The impact of imprisonment on the desistance process

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The Impact of Imprisonment on the Desistance Process

Shadd Maruna[1] and Hans Toch

Central to the promotion of public safety is an understanding of how and why offenders "go straight" or "desist from crime." The study of desistance from crime has received an increasing amount of attention in recent years (see Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph 2002; Laub and Sampson 2001), yet little of this work has focused on the role of the correctional system in this process. Indeed, something of a passive consensus has been reached in both the basic science on criminal careers and the more applied research on the effects of incarceration that the experience of imprisonment is largely irrelevant to the subsequent offending patterns of individuals. Farrall (1995) writes, "Most of the research suggests that desistance 'occurs' away from the criminal justice system. That is to say that very few people actually desist as a result of intervention on the part of the criminal justice system or its representatives" (p. 56).

Yet, surely an experience as profound as imprisonment has some impact (malignant or benign) on a person's life course trajectory. Most likely, these effects differ across individuals depending on a complicated mix of factors such as age, status, personality, previous life experiences, and the like. Prisons and the people who inhabit them are complicated, multifaceted, and diverse. Presumably, the experience of imprisonment varies across institutions, individuals, time, and place (see, e.g., Walters, 2003). All of the above

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make the question we will address in this chapter – how imprisonment affects the likelihood of desistance from crime – more than a little challenging to answer.

Before starting, we should skip to the punch line and state up front that "more research is needed" to make sense of these complicated interactions between life course trajectories and prison experiences. To quote Gendreau, Goggin, and Cullen (1999):

The sad reality that so little is known about what goes on inside the "black box" of prisons and how this relates to recidivism (Bonta and Gendreau 1990). Only a mere handful of studies have attempted to address this matter (Gendreau et al. 1979; Zamble and Porporino 1990). Analogously, could one imagine so ubiquitous and costly a procedure in the medical or social services fields receiving such cursory research attention?

Indeed, until recent years (see especially Bushway, Brame, and Paternoster 2004; Petersilia 2003), there has been limited overlap between the research on desistance from crime and the research on prison outcomes or so-called recidivism studies. This is more than a little ironic because desistance and recidivism are arguably two sides of the same coin. Longitudinal research designs that combine a focus on institutional experiences with an interest in issues of human development (e.g., Visher 2002) are badly needed to explore some of the hypotheses we present here.

In what follows, we try to synthesize the various theories of desistance from crime with the theoretical accounts of the effects of imprisonment in hopes that this might be a catalyst for such research designs in the future. Our formula here is a fairly standard one. First, we discuss our understanding of the desistance process. Following that, we selectively review the literature on the effects of imprisonment. Finally, we try to merge the two, using our interpretation of the desistance process to illuminate the "black box" of the prison effects research. In the name of "positive thinking," we use this concluding section to describe potentially "desistance-enhancing" features of the prison experience (knowing well, of course, that there are many more aspects of imprisonment that are desistance-degrading factors, at best).

Desistance from Crime

Of course, understanding desistance is not exactly rocket science. The most robust and important finding in this research to date has been that persons

who desist from crime seem to be better integrated into prosocial roles and positions of familial, occupational, and community responsibility than persons who continue offending (see Uggen, Wakefield, and Western, this volume). We know, for instance, that older men (over 27) who are employed are more likely to desist than men of the same age who are not (e.g., Uggen 2000). Likewise, a former offender who develops an attachment and commitment to a noncriminal spouse is more likely to desist than one who does not (e.g., Sampson and Laub 1993).

Such findings come as no surprise to the average parole or probation officer. These efforts to "settle down" have always been understood as largely incompatible with criminal behaviors. What remains in question is the *process* through which these variables come to be associated with the avoidance of crime (e.g., Is it the social control of the time clock or of the spouse waiting at home? Or is it instead the prosocial socialization and role-modeling?). In other words, there is still some question as to the theory of desistance that best fits the data we have on the subject (see especially Warr 2002). This theory question is, in many senses of the word, an academic issue. It may matter little in practical terms what it is about being employed or being part of a family that helps to sustain desistance. What matters may be simply that ex-offenders need to be given opportunities to make such attachments.

Nonetheless, there is a role for criminological theory in the applied world of corrections. Most criminal justice programming is not based on a coherent theory of desistance from crime or indeed any real theory (Gendreau 1996). The dominant ethos in corrections has been described as "anything goes" (Cohen 1985) with a little of this and a little of that thrown in to please various camps. Much of what is done in the name of "corrections" can be psychologically counterproductive – provoking defiance or creating dependence rather than strengthening the person's ability to go straight (see Maruna and LeBel 2003). As such, desistance-enhancing efforts to promote employment or change negative thinking patterns can be and often are coupled with desistance-degrading interactions (e.g., stigmatization and social exclusion). Such odd couplings can leave promising efforts looking ineffective in formal evaluations (and in terms of overall effects on public safety) when in fact babies are being thrown out with the bath water. At the very least, then, developing a coherent account of how and why former offenders go straight can help those of us in the research world make sense of our null findings in corrections research. More optimistically (naively?), correctional programming could become "desistance focused" (Farrall 2002)

or organized around a coherent theoretical model of desistance (Maruna and LeBel 2003).

What Is Desistance?

The phrase *desistance from crime* gained popularity in the study of criminal careers and was typically used to describe groups of subjects in probabilistic models of offending career trajectories (e.g., Barnett, Blumstein, and Farrington 1987). In this context, the concept was perfectly understandable and a useful tool for dividing up subpopulations within a cohort of known criminal offenders. Yet, outside of this aggregate framework, and in particular in trying to understand the lived experiences of actual individuals, the phrase's meaning becomes less clear. That is, for Joe Schmo, who was caught shoplifting three or four times as a kid, got into a few bar fights as a young adult, and, in later life, assaulted his partner in a drunken row, it is difficult to know when desistance starts, what desistance looks like, and what desistance means.

On the occasions when definitions of desistance are offered, they tend to be something like the "moment that a criminal career ends" (Farrall and Bowling 1999, p. 253) or "the voluntary termination of serious criminal participation" (Shover 1996, p. 121). This understanding has been widely criticized (see Bushway, et al. 2001; Laub and Sampson 2001), perhaps most noisily by Maruna (2001), who argues that the termination of offending occurs all the time in a so-called criminal career. All of the persons we describe as "offenders" go days, months, even years between offenses. As such, it is impossible to know when offending has finally ended until the person is dead. Even if we were interested only in understanding dead people's desistance, however, this definition still seems unhelpful. Maruna (2001, p. 23) gives the example of a purse-snatcher who stops offending:

Suppose we know conclusively that the purse-snatcher (now deceased) never committed another crime for the rest of his long life. When did his desistance start? Is not the...concluding moment the very instant when the person completes (or terminates) the act of theft? If so, in the same moment that a person becomes an offender, he also becomes a desister. That cannot be right.

In an inventive response to such criticisms, Laub and Sampson (2001) distinguish between what they call *termination* (the outcome) and *desistance*

(the process) in their important reformulation of desistance. They write: "Termination is the time at which criminal activity stops. Desistance, by contrast, is the causal process that supports the termination of offending." Desistance, according to this reformulation, is the process that "maintains the continued state of nonoffending" (p. 11) beginning prior to termination but carrying on long after.

Although this represents a significant improvement over past working definitions of desistance, Laub and Sampson add new confusion by conflating the causes of desistance with desistance itself. The verb *to desist* means to abstain from doing something. As such, in criminology, desistance is almost always used to mean "the continued state of nonoffending" – not the factors that lead to it. Suppose, for instance, that deterrence is identified as a major "causal process" in the "outcome" of termination. The Laub and Sampson definition would seem to suggest that when an individual steals a purse and then is engaged in the process being deterred (i.e., getting busted), he is actively involved in desisting from crime. The definition therefore ends up confusing desistance with its opposite. That is, usually when someone is arrested we think of this as evidence of offending, not the process of abstaining. Moreover, like other efforts to define desistance as a "process" (e.g., Bushway et al. 2001), the Laub and Sampson definition also confounds desistance with the process of *deescalation* or the slowing down of criminal behaviors that sometimes happens over time. Deescalation may (or may not) eventually build into full-fledged desistance, but there is no reason to force the two perfectly understandable processes to share the same name. It seems to us that deescalation should remain deescalation and desistance should remain desistance.

