

Chapter

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Impact of prison climate on sexual offenders: desistance and rehabilitation

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ABSTRACT

Prison social climate has been defined as the enduring social, emotional, organisational and physical characteristics of a prison as perceived by inmates and staff. Within this chapter we argue that a positive prison climate can create the conditions necessary to facilitate personal and behaviour change specific to reduced reoffending. We present an integrated model of prison-based sex offender treatment that identifies how prison climate is important in mediating the relationship between rehabilitation and desistance. Specifically, we articulate how a positive prison climate mediates this relationship *before*, *during*, and *after* the actual program delivery and what can be done to create and maintain such a climate. We conclude with an example from Australia where new prisons have been built with structural and correctional management innovations designed specifically to facilitate the development and maintenance of a positive prison climate.

INTRODUCTION

The majority of offenders convicted of a sexual offence will expect to receive a custodial sentence - often of considerable length. Life for a sex offender in custody will be difficult as the perception of sex offenders in prison, particularly those who have abused children, is likely to be even worse than it is in the outside community (see Akerstrom, 1986; Hogue, 1993; van den Berg et al., 2017). The challenges facing sex offenders in custody are further compounded by the general prison climate, which is commonly characterized as hypermasculine and hostile and operates under a 'prison-code', which sex offenders have violated by the nature of their offending behaviour. The prison climate and status of sex offenders within this environment can create an atmosphere of fear and isolation that can present considerable challenges for therapeutic efforts that aim to address the antecedents and risk factors associated with sexual offending (Ware, Frost & Hoy, 2010).

When considered within a desistance paradigm, imprisonment can provide a catalyst for change (Gobbels, Ward, & Willis, 2012), a period of primary desistance (Maruna & Toch, 2005), during which sexual offenders can commence the process of self-identity transformation and rehabilitation that can lead to sustained (secondary) desistance. Initial consideration of the proposition that prison can provide opportunities for positive self-development and prosocial self-identity appears paradoxical. However, within this chapter we will argue that the establishment of a constructive social climate within prison can create the necessary conditions to facilitate this type of personal change. Central to this argument is an integrated model of prison-based sex offender treatment, which identifies the prison climate

as important in mediating the relationship between treatment engagement, treatment effectiveness, personal transformation, formation of prosocial bonds and secondary desistance (Gobbells, Ward, & Willis, 2012).

This theoretical model argues that the prison climate has been underestimated in its importance as a contextual issue that may either positively or negatively affect rehabilitative (psychological treatment) effectiveness and the process of desistance. Specifically, we focus on and outline some of the core principles of group treatment and therapeutic communities with sex offenders and describe how we believe that a positive prison climate offers an extension of these concepts beyond the room in which treatment was delivered. We then describe an example from Australia where new prisons have been built with structural and correctional management innovations that we believe will assist in the development and maintenance of a positive prison climate. Throughout this chapter, in support of our model, we summarize the research evidence specific to prison climate and how this may impact rehabilitation efforts with sex offenders, highlighting the gaps in our knowledge with a view to inspiring empirical and conceptual consideration of these issues in the future.

DEFINING PRISON CLIMATE

The environment in which we live has an important influence on our attitudes and behaviour. This is particularly true in a prison environment where prisoners are required to work and live within the confines of the prison.

The social climate within any environment is recognised as particularly influential and is conceptualised as ‘a set of organisational properties and conditions that are perceived by its members and are assumed to exert a major influence on behaviour’ (Wright, 1985, p.258). More specifically, prison social climate has been defined as the enduring social, emotional, organisational and physical characteristics of a prison as perceived by inmates and staff (Ross, Diamond, Liebling, & Saylor, 2007).

Prison social climates are complex and multifaceted and are inherently relational and subjectively experienced (Lewis, 2017; Liebling, Hulley & Crew, 2012). As a result of this complexity, the development of a single, consistent operational definition of prison climate has proven elusive and there remains conjecture over the relative importance of the multiple sources of variance at both the individual and institutional level (Day, Casey, Vess, & Huisy, 2012; Saylor, 1984). The conceptualization and operationalisation of prison social climate has developed from two largely independent theoretical and disciplinary perspectives: managerialist and therapeutic.

The managerialist perspective of prison social climate has focused largely on the safety and security aspects of prison climate as well as the development of prison climate as a measure of management performance (Camp, et al, 2002; Camp, Gaes & Saylor, 2002; Dilulio, 1990; Logan, 1992; Saylor, 1984). This perspective defines prison social climate as the staff and inmate perceptions of the interactions between the physical, psychological and social elements of the prison environment (Saylor, 1984). However, it also emphasizes the importance of measuring both the subjective experiences and perceptions of staff and inmates as well as the more objective organisational information which is obtained from organisational and operational records to understand the etiology of prison climates (Saylor, 1984).

