance (Brown & Timler, 2019; Brown et al., 2017; Varcoe et al., 2020). Knowing the importance of social inclusion, relationships, reciprocity, and creativity for people in prison, the UBC team reached out to our pre-existing CSC partners and Government of Canada research funding agencies to pivot remaining research funds - intended to study Work 2 Give scalability - to support a rapid arts-based mental health in-reach support initiative. Our CSC partners rapidly created a network of champions across two institutions that included mental health nurses, social workers,

Social Program Officers and one psychologist. This team mobilized the gifting of arts kits and the distribution of tracking and consent forms to indicate level of engagement, i.e., if people wanted to engage in future research or not, and if people wanted to have their work digitized and shared virtually, as well as ways of contacting the UBC team. The UBC team sourced out high-quality creative writing and drawing supplies. The team also worked with Indigenous Elders and Peer Leaders with lived experience of incarceration to put together bundles of Indigenous medicines, Elders' teachings, art prompts and lessons, and messages of support, as shown in Figure 2.

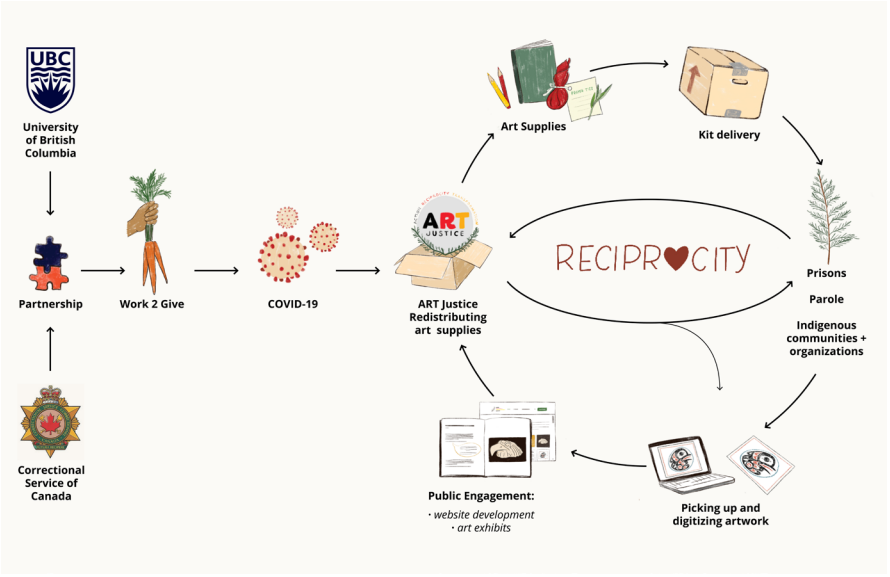

Figure 1: ART & Justice project development and processes

Figure 2: Art kit contents

The art kits were given as a gift, with 'no strings attached' in terms of engagement in research or in the sharing of resulting art. Individual recipients were invited to take part in the creating and sharing of art and future research activities, and there were opportunities for people to change their mind about their level of engagement over-time. Since August 2020, we have delivered 765 art kits to people in 6 prisons across different security levels - those on parole, and others in the community impacted by the criminal legal system, including rural and remote Indigenous youth and clients of regional Indigenous support organizations. To date, we have received 752 pieces of art from 88 artists, including drawings, paintings, poetry, and short stories. Some artists have used materials above and beyond what was offered in the kit, including canvas paintings, soap and wood carvings, and images of murals painted on cell walls.

Methods and Data

All 765 art kits included an information, consent and participant tracking form. The information form invited participants to confirm their desired level of engagement, if/how they wanted their art shared and/or potentially reproduced[1], and provided information about the research for recruitment purposes. In July 2021, with access to the institutions to collect data in-person, we distributed 200 surveys across two federal institutions and received 50 responses (n=50). Consenting participants completed a paper survey and returned to us in a sealed envelope, or called a toll-free number to complete on the phone with a member of the UBC team. While the survey approach limited exploration, the phone-in option was important for maximal accessibility across literacy levels, to provide opportunities for participants to ask questions about the research and consent processes, and for the research teams to ask follow-up questions. Initial analysis was conducted by the UBC team. Survey responses were anonymized, and thematic analysis of qualitative data, supported by NVivo Qualitative Software, was conducted on self-reported textual responses. Numerical response scales were analyzed using SPSS Statistics Software. Subsequent analysis meetings with CSC champions, Indigenous Elders and Peer Leaders, as well as community engagement events with incarcerated participants, are planned for Spring 2022. Additional engagement and opportunities for feedback from incarcerated participants is ongoing, supported through the toll-free number and letter writing with members of the UBC team.

Emergent Findings

Impacts on Incarcerated Artists & Storytellers.

Pilot research on this novel arts-based initiative in the CSC, Pacific Region has highlighted the significant value of meaningful creativity for people in prison during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have found that art and creativity can provide therapeutic benefit during COVID-19, that opportunities to connect with the UBC team have provided meaningful opportunities for connection, and that incarcerated individuals are interested in expanded opportunities for relationship building through art and storytelling.

Survey respondents shared that receiving the art kit was a valuable gift that helped people feel less alone, despite facing immense social exclusion because of COVID-19 infection control protocols. One participant shared that "it lets you know you're not alone. It takes your head away from your problems for a while," while others found that art was a positive and beneficial way to spend their time, seeing the creation of art as a way to calm their mind, "escape" into their art for a while, and

1 *Several participants opted to create art for their own purposes and for sharing with their families; this was supported by inclusion of stamped envelopes included in each art kit.*

hone their artistic craft. One man stated that "it kept me out of trouble most of the time, and kept me busy."

Having opportunities to connect with members of the UBC team, on the phone, through letters and surveys, also contributed to positive impact, yet respondents felt that increased connection and in-person meetings would be far more beneficial. One participant associated the positive impact of making art with making "progress in my correctional plan and feel[ing] better."

While COVID-19 restrictions have, to date, made most in-person visits to prison sites impossible, participants also imagined additional ways for their art and writing to build connection, including through the sale and donation of art to key organizations and Indigenous advocacy efforts. One man stated "I would definitely be interested in selling my art on consignment or otherwise," while others emphasized that the donation of proceeds to Indigenous organizations and grassroots efforts, such as support for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ peoples, would be meaningful.

These reflections from incarcerated artists indicate the importance of building into ART & Justice ways to promote reciprocity and community connections to benefit individuals both during and post-incarcerated, such as dignified employment through the creation and sale of art. These preliminary findings may also contribute in the future to desistance research and practices that emphasizes the importance of shifting away from aggregate outcomes towards "the individual as the agent of change" within "social contexts [and] embedded social networks" (Maruna & Mann, 2019, p. 6), where both individual and collective narratives and stories aimed at sharing the strengths and experiences of incarcerated peoples can support holistic health, dignity, and the collaborative dreaming of a positive future.

Importantly, some respondents noted negative impacts of the project, including the creation of art and writing re-triggering painful memories, and tensions with correctional staff around kit distribution. These challenges highlight the importance of ongoing program evaluation and improvement, and opportunities for artists and storytellers to share their experiences to support program growth, transparency, sustainability, and benefit.

ART for Connection, Community & Creativity during COVID-19.

While individual level benefits were widespread and important to note, individuals also shared impacts at the collective level. This included benefits and relationship building within the prison community; for example, one man shared with our team that since he started soap carving in his cell, incarcerated people and correctional staff have started to stop by to see what he is working on and engage in conversation, reducing his feelings of isolation. Another participant shared that he "learnt that it's okay to trust and ask for help," highlighting how the creation and sharing of art improved his relationship with his Institutional Parole Officer.

Individuals also noted the potential for community building through art and storytelling beyond the prison walls, with our team and the wider community. As one individual shared, "you have reminded all of us that there are those out there that still care. Such a powerful message for who've been left in the dark."

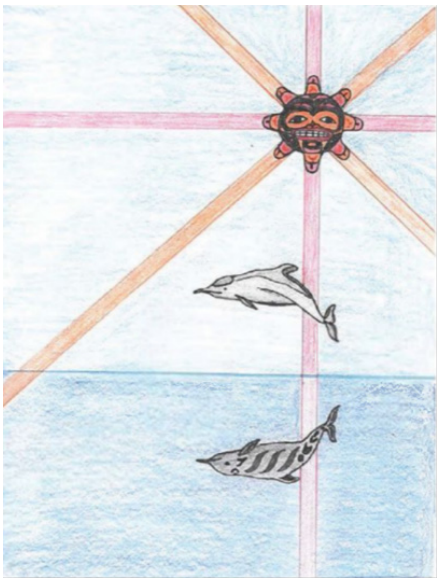

Figure 3: A drawing from an incarcerated man participating in ART & Justice

In imagining the impact of their art and writing in the world, participants felt hopeful about the opportunity to share their voice and vision with the wider community. Specifically, the opportunity to be seen as artists by the wider community was noted as beneficial, and respondents saw the initiative as having the potential to reduce social stigma around incarceration. When asked about what the most important aspect of sharing art publicly was, one man shared that he hoped the public engaging with this art would "understand that prisoners are human beings too. We feel joy, pain, sorrow, etc., just like everyone else. We are just as entitled to human dignity as people in the community." Additionally, respondents saw the potential for reciprocal benefits in the community, with opportunities for the wider public to learn more about prison and incarceration, and to be positively impacted through the process of engaging with art and writing. As one participant noted:

> *"If we are sharing artwork I'd most want to express to the community, 'without art lovers, what outlet would artists have?' To have someone appreciate our artwork, it means a lot to an art lover. When I pour my artwork into a piece of paper, I want that piece of art to come alive. I have a piece of art on my wall, that is an Aboriginal Chief, that looks like it's staring into you. I want that passion to come through to others."*

Sharing of art with others not only fostered a sense of personal worth but also was acknowledged by the artist as potentially empowering and meaningful to others. The reciprocity between artist and 'art lovers' highlights the benefit of creative empowerment made possible through sharing and experiencing the art within and beyond prison walls, and with the wider public. These preliminary findings about how dignity, wellbeing, and self-worth can be supported through the making and sharing art, and future research is focused on exploring longitudinal benefit, investigating how ART & Justice impacts re-integration within community post-release.

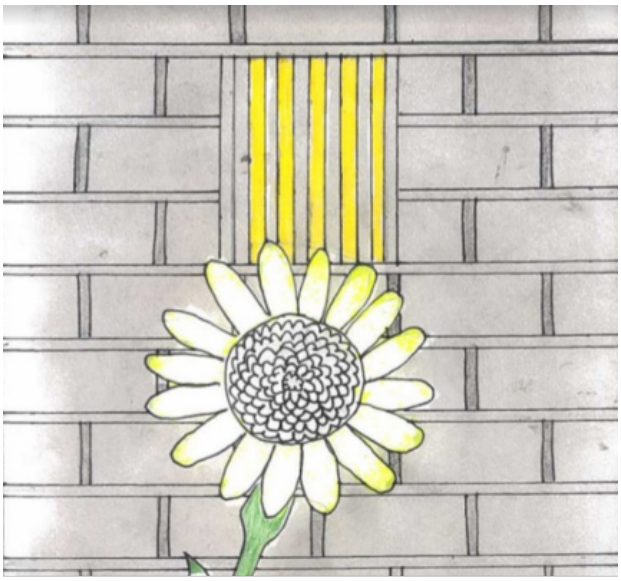

Figure 4: A drawing from an incarcerated man participating in ART & Justice

Principles of Transferability.

Key principles have supported program success thus far, and are useful when considering how to expand this initiative to other settings. First, we have been able to build on *strong and successful partnerships* between a large number of CSC staff and volunteers and the UBC team. Rather than being confined to a single department within each institution, a diverse group of leadership and staff, including Senior Managers, the Indigenous Initiatives sector, Health Services, Correctional Programs, Interventions, and Security departments have all contributed to program implementation at their institution and across the region. Staff from parole offices, Indigenous community organizations and residential facilities in the community have equally supported the community-focused aspects of the project. This approach has spread the workload across many people, making the program lighter and more manageable. This spirit of cross-sectoral collaboration and cooperation allowed us to overcome early pitfalls, such as security concerns with the contents of the art kits, which underwent several revisions in cooperation with Mental Health Services and Security Operations, before finally being approved for distribution. Beginning this region-wide program by developing strong interdepartmental working relationships was a critical step in the program's success, and is one key reason for the progress made to date.

Policy and Research Implications

The implementation of ART- & Justice to this point has indicated several research and policy implications for transferability to other contexts. First, from a policy perspective, the successful implementation reflected the value of a pre-existing *external* research partnership between UBC and CSC. Incarcerated participants indicated the gift of the art kit was particularly meaningful because it came from outside CSC: one participant shared they felt as through *"...we haven't been forgotten by the outside world."* The 'in-reach' design by an external academic partner also accelerated implementation. UBC received approval to pivot existing research funding that provided the capacity to design and implement ART & Justice alongside CSC champions and staff who had little time for

any additional work beyond pandemic management, yet played a critical role in selecting the target population of art kit recipients. From a research and design transferability perspective, receiving the art kit as a gift did not automatically mean study enrollment; each artist was invited to consider participating in the study while receiving a kit with 'no strings attached.' For some participants, as stated by one artist, this allowed for potential participants to ask questions and develop relationships with members of the UBC team overtime, only deciding to share their work and take part in the research months after receiving a kit. Given the creative, therapeutic, and personal value of art-making within prison contexts during a pandemic, intervention designs that create equitable opportunity for positive benefit regardless of enrolment in the study can contribute to benefit non-coercive recruitment for ethical research.

Implementation also requires policy leadership focused on communication and openness about project barriers, including limited funding, pandemic-related restrictions that continue to limit in-person visitation, and opportunities for engagement on key levels of program development and expansion. For the research, our survey included a section of questions asking for feedback and ideas related to in-person art exhibits. Participants were able to share their ideas, and subsequent opportunities for artists and storytellers to shape exhibit themes and processes are underway. Viewing and treating participating artists and storytellers as experts with autonomy, agency, and mentorship skills, and inviting their experience and leadership to sustain and scale ART & Justice has been fundamental to program success and ongoing relationship building. The voices and expertise of currently and formerly incarcerated artists remain foundational to ongoing and future implementation and evaluation activity, including through paid advisory roles and UBC employment opportunities.

Challenges & Limitations

This project was developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore is well-suited to pivoting and evolving to respond to shifting public health restrictions, stakeholder priorities and the needs and strengths of incarcerated individuals. That being said, certain challenges and limitations are important to note. First, leadership from Indigenous Elders, Peer Leaders and CSC champions initially highlighted the importance of targeting incarcerated Indigenous Peoples and those with mental health challenges given finite funding and art supplies; this resulted in tensions at some sites, as the selection of who received a kit and who did not was seen as unfair. Subsequent project expansion, based on additional funding, will work to support wider access to everyone interested in receiving a kit, and paying keen attention to the importance of fairness in environments of intense scarcity. Secondly, we have had limited ability to connect face-to-face and create relationships with incarcerated artists and storytellers, as well as with members of our wider team. We aim to initiate in-person data collection in at least one of the sites in the coming months, and to strengthen mechanisms for virtual connectivity across the region. Limited access to technology in carceral environments in Canada has also pushed us to develop creative ways to share and engage with people inside. For example, we have printed art booklets to share resulting work in prisons, have sent in newsletters, and messages of support. Future funding to support digital access and literacy for people in prison has been secured.

Conclusion & Next Steps

Committed to reducing the negative impacts of COVID-19 on mental health, UBC and CSC partners saw ART-Justice as an opportunity for *supporting* mental health and well-being in prison. Building on evidence that Peer-led processes can strengthen social inclusion (Barrenger, Hamovitch, & Rothman,

2019; Delveaux & Blanchette, 2000; Kay & Monaghan, 2019) and reduce feelings of loneliness and hopelessness (Brown & Day, 2008), art and storytelling have provided a useful mechanism to support community building and help people in prison feel less alone during the significant stress and fear of COVID-19. Research surveys highlight immense benefit, as well as opportunities to strengthen and sustain the project overtime.

Looking ahead, our team will continue to access funding and gift art kits, with the ultimate goal of providing one to every federally incarcerated person who wants one in the CSC Pacific Region. Additional partnerships to support reciprocity and community building are in development, including the launch of a public facing website to showcase the immense talent of the incarcerated artists, and exploring ways to support digital connectivity and literacy for incarcerated people through website access and virtual art workshops. Additional partnership with local art galleries will result in in-person art exhibits in summer 2022, with the ultimate goal of providing opportunities for empowerment for incarcerated artists and storytellers, and destigmatizing and strengths-based opportunities for community engagement. We are working together with CSC to find creative ways for incarcerated artists and storytellers to join us for this art show, either in-person or virtually. This project will undoubtedly grow and evolve, driven by the vision and creativity of participating incarcerated artists and storytellers. We appreciate sharing this positive initiative that was creatively imagined by a CSC-UBC team at a time where less seemed possible; we hope that you continue to follow this evolving work as we find ways to showcase the talent and generosity of people in prison with the wider world!

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A Role for Volunteers

PROFESSIONALISING THE RESPONSE TO VOLUNTEERS ENGAGED IN REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION: THE VOLPRIS STANDARDISED TRAINING COURSE FOR PEOPLE WHO COORDINATE PRISON AND PROBATION VOLUNTEERS

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Abstract

This paper contextualises an ongoing European adult education initiative to provide free, standardised training to people who support community volunteers in prison and with people on release, illustrating how this addresses current European policy frameworks and a current gap in training provision. Context is given by related case studies and lessons learnt from a pan-European research survey. The authors conclude with recommendations for future work. We show how specific training for volunteer coordinators – and by extension better training for volunteers – could support the expansion of voluntary organisation support to prison rehabilitation and post release services. We go on to detail barriers to volunteer engagement identified by prison staff in a pan-European survey in the VOLPRIS project, showing that what they believe is critical to the success of a project engaging volunteers in prison. The authors then present two case studies: the first showing how a trained volunteer coordinators' role functions in prison and probation volunteer recruitment, training and retention initiatives (Bremen, Germany), the second showing how trained coordinators pass this training on to volunteers themselves (Lisbon, Portugal). We conclude that similarities in the survey results and in current practice underscore volunteer and volunteer coordinator training as primary areas of investment for prison, probation and/or voluntary sector staff who intend to bring volunteers into secure environments. Finally, we identify critical areas of future work necessary to improve uptake of volunteering programmes to support rehabilitation services in prison, and to reduce existing barriers for prison staff keen to promote and engage in voluntary initiatives.

Keywords: Prison, Voluntary Sector, Reintegration, Rehabilitation, Adult Education, Volunteering, Prison staff training

Introduction

This paper aims to present theory and practice to support how system level innovation and integrated community support could be promoted through increased investment in training staff members (in prison or in voluntary sector organisations) who support volunteers to engage with people in prison or on release. The authors first give a brief overview of the variety of integral roles supported by volunteers and volunteering organisations across a variety of contexts and settings within Europe's criminal justice pathway. We then examine how European and international policy frameworks reference volunteering in prison and probation, showing a growing call for clearly defined criteria about the tasks, responsibilities and other issues related to volunteering. At this point, the authors present the results from a survey of staff who are responsible for volunteers delivering activities in European prisons, giving clear evidence of their need for more, better and more standardised training for volunteer coordinators in criminal justice working environments. From here, we visit two initiatives which show the worth of such training in current practice: a volunteer coordinator in Bremen, Germany, who is using VOLPRIS guidelines to recruit and train new prison and probation volunteers, and rolling training provision for criminal justice volunteers, delivered by experienced voluntary sector trainers in Lisbon, Portugal. We conclude by underlining the role which volunteer coordinator training has to play as prison and probation services currently look for more effective connections for criminal justice systems and civil society. Finally, we present some recommendations for future action, stemming from both the data presented and the experience of practitioners in our case studies.

The role of volunteers in supporting prison and post release rehabilitation services

Expanding and encouraging the involvement of volunteers in prisons and throughout the criminal justice system has become a key strategy for prison and probation services looking to reform how they provide effective rehabilitation support to people in prison, on release, serving community sentences and to victims of crime (Clinks, 2015; Duwe, 2013). Evidence exists that volunteers support staff in a large number of detention settings, in a broad range of capacities (Tewksbury, 2004) and voluntary initiatives such as visitation may reduce prisoner misconduct (Cochran, 2012). Enhancing existing prison services aims to reduce known recidivism risks, particularly as a programming resource used with higher risk offenders who lack social support (Duwe, 2016). Engaging independently with prisoners, volunteers can promote pro-social bonds central to desistance and desistance-focused practice (O'Sullivan, 2020), even when their motivation for volunteering may vary greatly (Lowe et al., 2019). As a result, the lives of people in prison can be enhanced in a wide variety of areas, including social participation, reinforcement of social ties and support back into the community.

Volunteer organisations and volunteering in prisons and post release community contexts play an integral role across a variety of contexts and settings within Europe's criminal justice pathway, from (community) policing, courts, prisons, probation systems and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Volunteering activities support rehabilitation work with prisoners and former prisoners, and by providing care and support to families and victims of crime (Matt, 2015). Volunteering within the Criminal Justice System has been shown to benefit not only prisoners and people on release, but families, communities, victims are also wider beneficiaries of volunteering activities. Research shows that a connection with people other than staff from outside of the prison decreases inmates' social isolation, increases social networks and builds a bridge with the community (Segal & Robinson, 2018; Salselas & Costa, 2022). Contact with volunteers is recognised as helpful for dealing with stress, decreasing depression levels and for embracing healthier lifestyles (Kreitzer & Hathaway, 2015).

Evidence also supports the effectiveness of volunteers engaged for a specific purpose in the criminal justice system: "Pioneering groups of volunteers and activists" have led to better representation of victims of crime in rehabilitation and reintegration activities (Maguire, 1991), bringing a more human and holistic approach to our criminal justice systems. In restorative justice initiatives with specific groups of offenders, trained volunteers have helped bring the perpetrator and victim of a crime together, to achieve closure and help the perpetrator understand the impact of their actions (Rossner and Bruce, 2016). Similarly, on release there are examples of effective volunteering with specific offender groups: Studies conducted on replication of Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA), for example, provide further evidence that trained and guided community volunteers can and do improve sex offenders' chances for successful reintegration (Wilson, Cortoni and McWhinnie, 2009).

Volunteering in prison and probation: European and International Policy Framework

The 2006 Council of Europe European Prison Rules' seventh basic principle is for prisons to encourage cooperation with outside social services and, as far as possible, the involvement of civil society in prison life[1] (Council of Europe, 2006). Then in 2010, in terms of probation, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted Recommendation CM/Rec (2010)1 which defines a need for probation agencies to develop partnerships with, inter alia, local community organisations. Indeed, CM/Rec(2017)3 goes a step further, stating that community supervision measures in fact require an awareness and knowledge of the value and importance of inter-agency and multidisciplinary approaches. These recommendations promote the involvement of volunteers as part of civil society's wider response to crime, with local community organisations working strategically towards safer neighbourhoods, rather than handing over such work solely to professionals. Facilitating effective social aid is also among the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules) guiding principles for prisoners under sentence, to ensure a gradual return to community life, embracing acceptance that recidivism is directly affected by post-prison (re) integration, and that each individual navigates their pathway away from crime according to multiple needs and barriers (Visher, 2003)[2]. The Inter-American Principles and Best Practices on the Protection of Persons Deprived of Liberty (2008) links community involvement to the prisoners' basic right to access to education, and to sports and cultural activities.[3]

Having the involvement of voluntary sector organisations plays a unique and valuable role in engaging with, and highlighting, the unmet needs of people in prison and on release. Specific groups have been highlighted as potential high beneficiaries from engaging with community volunteers and

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1 *Under its recommendations for raising public awareness about the purpose of the prison system and the work carried out by prison staff, rule no. 90.2 of the 2006 Council of Europe European Prison Rules states that the prison authorities should encourage members of the public to volunteer to provide services in prison where appropriate.*

2 *Nelson Mandela Rule 88 reinforces a prisoner's continuing part of the community, by recommending that community agencies should be enlisted wherever possible to assist the prison staff in the task of social rehabilitation of the prisoners (McCall-Smith, 2016).*

3 *Principle XIII of the Inter-American Principles and Best Practices on the Protection of Persons Deprived of Liberty (2008) requests that Member States encourage the participation of civil associations and non-governmental organisations in educational opportunities - additionally the prisoners' family and community in sports, social and cultural activities - in order to promote successful reform, social readaptation, and rehabilitation of persons deprived of liberty.*

organisations which support volunteering (such as foreign prisoners[4]). By far the largest area of voluntary sector work is service delivery to support individuals in the criminal justice system and their families. These recommendations fundamentally recognise that prison life should be arranged so as to approximate as closely as possible to the realities of life in the community (normalisation principle), and further, that community agencies can support prison staff to connect with prisoners for whom existing mainstream services often fail. Where community agencies can go beyond the prison gates to engage volunteers to support continuity of statutory through-the-gate, post release and probation services, there is a further chance to reduce recidivism.

There is also a growing role for voluntary sector organisations to play in effective collaboration towards secure and effective rehabilitation environments. We now recognise that security in prison depends on an alert group of staff who interact with, and who know, their prisoners. This signals the role's enlargement from purely custodial duties (UNODC, 2015). A fundamental aspect of this dynamic security approach is to feed intelligence from interactions and observations into the security system, thereby preventing escapes, riots and disturbances, but also identifying organized criminal and/or terrorist groups within the prison system and protecting individuals made vulnerable to criminal involvement, radicalisation and extremism. Well-trained prison officers are the core of this dynamic security approach and must learn and develop a broad range of problem solving and interpersonal skills. With their increasing role in social and probation services, voluntary sector organisations necessarily become a part of dynamic security information exchange and the training these organisations delivers to volunteers must make clear to the volunteer their importance in supporting staff to evaluate risks. Not all volunteers will feel comfortable with this aspect of the role, but prison and probation volunteers would be instructed in communication protocols and encouraged to understand how a good working relationships with prison, correctional and probation officers is central to both rehabilitative and prevention/ security objectives of criminal justice. This inter-agency risk awareness protocol must continue post release: meaningful dialogue between justice, prison, probation, police, social services and the community is key to current risk assessment, future engagement in statutory rehabilitation programmes and to finding the right pathway for an individual to turn away from crime. One example of how these communication and collaboration protocols may be adopted in national policy frameworks was given in 2010, in the Norwegian Government's report which raises the ambitions of prison and probation to provide a holistic, humane and socially responsible 'return guarantee' which would effectively mean "less use of prison and better rehabilitation" (Ploeg and Sandlie, 2011).

The Council of Europe has also recognised a need for standardised training for civilians who voluntarily support rehabilitation in prison and in probation settings, in its recommendations for education and training in the 2019 European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC) Guidelines regarding recruitment, selection, education, training and professional development of prison and probation staff (Carr, 2020). 7.3.c recommends that "In case volunteers are recruited to work with suspects and offenders, they should be provided with adequate training to enable them to carry out their work effectively. Consideration should be given to the possibility of recruitment and training of ex-offenders to work within probation agencies where appropriate." As with prison staff, the CDPC

4 *Volunteers are specifically referenced in Recommendation CM/Rec (2012)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member States concerning foreign prisoners among the community agencies who should be facilitated to support the rights of foreign nationals to connect with the outside world.*

guidelines go on to recommend that training should include reference to codes of ethics, clearly defined criteria about their tasks and responsibilities, limits of competence, accountability and other related issues.

The VOLPRIS Partnership: a pilot in standardised training for people who train volunteers to engage in justice settings

The above maps a shift in criminal justice strategy towards the recognition that better rehabilitation implies increased use of services and facilities outside of prison and probation systems. More recently, the policy focus has shifted again, to acknowledge that if interagency work is to be fully integrated into prison and probation processes, all actors – including volunteers – must be subject to effective recruitment, training and retention procedures which reinforce the rehabilitative aims of prison and probation. But how - or by whom - is the person in prison responsible for providing training to volunteer organisations or even directly to volunteers? What training should these practitioners receive? If they are to train volunteers directly, how do these trainers know what recruitment, training and retention procedures are indeed effective?

In this next section, we will move from policy to practice, and these are the key questions with which the VOLPRIS partnership began our work in 2019 as part of a European Union co-funded Erasmus+ project. Representing five European jurisdictions, our specific aim was to find out who took on the role of 'volunteer coordinator' in a prison setting, and did they themselves feel they had the skills to develop and deliver a standardised, broad ranging and effective curriculum to volunteers, fit for purpose in their prison?

The VOLPRIS partnership was established in 2019 and funded by an Erasmus+ Adult Education grant from the European Union[5]. It is a partnership of six organisations from five European Union member states, and consists of both ministries of justice/ prisons and non-profit or voluntary sector organisations (VSOs) in each partner country. At the European level, the VOLPRIS partnership is represented by the Centre for European Volunteering. Over the course of three years, we aim to:

1. Explore mutual learning opportunities between Prisons and VSOs.
2. Identify and profile key competencies of coordinators who support prison volunteers.
3. Develop a training curriculum and programme to guide the criminal justice system (CJS) volunteer coordinator profile.
4. Establish common European minimum training and assessment standards for CJS volunteer coordinators.
5. Promote collaborative training to take advantage of transferability and creativity of existing initiatives.

Our first step was to find out from people coordinating volunteers in prisons whether they felt they had what they needed in terms of competencies, skills and resources, to support volunteers and volunteering policies. In 2020, we conducted 5 focus groups involving 34 justice practitioners across 5 European member states, and we conducted an online survey, gathering responses from coordinators of volunteers from 79 prisons. The following three factors emerged as key to how effective an

5 *The VOLPRIS 'Prisons Managing Volunteers in EU' project number 2019-1-DE02-KA204-006497 is co-financed by ERASMUS + programme (KA2 - Strategic Partnerships for adult education) www.volpris.eu*

initiative is, from the perspective of the respondents:

1. The volunteers need specific and adequate training and consistent support.
2. Recognition of the value of volunteer and volunteering projects supports sustainability and buy-in.
3. The relationship between prison staff and volunteers is pivotal.

