SIX THEORIES RELATED TO AIC CHANGE
JULY 19, 2015

DESISTANCE THEORY

Desistance theory attempts to explain why some people desist from criminal behavior over time and others do not. Desistance theorists maintain that an individual's belief that he or she *can* change is requisite to enduring, positive conditions of desistance, and that effective intervention involves capitalizing on the strengths an individual inherently possesses, and exposing individuals to as many factors shown to be related to desistance as possible. Desistance theory repudiates the guiding philosophy behind conventional treatment models of correctional intervention, which separate criminogenic from non-criminogenic needs, and holds that all of a person's needs are relevant to such intervention.

Desistance theory approaches lend legitimacy to some of the driving principles behind art programs insofar as capitalizing on the existing strengths, skills, and talents of inmates is inherent in the delivery of (most) prison arts programs. The emphasis on the mentoring role of arts facilitators in prison arts programs speaks directly to another central factor found to be associated with desistance, which is the presence of positive, supporting relationships. The findings suggesting that arts programs create a social as well as physical space where prisoners have the rare occasion to be treated as human beings (Cheliotis & Jordanoska, 2014) would provide another form of such support. Another recurring finding in desistance research is that individuals who appear to successfully desist from crime for many years at a time are characterized relatively early on in the process with a sense of agency that is not present among those who are less successful. In contrast, the latter are often plagued by a feeling of powerlessness to control or manifest events in their own lives that is *not* present among people who appear to be able to desist (Maruna, 2001; Healy, 2013). The self-guided nature of arts activities provides the artist a degree of autonomy, control, and freedom, otherwise absent from the prison environment, and may in some cases be one of few opportunities during an inmate's time when they are able to exercise agency.

Possible measurement of desistance include improvement in participants' own self-perceptions and self-belief, specifically in terms of their ability to accomplish positive goals they did not feel they had the ability to before, or the development of talents and skills they did not know they had. Assessments of their sense of control and autonomy over their work in the arts programs would be relevant as well.

Cheliotis, L. K., & Jordanoska, A. (2014). The arts of desistance: Assessing the role of arts-based programmes in reducing reoffending. Howard Journal of Criminal Justice, 53(5).

Healy, D. (2013). Changing fate? Agency and the desistance process. *Theoretical Criminology*, 1362480613494991.

Maruna, S., & LeBel, T. (2010). The desistance paradigm in correctional practice: From programs to lives. *Offender supervision: New directions in theory, research and practice*, 65-89.

Maruna, S. (2001). Making good: How ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives. American Psychological Association.

PERFORMANCE THEORY

Performance theory posits that because one of the fundamental parts of human, social interaction is the ability perform different roles in various social contexts, and adapting one's role to changes between contexts, increasing a person's repertoire of available roles, and improving his or her ability to transition from one to another is central to living a successful life in society (Harkins, Pritchard, Haskayne, Watson, & Beech, 2011). A theater or drama context provides a safe and supportive space in which to practice taking on different roles, which is requisite to developing new ones. Furthermore, when participants are presented with the opportunity to step outside their habitual ways of thinking, behaving, and interacting with others, they are able to see themselves and others in new ways that challenge their currently existing self-perceptions, and perceptions of others (Thompson, 2000).

When inmates construct their own plays and scenes, often autobiographical in nature (an intentional prompt on the part of facilitators), they are able to externalize their own narratives, and examine them from a different perspective, to contemplate and question them, often with the input of others from their group. This kind of self-reflective activity is requisite for challenging the self-perceptions often associated with self-destructive and criminal behavior. It also allows them to channel and release emotions in a controlled, creative, and empowering form.

Without waiting until participants are released to see whether their ability to engage with the social world and relationships has improved, one possible way to assess the presence and the impact of acting out alternative roles from one's own could be to conduct a pre and post study using vignettes designed to assess the range of opportunities an individual possesses for reacting or behaving in different situations. If the post-participation range of positive coping mechanisms is greater, this could provide some evidence of effectiveness.

Harkins, L., Pritchard, C., Haskayne, D., Watson, A., & Beech, A. R. (2011). Evaluation of Geese Theatre's re-connect program: addressing resettlement issues in prison. *International journal of offender therapy and comparative criminology*, *55*(4), 546-566.

Thompson, J. (2000). Bewilderment: Preparing prisoners for 'real' work in the fictional world of prison. *Community, Work & Family*, *3*(3), 241-259.

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THEORY

Cognitive behavioral theory focuses on the interplay of behavior and thinking patterns. The premise of cognitive behavioral theory is that an individual's behavior and cognitive patterns are learned through observation of significant people early in life (Hughes, 2014). Thus, an individual can observe and learn antisocial thoughts, attitudes, and behavior. In order to change antisocial behavior, an individual must change the way he or she thinks first. Cognitive distortions, or destructive patterns of thinking, perpetuate destructive behavior (Brugman and Bink, 2011).

