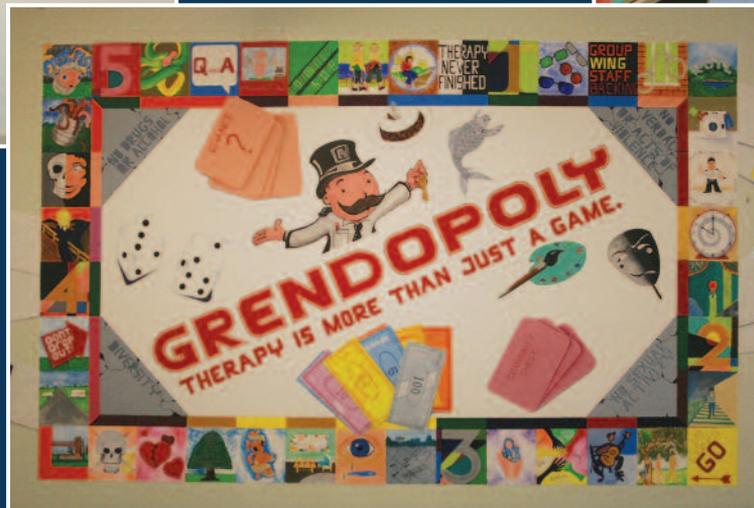


PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

May 2014 No 213



Breaking the Cycle

'Difference' and desistance in prison-based therapeutic communities

Dr Alisa Stevens is a Lecturer in Criminology at the University of Southampton.

There's an old joke about therapists, changing a light bulb, and the light bulb wanting to change. Clearly, one does have to want to change in order to change, which is why critics of prison-based therapeutic communities claim that if they are successful, it is because of a selection effect: only people who have already decided to change, go there and (much more importantly) stay there, so of course they change. And yet ... prisons contain plenty of people who claim they sincerely want to change, but cannot even stay away from the temptations of mobile phones, drugs, hooch, and all manner of infractions of the Prison Rules while 'behind bars', let alone when unleashed on the unbounded temptations of life 'on the out'. (Perhaps one can sympathize: after all, every January millions of people say they want to change, by giving up smoking or losing weight, for example, but have given up on that resolution by February.) So if therapeutic communities (TCs) are able to exploit whatever willingness to change pre-exists, it must require more than exceptional willpower on the part of the prisoners who go there. What is it, then, that TCs do to nurture a desire for personal change? Can one, in fact, make claims for offenders' progress towards desistance from crime, while in prison? Even if prisoners are not committing any criminal offences or contravening institutional regulations, 'going straight' is clearly an imposed virtue while imprisoned within an environment which severely curtails opportunities for offending. In this article, based upon my research in three forensic TCs, I contend that it is possible to observe and evidence indicators of meaningful rehabilitation in the TC. Moreover, the theoretical similarities between these changes, between this desistance in process, and those found in retrospective studies of successful desisters, allows one to argue that such profound personal change is indicative of actual progress towards a life post-crime, post-prison. But first, I begin with a brief account of prison-based TCs and description of the empirical research upon which this paper draws.¹

Prison-based democratic therapeutic communities

Many readers of this journal will know that HMP Grendon is the only British prison to operate wholly in accordance with the principles and practices of the democratic therapeutic community (TC), by offering small group psychotherapy within semi-autonomous and self-consciously pro-social small communities. Opened in 1962, this Buckinghamshire prison enjoys an international reputation for its rehabilitative work with men serving substantial (nearly all, nowadays, indeterminate) sentences for violent and sexual offences, and who have been clinically assessed as personality disordered or displaying traits associated with psychopathy. Readers may not appreciate, however, that three other English establishments offer TC treatment on one or more wings or units within, but physically and to varying degrees, operationally, distinct from, an otherwise 'mainstream' prison. The Serco-run 'therapeutic prison' inside HMP Dovegate in Staffordshire, which opened in 2001, most closely imitates, in size and ambition, Grendon. The TC at Leicestershire's HMP Gartree — known as GTC — celebrated its 20th anniversary in November 2013 and draws its residents, as prisoners in TCs are called, entirely from the early stage lifers who populate the host prison, while HMP Send in Surrey has, for a decade now, provided the only TC facility for women.² Each TC has its own constitution, its own multi-disciplinary staff group, and, as an accredited offending behaviour programme, each TC is audited separately for its programme compliance.