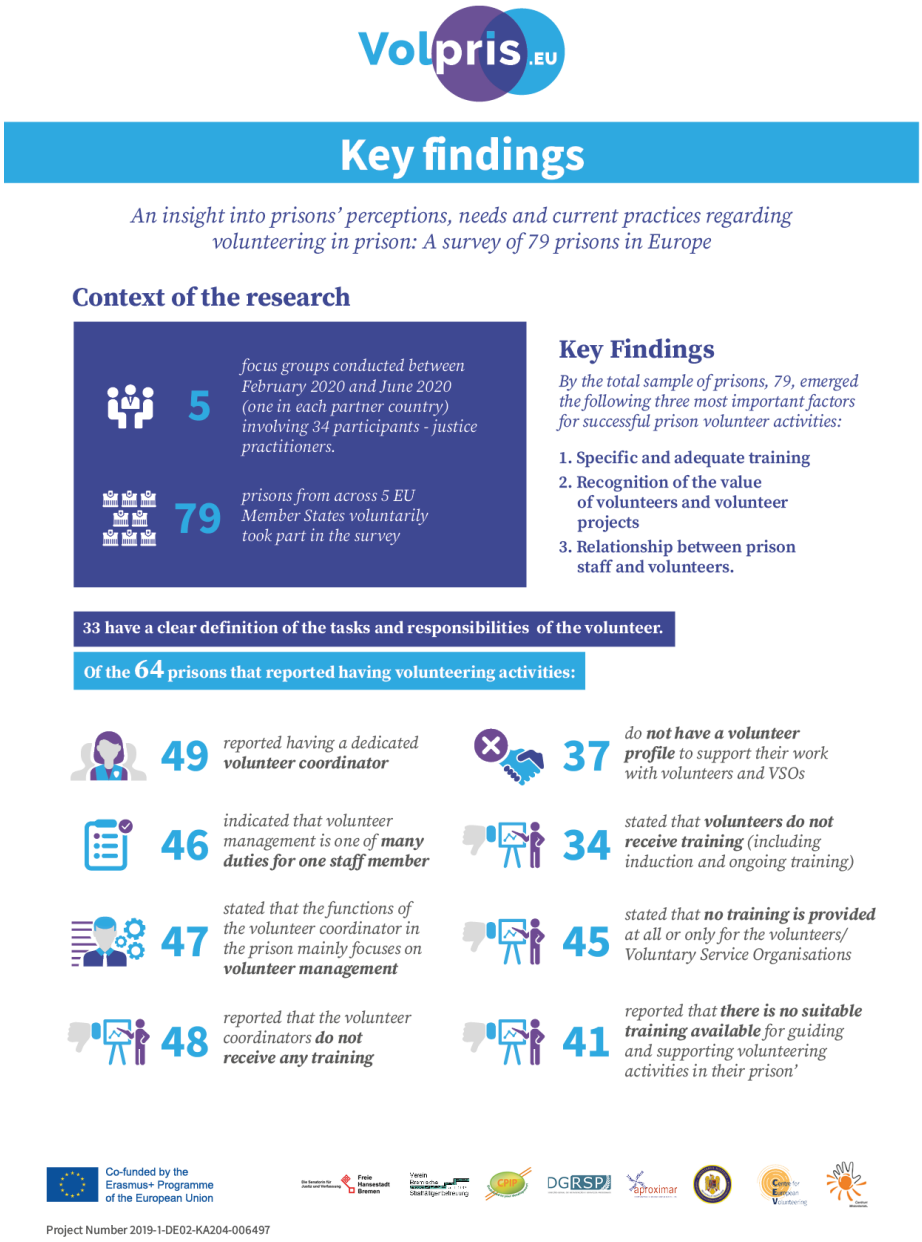

Figure 1: Key findings from a survey into the needs and current practices of volunteering in prison in 79 prisons across 5 European Member States

Volunteers were active in a wide range of programmes and activities, with 15% developing social skills and personal capabilities, 13% working to establish community links between the prisoner and the outside, 13% active in arts and cultural activities and 12% in wellbeing (sports, art, meditation etc)

VOLPRIS used the suggestions of our respondents to build a 12-module offline/ 8 modules online course for CJS volunteer coordinators, available free via www.volpris.eu and available in English, French, Portuguese, Romanian and German. Respondents identified critical success factors for a volunteering project in prison, and we have included these practical suggestions in each module. After the training of volunteers, respondents said that promoting the value of volunteering within the prison would have the greatest impact upon that programme's success. Their suggestions for doing this were to:

- Challenge the idea that voluntary sector services are 'for free': Volunteers need investment in training, workspaces, supervision, recognition and motivation, just like workers.
- Every 6 months, have a feedback meeting with your volunteers and ask them what they would do to improve the intervention.
- Connect your volunteer to prison staff, invite them to meetings, give volunteers feedback from staff and regularly pass on volunteers' news.
- Promoting 'success stories' of the positive role of volunteers helps to integrate them into the prison.
- Get feedback from prisoners on what works in terms of volunteer interventions, and integrate this into your next training cycle.

Alongside this, practitioners recommended investing in the relationships between prison staff and volunteers/ voluntary organisations. They suggested:

- Clear oversight and support of the programme at the governor/ director level.
- Flexibility on what and when volunteering is allowed in the prison so as to encourage more diverse volunteers who may have to fit in their engagement around commitments such as a full-time job.
- Robust procedures for recruitment, selection and training which align with existing prison protocols would build staff trust and confidence in volunteers.
- Support for volunteers with security vetting leads to quick take-up of roles.
- The volunteers need regular supervision, make time for this.
- Give trusted volunteers appropriate responsibilities to ease pressure on staff.

A final overarching critical success factor which respondents to the VOLPRIS needs analysis survey said would help in all cases was to expand the profiling and recruitment processes of the volunteers. In terms of recruiting volunteers, they suggested:

- Diversity supports reintegration: advertise volunteer roles in the areas of your community where you will find volunteers which 'match' your inmates.
- Deploy a multi-method selection process: first contact + application form + initial screening meeting + opportunity to visit the prison + guidance session = decision.
- Use matching criteria which meets prisoners' needs and you will increase the probability of

retention and get higher satisfaction from all stakeholders.

In terms of profiling volunteers, they suggested:

- Assess your new volunteers' skills, availability, and motivations.
- They will have diverse motivations, so find out how to respond to why they want to engage.
- Get to know your volunteers' networks and connections, build trust in these communities and take any opportunity to make them aware of prisoners' reintegration needs.

Figure 2 VOLPRIS Recommendations based on research into volunteering in prison needs and current practice in Europe

CASE STUDY 1: VOLPRIS training in practice: *Prison and Probation Volunteer Coordinator* role in the Federal State of Bremen, Germany

The authors present this first case study to give an example of how the VOLPRIS project equipped the Regional Ministry of Justice in Bremen to respond to an identified need to better support rehabilitation by increasing the interagency work of services and facilities outside of prison and probation systems.

In Germany, as in Bremen, civic involvement in the area of help for prisoners is one of the very small areas in terms of numbers. Nevertheless, it plays a central role in rehabilitation and reintegration processes. Willingness to cooperate towards more effective cooperation is also to be "awakened and encouraged" according to the Federal State of Bremen Criminal Code (§ 4 para. 3 of the BremStVollzG). In addition, the position of the victims must be considered and, with a view to release, civil society should also be more involved.

In Bremen's justice system, volunteers are employed in a wide variety of areas to work for the social and professional reintegration of prisoners and those released from prison[6], in line with the Bremen Prison Act and Bremen Ministry of Justice and Constitution policy. In Bremen Prison, volunteers are primarily engaged in prisoner discussion groups and as so-called *Vollzugshelfer/in* or prison assistants who are deployed in individual case assistance one-to-one with prisoners[7].

In the past, the engagement of volunteers was uncoordinated and depended on the commitment of the respective contact person to whom the person wishing to do volunteer work turned, often someone who already held a full-time role consisting of other duties. In 2016, local practitioners from the prison, the ministerial authority, the probation service and the voluntary sector met within the framework of the Erasmus+ program Mobilising society towards (ex) offenders reintegration[8] and used this as a platform to promote civic engagement in the judicial sector. This expert group identified a need for a contact point to act as a link between the different actors (prison, probation, independent voluntary sector and non-governmental agencies). This need was confirmed in a Bremen-wide analysis, the role was drafted and agreed between these stakeholders. As a result, the position of Volunteer Coordinator was developed by the group and recruited through the Ministry of Justice and Constitution. The position is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) Chance project.

The position is currently held by the social educator Rauja Al-Molla. Her central task is to network Bremen institutions (prison, probation, independent voluntary sector and non-governmental agencies) and to recruit, train and retain volunteers for the Bremen justice system. Working in parallel with VOLPRIS's Volunteer Coordinator training, Mrs Al-Molla's tasks are divided into five areas, outlined below:

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6 *Volunteers are deployed as follows: in the Bremen correctional system (currently 72 prison volunteers), in social services of the judiciary (currently 4 Probation Service Volunteers) and the independent non-governmental providers of assistance to prisoners and former prisoners engaged to deliver statutory probation services (currently 19 volunteers).*

7 *Other assignments are possible within the framework of probation services delivery, and services delivered by voluntary sector organisations that already have a connection to the prison system.*

8 *"Mobilizing Society Towards (ex) Offenders Reintegration" – MOBi project – 2017-1-R001-KA204-037360 – was co-financed by ERASMUS + programme http://mobi-initiative.org/*

1. Recruitment and selection of volunteers.
The coordinator is responsible for the joint acquisition, selection and deployment of volunteers. Social media recruitment advertisements were developed and deployed on regional small ads site of the local volunteering agency. The coordinator conducts interviews with volunteers, checks the requirements for volunteer work and forwards them to the appropriate institution.[9]

2. Qualification and support
A basic qualification course has been created for volunteers. Despite working across agencies, it is important to the Ministry of Justice that this course has been standardised for the Federal State of Bremen's justice system. Participation in this basic course is mandatory. Further training or advanced training modules are offered to the volunteers on a regular basis. Volunteers can suggest topics to the coordinator or to their contact person at any time.

3. Support and accompaniment
Full-time staff act as contact persons, to supervise and accompany the volunteers. Network meetings of these contact persons take place regularly. In addition, volunteers are offered regular meetings to share their experiences and give them an opportunity for reflection.

4 Recognition and appreciation
The full-time contact persons and the coordinator are available for the volunteers at any time during their service. They are offered regular meetings for exchange and networking.

5. Public relations
Media and other agencies also play a role in promoting positive rehabilitation to ensure safer communities, yet from the VOLPRIS survey we saw that more than half of volunteer coordinators (55%) do not have a community communication plan. This crucial contact supports recruitment and empowers wider civil society to take community action towards safter streets in their neighbourhood. The Volunteer Coordinator is therefore also responsible for public relations with regards volunteering activity, promoting positive news with sensitivity to the victims and to the families of prisoners.

Qualification of volunteers

Volunteers do not need to have any specific previous knowledge, but they should be at least 23 years old, have a certain amount of life experience, functional skills, the ability to work in a team, the ability to motivate people and a lot of patience. Bremen Prison and the Probation Service also require a police certificate of good conduct before the admission procedure.

After the initial interview, applicants are trained, currently through three online training videos due to restrictions of the pandemic. These explain, among other things, the German penal system, possible causes of delinquency, the nature and challenges of crime, rehabilitation and reintegration. Rules of conduct for volunteers are highlighted, such as the obligation to maintain neutrality and to cooperate with staff. "I especially liked the aspect with the requirements," explained one applicant during feedback, "because it was explained to you again what exactly you are allowed to do and what

9 *Of the 56 applicants who answered a 2020 call on social media, Rauja Al-Molla has fully trained 28. The rest did not begin training because they did not have enough time, had other ideas, were not available or did not seem reliable.*

not." At the end of the training, applicants complete a questionnaire online about their training and subsequent motivation for the role. Open questions are clarified in a second personal interview with the Volunteer Coordinator.

Those who pass the prerequisite receive a certificate and a service card. The Coordinator then refers trained volunteers to the appropriate institution. Finally, there is an on-site meeting with the volunteer, the coordinator and the contact person where the role is clarified, and there's an opportunity for both sides to feedback.

Future of Volunteering in Bremen

The project and the position were originally limited until the end of the year (2020), but due to the success of the action, will be extended. The goal is to make the position permanent at the Bremen Regional Ministry of Justice and Constitution. In addition, volunteer work will be more in the public focus in the coming period.

CASE STUDY 2: Voluntary Sector implementation of a Volunteer Training Toolkit in Portugal

This next case study takes a step back and looks at a project which informed the learning outcomes of VOLPRIS. Here, Aproximar, a Portuguese voluntary sector organisation, presents their implementation of the training toolkit for volunteers in the justice system, designed in 2016, under the European Union/ DG Justice funded transnational project *JIVE – Justice Involving Volunteers in Europe*[10]. During this project – with some of the same jurisdictions as VOLPRIS – the role and value of volunteers in criminal justice was researched, and a competence profile for volunteers agreed upon. This study, and particularly the evaluation of the pilot phase, highlights how skilled and competent volunteer coordinators either inside the criminal justice system or in the voluntary sector can identify and respond to volunteer training needs.

The purpose of the Training Toolkit is to help prisons, probation services and voluntary sector organisations plan and deliver training sessions which increase how effectively volunteers achieve the aims of individuals within that system. It has a modular structure and can be fully personalised and tailored to the needs of each organisation/ volunteering group. as the 11 modules cover some of the same curriculum as the VOLPRIS Volunteer Training Course, but from the perspective of a civilian without the training or qualifications of justice professionals. There is for example an 'Introduction to the Criminal Justice System', 'Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities', and 'Motivational Interviewing'[11].

Evaluation of the training toolkit was undertaken during the pilot phase of the JIVE project. These pilots reached 87 volunteers in Hungary, Italy, Portugal and Romania, not only in prison and probation, but also in community settings. Evaluating both the volunteers' and the trainers' satisfaction and increased competencies, improvements can be seen in all categories: According to the results

10 *The JIVE project was based on recommendations of the Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe (PAVE) and the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee of Europe (SOC /431- EU Policies and Volunteering)*

11 *Some own-jurisdiction modules were adapted to align with their justice system, for example the Portuguese version was developed in collaboration with the Portuguese Probation and Prison Services (Direção Geral de Reinserção e Serviços Prisionais/ DGRSP).*

compiled in the Pilot Evaluation Report (Aproximar, 2016), volunteers were satisfied with the contents and methods used in the training, and appreciated the flexibility of being able to undertake some of the course autonomously online. Through self-assessment of competences, results indicate that the training program is fit for purpose, with strengths including the toolkit's suitability (responding to volunteering needs and problems) and expected impact (volunteers might improve their activities and their role as volunteers and produce greater outcomes inside the prison context).

The toolkit remains in use in part or in whole, in the participating partner countries and beyond. In Portugal, for example, Aproximar coordinated closely with the Portuguese Probation and Prison Services (DGRSP) to adapt the JIVE training toolkit to the Training Programme for Volunteers in the Criminal Justice System, an official publication which, in accordance with current Portuguese legislation on volunteering in relation to the institutional settings, also includes voluntary activity in secure settings.

Conclusion

As the regional and European policy and legislation in this overview makes clear, despite differences in Europe's jurisdictions, there is a clear pull in the same direction towards more effective connections between prisons and the communities which surround them, and clear points at which this cooperation should be specifically encouraged. As we see from effective voluntary practice, community organisations are able to empower civil society's response to crime, rather than putting full responsibility for rehabilitation and reintegration solely in the hands of statutory criminal justice services. Yet, those who work with volunteers and volunteering organisations in prisons seem to struggle to embed these initiatives and make them self-sustaining. Despite recognising the value that volunteers bring, few are expanding their community programmes in this way. Respondents to the VOLPRIS prison volunteer coordinator needs survey tell us that better training for coordinators, greater recognition of volunteering and sustained investment in improved relationships between prison staff and volunteers will help sustain existing volunteering initiatives and give prisons the confidence to expand them. Such a survey might also highlight similar needs for training staff who support volunteer probation officers: although the profiles of prison and probation officers may differ greatly between jurisdictions, within the context of closer interagency working, we would expect some overlap in the skills trainers require to develop and deliver a standardised, broad ranging and effective curriculum to justice volunteers.

Areas for Future Action

When we take these steps to train the trainers of volunteers and to implement prison volunteering policy in a strategic way, as in the two illustrative studies, we have seen that the results can be positive for the volunteer and for staff who support them in prison. The authors strongly recommend more, and more standardised, training for prison and probation professionals who support volunteers in their daily practice and national adoption of policies which support this. Having also identified a lack of knowledge of how staff should define volunteering roles, how volunteer programs are appraised and whether there are strategic attempts to align the right community initiative with known criminogenic needs, we recommend research into potentially transferrable existing indicators and evaluation practice (both inside and outside of criminal justice volunteering). In parallel, we recommend that evaluation methods and indicators be aligned with policies to support volunteer coordinator staff in achieving the aims of their justice services. As more trained volunteer

coordinators onboard more members of the public, we will need greater insight into which criminal justice volunteering initiatives would be of greater interest to communities themselves – what would motivate civil society to take community action and how can we align these needs with the needs of people in prison and on release? Just as volunteer coordinators need to provide their Governors with evidence to increase buy-in for voluntary initiatives, the authors foresee an advantage to having greater perspective of how and when to evaluate the impact of volunteering initiatives on the prisoners themselves, on the culture of the prisons which support them, on the communities into which former prisoners are released and on the volunteering beneficiaries themselves: these unknown factors perpetuate doubt in the value of volunteering programmes in supporting rehabilitation services in prison, and put up unnecessary barriers for prison staff keen to promote and engage civil society in efforts to reduce criminal behaviour.

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THE VALUE OF STUDENT VOLUNTEERS WITH THE CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA (CSC)

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Abstract

The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) benefits from the contributions of over 4,000 volunteers who work with offenders in institutions and the community in support of their rehabilitation and reintegration. Volunteer contributions are diverse, from self-help groups to supporting recreational and spiritual activities to providing accompaniments in the community. Since 2015, CSC has discovered the value of collaborating with a university club of approximately twenty-five (25) post-secondary students. This paper will discuss the importance of expanding the best practices of the Queen's Correctional Services Volunteers (QCSV) across Canada, and the operational considerations to achieve this, as an area of growth for CSC's volunteer program.

Introduction

The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) is responsible for administering court sentences of two years or more and has a core mandate to safely rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders back into society. CSC manages federal inmates in institutions of various security levels across the country and supervises offenders under conditional release in the community. Volunteers are an integral part of this process both in and outside of institutions, bridging gaps between CSC and the community (Government of Canada, 2012). There are over 4000 volunteers registered with CSC who dedicate their time and energy to supporting offenders in their journey to becoming law-abiding citizens. Their involvement supports offenders' needs for connection to the outside world, promotes pro-social behaviour and helps them to cope, from which offenders draw hope, strength and self-respect. Their contributions are unparalleled.

It is widely accepted that volunteers in general society offer organizations a more diverse range of skills, experience and knowledge, while also raising awareness about an organization. The rates of young Canadians dedicating their time to volunteering have continued to rise, with Western governments and academic institutions pushing for student participation in extracurricular volunteering to foster an engaged civil society (Smith et al., 2010). In Canada, volunteering rates are higher among students than the general population, with individuals under the age of 25 making up 58% of volunteers (Vezina & Crompton, 2012). These rates are highest in post-secondary institutions, where 73% of undergraduate students reported engaging in some form of volunteer effort (Smith et al., 2010; Yuriev, 2019).

CSC has benefited from the contributions of student volunteers over the last decade, usually in the form of co-operative education placements, internships, research affiliate programs, or independently, through existing religious and community volunteer organizations (CSC, 2019). Typically, student volunteers have worked in the community accompanying offenders on conditional release to appointments, to run errands, and to equip them with the necessary practical and pro-social skills they need to succeed. However, students are often perceived as being too young and not mature enough to work with offenders or take on larger projects.

Since 2015, CSC has developed a unique relationship with the student-led group from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, called the Queens Correctional Services Volunteers (QCSV), which has shattered these assumptions. Initially, QCSV were involved in community volunteering, and have since expanded to include volunteering initiatives at three institutions located in the region and new opportunities through virtual means during the COVID-19 pandemic. By developing this relationship, the QCSV students have gone over and above the typical student volunteering activities within CSC, filling gaps in programming while also providing meaningful social interactions and building community ties with incarcerated individuals. The success of their work can be attributed, in part, to their partnership with CSC's Greater Ontario and Nunavut District, facilitated by the district's Community Volunteer Coordinator (CVC). The work of QCSV was noticed by regional and national headquarters, and has since become the basis of a special project to expand partnerships with post-secondary institutions across the country, through targeted outreach, to encourage more students to create student groups modelled after QCSV. This paper will draw on evidence from QCSV's best practices, to discuss why it is important to support student volunteers, including the benefits to offenders, staff, and the community, as well as the operating considerations to make this effort

successful. CSC believes that this could introduce opportunities to increase not only the number of volunteers, but also expand the initiatives and programs available to offenders, diversify the student volunteer cohort and promote future employment opportunities for qualified student volunteers.

Queen's Correctional Services Volunteers

The Queen's Correctional Services Volunteers (QCSV) student club was founded in 2015 by a small group of undergraduate students from Queen's University who demonstrated a strong interest in making a difference in their community by volunteering with CSC. Initially, volunteers assisted in community accompaniments at the Henry Traill Community Correctional Centre (C.C.C.) and then expanded to include the development and delivery of multiple workshops and programs at three institutions in the greater Kingston area, including Collin's Bay, Millhaven and Joyceville Institutions. QCSV programs have included practical skills development workshops focused on supporting offenders to develop interview etiquette, resume/CV creation, financial literacy, and therapeutic programs focused on nurturing soft skills such as self-expression, mindfulness, and self-esteem. During the COVID-19 pandemic, QCSV's activities expanded into new areas through virtual means. The group created a guide to healthy living for offenders, including content around managing stress, staying active and healthy eating, and developed a resource directory for the city of Kingston distributed to high-risk offenders at the Community Correctional Centre with a strong mental health focus. Some members of QCSV also began providing telephone support to offenders on release in the community, helping them complete a number of tasks such as researching accommodations, employment, conditions of release, etc.

With the support of CSC staff, due to the relationship built on collaboration and trust, QCSV was given license to create and deliver new workshops and programs for offenders, which went beyond the typical role of CSC volunteers. The group leveraged supporting literature and also developed a feedback loop whereby staff, volunteers, and offenders were engaged in updates and changes to their workshops and programs. For offenders, this indirectly increased their engagement in their rehabilitation and reintegration plans. QCSV introduced this innovative way of working to ensure that its programming was constantly evolving and improving while still being relevant to the needs of the target group. For example, when QCSV ran one of its employment workshops, an offender indicated that they wanted to learn more about money management for when they began to generate an income. In turn, QCSV created its finance management workshops that laid out the process of opening a bank account, budgeting, and saving money.

Like all of CSC's volunteers, QCSV members have Government of Canada security clearance, which at a minimum involves fingerprinting and provides for access to protected sites. If access to protected information is required for the activities, volunteers are also required to undergo a credit check. All volunteers take CSC's National Volunteer Orientation before they can begin volunteering, which provides information regarding the offender population, awareness of security procedures in institutions, expectations for professional conduct as outlined in CSC's directives, as well as understanding how to set boundaries and being aware of potential situations that could influence inappropriate behavior or actions. This on-line course, which takes approximately 4-6 hours to complete, is supplemented by site-specific orientation. Every activity is also risk-assessed by the site and supervised by CSC staff, according to operational routine and based on the level of security of the institution.

In seven years, QCSV has grown into a team of 25 highly skilled students of all ages, from a variety of faculties and personal backgrounds. One of QCSV's unique characteristics is that the majority of its volunteer efforts are focused outside of the Queen's University student body, despite it being a registered on-campus student club. Although QCSV's activities include a range of volunteering both internal and external to the university setting, they provide services that have no direct benefit to the student population. Volunteering through QCSV is also not curriculum-based and has no element of academic compulsion, as is the standard of many off-campus volunteering initiatives associated with post-secondary institutions (Smith et al., 2010). Students take the initiative and make the time to volunteer from their own free will and motivation, without the expectation of personal or academic gain.

Given the success of the QCSV, CSC hired Alicia Mora, the program founder and former president, to create the QCSV Best Practice Guidelines (Mora, 2021). CSC has since developed an outreach strategy to inspire, encourage, and raise awareness with more Canadian post-secondary students to build their own CSC student volunteer programs modelled after QCSV. The guidelines highlight QCSV's procedures for their volunteer selection, interviews, safety and training process, workshop development and implementation strategies, and expected professional conduct. As information has spread about the success of the QCSV, at least one other institution has made concrete steps towards building a relationship with a nearby university, where they hope students will start their own student program.

Benefits for Offenders

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory helps us understand the success of volunteers generally. When the perceived underlying motives of other people's actions are seen as sincere — rather than self-motivated — this provides the foundations for affect-based trust (Hoogervorst et al., 2015; McAllister, 1995). Affect-based trust is "trust based on feelings of emotional fondness for the authority, encompassing mutual respect, and confidence that the authority genuinely cares about the needs of others" (Wilcox et al., 2022). If done well, this leads to trusting environments where goodwill occurs. Research has found that volunteerism and altruism are related, with two studies by Hoogervorst and colleagues (2015) finding that clients are more likely to attribute support from volunteers to altruistic and sincere motives relative to support from paid workers because they believed there were fewer external rewards or hidden incentives for volunteers.

When we consider the principles of attribution theory through a correctional lens, one can see how the efforts of volunteers are perceived as more altruistic by offenders. Volunteers are there to support the offender's need for connection to the outside world, and meaningful human contact, whereas by necessity, staff must play a different role. This effect is further amplified when offenders acquire an understanding that student volunteers, such as those from QCSV, are not receiving class credits or monetary rewards, as is common with student placements. The student volunteer can sustain meaningful interactions over extended periods (i.e., several years as opposed to one or two semesters) and do so purely for the interest of the long-term success of the offender. One quote from a QCSV volunteer's interaction with an offender in the Millhaven Structured Intervention Unit (SIU) demonstrated the effects of attribution theory:

> *"I was volunteering in the SIU at Millhaven one weekend with some offenders who I had interacted with previously, but also a couple of guys I hadn't seen before. One of the new guys asked me how much I was getting paid to be there. When I said I wasn't [getting paid], he wanted to know how many volunteer hours I was getting instead. The answer once again was none. He couldn't fathom that I was willingly choosing to spend my Saturday mornings in the prison playing cards with the offenders. And that shocked me. I continue to be astonished by how surprised they were that someone cared. No strings attached. This impact is what I love most about volunteering with QCSV; that I can make such a meaningful difference in an offender's life by simply offering my time. (Hunter, 2020)"*

Given that many offenders may hold feelings of animosity or distrust towards the criminal justice system or individuals in positions of power, volunteers offer an opportunity to negate these feelings or beliefs (Ronel et al., 2008). The motivations for most volunteers in corrections include a deep passion for their work, a desire to give back, help others, connect with those most marginalized, and potentially building on religious beliefs or personal connections within the criminal justice system (Kort-Butler & Malone, 2015). Through the perceived altruism of authentic, non-ego-based, non-judgmental and helpful volunteers, offenders may experience stronger motivation to succeed and behave respectfully towards others (Ronel et al., 2008).

Generational Bridges

Although volunteers in CSC's institutions are not homogenous, they tend to be like other volunteers in general society, whereby they are more socially stable than the general population, more educated, higher paid, married, retired and more involved than the general population in other civic duties and faith-based communities (Kort-Butler & Malone, 2015). Younger volunteers bring new opportunities and new ideas to the correctional system, along with positive energy and creativity, which can benefit both offenders and staff. This means that student volunteers in institutional settings, being younger, can symbolize feelings of hope and provide offenders with novel interactive experiences that may not have been previously experienced. Student volunteers close the generational gaps often felt by offenders upon release or those who have spent significant periods of time away from their children or other young family members. As one QCSV volunteer recalled:

> *"I clearly remember when an elderly offender at Millhaven Institution once told me that the best part of his week was when we [QCSV volunteers] would come and visit. He described how we reminded him of his children who were similar ages to us and whom he had lost touch with over the years due to his incarceration and the negative choices he had made in his past. He described how he had given up all hope of his family or community accepting him if ever released and how the chance to see that young people actually cared provided him with the optimism that maybe there was a chance that he would be able to mend his family relationships and actually have a shot at a better life. He also added that the fact that he was able to discuss what pop culture trends were popular with a younger person made him feel less disconnected from his children and gave him more confidence to potentially reconnect with them."*

Benefits for CSC

Building an anti-racist, inclusive and diverse organization

A critical issue faced by Canada's criminal justice system is the overrepresentation of Indigenous and Black offenders. There are approximately 12,400 offenders in CSC's custody. As of 2019, CSC's male Indigenous offender population totaled 25.2% of the total incarcerated population and Black male offenders totaled 7.2% (Public Safety Canada, 2020), compared to the general Canadian population where 4.9% self-identify as Indigenous and 3.5% as Black (Do, 2019; Indigenous Services Canada, 2020). CSC has developed an Anti-Racism Framework (CSC, 2021) that outlines the organization's goal of creating an anti-racist organization by building a diverse, equitable, inclusive workforce and healthy environment for staff and offenders. In support of the Framework, CSC has begun working towards a more representative volunteer demographic to ensure that the offender population is well served in terms of relatable and diverse role models in age, language, gender, ethnic and cultural background. A recent study by Allen and Collisson (2020) found that ethnic-minority individuals who were exposed to a role model whom they perceived as more ethnically similar were more likely to make choices similar to that role model in comparison to a role model who was perceived as ethnically different. CSC's goal is to increase the ethnocultural diversity of volunteers, to increase offender access to ethnoculturally-diverse role models.

CSC is developing a recruitment strategy to reach and attract more diversity in our students. A detailed listing of the faculties, clubs and societies at each Canadian university has been developed to support outreach that includes Black and Indigenous student associations, the disability or LGBTQ2S+ communities. It also includes a broad array of faculties, such as Psychology, Business, Nursing, Philosophy, Sociology, Indigenous Studies and Gender Studies, since the tendency to have an increased motivation to emulate a role model extends past ethnic characteristics and can include similarities of common interests (Forsyth, 2012). Another area of focus for CSC will be volunteer self-identification so that we can track and measure our performance. Our current volunteer self-reported demographic data is very limited.

In parallel, CSC's national headquarters intends to support staff in institutions to build bridges to these post-secondary institutions, to develop partnerships with interested student bodies. CSC's penitentiaries do not currently work with student volunteers. While they may have post-secondary institutions in their geographic area, frontline staff in institutions may not have the time or tools to effectively reach out and build new relationships.

Benefits for Staff

As mentioned, the increased presence and contributions of all volunteers can improve the behaviour and success of offenders, which can ease the environmental conditions in which they fulfill their roles, and hence, lower stress for staff. The positivity and passion that students bring can create a ripple effect with staff, offering renewed energy and hope for more positive outcomes. For example, when discussing the volunteer efforts of a QCSV student at Henry Traill C.C.C. one staff member noted the following:

> *"When this program was first implemented, she [the volunteer] was paired with an offender who led a very reclusive lifestyle, had mental health concerns and minimal supports in the*

Kingston area. He would generally keep to himself and limit his interactions with staff and other residents. As a result, he would experience isolation, stress, anxiety and boredom. [The volunteer] dedicated her time and effort to speak with this offender on a regular basis. Through the numerous conversations with the offender over several months, there was a notable improvement to his motivation and engagement to interact with others. Her hard work with this offender improved his quality of life as he was more present and interacted effectively with others at the C.C.C., which really assisted in getting him out of his shell."

The District Director of CSC's Greater Ontario Nunavut District also spoke positively about QCSV's contributions stating that:

"The QCSV volunteers are a remarkable group of young people who decided to make an impact in our community and to impart change with some of our most challenging offenders. I have had the privilege to experience some of the social and learning initiatives the group has delivered and there is always an atmosphere of support, understanding, and respect that fills the room (CSC, 2020)."

Additional Benefits

Post-secondary student volunteers provide unique benefits in comparison to other community partners and volunteers. Students may have greater access to technology and higher levels of digital literacy. They are not constrained to typical working hours and tend to be more flexible and readily available during off-hours, such as weekends and evenings, and may be more open to connecting virtually (e.g. telephone and videoconference). They also have greater access to academic literature, which can be useful when providing evidence-based research in developing new workshops or programs. They can be well positioned to take on administrative functions to support frontline staff, as they are looking to increase their employability or acquire skills for their chosen career. Volunteering is also a great way for students to learn more about the important role that CSC plays in rehabilitation and public safety, and many student volunteers have transitioned to full-time employment within CSC.

Students at post-secondary institutions may be able to access internal funding or fundraise on campus or in the community. If students choose, they can request to be ratified as an official student club by their university or college and, in some cases, academic institutions will offer bursaries or grants to student organizations. This allows student volunteer groups to function and provide services independently from CSC. Ratification can also give students the independence to carry out their own internal hiring process, prior to applying with CSC, to ensure that the most professional and qualified students are selected. Moreover, by having the ability to create, update, and implement workshops and programs flexibly, rapidly, efficiently, with a small budget, and with access to vast academic databases, student volunteers can enhance existing programming to target offenders' needs and address gaps in existing correctional programs.

Benefits for Volunteers and the Community

Although the primary focus of CSC volunteer efforts is to benefit offenders, there are indirect and transformative benefits for student volunteers. As opposed to retired volunteers, students are interested in building and advancing their skills for future careers. Improving job opportunities

and career advancement was cited as a top reason for volunteers under 25 years old, which is why younger generations are shown to have the highest rates of formal volunteering across all generations (Hahmann et al., 2020; StatCan, 2021). Many students regularly face barriers of being seen as not qualified enough, too young, or holding insufficient prerequisites due to lack of experience to successfully fulfill a volunteer role (McArthur, 2011). By showcasing the success of QCSV and increasing the opportunities and responsibilities for student volunteers, CSC can mitigate negative perspectives while encouraging a more widespread acceptance and trust of younger volunteers.

A 2014 study by Kort-Butler and Malone examined the general benefits of volunteers in prisons. Their research found that volunteering with offenders transformed the volunteers' views on inmates and the prison system. Particularly, they found that volunteers gained awareness of and appreciation for the problems associated with both serving time and re-entry. When student volunteers gain this awareness, it enhances either their pre-existing knowledge from academic studies or their misconceptions from the media, and allows them to share this newly acquired knowledge with their peers and community. As part of QCSV's vision to break down misconceptions and stigmas associated with incarceration, the group utilized social media platforms to share the positive work being done by CSC, which contributes to counteracting many of the negative misconceptions held by the public.