This perspective of prison climate is largely build on Logan's (1992) confinement model of prison, which identified the key elements of a quality prison environment as security, safety, order, care, activity, justice, conditions, and management. This model of prison climate does not consider the 'what works' movement in modern prison management and the increased emphasis in prisons on the 'responsible engagement with offending behaviour programs and other activities or courses thought to challenge thinking and behaviours relevant to offending' (Liebling, Hulley & Crew, 2012, p.10).

More recently, conceptualisations of prison social climate have shifted to focus on the therapeutic effectiveness or therapeutic compatibility of prisons. Schalast, Redies, Collins, Stacey, and Howells (2008) contend that the extent to which the prison environment is perceived as supportive of therapy and therapeutic change contrasted with the level of tension and perceived threat of aggression and violence that exist, defines prison climate. They drew attention to three facets of correctional setting that define climate: (a) perceived inmate safety, (b) support provided by correctional staff and inmates, and (c) the inmate's perception of the climate as conducive to therapeutic change. With these facets in mind, a positive prison climate can be characterized as supportive, safe, and maintaining opportunities for inmate personal growth and development (van de Helm, Stamms, & van der Laan, 2011).

The most comprehensive conceptualisation of the prison climate has been developed by Leibling and associates and culminated in the formulation of the Measure of Quality of Prison Life (MQPL) (and associated Staff Quality of Life (SQL)) (Leibling with Arnold, 2004). This model of prison climate has been successful in identifying and operationalising a broad range of dimensions that influence prison life and determine a prison's climate. This multidimensional construction of prison climate or prison life, recognises the importance of understanding how the breadth of inmates' perceptions and experiences of prison affects their

behaviour and well-being both in custody and following release. The MQPL measures 4 key dimensions of prison climate: (i) Harmony (respect, staff-prisoner relationships, humanity), (ii) Professionalism (staff professionalism, bureaucratic legitimacy, fairness), (iii) Security (policing and security), (iv) Well-Being and Development (addressing offending behaviour, preparation for release) (Liebling, Hulley & Crew, 2012).

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRISON CLIMATE

There is general consensus that prison climate can have a considerable impact on the behaviour of inmates both in custody and following release from prison. As Ross et al (2008) articulates “it is reasonable to assume that variation in prison climate may have an impact on offending and re-arrest rates, and type of offence, after release. It may also influence the impact of imprisonment on self-harm, violent behaviour, or drug use among other variables, during incarceration’ (p.448).

The impact of prison climate on inmates is almost universally conceptualised as negative (Bradley et al., 1998; Cid, 2009; Dhimi, Ayton, & Loewenstein, 2007; Sykes, 1958) and counterproductive to the goals of rehabilitation and health enhancement (Day et al, 2012; Frost & Ware, 2017; Liebling & Maruna, 2005; Ross, et al, 2008). As Ward and Laws (2010) argue ‘it is probably quite safe to say that only in a very few isolated cases is prison a turning point toward prosocial, noncriminal behaviour’ (p.14). This impact is at least in part due to the physical conditions within which the inmates are housed but also due to the characteristics of the inmates themselves, particularly those with long histories of violence or mental health issues.

The prison environment is a complex social climate with values, rules and traditions (often referred to as a prison code; see Ricciardelli, 2014). Such traditions are largely implicit and are founded on rigid power relations. They tend to be proscriptive of openness and of democratic agency and are therefore inimical to the pro-social spirit of therapeutic change (Frost & Ware, 2017). These norms/prison code are generally negative, hypermasculine and have been interpreted as causing inmates (and staff) to become indifferent or hostile in the environment (Sykes, 1958). Ethnographic studies of prison environments have shown that inmates adapt (attempt to survive physically and socially) to prison social life by aligning themselves with the perceived prison code (De Viggiani, 2006). Prison environments are, therefore, seen as contexts for the maintenance and reinforcement of antisocial attitudes and behaviour and as hostile to individual’s attempts to change (Dhimi, Ayton, & Loewenstein, 2007).

For the individual inmate this environment is inherently self-verifying as it allows them to maintain their identity as criminals (Perrin & Blagden, 2014). Maruna (2001) for example, noted that when everyone around an inmate treats him like a danger and a threat, he may eventually internalize this view himself and fulfil the prediction by returning to criminal behaviour.