We think some clarification can be found by pilfering from the literature on criminal etiology. A half-century ago, Edwin Lemert (1948, p. 27) introduced considerable clarity into the debate on the origins of deviance by differentiating between two "sharply polarized or even categorical phases" in this developmental process: primary deviation and secondary deviation. Primary deviation involves the initial flirtation and experimentation with deviant behaviors, whereas secondary deviation is deviance that becomes "incorporated as part of the 'me' of the individual" (Lemert 1951, p. 76). Lemert's argument was that "criminal careers are fashioned in the time of personal identity" and that "to deviate over time is to assume a self-understanding consistent with the behavior" (C. C. Lemert 2000, p. 5).

This two-pronged understanding of deviance allowed Lemert (1951, p. 75) to avoid "the fallacy of confusing original causes with effective causes":

Primary deviation can arise from a wide variety of "causes." ... Each theory may be a valid explanation ... Thus, it can be freely admitted that persons come to drink alcoholic liquors excessively for many different reasons: death of loved ones, exposure to death in battle, ... inferiority feelings, nipple fixation, and many others. (Lemert 1948, p. 57)

Freed from what he saw as a "burdensome" debate around initial etiology, Lemert focused on why some primary deviants underwent a symbolic reorganization at the level of their self-identity and others did not.

This same framework might clarify some issues in the study of desistance. Perhaps there are (at least) two, distinguishable phases in the desistance process: primary and secondary desistance. Primary desistance would take the term *desistance* at its most basic and literal level to refer to any lull or crime-free gap in the course of a criminal career[2] (see West 1961, 1963). Because every secondary deviant experiences a countless number of such pauses in the course of a criminal career, primary desistance would not be a matter of much theoretical interest. The focus of desistance research,[3] instead, would be on secondary desistance: the movement from the behavior of nonoffending to the assumption of the role or identity of a "changed person." In secondary desistance, crime not only stops, but "existing roles

[2] The term would only apply to the crime-free gaps of secondary deviants. It makes little sense to talk of desisting from a once-off behavior. Although many of us dabble in criminal behaviors, if this activity does not become a routine pattern (i.e. secondary deviation), then it is more the original dabbling (why do people experiment with crime?) rather than the termination from this dabbling that is theoretically interesting.

[3] Like all definitions of desistance, this dichotomy would be difficult to operationalize. Still, for research purposes, periods of desistance can always be differentiated simply by their lengths. Primary desistance, like primary deviation, could be expected to occur only sporadically, for short periods – a week here, two months there. Secondary desistance, on the other hand, involves a more sustained pattern of demonstrable conformity – a measurable break with previous patterns of offending. If researchers had no other access to means of triangulating a measure of secondary desistance (e.g., through self-identification or the views of proximal others), arbitrary lengths of time could be selected to differentiate between the two types of desistance. Indeed, this is how desistance has traditionally been identified in existing research and makes perfect sense on pragmatic grounds. Optimally, the chosen length could be based on a measure of previous experiences of primary desistance. That is, if sample members tended to desist for a week or less between criminal acts, then a six month period of desistance might be enough to qualify as evidence of secondary desistance. Whereas, if a group seems to experience lulls of several months between criminal acts, then a six month cut-off would not be enough evidence that this is a significant change (see Bushway et al. 2001 for an inventive discussion along these lines).

become disrupted" and a "reorganization based upon a new role or roles will occur" (Lemert 1951, p. 76). Indeed, recent research (Giordano et al. 2002; Maruna 2001; Shover 1996) provides compelling evidence that long-term desistance does involve identifiable and measurable changes at the level of personal identity or the "me" of the individual.

Theories of Desistance

So, what processes can account for this move from a lull into secondary desistance? Until recently, criminological theory was largely silent on this issue. As recently as 1990, Gottfredson and Hirschi argued against theorizing desistance at all. They write: "Crime declines with age. Spontaneous desistance is just that, change in behavior that cannot be explained and change that occurs regardless of what else happens" (p. 136). More recently, efforts to "unpack" the age–crime relationship have been dominated by three basic paradigms: informal social control theory, differential association theory, and cognitive/motivational theory. A more comprehensive review of the different theoretical approaches can be found in Laub and Sampson's (2001) recent review, so no attempt is made here to be all inclusive. Additionally, we forgo the standard ritual of discrediting these existing theories, all of which seem to us to be perfectly plausible accounts, and instead use our conclusion to draw out plausible commonalities among all the views.

Informal Social Control Sampson and Laub's (1993) theory of informal social control is by far the best developed and best known theory of desistance. They argue that desistance is largely the result of social bonds developed in adulthood. Following the control theory axiom that a person who is attached to mainstream institutions will be less likely to risk the consequences of offending, the theory suggests that new opportunities for attachments in young adulthood (especially to a spouse or a career) account for the process of desistance. They provide the individual with "something to lose" by offending. Sampson and Laub further emphasize the "independent" and "exogenous" impact of these bonds. They argue that these triggering events occur, at least in large part, by "chance" (Laub, Nagin, and Sampson 1998, p. 225; see also Horney, Osgood, and Marshall 1995). If these turning points were entirely the result of the reasoned decisions or personal predilections of individual actors, control theorists admit, they could not argue for "the independent role of social bonds in shaping behavior" (Laub et al. 1998,

p. 225). According to Laub and his colleagues (1998, p. 237): "'Good' things sometimes happen to 'bad' actors."

Differential Association   Warr (1998, 2002) has provided the best developed sociological alternative to Sampson and Laub's theory. Warr counters that changes in postadolescent peer relations, rather than the development of adult institutional attachments, are at the heart of the desistance process. In his social learning or differential association-based reinterpretation, Warr argues that changes in social networks (e.g., exposure to offending or delinquent peers, time spent with peers, and loyalty to peers) can account for the decline in crime with age. When a person drifts away from criminal peer networks who promote and rationalize deviant behaviors, they lose both the motivation and the means of committing most types of criminal behavior. Warr does not doubt that adults who are employed and in stable marriages are most likely to desist from crime, but he argues that this is because married and employed individuals have the least amount of time on their hands to associate with their rowdy friends. Therefore, it is the associations, rather than the informal social control factors, that are driving desistance.

Cognitive/Motivational   The other well-known rejoinder to the informal social control theory originates in a critique of the claim that salient life events such as marriage and employment are mainly exogenous occurrences. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990, p. 188), for instance, scoff at the notion that "jobs somehow attach themselves" to individuals and emphasize that "subjects are not randomly assigned to marital statuses" (p. 188). Similarly, in her review of Sampson and Laub's (1993) *Crime in the Making*, Joan McCord (1994, p. 415) argues that the authors' own qualitative case histories "seem to show that attitude changes precede the attachments which Sampson and Laub emphasize in their theory." In what Uggen and Kruttschnitt (1998) refer to as "motivational models of desistance," desistance theorists have started to focus on what specific changes on the level of personal cognition (Giordano et al. 2002; Zamble and Quinsey 1997) or self-identity (Burnett 2004; Shover 1996) might precede or coincide with changes in social attachments. Often emerging from a symbolic interactionist tradition, these models suggest that "turning point" events may have a different impact depending on the actor's level of motivation, openness to change, or interpretation of the events (Maruna 2001).

The Impact of Imprisonment on the Desistance Process

The most fully developed theory of this sort is probably Peggy Giordano and colleagues' (2002) four-part "theory of cognitive transformation." They argue that the desistance process involves the following four stages:

1. A "general cognitive openness to change" (p. 1000);
2. Exposure and reaction to "hooks for change" or turning points (p. 1000);
3. The envisioning of "an appealing and conventional 'replacement self'" (p. 1001); and
4. A transformation in way the actor views deviant behavior (p. 1002).

The "replacement self" most often described in the literature is that of the parent, "family man," or provider (Burnett 2004; Shover 1996). Gove (1985, p. 128), for instance, argues that desistance results at least in part from:

a shift from self-absorption to concern for others; increasing acceptance of societal values...; increasing comfort with social relations; increasing concern for others in their community; and increasing concern with the issue of the meaning of life.

Following Erikson (1968), Maruna, LeBel, and Lanier (2003) refer to this as the development of generativity or a concern for promoting and nurturing the next generation – a process that is thought to be a normative aspect of adult development as individuals mature.