As operationalized within prisons, the primary purposeful activity of a TC is the provision of small group therapy three mornings a week. These groups typically comprise eight residents and one or two regular facilitators, who may be psychotherapists, psychologists, or prison or probation officers. In a largely unstructured, non-directive manner, incrementally and iteratively, each resident will tell the story of his or her life, from earliest childhood memories, through formative relationships and events and personal triumphs and traumas, to the crime(s) for which the resident has been imprisoned. On the

1. For a comprehensive discussion, see Stevens, A. (2013) *Offender Rehabilitation and Therapeutic Communities*. Abingdon: Routledge.
2. A TC also operated at HMP Blundeston, until the host prison's closure in December 2013.

remaining two mornings, residents hold community meetings, in which they discuss and attempt to resolve through negotiation any issues which affect, and especially, may adversely affect, the day-to-day functioning and management of the community. Residents can also participate in art therapy and psychodrama, and are expected to carry out 'rep jobs' of benefit practically to the community and developmentally to the individual, such as contributing to drug strategy and violence reduction meetings, or organizing social activities and events for their peers or visiting family members.

Most academic literature on forensic TCs has focused on researching their effectiveness in terms of reducing re-offending and remedying psychological dysfunction.³ Relatively little attention has been paid to TC culture and experience, and in particular, there has been a curious neglect of the perspectives of those people for whose benefit the TC exists. My sociological and phenomenological research accordingly sought to contribute this emic or insider's appreciation of the regime by eliciting detailed accounts from residents about their experiences. In the course of my observations of the regime at Grendon, Gartree, and Send during 2006 and 2007, 60 residents, who on average had resided for 16 months, volunteered to be interviewed.

This was therefore not a random sample, but one comprised of people who had successfully adapted to, and chose to remain in, the TC. Given its much greater population size, the majority of participants resided at Grendon. With their consent, interviewees were tape recorded and the illustrative quotes that appear in this article are therefore verbatim, though the names of all participants have been changed to preserve their anonymity. The fieldnotes and interview transcripts were subjected to a grounded theory analysis in order to develop inductively a set of descriptive and thematic categories by which to understand residents' experiences, including in what ways participants thought TC treatment promoted (or prevented) their rehabilitation.

What I found was that interviewees described a process of change, both for themselves and discernible in others, which they believed could and would lead to eventual desistance; that is, the giving up of crime. In other words, I found evidence of desistance in process, in which the penal 'difference' of the TC was integral to creating and fostering the emergence of positive 'differences' in its residents. The remainder of this article explains how this was achieved.

Being somewhere 'different'

A recurrent theme of this research was that residents created very unambiguous distinctions between the respective 'ways'— the regime, culture, ethos, and norms — of the TC and of 'the system'; that is, mainstream secure prisons. 'System' thinking and behaviour was simply 'not the way we do things here' (fieldnotes), and either explicitly or by implication, this meant that residents were keen to portray the TC way of imprisonment and rehabilitation as, without fail, superior. For those who work in 'normal' prisons, this dichotomy and characterization may seem overly simplistic, and hence, unfair, even offensive. I interpret this bifurcation as symbolically significant, however, because perceiving oneself to be in 'a totally different environment'

(Winston, Grendon), 'a million miles away from the system' (Andrew, Grendon) seemed to communicate to new arrivals, swiftly and evidently very effectively, the need to behave and think about oneself differently. Indeed, as many noted, they were no longer a prisoner on a wing, but a resident on a community.