More especially, the identity and reputation of sex offenders in prisons (especially those convicted of child sex offences) is seemingly even more marginal than it is in the outside community (see Willis, Levenson, & Ward, 2010). These individuals are usually viewed negatively by other inmates and staff and may subsequently experience hostility and anxiety on a daily basis (Ireland, 2000; Schwaebe, 2005). Sex offenders often report feeling unsafe due to a constant sense of threat and victimisation (Ricciardidelli, 2014) and may report feeling unsupported by correctional staff, particularly those not involved in treatment (Willis, Levenson, & Ward, 2010). Mann, Webster, Wakeling and Keylock (2013) found that 63% of their sex offender sample reported having had experiences in prison because of the nature of their conviction that led to them feeling unsafe. Their experiences included being belittled and humiliated by staff, being verbally abused by other prisoners, and being subjected to physical violence. There is also some evidence that sex offenders present with psychological characteristics that may increase their sensitivity to threats within a prison context (Marsa et al., 2004).

This negativity is even more likely in mainstream prison contexts where sex offenders are housed alongside other inmates and take their place at the lower rungs of the prison hierarchy (Blagden, Winder, & Hames, 2016). Schwaebe (2005) described the strategies employed by sex offenders trying to survive within a mainstream prison. They either denied being a sex offender, tried to establish a reputation as someone able to defend himself and who is prepared to use violence, or engaged the protection of others, usually through paying extortion fees.

Prison staff may also contribute to a negative environment. In the now infamous Stanford Prison Experiment, Zimbardo (1972, 1973) demonstrated that it was the situational or contextual factors within a prison environment, as opposed to individual staff personality characteristics, that contributed to a wholly negative and dangerous prison climate. Sexual offenders are often viewed negatively, and this may make it difficult for staff to interact positively with them (Akerstrom, 1986; Lea, Auburn, & Kibblewhite, 1999). These negative views may be in part due to the often observed (yet understandable) behaviour of sex offenders within prison such as their defensiveness, manipulation, hostility, or denial (see

Ware & Mann, 2012). The negative views towards sex offenders may also, however, be due to the attitudes of staff towards these individuals and their sexual offences.

Correctional staff (and the community more generally) are likely to have more negative attitudes towards sex offenders than other offenders (Craig, 2005; Hogue, 1993, 1995; Weekes, Pelletier, & Beaudette, 1995). Within their review of attitudes towards sex offenders, Willis, Levenson, and Ward (2010) noted that researchers typically find that, in assessing the views of correctional staff who deal with sex offenders, prison officers not involved in treatment have the most negative views.

While arguments for the criminogenic effects of prison are extensive, it is important to consider that prison climates like all social climates, are dynamic and malleable (Lewis, 2016). It is therefore logically consistent that if harsher prison conditions perpetuate criminogenic norms then improvements in prison conditions and climate should produce a decrease in crime-related dispositions (Gaes & Camp, 2009). This proposition is supported by recent efforts to conceptualization the potential benefits that could be realized by a positive prison climate by drawing on the principles of and evidence for the effectiveness of therapeutic communities in achieving and sustaining behavior change (Day & Doyle, 2010). This work provides insights into how the broader prison environment could be modified to promote similar positive effects.

This work has highlighted the need to move away from the ‘black-box’ approach to prison-based research to an enhanced understanding of why and how prison exerts such an impact (Gaes & Camp, 2009) and to identify how prison climates can be transformed to promote prosocial identities and sustained desistance (Lewis, 2017; Needs & Adair-Stantiall, 2017).

PRISON CLIMATE AND DESISTANCE

Advancements in the theorization of the desistance process provides a broad framework within which the causal impact of prison climate on the psychology and behavior of offenders can be understood. In recent times, the literature on desistance has shifted from discussion of the formation of strong social bonds commonly experienced by offenders who have desisted, such as gaining employment, forming interpersonal relationships, having children, to more sophisticated theories that improve understanding of the actual process of desistance (Gobbels, et al, 2012; Maruna & Toch, 2005).

In its simplest form, desistance is defined as a gradual process, characterized by lapse and relapse, of maintaining “long-term abstinence from crime among individuals who had

previously engaged in persistent patterns of criminal offending” (Maruna, 2001, p. 127). Maruna (2005) differentiates between ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ desistance. Primary desistance refers to any lapse in offending or crime-free period, while secondary desistance offending behavior ceases as a result of a transition to a prosocial identity. There is general consensus that for desistance to occur, transformation needs to be realized at both the individual agent level and the socio-structural level.