Prosocial Labeling   Finally, some observers have drawn on labeling theory's notion of a "delabeling process" (Trice and Roman 1970) in understanding desistance. Meisenhelder (1977, p. 329), for instance, describes a "certification" stage of desistance in which, "Some recognized member(s) of the conventional community must publicly announce and certify that the offender has changed and that he is now to be considered essentially noncriminal." Maruna (2001) found considerable evidence of what he calls "redemption rituals" in the life stories of successfully desisting ex-convicts. As with the "degradation ceremony" (Garfinkel 1956) through which wrongdoers are stigmatized, these delabeling ceremonies are directed not at specific acts but to the whole character of the person in question (Braithwaite and Braithwaite 2001, p. 16). Delabeling is thought to be most effective when coming from "on high," particularly official sources such as judges or teachers rather than from family members or friends – where such acceptance can be taken for granted (Wexler 2001). Yet, this sort of certification is most likely to occur when an individual has noncriminal others (especially spouses, employers, or work colleagues) who can act as

"personal vouchers" to testify to an individual's credentials as a "changed person" (see Maruna and LeBel 2002).

There is scattered evidence in support of this sort of Pygmalion effect in the behavioral reform process. For instance, in a now-famous experiment, Leake and King (1977) informed treatment professionals that they had developed a scientific test to determine who among a group of patients were most likely to be successful in recovering from alcoholism. In reality, no such test had been developed. The patients identified as "most likely to succeed" were picked purely at random. Still, the clients who were assigned this optimistic prophecy were far more likely to give up drinking than members of the control group. Apparently, they believed in their own ability to achieve sobriety because the professionals around them seemed to believe it so well.

Similarly, Miller, Brickman, and Bolen (1975) demonstrated this process in their experimental research on compliance. They found that when untidy students were instructed to keep their classroom neat, the young people complied with these pleadings only as long as they were reinforced with consequences and no longer. Conversely, when, during one such period of compliance, a random group of the students was identified and praised by the teacher for being especially tidy individuals, the improvements lasted for several months (see also Strenta and DeJong 1981). People tend to persist more in the pursuit of behavior that they see as intrinsically determined rather than imposed by external forces (Kelman 1958). Likewise, some research on desistance suggests that secondary desisters avoid crime because they see themselves as fundamentally good (or noncriminal) people and not because they "have to" to avoid sanctions (Maruna 2001).

Key Commonalities: Agency and Communion

These various theoretical positions are not necessarily in competition with one another; indeed they share numerous commonalities. In particular, all these accounts, in some way or another, reflect a need for "agency" and "communion" (Bakan 1966)[4] in the desistance process. That is, each

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[4] Bakan may owe this dichotomy to the pre-Socratic philosopher, Empedocles. Dan McAdams and his colleagues (1996: 340) write, "That human lives are animated by two broad and contrasting tendencies resembling Bakan's concepts of agency and communion is an idea that is at least 2,000 years old." Agency and communion themes have also been a central feature of almost every scientific effort to quantify significant aspects of interpersonal behavior for at least the last 45 years (see the review in Wiggins, 1991).

theory predicts that desistance should be associated with the achievement of success and autonomy in the prosocial world (usually in the form of a career) and the development of intimate interpersonal bonds (usually in the form of a family) (see Uggen, Wakefield, and Western, this volume). That such things are important to one's ability to go straight is not surprising. Sigmund Freud nominated these two aspects of life – work and love – as the two essential ingredients of a happy and well-adjusted personality. More recently, Deci and Ryan (2000, p. 229) have included the polarities of agency and communion as among the basic human "needs" or "innate psychological nutriments that are essential for ongoing psychological growth, integrity, and well-being."

If it is true that human beings have a natural predisposition "to experience themselves as causal agents in their environment" and to earn the esteem and affection of valued others (Gecas and Schwalbe 1983), then crime might be associated with constraints on these human needs. For instance, Moffitt (1993, p. 686–687) describes the 5- to 10-year role vacuum that teenagers and young adults face during which "they want desperately to establish intimate bonds with the opposite sex, to accrue material belongings, to make their own decisions, and to be regarded as consequential by adults" only to find they are "asked to delay most of the positive aspects of adult life." When social structures constrain one's ability to achieve agency and autonomy (or, in Marxist terms, when the individual is alienated from his or her labors), an individual might turn to criminal or delinquent behaviors to "experience one's self as a cause" rather than an "effect" (Matza 1964, p. 88; see also Messner and Rosenfeld 2001). This deviant behavior itself can become a kind of "chimera" (Patterson 1993), "mortgaging one's future" (Nagin and Paternoster 1991) by cutting off opportunities for achieving success in employment, education, and even in marriage (on incarceration and "marriageability," see Wilson and Neckerman 1987). Such persons are often left with limited opportunity for achieving self-respect and affiliation in the mainstream – but are welcomed among subcultural groups of similarly stigmatized outcasts (Braithwaite and Braithwaite 2001; Sampson and Laub 1997).

Within this vicious cycle, however, there are numerous lulls in offending. By most accounts, a lull can turn into secondary desistance if the person finds a source of agency and communion in noncriminal activities. That is, he or she finds some sort of "calling" – be it parenthood, painting, coaching, or what Richard Sennett (2003) calls "craft-love" – through which they find meaning and purpose outside of crime. The discovery of

alternative, intrinsically rewarding sources of achievement and affiliation seems to be an essential component in the successful abstinence from such highs.

The Impact of Imprisonment

Imprisonment can provide one well-known "lull" in an offending career. Of course, there are opportunities for violence, theft, drug sales, and the like inside every prison system. Yet the process of arrest, conviction, and incarceration is a notable disruption in the lives of individuals and conceivably could be a window of opportunity for making a change in one's behavior.

Nonetheless, the major theories of desistance reviewed above do not tend to include an explicit role for the impact of imprisonment. There is a good reason for this. From the best available research, it still remains unclear what impact, if any, prison might have on the desistance process (and, for that matter, on public safety). Although inconclusive, research suggests that imprisonment has little if any predictable impact on offending careers, good or bad (Gendreau, Goggin, and Cullen 1999; MacKenzie and Goodstein, 1985). Of course, as Wormith and Porporino (1984, p. 427) argue: "The prison itself does not do anything.... It just sits there. What really matters are the 'subtle specifics of each prisoner's participation in prison life.'" As such, untangling how this process works for different persons in different circumstances is rightly described as a "methodological nightmare" (Wormith 1984). Donald Cressey (1973) famously argued that "Prison life is made up of social interactions that are confused, entangled, complicated, and so subtle in their effects that any detailed attempts to tell what happens in them sounds like the ravings of a crazy man."

Theories of Prison Effects

There are three paradigmatic accounts of how prison experiences affect most prisoners most of the time. Each has had its day and all three continue to be tested and modified in prisons research. The "specific deterrence" hypothesis suggests that the experience of prison scares crooked people straight, convincing them to behave or face the same consequences later. Most other arguments posit the opposite effect: that prison is, in the words of a British Home Secretary, "an expensive way of making bad people worse." The most common version of this story is the "schools of crime" idea that differential association with a group of seasoned offenders will

promote further and greater criminal behavior among graduates. Others have argued that the experience of confinement, specifically severe forms of solitary confinement, can produce negative mental health effects that could exasperate future criminality. Finally, sociologists have argued that the pains or deprivations of prison life require the development of social adaptations that may themselves have a lasting impact on the ability of an individual to desist from crime.

Prison as a Specific Deterrence

Although the idea that "prison works" as a specific deterrent is favored by vote-seeking politicians (see Austin and Irwin 2000), the idea that the prison experience should reduce offending among ex-prisoners (Andenaes 1968) has almost no support in the criminological literature. In fact, not only has specific deterrence theory been long pronounced dead (see especially McGuire's 1995 essay, "The Death of Deterrence"), criminologists refuse to offer any respect for the deceased (see, for example, Lynch's 1999 article titled, "Beating a Dead Horse: Is There Any Basic Empirical Evidence for the Deterrent Effect of Imprisonment?").

The most conclusive evidence to date of the futility of the "prisons as deterrence" thesis is Paul Gendreau and colleagues' (1999) meta-analysis synthesizing the findings from 50 prison effects studies dating from 1958 involving over 300,000 prisoner subjects. Combining the data across studies that either compared prison sentences to community sentences or correlated length of time in prison with recidivism outcomes, the authors concluded there was no evidence that prison sentences could reduce recidivism and substantial evidence shows that the relationship works the other way around. Indeed, they found the higher the quality of the study (including two randomized designs), the more likely it was to find a strong positive correlation between time spent in prison and recidivism.