The most valuable benefit to volunteers is the role itself and the gratitude that is shown by CSC staff and offenders (Matt, 2015). One QCSV volunteer recalled the gratitude an offender displayed in being able to give back to the community from Henry Traill C.C.C. in the following:

> *"During my first year with QCSV, I had the opportunity to build toys with offenders that were donated to a woman's shelter during the holiday season. After we were done, one of the offenders spoke about how he was grateful to be able to take part in this activity. He felt as if this was one of his first positive contributions to his community and he was moved to tears thanking us for providing him [with] the opportunity to give back."*

Another volunteer also recalled the following from an experience at Henry Traill C.C.C.:

> *"I remember one time when I was volunteering at Henry Traill [C.C.C.] one of the offenders who regularly took part in our programs was moving to a new home and it was the last day we were going to be seeing him. At the end of the session, he told us that he wanted to say a few words as he stood up in front of the room and began a speech that he had clearly been thinking about for quite some time. He expressed his gratitude towards all of us volunteers and explained how much he appreciated all the time we spent coming in and doing programs with him. Essentially, he said that the programs and activities we came in to do had given him something to look forward to, and something to motivate him. It was at that point I realized that although it is only a few hours of my time, it makes a huge impact on so many people, so much so that the offender prepared an entire speech and was nearly in tears saying goodbye. QCSV has allowed me to really make a difference in so many lives and this instance is one I'll never forget."*

Conclusion

CSC believes that recruiting more post-secondary students can increase the diversity of CSC's volunteers, support frontline staff, establish stronger ties with the community, break down stigmas

and misconceptions associated with corrections, and create new ways for offenders to engage with society on their path to becoming law-abiding citizens. The success of QCSV is clear, based on the exceptional reviews received by offenders, volunteers, and staff. CSC hopes that the more it invests in expanding student recruitment, supports student bodies to start their own student-run club and builds bridges between institutions and student bodies, the wider spread the success of QCSV-like programs can be nationally.

However, this is a best practice that CSC will need to invest time and energy into to replicate. Change and transformation do not happen without effort. To scale up this best practice in the institutions, for example, will be very different from the District, where it started, especially since there is no history of student volunteers in the institutions. CSC needs to ensure that volunteer coordinators in both institutions and districts are equipped to take on this role. Successful volunteer coordination depends on the careful implementation of roles and responsibilities (Studer & Von Schnurbein, 2013). Currently, as per policy (Commissioner's Directive 024 – Management of CSC Volunteers), volunteer coordination is at the local level (CSC, 2018). Only the community volunteer coordinator is dedicated exclusively to volunteer coordination. In institutions, volunteer coordination is one of many duties of the Social Program Officers. CSC may need to alter current roles and responsibilities, given the time and skills needed to develop new initiatives and work with students. As well, CSC needs to identify a specific skill set and/or competency profile, and train and develop volunteer coordinators, which is not done currently. The willingness to embark and adapt to change requires a coordinated, committed and sustained effort by all.

Volunteer coordinators must also have to have time and ability to engage their volunteers. One of the best ways to retain volunteers is through job satisfaction, which can be enhanced by open and ongoing communications, encouragement from staff, and creating opportunities for feedback, debriefs and/or check-ins. For the QCSV, the Community Volunteer Coordinator created frequent opportunities for volunteers to debrief with staff, for them to understand how the offenders conducted themselves in the QCSV-led activities, and to address any concerns related to the volunteers' safety and privacy. Younger and newer volunteers also need lots of connection and positive reinforcement. All of these efforts ensure volunteers know that their efforts are valued, which contributes to their retention. If CSC is investing time and resources into the implementation of student-run programs like QCSV, it is in the best interest of the organization to also invest in the staff and resources needed to retain them. Student volunteerism is already characterized by a high turnover rate. For example, since 2018, there have been 80 students in total who have registered as volunteers from QCSV.

Ultimately, with sufficient and effective support, the expansion of partnerships with post-secondary student groups could yield impressive results, as demonstrated by QCSV. By supporting young volunteers, CSC will be able to contribute to the growth of young educators and community leaders (Marullo & Edwards, 2000). With their openness and enthusiasm, these student groups can be catalysts for change. They also support CSC's longstanding and continuous effort to build stronger ties with the public it serves. Expanding student volunteering also generates interest in CSC as a potential employer and creates a pathway for students to future employment opportunities with CSC. If CSC can succeed at recruiting more ethnoculturally diverse volunteers, this could also help expand the diversity of the pool of potential applicants to employment opportunities with CSC. Building more and different post-secondary collaborative efforts will enhance CSC's longstanding volunteer

program, contributing to its mandate of rehabilitation and safe reintegration of offenders while transforming lives.

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COSA: A PROVEN APPROACH TO REDUCING SEXUAL OFFENDING

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Abstract

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) is a program used in several countries that has demonstrated success in reducing recidivism and improving community reintegration with people who have committed serious sexual offences. The program is community-based and uses principles of restorative justice. This paper describes the program, reviews evidence on its success and discusses some of the implementation challenges. CoSA is cost-effective and merits wide adoption as a way of dealing with a serious issue in criminal justice.

Introduction

People who have committed serious sexual offenses[1] are a particularly vilified and stigmatized group. Despite evidence (Hanson et al., 2018; Hamilton, 2015) that reoffending rates in this group are generally low, they tend to be seen as high risk and beyond redemption (Janus, 2020). Public attitudes towards people convicted of sex offenses are often harshly punitive, which puts pressure on services to keep them incarcerated for longer periods or to place many restrictions on them after release (Blagden et al., 2018). Media coverage often provokes further panic, casting such offenders as irredeemable monsters destined to continue preying on vulnerable populations, including women and children (Harper, 2018). Many governments have responded by enacting heavily punitive and exclusionary policies, such as public sex offender registries, indefinite detention and lifetime or long-term community supervision.

These persons are often released from prison with no family, friends, or support in the community. Indeed, they face stigma and isolation among the many challenges during reintegration efforts. Many of them are institutionalized after having spent long periods of time in prison and many have a history of abuse and deprivation. Probation and parole services struggle as to how to respond to people in this category.

Yet there already exists a unique program model, used in several countries, that has been shown to be very effective in supporting such persons adjust to post-sentence life and in reducing recidivism to a very high degree. That program is called CoSA – Circles of Support and Accountability. In this article we discuss the CoSA model, share some of the research showing that CoSA reduces sexual reoffending, and outline some of the implementation issues. CoSA, based on restorative justice principles, is effective in reducing recidivism, increasing the safety of the community, successfully integrating people who have committed offenses, and enhancing societal wellbeing. And it does so without the punitive measures that are the typical response in criminal justice. In the world of What Works, here is a model that has shown good results in a range of different settings, and is inexpensive, so deserves much wider adoption.

What is the CoSA model?

The underpinning principles of CoSA are: 'no one is disposable' and 'no more victims' (Fox, 2010). The program has been described by Correctional Service Canada (2002: 12), which operates federal prisons and parole services in Canada, as being 'to substantially reduce the risk of future sexual victimization of community members by assisting and supporting released individuals in their task of integrating with the community and leading responsible, productive, and accountable lives'.

CoSA is centred around the development of relationships with pro-social members of the community through what is called a 'circle' format. CoSA circles consist of trained volunteers who support individuals convicted of a sexual offence (called 'core members') and considered high risk as they leave prison and re-enter the community. The volunteers provide, as the name says, both support and accountability. For many core members, CoSA may be the first time in their lives that they are engaging in healthy relationships with people who genuinely care about their well-being - and who are not paid to spend time with them. The relationship itself, and its voluntary nature, are fundamental

1 *We do not use the term 'sex offenders', which we feel lumps together a very wide range of actions and also stigmatizes people by equating them with specific wrong actions – see Willis, 2018.*

to CoSA's success.

Each circle of a core member and volunteers is underpinned by a written agreement, usually called a 'contract' or 'covenant'. This document establishes conditions of behaviour for the core member, procedures for dealing with any breaches of the agreement and failure to meet conditions set by the relevant correctional authority, safety procedures, and protocols for responding to 'warning signs' in the core member's behaviour.

In most cases a number of circles in a community operate together under the aegis of a sponsoring organization, overseen by one or more circle coordinators. These models vary in different countries. In some cases, CoSA circles are operated by state organizations such as probation services. In Canada, 19 different sponsoring organization operates circles in several parts of the country. The sponsoring organizations may be religious, criminal justice, or other community groups. In the Canadian model each of the sites is independent with its own governance, while CoSA Canada provides coordination and administers funding that is provided by the Government of Canada and others. Jurisdictions that are smaller or more homogeneous or operate in states without a federal structure may have simpler structures.

CoSA volunteers come from many walks of life. They are students, professionals, retired people, or anyone else who wants to contribute to the community and believes in COSA's approach. The volunteers are supported by a range of professionals such as therapists, probation and parole officers, police, and CoSA program staff to whom they can turn if issues arise in a circle and/or they need to seek professional advice. Where necessary, volunteers report back to a circle coordinator about the activities of the circle and the attitudes and behaviours of the core member. The circle coordinator in turn reports any concerns to the relevant authorities. While ensuring the confidentiality of the circle is important to foster core members' trust and honesty, core members participate in CoSA on the understanding that if volunteers become concerned about a core member's behaviour, it will be reported.

Restorative justice principles and practices guide CoSA's operations and ground how CoSA frames wrongdoing and what to do about it. Restorative justice begins with a belief that crimes harm relationships and create obligations to right the wrong. CoSA promotes meaningful accountability while assisting the core member to build social capital. CoSA also allows the community, through volunteer members, to build relationships with core members that promote healing and well-being for everyone.

In the initial stages, the circle is focussed on working with the core member on practical issues related to life outside of prison, such as finding housing, accessing a food bank, obtaining employment, or getting a driver's license, health card, or other important documents – factors identified as reducing risk of recidivism among recently-released prisoners (Ullrich & Coid, 2011). The circle can also help the core member manage conditions required by the justice system; everyone released on parole or probation will have such conditions, and they are often onerous (Canadian Civil Liberties Association, 2014). Weekly circle meetings may be supplemented, especially in the early days of an offender's release from prison, with regular contacts with individual circle volunteers.

As the circle members become more familiar with one another, they can begin to address more complex issues such as triggers for reoffending, depression, substance misuse, self-harm, family conflicts, and anger. The voluntary and community-based nature of CoSA seems to motivate core member commitment and continued involvement; as one core member (in Thompson & Thomas, 2017: 87) stated: "It doesn't matter who those people are it's just that those people give their time to help you". CoSA fills the gap between prison life and life after incarceration with a support service that stands outside the 'system', in an intermediary role between legal/correctional services and societal integration.

Origins

The CoSA model emerged, largely through a process of trial and error (see Richards et al. 2020 for an overview), in Canada in the early 1990s. Since then, the model has spread across Canada (Chouinard & Riddick, 2014; Wilson et al., 2005, 2009), parts of the United States of America (Duwe, 2018; Fox, 2013), the United Kingdom (Bates et al., 2012; McCartan, 2016; Nellis, 2009), Western Europe (Höing et al., 2013, 2015), and Australia (Richards et al, 2020; Richards & McCartan, 2018).

CoSA has worked well with diverse populations, including Indigenous, Black, and other people of colour (see Duwe, 2018). Although the great majority of people with convictions for sex offences are male, CoSA has also worked with female core members, and with people of varied ages and backgrounds. The CoSA model is attentive to the harm of systemic racism by focusing on the experience of each individual. CoSA training can provide volunteers with an understanding of the social and individual factors that contribute to wrongdoing. It is a model that operates without blame and shame, focusing on repairing harm and recognizing the worth of every individual. In addition, it is a model that works equally well in urban, rural, and suburban settings.

Does CoSA work?

A number of studies, done by different researchers in various countries, support the effectiveness of CoSA. One recent and powerful study is Duwe (2018), which compared 50 participants with 50 non-participants over six years and found a significant reduction in reoffending of 88%. These conclusions are reinforced by several quasi-experimental studies, that compared core members to a matched comparison group, in Canada (Wilson et al., 2005, 2007, 2009) and the United Kingdom (Bates et al., 2014). These studies found positive results on a similar scale – that is, very large reductions in reoffending. For example, Wilson et al. (2009) found an 83% reduction in sexual recidivism among core members compared with the non-CoSA group.

While recidivism remains a primary focus, it is not the only outcome that matters, especially given issues around what recidivism is and how to measure it (Klingele, 2019). Other studies have looked at the effects of CoSA participation on other desirable indicators such as core members' relationships (Bates et al., 2012; Elliott et al., 2017), employment and education (Bates et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2017; McCartan et al., 2014), housing (Bates et al., 2007; Clarke et al., 2017), health (Bates et al., 2012), prosocial attitudes (Bates et al., 2012; Höing et al., 2015), participation in prosocial activities (McCartan et al., 2014), emotional regulation and self-esteem (Höing et al., 2015), and sense of hope (Elliott et al., 2017).

One must always be careful in drawing conclusions about the effects of interventions unless there

are multiple, carefully controlled studies. However very few interventions in criminal justice have that amount of evidence, and many responses to crime are implemented with little or no supporting evidence. As Johnson et al. (2018) argue, mass incarceration has done little to reduce crime. At present CoSA has stronger research support than many other proposed policies and programs in this field. Multiple studies, done by independent researchers, in differing settings, have shown strong support for this model as an effective approach to reduce recidivism among individuals with sex offence convictions.

An additional and unique benefit of CoSA is the way it draws in the community, its organizations and citizens who become involved in CoSA as volunteers. Churches, for example, were instrumental in the development of CoSA and remain strong supporters of many of the programs and major sources of volunteers for the circles. But a variety of other community groups and individuals may operate or support CoSA programs. In Canada, 15 different community organizations across the country operate CoSA programs in conjunction with CoSA Canada (see www.CoSACanada.com), the national body.

It should also be emphasized that CoSA is a very cost-effective intervention, in part because of its structure and in part because of the central role of volunteers. CoSA Canada estimates its costs at about $12,000 per core member per year (to cover staffing, volunteer recruitment and training, office, travel and sundry costs), compared with about $115,000 per year to keep a man in jail (the cost for women in Canada is much higher) (Public Safety Canada, 2022).

As well, cost-benefit studies on crime show that serious sex crimes have very high costs because of their traumatic effects on victims and families, so each crime prevented provides a significant public benefit as well. Public Safety Canada (Gabor, 2015) estimated the legal, employment, and mental health service costs of sexual assault at about $150,000 per victim. CoSA Canada operates with a total budget of less than $2 million annually, compared to the billions of dollars Canada spends each year on corrections, including incarceration (Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, 2013). The program fully justifies its budget even if prevents only a small number of arrests.

Implementation issues

A key important issue for CoSA is to have a secure source of ongoing funding. In Canada the organization has faced temporary funding in recent years followed by a complete cessation of funding, followed by a time-limited commitment that is soon to expire. A program that operates with community partnerships and volunteers is especially hard hit by this uncertain situation in that it takes a long time to build or rebuild the networks essential to success.

CoSA runs largely on volunteer efforts supervised by a very small number of trained staff. In such a model, there are several key implementation challenges. One is being able to recruit, train and retain a sufficient number of volunteers. Circles cannot operate without enough volunteers, but it is equally important that the volunteers are trained to understand how to undertake their roles and responsibilities. This is achieved through careful processes of volunteer screening and training, which can cover topics such as offender typologies, the criminal justice process, understanding group dynamics, and monitoring of the offender. The circles also depend on developing lasting relationships, so too much turnover among volunteers can be a problem to provide long term support and ensure accountability. Support and self-care for volunteers is therefore vital to ensure volunteers remain

engaged with CoSA.

Another issue in a program that has multiple sites and large numbers of volunteers is ensuring a degree of consistency in the delivery of the program. Some variation is unavoidable and can also be desirable as circles respond to the specifics of each core member and each community setting. One would not expect the operation of a circle to look the same in all countries, or with people who committed different kinds of offences. But too much variability can also be problematic. It is important, then, that mechanisms be put in place for circles and sites to share their best practices and learn what works from each other.

And of course, recruiting, engaging and working with core members can also pose significant challenges. Participation in CoSA is offered to prospective core members on a voluntary basis (i.e. it is never mandated). This is a critical part of the CoSA model, which aims to support those who are committed to desisting from crime and adopting a healthy and meaningful life in the community. Nonetheless, some core members can pose challenges for volunteers by, for example, being evasive or minimising the effects of their offending. Researchers have stressed the importance of CoSA in these instances, rather than only accepting the "low-hanging fruit" into CoSA programs (Richards et al., 2020).

These challenges can be dealt with in a number of ways in circles. Core members can, for example, be reminded of the covenant to which they have agreed, which sets out expectations for their behaviour in the circle and beyond. Volunteers can and do challenge core members when necessary, or seek support from CoSA staff. While it can be difficult in practice to sustain the engagement of the core member, particularly when his actions are being scrutinised, research has clearly shown that core members generally appreciate the transparent manner in which volunteers raise concerns about their behaviour (see e.g. Petrina, Alards & Höing, 2015).

A document published by Circles4EU (Petrina, Alards & Höing, 2015), on best practice in CoSA, provides very useful advice on a wide range of implementation issues. It sets out a number of case studies of challenges experienced by CoSA programs across Europe, as well as how the challenges were dealt with in each circle. For example, CoSA practitioners reflect on their experiences of responding to: a core member found to have photographs of his young niece on his camera; a breach of circle confidentiality; excessive media attention directed toward a core member; and disagreements among CoSA volunteers. These practice case studies highlight the array of challenges that an individual CoSA may face, and the highly localised and flexible way in which they are addressed.

CoSA in the time of COVID-19

Person-to-person contact in groups is a central feature of the CoSA model. The COVID-19 pandemic has created many challenges to that model yet also created some new possibilities for the program.

The most obvious challenge is that in many locations actual circle meetings were no longer possible and had to be replaced with some form of remote encounter. Quite a few core members, often those who were most vulnerable, have their internet use restricted as part of their post-release conditions, in which case online meetings were also not possible. People often find online meetings a poor substitute for in-person contact, but telephone meetings are even less adequate. Even the logistics of

managing participation, such as who speaks next, are hard when people cannot see each other.

Another challenge was that some core members and volunteers lacked the appropriate equipment, could not afford to buy it, or could not afford high speed internet or significant long-distance phone charges. Some circles operate in remote communities where such access to these services is especially problematic. In other cases, core members were living in group settings, such as halfway houses, where their privacy while participating in a circle was not assured.

Most importantly, CoSA relies on building strong connections between core members and circle members, and that is much harder to do when people are not physically present together.

On the positive side, remote contact made it easier for volunteers to stay connected with core members in rural settings, or where there were transportation issues, or in bad weather. In a few cases core members moved but were still able to retain phone or video contact with their original circle members. Remaining in their home rather than traveling to a meeting can be more comfortable both for core members and for some volunteers. Another benefit was that volunteers did not have to travel, including for initial training, which in some cases substantially reduced the time required.

To try to address these issues, CoSA organizations can provide circles with protocols around effective use of technology and effective participation in remote meetings – for example by using words to express feelings that might normally be evident in body language and by having follow-up to each meeting to debrief participants, especially core members.

Conclusion

CoSA is an evidence-based program that merits much wider use. It leads to a significant reduction in recidivism, prevents further victimization and increases public safety across communities. And it does so at modest cost and with very good results.

Although the CoSA model already has a good base of supporting evidence, the fact that the model is operating in several international jurisdictions provides an important opportunity for comparative research that could tell us much more, not only about how well the model works, but about how and why it is successful (Richards, 2022). This program calls out for further research that has local, national and international dimensions to increase our understanding of how to intervene effectively in an area of great public concern.

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VALUING VOLUNTEERS IN CORRECTIONS: LEARNING FROM THE VOLUNTEER PROBATION OFFICER SCHEME IN JAPAN[1]

Frank J. Porporino[2]

Abstract

The world of corrections is witnessing growing recognition of the contributions that can be made by well-coordinated and thoughtfully integrated volunteer schemes. One of the most impressive and longstanding examples is the Volunteer Probation Officer model in Japan. In both its breadth and depth of engagement with community, it is perhaps one of the finest examples worldwide of *What Else Works*. This paper uses the example of the Japanese 'Hogoshi' model to illustrate how the role of volunteers can be seen as fully consistent with our evidence base for how to best engage both service-users and our communities in realizing sustained reintegration. Six key features of the Japanese VPO scheme are discussed that may account for its success and that could (and should!) be emulated in other contexts.

1 *Portions of this paper are based on an invited keynote presentation by the author to the 14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention & Criminal Justice in Kyoto, Japan, March 2021*

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INTRODUCTION

Community-based support for individuals who have fallen into criminal conduct was essentially originated by volunteers. In America, for example, John Augustus, a Massachusetts boot-maker by trade, is credited with being the 'Father of Probation'. Augustus believed that abusers of alcohol, and other unfortunates, could be rehabilitated 'through understanding, kindness, and sustained moral suasion'. In 1841, Augustus attended a police court hearing to bail out a 'common drunkard'. The offender became the first probationer. He was ordered to appear in court three weeks later for sentencing. He returned to court a sober man, accompanied by Augustus, and to the astonishment of the judge and all in attendance.

In the UK, the notion of Police Court Missionaries was created under the Probation of First Offenders Act of 1887 enabling magistrates to refer offenders to a volunteer who would try 'by personal influence, with material help, if necessary, to persuade those who had found their way into the dock to lead a sober and steady life in the future'.[1]

Volunteers have made a long-standing and significant contribution in reforming our *institutionalized* approaches for dealing with offending, whether prisons or community supervision practices. Importantly, volunteers have also stood steady in keeping the original spirit of understanding and support for offenders alive and well. In many respects, volunteers have always implored corrections to do more, and to do better in treating offenders with decency and humanity. Perhaps surprisingly, however, the contribution of volunteers has not been recognized typically as either essential or as evidence-based. It has been seen, and continues to be seen, more as a 'nice to do' adjunct to professional correctional practice rather than as a central requirement for having true impact. This article argues that corrections should much more actively embrace the value of volunteers as true partners in the challenge of offender reintegration. It will highlight the Volunteer Probation Officer (VPO) scheme in Japan as an exemplary model that shows what can be achieved when a Volunteer Scheme is well organized and fully integrated with Professional Correctional Practice and not just loosely appended.

WORKING TOWARDS 'DESISTANCE' IN OFFENDING

One of the core messages of the increasingly recognized 'desistance' paradigm is the fact that true rehabilitation and reintegration requires more than just a focus on 'personal' or 'individual' change in offenders (Maruna & Immarigeon, 2004; Porporino, 2010). Despite all of the dedicated efforts of professional correctional staff in delivering programs and services to change well established 'criminogenic risk' factors, that 'change' may or may not be realized. The desistance paradigm, perhaps expressed most ably and succinctly by Professor Fergus McNeil, highlights four distinct types of 'rehabilitation' – not just the personal – but the social, legal and moral dimensions that have to work in the same direction (McNeill, 2006; 2012). The social dimension is about acceptance, belonging and access to opportunities in one's community. Without enhancing the community's ability to assimilate (and support) offenders towards reintegration, perhaps no real rehabilitation is possible, no matter what we can do with our change-oriented programs and services. The legal dimension requires that we aim to eliminate the stigmatizing and exclusionary effects of conviction. And the moral dimension speaks to the need for reparation in earning some form of redemption as a

1 *British Social Work in the Nineteenth Century. By A. F. Young and E. T. Ashton. New York: The Humanities Press, Inc., 1956.*

citizen of good character. In many respects, it can be argued that volunteers may be better placed to help offenders realize these other forms of 'rehabilitation'.

Offenders ultimately can't remain rehabilitated through sheer force of will – they need to see movement towards successful social integration, citizenship and participation. The 'desistance' framework acknowledges that this fundamental change in identity is a slow and evolving process that we can't rush or force. Attitude change follows identity change, not the other way around. But professional practice often is characterized by an urgency to request attitude change, to monitor and overly emphasize (and even penalize) lapses, rather than accept while patiently helping to re-align effort. Corrections professionals, moreover, are not attributed automatic pro-social legitimacy. They are inevitably seen as working for the 'system', and having to enforce the rules of the system. Volunteers, on the other hand, can serve as impartial role models, as the catalysts and the reinforcers for this crucial identity change to emerge and strengthen.

Can correctional practice somehow incorporate the 'force and influence' of volunteers more deliberately in order to legitimize their role in helping offenders move towards desistance? This article elaborates on why a Volunteer Scheme such as the one that Japan has sustained for more than 60 years may offer a truly transformative, alternative model for supporting professional correctional practice, not just for parole or probation practice but more generally all correctional practice directed towards helping offenders reintegrate.

THE VPO SCHEME IN JAPAN

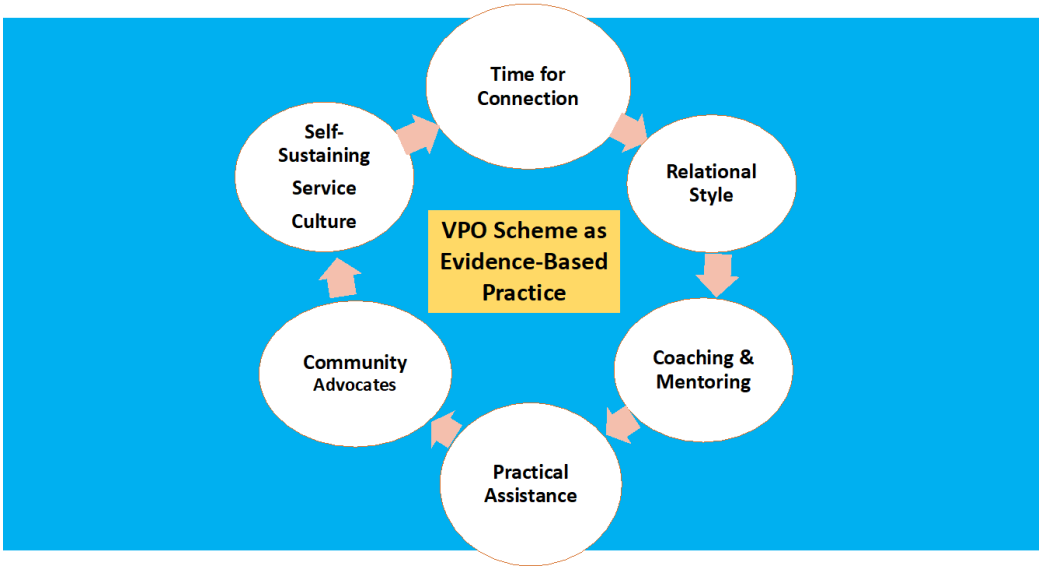
Japan has one of the lowest incarceration rates in the world (45 per 1000,000) and it has entrenched an approach to community supervision that is nothing short of bold and all-encompassing. Now being emulated increasingly both in the Asean region and beyond, the well-established Volunteer Probation Officer (VPO) scheme is not just considered an adjunct or minor component of community corrections; it serves as its very backbone. The VPO model is unique in capitalizing on the efforts and the energy of a mini-army of VPOs (more than 40,000) and it has been referred to by some probation scholars as a 'third sector template' for probation practice and delivery of community corrections services (Ellis, Lewis & Sato, 2011). Similar VPO schemes have now been adopted in a number of countries (e.g., Thailand, Philippines, Kenya, Korea, Singapore and China), but the Japanese VPO scheme remains the most impressive in both scale and breadth of involvement of VPOs. A number of reports in recent years written in the English language have described the history, development and functioning of the Japanese VPO model (Akashi, 2017). Most comprehensive is the book 'Volunteer Probation Officers and Offenders Rehabilitation' that was prepared by the Ministry of Justice Rehabilitation Bureau organizing committee after the Third World Congress on Probation that was held in Tokyo in September of 2017. Detail describing the VPO model will not be repeated here. Rather, the article is written at least in part from the perspective of personal exposure to the Japanese VPO scheme over the last number of years and trying to understand why it is working as well as it is.

I first became aware of the Japanese VPO scheme when I had the privilege of lecturing for the United Nations Asian & Far East Institute (UNAFEI) at one of their International Training Courses in Fuchu, Tokyo in 2012. Fortuitously, I had the double privilege of meeting a group of Japan's VPOs ('Hogoshi') and was able to visit a number of Japan's Offender Rehabilitation Support Centers that are staffed

by VPOs. A few years later, I was also invited to attend the Second Annual VPOs Meeting that was held in conjunction with the Third World Congress on Probation where hundreds of VPOs were in attendance from both Japan and internationally.

As I interacted with these VPOs and listened to their stories about why they had become involved in this work, I was touched by the repeated theme of wanting to give back to their communities and assisting others who had been less advantaged in their lives. In their recounting of a number of case histories of clients they had worked with, I was left awestruck by the warmth and compassion that was expressed, the level of commitment to help re-direct individuals who were stuck in living often lonely and chaotic lives, the intuitive understanding of what might have led these individuals into pathways of crime, and the patience and optimism to 'stick with it' despite the usual setbacks. What could account for this kind of very human spirit and dedicated enthusiasm in spite of the fact that they were working with difficult individuals who faced very difficult circumstances with multiple issues and needs and a history of failure that could be expected to have crippled their resilience to bounce back and try to improve their lives? Why were VPOs in Japan able to engage so well with offenders, and why in turn did they seem to get so engaged by this work, receive satisfaction and remain so personally committed over time. My reflections led me to ask whether this kind of reliance on volunteers could have implications for the transformation of correctional practice more broadly.

We know what doesn't work with volunteer schemes in criminal justice. Schemes that are too short-term, under-resourced, not well coordinated or supervised, where volunteers are inadequately trained, and where there is inconsistent and/or lack of any intensive contact with offenders tend to make little difference. But reverse all of these conditions and impact begins to appear in clear and measurable ways (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2007).[2]



2 *Another good example of a well-coordinated volunteer effort that originated in Canada and is now spreading internationally is the Circles of Support and Accountability (C.O.S.A.) framework where a group of well trained and carefully screened volunteers (up to 5 or 7) become a 'circle' of 24/7 support for a given offender, and where the offender meets with the circle as a group and then again individually with each circle member as often as once a week (Wilson et al., 2009).*

I'm going to argue that the VPO model in Japan gives us some insight into at least six essential elements of successful volunteer support initiatives ... and argue further that these elements are fully consistent with the evidence-base we have about 'what works' in community supervision.

DEVOTING TIME FOR CONNECTION

You can't help if you don't connect ...

In contrast to professional community justice workers who have to deal with ever growing caseloads where they are bombarded every day with some client crisis or problem and where they have to squeeze in time on their schedules to have some personal contact with their offenders, in between the paperwork they have to negotiate, and the meetings they have to attend, VPOs have the luxury of only a few clients they deal with at a time. The majority of VPOs in Japan are in their elder years (averaging about 65 years old). They are recruited with the understanding that they will have the time and energy to devote to their VPO duties. Most of these VPOs are retired, are both financially and emotionally stable, in good health, undistracted by the usual stresses of earlier stages in life, having left behind productive careers, not needing to worry about earning further income, and looking for some meaningful way to still 'make a difference'. With relative peace and clarity of mind, they have the time to listen to offenders, get to know them, and get to connect with them before beginning to give advice or counsel.

The initial motivational engagement phase of working with offenders, considered so crucial in all of the literature on effective practice in corrections, does not have to be rushed. It can be attended to flexibly, and it can begin to occur both at a 'time' and 'place' convenient to the individual offender – not just in the probation office at a given time on a given day, but in a coffee shop, a park, or even in the VPOs own home over a cup of tea. This is not forced engagement following some structured motivational technique but rather naturally evoked engagement between two people with different sets of experiences and backgrounds where each can learn from the other.

Though the notion of 'respect for the elderly' in Japan may enter the dynamic, more likely is the fact that the absence of any power imbalance, as in the classic probation officer dilemma of being both enforcer and supporter, allows for a more human connection to take place. Time allows trust to develop and trust becomes the fuel that powers pro-social influence. From the offender's perspective, as trust unfolds, there is no ambiguity or suspicion about the VPOs motives. The VPO becomes seen as a steadfast and non-judgmental 'helper' pure and simple, in an uncomplicated relationship-building process, where the offender may genuinely experience a caring other, perhaps for the first time in their lives. VPOs in turn receive an uplifting sense of having had a positive influence on someone else's life. The literature on aging is clear on the importance of social networks as a protective factor for the elderly. The relationships VPOs nurture with their offenders, and with their fellow VPOs, undoubtedly contributes to a zest for living a continued and worthwhile life ... a zest that quite likely may also infect the offenders they work with.