More specifically, offenders need to undergo a process of personal transformation that facilitates the development of a coherent, prosocial self-identity (Maruna, 2001; Ward & Laws, 2010). At the socio-structural level, transformation occurs through the establishment of pro-social bonds, such as employment, marriage and parenthood. The interaction between agent and structure is thought to be brokered by cognitive mediators, which can be enhanced through effective rehabilitation, as well as a reciprocal positive relationship between an individual and their socio-structural context, which further enhance an offender’s sense of agency in the process of transformation (Weaver, 2012).

Empirically, the areas of offender rehabilitation, offender desistance and the prison social climate have largely been investigated independently, with little attempt to understand how these three areas interact to facilitate or impede an individual’s pathway to desistance. We argue that the reason for this disparate approach to empirical investigation is due to the absence of an integrated model that hypothesizes the relationship between the three areas. In this chapter, we will build on existing theories of desistance from sex offending (Gobbels, Ward & Willis, 2012) to present an integrated model of prison social climate, offender rehabilitation and desistance that brings together these hitherto unconnected evidentiary efforts. This model is presented in Figure 1 and shows the central role of prison social climate in mediating the relationship between treatment engagement and effectiveness, transformation of self-identity, formation of prosocial bonds and secondary desistance.

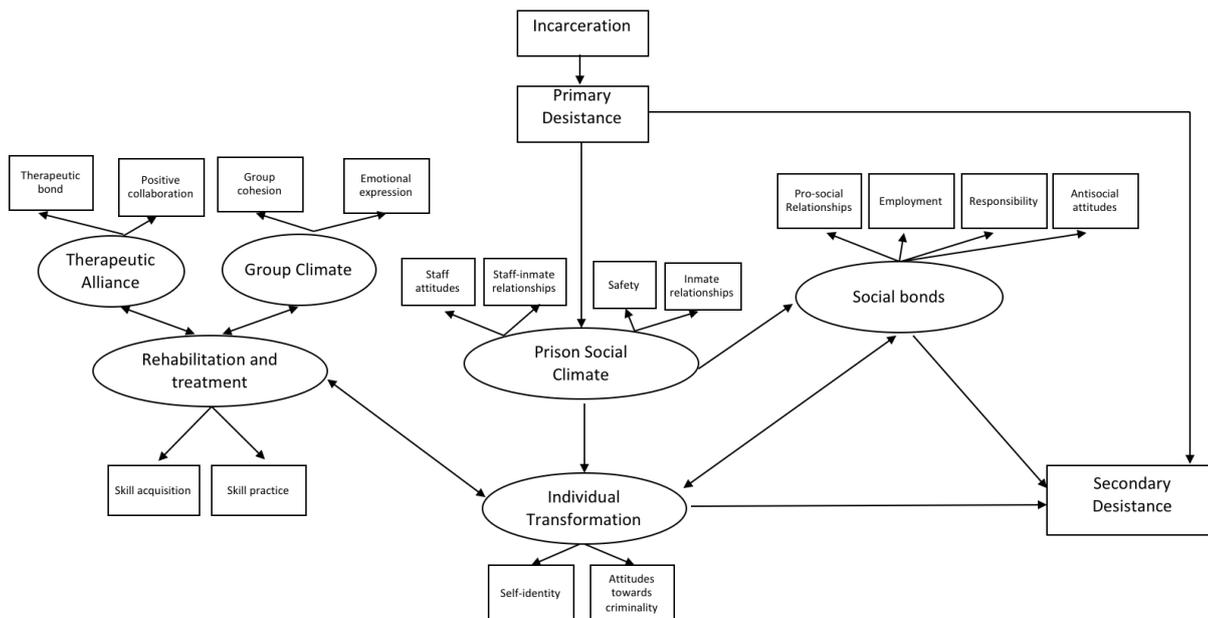


Figure 1: Integrated model of prison social climate, desistance and rehabilitation

This integrated model conceptualizes incarceration as a period of primary desistance (Maruna & Toch, 2005), during which the opportunity for offending behavior is temporarily reduced. Incarceration can also provide a catalyst for change by destabilising an offender’s self-perception (Needs & Adair-Stantiall, 2017), which can lead to critical evaluation and reflection of their current identity as an offender (Gobbels, et al, 2012).

In order for this initial catalyst or lull in offending can be sustained and progress to secondary desistance, the individual must find a source of agency and communion that is conducive to non-criminal attitudes and that facilitates the establishment of a transformation narrative (Liem & Richardson, 2014). As Figure 1 shows, this integrated model hypothesises a direct relationship between the prison climate and individual transformation. A positive prison climate can produce the conditions, such as positive staff-inmate relationships, positive staff attitudes, sense of safety and positive inmate relationships, necessary for relational learning, development of agency, transformative narrative and prosocial modelling (Lewis, 2017).