This perceived difference encompassed all aspects of the TC experience. Interviewees certainly welcomed the 'relaxed vibe' of the TC prison or unit, with 'none of the usual jockeying for position' that occurs amongst hypermasculine 'tough men', all trying to establish themselves on a wing and pre-empt the pugilistic potential of perceived 'disrespect' (Francis, GTC). But adaptation to the regime was widely experienced as

Most academic literature on forensic TCs has focused on researching their effectiveness in terms of reducing re-offending and remedying psychological dysfunction.

3. For example, Taylor, R. (2000) *A Seven Year Reconviction Study of HMP Grendon Therapeutic Community*, Home Office Research Findings No.115. London: Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate. Newton, M. (1998) 'Changes in measures of personality, hostility and locus of control during residence in a prison therapeutic community', *Legal and Criminological Psychology* 3 (2): 209-23. Shuker, R. and Newton, M. (2008) 'Treatment outcome following intervention in a prison-based therapeutic community: A study of the relationship between reduction in criminogenic risk and improved psychological well-being', *The British Journal of Forensic Practice* 10 (3): 33-44. Neville, L., Miller, S. and Fritzon, K. (2007) 'Understanding change in a therapeutic community: An action systems approach', *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology* 18 (2): 181-203.

challenging, and indeed the high attrition rate in the early stages of residency attests to the fact that the bewildering 'culture shock' (Ross, GTC) of the TC proves, for some, to be too much.⁴ Most obviously, one has to get used to the precepts and demands of psychotherapy and the 'interesting, but weird, very weird' (Ravi, Grendon) community meetings. As members of a social community, however, residents were also expected to be more friendly with, courteous to, and reliant on their peers and prison staff; and to trust that the 'issues' disclosed in therapy would be understood and empathized with (in part, because many of these 'issues' were widely shared by residents), rather than ridiculed: 'You don't have to fear here that any openness will be used against you, that is that whatever you've revealed will be thrown back at you and seen as a weakness' (Michael, Grendon). In other words, successful adaptation to the TC way requires the abandonment of the normative 'inmate code', the value system which traditionally governs social relations within the prison. This pits prisoner solidarity against the staff ('them and us'); prohibits informing against ('grassing'), or exploitation of, one's peers; and encourages self-sufficiency, because any perceived vulnerability, particularly amongst 'macho men', might otherwise be mercilessly exploited: 'If you're weak, the predators will come out and claim you. Be a man, or be a victim; that's the reality in the system' (Keith, Grendon). As Wesley (Grendon) explained:

Straightaway [TC staff] expect you to do certain things that you're not used to doing. Just simple things: the way you talk to other inmates, the way you get to know someone. In the system, you may not talk to your next door neighbour for a year. Here, you're expected to integrate straightaway, to come forward with information if there's any drugs or if anyone's been threatened ... I found that difficult to get my head round.

A number of uniquely TC situational and cultural factors further fostered the perception that 'everything is different in TC; there's no comparison to normal jails' (Adele, Send). The stable populations and limited size of

the communities (of up to approximately 40 residents at Grendon and Send and only two dozen at GTC); the provision of sociable spaces including at the men's TCs, a dining room for each community, and above average time out of cell; and the expectation that residents and uniformed, managerial, and clinical staff alike will address each other by their first name, all contributed to the creation and sustenance of a 'family-like' (Richie, GTC), egalitarian atmosphere. At Grendon and GTC, for example, residents were encouraged to spend time in the wing office; a workspace where 'in normal nicks, inmates only go to get a bollocking or grass' (Shane, Grendon). The TC's 'open door' policy, however, enabled easy access to, and effortless sociability with, staff. This challenged the ingrained distrust and dislike

of authority figures some long serving, battle weary 'cons' held for 'system screws', and redrew the boundaries within which interpersonal relationships could be formed:

I like going into the wing office and sitting down and talking. Being allowed to do that. Having officers talking and they don't shut up because you go near them. They're having general conversations in front of you; they talk to you. You can have a laugh with them, bit of banter. And not just officers. This governor sat down and was telling me

about his kids and how they'd built this play house at the weekend. And I'm looking at him thinking, are you mad? You're sitting there telling me about your life! And he seemed like a nice guy! [laughs] You know what I'm saying, though? That just don't happen in a normal jail; I've never heard a governor or officer or no one telling me the slightest thing about themselves personally.