AIC offers a way to address cognitive distortions, and according to cognitive behavioral theory, antisocial behavior. For example, the cognitive distortion of jumping to conclusions, or mind reading, occurs when an individual assumes he or she knows why another person acts or feels the way he/she does without actually knowing. Participating in theater and taking on different roles allows AIC participants to challenge this cognitive distortion by examining a situation from others' perspectives. Overgeneralization occurs when an individual comes to a conclusion based on a single incident or piece of evidence. Learning to play an instrument, for example, offers a challenge to this cognitive distortion by providing repeated evidence that mistakes do not mean failure. AIC allows for participants to create new neural pathways that challenge destructive ways of thinking as well as opportunities to work as a team towards a pro-social goal.

The fundamental concepts of cognitive behavioral theory are easily measured by several valid and reliable scales, such as the General Attitude and Belief Scale (Lindner, Kirkby, Wertheim, & Birch (1999), that measure the degree to which respondents agree or disagree with cognitive distortions like, "it's awful to do poorly at some important things, and I think it is a catastrophe if I do poorly" and "I think it is terribly bad when people treat me with disrespect."

Brugman, D., & Bink, M.D. (2011). Effects of the EQUIP peer intervention program on self-serving cognitive distortions and recidivism among delinquent male adolescents. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 17 (4): 345-358

Hughes, J. (2005). Doing the arts justice: A review of research literature, practice and theory. A. Miles, & A. McLewin (Eds.). London, England: Unit for the Arts and Offenders.

Lindner, H., Kirkby, R., Wertheim, E., & Birch, P. (1999). A brief assessment of irrational thinking: The shortened general attitude and belief scale. *Cognitive*

Therapy and Research, 23(6): 651-663.

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

Social learning theory overlaps with cognitive behavioral theory in its focus on the importance of adapting to more beneficial ways of behaving. Social learning theory proposes that learning pro-social behavior is crucial to healthy development, as well as the ability to understand and perform to expectations of others. Learning social roles is essential for success. Like cognitive behavioral theory, social learning theory suggests that antisocial roles and identities are learned (Hughes, 2014).

AIC provides the space and processes to learn to play pro-social roles and learn empathy. Theater, in particular, allows for AIC participants to take on the role of someone quite different and see the world from another point of view. Additionally, AIC provides the space for role-playing for the different roles participants may have to play once released from prison, such as employee and parent in a safe space.

The concepts associated with social learning theory are not as easily measured as cognitive behavioral theory. The Measures of Criminal Attitudes and Associations scale (Mills, Kroner, & Hemmati, 2004) measures the degree to which an individual has criminal friends and family and he or she supports criminal activity. Traditionally, social learning theory has been measured by asking if an individual's friends or parents engage in the same behavior. However, in the context of AIC, it seems more relevant to determine the extent to which an individual is able to establish a pro-social identity and adapt it to different situations. Other scales that are not directly related to AIC or criminal activity but focus on the degree to which an individual feels ambiguously or conflicted about his identity may be a better measure of the concepts behind social learning theory.

Hughes, J. (2005). Doing the arts justice: A review of research literature, practice and theory. A. Miles, & A. McLewin (Eds.). London, England: Unit for the Arts and Offenders.

Mills, J.F., Kroner, D.G., & Hemmati, T. (2004). The measures of criminal attitudes and associates (MCAA): The prediction of general and violent recidivism. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 31(6): 717-733.*

SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORY

The main premise of social capital is that social networks have value and allow individuals and or communities to achieve a certain success marker despite exposure to risk (Hughes, 2014). Social capital includes personal skills and social skills, but most

importantly, networking skills that help individuals form relationships that allow them to prosper despite obstacles and challenges. The idea of released individuals having a cohesive network and bond is key for desistance from crime. With many theories explaining why individuals engage in illegal activity including strain, social disorganization, and rational choice, social capital theory takes a stand and argues that "healthy" relationships, which individuals can begin to form through the arts (theatre, painting, drawing, etc.) can teach them how to appropriately handle certain situations without turning to illegal activity (Hughes, 2014). Family and social networks have often been cited as key figures to ease the reentry process (Martinez and Christian 2009; Kawachi et al. 1999) and providing people the skillset to create and maintain healthy relationships could result as one of the most effective ways to help them desist from criminal involvement.