While limited, there is emerging empirical evidence demonstrating that efforts to foster a positive prison climate can increase offenders’ (including sex offenders) sense of safety and improve staff perceptions of and support for inmates (Blagden, Winder, & Hames, 2016; Day, et al, 2012). It is these elements of prison social climate that can improve the

subjective experiences of offenders and empower a greater sense agency to undertake the process of self-identity transformation.

A prison climate where prisoners feel safe and the environment is not threatening, and offenders can have positive and validating contacts with others encourages offender agency and concentration on their own personal development (Leibling, 2005; Needs & Adair-Stantiall, 2017). This process of introspective personal development, supported by the socio-structural context and the relational interaction between the individual agent and this context, will allow new pro-social roles, bonds and identities to emerge (Weaver, 2012).

PRISON CLIMATE AND SEX OFFENDER REHABILITATION

Within our model (figure 1), prison climate interacts with offender rehabilitation through the promotion or impediment of the process of transformation. Negative prison climates are likely to impact negatively on offender rehabilitation outcomes irrespective of the content of the treatment or skills of the treatment provider. Perhaps as evidence of this, Schmucker and Lösel's (2015) large scale meta-analysis of sex offender treatment effectiveness found that, in comparison to treatment in the community and in hospitals, treatment in prison did not reveal a significant effect. Schmucker and Losel suggested that prison settings do not enable practice of skills and transfer of learning to the real world. Both Schmucker and Lösel (2015) and Mann (2009) suggested that whilst poor program design, poor program implementation, or inability to transfer learning to the real world may contribute to ineffective prison-based treatment, it is likely inadequacies in the supporting context for the program (whether other aspects of the prison context undermine the messages of the treatment programme, i.e., prison social climate) is the primarily cause.

We have argued that a positive prison climate is likely to impact positively on offender rehabilitation outcomes (Ware, Frost, & Hoy, 2010). As noted by Frost and Connolly (2004), protracted incarceration, within therapeutically-focused prisons, may offer opportunity for increased safety, therapeutic immersion, and singleness of purpose, increased support, and freedom from distraction. The best example of such an environment would be prisons that were firmly established and maintained as therapeutic communities (Lipton, 1998), where every event and any relationship within the environment are considered a learning opportunity, potentially maximizing therapeutic gain (see also Baker & Price, 1995).

Frost, Ware, and Boer (2017) noted, however, that there remains a lack of compelling evidence as to the effectiveness of therapeutic communities for sex offenders. Within Lösel and Schmucker's (2005) earlier meta-analysis of sex offender treatment effectiveness, the

mean effect size for therapeutic communities, in terms of the odds ratio (OR), was 0.86. This does not reflect a positive effect of treatment and is significantly less than cognitive-behavioural treatments alone (OR = 1.45). Ware et al. (2010) cautioned that it was unclear to what extent these programs, or other programs within the meta-analysis, actually espoused therapeutic community principles. As an example of this, the Kia Marama programme of the New Zealand Department of Corrections incorporates therapeutic community principles extensively, yet this is not emphasized within its research (see Allan, Grace, Rutherford, & Hudson, 2007).

Specific to prison climate, qualitative research examining therapeutic communities has indicated that participants report aspects such as the mutual support of other residents, staff support, a safe and friendly environment (Boswell & Wedge, 2004), and the out-of-group environment as being important to their treatment success (Frost & Connolly, 2004). In one of the few studies to examine treatment gains in the context of prison climate, Woesser and Schwedler (2014) found that positive ratings of different aspects of prison climate significantly correlated with positive changes in dynamic risk factors pre- to post treatment in a sample of 185 offenders in two correctional treatment facilities. Supplementing this, qualitative studies report that TC residents consider the support of other residents and staff, a safe and friendly environment (Boswell & Wedge, 2004), and the 'out-of-group' environment (Frost & Connolly, 2004) to be important to their treatment success.

We also point out at this that, within our integrated model of desistance, rehabilitation and prison social climate, the interaction between prison climate and offender rehabilitation is multi-directional. The presence of treatment programs within the prison context is likely to lead to an increased perception of safety, support, and opportunity for offenders. In support of this notion, French and Gendreau (2006) found, that prisons that provided behavioural treatment programs delivered by professional staff experienced the lowest rates of prison misconduct. This remains an area for further research.

HOW DOES PRISON CLIMATE POSITIVELY IMPACT TREATMENT EFFECTIVENESS?