(Stewart, Grendon)

Becoming someone 'different'

Just as TC residents dissociated everyday life in the TC from 'normal' prisons, so they distinguished psychosocial TC treatment from the offending behaviour programmes they had previously completed elsewhere, such as Enhanced Thinking Skills, the

. . . successful adaptation to the TC way requires the abandonment of the normative 'inmate code', the value system which traditionally governs social relations within the prison.

4. Approximately a third of all new arrivals at Grendon leave within their first year.

Cognitive Self-Change Programme, and the (Extended) Sex Offending Treatment Programme. The depth and constancy of therapeutic enquiry in small groups and the wider community was consistently contrasted by interviewees, rather brutally, with these 'surface, very simplistic' courses (Tim, Grendon), which did not allow one 'to go into more depth, to really understand where [my offending] started, why, and how I came to this' (Eddie, Grendon).

By depth, I refer to the microscopic exploration and dissection of one's life in the small therapy group. A fundamental principle of psychodynamic psychotherapy is that one must understand an individual's past in order to understand their behaviour, attitudes, and problems in the present and how to resolve them beneficially for the future. Specifically, the offender's personal history and internal world — including the unconscious meanings they have ascribed to, and the suppressed and sublimated emotions arising from, disturbing and distressing events and experiences — explain both how it became possible for this damaged person to inflict damage upon others, and how these painful and problematic experiences continue to infuse and be re-enacted within their interpersonal relationships and responses to everyday life in the TC. This is what residents refer to as 'making links', in which work they are aided by the habitually robust but ideally constructive observations, interrogations, clarifications, and interpretations of their fellow group members; in particular, 'senior' residents whose advanced therapeutic progress other residents respect. The following examples illustrate how the process can work:

[After swearing at a prison officer] your group goes into detail: 'Why are you always so aggressive? Why are you anti-authority? Have you got something against that officer? Was there some other way you could have said that?' You'd get none of that in another prison.

And have you found that sort of questioning helpful?

Oh yeah, I've not sworn at an officer now for, oh, a couple of weeks! [laughs] ... When I'm challenged, it's not nice to hear, but it makes me think about why I'm pissed off and how I make other people feel around me. It gets explored and the questions you're asked can lead anywhere; one minute you're talking about anger, and the next, your childhood. But that's how you make links, isn't it? You

have to look for the true meaning behind your behaviour.

(Charles, Grendon)

I went to the pod⁵ and asked for a juice, and I took it bad when [the pod worker] said no ... I threatened him because I was pissed off ... So I got grouped⁶ and had to talk about why the juice was so important to me [laughs]. And then [name of senior resident] started asking me loads of questions and I ended up talking about my index offence.

How did you go from talking about juice to rape?

Er, he said my problem was entitlement; that I feel like I'm entitled to what I want and don't think about how my behaviours make other people feel.

Right. So that's how you make links between ...

Between little things that you do that are a bit wrong and the big things you do that are very wrong. It's not easy but [name of senior resident], he's a sensible fella, he's got good insight into therapy, and him and me have similar issues, so I did take on board what he said.