Contemporary research on specific deterrence tends to focus on explaining this "positive punishment effect" (e.g., Paternoster and Piquero 1995; Pogarsky and Piquero 2003). Yet, it is not hard to imagine why the rational-sounding deterrence hypothesis seems to fail in the case of prisons. The use of incarceration as a sanction meets none of the suggested conditions for success (e.g., certainty, severity, and celerity) in the basic psychology of punishment (McGuire 2002; Moffitt 1983). Moreover, the average prison regime meets none of the criteria that various observers have suggested for promoting long-term compliance and conformity (e.g., Bottoms 2000; Kelman 1958; Tyler 1990).

Still, dead though this horse certainly is, the idea of the prison as a specific deterrence has some hope for a more modest afterlife. Emerging research, for instance, has focused on identifying individuals who might be more receptive to deterrent effects based on their level of attachment to mainstream institutions (e.g., DeJong 1997), their level of "risk" or immersion in criminal activities (Zamble and Porporino 1990), or cognitive factors (e.g., Pogarsky and Piquero 2003).

Prisons as Schools of Crime The most enduring assumption used to explain the criminogenic effects of confinement is that prison functions as a "school of crime." On the strength of this assumption, 19th-century penitentiaries carefully restricted communication among prisoners to the extent of hooding newly arrived inmates so that they could not see any of their peers, who were safely locked behind the massively impermeable doors of segregation cells. In subsequent periods of early prison history, permutations of silence rules and solitary confinement were instituted, variously subsumed under rival and fiercely competing schools of penology. Despite warmly debated differences in cherished prescriptions focused on issues such as the virtues of congregate versus solitary labor, the penological experts of the time unanimously converged on the premise that if their prisoners were allowed to associate and to converse with each other, they would be inevitably reinforcing criminal propensities and honing their felonious expertise.

Though prison inmates were ultimately allowed to freely congregate and associate in general prison populations, the "school of crime" assumption was never completely abandoned. It survived among prison administrators as a standard rationale for administrative confinement, and it earned popularity among social scientists as a subject for prison research studies. Typically, these studies consisted of thoughtfully worded opinion inventories administered to prisoners over the course of their sentences. The expectation of the researchers who conducted the studies was that they would be able to document a process (called "prisonization")[5] whereby inmates would be "taking on in greater or lesser degree the folkways, mores, customs, and general culture of the penitentiary," including "the criminalistic ideology in the prison community" (Clemmer, 1970, p. 299). The survey results showed apparent increases in antiauthoritarian and deviant attitudes,

[5] The concept of prisonization, although often attributed to Clemmer, probably originated in 1898, under the diagnosis of "Ganser Syndrome" (Shorer 1965).

which, however, usually dissipated as prisoners approached the end of their terms (Garabedian, 1963; Wheeler, 1961). This "inverted U curve" usually described in early studies was eventually proved to be a misleading composite, covering subgroups of inmates who held divergent attitudes and experienced varying patterns of attitude change over time.

The idea of "schools of crime" implicitly raised the presumption that older, seasoned, recidivistic offenders would exercise formative criminogenic influences over young, incipient delinquents at the threshold of their inauspicious careers. This hypothetical scenario contrasts sharply with the interaction patterns generally observed in non-age-graded prison yards, which include frantic efforts by older prisoners to insulate themselves and avoid contact with youthful fellow inmates, who in turn tend to congregate and associate with each other.

This does not mean that some prisoners are not exposed to pressures and influences from other prisoners. Such influences can be criminogenic if they sustain or reinforce an offender's interest in offending, such as through nostalgic war stories involving inflated accounts of criminal accomplishments. Fellow inmates can also interfere with other prisoners' self-improvement efforts by distracting them or belittling their accomplishments or promulgating antiadministration subcultural norms.

The main criminogenic effect may therefore consist of opportunities for the peer reinforcement of antisocial norms and behavior patterns among younger offenders. This interaction pattern became of particularly pressing concern to prison administrators in relation to gang activity, which was said to include participation in intramural drug trading and in violent incidents resulting from intergroup rivalries.

The perceptions of the refractory nature of gang behavior recently contributed to the proliferation, in American prisons, of administrative segregation (or "supermax") settings, reminiscent of early solitary confinement regimes. Given historical experiences with isolation or segregation settings, one would expect that their sensory-depriving regimes will prove multifariously criminogenic, reducing the coping capacity of long-term confinees, cementing their alienation and resentment, impairing their mental health, and disqualifying the ex-prisoners for effective communal existence.

The hypothesis at issue is that "when finally released to the 'free world,' the [supermax] prisoners' rage or damaged mental health, or both will result in continuing criminal, especially violent, conduct" (Ward and Werlich 2003, p. 62). A persuasive case to this effect is made by Craig Haney (2003), who described "social pathologies" that have been reported or observed in

segregation settings. The most common include problems with self-control and self-initiation of behavior, apathy, lethargy and despair, bursts of acting out, uncontrollable anger and rage, persecutory delusions, and fantasy lives centered on prospects of revenge. Haney points out that "there is good reason to believe that some prisoners ... cannot and will not overcome these pathologies; their extreme adaptations to supermax confinement become too engrained to relinquish" (p. 141). Prisoners who break down under stress have diminished prospects for postrelease adjustment. By the same token, "those who have adapted all too well to the deprivation, restriction, and pervasive control are prime candidates for release to a social world to which they may be incapable of ever fully readjusting" (ibid.).

Supermax settings are designed to benefit the prisons from which candidates for supermax placement are drawn but may accomplish this at the expense of public safety in the community. Results of a recent study (Lovell and Johnson, 2003) confirm that supermax graduates may record higher-than-expected recidivism rates. Increments in serious offending were particularly noteworthy among the segregated inmates who were released into the streets directly from confinement. The authors write:

A major concern ... was that offenders released from [segregation] into the community would be too disoriented, jumpy or hostile to cope with the challenges of society.... We found that the time between subjects' release from [supermax] and their release into the community (Time to Release) was correlated with felony recidivism, new person offenses, and length of survival in the community before committing new offenses.... When entered into logistic regression equations, Immediate Prison Release showed more robust associations with outcomes than Time to Release did. (p. 13)

Prison Adaptation as Criminogenic According to some observers, prisons in general may leave a lasting impact on the prisoner's sense of self and personal identity because of the adaptive challenges that prison environments present (see Petersilia, this volume). Liebling (1999, p. 341) writes:

Fear, anxiety, loneliness, trauma, depression, injustice, powerlessness, violence, rejection, and uncertainty are all part of the experience of prison. It is this 'hidden,' but everywhere apparent, feature of prison life that medical officers, psychologists, and others have failed to measure or take seriously. Sociologists of prison life knew it was there, but have to date largely failed to convince others in a sufficiently methodologically convincing way that pain is a harm.

This concern originated with functionalist sociologists, notably with Gresham Sykes (1965), who saw much of prison behavior reflecting an

effort by inmates to retain their self-esteem in the face of custodial assaults. Sykes discussed five "pains of imprisonment," which he defined as "deprivations and frustrations [that] pose profound threats to the inmate's personality or sense of personal worth" (p. 64). The first deprivation discussed by Sykes was the deprivation of liberty, including long-term separation from loved ones and a sense of "rejection or degradation by the free community [which] must be warded off, turned aside, rendered harmless" (p. 67). Sykes highlighted the spartan nature of prison life "in a world where control and possession of the material environment are commonly taken as sure indicators of a man's worth" (p. 69) and discussed the liabilities of a single-sex world in which "an essential component of man's self conception – his status of male – is called into question" (p. 71).

The most obvious problems for the prisoner that is described by Sykes was the deprivation of autonomy, which results from the proliferation of rules and constraints that pose "a profound threat to the prisoner's self image because they reduce the prisoner to the weak, helpless, dependent status of childhood" (p. 75). Sykes wrote that "of the many threats which may confront the individual, either in or out of prison, there are few better calculated to arouse acute anxieties than the attempt to reimpose the subservience of youth" (p. 76). Finally, Sykes dealt with assaultive or threatening behavior by other inmates that "constantly calls into question the individual's ability to cope with it, in terms of his inner resources, his courage, his 'nerve'" (p. 78).