A SUPPORTIVE AND RESPECTFUL 'RELATIONAL' STYLE

How you relate determines how others will respond …

In a number of early ethnographic studies of probation practice (Bailey & Ward, 1992; Ditton & Ford, 1994; Rex, 1999), a particular blending of style and skills emerged as *core* in importance in working effectively with offenders. More recent research looking at variation in the 'relational' skills of probation staff shows clearly that more 'relationally' skilled supervision is more effective (Chadwick et al., 2015). Contemporary notions of 'motivational' practice point to the same qualities (Miller & Rollnick, 2002; McMurran, 2002; Porporino & Fabiano, 2007; Prochaska & Levesque, 2002; Stinson & Clark, 2017). A recent qualitative study of probation practice (Lewis, 2014; 2016), that is fully consistent with other studies looking at probation officer qualities influencing desistance (Robinson et al., 2014), has narrowed in on 5 key dimensions --- *acceptance, respect, support, empathy and belief*. It is this adroitness in enabling a positive relational climate with the offender that in turn can effect a significant change in beliefs and behavior. The conclusions from all this research are strikingly consistent … a 'relational revolution' is needed in criminal justice where offenders are given opportunities to project their voice and be heard with respectful and genuine interest so as 'to alleviate feelings of social exclusion and reconsider their identity' (Lewis, 2016, p. 163). This is fully in accord with the principles of the 'desistance' paradigm that calls for far more attention on the factors that can help offenders find their way 'out of crime' rather than the just the risk factors that have propelled their lives 'into crime' (Porporino, 2010; Maruna & Immarigeon, 2004; McNeil, Raynor & Trotter, 2010). The VPOs I met in Japan, perhaps in part because of their maturity and range of life experience, seemed to me to adopt a calm and responsive relational style, effortlessly and naturally, that could help offenders navigate through their struggles. To breakthrough credibly with offenders, the message giver may have to display certain characteristics, and be able to deliver the message in a trusting interpersonal relationship, where it may be seen as safe to self-disclose meaningful and sensitive information. The VPOs I met impressed me as these kinds of genuinely credible 'message givers.'

COACHING TO SUPPORT AND MENTORING TO INSPIRE

Coach me to deal with the NOW; Mentor me to imagine my FUTURE …

In the business management literature, a distinction is made between the focus of 'coaching' and 'mentoring' (McCarthy, 2014). The terms are often confused in criminal justice. In summary, the mentor in the leadership development literature is seen generally as person-focused and future-oriented; the coach, on the other hand, is seen as task or performance-focused and mostly present-oriented. The mentor is someone who is personally involved and displays an obvious personal interest – in a sense a respected 'friend' who cares about you, your future and your long-term development. On the other hand, the coach concentrates on helping you develop specific skills for the task, and coping with the challenges and performance expectations that you are facing in the present.

The most distinguishing features of the mentor is how they are able to 'listen and understood me' and how they can 'build my confidence and trust in myself, and empower me to see what I can do'. The mentor serves as a sounding board, creating a two-way mutually beneficial learning experience where

the mentor provides advice, shares knowledge and experiences, and gently teaches in a Socratic questioning style to encourage self-discovery. A coach can be more directive in pointing someone to some end result. Though the other may choose how to get there, the coach should be strategically assessing and monitoring progress and giving advice for effectiveness and efficiency.

One has to stretch very little to appreciate the fact that one of the essential skills that correctional staff should master is the ability to oscillate between being both 'coach' and 'mentor' to the offenders under their care. Again, in my interactions with the VPOs I met, I saw evidence that they remained attuned to both of these aspects of their work. Offenders need coaching to deal with the many facets of their lives, in the short-term, that can create 'clear and present danger' – a return to substance abuse, managing their emotions and especially their anger and depression, dealing with conflict with loved ones, boredom, the discouragement of continued unemployment ...etc. Coaching offenders with realistic options and strategies they can use to cope with (and hopefully resolve) their issues can be clearly invaluable. The coaching is unlikely to take hold as a one-shot intervention. But repeating and reinforcing, clarifying and adjusting, and repairing ruptures in the relationship whenever necessary all work towards helping the offender remain positive even in the face of inevitable setbacks. It is the kind of supportive 'stick-to-itiveness' that I noticed in the case histories that VPOs presented on that afternoon in Tokyo.

Beyond the coaching effort, where the need to do it becomes almost immediately apparent in beginning to work with offenders, mentoring begins to take center stage as the relationship unfolds and offenders begin to find some semblance of stability in their lives. Once again owing to a combination of their age, their life accomplishments, their experience and their intimate knowledge of the community context and the opportunities it can present, VPOs in my view illustrated the potential to serve as powerful and empowering role-models. They could nudge and influence offenders in realizing they can achieve not just basic adjustment – but their full potential. A consistent finding in positive psychology is that 'implementation planning' (the how, when, and where of goal pursuits) works only when there is strong autonomous motivation to strive for the goal, and when consistent approach-oriented strategies are applied. In working with offenders, it means that we should be helping them with their planning skills for the future, practically and concretely, and that we should remain by-their-side as their approach-goals emerge, and not just be there to admonish and call out what they should avoid.

One of the essential tenants of the 'desistance' paradigm is that over the longer haul what will support desistance are the *positive* qualities of sustaining hope, maintaining a strong sense of self-efficacy, and re-defining one's sense of self and identity. This necessitates that the individual achieves at least some of their personal aspirations, both for new meaning and for gaining pro-social legitimacy (Porporino, 2010). The VPOs I met seemed to be acutely aware of this basic tenet of the Good Lives Model (Ward, 2002).

PROVIDING MEANINGFUL PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE

Give me food and shelter before you give me INSIGHT ...

In the case histories that the VPOs presented that afternoon in Tokyo, there was repeated emphasis

on efforts made to give offenders some level of 'practical assistance' (e.g., a suggestion or referral for possible employment, a place to sleep for the evening, a warm meal, transportation, help in acquiring some official document, support in entering a substance abuse program ... etc.). We know that desistance seems to be accompanied by active, offender-led, *agentic* resolution of social obstacles (Farrall, 2002; 2004). It is this sense of 'agency' experienced by the offender -- where they feel they have been able to personally surmount some significant concern or obstacle in their lives -- that in turn seems to strengthen motivation and resolve even further (Burnett & Maruna, 2004). Curiously, much of our standard community supervision often fails to recognize (or is unable to respond to) the often indirect or vague requests for practical assistance received from offenders. Instead, supervision tends to lead with standard options rather than complement emerging offender 'agency' motives with timely and contextualized practical support (McNeill, 2006). To paraphrase a dictum regarding what works generally in intervention, for support to make a difference, it has to be the right support, offered at the right time, and in the right way. In the end, the individual should believe that though the support was helpful, it was their own efforts that made the greatest difference.

As I listened to my group of VPOs, I began to appreciate how they fully accepted their role as 'practical helpers' – who should use their contacts, their connections, and their influence in the community to help offenders surmount some of their key obstacles and deal with some of their most immediate concerns. These VPOs moreover seemed to understand the importance of 'agency' and how it can 'lift the individual up' -- perhaps because 'agency' had been so important in their own lives. Even in their elder years, these were individuals who took control of their lives and agreed to take on a significant new challenge as VPOs. A good deal of ethnographic research on probation practice points to the fact that 'good' practice should remain attuned to giving timely, concrete and meaningful 'practical support' that can begin to improve the quality of life for offenders, even if only in small ways (Farrall, 2004; Mair, 2004; Robinson et al., 2014). VPOs seemed to me to be ready, willing and able to play this role.

VPOs AS COMMUNITY ENGAGERS AND COMMUNITY ADVOCATES

You can't engage your community if you don't know your community ...

There is clear and unambiguous evidence to support the buttressing of active community involvement for successful offender reintegration. For example, over a period of more than a decade, the well-respected Urban Institute in America conducted perhaps one of the most comprehensive evaluations ever of prisoner reintegration initiatives across the nation. They explored the pathways for successful reintegration and concluded that when key elements are addressed – in the areas of employment, housing, substance use, physical and mental health, family, and community supports – success is consistently improved.[3]

Most communities in most parts of the world are still restrained by the attitude that offenders' well-being and adjustment is a correctional services responsibility and not a community responsibility. Because of their status and their interconnectedness in their local communities, VPOs in Japan are ideally positioned to counter this sentiment and to promote instead the proposition that the responsibility is *joint*. When the community gets involved and the offender succeeds, it is both

3 *For a summary listing of research reports, see: http://www.urban.org/center/jpc/returning-home/publications.cfm*

the community and the offender that benefit. VPOs in Japan have entrenched themselves as local ambassadors, reaching out to the community in a myriad of ways – in all of the various community events they participate in, social gatherings they attend, discussions they have with their neighbors, presentations they make to other association meetings, contacts they have with employers and business people, the exposure they may get in the local media ... etc. There is an unleashing of energy and creativity needed to engage communities and help them see that offenders, with the right support, can indeed become an asset instead of a liability. Government institutions have a difficult time to orchestrate this kind of momentum. Though it may perhaps be difficult to measure how and how much, I am convinced that VPOs in Japan are creating this momentum, as ambassadors for a community-responsive, reintegration philosophy for corrections, both at the local and national level.

A SELF-SUSTAINING CULTURE OF SERVICE: VPOs AS RECRUITERS OF OTHER VPO's

We reap what we sow ...

The last stage in implementing effective practice is often the most difficult. Once good practice has been entrenched, it has to be sustained. Too often in corrections we fail to sustain effective practice and it ends up becoming fragmented, spotty in quality and generally truer 'on paper' than in reality (e.g., outlined only in policy). Establishing and preserving continuity for an overarching culture of committed service to clients is especially difficult.

One of the most significant informal functions of VPO's in Japan is to look for, identify and recruit other VPOs. In most correctional jurisdictions, recruitment of volunteers (not to mention the right kinds of staff) is an up-hill struggle. Recruiting the right kinds of volunteers is even more difficult. The public has a stereotyped view of offenders, often assuming them to be dangerous, unpredictable and uncooperative. Some volunteers may be attracted more because they are curious or intrigued – and not because of any particular dedication to support and assist others who are troubled and disadvantaged. Because they have done the work, VPOs are more likely to have a deep appreciation of the characteristics and qualities that are needed. They can remain alert in looking for, identifying, educating, informing, and encouraging others to take on the role of VPO. From personal experience and real examples, they can point to what makes the work both rewarding and meaningful. The VPO system becomes self-sustaining, with one generation of VPO's recruiting and then guiding and advising the next generation in order to preserve a culture of service.

Noteworthy is the fact that being appointed as a VPO in Japan also carries some level of prestige. For example, individuals who apply to become VPO's are screened and then officially appointed by the Ministry of Justice. They became part of a 'community of VPO's' both locally and nationally as members of a recognized, structured and rather dynamic National Association of VPO's. The system, in essence, is effectively and easily sustainable because it feeds and nourishes itself. Of course, Professional Probation staff also play an active role in continuing to engage VPOs through various training seminars, encouraging the sharing of practice-based experience in treatment meetings held at Rehabilitation Support Centers, and in recognizing the work of outstanding VPOs with recommendations for particular commendations. But it is the continued networking of VPOs themselves that seems to be the glue keeping the VPO scheme dynamic in the present and sustainable for the future.

CONCLUSION

A VPO who wanted to share her experiences presented a short case study at the Third World Congress on Probation that perfectly illustrates the potential force and influence of these dimensions of practice that I have just outlined. The case was about a young offender who had a very difficult and rebellious early adolescence and fell into drug use. The VPO worked with the young man for a lengthy period seeing him regularly every week and thinking she had established a good relationship. The young man was working and going to school. However, in time he relapsed back into drugs and one day assaulted a peer. He was sent to training school. The VPO was disappointed but thought there was nothing more she could do. But the young man's mother visited the VPO at her home and asked that she not abandon her son. So, she didn't. She visited the young man every week once again while he was in training school. As the young man's release approached, she advocated with the young man's previous employer to re-hire him. The employer obliged. The young man did exceptionally well this time around, completed his probation period, and he continues to visit the VPO to give her the occasional update concerning his life. The VPO concluded that she learned to not give up and that everyone can change if someone 'stays by their side'.

In the last few years, the relatively informal, supportive, offender-focused approach that developed so naturally with the tradition of the VPO scheme in Japan has been challenged as perhaps 'too soft'. It has also been noted that recruitment of new VPOs is becoming increasingly difficult owing to the steady urbanization of Japanese society, the fracturing of community relations, and a situation of growing financial hardship among the elderly. Japan is among the most quickly aging countries in the world. Japanese society is changing and the recruitment of VPOs will have to adapt and adjust to those changes. Whether VPOs will be able to counteract public perception and remain dedicated to their original goals and aims will remain to be seen. Whether government, in concert, will be able to work to support these original goals and aims, and see them for the 'evidence-informed' practice that they really are, will also remain to be seen. Criminal justice practice should not be categorized as either soft or hard. It should be seen as either smart, evidence-informed and community responsive – or NOT.

Of course, it could be argued that it is naïve and idealistic to suggest that what might work in Japan (and some other cultures) might also work in cultures where more punitive public attitudes prevail. Obviously, there are real cultural differences. In Japan for, example, it is considered a kind of duty and genuine honor to give back to one's community in some fashion as a volunteer. As already noted, one of the most significant informal functions of VPO's in Japan is to work on recruiting other VPOs. In most western correctional jurisdictions, recruitment of volunteers is more a matter of simply waiting for them to come to us ... rather than making any meaningful and active effort to go to them! Some volunteers may be attracted more with dis-ingenuine and naïve motives – and not because of any particular commitment to extend a helping hand. The right volunteers can make a huge difference; the wrong kinds of volunteers can lead to cynicism and suspicion among corrections professionals towards the whole idea of volunteers. We also have to stop thinking of volunteers as just a 'free' resource. In Japan, VPOs have clearly defined roles and they are not just taken for granted. They are supported, respected and acknowledged, even at the highest levels of their Ministry of Justice.

It's also true that the public is often punitive and holds a stereotyped view of ex-offenders. But these

views can change ... even at the societal level. A very notable example is the Singapore Yellow Ribbon Project, launched in 2004 as a broad-scale annual campaign to engage Singaporeans in supporting ways of giving offenders a 'second chance'. The incredible achievements of the Yellow Ribbon Project have been documented extensively, including the explosive growth in number of employers and community volunteers who are now contributing concretely to giving individuals that 'second chance'.

An important Declaration on Community Volunteers Supporting Offender Reintegration was endorsed during the last 14th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice held in Kyoto, Japan. The Declaration called for an "international network of community volunteers in the supervision and reintegration of offenders, to provide technical assistance and to urge member states to enact laws to anchor community volunteers for the purpose of fostering volunteering, raising awareness among the public and establishing systems of community volunteers." The Japanese Ministry of Justice is now also spearheading a campaign for UN endorsement of an international *Hogoshi* Day. Valuing the role of volunteers will hopefully continue as an influential movement in the world of corrections for years to come.

When we cut through to the core of all the research and all the theorizing about 'What Works' with offenders, one conclusion comes to the forefront. Corrections is fundamentally about how to influence change in others through the building and leveraging of relationships. When we get this right, whether in prisons or in community contexts, we can help transform lives. This is what makes corrections a noble profession and this is what makes the VPO model in Japan an innovative, far-reaching and important component of community corrections that I believe should be preserved, applauded and emulated wherever and however possible.

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GARDENING WORKS: LESSONS LEARNED FROM A SUSTAINABLE GARDEN PROGRAM IN A RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY CORRECTION SETTING FOR WOMEN

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Abstract

Ecotherapy and gardening have gained popularity in corrections, with most interventions focusing on prison settings. This paper briefly describes the authors' experiences developing a gardening program in a community corrections facility for women, describing a pilot research program and preliminary results. Findings indicate that gardening is an effective, low-cost programming option for community residential settings that improve clients' mental health and nutritional awareness, fosters community partnerships, and promotes camaraderie among clients and staff.

Keywords: gardening, women, community corrections, correctional treatment

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Introduction

Since the 1990's green prison programs have gained popularity as a means to advance rehabilitation in correctional settings (Jiler, 2006; White & Graham, 2015). According to the National Institute of Corrections (2011), about one-third of prisons are already integrating green education and job training programs. In addition, in the United States, a national community of practitioners that have led prison garden programs has formed, seeking to further develop research and practice around ecological interventions in correctional settings (Conference on Social and Ecological Infrastructure for Recidivism Reduction, 2021, Del Sesto, 2022). Building on this emerging work, this brief article describes the process of implementing a sustainable garden program in a residential community corrections facility for women as a practice innovation and as a form of structured leisure time to help support programming and reentry needs.

Our site is a females-only Community-Based Correctional Facility (CBCF) which averages 215 intakes per year with a successful completion rate of approximately 78% and an average length of stay of approximately 4.5 months. It is run by a non-profit agency that provides a range of evidence-based community corrections programs to meet the sentencing requirements of local courts and help communities address the issues of public safety and successful reentry. The median age range is 26 – 35, with less than 40% having earned a high school diploma or the equivalent. Racial demographics include 75% White, 12% African American/Black, and 13% other.[1] The gardening pilot program was an attempt to address women's (referred to as clients at this facility) and organizational needs – explained more in detail below – at the same time while overall contributing to more sustainable practices in correctional facilities. In the following, we describe what we know about gardening in corrections, how we developed a gardening program, lessons learned from this practice innovation, and thoughts for further programming.[2] We conclude with a description of a pilot research program and outline preliminary results.

How Gardening Has Been Found to Work

Gardens have long been part of penal settings, yet the relationship between the penal complex and the natural environment is a complex and challenging one. Correctional institutions such as prisons, jails, and community corrections facilities in the U.S. are traditionally places of environmental injustice (Nocella, Ducre, & Lupinacci, 2017) and malnutrition (Camplin, 2016; Soble et al., 2020). Yet more recently, there is also renewed interest in the therapeutic potentials of gardening– as structured leisure time within correctional facilities for recovery and reentry. It provides a means for participants to help alleviate mental health issues, improves physical health through exercise and outdoor movement, and helps develop social and job skills. It aids re-entry as it can help cultivate positive relationships with family and community organizations, and - especially in the case of organic gardening - is a meaningful, sustainable practice that positively contributes to a planet in climate crisis. Last but not least, it provides fresh, healthy, and low-cost food.

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1 *For comparison, the racial demographics of the only women's prison in the state are 75% white, 23% Black, and 2% other, see ODRC (2021). We find significantly more Black women in prison than in this residential community corrections setting which begs further research on racial inequality in sentencing practices and also examination on data collection practices on race by different correctional entities that are beyond the scope of this paper.*

2 *If you are a visual learner, we invite you to refer to online presentations about the development and implementation of the program (Jauk & Blackwood, 2021; Jauk, Blackwood, & Boros, 2020).*

Research has shown how horticultural interventions that are intentionally designed to meet people's needs can be effective in helping individuals in institutions manage mental health issues such as depression and anxiety (Clatworthy et al., 2013; Grinde & Patil, 2009; Moeller et al., 2018), and PTSD (Annerstedt & Währborg, 2011). Evidence of the effects of therapeutic gardens goes well beyond a correctional context. Exposure to nature "works" for the majority of humans, and the lessons from decades of research of benefits of human-plant interaction can be applied explicitly to correctional contexts. Engagement with nature and gardening helps incarcerated individuals develop social skills such as teamwork, responsibility, and nurturing behaviors (Ascencio, 2018; Jiler, 2006; van der Linden, 2015). New skills can potentially be translated into self-efficacy (Allred et al., 2013) and meaningful employment upon release, most notably in states that feature green industries (Baybutt et al., 2019; Ehrenpreis et al., 2021; Moore et al., 2015; Christie et al., 2016; Farrier et al., 2019). Gardening can also help develop social bonds and networks that support and promote social cohesion (Kingsley & Townsend, 2006).

Horticultural program interventions have also been found to reduce recidivism of their graduates. Self-published recidivism rates of graduates of green prison and community service programs are exceptionally low, ranging between 4% and 24% (e.g., Growing Gardens, n.d.; Holmes & Waliczek, 2019); however, depending on the specific program, data are often from internal evaluations and not accessible. Van der Linden (2015) analyzed data from the Green House and Green Team project in New York City. He found that Green Team graduates recidivated at a rate of 8.92% (compared to 23% for the general population in N.Y.) at the one year mark, and 10.17% at the three-year mark (compared to 42% for N.Y. and 45% recidivism rate for the general U.S. population). Benham (2014) found that between 2004 and 2010, out of 117 Insight Garden program participants in California, only 10% returned to prison within three years, compared to the average recidivism rate (64%) over the same time period.

Only a few studies address horticultural interventions with incarcerated women. Toews et al. (2018) evaluated a one-time nature-based intervention (planting party) with women incarcerated in a mental health unit. They reported women being happier, calmer, and more peaceful after the intervention. In a different study, Toews et al. (2020) found that a visitor garden in a women's prison improved prison visits, facilitated better affective experiences, and better parent-child interactions (Toews et al., 2018; Toews et al., 2020). Lindemuth (2007) found similar effects for a children's garden at the Bedford Hills correctional facility for Women.

Initiating a Gardening Program as Structured Leisure Time Addressing Women's and Facility Needs

Background

Based on emerging research on gardening in corrections, the garden program idea initially evolved as a response to clients' complaints about the low quality of food in the facility and the extensive "downtime" between treatment classes. These attitudes were indicated on exit evaluation forms every client was invited to fill out anonymously. Facility administrators had acknowledged both complaints however, the food supply is regulated by long-term contracts, and providing meaningful leisure activities through structured leisure time often proves to be a challenge — especially in chronically understaffed correctional environments.

Numerous studies have identified leisure as a criminogenic need directly linked to recidivism and criminal behavior (Bonta & Andrews 2007; Link & Williams 2017). In community-based corrections, various programming often embeds cognitive-behavioral techniques centered on social skills, problem-solving, critical reasoning, and self-control to address criminogenic needs (Wooditch, Tang, & Taxman, 2014). Additionally, leisure activities in correctional facilities have been shown to positively influence criminal behavior when used as a vehicle to teach cognitive-behavioral techniques that address a variety of an individual's criminogenic risk factors (Link & Williams, 2017). Research indicates a positive correlation between engagement in leisure activities and active participation in treatment (Wooditch et al. 2014: 14).

Food in the CBCF is provided by three large corporations who share the correctional food industry business that is often characterized by profit-maximizing and carb-heavy, heavily processed foods (Camplin, 2017; Soble et al., 2020). Correctional settings in the U.S. have been conceptualized as "out-of-sight food deserts" (Soble et al., 2020, p. 15), substantiating ill-health amongst marginalized populations that already experience profound inequalities and food insecurity in their home communities.

The facility's recreation yard was large enough to hold a garden without limiting other activities assigned to the space. We concluded that gardening as a structured leisure option could address several criminogenic needs (a facility mandate), including promoting social outside involvement, building positive relationships, and developing soft employment skills such as problem-solving, team building, and communication (Jiler, 2006).

A small organic garden could also produce food, especially herbs and fast-growing salads, which could help supplement the industrial-looking "inmate tray." The hands-on garden also could enhance nutritional awareness among women — knowledge they could bring home to their families and communities. However, the most crucial impetus for us as feminist researchers was to provide programming for the women that would be developed with the women and create spaces of recreation and agency in an otherwise limited and limiting environment. As feminist researchers, we utilize a feminist criminological theoretical framework that strives to center women's voices (Chesney-Lind, 1997). Women and girls have gendered pathways to crime and face gender biases and discrimination based on gender stereotypes within corrections (Chesney-Lind, 1997; Covington & Bloom, 2007). Correctional environments usually are androcentric in design and lack gender-responsive programming (Covington & Bloom, 2007). Along these lines, we strived to develop programming specifically for women, based on women's feedback and needs. The critical contribution of this project is that we sought to study the implementation of a therapeutic and educational garden program and investigate some of the challenges and possibilities of such an endeavor.

Developing a Curriculum and Community Partnerships

As we started thinking about the garden program in this re-entry context, it became apparent that community partnerships could strengthen and enhance the program and build bridges to post-release leisure activities through volunteering. We built on existing resources, as this particular facility had an already existing relationship with a local non-profit food justice organization that creates and supports community gardens that supply fresh food in disadvantaged neighborhoods. This organization has accepted women volunteers from our research site since 2013 and was familiar with

the larger correctional agency. We also invited the local Extension Office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to the table to gain access to educator-experts and master gardener volunteers to help give hands-on direction.

The agency supported the project in this facility ideologically. Yet, the small budget of $500 made clear that we needed to find some creative ways to stretch our money and search for resources outside the agency. Assembling a team of supportive staff, volunteers, and outside experts to help with implementation came next. We recognized it was crucial to establish buy-in with administrators and the facility's staff for the garden program to be successful, not only at its onset but later as an established offering in structured leisure time choices. When presented with the idea, staff members were initially apprehensive. Faced with chronic staff shortages, the garden program was seen as extra work that would require additional staff members to be available to be physically present during gardening lessons. It was very helpful that we identified one staff member who had extensive knowledge in gardening and would later serve as an essential anchor for the program. Simultaneously, we tapped community garden leaders, took neighborhood garden tours, attended free workshops, and built a reference library to enhance our knowledge and provide resources for the clients.

The curriculum for the first pilot program (held in the Spring of 2019) was primarily adapted from a prison garden project by fellow clinical sociologists in a Southern U.S. State, with the goal of comparative research (Jauk, Gill, Everhardt, & Caruana, 2022), and enhanced with input from the community partners who served as guest speakers for several lessons. The spring pilot curriculum was 6-weeks in length, with classes held twice per week. Lesson topics included lasagna gardening (a no-dig, no-till method), seed starting, the benefits of gardening, botany, soil and composting, pollination and the life cycle of plants, growing vegetables and herbs, eating the rainbow for nutrition, pests, and other insects, and harvesting. Guest lecturers, recipes and tastings, field trips, and reflection writing assignments about their gardening experiences helped bolster clients' learning.

A graduation ceremony that included an invitation to clients' family and friends and a certificate of completion rounded out the first 6-week session. Clients who had completed a minimum of 8 out of 12 total classes also received a take-home growing kit that consisted of seeds, a trowel, and garden gloves. Women reported that the graduation ceremony was a big event for them, as the president and several vice presidents of the agency were present to honor the clients' accomplishments and the women felt validated and seen. The benefit for the agency was also that the garden project attracted positive media attention and helped forge a picture of the facility as a "good neighbor" that contributes to sustainability and positive outcomes in the community through innovative programming for women (Blair, 2019).

Over the Summer and Fall of 2019, the program was continued with gardening lessons every other week and garden maintenance work hours in the weeks in between. To save money, promote sustainability, and demonstrate the idea of "use and reuse," we adopted everyday household items as low-cost versions of primary materials: recycled tires became planters for potatoes, plastic hanging shoe holders became vessels for growing herbs, and toilet paper tubes became seed starters. We utilized vinegar and dish soap as insect and weed deterrents rather than commercial products. We used discarded cardboard and newspapers for mulch, and we "upcycled" soda bottles and plastic jugs for watering cans. We hoped that with incorporating accessible and low-cost strategies of gardening

we could empower clients to replicate these practices upon discharge.

Figure 1: Herb planter made from Dollar Store shoe rack

Successes, Lessons Learned, and Barriers Identified

The pilot program proved to be very popular among the clients, with an average of 15 women participating in the garden lessons every week, totaling 116 women in 2019. Of those 116 participants, 63 women participated in at least three gardening lessons. Throughout this first year, we had some great successes in programming, learned many valuable lessons, and identified some barriers that needed to be addressed. We recognized early on that the program was a worthy addition to the structured leisure offerings. Many of the clients were enthusiastic about participating in the garden program and motivated to spend some structured time in and outside the classroom learning new skills and working as a team. Others were interested in the link between gardening and nutrition and wanted to learn how they could add healthy foods to their pantries through gardening.

Figure 2: Bed building in the lasagna garden

Several of our lessons were particularly popular. Participating in building the lasagna garden beds was extremely gratifying for many women. This involved learning to use a power drill to construct the raised-bed frames over a cardboard base, shoveling green and brown layers of organic material into the frames, and mulching pathways around the bed to keep down weeds and lessen the need to mow in between the beds. Once completed, the bed frames were ready for planting a combination of seed and seedlings. Contrary to popular gender stereotypes, many women took pleasure in "getting dirty" and participating in the physical labor of bed building. Once finished, several clients asked to have their pictures taken to show what they were doing in the facility. It was very apparent that it was essential to the women to demonstrate to their families and friends that they were being productive and learning new skills while at the CBCF, which is indicated in the following quote from a garden-related focus group:

> *"And their family member that's been in jail and all that stuff is in a different role where they are like proud of doing some kind of work or doing something, would kinda help to change the family's vision of that person." (Focus group, February 2020)*

Another popular lesson was understanding pollination and the importance of pollinators such as bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, and moths. This lesson stressed the connection between nature and the garden. Clients were taught the numerous parts of flowering plants, the life cycle of a butterfly and its role in pollination, and how pollinators help the garden grow. Our "hands-on" component involved the purchase of a painted lady butterfly hatching kit, watching caterpillars transform into chrysalides, and then seeing them hatch into adults. The women took turns watching over the incubator and were excited to see how the whole process unfolded.

We conducted anonymous reflective writing assignments after every lesson. The reflection writing assignment for this lesson, for instance, tied it all together using pollination as a means for clients to identify ways to attract positive attitudes and behaviors to "pollinate" their lives. Clients' journal entries included making better choices, pursuing their GED, and building healthier relationships. Entries such as, "I would like to pollinate my life with better choices and better decisions," and "I would like to pollinate my life with good ideas by staying sober and practicing kindness toward others," demonstrated the effective use of "garden as metaphor" to reinforce lessons taught in other areas of programming. The final part of the lesson was a "release party" in the garden where the entire class watched the butterflies flit around the garden and then fly away. It was decided after this lesson to add a hummingbird feeder and several bee watering stations in the hopes of attracting other types of pollinators.

We also learned some valuable lessons. First and foremost, we soon realized that the 180-day maximum sentence in the CBCF affected the rhythm of our program. Maintaining continuity in the garden program was crucial. Women who participated in the program and volunteered for tasks such as watering or weeding could suddenly leave the facility for a variety of reasons. We found (after losing a number of seedlings due to lack of maintenance) that it was necessary to have a sign-up maintenance schedule and specific duties with backup volunteers to step in for those clients who were no longer present.

Moreover, we found that classes went more smoothly when a set routine was followed: classroom

lecture and/or demonstration, project, journaling, and then outside garden maintenance. Trying to "mix things up" for variety, rather than making things more interesting, caused some clients stress and confusion. We also found that organization was vital. Tools and equipment needed to be organized for easy access, identification, and inventory. We generated an ongoing inventory list, numbered all our tools, and created a sign-out sheet for supervisors to maintain a current count before and after a gardening session.

But by far, the most valuable lesson was failure. Plants died, online directions for some projects were confusing or did not seem quite complete, and basic human error were lessons in humility, perseverance, and patience. These issues taught us a great deal about what we needed and what we could do without, what was important and what things we could let slide, and most importantly, how to work as a team.

What emerged from our first year in the garden was a committed group of clients, administrators, and staff. Throughout the season, these individuals that made up this group would change as people rotated in and out of the CBCF, but the dedication to the garden program remained constant. The new clients to the team would quickly come on board through the support and mentoring of the more seasoned members. In many cases, the students became the teachers, showing fellow clients the correct way to water, weed, and cultivate. They were proud of themselves and each other and proud of the garden. This was a clear sign that the garden as structured leisure time was, indeed, a pro-social activity.

Figure 3: The garden in full swing, August 2019

Research in the Garden

At the beginning of 2020, we gained access to institutional review board review and developed a research design to evaluate the pilot program. We examined the project using a variety of qualitative methods, including fieldnotes from participant observation, the anonymous written clients' reflections reports (n=120), as well as interviews with community partners and staff (n=8) to explore the benefits and challenges of this therapeutic garden program. We also conducted a focus group with clients discussing food and facility experiences and expectations of the garden program (n=4, February 2020). Women in the focus group have substantiated their interest in a garden program and the anecdotal evidence that they often skip meals because they were so deterred by the food on their plates (Focus group, February 4, 2019).