We have argued previously (Ware, Galouzis, Hart, & Allen, 2012) that the importance of non-therapy correctional staff and their role in the effective treatment of sexual offenders has not received sufficient research attention. Treatment will always rely, to some extent, on the *positive support* of non-therapy staff who can encourage, motivate, support, and provide opportunities for offenders to practice and rehearse the skills learnt within treatment. In this

sense, prison climate is likely to be important to treatment effectiveness *before, during, and after* the actual program delivery. Below we articulate how we think that a positive prison climate (the environment being safe, supportive, and maintaining of opportunities; van de Helm et al., 2011) is important at each of these phases of treatment and what can be done to create and maintain such a climate.

Before treatment

Treatment will only be effective if sex offenders actually participate and then complete the program (Marques, Wideranders, Day, Nelson, & van Ommeren, 2005). We argue that a positive prison climate assists sex offenders to volunteer for treatment. This is important as refusal rates can be high for sex offenders in prison. Mann et al (2013) reported that the rates of refusal offenders across institutions within England and Wales averaged over 50%. That is, half of all identified sex offenders did not agree to participate in treatment. Jones, Pelissier, and Klein-Saffran (2006) reported a treatment refusal rate of 22% in their study of 404 sex offenders offered treatment in a Federal prison whilst Clegg, Fermouw, Horacek, Cole, and Schwartz (2011) found that 59 of 156 sex offenders (38%) within a medium security facility that houses all types of offenders had never accepted an offer of treatment. Consistently, prisons identified as having a negative prison climate have been shown to negatively affect treatment readiness (e.g., Schalast, Redies, Collins, Stacey, & Howells, 2008).

There are very few studies directly investigating why sex offenders refuse treatment however a qualitative study by Mann, Webster, Wakeling, and Keylock (2013) demonstrates how important the prison climate can be. They found that treatment refusers were significantly more likely to have observed negative changes in other prisoners undertaking treatment, to have heard staff speak negatively about treatment, to see education or work as a more pressing priority, to believe that treatment programs were offered for reasons other than for the offender's benefit (e.g., financial gain for the prison), and that treatment participation would make it harder for them to survive in prison. Over 40% reported that they could not trust prison officers. They found that, in some cases, prisoners had been offered a treatment place by a member of staff who did not provide any information about the nature of treatment, or who did not discuss the relevance of treatment to their individual needs, or worse, who made "derogatory offers" (p. 201).

To ensure a positive prison climate supportive of rehabilitation *before* treatment it is important to focus on the engagement and education of non-treatment staff. Unless they are

properly informed and educated about sex offender treatment (and the need to provide positive support to offenders), it is likely that they will instead hear (and possibly believe) the same myths that sex offenders do. Whilst Willis, Levenson, and Ward's (2010) review concluded that educational programs for non-therapy staff are mostly ineffective, there are examples in which staff have clearly benefited from such training. Ware, Galouzis, Hart, and Allen (2012), for example, demonstrated that non-therapy staff who attended a two-day training program reported significantly more positive attitudes towards sex offenders as a result of training. Notably the endorsement of myths about sex offenders lessened and staff were more likely to believe a sex offender could be rehabilitated. These results were consistent across all occupations and irrespective of years of experience.

During and after treatment

We argue that a positive prison climate will provide sex offenders with the opportunity to practice and rehearse their new learning (*content*), acquired within treatment sessions, within a constructive therapeutic context where they are exposed to a myriad of supportive relationships (*process*) and therefore receive consistent feedback and challenge. Frost and Connolly (2004) labeled this a “forum for experiential change” (p.3). In the all day–everyday context of the prison, this means not just “talking the talk” in the therapy group but “walking the walk” in the prison unit during and after treatment.

The sex offender participating in a prison-based treatment program has inherently limited options for practicing and rehearsing new skills outside of the therapy room (Frost & Ware, 2017). Instead, the knowledge and skills most normally practiced relate to managing oneself within the prison, often referred to as the “inmate code” (Cordilia, 1983). Ware, Frost, and Hoy (2010) reflected on this dilemma noting that one of the most important challenges for prison based treatment programs is how to address the causal or risk factors that contributed to the sex offending behaviour (skills that are to be used upon release) whilst also negating the harm caused, or difficulties created, by the prison environment (skills to be used whilst in prison).