The point made by Sykes and other deprivation theorists was that prisoners are constrained to engage in adaptive behavior that promotes survival in institutional settings. The corollary-presumption was that the behavior could be discontinued upon release. Goffman thus wrote that "it seems that shortly after release the ex-inmate forgets a great deal of what life was like on the inside and once again begins to take for granted the privileges around which life in the institution was organized" (Goffman 1961, p. 72). However, there remains the question of whether deprivation-induced adjustments may in fact persist and prove dysfunctional for some offenders following release from confinement. (As cases in point, prison tattoos foreclose employment options, and ex-offenders may carry weapons to counter no-longer-existing threats.)

More to the point is that prison adaptations such as those described by Sykes and others may replicate some of the crime-related subcultural behavior imported from the streets and may help to perpetuate it (Wacquant 2000). The criminogenic carryover patterns, which are accentuated by

deprivation, include prison gang behavior, as well as hypermasculine behavioral norms and codes that are prevalent in male maximum security prisons (Toch 1997). These norms include subcultural assumptions that legitimize the use of force and the exploitation of weak or vulnerable peers. To the extent to which the assumptions of deprivation theory hold, the perpetuation of criminogenic norms in prison is a product of harsh custodial regimes. If this is the case, it follows that crime-related dispositions can be reduced where prison deprivations are ameliorated.

Assessing Prison Impact

In a recent issue of the *California Law Review*, J. C. Oleson (2002) advanced the ingenious Swiftian prescription he entitled "The Punitive Coma." Under this tongue-in-cheek proposal judges would not sentence any offender to a conventional prison term but would instead substitute a commensurate period of chemically induced sleep. Among the advantages of this innovation is that it would save a great deal of money, because the prisoners could be stacked in rows of bunk beds, with minimal servicing required. The system would also make the present chapter very short, because the probabilities of reoffending at discharge from the prison could not have been affected by the prison experience. In other words, the impact of the prison would be zero.

A less drastic variation on this same scenario is the contention (by Zamble and Porporino 1988 and others) that adaptational styles and capacities of offenders are basically invariant and largely impervious to effects of imprisonment. According to this view, incarceration is a "behavioral deep freeze" that puts a person's self-destructive propensities on hold until renewed opportunities are presented for these propensities to be freely exercised. Indeed, ethnographic work in prison that indicates that prisoners construct prison time as a sort of "limbo" (Sapsford 1978) or "suspension" of reality (Schmid and Jones 1991), separating their inside selves from their real life (or outside selves).

An argument against this position would be based on the fact that there are well-established maturation effects on criminal behavior in the community, which are manifest in dramatic negative correlations between age and offending (Glueck and Glueck 1937; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). Such maturation effects need not be discontinued during confinement. Maturation explains the fact that prison rule violation rates decrease over time (Toch and Adams 2002) and that the key concerns of prisoners and their

interests can evolve, especially with long-term confinement. Such changes are often accommodated by prison administrations with differences in the setting in which younger and older prisoners are placed.

Of course, measuring the effects of imprisonment is no easy task. At present, the prison effects literature is redolent with descriptive accounts, vignettes, and imperfect research studies, which can be easily dismissed by discerning critics as invalid documentation of prison impact (see Bukstel and Kilmann 1980). There are also difficulties about attributing increments (or decrements) in postprison adjustment to experiences in the prison. On the one hand, observed changes in attitudes or behavior may not endure once the inmate leaves the prison. Beyond the first hours after release, for example, powerful environmental impingements may supercede any salutary or destructive residues of the prison experience itself. On the other hand, there is also the risk of our crediting the prison with transformations the prisoner may have undergone independently of experiences for which the institution is responsible. The offender may improve on his or her own while incarcerated or may be positively or negatively affected by developments outside the walls. Moreover, institutional influences can reinforce or neutralize each other. As the criminological psychoanalyst Fritz Redl was fond of pointing out, "If I mend a delinquent's arm, I am not to be blamed if he goes out and breaks his leg."

To assess the impact of a program we need to know how much recidivism we can expect from its graduates. With this information at hand, we can take credit for differences between expected and attained recidivism scores. In conventional designs, the source of information about expected recidivism is the success rate of a comparison group, which presupposes strict comparability of expected scores for the groups and a "deep freeze" assumption about the comparison group. Of course, the design does not help us with regard to individual offenders, which is important because program impact is apt to differ for members of any group.

In assessing the effects of imprisonment on an offender's chances of recidivating one would need to know how much recidivism could have been expected under deep-freeze or punitive-coma conditions. A measure that Leslie T. Wilkins called the "Base Expectancy Score" could summarize the predictive indices available at prison intake (very much including anticipated age at release) and could provide the tool for systematic comparisons of prison effects. Discrepancies between expected and observed recidivism in either direction would point to benefits or harms accrued during confinement. Researchers can explore differential effects of

various prison programs by grouping prisoners who have higher and lower expectancy scores to assess the impact of the program on inmates varying in criminogenic potential and to compare these effects to the differential impact of various interventions. However, it is important to emphasize in this connection – as did Wilkins (1969, p. 130) – that:

The attractiveness of base-expectancy methods in evaluation lies in its independence of administrative or operational processes. The program may be designed in any way, offenders allocated by any procedure believed to be good, and yet some form of evaluation may still be possible.

Wilkins (1969, p. 106) emphasizes that "if we wish to consider the outcome of treatment on offenders, we should be concerned both with the type of treatment and with the type of offender, because the postulated outcome can be seen only in terms of an interaction." An excellent illustration is provided by one of the principal findings of the original Borstal prediction study (Mannheim and Wilkins, 1955). The authors reported the following:

The 'open' Borstals do get 'better material' upon which to work their reforming influence, so far as the experience tables enable us to classify new entrants into risk groups. But, over and above this, the results show that there is a fair amount of the variance which may be accredited to the type of treatment – or, in other words, those who are sent to 'open' Borstals do better than the prognoses suggest, whilst those who are sent to 'closed' do worse.... This is, perhaps, not absolute proof that 'open' treatment is better than 'closed,' but it is extremely near complete proof. (p. 112)

The point being that although person-setting interactions are inextricable, we can sometimes parcel out the relative contributions of environments and of personal predispositions to positive or negative outcomes.

Desistance-Supportive Prison Experiences

On the average, one of two paroled inmates return to prison within 3 years (Langan and Levin 2002). Innovative efforts to reduce this average figure through rehabilitative programming come and go occasionally. Of course, these days, such programs in the U.S. prison system tend to be "going" more than "coming," as states cut back on "perks" such as education and treatment inside their prison systems. In some ways, then, it is remarkable that the reconviction rate is not higher than it is, considering what we know about desistance and the experience of imprisonment. In this section, we review the elements of the prison experience that might contribute to the

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remarkable resiliency of so many of the individuals who pass through the prison system.

Building on Success

Interventions that demonstrate unusually low recidivism of necessity must combine features or attributes that uniquely contribute to promoting personal reform and to enhancing its staying power. An example of an unusually successful enterprise some of whose components have been emulated elsewhere is a small prison located in the state of Sao Paulo, Brazil. This prison – formerly administered by the local police – was adopted in 1973 by a Catholic lay organization (APAC), after which it was named. The prison claims to be nonsectarian, but religiosity and commitment to change are among its admissions criteria. According to Anderson (1991), "Inmates transfer to APAC Prison from government-run prisons throughout Brazil. They must fill out a 12-page written application and undergo an interview process in which APAC Prison staff evaluate the sincerity of their interest in rehabilitation" (p. 100). Serious offense history is no bar to admission into the prison, half of whose inmates are violent offenders, including men convicted of homicide, robbery, and sexual assault. A total of 520 of these inmates were released or paroled from the prison during its first 18 years of existence, and 20 were reconvicted – a recidivism rate of 4 percent, as compared with the Brazilian national reconviction rate of 84 percent. A more recent cohort, comprising 148 APAC prisoners released in 1996, yielded a reconviction rate of 16 percent over a 3-year period. The author of this study acknowledged that the figure was higher than the previously recorded 4 percent, but pointed out that "the recidivism rate . . . is remarkably low by any standard" (Johnson 2002, p. 9).