The proposed healthy relationships can help with seeking potential employment and or housing. There is some evidence that suggests the social capital the excarcerated have is not ideal for seeking out "legitimate" sources of income/employment (Weiman, 2007; Garland, 2011) and thus, art can help with creating new relationships. Because art serves as a form of unspoken communication for individuals it can be a gateway for those who have trouble expressing themselves with words (Johnson, 2008). Moreover, through indirectly teaching communication skills ("safe" outlets) art can promote those arguably "healthy" forms of social capital by establishing a common bond amongst individuals.

When thinking about how to measure social capital, it would be wise to identify how the relationships/networks have changed individuals' perceptions of themselves. For example, asking about their identity, asking how certain or confused they feel about who they are*, like the Global Social Capital Survey does, would be interesting as a sense to capture how the arts have allowed individuals to embody a different identity other than the one society places upon them once convicted: guilty, convict, ex-prisoner, etc., and an identity they are more comfortable with. We could also think about measuring neighborhood connections that released individuals have been able to form in the community. For example, asking how likely neighbors are to invite them to a birthday party/get together*, ask them to watch over their children*, recruit them to volunteer at a church event*, ask them to join the PTA (if they have children), etc. Lastly, one major concept it would be worthwhile to look into is trust. Many individuals who leave prison enter the community with a heightened fear of authorities on high alert, distrusting, and with a guard up (Martin 2008). Being able to identify when and how individuals learned to become more trusting of their peers would be useful in this project.

*denotes these measures were looked at in the study called *A Dimensional Approach to Measuring Social Capital: Development and Validation of a Social Capital Inventory*.

Garland, B., Wodahl, E.J., and Mayfield, J. (2011). Prisoner reentry in a small metropolitan community: Obstacles and policy Recommendations. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*. 22(1) 90–110.

Hughes, J., & McLewin, A. M. A. (2005). Doing the arts justice. A review of research literature, practice and theory. The Unit for the Arts and Offenders. *Centre for applied Theatre Research. Web publicationhttp://ccpr. designiscentral. net/record/286*.

Kawachi, I., Kennedy, B. & Wilkinson, R. (1999). Crime: Social disorganization and relative deprivation. Social Science Medicine. 48, p. 719-731.

Martinez, D J. and Christian, J. (2009). The familial relationships of former prisoners examining the link between residence and informal support mechanisms. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 38(2):201-224.

Johnson, L. M. (2008) A place for art in prison: Art as a tool for rehabilitation and management. *Southwest Journal of Criminal Justice*, Vol. 5(2). pp. 100-120.

Martin, Y. (2008). ¿Y ahore, que?: New York city Latino/as coping mechanisms: Prison reentry and recidivism. *Latino Studies*. 6:220–228.

Weiman, D.F. (2007). Barriers to prisoners' reentry into the labor market and the social costs of recidivism." *Social Research*. 74(2):575-611.

RESILIENCE

Unlike theories which attempt to explain what the individual needs in terms of material and on material things to desist from crime, resilience theory strives to focus not so much on changing the individual, but on using the qualities he or she may already poses that will allow him/her to prosper and rise above adversity. According to Windle et al. (2011), resilience is the process by which individuals negotiate, manage, and adapt to significant sources of stress or trauma. The skills, resources, and assets, one already has, as well as their peers and settings, create an environment for them to 'bounce back' from troubling situations. As Windle et al. (2011) suggest, "resilience could be the key to explaining resistance to risk across the lifespan and how people deal with various challenges presented from child-hood to older age." This resonates with the arts particularly because of how easy it can be for individuals to participate.

While arts programs (of various different forms) attract people who have been involved in some form of art for most of their life, they also are ideal settings for individuals who have never picked up a pencil to draw. The programs become an opportunity for participants to showcase their talent (and prove to the prison community they are much more than an ex-con) as well as build on their already existing attributes such as: patience, goal orientation, and social and cognitive competence.

In terms of thinking of how to measure resilience, it would be helpful to look at troubling times in the individuals' life since their release in which they were able to persevere. For example, asking about the job search, which most likely was a challenging experience. Asking about coping with stress (do they maybe strive to see the humorous side of

things*), how do they avoid or appropriately (not violently) handle uncomfortable situations (how did the arts teach them to do this). Also, asking about if they give their best effort to everything regardless of potential outcomes* (on a scale we can ask if they "gave it their all" even not knowing if they would get the job, position, etc. It would also be interesting to ask about if/when past success gives them confidence for new challenges*. This last point, particularly, would showcase their resilience and determination to "dig within them" and use a particular asset they already have to prevail.

**denotes these measures were taken from the Connor-Davidson resilience scale*.

Windle, G., Bennett, K.M., and Noyes, J. (2011). A methodological review of resilience measurement scales. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*. 9(8).