Frost, Ware, and Boer (2017) have also suggested that there are two necessary conditions in providing a positive prison climate during treatment to allow for content rehearsal and practice – particularly in relation to interpersonal or relationship skills. First, there must be a “safe” and containing environment that is conducive to openness, directness and honesty and. second, it must create structured opportunities to develop attitudes and learn skills as an expedient forum for addressing interpersonal relationships. Frost and Ware (2017)

reported that positive prison climates will often have a distinctively defined purpose, such as reducing reoffending, on the basis of commonly held principles or values. “From collusion to collaboration and co-operation” and “From blame-shifting to personal responsibility” are examples of values that can bring to life the principles of rehabilitation. This allows the prison as a whole, with its complexity and dynamics, to combine to represent a change modality in its own right. Alongside the contributions of non-therapy prison staff, the sex offenders share in the therapy of each another in a systemic whole: a milieu.

Non-therapy staff such as correctional officers have an important role. As well as being responsible for maintaining an orderly, safe, and humane prison environment they may provide emotional support through listening, practical help with information, and, in certain contexts, may assist in explicit rehabilitation efforts (Bottoms, 1999). The Five Minute Intervention (FMI) project within the United Kingdom represents an excellent example of this where prison officers were trained to turn everyday conversations into rehabilitative opportunities using skills such as Socratic questioning, active listening, and affirmation (see Tate, Blagden, & Mann, 2017).

We argue that in the same way, offenders themselves, particularly when deployed as peer-supporters within a positive environment, can also provide such assistance and therefore contribute to overall treatment effectiveness. In the broader prison context, Perrin, Ware, and Frost (2018) suggest that prisoner-led peer-support initiatives that are characterized by shared problem solving and reciprocal emotional support can greatly reduce the anxiety prisoners face surrounding treatment (and therefore enhance prison climate). Furthermore, it is suggested that such practices may represent a space in which treatment gains can be enhanced, assimilated into program-completers lives, and routinely practiced in a broader ecological (out-of-group) context. Through mutually supportive dialogue and reciprocal modelling of skillsets, peer-supporters can organically expand the impact of group therapy into the broader environments of prison. This variation of treatment continuity has been found to be crucial in therapeutic climate contexts and can maximise and engrain learning (Blagden & Perrin, 2016).

Turning our attention to the treatment process, our view is that a positive climate will provide for a favorable extension of the important treatment learning and therapeutic process from the office or group room to the wider prison. In other words, a positive prison climate can provide a secure environment where a broad range of behaviour change opportunities may be exploited in a constructive therapeutic “framework”, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The meaning of ‘therapeutic alliance’, in this setting, is not restricted to a therapist–

client dyad (see Frost, 2011), but is a more inclusive and extensive construct that involves the active engagement all members of the prison.

There is now evidence highlighting that treatment effectiveness significantly hinges on therapist characteristics, quality of therapeutic relationship, and the degree to which group treatment environments are cohesive and emotionally expressive (Beech & Fordham, 1997; Beech & Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2005; Marshall et al., 2003). Frost (2011) and subsequently Frost and Ware (2017) argued, however, that there remains a need to focus attention on the impact of the broader context and environment in which treatment takes place. Using the term “social therapy” they suggested that this relates to the broader concern with systemic and dynamic aspects of therapeutic relationships within a context such as a prison. They noted that potential effective therapeutic relationships exist beyond those established between a therapist and the offender and these will include: relationships between therapist and offenders (therapeutic alliance), relationships offenders have with each other (group climate) and the relationships between offenders and all other staff, *as well as* the relationships that all parties have with the group or the community as a whole (group climate and therapeutic community). Prisons established using therapeutic community principles represent the best example of this where, for example, there might be frequent group and individual therapy sessions, community meetings (involving staff and residents), committees and sub-committees, mentoring programmes, structured activity days, therapy-related employment opportunities, and other arrangements where conduct and practices are openly raised and processed (Ware et al., 2010).

In support of our proposition that positive climate will provide for a favourable extension of the important treatment learning and therapeutic process, Frost and Connolly (2004) completed an insightful qualitative study examining the therapeutic engagement experience of sex offenders undergoing prison-based treatment. They found that found that out-of-session time represented an important component of a sex offender’s change process. Behavioural change within the broader prison context was most likely to occur when a sex offender adequately recalled information from sessions, identified with and ruminated over the issues, and then consulted with others and reflected on their feedback before re-evaluating and goal setting/commitment. An offender could disengage from the therapeutic process in any of the states of this process. It appears that a positive prison climate provides the basis for an effective use of the consultation phase in which reciprocity and the provision of support within a personally safe environment were seen as critical elements.

ESTABLISHING A POSITIVE PRISON CLIMATE

There are inherent difficulties in the development of a pro-social culture within a prison setting, as articulated by Akerman (2011). Notwithstanding these difficulties, Corrective Services New South Wales, Australia, has recently built two new prisons ('Rapid Build' prisons) with structural and correctional management innovations that are specifically designed to facilitate the development and maintenance of a positive prison climate.