Among the salient attributes of the APAC Prison is that it has no correctional officers. Three civilians serve as warden-equivalents – with support from a democratically elected inmate council – and other custodial functions are exercised by the inmates themselves. The prisoners' institutional career is divided into three phases of increasing freedom and escalating contributions to the community, culminating in a phase of work release. The prison is unprecedentedly permeable, with continuous involvement by the relatives of the prisoners, who attend many communal functions and religiously tinged educational experiences. Each prisoner is also assigned a citizensponsor, who acts as "godparent" during his confinement and following release. An army of religiously motivated citizen volunteers – including

mental health professionals – lead prison seminars and weekend retreats that are concerned with issues of ethical behavior and human relatedness. All religiously oriented experiences in the prison, ranging from the didactic sessions to more formal occasions such as mass, are participatory in nature. The prison thus has many of the earmarks of a communitarian social movement.

Correctional officials from various parts of the world have made professional field trips or pilgrimages to the APAC prison. The experience is invariably described as illuminating. A Scottish prison official returned home to report that "there is little doubt that this regime works." He recalled that "during the final week of my visit a five-man Russian delegation arrived at the prison. General Saraikin, Deputy Director of the Russian Prison system, said that 'seeing is believing' what he had already heard and read about the APAC prison" (Creighton 1993, p. 11). APAC's own newsletter provides a continuing record of concurrent visits by foreign dignitaries who are cited as voicing their determination to replicate the model in their own countries. One of the visitors who expressed the resolve was Chuck Colson, the founder of Prison Fellowship. In a foreword to a book about APAC, he wrote that:

I first visited Humaita [a preexisting name for the prison] in the spring of 1990. I was overwhelmed. It seemed more of a spiritual retreat center than a prison.... If anything, my second visit to Humaita was more exciting than my first. I didn't see a single inmate who was not smiling. Almost all of the men were wearing crosses around their neck or T-shirts with biblical quotes.... I told them I was glad to be there because the Spirit of God was so evident in the place. The inmates immediately burst into sustained applause.... This is a prison you'd like to stay in.... I couldn't help but think what would happen if we could apply some of these basic concepts to our criminal justice system in America. (Ottobani 2000, 1–2)

The United Kingdom has instituted several prison units modeled after APAC. The first such unit was opened in 1997 at HMP The Verne under the auspices of Geoff Hebbern, a Principal Officer employed by the prison. Three years after its inception, the Verne unit reported that it had released 120 prisoners, but that only 5 had reoffended (Bowers 2000; but see the later evaluation by Burnside, Adler, Loucks, and Rose 2001). In a retrospective letter, Officer Hebbern (1998) wrote that "the success is due to many different elements in the programme," but that these included "the strong Christian component," "the large number of volunteers," "the fact that participants are allowed to make many of the decisions...through their democratically elected councils," an inclusive or "open" admissions

policy, and "prison system permission to allow ex-offenders to work on the project." Hebbern also alluded to the unit's morale and social climate, indicating that "this is, without a doubt, the most dynamic and exciting program I have ever been involved in."

In the United States, the Prison Fellowship Ministries opened a religiously oriented prison (InnerChange, in Jester-II in Texas), said to comprise key elements of the APAC model, including the participation of relatives of inmates and the heavy involvement of civilian volunteers. The prison's regime, however, is relatively traditional and does not prominently include the democratic and communitarian elements of the Brazilian and the English prison units. Theologically, as pointed out by Creighton (1998), "the difference between the two models might be described in terms of their Roman Catholic and Protestant/Evangelical perspectives, and different cultural backgrounds" (p. 7). The import of these differences in regime, religious orientation, and culture between the Brazilian model and the Texas adaptation awaits exploration through recidivism research. Such research will be facilitated by the fact that eligible inmates are randomly allocated to Jester or a comparison group of Texas prisoners. Additional comparisons become possible by virtue of the fact that InnerChange programs have been established in prisons in Minnesota, Kansas, and Iowa as well as Texas, so that contextual variations can be explored.

Regenerative Continuity

Among the difficulties that have plagued otherwise potent and effective programs is that of discontinuity between their rarified and specialized environments and the mundane attributes of settings in which their graduates must function. The problem of nontransferability of gains is not confined to specific treatment modalities. Learning-based or behavior-modifying programs have found themselves unable to compete with real-world reinforcement schedules, and the clients of insight-promotive or group-therapeutic programs have encountered outsiders less than hospitable to their disarming displays of openness and honesty.

More generic prison programs have also had to deal with discontinuity issues. Programs that were assiduously engaged in shaping prosocial attitudes and reinforcing beneficent personality traits, for example, had good reason to suspect that on the streets some desirable personal dispositions are more deployable than others. Likewise, vocational trainers discovered that they could expect no impact (other than boomerang effects) from the

successful inculcation of skills for which there was no free-world demand or for which they would not be able to practice because of legal restrictions. The *New York Times* (Haberman 2003) recently recounted the story of an ex-prisoner, successfully trained in the barbering trade inside the New York State prison system, who learned upon his release that he could not gain a license to actually cut hair from the state that had taught him barbering.

Some discontinuity problems are insoluble because the disjunctures involved are unbridgeable or the variables that need to be addressed lie beyond one's jurisdiction. Prison administrators, for example, cannot select salubrious associates for ex-offenders or engender employment opportunities for graduates of their vocational training programs. On occasion, however, bridging experiences can be devised that transfer enough elements of rehabilitative interventions into the community to keep the regenerative process alive. In some innovative bridging experiences, supportive arrangements can be introduced that allow the offender to practice newly acquired skills or to deploy some of the fruits of recent learning experiences. These protective experiences are designed to preserve some of the rehabilitative gains achieved by the offender in the prison, ensuring their carryover into the community.

Historical precedents for aftercare components are provided by the mental health movement in the period preceding deinstitutionalization, when hospital administrators were assigned responsibility for making release arrangements for their patients (Rothman 1980). Continuity was presumptively ensured (much to the dismay of some hospital administrators concerned about their budgets) by specifying that patients would be served by staff members who had worked with them in the institution. Where compartmentalization of agencies came to preclude continued assignment of the same service providers before and after release, approximations were attained by promoting close links between institutional program staff and staff charged with running (philosophically congruent) aftercare programs, such as trained, specialized parole officers. Conversely, prison programs were sometimes run by the staff of their community components, or by some of their own graduates, on a contractual basis.

In connection with the APAC program, we have already seen continuity in religious or faith-based prison units that operate with the support and participation of outside religious groups. Church members who are involved in such programs offer all manner of social and material assistance (very much including jobs) to program participants after they leave the prison. This makes it very difficult to attribute an offender's successful

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adjustment in the community to the (religious) content of the program, as opposed to the material and interpersonal assistance he has received or some combination of these elements.

Bridging Experiences

It has become increasingly obvious that the process of readjustment to the community may be initiated while the offender is still in prison, though this principle is resoundingly violated where shackled prisoners are discharged from segregation units or where jail inmates are released with bus tickets and change. By contrast, intramural transition management can take a variety of forms, ranging from preparole counseling and courses in parenting, job hunting or life skills, to halfway house or work-release settings that provide graduated experiences of community living.

The overwhelming concern when any offender leaves the prison is the prospect of his or her reoffending, but a closely related concern is that the offender may not be able to secure employment so as to keep from reoffending. Programs have consequently been set up to try to initiate the job-hunting sequence while the offender is still confined. The state of Ohio, for example, "invites local business leaders to job fairs at Ohio prisons... inmates must be within 45 days of release and are required to develop a current resume." Preliminary data suggest that "about 26 percent of participating inmates are offered employment... another 73 percent are encouraged to report after their release for additional interviewing and consideration" (Unwin, Mayers, and Wilt 1999, p. 114–115). Ohio prisons also uses teleconferencing facilities for employment interviews. Other technology is deployed by the Washington State prison system, which operates a computerized clearinghouse, called CCH. According to Finn (1999):

At five prisons, CCH instructors register their students with the Employment Security Department, enabling them to access the department's JobNet computerized job data bank so that they can discover job leads while still in the prison. CCH contracts with.... the "Ex-O" program, which provides job search assistance to adult and juvenile ex-offenders, including ongoing post placement services. (p. 8)

The Washington program has instituted a community resource directory, which is staffed by prisoners with computer expertise. Finn (1999) notes that there were "six inmates who designed and wrote the computer software for the disk version of the directory, update the entries quarterly, and staff toll-free telephone and fax lines for ordering copies, receiving

updates, and adding resources" (p. 9). The directory represents a twist in transitional programming in that prisoners assist ex-prisoners with problems of community reintegration.