We were particularly impressed with the second focus group we ran as an "implementation workshop" with all participating stakeholders, including facility management and community partners (n=7, March 2020) for an improved garden program in 2020 and more comprehensive evaluation research. We used this opportunity to present a garden workbook that had been developed with the help of an intern, as well as a preliminary evaluation research plan. We were also able to present women's voices from data collection and gathered input from all partners and facility management with the help of design-thinking methodology. We were planning on a "garden-to-table" approach for the following year and planned to partner with the dietician that teaches health and nutrition at the facility. Forthcoming gardening and nutrition programs would be linked, and produce would be grown for use in both classes. If clients chose to participate in both programs, they could earn a joint "Gardening for Health and Wellbeing" certificate.

The implementation workshop was designed as the onset to a truly participatory research project in which clients and community partners shape research questions, research process, and analysis. Unfortunately, the emergence of COVID-19 disrupted this vision, the garden intervention, and data collection. Yet a total of 12 women participated in four gardening lessons in August 2020 when the garden operated for only one month due to the impact of COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown of the facility for most of the 2020 year.

Existing data show significant improvements in self-reported mental health, perceived physical well-being, improved nutritional awareness, and improved interaction on the resident level and between residents and staff. All available interviews and audiotaped fieldnotes, reflection questions by participants, and recordings from the focus group and implementation workshop were transcribed verbatim and coded using NVivo12. The first analysis focused on women's perceived benefits of the program. Emerging themes of this analysis were:[3]

1. **Benefits on the level of mental wellbeing**
    a. "It's kind of like therapy" - Gardening as a coping skill for stress
    b. "I grow every day, like plants" - The garden as a helpful metaphor for recovery
        i. Metaphors relating to personal growth
        ii. Metaphors relating to change and resilience
        iii. Metaphors relating to recovery from substance abuse

3 *We give an overview of emerging themes and exemplary quotes here; a first comprehensive systematic analysis and detailed presentation of these data is forthcoming 2022 in the journal Women and Criminal Justice.*

c. "I can do it" – The garden as space for empowerment

2. **Effects on physical wellbeing**
   a. "I got to play in the dirt" - Physical activity and more outside time
   b. "There was a lot of snacking going on" - Access to nutritious food in the facility
   c. "You will eat it when you grow it" - Agency for increasing food security and health

3. **Effects on Social Interactions (Prosocial Behavior)**
   a. "You showed me teamwork" -- Positive client-client interactions
   b. "A lot of fun" -- Positive client-staff interaction
   c. "Getting to meet the neighbors" -- Building prosocial networks

Overall, the participants expressed overwhelming gratitude for the garden program. The mere fact that a program had been developed and staffed by external volunteers was reassuring for the participants and gave them the feeling that they were appreciated and seen by an imaginary outside.

Figure 4: Sharing a small harvest from volunteers in the pandemic garden

"I want to thank you for having a gardening program. I truly appreciate learning new skills and watching the garden grow,'' wrote one woman on the colorful page of paper we handed out after every lesson in May 2019. It contained reflection prompts and unfinished sentences (e.g., "The most important thing I learned today was…") as an invitation for women to share their perceptions and also help us think through improvements of the program. "I had a lot of fun with other participants and helping in the garden. I will grow my own garden now that I have the skills." "I can do it," wrote several women in their reflections, which demonstrates their belief in their ability to create the desired outcome, or as Bandura (1995) defined the concept of self-efficacy, "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action require to manage prospective situations" (p.2).

Women felt personally empowered by the garden program. One account reads, "…you helped me grow like a flower…you showed me teamwork, love, and acceptance…you made me feel like family…this program is the best." Women expressed that they embraced the garden program as a space where they felt respected, a welcome juxtaposition to the hierarchical facility system, rules, and literal "correction" of behaviors, speech, and mannerisms. Especially in substance abuse treatment settings, treatment approaches focus on individualized discourses in which women are encouraged to accept

a view of themselves as inherently damaged. The garden became an alternative space of acceptance that encouraged women to "nourish oneself with better food and thoughts about myself" (excerpt from an anonymous reflection). A participant used the garden as a metaphor of resistance against narratives that seek to reduce women to their histories of substance abuse and involvement with the criminal justice system in a local television interview. She stated, "Just because we made a mistake does not mean we are a mistake. We are a creation just like these are creations [pointing to the garden plants], and we deserve that chance" (Blair, 2019).

Concluding Thoughts

The garden project at the CBCF was an exemplar of low-cost programming with positive benefits. Time in the garden enhanced women's mental and physical wellbeing, as well as improved their nutritional awareness. Many women that participated in the program told us that gardening was an activity that made them feel simultaneously relaxed and active. Nutrition lessons made them more aware of what was on their plate, how to eat a balanced diet, and how to make healthier choices in the grocery store - even on a limited budget.

The gardening program also touched on several criminogenic needs identified in the criminal justice literature: developing positive leisure and outside activity, building positive relationships, and exploring soft job skills centered on horticulture. Employing social skills was heavily promoted in the garden. Asking for help, following and giving instructions, dealing with emotions, coping with stress, and learning the steps in successful planning were all practiced through a garden intervention. Gardening was the catalyst to study, rehearse, and habituate these social skills, and the clients used the class time effectively to practice them while in the garden. Structured leisure time in the form of gardening gave the women something to look forward to, something to learn from while having fun, and something positive to bring with them when they finally left the facility.

Our research (described in more detail in Jauk and Blackwood, forthcoming 2022 in *Women and Criminal Justice*) showed that women not only gained hands-on technical skills for urban gardening but also reported direct mental and physical benefits from the gardening program. Additionally, we identify several effects of the gardening program on the interactional level that improve facility culture and client-staff interactions and provide social skills for the reentry process. Overall, the participants expressed overwhelming gratitude for the garden program. The garden evolved as a space in which women could literally and metaphorically "grow." It was a space to try new skills, to feel empowered, and to participate in a collaborative culture within a carceral environment that otherwise leaves little space for agency and playfulness. It was a space for connecting to plant life, connecting to others, and connecting to themselves. Finally, the garden program evolved as a space for connection with the community. Through the garden program, not only the women but also the facility and the agency could forge new partnerships that permeated the barbed wire and brought innovative new collaborations for the benefit of clients.

We wish to clarify that therapeutic and educational gardening is by no means a panacea and cannot address the systemic racialized and gendered inequalities and the marginalization women face in the American justice system and broader society. A garden cannot substitute for trauma-informed correctional programming that centers on rehabilitation and recovery within the facility. It also cannot address the need for comprehensive community-based wrap-around services (e.g., housing, mental

health services) upon release to ensure the individuals being released are adequately supported (Kouri & Lemoine 2021). We do hope, though, that the garden in this facility, even in a very small way, contributed to "justice architecture and practices which allow prisoners to live and work in conditions that mirror those of other citizens, in settings and doing activities designed to maximize human and ecological wellbeing" (Graham & White 2015:855).

We do, however, think it is of crucial importance to focus on women and girls in the American criminal justice system, as this is a population that has exploded in recent decades, particularly in community corections. The garden program is a feminist research intervention, as it was developed as a response to female client's feedback specifically for them and also *with* them. The value of this work is that we here follow the implementation of an program as clinical sociological intervention. We hope to demonstrate that a formative evaluation can be the foundation for more thoughtful and detailed research results.

In the spirit of making new connections and "growing" practices, you are welcome to connect with us. We will happily share experiences and resources we have used. This small garden in the American Midwest also emerged in the context of a growing network that spans across the U.S. You can connect with this network of practitioners and researchers on desistance gardening and therapeutic horticulture through a follow up to the Conference on Social and Ecological Infrastructure for Recidivism that will take place in July 2022.[4] To answer the inspiring question of this special issue on what else works, we reply Gardening works. Consider to give it a g(r)o(w)!

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4 *For further information and resources, check the website https://www.prisongardenjustice.org/ and the Youtube playlist with selected presentations from the 2021 virtual gathering available here https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLigfHzllou9mm6naGL2-2Wpdc0oY_lHKZ*

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CREATING A COORDINATED SYSTEM OF CARE FOR MOTHER-BABY PAIRS TRANSITIONING FROM A PRISON NURSERY TO THEIR HOME COMMUNITY[1]

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Abstract

Prison nursery units have improved outcomes for mother-baby pairs, but challenges remain post-release. Motivated by a coauthor who experienced incarceration in a prison nursery, university public health faculty collaborated with the Indiana Department of Correction Medical Division's Transitional Healthcare team to develop and implement Mothers on the Rise (MOR), an innovative program that coordinates care for each mother-baby pair at the Indiana Women's Prison during their transition to community, and first year post-release. We describe the creation of this system, grounded in human rights and health equity approaches, its components, processes, and successes in improving community reintegration for mother-baby pairs.

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Introduction

The development of prison nurseries is a positive innovation to promote the care and attachment of mother-baby pairs (Byrne et al, 2010; Carlson, 2001), improve developmental outcomes for infants (Goshen et al, 2014a) and prevent recidivism (Carlson, 2001; Goshen et al, 2014b). Challenges remain as these mother-baby pairs transition to their home community (Goshen et al, 2014b; Byrne et al, 2012). Urged to address these challenges by a mother who experienced incarceration at the Indiana Women's Prison nursery, our interdisciplinary team integrated a human rights-based approach to health (Yamin, 1997) and health equity framework (Bravemen et al, 2017) to develop Mothers on the Rise (MOR), a coordinated system of care serving mother-baby pairs transitioning from a prison nursery to their home community.

A human rights-based approach to health builds the capacity of rights-holders to claim their human right to health. In addition, it builds the capacity of duty-bearers (institutions) to promote and protect the health and human rights of individuals they serve (Yamin, 1997). This approach conceives of health broadly, considering both physical and mental health and the social determinants that influence them (World Health Organization, 2017). It prompts us to ask what knowledge, capabilities, and resources do rights-holders need to attain wellbeing, and what are the needs of duty-bearers to assist in this realization? Simultaneously applying a health equity framework requires duty-bearers to implement policies and practices that address inequitable systems that result in health disparities (Bravemen et al, 2017).

As the number of women who are incarcerated has grown substantially over the past several decades (Ervin et al, 2020; Koski & Costanza, 2015), so too has the demand to develop gender-specific programming and policies within and beyond the prison system (Miller, 2021; see also Brown & Bloom, 2009; Koski & Costanza, 2015; Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009). Women who experience incarceration have often been victimized and (Koski & Costanza, 2015; Jung & LaLonde, 2015; Killian et al, 2018; Lynch, et al., 2012) frequently report behavioral health issues, diagnoses of substance use disorders and/or mental health diagnoses (Ervin et al, 2020; Visher & Bakken, 2014; Lynch et al., 2012). Justice-involved women are more likely than men to have chronic health conditions (Miller, 2021). These realities require duty-bearers to ensure adequate trauma-informed care and wrap around support both during and after incarceration.

More than half of women who are incarcerated identify as mothers and primary caregivers to young children (Maruschak, 2021). Mothers who are incarcerated face additional challenges. They often feel maternal guilt and lack confidence in their parenting skills, which not only impacts their mental health, but also the quality of care and attachment with their baby (Robison & Hughes Miller, 2016; Arditti & Few, 2008). This is important, as the confidence and identity of a mother can be a major motivating factor in the success of her reentry process (Cobbina & Bender, 2012). The community transition can also place the mother in immediate financial distress as a host of competing priorities (e.g. unresolved health concerns, post incarceration supervision requirements, transportation, and childcare) make securing employment challenging (Arditti & Few, 2008; Brown & Bloom, 2009; McGrath, 2012). Frequently unable to establish their own household, women may reenter violent, toxic, or unsupportive relationships (Brown & Bloom, 2009; Gobena et al, 2022). Thus, any successful effort aimed at improving the transition from prison to community needs to include a positive social network that supports and empowers the mother as she navigates societal challenges.

While several programs support women transitioning to the community, coordination and peer support to encourage use of these resources is often lacking (Brown & Bloom, 2009; Byrne et al, 2012; Gobena et al, 2022; McGrath, 2012). Mothers need support managing the emotional and legal challenges of reuniting with their children, finding safe housing, securing employment, and navigating the social safety net (McGrath, 2012). Furthermore, social networks can heavily influence the risk of recidivism. Family support is often a powerful protective factor, whereas peers may exert negative influence (Bowman & Mowen, 2017). Recognizing the compelling influence of social networks, we developed a coordinated system of support using community navigators as a central element to empower the mother and holistically promote her safety and well-being during and after the transition of her and her baby to the community.

Mothers on the Rise offers an individualized, coordinated system of care that is mediated through a peer who is not in a position of authority. At the same time, the process allows for the identification of social system patterns and gaps. This provides opportunities to build the capacity of duty-bearers to make system changes that better serve these mother-baby pairs. Described here are the key steps taken to establish the program, and its functions as mother-baby pairs transition to the community.

Developing, Implementing and Evaluating a Coordinated System of Care

Our interdisciplinary team (public health university faculty with expertise in maternal and child health, a previously incarcerated mother, a social worker with expertise in serving mothers incarcerated, a public health nurse, and Indiana Dept. of Correction's Transitional Healthcare Team) sought to create a seamless transition to community that simultaneously empowered women to claim their rights to health and build the capacity of duty-bearers to support women as they claimed these rights. Drawing from health equity frameworks (Braveman et al, 2017), the team recognized the importance of data collection and continuing to engage women with lived experience in the evaluation and refinement of strategies.

Program Origins

Mothers on the Rise grew out of awareness of the needs of a unique population within the prison system. One of our coauthors was a participant in the prison nursery and encountered firsthand the barriers and struggles that mothers face leaving the nursery unit. She describes preparing for release...

> *"... and the case manager was trying to find a housing placement and we called over 49 places and couldn't find anywhere. They put us in a hotel the first night and after that I was on my own. That's how it began...I did have a change of heart and change of mind, but I didn't have the opportunity. There wasn't anyone on the inside who could also talk to me on the outside."*

When a social worker asked this coauthor to identify future goals, the question gave rise to the initial "scribbles" that ultimately became MOR. When the coauthor joined the Grassroots MCH Initiative, a university-based program that provides leadership training and mentoring (Skinner et al, 2019) for women in marginalized communities with poor maternal and child health outcomes, the co-author presented her ideas to the Initiative's director. Plans began to take shape into a coordinated program designed to support the transition of mother-baby pairs from the prison nursery.

The Director of the Grassroots Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Initiative reached out to initiate a partnership with the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) to explore ways to expand support for mother-baby pairs transitioning from the prison nursery into their community. The director's approach was well timed; he connected with the newly established Transitional Healthcare Team (THT), which had acquired oversight in November 2019 of Wee Ones Nursery (now the Leath Maternal and Child Health Unit (MCHU), at Indiana Women's Prison. The THT was working to transform the Leath MCHU from a punitive model to a medical model. The team embraced a focus on education in lieu of punishment, with the belief that behavior change comes from support and empowerment and that long-term success comes from addressing the mother's and baby's barriers to health. Changes to the Leath MCHU included implementing an inclusive criteria model to expand bed space for participants, and to remove implicit bias from the selection criteria, such as more severe charges due to systemic racism within the justice system. Subject matter experts were identified to expand the child development curriculum and maternal health services. A Child Wellness Clinic was built inside the Leath MCHU to allow mothers to participate in their child's wellness visits, to communicate concerns with the pediatrician directly, and to empower mothers to make decisions regarding their baby's healthcare. In April 2021, in recognition of these changes, the unit was renamed and officially dedicated in honor of fallen Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD) Officer Breann Leath, who served in the unit as a correctional officer and demonstrated that accountability, kindness, and support can occur in a prison environment. MOR fit well within the unit's new holistic, individual-centered, and empowering approach.

The director of the Grassroots MCH Initiative initially obtained private grant funding to enable the development of the interdisciplinary team mentioned above to study the prison and community contexts of the mother-baby pairs and design an approach aimed to optimize the health and social well-being of each mother-baby pair. Once the foundation of the program was established, the team applied for and received pilot funding from the Indiana Department of Health (IDOH) to start implementation and to assess feasibility. Following the pilot, two years of Title V funding was awarded from IDOH to continue to sustain, grow, and evaluate the initiative.

Community-Based Program Team

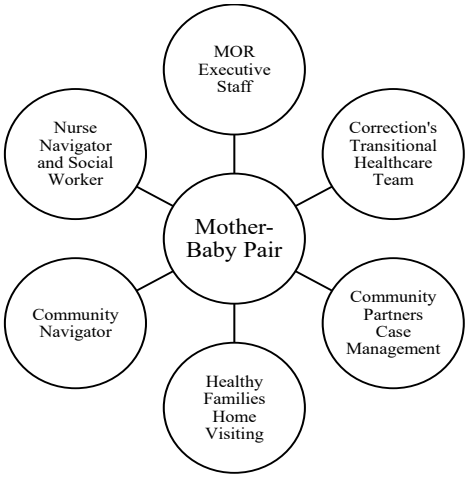
With the initial state pilot grant, necessary program staff were hired, and partnerships solidified. The director led sustainability planning, project direction, and oversaw implementation and evaluation. The director hired the coauthor, who was previously incarcerated in the prison nursery unit, to serve as the lead community navigator. This was vital in providing a lived experience perspective to the development, implementation, and evaluation of the program. A program administrator was hired to oversee partnerships, recruit, and train community navigators, and coordinate social services. Both of these individuals simultaneously participated as AmeriCorps members, which built their community leadership and development capacity. The program administrator assisted in locating, training and retaining community navigators (described below) from geographic areas where mother-baby pairs moved to upon release from the prison nursery. To ensure program quality and sustainability, a researcher affiliated with the Grassroots MCH Initiative joined the project team to assist with documenting outcomes, reviewing and incorporating relevant literature on gender-specific, evidence-based practices in community reintegration, leading monitoring, evaluation, and quality improvement efforts, and coordinating publication of outcomes and other dissemination strategies. Impactful communications via a national journalistic outlet, a national radio broadcast, and international podcast

have helped spread information about our new approach to build a coordinated system of care for these mother-baby pairs.

Mother-baby pairs are released to varying geographic regions and home contexts, making local social support essential. To provide individualized, relevant services and resources, mother-baby pairs are linked with a local woman. These women are recruited and trained by the program administrator to become community navigators. Navigators have experience in education, healthcare, and social services, and have a passion to serve mother-baby pairs. They complete Grassroots MCH Leadership (GMCHL) Training, an evidence-based curriculum that aims to build capacity of individuals to meet the needs of traditionally marginalized mother-baby pairs (Skinner et al., 2019). Community navigators are introduced to the mothers prior to release and work closely with them in their home communities. They communicate regularly via texts, phone calls and in-person meetings. Navigators help mother-baby pairs set goals, complete paperwork, seek out relevant resources, and brainstorm action plans to address specific needs.

Additional community stakeholders coordinate care and tailor essential services before and after transition home. Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) provides two prevention services, Community Partners for Child Safety, and Healthy Families, to each mother-baby pair. Community Partners for Child Safety provides home-based case management services to connect families to local resources. Healthy Families provides evidence-based home visitation services to encourage parent education and promote child development. The Mothers on the Rise program administrator works in coordination with the IDOC THT to refer and connect mothers to these services.

To further serve participants and individualize care, a nurse navigator and a social worker conduct weekly check-ins with each mother to provide needed resources. The nurse navigator, who completed GMCHL training, empowers women to claim their rights to health in several important ways:



Legend: This illustrates the positive social network that is created for each mother-baby pair to support their successful community reintegration. The MOR program executive staff includes the program director, program administrator and the lead community navigator.

Figure 1: Post-Release Support System

helping mothers navigate the healthcare system, ensuring necessary appointments are scheduled, encouraging appointment follow-through, supporting mothers with key health care decisions while teaching self-advocacy. Using an evidence-based approach, the social worker, with more than 18 years of working within a women's prison setting, helps each mother learn to: recognize and manage stress, build self-esteem, and build and sustain healthy relationships.

Table 1: Participant Information Form

Participant Name:
DOB:
County being released to:
Earliest possible release date:
Are you currently pregnant (if so, what is the due date):
If you recently delivered your baby: what is the name/sex/DOB:
Will you be the primary caregiver once released:
How many children will you be responsible for upon release:
Do you have safe and stable housing for you and your baby upon release? If so, where:
Who will support you and your baby upon your release:
Do you have any open criminal cases or pending charges:
Have you ever suffered from addiction? If yes, please list:
Do you have a diagnosed medical illness (for example: diabetes, heart diabetes, depression, bipolar disorder)? If yes, please list conditions and if whether you have a health care provider to assist once released:
Are you interested in Mothers on the Rise and having a Grassroots Navigator to help connect you to resources and need your and your baby's needs? If so, please answer the following questions:
Why are you interested in being a part of this program?
How do you see this program helping you and your baby?
What are your strengths and weaknesses?
What are you most concerned about post release?
Tell a time when you were challenged as a person? What did you do to overcome this challenge? Did you do this along or did you reach out for help?
Describe why your hard work is important in this program for you to be successful after release?
How do you feel about your navigator collaborating with community members (for example: potential employers, childcare centers) to help produce resolutions and/or resources necessary to help you progress through this navigation program?
What does feeling vulnerable mean to you?

Legend: Each mother in the prison nursery is invited to participate in our coordinated system of care. If they are interested, they complete this information form that is used to help organize their care delivery, and provide guidance for their community navigator.

Table 2: Participant-Identified Needs Assessment

Help Needed:	Yes/No	Notes
Housing		
Recovery – Substance Use Disorder Support		
Job Placement		
Job Skills – type of skill desired?		
Women's Clothing/Hygiene Supplies		
Infant Clothing/Hygiene Supplies		
Utility Payments		
Driver's License		
Infant Daycare		
Legal Aid		
Adult Education Services (GED) Junior College, Trade School)		
Domestic Violence Advocacy		
Household Furniture		
Banking and Finances		
Computer Skills Training		
Women's Health Care (physical and mental)		
Infant Health Care		

Legend: Each participant completes this information form prior to release. This helps the team organize services and connections within the mother's local community. This is also used to during team meetings to evaluate our progress in meeting the mother's needs.

Table 3: Nursery-Based Services Form

Service:	**Date Completed:**	**DOC Initials:**
Car Seat		
Safe Sleep Kit		
WIC Referral		
CCDF Voucher		
Healthy Families Counseling		
Healthy Start Counseling		
Contact with Community Navigator		
Other:		

Legend: This form is completed by the Transitional Healthcare Team prior to release. This helps the community navigator understand the range of services received within the prison nursery.

Program Process

Each mother-baby pair has individual strengths and needs when transitioning to a community that presents unique opportunities and challenges. Therefore, the program materials and services provided reflect each woman's self-identified needs. Figure 1 displays the full array of supports that make up the coordinated system of care.

To tailor post-release services and resources for each mother-baby pair, the team developed tools and utilized strategies to identify individual needs prior to release, including detailed forms and one-on-one communication. Each mother completes a Participant Information Form (Table 1) that confirms interest in the program, captures demographic and contact information while self-identifying strengths and weaknesses. Table 2 shows the contents of the Participant-Identified Needs Assessment, allowing each mother to request specific services or resources needs, including housing, substance use recovery support, material supplies, employment skills and healthcare services. Table 3 shows the contents of the Nursery-Based Services Form, completed by the IDOC Transitional Healthcare Maternal and Child Health Coordinator to identify services/referrals the mother-baby pair received within the nursery unit.

Beyond coordinating the initial intake forms, consistent weekly communication between team members is crucial to communicate status of enrollment in the prison nursery and mother-baby pair release dates. In addition, the THT provides opportunities for the MOR team to communicate directly with the mothers prior to their release, building trust and rapport. To establish a monitoring and evaluation system, a shared data system was created by program staff and an IDOC epidemiologist that includes: completed participant forms, assessments, basic demographic information, and an evaluation tool to measure outcomes. The evaluation tool is routinely updated to keep track of personal resources provided to meet mother-baby needs, and the progress made to foster the mother's personal and professional development via her relationships with her support team member (i.e. community navigator, nurse navigator, social worker, Healthy Families Home Visitor, Community Partners Case Manager).

Prior to the mother's release, the program administrator orders items requested from the Material Needs Form, introduces the program staff and the navigators to the mother, and refers the mother to Healthy Families and Community Partners Case Management. Community navigators use the Screening Form and Needs and Services Form to assess individualized community needs and identify appropriate resources including, recovery programs, food banks, mental health providers, and physical healthcare services. The established communication channels with IDOC has allowed the MOR team to work quickly to build support and establish direct communication when release dates change unexpectedly.

Continuous evaluation and quality improvement are primarily conducted and recorded through regular meetings. We host weekly meetings attended by the MOR director, lead navigator, program administrator, community navigators, nurse navigator, social worker, and senior researcher. During these meetings community navigators provide weekly updates on the successes, barriers and needs of each mother-baby pair. This helps us monitor needs and identify potential gaps in care. These discussions also focus on relevant research literature and evidence-based practices. In addition, we host biweekly meetings with THT partners to ensure quality improvement and address care

coordination for participants.

Initial Findings

Since its inception, 13 mother-baby pairs have transitioned from the prison nursery to community. Mothers on the Rise has completed serving two mother-baby pairs and is currently serving eight pairs residing in five different counties across the state of Indiana. This partnership has led to favorable outcomes across different domains identified below.

Justice System: All mother-baby pairs have remained together in the community post-release. No mothers in the program have returned to jail or prison.

Meeting Immediate Needs for Community Reintegration (empowering the women): Each mother-baby pair was provided up to $1000 in basic clothing for mother and baby, hygiene products for both mother and baby, and infant care supplies. In addition, thanks to a group of county commissioners, each mother is provided a laptop upon release. All these items, in addition to the items provided by the THT (cribs, strollers, and car seats), help empower the women to begin their community reintegration process. Our community navigators keep the team informed of maternal and infant care needs across the post-release period and we are able to provide more essential care items if needed by the mother.

Making Positive Community Connections (empowering the women): Using an integrated care model, the Leath MCHU works with IDOC Medical, Centurion Healthcare, and local providers for a seamless handoff to the community. Community navigators have successfully connected and sustained mothers with: food bank services, employment opportunities, quality physical and mental healthcare services for them and their babies, legal aid services, housing opportunities, and daycare services. Together, the community navigators, nurse navigator and social worker provide valuable weekly individualized education about well child care, well woman care, contraception care, healthy relationships, and stress reduction techniques. Most importantly, they are a constant, always accessible, non-judgmental support system that the mothers can talk with throughout their community reintegration.

System Changes (building the capacity of duty bearers): The partnership has led to systemic change at the institutional level. University faculty and staff have trained a THT member and mothers on the prison unit to become safe sleep ambassadors. This is critical as unsafe sleep practice is a still a major cause of infant death in Indiana. In addition, university faculty and staff developed a set of medical roadmaps for all incarcerated women. These roadmaps work to guide the women through basic health care interactions upon release. They have worked in partnership with the THT to improve standards of care for pregnant women in the Department of Correction, and are supporting training of a THT member to implement evidence-based infant parenting techniques for the mothers in the prison unit. Finally, our partnership with DCS has resulted in each mother-baby pair qualifying for Healthy Families, as nurse home visiting service, and Community Partners, a case management service. This was not the norm prior to the initiation of our multisector partnership.

Barriers: While we have observed successes serving the mother-baby pairs and bringing about systems change, barriers do exist that we have to address. Throughout our evaluation process we note that a lack of stable housing, poor paying jobs, challenging relationships with partners, peers or family members, the lack of transportation opportunities, and a lack of skills using computer

technology often frustrate the women. We are fortunate that they trust our team and communicate these realities to us. Keeping in communication with them on a regular basis helps them identify these barriers for us in real time, providing us an opportunity to act quickly to work in partnership with them to develop solution strategies. For example, the persistence of messages about challenging relationships prompted us to include a licensed clinical social worker as a critical team member focused on healthy relationships training. The diversity of knowledge, skills, and connections observed across our team helps us navigate these barriers and the chaos they create for the women.

Discussion and Concluding Thoughts

Prison systems face immense pressure to ensure excellent care and a smooth transition for mother-baby pairs transitioning into the community. Like other prison nurseries (Byrne et al, 2010; Carlson, 2001), the Indiana Women's Prison Leath MCHU promotes healthy mother-baby bonds, behaviors and outcomes. The individualized, coordinated system of care created and described in this paper allows an extension of efforts into the community, reducing the burden of the THT and promoting the health of mother-baby pairs. Focusing on the needs of a vulnerable population that experiences disproportionate health challenges increases their ability to claim rights to health and increase the capacity of duty-bearers to support them.

Found in other settings (Koski & Costanza, 2015; Jung & LaLonde, 2015; Killian et al, 2018: Lynch, et al., 2012), the challenges that a mother encounters leaving incarceration is multi-faceted and often unpredictable, making it impossible for one agency to solely address all the challenges. Our team's success rests on creating strong, multidisciplinary networks. Partnership between university-based public health faculty and staff and the IDOC THT is crucial for establishing strategies and sharing data. Coordinating with local women (community navigators), state agencies, and social service providers ensure that mother-baby pairs have the support needed to successfully reintegrate into their home community.

Paramount in our approach is the inclusion of perspectives of a woman who has lived experience similar to those we serve. Historically, justice involved individuals were discouraged to lead efforts in reentry programming. Building health equity demands that individuals with lived experience be involved in the crafting and evaluation of strategies to address health-related needs (Braveman et al, 2017). Lived experience by one of our team members is a powerful ingredient for our program's success. Her perspectives on challenges faced by the mother-baby pairs truly enlightens our team's program planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.

Moving forward we will work to address the limitations in our approach. While our numbers at this time are small, we have successfully served 77% of the mother-baby pairs released since the inception of our program. We believe the strength of our approach will mature as we continue to support more pairs during their community reintegration process. We are also cognizant that we are serving a small fraction of mothers within the justice system, as we do not serve mothers who are in jail or house arrest contexts. These contexts have distinct challenges that likely will require a different approach to optimize the outcomes of these mothers.

Our initial outcomes reveal the power of establishing positive, community-based social networks for mother-baby pairs transitioning from a prison nursery to community. It contributes to the

conversation among individuals interested in advancing corrections regarding "what else works..." when it comes to successfully reintegrating mothers and babies into our communities.

Below we provide a brief summary of the basic steps to help other prison nursery systems replicate our coordinated system of care serving mother-baby pairs transitioning from a prison nursery to their home community.

1. Create an interdisciplinary team grounded in the perspectives of a woman who was incarcerated in a prison nursery. In addition to a mother who was formerly incarcerated, include corrections staff with a passion for transitional healthcare, local public health experts (university faculty or health department staff), a public health nurse, a social worker, and community members and agencies dedicated to optimizing maternal and child health outcomes.

2. Seek funding from non-profits interested in criminal justice reform, or state health, family services, or corrections agencies interested in building community reintegration programs to improve state maternal and child health outcomes.

3. Use funding to support the team's efforts as they build an innovative institution, sensitive to their local context, that simultaneously empowers women to claim their health and human rights, while building the capacity of duty bearers (institutions) to better serve these mother-baby pairs. Within this institution develop internal and external communication channels, a set of processes to implement program elements, and monitoring and evaluation protocols to continuously improve the coordinated system of care.

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WHAT ELSE WORKS? THE STEPPING STONES CRIMINOGENIC PROGRAM FOR WOMEN

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Abstract

As women who offend represent a small minority in correctional systems, most programs and policies are made based on research on male populations. There is, however, a growing body of literature demonstrating that women's pathways into offending are different. This paper outlines a new program that Corrections South Australia has developed in an effort to provide a gender-specific rehabilitation program to address the criminogenic needs of women in prison. In approaching this work, Corrections South Australia considered a range of theoretical and clinical perspectives, including Aboriginal women's experiences of the justice system, in its design of a culturally inclusive program.[1]

1 *Acknowledgement of Country: This document was developed on Kaurna land. The Department for Correctional Services (DCS) acknowledges the spiritual connection to country and recognizes Kaurna people as the custodians of the greater Adelaide region. DCS also acknowledges Traditional Owners across South Australia. We recognize the continuing importance of language, land, culture and spiritual beliefs to all Aboriginal people. The Department pays respects to Aboriginal people from all other regions of Australia, particularly those who helped contribute to the development of this paper and who will be involved in, or impacted by, the achievement of its actions.*

Introduction

The "what works" literature base has demonstrated that recidivism rates can be significantly reduced through theoretically sound, well-designed programs that appropriately apply the principles of effective intervention. These principles of intervention were synthesized by Andrews, Bonta, and Hoge in 1990 to create the Risk-Need-Responsivity model (RNR) of offender management. The RNR model remains the best validated guide for interventions that aim to help people who have offended to cease offending (Looman & Abracen, 2013; Polaschek, 2012).