These prisons are particularly innovative because they have been designed to operate as main stream prisons, as opposed to therapeutic prisons. Whilst not established as therapeutic communities (see Baker & Price, 1995), these Rapid Build prison, which were built in just over 12 months, deliver innovations in inmate management relative to traditional prison. The primary structural innovation relates to dormitory style housing for offenders in a maximum security environment, accompanied by intensive and technologically advanced surveillance. Each correctional centre has 400 beds configured in 16 dormitory pods, with 25 cubicles in each pod. Individual cubicles have an interactive TV for offenders to take greater control of their own administration.

In conjunction with the prevailing structural features, the Rapid Build correctional centres also incorporate a range of innovations to correctional management philosophy associated with offender routine, purposeful activity and interaction with staff. The overarching philosophy of these centres relates to rehabilitation and assumes that the establishment of a prosocial environment within the prison will positively influence offender behaviour, motivation and skills to facilitate desistance from future offending.

All correctional centre staff (custodial and non-custodial) at the Rapid Build prisons were selected to work within a staffing model that delivers constant positive engagement with offenders, facilitated through an increased staff-inmate ratio. Staff are provided with additional training to promote positive staff attitudes towards these offenders and to deliver increased prosocial interactions with inmates, with the aim of establishing the conditions necessary for relational learning, development of agency, transformative narrative and prosocial modelling.

The Rapid Build prisons operate a management philosophy that provides systemic incentives for prosocial behaviour and additional privileges for inmates are willing to positive engage with the employment and program opportunities provided. The prisons provide significantly longer periods out-of-cell (12 hours) and sufficient industries, programs and recreational capacity to ensure all inmates have a balanced, purposeful daily routine. This extended structured day and meaningful opportunities provided to inmates are designed to

foster positive behaviour both within custody and following release to the community. We believe that these Rapid Build prisons, by their very design, will maximise opportunities for offenders to practice and rehearse their new learning acquired within treatment sessions, within a constructive therapeutic context where they are exposed to a myriad of supportive relationships and therefore receive consistent feedback and challenge.

Corrective Services NSW has designed a comprehensive research and evaluation framework in order to establish an evidence base for how the innovation in prison design and management philosophy at the Rapid Build prisons impact on the wellbeing of both staff and inmates. The first evaluation of the Rapid Build prisons commenced in late 2017 and is exploring the social climate established in the two Rapid Build Correctional Centres compared with the social climate at more traditional centres. This study will also explore the impact of the design and operation of the Rapid Build centres on staff, specifically staff attitudes towards offenders; levels of job satisfaction; and levels of stress and well-being.

Over the next 5 years, Corrective Services NSW will commission a series of research and evaluation projects that will explore the impact of the structural and management innovations on operational outcomes, such as incidents of violence, inmate infractions and self-harm. Empirical enquiry will also focus on the relationship between purposeful activity, social climate, and operational outcomes. This research is expected to provide a valuable contribution to the limited empirical evidence available to guide policy and expected outcomes regarding the optimal number of hours inmates should spend out of their cells and in purposeful activity each day. Finally, research will apply the integrated model of prison social climate, desistance and rehabilitation articulated in this chapter to better understand the role of prison social climate in offender pathways to rehabilitation and desistance.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Within this chapter we have articulated the critical role of the prison climate in both offender treatment and rehabilitation and in the process of desistance. The model of prison-based treatment presented in this chapter provides a holistic and comprehensive empirical framework that will integrate previously disconnected areas of investigation to enhance our understanding of the relationship between prison climate, offender rehabilitation and the process of desistance.

To date, there is only one study that has explored the relationship between prison based treatment, therapeutic change, prison climate and reoffending. Using a sample of sexual and violent offenders, Woessner and Schwedler (2014) found that offender ratings of

the prison social climate correlated significantly with prosocial changes in a number of dynamic risk factors. However, the prosocial changes in dynamic risk factors was not predictive of reoffending.

The findings of this study provide preliminary evidence of the importance of a positive social climate on a therapeutic program's effectiveness in facilitating changes in inmate cognitions. However, this study could have been improved with the application of a more advanced statistical methodology to examine the direct and indirect relationships or pathways between prison social climate, offender rehabilitation and desistance as articulated in the integrated model presented in this chapter.

The integrated model model of prison based treatment presented in this chapter provides a comprehensive framework that can inform future empirical investigations into the relationship between prison social climate, offender treatment and desistance.

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