The Washington program showed reduced recidivism, but "the study did not control for the possibility that the Ex-O clients might have been lower risk or more highly motivated than other releases" (ibid.). No such caveat attached to a bridging program in Texas (Project RIO) in which the participants and nonparticipants "had similar demographic characteristics and risk of reoffending." Moreover, participants from minority groups showed disproportionate benefits, and the program proved "of greatest benefit to ex-offenders who were considered the most likely to reoffend" (p. 7). This outcome is particularly telling because it suggests that some bridging experiences might be most profitably deployed with prisoners whose base-expectancy scores are the least promising.

Sequencing of Prison Experiences

If prison terms were to be designed for impact, the average prisoner's experiences would be arranged in chronological order to achieve cumulative effects. A module that inculcates basic skills, for example, could be followed by an opportunity to acquire advanced skills and a set of work assignments in which these skills could be exercised. Treatment and educational experiences might similarly lead to paraprofessional assignments as peer counselors, teacher's aides, and so forth.

Advancement and progression would not only make prison existence more "normal" but also multiply incentives for prisoners to engage in constructive activities. Long prison terms, in particular, have to be reviewed from time to time to ensure that the prisoners do not vegetate or drift along haphazardly. Sentence planning must start with some attempt at an orientation, to ameliorate predictable adjustment problems. Conversely, any programs designed to facilitate reintegration are best deployed close to release. Midsentence planning for the prisoners remains an inordinately difficult challenge, because sequences of constructive experiences are hard to come by in prisons, especially experiences with beneficent carryover potential.

Short sentences promise less chance of impact than long sentences because brief prison terms can be regarded by an offender as intermissions, as substandard vacations, or as routine costs of doing business. However, a revolving door of short-term incarcerations may at some juncture offer

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a window of opportunity if the offender realizes that he is embarked on a distressingly redundant self-destructive career with no end in sight.

Short prison terms can also be designed (as in shock incarceration experiences) to promote desistance through intensive programming. Typically, the prisoner discovers that he is being concurrently exposed to different interventions, such as substance-abuse treatment, education, and military-style basic training. If the results include low (or nonhigh) recidivism rates, program staff will argue that the effect must be due to the combination of modalities in their program. Such, however, is not necessarily the case, and it has thus been argued that military drills in shock incarceration do not contribute to the outcome of the intervention (MacKenzie, Brame, McDowell, and Souryal 1995). Literacy-based or educational "boot camps," involving intensive educational drills or service learning may be just as likely to promote desistance as is marching about and doing push-ups. Indeed this was empirically documented in Farrington et al.'s (2002) of two qualitatively different boot camp regimes (one militaristic and the other treatment based) in the United Kingdom.

Prison Milieus

In considering the impact of prisons one must not only focus on rehabilitative programs but on differences in the prison environments in which the programs must function (Liebling 2002; Lin 2000). Such differences have been characterized as systematically divergent social climates (Moos 1975; Toch 1992). These are psychometrically describable, but they may also be readily discernible to informed observers.

A prison visiting committee fielded by the Corrections Association of New York thus observed in a recent report (2002) that "it is notable to us that each prison we visit tends to have its own distinct culture, and that traditions and practices are reinforced over time which lend to the facility a certain status or reputation" (p. 10). As cases in point, the committee alluded to "two prisons across the road from each other, [whose] cultures are worlds apart." In the first of the prisons, "inmates and staff refer to the prison as a 'campus.' The atmosphere is markedly peaceful; prisoners and staff report few complaints when we visited. Everyone seemed invested in keeping the prison safe and calm." The second prison proved to be a source of "numerous reports from inmates, attorneys and family members . . . about serious correction officer misconduct" pointing to "an unspoken policy of might makes right which appeared largely ignored by a detached administration."

Divergences in institutional climate were reinforced by a reputed tendency of security staff to "seek positions at prisons where the culture supports their style of management" (ibid.).

Differences in climate may be unrelated to security level that is associated with offender attributes. One New York prison contains a population, 87 percent of which is under sentence for violent felonies, and is described in an official publication as having "a relaxed low-key feel" resulting from "an attitude created and nurtured by the staff and felt and shared by the inmates." The "spirit of mutual respect" is described as carrying over into "sustained operation of programs for several groups of men with special problems." Clients of the programs "are not victimized. On the contrary, many general population inmates watch out for them, informally or formally as interpreters and mobility guides" (*DOCS Today* 2002, p. 14).

The portrait is noteworthy, in that special populations in the prison include individuals lacking in life skills, whose adjustment to the community could be problematic. Under an inflexible custodial regime, or in a dog-eat-dog inmate environment, any benefits accrued through social skills training could be neutralized by the institutional climate. Given the cooperative, nurturing culture in this prison, however, programmatic benefits can be reinforced, enhancing the potency of treatment modalities.

Prison Visitation and the Limits of the Deprivation of Freedom

Family visits are widely recognized as an important tool in prison management. The idea is that visitation can contribute to correctional goals by modulating the average prisoner's disposition, improving his deportment, and enhancing the prospect of his rehabilitation by cementing tenuous family links. The Code of Federal Regulations, for example, proclaims that "the Bureau of Prisons encourages visiting by family, friends, or community groups to maintain the morale of the inmate and to develop closer relationships between the inmate and family members or others in the community" (cited in Bosworth 2002, p. 133). A sample legislative provision, signed by the governor of California in August 2002, verbalizes this perspective more eloquently than most:

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS: SECTION 1. Chapter 10.7. PRISON VISITATION 6400. Any amendments to existing regulations and any future regulations adopted by the

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Department of Corrections which may impact the visitation of inmates shall do all of the following:

a. Recognize and consider the value of visiting as a means to improve the safety of prisons for both staff and inmates.

b. Recognize and consider the important role of inmate visitation in establishing and maintaining a meaningful connection with family and community.

c. Recognize and consider the important role of inmate visitation in preparing an inmate for successful release and rehabilitation.

Of the three postulated impacts, the second and third are intimately related to each other, and congruent with several of the key desistance theories we have reviewed.

The achievement of such objectives is furthered if arrangements and conditions for visitation are appropriately supportive, allowing visits to be meaningful experiences for prisoners and their visitors. Visitation generally reduces what has been called the collateral damage of imprisonment. Put another way, visitation reduces the collateral damage inherent in the deprivation of freedom. Importantly, though, visitation accomplishes these ends thanks to the hard work and sacrifice of visitors and at the expense of emotional strain for the inmate. The process of visitation at its best is a far cry from the stereotypical concept of an unfettered "privilege," which connotes enjoyment made available by the prison as a reward for exemplary behavior. Though prisoners who expect to be visited may look forward to their visits with eager anticipation, that does not mean that the visitation experience as it unfolds will be anywhere near pleasurable. Through visits, inmates gain the prized opportunity to play a role other than that of inmate, but few manage to play such roles effectively and convincingly. After all, a great many feelings that are evoked by visitation experiences cannot be easily faced or cannot be freely expressed in the public arena of a visiting room.

Despite the obvious barriers and limitations to the free expression of feelings, visitations offer inmates the only face-to-face opportunities they have to preserve or restore relationships that have been severed by imprisonment. Johnston (1995, p. 138) points out, for example, that parent–child visitation can serve to allow children to express their reactions to separation, and "the more disturbed children are by parent-child separation and the poorer their adjustment, the more important it is that visitation occurs." Very young children are bound to harbor all sorts of irrational feelings and ideas about their incarcerated parents, and "visits allow [the] children to

release these feelings, fears and fantasies and to replace them with a more realistic understanding of their parents' characteristics and circumstances."

Yet, for these and other constructive ends to be attained the prison must provide an ambience that makes restorative encounters possible. Not surprisingly, "many incarcerated parents [have raised] concerns about inappropriate and oppressive visiting conditions" (Barry 1995, p. 151). It boggles the mind, for instance, to conceive of what meaningful reassurance one could provide to apprehensive children behind bulletproof glass. A visit under such conditions may in fact impair rather than restore a parental relationship. It is easy to see how a vulnerable child facing her father under scary, noncontact visitation conditions can have her worst unconscious preconceptions confirmed, no matter how the father may act, and how visits under inhospitable conditions may be taxing or onerous for children. Any such practices that appear to further disrupt the lives of families that have already been severed by imprisonment stand as powerful obstacles to future desistance, as it has been explained in this chapter.