The aim of this paper is to describe Stepping Stones, a program developed and facilitated by the South Australian Department for Correctional Services. The program is designed for women under supervision in prison and incorporates the RNR model with other complimentary rehabilitation approaches. The program was developed in response to the need for a new approach to working with women, which does not assume that existing men's programs will be effective for women.

Background

Existing programs for treating women who have committed offenses are based on the RNR model. The *need principle* of the RNR model asserts that treatment should address factors — "criminogenic needs" — about the offender that are functionally related to their offending behavior. The RNR literature has identified eight criminogenic risk factors, referred to as the "central eight". These include: Criminal history, Pro-criminal attitudes, Pro-criminal associates, Antisocial personality pattern, Family/marital relationships, Employment/education, Substance use, and Use of leisure time.

Because women who offend represent a small minority in correctional systems, most correctional programs and policies are made based on research on male populations (Gobeil et al., 2016). This approach that has been called "gender-neutral" because it assumes that men and women are similar enough to justify the use of the same assessment tools and treatment programs. However, a gender-neutral approach fails to acknowledge how women's experiences in the world fundamentally differ from those of men. There is reason, therefore, to speculate that a specialized approach is required to explore "what else works" with women; and, indeed, there is a growing body of literature demonstrating women's diverse pathways into offending which differ from men's (e.g., Chesney-Lind, 2006; Van Voorhis et al., 2010).

Van Voorhis et al. (2010) found that although the purportedly gender-neutral Level of Service Inventory-revised (LSI-R; Andrews & Bonta, 1995) predicted reoffending in samples of women, the addition of gender-responsive factors, such as mental health, abuse, and unhealthy relationships improved prediction. These findings suggest some factors not usually considered in correctional theory might be important for the treatment of women. It should also be noted here that the predictive utility for the LSI-R has been found to be lower for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women than for other offenders (Watkins, 2011). Therefore, the intersection of Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander status and gender has implications for treatment.

Yesberg et al. (2015), not only found that the Dynamic Risk Assessment for Offender Re-entry (DRAOR; Serin et al., 2012), another purportedly gender-neutral measure, was a robust predictor of women's recidivism, but also that the main driver of this predictive ability was its Acute subscale. This subscale includes items such as substance abuse, relationship problems, and living conditions.

In contrast, a more recent study found that no one subscale of the DRAOR uniquely predicted reconvictions in women, but the Acute subscale independently predicted reconvictions for men (Scanlan et al., 2020). This more recent study differed from the 2015 study in having a lower risk, community-sentenced sample. Although it is not clear why the findings of the two studies were different, both sets of findings suggest the DRAOR is not operating in the same way across gender.

Bonta and Andrews (2016) claimed that most of the gendered pathways align with the "central eight" risk factors. An interesting consideration in this regard, is Polaschek's (2012) argument that a conceptual gap exists between the dynamic risk factors identified in the RNR literature and the theoretical resources needed to translate these factors into clinical formulations, and treatment plans. She argued that although the "central eight" risk factors have been established as correlates of reoffending, each is best considered a proxy for a series of psychologically meaningful risk factors.

It is possible, therefore, that while gendered pathways align with the "central eight" risk factors, as Bonta and Andrews (2016) argued, the psychological processes that these factors stand as proxies for are in some ways different for women than they are for men. By way of example, it has been suggested that females are more likely than males to use substances as self-medication to provide relief from unwanted feelings (Becker, Perry, & Westenbroek, 2012). Similarly, Howells (2000) suggested that drugs and alcohol have more of a "numbing" of emotion function for women than for men.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy, a historical and social system of male dominance over women (Chesney-Lind, 2006), results in social arrangements which privilege males (Crittenden & Wright, 2013). Patriarchy degenders human experience because the male is the default position. In terms of social and psychological impacts on women of patriarchy, Linehan (1993) argued that the experience of invalidation is especially common for girls and women. One daily example of this is that women are the more interrupted gender in conversations (Hancock & Rubin, 2015). The power imbalance between men and women and the social construction of masculinity and femininity also influences how men and women experience and express distress (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). Women often face having their thoughts, feelings and opinions chronically dismissed or trivialized, and Salter (2012) proposed that invalidation is a pervasive manifestation of gender relations as expressed through strategies of minimization, disbelief and denial.

The patterned experiences of women in society lead to a requirement to also explore how women's connections to the justice system differ from those of men. The Pathways literature is based on the work of Kathleen Daly (1994) who identified "street, harmed or harming, battered, drug-connected, and other" pathways into crime for women. This body of literature has argued that there is a core set of experiences that mark women's pathways to crime (Kruttschnitt, 2016). These experiences have been said to include characteristics such as abuse, mental health problems, deficits in education, prior justice system involvement, substance use, or family and relationship problems (Steiner et al., 2020). The pathways research has noted that child abuse plays a prominent role in these experiences (Kruttschnitt, 2016) and highlighted the relationship between victimization and offending (Carbone Lopez & Miller, 2012).

Complexity

Many women in prison have complex histories of trauma and victimization, mental and physical health issues, and substance abuse as features of their pathway into offending. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, this includes intergenerational trauma and other impacts of colonization, encompassing a deep loss of culture through racist policies and attempts to silence women's experiences. Often first-generation survivors who directly experience or witness traumatic events can unknowingly pass this down to future generations (Menzies, 2019).

Because trauma, victimization, mental and physical health issues, and substance abuse, are intertwined, treatment of any one of these factors is likely to involve the treatment of others (Saxena et al., 2016; Trotter & Flynn, 2016). Problems related to substance use, for example, may not be reduced unless difficulties related to an abusive partner are also addressed.

Integrating feminist criminology and the RNR model

As already discussed, there is evidence that the "central eight" risk factors are to some extent relevant to women's offending. However, derived as it is from a patriarchal culture, the RNR model tends to erase gender as a concern when assessing and treating those who have offended. It may be possible to integrate the pathways to crime identified in feminist criminology with the RNR model. If offending is considered as the endpoint of a course of events, the risk factors typically identified in the RNR literature, such as substance abuse, tend to be quite closely proximal to the offenses. Factors identified in the pathways literature, such as victimization as a child, a history of mental illness, a history of substance abuse, dysfunction in intimate relationships, reduced self-efficacy, and adult victimization, tend to be more distal. Distal risk factors may be understood as underlying vulnerabilities that do not necessarily predict that offending will take place. Proximal factors, in contrast, represent more immediate vulnerabilities for criminal behavior.

A life course perspective that includes an exploration of distal and proximal factors offers facilitators a way of integrating RNR and feminist approaches in a therapeutically useful way. Moreover, it takes heed of the caution by authors such as Polaschek (2012) and Ward and Beech (2015) that dynamic risk factors may be better regarded as clusters of clinical features generated by underlying causal mechanisms than as causes themselves. In clinical practice, therefore, it is probable that reducing the influence of identified dynamic risk factors will require that the causal mechanisms — which will likely include the underlying vulnerabilities — be addressed.

Women in prison in South Australia

Prisoners in Australia data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) show there has been an 85% increase in the number of females in custody in South Australia in the last decade. This compares with a 50% increase nationally. This trend is even more pronounced for women with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural backgrounds, with the number in South Australia doubling in the past decade (compared with 68% nationally), further exacerbating their over-representation in the prison system. As of the beginning of January 2022, Department for Correctional Services data indicate there were 196 women in prison in South Australia (6.6% of the total prison population) and nearly

31% of these women were Aboriginal[1].

Existing programs

As pointed out by Wong et al. (2016) programs are developed and evaluated in a context of pre-existing programs. In South Australia, prior to Stepping Stones, there existed a six-month criminogenic program, Making Changes, developed in 2011. This was an adaptation of Making Choices, originally developed by Hall McMaster and Associates for men engaged with Queensland Corrective Services.

Besides a change of pronouns, the main difference between the men's and women's Making Changes programs was the inclusion of some content on parenting in the women's version of the program. Feedback from both facilitators and women who participated in the program highlighted the lack of acknowledgement of domestic violence and trauma in the lives of women who offend. In short, the program did not address the complexity of factors leading to offending by women as well as we would have liked.

Besides Making Changes, there were two other programs offered to women who had offended. Both programs were based on Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) principles; one was a full program, implemented as a pilot during 2012 and 2013, and the other was a six-week Psychological Skills program, which also taught mindfulness, emotional regulation, distress tolerance and interpersonal skills. Because women tended to receive relatively short prison sentences, only 18 women completed the DBT program. This was considered problematic, and so the Psychological Skills program commenced in 2016 and was offered instead of the DBT program, to support more women to engage in and complete a version of this program due to its shorter length. Neither of these was considered to be treating criminogenic needs as they were understood.

Preliminary unpublished data from the Making Changes, DBT and Psychological Skills programs shows a lower return to custody within two years among women who completed the DBT program (6.3%) compared with women who completed the Making Changes program (23.8%). It should be noted, however, that the women participating in the Making Changes program were at higher risk of reoffending than the women completing the DBT program as assessed using the Risk of Re-offending: Prison Version (RoR-PV; Thompson & Stewart, 2007). The mean RoR score for women participating in the Making Changes program was 15.8 as compared to 13.3 for the women participating in the DBT program. Return to custody data has not yet been collated for women who completed the Psychological Skills program.

Stepping Stones

The South Australian Department for Correctional Services Strategic Plan (2018-2022) stated a commitment to "improve outcomes for women offenders." As part of the effort to meet this commitment, a Women's Rehabilitation Working Party was convened to guide the development of a new program, Stepping Stones, to assist women in prison to address their offending behavior. Members of the working party included women in DCS from diverse cultural, clinical and academic

1 *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is the terminology used in the national context and within South Australia, the term Aboriginal is used in preference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, in recognition that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of South Australia. This paper follows this preference, referring to Aboriginal people when discussing the South Australian context. No disrespect is intended to our Torres Strait Islander colleagues and community.*

backgrounds. These women included an Aboriginal Elder, clinicians, managers, an evaluator, and policy makers. The working party also included the Manager of Integrated Programs from Women's Safety Services South Australia, a service which supports women and their children who are experiencing domestic and family violence. All but two members of the working party were women.

The Women's Rehabilitation Working Party drew from their own collective experience, feedback from women who had participated in existing programs offered by the Department, and the Pathways literature to guide the development of the Stepping Stones program. It was also noted that the treatment targets of the DBT program seemed to overlap with the factors identified in various pathways to women's offending. Because of the presence of domestic violence and trauma in the lives of many women who offend, it was decided that mindfulness, emotion regulation skills, and distress tolerance skills should be introduced early in the program in preparation for sessions in which trauma and grief would be discussed. Values and identity are also discussed early in the program.

Stepping Stones aims to reduce maladaptive behaviors, increase functional coping skills and improve wellbeing, with a long-term aim of reducing reoffending. Stepping Stones invites women to consider where they are now, where they have been, and where they hope to go, and seeks to empower women to make broader positive and pro-social changes in their lives.

The program also has a focus on thinking. Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) is the main approach used here. This work is guided by a strengths-based model of CBT proposed by Padesky and Mooney (2012). The model includes four steps:

- Search for strengths
- Construct a personal model of resilience
- Apply the personal model of resilience to areas of life difficulty
- Practice resilience

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) interventions are also used, primarily the ideas of "unhooking" from unhelpful thoughts, and of making choices that may lead to vitality or suffering. This is also linked to shame, as shame can be attached both to experiences of trauma and their own actions which brought them into custody. Because shame is often present, self-compassion is emphasized when discussing emotion regulation. ACT is useful here because attempts to avoid or escape unpleasant or painful feelings (experiential avoidance) are likely to be unhelpful in the longer term.

Stepping Stones also focuses on substance use, prefaced on a belief that people who use substances contextualize their experiences in gendered ways. While men talk about stress connected with external pressures such as work, women described their problems with substances as linked with their private, emotional and/or relational lives (Ettore, 2004). To hold an exclusive focus on the individual's misbehavior is to risk investing in gendered social norms that allow us to regard women who use substances as socially and morally inferior.

Delving further into women's reasons for, and experiences of, substance use, Ettore (2004) suggested that by using substances, women may be "enacting norms of feminine conformity." Specifically, she suggested that women might use substances to be sexually appealing, to relax, or to deaden the

pain of abusive relationships. Ettore also argued that for some women, substance use may, by being a form of "adventurous leisure," be seen as resistance to passive femininity. Feminist perspectives, then, tend to situate practices associated with substance use within a system of gender relations. An example: Dominant societal norms position drug use and motherhood as incompatible; pregnancy and motherhood increase the stigma of drug use. Some program participants may have viewed becoming pregnant as an opportunity for a new start — to develop a new narrative around motherhood. If, as sometimes happens, a woman in this position then loses custody of her child, this budding narrative is then challenged.

A feminist perspective allows us to wonder with our participants how they are "doing gender," in relation to substance use, and why they are "doing gender" in the ways that they are. Ways of enacting gender are necessarily meshed into a socio-cultural milieu. Exploring aspects of how this milieu influences behavior may be empowering for group participants.

Stepping Stones differs from our existing programs in placing more emphasis on rapport and on the need to establish emotional safety in the treatment room. Because of the histories of trauma and victimization of many of the participants, emotion regulation and distress tolerance skills are addressed early in the program. Desistance literature is also drawn upon, particularly to avoid delineating between "us" (law-abiding citizens) and "them" (offenders) in support of a re-authoring of a pro-social narrative and robust identity in line with participants' values. In addition, acknowledgment of the impact of power imbalances — including in a prison setting — is used to promote empowerment and self-efficacy.

The program does not aim to treat symptoms of trauma, instead it has the more modest ambition of being trauma informed. In Stepping Stones, grief, adversity, and trauma, as discrete instances, patterns, and intergenerational experiences, are recognized likely to have influenced the lives of most of group participants. Another purpose is to acknowledge and trace some of the links between experiences of adversities and experiences of emotional distress and troubled behavior. From a trauma perspective, many of the maladaptive behaviors in which people engage are learned coping or survival strategies.

Aboriginal Women

Previous programs offered to women in prison in South Australia lacked focus on cultural factors pertinent in the lives of Aboriginal women. Stepping Stones, while offered to participants from diverse cultures, does include some discussions of Aboriginal concepts such as *Kanyini*. *Kanyini* is a Luritja and Pitjantjatjara term defined as "holding" by Ryan (2011) and "love with responsibility" by Smitsman (2019, citing Bob Randall). *Kanyini* relates to the terms, *waltja* (family but in a broader sense than the Western notion of family), *ngura* (camp, home, place of belonging; the place where connections between people and ancestors are made), *kurunpa* (spirit or soul), and *tjukurpa* (the dreaming). *Tjukurpa* is the basis for codes of behavior and relationships between people, places, animals, and social organisation. *Waltja, ngura, kurunpa*, and *tjukurpa* (all Pitjantjatjara terms) are bound together, held, minded, and managed by *kanyini*. An example of how *kanyini* can be explored is through an activity reflecting upon lifestyle balance and wellbeing. Using the cultural lens of *kanyini* also puts a different cast on the way other aspects of the program, such as cognitions, emotions, and the capacity for personal agency are approached.

Stepping Stones: Structure and program integrity elements

Stepping Stones is designed for women who are at a moderate-high risk level of re-offending (based on the LS/RNR) and for whom, substance use has contributed to their offending. The women must be serving prison sentences (the program is not run in the community and is not offered to women on remand). Stepping Stones is a manualized program, designed to run for 48 group sessions of 2.5 hours duration. The manual suggests these sessions should be offered three times a week but is not rigid on this point. In addition, the manual specifies that one session per week be set aside for individual work. The program includes the following topics:

- Orientation
- Trauma
- Relationships
- Thinking
- Emotions
- Substance use
- Self-management plan

Two facilitators are allocated to the program. The facilitators are chosen from the Social Workers employed at the Adelaide Women's Prison and are trained in the delivery of the Stepping Stones program. To preserve program integrity the sessions are video-recorded and facilitators receive weekly supervision for the duration of the program.

Learnings to date

The piloting of the Stepping Stones program has been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, some women have completed the program and offered feedback. Most former participants were positive about the program. The aspects of the program participants identified as being most useful were:

- managing triggers and understanding emotions
- mindfulness and grounding techniques
- goal setting

Some women reported feeling vulnerable talking about their trauma history in the group context as well as addressing this in prison. This gives us reason to consider further how we raise the topic of trauma during the program. Perhaps some aspects of the program would be better facilitated individually.

Most of the women interviewed emphasized their need for further intervention around their drug use, particularly on release. It may be helpful to offer complementary sessions with external agencies that can offer post-release support during the program. Further exploration could include independent accessing of material, perhaps in the form of workbooks. Some women may benefit from fostering a more individual approach.

Conclusion

The South Australian Department for Correctional Services is strongly committed to improving the lives of individuals in custody through its intervention programs. This includes regularly reviewing the efficacy of its programs in reducing reoffending, and incorporating emerging evidence of effective

approaches to addressing the needs of women involved in the correctional system. Stepping Stones represents a new, gender-specific treatment approach that attempts to marry the strong evidence-base of the RNR model, with complimentary approaches that recognise women's unique pathways and experiences. It also applies a cultural lens to improve its relevance for Aboriginal women, drawing on the Aboriginal concept of *kanyini* to illustrate different ways of understanding the interplay of cognitions, emotions and personal agency.

Stepping Stones is still in its infancy so it is not yet possible to establish the extent to which it is achieving its objectives. An evaluation in due course will present an exciting opportunity to contribute to our understanding of "what else works" and ensure that treatment programs for women are not perpetuating patriarchal constructs that further contribute to their disadvantage. Related to this, an additional future direction may be the development of an Aboriginal women's program, in light of the compounding impacts of colonization, displacement and intergenerational trauma experienced by Aboriginal women. Further research examining the treatment outcomes for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women will help to establish whether there is merit in this.

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BRINGING TOGETHER THE VOICES OF CONTEMPORARY LIVED EXPERIENCE THROUGH PRISON-BASED AND COMMUNITY-BASED THINK-TANKS

Marietta Martinovic, RMIT University
Tarmi A'Vard, La Trobe University
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Abstract

The lived experience of people impacted by the Criminal Justice System has often been neglected and excluded from the policy-making process. To provide a space for their voices to be heard, four prison-based Think-Tanks and one community-based Think-Tank have been established in Victoria, Australia. This paper outlines the operation of these Think-Tanks and describes how these contribute to the consultation and research commissioned by government departments, non-government bodies and advocacy groups. The inclusion of various voices in the design of practical strategies improves and innovates the social justice sector.

Introduction

It is well established in literature that 'good policy' should be informed and shaped by the people most directly affected by it (Lancaster et al., 2017). After all, those with direct experience with the criminal justice system (CJS) are most aware of the actual impact of criminal justice (CJ) policies and are best positioned to make suggestions to improve them. Innovations in various health fields, most notably in mental health, have included the personal experiences of clients when developing their best-practice approach policies (Sandhu, 2017). Despite the reported benefits of inclusion of the lived experience voice (see Sandhu, 2017), the CJ space has failed to incorporate the voice of those with lived experience in the CJS in policymaking.

Literature suggests that incorporating the voices from lived experience provides deeper context from which policymakers can craft comprehensive solutions (Doyel et al., 2021; Sandhu, 2017). For example, Doyel et al. (2021) stated that:

> [including voices from lived experience] offer[s] policy makers greater insights into the challenges that people face while incarcerated and post-release. By listening to, valuing and including the diversity of voices, policymakers [are] provided with an expanded set of perspectives of generating newer practice-based knowledge that is more closely aligned with the user experience, thereby offering insights into reducing incarceration and reincarceration rates (p. 84).

To address this gap in the CJ space, an academic from RMIT University's Criminology and Justice discipline established four prison-based Think-Tanks, comprising:

- 'Changing Faces' Dame Phyllis Frost Center (DPFC) and Tarrengower Think-Tank (est. in 2015);
- 'Think for Change' Marngoneet Correctional Centre- Karreenga annex (MCC-K) Think-Tank (est. in 2017);
- 'Change on the Inside' Ravenhall Correctional Centre Think-Tank (RCC) (est. in 2018); and
- 'Change Seekers' Loddon Prison Think-Tank (est. in 2021)

And one community-based Think-Tank, titled:

- Beyond the Stone Walls Advisory Collective (BSWAC) (est. in 2020).

This paper describes the rationale behind the establishment, purpose and operation of innovative prison-based and community-based Think-Tanks. It explains the way in which they consult with government departments, non-governmental organizations and advocacy groups to provide nuanced perspectives on complex issues which affect people experiencing the CJS. In addition, the key projects are highlighted and a foundational framework to enable other advocacy groups to inform the future operation of the CJS is provided. The Think-Tanks look to expand their reach with the key aim of ensuring that the diverse and contrasting voices of lived-experience are incorporated into contemporary social justice policy and practice.

Background: What are Think-Tanks?

It is believed the term Think-Tank was first used in World War II in describing a place where strategies and tactics could be discussed in confidence (Ladi, 2015). During the 1960s the term became more widely used to describe "private non-profit policy research organizations" (Ladi, 2015, para 2). Whilst

a contemporary definition of Think-Tank is still being debated (see Ruser, 2018), a widely accepted definition is a body of experts who collaborate on specific issues to provide information, advice and develop solutions to complex issues and commonly "bridge the gap between the government and the public" (McGann & Shull, 2018, pg. 4). Wellstead and Howlett (2021) have also suggested that the terms 'knowledge-based policy influence organizations' capture the essence and purpose of the contemporary Think-Tank.

Think-Tanks have become an integral part of local, national, international and global policy making around the world, and can provide innovative ideas to challenge dominant assumptions of policy and practice (McGann, 2016; McGann & Shull, 2018). It is argued that they have also become "particularly relevant in moments of change or transformation," especially with "complex policy demands" (McGann & Shull, 2018, pg. 8). To have an impact on the policy making process, Think-Tanks need to carefully navigate the complexity of working across multiple organizations and foster partnerships with the policy makers within organizations and government departments. Whilst Think-Tanks at a local community-based level aim to contribute to policy making with a bottom-up approach (through the perspective of people who are directly impacted by policy), the policy making approach in most organizations is top-down (Bilorusky, 2021; McGann & Shull, 2018).

Incarcerated people's quest for inclusion and increasing recognition of their voices

People who enter the carceral space are faced with moral exclusion, disconnecting them from the sense of belonging (see Ross, 2020; Wolfendale, 2020). The majority of people in prison come from marginalized communities and have experienced significant traumatic events, which typically lead to a lack of self-confidence and a feeling of disconnection from their community (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2021; Wolfendale, 2020), generating the sense of a "belonging uncertainty" (Brown, 2021, pg. 165). Yet, humans are hardwired for connection and belonging, which are essential elements for survival (Brown, 2021; Smith, 2014). The culture of the prison environment and the 'us versus them' mentality of prison officers and incarcerated people often prevents positive relationships from developing (Lerman, 2013).

Incarcerated people have traditionally been powerless to use their voice directly to contribute to change. They have had to utilize advocates to collaborate on their behalf. These have typically been part of independently-run, volunteer-based organizations that provide advice and guidance to those requesting their knowledge and expertise (Nehls & Nagai, 2013; Newman et. al, 2011). This process has had the potential to make incarcerated people feel externally (and internally) pressured to participate as a 'token gesture'.

There has however been a 'wider shift' in respecting and listening to people with lived experience. Recent Australian Royal Commissions and Victorian Ombudsman reports rely on accounts from people who are most impacted by the policy and practice of the government institutions which are/ have been accountable and responsible for their care (see Armytage, et.al, 2021; Commonwealth of Australia, 2017; Glass, 2017; White & Gooda, 2017). The findings and recommendations of all of these inquiries referred to the importance of listening to the people with lived experience and confirmed their reports of systemic failures.

Hearing overwhelmingly negative and traumatic perspectives of people who have lived experience

is uncomfortable for professionals working in government institutions, but necessary in order to improve outcomes. Public servants are therefore required to upskill as collaborators and negotiators and actively engage in reform and improvement of policies and processes (Holmes, 2011).

The rationale for the inception of prison-based and community-based Think-Tanks

Since 2015, four prison-based Think-Tanks have been established in Victoria, Australia under the auspices of RMIT University and in partnership with Corrections Victoria. Each Think-Tank comprises approximately 20 members [10 inside members (prisoners) and 10 outside members (initially university students and subsequently practitioners and researchers)] who meet fortnightly on an ongoing basis. Similarly to their predecessors in the USA, the Think-Tanks are a platform to provide incarcerated people and university students with an intellectual space to discuss and formulate solutions to contemporary issues people face experiencing the CJS. What sets the Australian Think-Tanks apart from their US counterparts, is the direct advocacy and consultation they have with policymakers and organizations (see Allred et. al., 2020).

The prison-based Think-Tanks were formed organically. That is, incarcerated people upon completing the Inside Out Prison Exchange Program (referred as Inside-Out from hereon) (see Martinovic & Liddell, 2020; Martinovic, et.al., 2018) wanted a platform in which their ideas about change and innovation could flourish and thrive. Inside-Out is a transformative learning environment in which students (incarcerated people and university students), have learning experiences that emphasize collaboration and dialogue across social barriers. The subject which is taught in Inside-Out is 'Comparative CJS.' It exposes students to diverse international CJSs which they critique and compare to Victoria's CJS. This provides students with a foundational understanding about how CJS reflects societal and cultural values and the political complexities related to CJ policies. Through the Inside-Out experience the students learn to explore and find innovative solutions to issues of social concern.

The establishment of prison-based Think-Tanks offers a safe space for incarcerated people to create connections with other people and collaborate on ideas to generate solution-based strategies to improve prison policies and practices. The Think-Tanks support self-determination and create the circumstances to nurture the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness (see Ryan & Deci, 2017; 2020). Inside members of Think-Tanks lead discussions, propose relevant solutions/strategies and actively participate in the development of the projects, thereby demonstrating an autonomous motivation approach. In fact, they are excited to participate in discussions and feel competent and effective in their contributions. There is also a sense of relatedness which extends far beyond the prison walls, as Think-Tank members strive to improve the CJS for people who come into contact with the CJS after them.

Upon release from prison, individuals who were a part of prison-based Think-Tanks continued to seek an active role in contributing to the projects of the prison-based Think-Tanks. As a result, the first community-based Think-Tank was established in 2020 and then it transitioned into the BSWAC. It also operates as a partnership between Corrections Victoria and RMIT. BSWAC provides continuous engagement in shaping CJ policy for those exiting prison, as well as university students transitioning (or have transitioned) into professional practice and/or further study. Given members reside locally, interstate and internationally, BSWAC meets online every fortnight to discuss current projects.

All Think-Tanks are composed of a diverse collective of people generally representative of the Australian community. The prison-based Think-Tanks are in adult prisons, therefore the ages of inside/ex-inside members range from over 18 years old, serving both short and long term sentences across all offence types excluding sexual offences. They have a range of educational achievements and abilities. Members represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities, and other marginal and socio-economically disadvantaged groups. However, in terms of outside members (who were Inside-Out university students), there is an over-representation of females, which aligns with the demographic of students enrolled in social science-based disciplines (Trusz, 2020).

The operation of prison-based and community-based Think-Tanks

Through effective collaboration with policy makers and other professionals, the overarching goal of the Think-Tanks is to influence positive change in the social justice sphere. As a collective, the members of the Think-Tanks make decisions about which projects to take on. To date, all projects which have been commissioned by government and non-government organizations have been undertaken.

Think-Tank members sign a consent form and a code of conduct, which is developed by the legal team at Corrections Victoria. It outlines the principles and standards that members are obligated to abide by including confidentiality, privacy, appropriate behaviour and expectations. The scope extends to members not contacting or speaking with media outlets and posting on social media platforms. Employers of the practitioner members of the Think-Tanks require the disclosure of any conflicts of interest which may exist due to the advocacy nature of the Think-Tanks. It should also be noted that neither our advice nor reports are publicly available (other than our submissions to Parliamentary Inquiries).

The Think-Tank leader trains members in understanding the complexities of policy-making, policy reform and the importance of incremental change. Members are encouraged to consider issues not only from their individual viewpoint, but also from a holistic perspective where they reflect on the wider concerns of others who are experiencing the CJS. Furthermore, members are educated about the complicated connection between policy-making, best practice and the role of politics in designing innovative strategies. They develop skills in negotiation, communication and teamwork, and learn to work through situations when there is vehement disagreement and a unified position needs to be adopted. Members gain appreciation for the power of community opinions in matters of CJ policy. They also learn to value engaging with stakeholders when developing innovative strategies to improve the CJS.

Think-Tanks coexist amongst other advocacy/advisory groups in Victoria (such as Flat Out and the recently formed Justice Transition Alliance part of the After Prison Network) and Australia (Sisters Inside and Justice Reform Initiative). Think-Tanks do not specifically reach out to other groups to collaborate on projects, rather they receive and respond to requests for advice and/or collaboration. The Think-Tanks are different to other groups as their advice is incremental, apolitical and led by the voices of contemporary lived experience. When arguing for systemic change, latest empirical research and practical strategies for improvement are provided to stakeholders. On some occasions, whilst working on projects, there has been a conflict between the empirical research (i.e. best practice)

and the lived experience of the members. This is not regarded as an issue, but in fact a welcome opportunity to present differing points of view. What also sets the Think-Tanks apart is the primary advisory capacity and close partnerships with government agencies, particularly Corrections Victoria. Other organizations are mainly advocacy groups, without partnerships with government agencies and visions to totally reform the CJS's punitive ideology and operation.

Key projects of the prison-based and community-based Think-Tanks

In the Think-Tanks, incarcerated/ex-incarcerated members' personal stories and ideas based on lived experience combined with university members' empirical research based on best practice lead to innovative practical solutions to address a myriad of operational challenges within local prison settings. For example, the formulation, development and implementation of incentives programs (at DPFC and RCC); encouraging incarcerated people to transfer to lower security institutions (at DPFC); improving responsivity to programs delivered in prison (at RCC); introduction booklet for new admissions (at DPFC); and improving offerings for distance education and learning in prisons (at DPFC, RCC and MCC-K).

More recently, the Think-Tanks have been consulted on and have worked collaboratively on 'bigger-scale projects,' including:

- *The development of the "Common Clients Reform" for the Department of Justice and Community Safety, 2021 (Victoria, Australia).* The Think-Tanks were consulted on their perspectives to support the 'Common Clients Reform Agenda' which aims to improve the unique needs of a cohort of people engaged with social, health and justice services, often simultaneously. Members were asked about their perspectives on being a client of multiple health, social and justice services and advice about particular Common Client priorities. Five themes raised in the consultation were: the importance of rapport, trust and being treated as an individual; choice, consent and information sharing being client-centered and trauma-informed; integrated health, social and justice programs inside and outside prison; staged reintegration processes and re-entry into the community; and more positive inclusion of family and the community. Members also mentioned that the name 'Common Clients Reform' seems derogatory and recommended for it to change; they provided some suggestions.

- *"Breaking Down Barriers Between Blue and Green'' for the Department of Justice and Community Safety, 2021 (Victoria, Australia).* This submission responded to the 'Cultural Review of the Adult Custodial Corrections System' addressing the terms of reference 'Effectiveness and appropriateness of DJCS systems and processes to support the safety of people in custody.' The Think-Tanks explored issues surrounding dehumanization, stigmatization and the prison culture which cultivates division between incarcerated people and correctional staff. The positive impact of prison culture in Sweden and Norway was discussed and the general complexity of improving prison culture. Finally, an innovative 'Between the Blue and Green' program was created, with separate workshops for new recruits and established staff, to improve relationships by developing mutual respect and understanding.

- *Wyndham Law Court project of Court Services Victoria, 2022 (Australia).* Think-Tanks were invited to collaborate with the Major Projects Division of Court Services Victoria in the

development of the Wyndham Law Court in Werribee, Victoria. The Wyndham Law Courts Complex is a multi-jurisdiction precinct, comprising 10 Magistrates' Courts, three Children Courts, four Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal hearing rooms, three mediation rooms and 26 holding cells. Think-Tanks' report made recommendations supporting trauma-informed court design; the introduction of Client Liaison Officers who have lived experience to assist people attending court to navigate the required processes; development of user-friendly technology; and offering post-court release support initiatives.