Ameliorating Prison Impact

Though we know very little about the beneficial or harmful effects of prison experiences, new types of experiences can be introduced into prisons to ascertain how they work and to determine what impact – if any – they have on recidivism rates. Such an experiment was initiated by the Bureau of Prisons on May 13, 1976. Norman Carlson, the Director of the Bureau, presided over the opening of the experimental facility, which he described as "an institution dedicated to change and innovation." Carlson noted that:

The Federal Correctional Institution at Butner, North Carolina represents an attempt by the Bureau of Prisons to develop an institution where new ideas, concepts and theories can be tested and evaluated. In designing the institution and its programs, we sought to create a safe and humane environment which was conducive to change and to finding new and more effective ways of providing correctional programs for offenders. (Carlson 1981, p. 2)

Butner was a composite prison comprising three subpopulations. The prisoners involved in the most explicitly innovative program were a group of 150 recidivistic and/or violent offenders who had been selected by a computer in Washington, DC. The computer also selected a comparison group of inmates elsewhere in the system. By the time a solid evaluation

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study of the program could be completed, data had been collected about 345 experimental and 245 control inmates, and 95 prisoners who had sampled the program and decided to "opt out" – mostly, to be closer to their families.

No differences were found in postrelease performance measures between the groups, which meant that desistancewise the experiment was arguably a flop. In other words, one could conclude that "the Butner program probably doesn't affect the likelihood of post-release criminal activity" (Love and Allgood 1987, p. 4).

Given the availability of other measures, however, a second conclusion followed, which was that:

it can be clearly demonstrated that a group of sophisticated, dangerous and experienced criminals can be housed in prisons where a central management philosophy emphasizes individual rights. This difficult to manage population functions very well under these circumstances. When inmates were allowed to volunteer for programs, they not only participated in more programs, but they also completed more programs. There were fewer disciplinary problems and fewer assaults. (p. 5)

Under current trends in correctional management, the second conclusion may be as important as the first. Norval Morris, who originated the reform model implemented at Butner, designed a "deep end" approach, to counter prescriptions that he felt "read like the design of the inner circles of hell" (Morris 1974, p. 88). He also noted that "if a humane and reformative program can be accorded to this category of offenders, then it should have as a direct and inescapable consequence the application of better programs throughout the prison system to less threatening groups" (ibid.). Morris would not have been overjoyed by the results of the evaluation study. He did, however, write in anticipation that:

Of course, reducing recidivism is by no means the only goal of the proposed institution. It is likely, for example, that it will have a beneficial effect on other aspects of the inmate's life upon release, such as job stability and personal relationships; that the inmate's time in the institution will be less damaging; and that the attitudes and career patterns of staff will be improved. Measurement of the achievement of these and other legitimate goals of the institution must be included in the evaluation design. Nevertheless, unless the later violent crime of the test group is less than (or *at least no greater than*) that of the control group, the institution must be determined a failure and its design abandoned for other approaches to dealing with repetitively violent offenders. (p. 119, emphasis added)

The warden of Butner, in a dialogue at a conference 2 years after the prison had been opened, made a comparable point. He said that:

The unique thing about Butner is the atmosphere — the mix of several types of inmates in open, relaxed surroundings, with all kinds of community people inside. The inmates wear private clothing, they have keys to their own room, the come and go as they please, and there are women all over the place. Butner does not have a perfect alignment of programs, but I think it has a good variety....

The only thing that we can now say is being studied is if you take two men who are the same type of violent offender and the one man is in Leavenworth and the other man is in Butner, who participates more in programs? Who does better? Who stays out of trouble? Can you manage the man who is in the relaxed, open atmosphere just as well as you can manage the man who is locked in? And, finally, how do the two men do when they go onto the street? ...

There very well may not be a difference in terms of recidivism rates. All of these men have been locked up under pretty tight security for a long time. Now they are walking around, and they have not gone on a rampage, nothing terribly wrong has happened, and the atmosphere in the prison is good. This is a test of how well inmates can live in the Butner type of prison environment. (Ingram 1981, pp. 106–107)

The prescription by Norval Morris had assumed that inmates in the experimental population would have an assigned parole date and would be released in graduated fashion. But no one had consulted the parole board nor the agency running the halfway houses. As a result, differences relating to release arrangement did not eventuate as planned.

The Morris design had also called for officer-run counselling or "living/learning" groups in the inmate living units. Staff were not in fact trained for the exercise, however, and thus "many of the meetings degenerated into little more than prisoner 'ventilating' against staff and prison conditions" (Federal Prison System 1981, p. 8). This meant that at best, the only functional consequence of the small living groups appeared to be the release of tension by prisoners during a meeting" (ibid.).

The remaining core of the Butner model was cafeteria-style programming. Prisoners arriving at the facility were invited to sample available programs, on the assumption that informed decisions could be made based on first-hand experience. The model also had other climate-related elements. It called for a diversified staff and freedom of movement within the prison. The evaluation showed that "staff were nearly unanimous in their approval of the degree of open communication between inmates and staff" (Love and Allgood 1987, p. 4).

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The liberalized regime passed a subsequent test involving the doubling of the prison's population. According to local research staff (Pelissier 1989), "there may be a natural tendency for custody practices to become tighter with increased population sizes" but Butner's warden held the line with no adverse results, "suggest[ing] that institutions experiencing population increases may wish to use caution in limiting changes in security practices and avoid unnecessary tightening of security" (p. 5).

Conclusions

As evidenced by our review in the opening section of this chapter, desistance theories may differ in detail, but they converge in lamenting the attenuation of links between offenders and society, which include stable employment and membership in stable family constellations. To the extent to which prisons further disrupt and attenuate such links, they can be seen to cement the alienation of offenders; to the extent to which prisons encourage and support visitation and opportunities for success outside the prison walls, they can be credited with supporting desistance. Hence, longer sentences and harsher conditions are hypothetically more damaging than shorter sentences and ameliorated conditions. Likewise, facilitating "new careers" for prisoners, opening up free-world support systems through the involvement of community volunteers, and encouraging visitation and civic participation should all be associated with greater chances for success.

Importantly, though, these proactive efforts toward reintegration are nothing like panaceas for reform. Desistance does not come in the shape of a "prison program," and the best research to date seems to indicate that most prison practices make little difference on offending outcomes, regardless of whether the intent is to scare straight or rehabilitate. Likewise, the promotion of public safety seems largely unrelated to the construction of additional fortress prisons. As such, those hoping to facilitate radical changes in the lives of offenders, let alone in public safety, might be better directed to focus their attention outside the prison walls.

Perhaps the best the prison can do, in the end, is to "do no harm." Keve (1996, p. 1) begins a history of correctional standards by quoting Florence Nightingale, who first wrote that, "It may seem a strange principle to enunciate as the very first requirement in a hospital that it should do the sick no harm." Keve observes that Nightingale "undoubtedly would have expressed a similar principle for prisons." Most likely, Nightingale did precisely that, as keynote speaker to the 1870 Congress on Penitentiary

and Reformatory Discipline. The fourteenth principle annunciated by the Congress asserts:

There is no greater mistake in the whole compass of penal discipline, than its studied imposition of degradation as part of punishment. Such imposition...crushes the weak, irritates the strong, and indisposes all to submission and reform. It is trampling where we ought to raise, and is therefore...unwise in policy. (Wines, 1871)

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7

Communities and Reentry

CONCENTRATED REENTRY CYCLING

Todd R. Clear, Elin Waring, and Kristen Scully

It is easy to view reentry through the lens of the individuals who are personally involved. *Coming home* from prison, as Joan Petersilia (2003) has termed it, is an intense personal experience. To come home is to rejoin the lives of families, associates, and other intimates. The personal issues that arise for the ex-prisoner coming home pose weighty challenges for the individual and his or her close associates, and it is not difficult to see why they matter. A growing literature now examines the significance of reentry for the individuals who experience it.

Yet the focus of this chapter is reentry as a community (rather than an individual) phenomenon. It is less obvious how reentry manifests itself at the community level, although its impact on communities is worthy of special attention. Reentry, because it is highly stigmatizing as well as concentrated among people already troubled by poverty and exclusion, can be a significant factor of community life – one that transcends the sum of individual experiences. We also consider the effects of incarceration. Incarceration sets the stage for reentry, affecting the same communities that reentry does and thereby compounding the effects of reentry in poor communities that have high rates of residents cycling in and out of prison. We have referred to these intertwined processes as "reentry cycling" and their impact on the community as "coercive mobility" (Clear, Rose, Waring, and Scully 2003). The shift in focus from individual-level analyses to community-level analyses is illustrated by a simple comparison. Faced with a criminally