- *Submission to the Legal and Social Issues Committee's (LSC) inquiry into Victoria's CJS of the Victorian Parliament, 2021.* Think-Tanks responded to two points of reference. Firstly, an analysis of factors influencing Victoria's growing remand and prison populations. The submission provided three recommendations: reinstate alternatives to imprisonment such as home detention and suspended sentences and impose more community-based sentences; reward positive behavior by early release on parole; and reduce high remand populations by lowering the threshold for bail approval. Secondly, an examination of how to ensure that judges and magistrates have appropriate knowledge and expertise when sentencing and dealing with offenders, including an understanding of recidivism and the causes of crime. The submission recommended that the bench of judicial officers come from diverse backgrounds, representing the gender, class and ethnic diversity reflected in the community; and that judicial personnel regularly consult with people who have lived experience of criminalization, including arrest, court processes and imprisonment, in order to better understand the impact of these processes.

The feedback about the consultations and reports conducted by Think-Tanks from the relevant stakeholders, including government departments, has been glowing. A stakeholder commented:

> We are always blown away after each session with what we hear and learn. The participants were so generous and insightful. They had such rich observations and experiences. We have been reflecting afterwards that we should be doing this as a matter of course across the government.

The consultations have resulted in actual reforms of the CJS and have led to increasing interest in consulting with the Think-Tanks.

Outcomes for incarcerated/ex-incarcerated Think-Tank members

The prison-based and community-based Think-Tanks are unlike any other initiative established within the Australian correctional arena. These are not attached to objectives formally mandated by correctional or departmental indicators, adding elements of humanity to what is oftentimes a highly politicized field. The Think-Tanks recognize the wealth of knowledge those with lived experience can bring to the table in enriching CJ outcomes and guiding policy trajectory, not only to better the conditions of imprisonment, but to improve the lives of incarcerated people in prisons. These unique experiences bring to light the difficulties and challenges faced by those impacted by the CJS and build policy and innovation in spaces that are overlooked by current policy and practice.

Incarcerated/ex-incarcerated people engaged in the Think-Tanks attain a sense of purpose, gain/regain their sense of confidence and worth, and create prosocial relationships built through mutual learning

and understanding. Through these residual outcomes, they feel that their views are valid and that they are contributing to the CJ space, not merely for their own individual gain, but ultimately to feel a sense of belonging and being part of a community. This was explained by an incarcerated member:

> Unfortunately, it is too easy in prison for the world to shrink to encompass only what exists between the walls. The gossip, insults, and angry words become magnified and take on more meaning than they should. Think-Tank is a lifeline to the world outside. Each session allows me to reset my thinking and remember that prison is not the world, that I am more than a prisoner, and I have value. More importantly than that, it allows me to contribute. It gives me the opportunity to make an actual difference and that is the most powerful feeling in the world.

Incarcerated/ex-incarcerated members are also encouraged to undertake further studies, conduct research and engage in presentations. This builds capacity for personal and professional growth. As a result, many individuals start the education journey to eventually be employed within the social justice realm.

Furthermore, as the Think-Tanks are composed of and engage with a diverse range of people, they can provide a multidimensional perspective to contemporary CJ issues. For example, individual opinions about the carceral experience itself may vary from those serving long sentences in comparison to those serving short-medium term sentences, and those who are sentenced versus those on remand. Continuous contact with external individuals who are not incarcerated, gives incarcerated (and even ex-incarcerated) people a regular sense of normalcy that is otherwise unobtainable. This has been most pertinent during the Covid-19 pandemic, where regular contact with the outside world was unreliable and transient. Moreover, the sense of achievement and pride obtained from membership in the Think-Tanks extends to incarcerated/ex-incarcerated people's families.

The Think-Tanks are not just a program, especially for those that have experienced the CJS for a significant period of time. For many, they are the only safe space to openly and honestly discuss their experiences of the CJS, and express the difficulties and frustrations they face whilst incarcerated. It is through these unique and deeply personal experiences, reflected in the work of the Think-Tanks, that its members are able to feel proud of their contributions, and see their time in prison as being something meaningful and worthwhile.

Outcomes for students, researchers and practitioners who are Think-Tank members

Higher education graduates in the CJ and related disciplines rarely have the opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue with a person with lived CJ experience. Further, the material that the students learn through, textbooks and journal articles, does not always reflect the complex 'reality' and/or the deprivations of the carceral space. Consequently, they are often unable to understand the actual impact of an ineffective, bureaucratic, and highly regimented system on the incarcerated person and their families. On the other hand, graduating from the Inside-Out Program, progressing into prison-based Think-Tanks, then joining the BSWAC space, provides those who become practitioners and researchers, the ability to discuss and comprehend complex systemic and individual issues in a respectful and equal standing. A student explained this:

> The Think-Tanks have opened my eyes to the reality of our justice system, and the complexity

> of it all. We can, and must, do better. More than that, I have seen the power of education, and learnt giving people a platform to learn and to speak, where they feel safe and heard is so important. So much could change if we do this more. I see the power in discussions and shared experiences, and believe change is possible.

Through critical discussions in the Think-Tanks students, researchers and practitioners continually have their preconceived ideas and biases (which are often subconscious) challenged. Importantly, they no longer perceive incarcerated people as 'others', but rather as people who have the capacity of contributing positively to society.

Given the researcher and practitioner members of BSWAC have all entered, studied and collaborated with incarcerated people inside a prison environment (firstly as students in the Inside-Out Program and then in prison-based Think-Tanks and the BSWAC), they are able to better appreciate being part of that environment and the various levels of oppression the prison system generates on all those who live, visit and work behind the walls. They develop a nuanced understanding of the complex issues, vulnerability and disadvantage incarcerated people often face before, during and post their incarceration.

Students, researchers and practitioners are an integral part of the Think-Tanks' discussion, design and the developmental process of generating reports and submissions. Through this process they develop skills which enhance graduate qualities and outcomes not otherwise gained through textbook learning. Professional practice skills developed include collaboration, innovative thinking, solution-based problem-solving, rapport building, boundary setting, critical thinking, empathy and need for self-care practices.

The prison-based and community-based Think-Tanks are also a platform for researchers and practitioners to gain a deeper understanding of employment opportunities and career pathways. On occasions, special guests working directly in the field, attend Think-Tanks and discuss their own professional journeys and achievements which inspire members and provide them with innovative professional pathways.

Conclusion

In prison-based and community-based Think-Tanks discussions are critical, deep, personal, innovative and solution-focused. The proposed systemic changes are futuristic and well beyond members' individual personal gain. Members are passionate advocates and creative consultants who propose solutions to complex issues based on deep and personal experiences. The goal is to bring systemic change within the social justice sector.

The value of the voices of contemporary lived experience actively participating in policy and practice reform is gaining momentum. The Think-Tanks, with their unique inclusion of people with contemporary lived experience - incarcerated/ex-incarcerated people and students/practitioners/researchers - are well placed to humanely reform the system. The Think-Tanks look to further expand their reach with additional departments and organizations, ensuring that the diverse and contrasting voices of lived experience are amplified and incorporated into contemporary policy and practice.

Designing innovative solutions to complex CJS-related issues based on the lived experience as a key component creates a more inclusive and equal society, as well as, has the potential to reduce the likelihood of re-offending. The best way for jurisdictions to get a similar initiative started is to establish a partnership with a university and commence a university-led teaching exchange program. The program should organically develop into an initiative that not only embraces advocacy and policy advice, but is also independent and sustainable. Engaging and learning from experts by lived experience is currently a non-traditional approach but one which clearly facilitates a richer and more nuanced understanding of key issues related to the operation of the social justice sector.

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THE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT IN PRISON: INNOVATION IN REHABILITATION, RESTORATION, AND REENTRY

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Abstract

The Missouri Department of Corrections consistently implements initiatives designed to address diverse, incarcerated population needs, including educational, faith-based, restorative justice, and reentry programs. Of important note is that many of these programs are facilitated by Volunteers in Corrections (VICs) who have direct interaction with incarcerated persons. One successful program incorporates key concepts of leadership as a component of offender development and restoration. This paper outlines a creative approach to offender education and personal development, illustrating the effectiveness of the Global Leadership Summit (GLS) in enhancing offender motivation for change, highlighting the benefit of partnering with external organizations to expand prison programming, and suggesting how GLS has influenced positive changes in prison culture. This interdisciplinary approach expands on discussions of programs that are making a difference in correctional institutions with clear implications for "What Else Works..."

Leadership Training for Incarcerated Persons

It is well documented that engagement in educational opportunities (Chappell, 2004; Davis et al., 2013; Fogerty & Giles, 2018; Foley & Gao, 2004; Gaes, 2008; Gray, 2010; Karpowitz & Kenner, 1995; Pelletier & Evans, 2019; Pompoco et al., 2017; Steurer et al., 2001), programming designed to build pro-social skills (Clark & Duwe, 2015; Golden, 2002; Golden et al., 2006; Little, 2003; Lowenkamp et al., 2009), and restorative practices (Crocker, 2015; Dhami et al., 2009; DuBois, 2018; Gavrielides, 2014; Johnstone, 2007) reduce recidivism. This paper aims to expand on these findings by also incorporating leadership as a key component of offender development and restoration. Reiss (1988) was one of the first to recognize that being a "follower" or "joiner" (p. 147) contributes to many individuals' entry into deviance and criminality. Specifically, deviant behavior is often the result of individuals who follow accomplices (i.e., the recruiters) into crime (Amemiya et al., 2016; Reiss, 1988; Reiss & Farrington, 1991; van Mastrigt & Farrington, 2011). By building leadership characteristics, it can create a more peaceful inmate culture and also better prepare individuals for reentry into society.

Wade and Kilburn (2015) first piloted and evaluated offering the Global Leadership Summit (GLS), a 2-day live-streamed leadership conference, in a Missouri prison in 2015, and found that inmate participation in the GLS contributes to the development of servant leadership characteristics (Kilburn et al., 2016). The servant leader approach emphasizes putting the welfare of those served as their highest priority; they serve first rather than have a desire to exercise power (Greenleaf, 1996). Due to the success of the pilot event at the prison, it is now an annual event in the facility, and has expanded to over 100 prisons, reaching more than 10,000 incarcerated persons and correctional staff. What follows is a detailed description of this innovate approach to this restorative practice at Southeast Correctional Center, along with a brief discussion of the most recent evaluation of the program using participants' pre- and post-participation self-report data.

The Global Leadership Summit

The Global Leadership Summit (GLS) is an annual leadership event hosted by the Global Leadership Network. GLS began in 1975 to provide training to Christian church leaders through a 2-day conference event hosted by Willow Creek Community Church, a multi-site evangelical megachurch in the Chicago, IL, area (USA). The conference grew quickly and the Willow Creek Association—now the Global Leadership Network—was developed as a nonprofit organization to coordinate the event.

The GLS is held every year at Willow Creek Community Church's main location in South Barrington, IL, and live-streamed to over 500 host-sites, reaching approximately 400,000 participants in 120+ countries annually. Every year, around 15 "faculty" speak at the event, representing various business, education, government, technology, entertainment, and religious sectors who offer vision, inspiration, and practical skills to current and future leaders. These speakers are drawn from the faith-based community and from outside of the religious context, and are chosen because they possess leadership experience or expertise that can positively impact leaders both inside and outside of church settings. While the Global Leadership Network is a Christian organization and many speakers share the impact their faith has on their leadership, the primary focus is on creating a culture of servant leaders. This draws an audience that includes non-Christians and provides principles that can be applied in a variety of contexts. Notable faculty from recent years include Bryan Stevenson (lawyer and social justice activist who founded the Equal Justice Initiative), Melinda Gates (Co-Chair, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation), Sir Tony Blair (former Prime Minister, UK), Sheryl Sandberg (COO, Facebook), Ben

Sherwood (former Co-Chairman, Disney Media; former President, Disney ABC Television), Laszlo Bock (Senior Advisor, Google), John C. Maxwell (author), Bear Grylls (Adventurer, TV Host, Former British Special Forces), and Immaculée Ilibagiza (Survivor of Rwandan Genocide).

The Missouri Department of Corrections & Southeast Correctional Center

The state of Missouri's (U.S.) Department of Corrections oversees approximately 32,000 convicted offenders across 22 institutions. Southeast Correctional Center (SECC) is one of those 22 institutions. It is a maximum security male prison in the southeast region of Missouri, and houses approximately 1,400 incarcerated persons in its main facility and 190 minimum security offenders in a Minimum Security Unit. In addition to those housed at the facility, it employs approximately 400 full-time staff. This facility is a "Sentence Length 5" classification—the highest institutional classification—meaning many of the incarcerated persons are serving life sentences without parole.

The Missouri Department of Corrections has a history of promoting and implementing prison programming to meet a variety of needs (e.g., education, faith-based, restorative justice, reentry, etc.). Many of these programs are facilitated by Volunteers in Corrections (VICs) who receive annual in-service training and testing to maintain their certification as VICs. Once certified, VICs have direct interaction with incarcerated persons and have access to move about freely in most areas of the institution.

Details about GLS in SECC

In 2014, the Global Leadership Network alpha tested offering the GLS in four correctional institutions. In 2015, this expanded to include SECC as one of eleven prisons worldwide to be a host-site for a live-stream of the GLS. In order for this to occur, a number of logistical issues had to be identified and remedied.

Personnel

Existing volunteers who had participated in the GLS at other host locations began by identifying needs with regard to bringing the GLS into SECC. These primarily included technology (e.g., sound system, screen, projector, laptop computer, and internet connection) and physical space (i.e., a large classroom to view the event and several smaller classrooms for small group break-out sessions).

The Prison Training Coordinator and Prison Chaplain were the main points of contact inside the institution. They consulted with prison administration to assess existing technology and allocate physical space. Once the logistics of live-streaming the conference inside the facility and space to accommodate the event were detailed, VICs submitted a formal proposal to the prison's Warden. After the Warden approved the event, it went to executive leaders in the Missouri Department of Corrections for approval. Once approved, volunteers and prison staff began preparing for the event.

Participants

Because the GLS was still new to prisons in 2015, volunteers and prison administrators wanted to keep the event small to minimize potential risks and complications, as well as to confine the use of facility space to one classroom. In the first year, VICs identified 34 incarcerated persons—representing various religions, including atheists—who were existing leaders in the institution or who demonstrated the potential for leadership and were also at least 120 days violation-free. These

individuals were then vetted by the prison executive staff and signed a Covenant to participate (See Figure 1). The Covenant was effective in generating anticipation for the event, outlining expectations of participants, and motivating those selected to maintain good behavior in the interim.

I, _____ (print name) agree to:

1. Attend and engage myself in all GLS sessions on August 8th and 9th.
2. Diligently participate in all GLS breakout sessions during the two days of the leadership training.
3. Consent to being interviewed, photographed, audiotaped, and videotaped for authorized reporting and promotional material necessary for the Missouri Department of Corrections and/or LaCroix United Methodist Church.
4. Attend and participate in the aforementioned GLS follow-up sessions.
5. Respect my fellow participants, VICs, guests, and participating SECC staff.
6. Focus on improving my skills, strategies, and capacity to lead.
7. Refrain from pursuing any personal agendas.

_____ _____
Signature Date

_____ _____
Staff Witness Date

Figure 1: Participant Covenant

Since 2015, GLS has continued to grow at SECC and prisons worldwide (See Table 1). Because of the success of the event the first year (Kilburn et al., 2016; Wade & Kilburn, 2015) both prison administrators and participants were eager to continue offering the event. In 2016, returning participants were asked to invite one fellow inmate to attend the GLS. They, too, were vetted by the prison executive staff, and approved participants signed the GLS Covenant to participate. Since then, existing inmates, prison staff, and volunteers have continued to nominate additional incarcerated persons to attend the event every year. Due to the increased number of participants, GLS is now streamed in the institution's gymnasium, and multiple classrooms are used for small group discussions (approximately 10-15 inmates and one VIC in each group) before the event begins in the mornings, during breaks and lunch, and after the stream ends each day.

Evaluation of GLS at SECC

In addition to signing the abovementioned Covenant, each participating inmate had the option of signing consent forms that ensured confidentiality and voluntary participation in completing pre- and post-test evaluations. In order to pair the before and after survey data, participants were asked to include the last four digits of their Department of Corrections Identification Number on each evaluation; so confidentiality could be maintained, these numbers were not made available to the researchers. These surveys have been completed by participants from 2015-2019 (Note: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, SECC was unable to offer GLS in 2020, and a decreased number participated in 2021.) Analyses below reflect participants' initial pre-test, a post-test given immediately following the end of the GLS conference, and a second post-test given approximately three months after that. The questionnaires were designed to measure understanding of leadership qualities, confidence in leadership skills, and perceptions of good leadership.

Table 1: GLS Participation at SECC and Worldwide

GLS Year	Participants at SECC	Number of Prisons Participating in GLS Worldwide
2015	34 inmates 3 staff; 12 volunteers	11
2016	71 inmates 3 staff; 15 volunteers	43
2017	92 inmates 3 staff; 15 volunteers	60
2018	126 inmates 32 staff; 18 volunteers	67
2019	157 inmates 16 staff; 15 volunteers	83
2020	0 (not offered in prison due to COVID)	-
2021	118 inmates 7 staff, 5 volunteers (lower number due to COVID)	100+

Table 2: Personal Strengths and Confidence as a Leader

Question Significant at $p < .05$	Pre-Test	*Post-Test 1*		*Post-Test 2*	
	μ	**μ**	***r***	**μ**	***r***
I am able to see my strengths/weaknesses	4.30	4.43	.30	4.69	.32
I have the ability to create a vision for the future	4.11	4.47	.30	4.54	.32
I have confidence in my ability to be a leader	4.21	4.58	.34	4.55	.27
I am always looking for ways to improve myself	4.55	4.72	.20	4.77	.20
I have a sense of purpose as a leader	4.10	4.48	.32	4.54	.34
I feel I can be a good team leader	4.23	4.49	.28	4.54	.27
I like to learn from my mistakes	4.37	4.59	.22	4.70	.27
I can take risks	4.06	4.30	.24	4.44	.32
I am able to celebrate my accomplishments	4.17	4.37	.20	4.45	.24

The results of the pre- and post-test surveys illustrate clear promise of positive outcomes from incarcerated persons participating in GLS. To begin, the data exhibit growth with regard to their personal strengths and confidence as leaders. As illustrated in Table 2, Wilcoxson Signed-Rank analysis, which is used to compare responses over multiple periods of time, demonstrated that participants had statistically significant growth in their average scores in a number of areas. For example, pre-test responses to the question "I have the ability to create a vision for the future," with response options 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree, averaged 4.11 (i.e., most respondents tended to "Agree" with this statement). Immediately following their participation in the 2-day GLS conference, response averages increased to 4.47 (i.e., most respondents tended to "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" with this statement). Three months later, this average continued to increase to 4.54, indicating more individuals "Strongly Agreed" with this statement than any other response. The corresponding "r" values noted in the table reflect the calculated effect sizes—or magnitude—of participation in GLS. Scores around .1 represent a small effect, those close to .3 represent a medium-sized effect, and those near .5 reflect a large effect.

Respondents also demonstrated positive growth with regard to their perceptions of what makes a good leader (see Table 3). While significant changes were not noted between the pre-test and first post-test with regard to "I feel conflict is always a bad thing" and "Being a leader is helping others to do their best," this growth continued after the end of the summit, and were evident in the second post-test. These findings are especially encouraging because they suggest leadership growth and development continued after the 2-day event concluded.

Other promising findings were evident with regard to participants' perceptions of their ability to lead others in their community (see Table 4). When taking into account that many participants' roads to incarceration were the result of community disorganization/chaos, inability to work with others, and conflicts regarding respect, these results are especially promising. For example, participants reported significant growth in their perceptions that they can make changes in their community, lead people who may be different from them, welcome feedback from others, and treat others with respect. This has positive implications for participants during their time inside the institution as well as when released into their communities.

Table 3: What Makes a Good Leader

Question Significant at $p < .05$	Pre-Test	*Post-Test 1*		*Post-Test 2*	
	μ	**μ**	***r***	**μ**	**μ**
I feel conflict is always a bad thing	2.34	NS	NS	2.17	.16
Being a leader is helping others do their best	4.61	NS	NS	4.79	.16
Being a leader is all about power	1.55	1.41	.16	1.42	.16

Table 4: Perceptions of Ability to Lead Others

Question Significant at $p < .05$	Pre-Test	*Post-Test 1*		*Post-Test 2*	
	μ	**μ**	***r***	**μ**	***r***
I feel I can make changes in my community	4.38	4.69	.32	4.69	.23
I can work well with others	4.34	4.49	.17	4.58	.23
I can help others do their best	4.19	4.49	.29	4.60	.39
I have the ability to lead people who may be different from me	4.12	4.46	.30	4.41	.22
I welcome feedback from others	4.24	4.44	.17	4.49	.22
I can treat others with respect	4.67	4.87	.28	4.83	.23
I support people and their decisions	3.92	4.61	.27	4.41	.33
I am able to celebrate the accomplishments of others	4.39	4.60	.22	4.66	.27

Respondents were also invited to provide open-ended feedback on the surveys. This added insight regarding reactions to the GLS, as well as skills learned and how participants planned to apply their knowledge in various environments (see Table 5).

The Logistics of Offering GLS in Prisons

It is likely no surprise to this readership that implementing new programs in correctional institutions is not without challenges. The most common obstacle is funding, and it can be disheartening to have costs prevent the inclusion of beneficial programming. To be completely transparent in the costs of implementing the GLS at SECC, we have included a summary of expenses—as well as donations from various sources—below. In addition, some of the prison-specific obstacles of this type of programming are addressed.

Financial Considerations

In 2015, the 1st time host-site cost to stream the event in SECC was $5,000 USD. This included the live-stream of the 2-day event, technical support, and paperback booklets for each participant. However, the Missouri Department of Corrections has never had to pay for this event. In the first year, the church that coordinates one of SECC's volunteer prison ministry teams donated the $5,000 fee. Every year since then, one private donor has graciously paid SECC's host fee. The Global Leadership Network now recognizes that many prison facilities are unable to cover the expense of the GLS. In turn, they work closely with donors and local religious institutions to cover these costs, and also offer scholarships to correctional facilities that cannot afford the fees. As such, there is now no cost to correctional institutions to be a host-site for live-streaming the GLS.

There are additional costs that vary by site. In the case of SECC, donors have also covered the cost of the satellite installation that allows for the GLS to be streamed into the prison, as well as internet cost for one month every August when the event is held. Donors and volunteers also purchased prepackaged snacks that are brought into the facility for participants, as well as shirts that identify VICs during the 2-day event. Additional costs might include a projector, screen, and adequate audio speakers if an institution does not already have this equipment.

Table 5: Participant Feedback

Things Learned	Better Equipped to Lead	What is (and isn't) Leadership	What Makes a Good Leader
Change is possible! There's a process, and sometimes that process can be lengthy, difficult, and painful. BUT the effort in that change is worth it! *Being a successful leader is just as much about others as oneself.* *Discomfort is a sign that you are on the right path.* *I have a role to play in a world that's much bigger than myself.* *Value your difference! True leaders can learn from anyone.*	*I've been struggling to push myself to the next level and I have more insight and tools now to reach my goals.* *I used to think leading was more about me – now I know it's about the people I lead.* *This is my 4th GLS and each time I leave better than I came. I grow mentally and spiritually, and I can help inspire others to be better.* *For two days I felt human again, and now am empowered to do better.* *I am going to accept myself for who I am and not allow my past to define my destiny.*	*...being a humble servant while meeting the needs of others around me through everyday encounters.* *Helping others reach their full potential and being able to build up the morality of the people to accomplish the task.* *Leading is not giving orders, it is being the example of what you wish each person to be.* *Leadership is not the good work that I do, but the great work I can inspire others to do.*	*Perspective! A good leader is able to look at people, situations, circumstances, and see it as an opportunity rather than a problem.* *Guiding others in the right direction and being a service to them.* *Helping others and welcoming criticism and feedback.* *A good leader sets everyone up for success.* *Someone with the vision to see the goal, the clarity to convey it to others, and the strength to do the hard things required to get there.*

Challenges

As this readership can imagine, there were unique challenges that accompanied offering the GLS inside a U.S. maximum-security prison. To begin, VICs worked very closely with custodial staff and prison administrators to help facilitate the movement of participants to and from the institution's gymnasium and classrooms during times at which such movements generally do not occur. In addition, times at which prison count was taken could not be adjusted. Therefore, when count was to occur, custodial staff came to the auditorium to go through the process of verifying the presence of each individual under correctional control. The prison also made accommodations to provide bag lunches to inmate participants rather than requiring them to go to the cafeteria to obtain and eat their lunch.

The use of necessary technology also posed a challenge. Select computers in the institution have limited internet access, but it was not a system with bandwidth that could support the GLS. As such, the abovementioned satellite needed to be installed after receiving Missouri Department of Corrections approval. While technical support was available from the Global Leadership Network during the streaming of the conference, cell phones are not allowed inside Missouri prisons, so initially there was not a way that those working with the technology inside the institution could

access assistance. One VIC was able to obtain special permission to bring their cell phone inside solely for the purpose of having immediate access to support. Additionally, because the prison had to utilize a satellite internet connection, inclement weather—namely thunderstorms—at or near the prison during GLS have resulted in losing the live-feed connection. During these times, VICs took advantage of opportunities for additional small group discussion until internet service was restored.

Suggestions for Others

Over the last seven years of offering the GLS inside SECC, a number of factors have been found to be important to the success of the event. Some the most essential factors are listed below.

Staff

Much of the success of GLS at SECC can be attributed to SECC employees. Starting by working with those in entry-level administration (e.g., Training Coordinators, Volunteer Coordinators, Chaplain, etc.) and working upward led to motivation of the Warden; the proposal then gained momentum to get Missouri Department of Corrections' executive staff excited about the prospect of having a host-site within one of their institutions.

Exclusivity

Generating excitement among participants beforehand also helped to create positive energy among persons incarcerated at SECC. Intentionally selecting the best inmates in year one led to perceptions that it was an exclusive, desirable opportunity. Because participants had to be violation free for at least 120 days in order to participate, it motivated others in the institution to model their behaviors. It is acknowledged that selecting only the best inmates in year one likely excluded those participants who would most benefit from this type of programming. Subsequent years, however, included a more diverse representation of incarcerated persons, including those considered higher risk participants. Those who were not included in the first year wanted an invitation and worked to get one. In fact, people started referring to GLS as the "Get Lucky Society" because word quickly spread that it was a beneficial event. Once selected, participants had to sign a Covenant that also helped to deter problematic behaviors because they knew it would result in losing their place at GLS and being replaced by an inmate on a waiting list.

Inmate Assistance

Including inmates in helping to deliver the event has been beneficial to both prison staff and VICs. Having a group of participants assigned to set up and break down tables/chairs, make nametags, keep water coolers filled, assist with distributing booklets/notepads, take photos, etc., not only allowed volunteers and staff to have more time to interact with other participants, but also provided inmates the opportunity to be a part of the team offering the event. VICs have also come to rely on the expertise of participants who are familiar with the prison's technology. Inmates who work with the facility's learning lab and television station have been essential in troubleshooting computer problems that are separate from the GLS live-stream; this inclusion in delivery of the program allows participants to share their own skills and expertise to benefit the group as a whole.

Break-Out Groups / Discussion

Every afternoon, the GLS has a short break for the lunch period. VICs planned to utilize this period to have small break-out sessions of approximately 10 participants and one volunteer. During this time,

they would eat sack lunches and discuss the morning's speakers. After the first lunch discussion in 2015, both inmates and volunteers realized how important these sessions were; they allowed for further discussion on the topics, but also allowed for participants to discuss how they might apply what they have learned to their lives inside the prison. This was essential, as the examples provided by the GLS faculty did not always have direct links to those living inside institutions. However, through break-out sessions, participants were able to discuss how concepts and practices from the conference could be transferred to different environments.

Because these sessions were so enlightening, VICs—with the assistance of returning participants—now help facilitate break-out sessions in the morning before the conference begins, during lunch and other shorter breaks in the conference, and, when time permits, after the conference concludes. In addition, volunteers also provide informal follow-up meetings three and six months after GLS. During these meetings (typically about 2-3 hours), short videos from previous GLS conferences are shown, and small group discussions allow for participants and volunteers to discuss how they have been applying their leadership skills to situations both inside and outside of the prison. For example, participants regularly comment on how they are more skilled in listening to others; rather than simply hearing others and preparing to respond, they listen to others and ask questions to better understand their concerns and perspectives—especially if they are different from their own. Another commonality in these sessions is how practicing humility has had a ripple-effect and they notice people around them now finding joy in seeing others succeed.

Beginning in 2021, the Global Leadership Network also offers a live-streamed *GLS Special Edition* to offer continued/expanded leadership training approximately six months after the GLS. This three-hour event is free of charge to all participating correctional institutions. In 2021, SECC had it available on demand for a period after the original streaming. All of these opportunities for ongoing small group discussion have been vital to the long-term success of offering GLS in SECC.

As was illustrated in Table 1, from 2015-2017, prison administrators invited a select number of SECC staff to attend the GLS with inmates. These staff members typically played a passive role during group discussions, and often utilized that time to take needed breaks. However, in 2018—after consulting with inmate participants from previous years—VICs and prison administrators sought to extend this invitation to more staff members, including those at other Missouri Department of Corrections institutions. In 2018, 32 Missouri Department of Corrections staff members (correctional officers, case managers, healthcare providers, chaplains, and other administrators) attended GLS at SECC. At first, participating staff were assigned to their own break-out groups. However, on Day 2, the participating staff unanimously agreed to join offender groups for discussion. This proved to be mutually beneficial. One inmate participant said, "I used to think the guy [staff member who joined their group] was a jerk, but seeing him without a uniform and listening to his viewpoints, he's really okay." Following the 2-day event, a staff member offered, "This was eye-opening. These guys are serious about this. I think for the first time in my seven years, we saw each other as human beings." Additional evaluation of staff participation and outcomes is forthcoming.

Conclusion & Implications

The purpose of the 2015 evaluation—the first year GLS was live-streamed in SECC—was to determine if those participating were impacted by attending the GLS and to glean their perceptions

of that impact. These data were also used to determine if further participation was warranted. An unforeseen outcome was sharing the experiences and data with other correctional officials, including other institutions around the U.S. considering delivering the GLS. Given the positive impact it has had on inmates and the institution itself, we would be remiss not to spotlight this innovative rehabilitative and restorative practice. Inmate participation in the Global Leadership Summit at Southeast Correctional Center resulted in significant leadership growth. In particular, the GLS has contributed to statistically significant increases in perceptions of leadership strengths and recognizing qualities of strong leaders. Importantly, positive changes were also noted with regard to ability to make changes in their community, helping others, working with those who are different from themselves, welcoming feedback, treating others with respect, and celebrating the accomplishments of others.

Written responses from participants echoed this, but also underscored the impact it had on their personal development. For example, a participant noted, "I've been struggling to push myself to the next level and I have more insight and tools now to reach my goals." These comments speak to the restorative impact GLS can have. One respondent wrote "For two days I felt human again, and now am empowered to do better." Another stated, "I am going to accept myself for who I am and now allow my past to define my destiny." Discussions on restorative justice often focuses solely on victim needs. While this is paramount, a key element of restorative justice that is often overlooked is offender personal transformation and reintegration into society. It is well known among correctional professionals that most prisoners will eventually return to their communities. Both the quantitative and qualitative data from GLS in SECC highlight this rehabilitative component that has helped build confidence and transferrable skills that will contribute to success and pro-social activities when released from incarceration. In fact, while enough data are not yet available, SECC staff and administration have voiced a noticeable trend in seeing participating offenders having their custody levels lowered, and many have achieved parole or release ahead of schedule—an impressive feat given this is a maximum security facility housing offenders with significantly long sentences. One participant attended four years of GLS programming at SECC before being released on parole after being sentenced to life in prison. When asked what impact GLS had on him, he responded "GLS allowed me to meet people who gave me the right information to help me get ready for my parole hearing and beyond... it helped build confidence to push on to do more for others... lots of patience and grit to push on."

Administrators at SECC have also noted the impact GLS had on prison culture, namely inmate behavior. In 2014—the year before GLS was implemented—there were 576 incidents in which prison staff used physical force against inmates. In 2018, administration reported this was down to 198 incidents. This was not a variable under examination so statistical support is unavailable, but administrative staff have noted that they feel the only change that could account for this drop in use of physical force was improved inmate behavior in connection with GLS. In addition, the Training Coordinator has noted similar decreases in conduct violations written and inmate grievances filed. Again, staff at SECC point directly to GLS as the reason for this decrease.

While the authors acknowledge more empirical evidence is needed, and that anecdotal evidence should not be overemphasized, strengthening leadership skills among incarcerated persons aides in the restoration and rehabilitation process. As a result, human capital is also established, which can lead to positive impacts in reentry and reintegration. With that said, many of the individuals who

participated in GLS at SECC are serving sentences of life without parole. They are still in a position to have an impact on their families and communities, but much of their influence is inside the prison itself by helping to change the culture of the institution. The prison culture and environment are essential to health and safety—helping incarcerated persons lead successful lives whether inside the facility or upon release.

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DO WARDENS HOLD THE KEY TO PRISON CULTURE? PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE AND A CALL FOR RESEARCH ON EMPOWERING CORRECTIONAL LEADERS TO REIMAGINE PRISON

Rachel D. Crawley and Jesse Wiese
Prison Fellowship®[1]

Abstract

Research across disciplines links improved customer outcomes to organizational culture, and organizational leadership drives that culture. The same links may also exist in corrections such that improved prison culture may facilitate better outcomes for returning citizens, and correctional leaders can influence those improvements. Warden Exchange®, a program of Prison Fellowship®, was developed based on the hypothesis that equipping corrections professionals to be transformational leaders will ultimately lead to better prison culture and outcomes. Evaluation evidence suggests that prison leaders may indeed hold the key to transforming culture in corrections. Further investigation is recommended.

Keywords: Correctional Leadership, Prison Culture, Transformational Leadership, Leadership Development

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Introduction

Organizational culture – the work environment and its influence on values, attitudes, behaviors, and practices for those in the organization (Warrick & Mueller, 2015) – is widely recognized as an important contributor to staff performance and wellbeing (Nikpour, 2019; Rossberg & Friis, 2004) and consumer satisfaction and service provision (e.g., Agbényiga, 2011; Beidokhti & Ghaderi, 2011; Gillespie, Denison, Haaland, Smerek, & Neale, 2008; Rossberg & Friis, 2004) across various disciplines. The importance of organizational culture is supported beyond just the business sector, with mounting evidence of its vital role in healthcare (Hartmann et al., 2009; Rossberg & Friis, 2004; Tzeng, Ketefian, & Redman, 2002) and the social services (e.g., Collins-Camargo & Royse, 2010; Williams, Glisson, Hemmelgarn, & Green, 2017). The links between staff wellbeing, staff retention, and quality of services have prompted organizations to re-examine and prioritize their company culture (Warrick, 2017).

Leadership approach has emerged as one of the primary factors influencing organizational culture (Sarros, Gray, & Densten, 2002; Warrick, 2017), and transformational leadership (a leadership style marked by valuing and developing the team, openness to opposing ideas, inspiring others towards improvement, taking appropriate professional risks, and embracing and expecting innovation; Burns, 1978; Edwards, Knight, Broome, & Flynn, 2010) is often cited as an effective approach for developing organizational culture. Leaders who take a transformational leadership approach to their role tend to see greater performance and satisfaction from staff (e.g., Andriani, Kesumawati, & Kristiawan, 2018; Anselmann & Mulder, 2020), and wardens using this approach may benefit from protective factors from stress (Atkins-Plunk, 2013). Transformational leadership may be a particularly effective approach for corrections due to its focus on improving the environment and working conditions (Crockett, 2017) and the broad application of the term "transformational" including both small and large changes (see Burns, 1978). Among the few studies examining prison leadership, transformational leadership factors were indeed predictive of management and leadership effectiveness (Walters, 1998),

Despite the growing body of knowledge about the impact of organizational culture and leadership, and the application of this knowledge in corrections in other countries (e.g. Norway, the Netherlands), these concepts have not been fully applied to or examined in the corrections field in the United States. In fact, Jacobs and Olitsky noted these gaps and the sparsity of literature on correctional leadership in 2004. Unfortunately, surprisingly little has been done to address these issues in a scholarly manner since. There has been modest interest in prison culture, but research in this area has primarily focused on social culture or climate from the point of view of those incarcerated in prison (e.g., Auty & Liebling, 2019; Bosma et al., 2020; Mitchell, Pyrooz, & Decker, 2020), and has not addressed the organizational climate from the viewpoint of leadership and staff. In fact, a recent article by van Ginneken (2020) points out that the lack of multi-level analysis of prison culture is one of the current gaps in the literature. Findings from existing studies do, however, provide evidence for the impact of staff attitudes and behaviors on the social climate and other outcomes for people in prison (e.g., Autry & Liebling, 2019; Beijersbergen et al., 2016; Schubert, Mulvey, Loughran, & Losoya, 2012). Studies have examined and compared prisons by cultural markers such as staff interactions, felt safety, and security level (Camp, Gaes, Langan, & Saylor, 2003; Chen & Shapiro, 2007; Gaes & Camp, 2009; Long et al., 2011 Nagin, Cullen, & Jonson, 2009) suggesting that prison itself is a type of program, and what people living in prison learn and practice cognitively and behaviorally while they are incarcerated depends heavily on the attitudes and behaviors of the staff and leadership, or organizational culture.

Researchers suggest that prison culture, reflected by how staff treat people in prison, is related to outcomes for returning citizens (Auty & Liebling, 2019). Not only does this culture negatively impact staff and people in prison, but it also creates an environment where implementing innovative or best practices is challenging (e.g., Williams & Glisson, 2014). Culture could be a barrier or a strength in multiple areas.

Given the above considerations and evidence, it is reasonable to hypothesize that, like other fields, the organizational culture in corrections is linked to staff and "consumer" (people in prison) outcomes and is likely heavily influenced by leadership as previously suggested by Jacobs and Olitsky (2004) (note that the influence of prison on the people incarcerated there is limited and should not be considered more responsible for their success or future struggles than other, more influential factors). Likewise, it is likely that a transformational leadership approach would result in successful changes to culture. Despite the unique security considerations in corrections settings, these institutions can either provide a positive and productive culture for staff and incarcerated citizens to engage in social learning and practicing a prosocial lifestyle, or a punitive culture that has historically been harmful to both staff and people in prison (Auty & Liebling; Cullen, Jonson, & Nagin, 2011; Liebling, 2011), and prison leaders set the tone one way or the other. However, ensuring that prison leaders have the skills to intentionally influence culture presents another challenge.

Leadership development for correctional leaders (i.e., wardens, superintendents) in the United States has historically been lacking. Often, wardens are not provided with leadership development, and they report feeling isolated and unprepared for their roles (Beto, 2007; McCampbell, 2002). Despite holding a complex leadership position akin to a community mayor who oversees the welfare of a community (Atkin-Plunk, 2013), wardens have historically been hired because they were good at their security role rather than for their potential as a visionary leader (Beto, 2007). In fact, research suggests that visionary leadership is one of the lowest-rated leadership skills for prison leaders (e.g., Munoz, 2019). Leadership training and a focus on culture is one of the recommended directions for prison leadership development (Beto, 2007). Strategic planning and forging productive partnerships are also cited as an area for development for prison leaders (Cohn, 2008). Fortunately, more leadership training opportunities have emerged (e.g., the National Institute of Corrections Correctional Leadership Development Series), but we know little about their impact.

Transformational Leadership Training for Prison Leaders

One of the leadership development opportunities emerging to meet the needs of correctional leadership is Warden Exchange, a program of Prison Fellowship. Warden Exchange aims to equip corrections professionals to bring restorative change to their facilities. The program features an interactive transformational leadership curriculum and is unique in the United States as the most comprehensive available program for corrections leaders (i.e., nine-months for online and residency components or seven-months online-only).

Warden Exchange began in 2014 as a nine-month residency program with weekly online sessions; three 2-day in-person meetings at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the program; and a vision plan component. The program has continued annually since with each year's class separated into cohorts. The evaluation team utilized an instructional design approach (McKenney & Reeves, 2019) to provide actionable evaluation data to the development team as the program evolved. In

2015, an additional seven-month long online-only cohort was added to Warden Exchange. In 2021, online-only participants began completing vision plans as part of the program. An additional cohort of security leaders (e.g., shift supervisors, majors) was added to the online program in 2021. The security leaders' cohort does not complete vision plans. Table 1 summarizes the program cohorts and the major components that differ between them.

Table 1: Warden Exchange Historical Cohorts and Activities

	In-person Residency Sessions	Online Sessions	Vision Planning
Residency 2014-2021	X	X	X
Online 2015-2020		X	
Online 2021		X	X
Security Leadership 2021		X	

During the program, participants explore correctional best practices with subject-matter experts in restorative justice, change management, engagement strategies, strategic planning, communication, and team development. Online sessions typically include presentation of a topic, skill, or best practice by a subject matter expert and then activities and/or discussion groups to consider how the topic applies to their own circumstances follow. Sessions range from theoretical to applied in nature. In-person sessions include opportunities to network with and benefit from the experiences and wisdom of other participants and advisory panel members (former directors or secretaries of corrections and other highly respected correctional leaders), visit other prison facilities, and engage in experiential group activities aimed at brainstorming ways to re-imagine corrections in their own country. As part of the program, participants are taught how to create a vision plan and are encouraged to do so for their own facilities. Strategic planning and communicating the vision are both important components of successfully facilitating cultural change, especially if the desired changes are transformational in nature (i.e., those with the "potential to bring about deep and profound shifts in systems and cultures," Carol Flaherty-Zonis Associates, 2007, p. 42; Warrick, 2017). Vision plans provide participants with the framework needed to identify specific culture issues they wish to change, the goals and strategic steps needed to make those changes, and their approach for tracking progress and outcomes. Vision plans also provide participants with a means to communicate their vision and strategic plan with their team and leadership (e.g., Carol Flaherty-Zonis Associates, 2007). At the end of the 9-month program, each warden presents their vision plan to the group and to the advisory panel for feedback and suggestions.

While the evaluation efforts examining Warden Exchange were not intended to address the gap identified in the broader knowledge base, the evaluation results provide some information about the link between prison leadership and their impact on prison culture. Results are presented here to encourage more investigation of leadership development for correctional leaders and the potential impact on prison culture.

Method

Participants

Three hundred fifteen correctional leaders participated in Warden Exchange from 2014 to 2021 (Table 2). Most participants were correctional leaders within the United States; less than 5% were correctional leaders in the United Kingdom. Participants included males (61%) and females (38%) with less than 1% of participants not providing gender. More than half of participants identified as White (61%) followed by 16% Black or African American, 3% Hispanic, and 20% Other or unknown. Most participants were Wardens (36%; highest ranking staff member at the facility, responsible for overseeing all facility operations and planning) or Associate, Assistant, or Deputy Wardens (40%; oversees facility staff, operations, and planning under the direction of the warden) followed by Managers/Supervisors (13%; responsible for specific areas or shifts and security staff at a facility; includes Unit Leaders, Counselors, Lieutenants, Captains, Majors, and Colonels) and other designations (12%; e.g., Director, Administrative Assistant, Chaplain). Of the 122 residency participants, 118 individuals from 56 institutions completed the 9-month residency program.

Table 2: Warden Exchange Cohort Participants (N = 315) by Year 2014 through 2021

Cohort Year	Number of Residency Participants (n = 122)	Number of Online Participants (n = 170)	Number of Security Leader Participants (n = 23)
2014	15	n/a	n/a
2015	14	7	n/a
2016	15	7	n/a
2017	15	3	n/a
2018	15	17	n/a
2019	16	20	n/a
2020	18	40	n/a
2021[c]	14[a]	76[b]	23

[a]Eighteen participants were included in the residency cohort at the time of the prison culture pilot survey.
[b]Seventy-seven participants were included in the online cohorts at the time of the prison culture pilot survey.
[c]One-hundred eighteen participants were included in the 2021 cohorts at the time of the prison culture pilot survey.

To ensure logistical programmatic support for participants, they were each asked to verify receipt of the appropriate authorization to participate. Perceived support from participants' respective departments or higher authority was not systematically collected.

Procedure

Evaluation Interviews and Surveys

Semi-structured interviews asking about participant beliefs about corrections, need for change, leadership, and their experiences in the program were conducted with the initial 2014 cohort (n = 15) throughout their participation in the program. Additionally, in 2018, participants from each residency cohort from 2014 through 2017 (n = 59) were asked to participate in follow-up semi-structured

interviews about their experiences in the program. Forty-seven participants completed these follow-up interviews representing 80% of residency participants during that timeframe.

In December 2018, an impact survey was sent via e-mail to all individuals who participated in the residency program from 2014 to 2018 (*n* = 74). The survey was completed online by 39 participants (52% response rate).

Vision Plan Impact Interviews

Residency participants from the 2014 through 2020 cohorts who completed and presented vision plans during the program were contacted by the evaluation team in 2021 and asked if they would be willing to complete a follow-up survey about their vision plan implementation. Participants who agreed also had the option to take part in a follow-up semi-structured interview to further understand the context around their survey responses.

Organizational Climate Survey Pilot

Participants in the 2021 program (*n* = 118) were presented with the option to participate in a pilot survey examining prison culture within their facilities using adapted subscales from the Texas Christian University Organizational Readiness to Change Criminal Justice Form (Lehman, Greener, & Flynn, 2012). Scales included Mission (mission clarity and awareness of institution mission and goals), Cohesion (team trust and cooperation), Autonomy (independence for staff to do their jobs), Communication (receptivity to suggestions and effectiveness of information networks), Stress (perceived strain and role overload among staff), and Change (the institution's interest in and openness to change). Participants who volunteered to complete the survey accessed the online questionnaire via a link e-mailed to them by the evaluator and answered each organizational climate item representing their perspective of their facility at the time of the survey (April-May 2021) and retrospectively prior to participating in the program (prior to January 2021).

Results

Evaluation Interviews

First Warden Exchange Cohort Interviews

Interviews with the initial cohort of Warden Exchange participants (Johnson, 2014) inquired about perceptions of the culture and challenges in corrections. Thematic among their responses was that the environment is "naturally negative" within the prison and that environment contributes to difficulties finding and keeping quality staff. When asked about prison culture – what is it and how to change it – several themes emerged among responses. Participants believed that the staff culture and that of the incarcerated people were separate but influenced each other and that the staff play a significant role in the culture within the facility. Participants noted the need for a more respectful approach from staff towards people in prison and the need for a shift in attitude (i.e., a less negative attitude) about people in prison. Some participants noted the direct role that leadership and administration play in setting the tone and driving the culture of the facility. When asked about what evidence could be used to monitor culture change in their facilities, participants reported using their standard metrics to track areas of change, such as fewer violent incidents. Participants also anecdotally reported that they observed more positive interactions between staff and people in

prison, more community involvement and investment among staff, more willingness among staff to volunteer for things, and less overall tension.

When asked specifically about what they valued about the program, participants in the first cohort indicated that they valued the networking opportunities – the ability to talk to someone else in a leadership position with some of the same issues – the opportunity to grow together and learn together as leaders. Participants reported that the program encouraged them to develop a clearer message which led to better teamwork within the facility. Participants also mentioned being encouraged to take more ownership of their facility and outcomes.

Follow-up Interviews

Participants from the 2014 to 2017 residency cohorts were interviewed to gather their perspectives on the program and prison culture change (Reeves & Hill, 2019). All responses represent participants' perceived experiences.

When asked about their experience in the program, participants from multiple cohorts reported they highly valued networking with each other as a benefit of participating in the program; citing being able to talk to other leaders and get ideas from each other. Participants across multiple years also reported that the experience challenged their thinking and changed the way they view their leadership role – expanding it to include more creative ideas and courage to take more professional risks. Participants mentioned that they valued being exposed to new ideas and possibilities that challenged their way of thinking about their role and what corrections could look like (Johnson, 2014).

When asked what, if anything, has changed within their facilities since participating, several themes emerged. Participants reported changes in their own approach to their jobs. For example, participants reported being more open communicators, listening more to staff, and being more intentional about showing staff their appreciation for them. Participants spent more time getting to know both staff and people in prison better. Participants also indicated reading more and sharing more about evidence-based approaches and best practices within corrections, as well as implementing more programming and being more open to the use of technology to meet needs. Many participants reported that the way they viewed their role as a leader changed and they saw more value in casting a vision for their facilities. An additional common theme was that participants reported increased leadership courage and willingness to take reasonable risks.

Participants also reported noting changes in their teams and staff. For example, participants reported better overall communication with their staff and better teamwork among staff. They also reported noticing their staff brainstorming more and taking a more creative to approach problem solving. They reported their staff have more ownership of their own roles and there is better mission congruence.

When asked how participants continue to use what they gained in the program, many referred to changing the way they view their roles and the value of casting a vision for themselves as leaders and for their facility. One theme that emerged was the increase in leadership courage and passing their new knowledge on to upcoming leaders and staff. Many participants anecdotally reported that they observed changes in their facility culture. Changes cited included more open communication, more respectful interactions, and changes in the people they hire and in their incarcerated people.

Vision Plan Impact Interviews

To better understand the utility of vision planning among participants of the Warden Exchange residency, those who completed a vision plan during the program from the 2014 through 2020 cohorts were contacted to request follow-up interviews. Of the 44 facilities represented among the cohorts within this timeframe, 36 completed vision plans. Thirty-four of these facilities were invited to participate in the follow-up. Two were not invited due to low vision plan quality (e.g., very few details). Twenty-one facilities responded to the request. Of those responding, 17 reported being able to implement at least part of the vision plan they developed during the program. Among those who were not able to implement their vision plan, leadership changes (e.g., the participant moving to a different facility or being promoted) and the COVID-19 pandemic were often cited as the primary barriers.

Where possible, indicators of change such as aggregated facility metrics within the facility were requested for those who implemented at least part of their vision plan. While the shared metrics were not sufficient to conduct any statistical tests to verify trends, participants pointed to datapoints they believed reflected perceived changes in their facility culture: Increase in the number of community volunteers (e.g., the number of volunteers doubled from 20+ to 40+), a downward trend in violent behaviors, reduced monthly cell extractions, increases in staff accolades (in this case, average accolades per year increased 25% after implementing the vision plan compared to the years prior), decreases in protective custody requests, decreases in grievances, and a decreasing trend in suicide attempts. In other cases where indicators were less quantifiable, participants pointed to perceived changes such as greater community engagement, more discussions with media and community members among staff and people in prison, implementation of more programs for people in prison, more staff development and promotions, implementation of creative projects like special units, and expanding peer to peer programming. Additional participant perceived indicators of change included: a shift from a culture of violence to one of rehabilitation, more staff involvement in strategic planning, more staff engagement and ownership of the mission and vision, more respectful interactions and language among staff and people in prison, implementing initiatives to give people in prison a voice in their environment and decisions that directly impact them, and implementation of creative corrective sanctions. Participants seemed to embrace the belief that they have the ability to drive culture change.

During the follow-up interviews, evaluators learned that a number of alumni have been promoted since completing the program. In these cases, participants articulated being able to take their transformational leadership skills with them to their new facilities or roles supervising or mentoring other prison leaders. These individuals report being supportive of the continued efforts of others under their purview to improve prison culture.

Organizational Climate Survey Pilot

Through 2020, nearly all the evidence of culture change within participant facilities was anecdotal – observations made by the participants collected during qualitative interviews and surveys. To examine change in culture in a different way, the evaluation team piloted a survey among participants of the 2021 residency, online, and security leadership participants asking participants about their perceptions of their facility's culture before starting the program (retrospectively, before January 2021) and at the point in the program when the survey was administered (April and May 2021). Results from the survey indicated that participants perceived organizational changes within the first

several months of the program including statistically significant improvements in mission, cohesion, staff autonomy, communication, and openness to change (see Table 3).

Table 3: Organizational Readiness to Change Scale Scores and Paired Samples t-test Results

	$M_{Time\ 1}$	$M_{Time\ 2}$	*t*-value	*df*	Cohen's *d*
Mission	35.97	37.41	-3.66***	63	0.46
Cohesion	32.18	33.28	-3.03**	58	0.39
Autonomy	31.72	33.23	-3.09**	63	0.39
Communication	33.29	35.54	-5.71***	63	0.71
Stress	32.38	32.50	-0.64	63	0.08
Change	35.75	37.29	-5.03***	63	0.63

$^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

Discussion

Research across disciplines demonstrates the importance of organizational leadership to culture and the impact of culture on staff and customer outcomes. It is hypothesized that these same links are also important in the corrections environment. Thus, prison leaders (wardens, superintendents, governors) can transform prison culture with the appropriate training in transformational leadership and vision planning. Evaluation findings from Warden Exchange from 2014 through 2021 provide some preliminary evidence that supports this hypothesis, but robust, targeted research is needed to further explore the potential of prison leadership training to contribute to the "what works" literature.

Evaluation data from Warden Exchange suggests that when provided with leadership programming and vision planning guidance, wardens take advantage of the networking opportunities to share ideas, support each other and seem to be open to challenging their views of prison culture and the role of the warden. With leadership training, wardens reported involving their staff more in the planning process, listening more, and investing more in important relationships. They also reported feeling more empowered to take calculated professional risks and to find more creative solutions to issues. Anecdotally, wardens who implemented at least some of their vision plans perceived changes in their facility culture such as better communication and teamwork, more respectful interactions among staff and people in prison, improving trends in their facility metrics, and less overall tension within the facility. Further, retrospective organizational climate scale results indicated that wardens were seeing significant improvements in mission alignment, communication, team cohesion, staff autonomy, and openness to change.

Research in the human services field suggests that organizations with a more open, higher functioning climate are better situated to implement new innovations and can expect better staff engagement and performance as well as better client satisfaction (Agbényiga, 2011; Beidokhti & Ghaderi, 2011; Gillespie, Denison, Haaland, Smerek, & Neale, 2008; Moullin, Ehrhart, & Aarons, 2017; Nikpour, 2019; Rossberg & Friis, 2004). Leadership development, especially in the area of impacting culture, is seen as a high priority in other fields (e.g., Warrick, 2017; Warrick & Gardner, 2022). The need for more leadership development for corrections has been noted for years (e.g., Jacobs & Cooperman, 2012; Jacobs & Olitsky, 2004). If the anecdotal observations gathered from Warden Exchange participants are truly culture changes, then training prison leaders to be more transformational and engage in

more strategic vision planning may be another tool (a more accessible one) in the "what else works" toolbox that can be implemented by a number of training providers.

Because the evaluation data presented here were not collected alongside comparison data or using an experimental design or even validated measures for prison culture, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that it is possible these things are connected. It is also possible they are not connected. However, evidence spanning various disciplines supporting these connections provides support to recommend further investigation in this area. One challenge in this area of inquiry is the lack of validated measures created for use within this context. Future research should not only focus on the development and impact of training for correctional leaders, but also on measures and methodology. Future research may also wish to investigate the wider, indirect impacts of leadership development on staff, people in prison, and the community and determine if any of these impacts are sustained over time. Warden Exchange participants focus on the changes they can make within their own facilities rather than larger, systemic changes in corrections. The initial program evaluation model for Warden Exchange was not designed to estimate longitudinal changes, indirect effects, or sustainment; however, results suggest that multi-level investigations may provide more insight. Leadership development and implementation science has rarely been applied to corrections, and we recommend more investment in doing so in the future.

Conclusions

While the findings presented here do not lead to solid conclusions about leadership training for prison leaders, they do provide evidence that this is an area worth further investment. Preliminary evaluation data suggest that it is likely that prison culture, and thus corrections outcomes can be improved by empowering leaders to develop and use transformational leadership skills. We recommend further investigation to determine if this could truly be an additional "what else works" approach to improve corrections.

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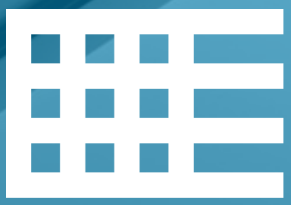
Jesse Wiese serves as National Director of Program Design and Evaluation at Prison Fellowship, the United States' largest outreach to prisoners, former prisoners, and their families. He has worked in various aspects of criminal justice including prison programming, reentry, and advocacy. Currently, Wiese manages Prison Fellowship's program design and evaluation and the expansion of Prison Fellowship's Good Citizenship Model™, an innovative approach to defining and measuring success in the prison system. Wiese served seven-and-a-half years incarcerated for robbery and is a powerful advocate for criminal justice solutions that promote human flourishing. Wiese shares his unique insights with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including state legislatures, universities, and businesses. He has testified before Congress and several state legislatures. Wiese is currently a licensed attorney and lives in Virginia with his wife and children.



ADVANCING CORRECTIONS

Journal of the International Corrections and Prisons Association

Call for Papers and Submission Guidelines

For publication in ADVANCING CORRECTIONS
Issue # 14: "What Else Works ...Volume # 2"
JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL CORRECTIONS AND PRISONS ASSOCIATION

PLEASE SUBMIT BY JULY 30th, 2022

AIMS AND SCOPE OF ADVANCING CORRECTIONS

The ICPA believes that development of a professional and humane corrections should be grounded in evidence. Respect for evidence is a hallmark of the ICPA. But evidence is of little value unless it is understood and put into action. Our semi-annual Journal *Advancing Corrections* is intended to fill the need for researchers to speak more clearly to practitioners and practitioners to speak in a more evidence-informed way to their colleagues. We want to provide a forum for both researchers and practitioners from a wide range of disciplines (criminal justice, education, psychology, sociology, political science, economics, public health, and social work) to publish papers that examine issues from a unique, interdisciplinary and global perspective. Your paper could be an evidence-informed discussion of an important correctional issue, an overview of some new research findings and their implications for practice, a description of an innovative program or approach, or an informed commentary on some aspect of managing a key issue in corrections.

The Journal invites submission of papers that can be digested and appreciated by practitioners, managers, policy-makers and other correctional professionals. Authors are welcomed to submit papers for one of three sections of the Journal. *Featured Research Articles* should be more research oriented and scholarly, including the usual practice of referencing the relevant literature. Another section called *Views and Reviews* welcomes shorter and thoughtful discussions of a particularly relevant or emerging issue/topic. And finally, a section we are calling *Practice Innovation in Corrections* would like to profile what is going on in a given agency/jurisdiction that is especially innovative and can be of interest broadly to others.

THEME for the 14th Edition: "What Else Works ... Volume # 2"

Our last Edition of Advancing Corrections on the theme of What Else Works received a very enthusiastic response. In order to give an opportunity to other researchers and practitioners who might wish to address this theme, we have decided to publish a 2nd Volume on the same theme. Once again, we would like to explore what types of programs, services, activities, policies and/or practices seem to be making a difference (or could be making a difference) even if direct evidence in affecting re-offending may not be either yet available or easily determined.

- We especially invite reasoned arguments for why the traditional What Works approach should be modified and how;
- Descriptions of 'system-level' recasting of services that are connected and delivered 'as an

integrated whole' – either in prison, in the community, or in helping individuals to transition from the prison to the community.
- Well integrated community support and services to help marginalized individuals overcome barriers and the challenges of reintegration;
- The benefits of partnerships with NGOs, other government sectors, research institutions and other stakeholders in introducing change and improving correctional performance;
- Importantly, there should be some clear theoretical coherence and/or qualitative or quantitative evaluation data to support the models or frameworks that are described.
- New research findings are especially welcomed where there is clear implication for What Else May Work in helping shape corrections towards excellence.

HOW SHOULD YOU SUBMIT YOUR PAPER?

Manuscripts should follow the Guidelines for Authors for the Journal. Suggested page length is from 7 to 15 pages (about 2,000 to 5,000 word-count), although lengthier research-oriented manuscripts or reviews may be considered based on merit. Whenever appropriate, papers should include referencing of other related scholarly work, though it is emphasized that *Advancing Corrections* is not intended as an academic publication. Papers should be respectful of evidence but they should be written in a way that appeals to practitioners. Manuscripts should be submitted electronically to **Dr. Frank Porporino, Ph.D**., Chair of the ICPA Research and Development Network and Editor of *Advancing Corrections* (fporporino@rogers.com). A copy should also be forwarded to the ICPA Communications Officer, **Alex Petrov**, at the ICPA Head Office (alexpetrov@icpa.org).

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOUR PAPER?

Advancing Corrections has an international Editorial Review Board and submitted papers **will undergo a formal and rigorous 'peer review' process**. The ICPA Research and Development (R&D) Network is committed to finding more and better ways of communicating research-informed knowledge to the ICPA membership. Many of the members of the group serve as reviewers of submitted manuscripts.

The Editor of *Advancing Corrections* will manage the process of selecting manuscripts for review and choosing the final set of papers to be included in the Edition. Papers that may not be suitable for the publication may nonetheless be posted on the ICPA Web Site or included in the ICPA Newsletter for the information of ICPA members.

Please note that we will not accept papers that are submitted after the deadline for a given Edition of *Advancing Corrections*. We will also not accept papers that simply attempt to promote a particular product or market a particular method or service without supportive evidence of effectiveness. *Advancing Corrections* is not a marketing vehicle. It is a professional Journal intended to broaden our knowledge base in corrections.

If you believe that evidence and facts should be the drivers for change in corrections rather than

ungrounded opinion or ideology, please make an effort to support our ICPA Journal.

Sincerely,

Frank J. Porporino, Ph.D.
Editor *Advancing Corrections* and Chair, ICPA Research & Development Network

GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

-- For publication in *ADVANCING CORRECTIONS* --

JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL CORRECTIONS AND PRISONS ASSOCIATION

Aims & Scope

Advancing Corrections is a peer-reviewed publication that provides an interdisciplinary and international forum for the dissemination of new research, policies and practices related to advancing professional corrections worldwide. The aim is to provide an opportunity for both researchers and practitioners from a wide range of disciplines (criminal justice, psychology, sociology, political science, economics, public health, and social work) to publish papers that examine issues from a variety of perspectives in a unique, interdisciplinary forum. Your paper could be an evidence-informed discussion of an important issue related to the theme of our next ICPA Annual Conference, a summary of some new research findings and their implications for practice, a description of an innovative program or approach, or an informed commentary on some aspect of managing a key issue in corrections.

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Article contributions will only be considered provided they have been edited and are ready for processing, namely: language edited, stylistically polished and carefully proof read in following the technical format and referencing guidelines as provided below. In submitting a paper author/s acknowledge that it is their own original work and that all content sourced from other authors and/or publications have been fully recognized and referenced according to the guidelines for authors.

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- The theme of the paper is significant and useful (timely, important, in need of addressing);
- The paper addresses (unpacks) themes logically, consistently and convincingly;
- The paper demonstrates an adequate understanding of the literature in the field;
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- Conclusions are clearly stated and they adequately tie together the elements of the paper;
- The standard of writing (including spelling and grammar) is satisfactory and the style of writing is practitioner-oriented;
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Papers that are submitted for consideration should adhere to the following minimum standards and technical and formatting requirements:

1. All parts of the manuscript, including referencing, should follow standard American Psychological Association (APA) format; the paper should be double-spaced, with margins of at least one inch on all sides and with manuscript pages numbered consecutively. Suggested page length is from 7-15 pages, double-spaced (about 2000 to 5,000 word-count). Each paper should be summarized in an abstract of not more than 100 words;
2. The title of the article (in Sentence Case, i.e. displaying words to be intentionally capitalised) and the author's f**ull first name and surname**, designation, institutional affiliation, address & contact email should appear on the first page;
3. Font: Times New Roman 12 ;
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5. Spelling: Please make use (choose this as your default option) of the North American spellcheck and NOT the UK one;
6. Use of quotes and italics: Long quotes are placed in a separate paragraph and must be indented from both sides.

ICPA wants to encourage authors to include references with their papers in order to allow readers to do follow-up reading on the topic in question. Manuscripts, including figures, tables, and references, must conform to the specifications described in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

Examples for Referencing:

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Contribution to a Book: Chow, T.W., & Cummings, J.L. (2000). The amygdale and Alzheimer's disease.

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Other Documents: African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. (1999). Available at: http://www.umn.edu/humanarts/africa/afchild.htm (accessed [or retrieved] on: 14 January 2005).

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