(Eddie, Grendon)

By constancy of enquiry, I am alluding to the ideological, temporal, and spatial positioning of 'courses' in mainstream prisons as a distinct rehabilitative activity, undertaken for a set period of time, by programmes staff, and which therefore allows prisoners to compartmentalize their learning: to consign it to the classroom. In TCs, because the entire regime is designed to produce spontaneously occurring opportunities for social and experiential learning, and because every observable incident and interaction is potentially grist to the therapeutic mill, 'therapy doesn't stop when the group ends' and efforts to change become 'full-on, 24/7' (Nigel, Grendon). Among a community of 'like-minded people who aren't going to wind you up and aren't going to take the piss, that you're actually able to have sensible conversations with about changing' (Callum, Grendon), 'change talk' flows more fluidly from the therapy groups or community meetings, into the corridors and wing office and on through to the

5. 'The pod': small kitchen on each community.

6. 'Grouped': The referral to the resident's small group by another resident of an issue for exploration.

residential areas, and thus allows for the collective reiteration and reinforcement of the belief in the possibility of meaningful personal change. Leslie (Grendon) explained the difference in these terms:

I did the SOTP at [a prison reserved for sexual offenders] but even there, you'd do it and then you come back on the wing and that was it, it's not spoken about; you leave it behind. It's like that is your therapy and this is your prison and never the twain shall meet. But here, the two go hand in hand; your therapy and how you socialise and what you talk about. So the rehabilitation here is all the time, so it feels much more genuine and closer to what you'll need for life outside.

The other aspect of the TC regime which interviewees highlighted as potentially transformative was the high levels of individual and collective responsibility afforded to, and expected of, residents. This was achieved through 'having a voice' in community meetings about 'everything that affects our community, because it is *our* community' (Belinda, Send), and through the successful completion of 'rep jobs'. The ability to influence one's environment positively through active contribution and democratic participation improved residents' sense of ownership of, and investment in, their community, and reinforced their perception that they were residents of a viable, distinctive social community in prison, rather than 'just' prisoners. 'Doing things not just for you but for other people ... [which] teaches you something about responsibility you won't get elsewhere' (Muktar, Grendon) also provided residents with opportunities to assume new, pro-social roles, and through their reiterative practice, prompted them to re-examine any self-limiting beliefs they held about who they 'naturally' were and of what they were capable:

I never really believed I could be anything better; it's very hard to think highly of yourself when you're a drug addict and committing crimes, you know? ... [My rep job] showed me that I've got a good head on my shoulders and it can be put to good use; I am capable of

more; I can be someone totally different, basically — that's what this place gives you.

(Nate, Grendon)

I've struggled with feeling confident all my life and [being chair] made me put myself forward, to face my responsibilities, to get things done and not shut myself away in my cell, which is what I would have done before. I've kind of surprised myself ... [and] for sure, I feel a lot better about myself.

(Lee, GTC)

The other aspect of the TC regime which interviewees highlighted as potentially transformative was the high levels of individual and collective responsibility afforded to, and expected of, residents.

Most startling, however, was the responsibility placed on residents to monitor, 'feedback' upon, and collectively enforce adherence to the TC's cardinal rules of abstinence — no violence, no drink or drugs, no sex — without which no therapeutic community can function safely or effectively. For the most serious incidents of rule-breaking, this requires that residents vote, by show of hands in a community meeting, upon whether they recommend to staff that their peer should remain in the community or be expelled. It is in this role reversal of *prisoners* self-governing assiduously, and being willing to inform on, and propose sanctions against, 'offenders' against the TC way, in which one sees the most fundamental rupture from the

traditional roles, codes, and loyalties by which 'cons' normally abide. As Steve (GTC) explained:

I used to be staunch about no grassing; it's just a major rule of prison life. But I have no qualms about it here because it's not grassing: it's feedback to help someone with his behaviours and to keep the community safe.

Desistance in process — in prison?

The elements of what I call desistance *in process* have similarities to the factors identified by academics who have studied the achievement of desistance *retrospectively*. My research coheres with desistance theory which recognizes the importance of positive changes to one's identity — 'our understanding of who

we are and of who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and of others (which includes us)⁷ — and our internalized 'storied self',⁸ which every individual mentally creates and constantly updates in order to make sense of, and find meaning in, one's life. 'The capacity to *keep a particular narrative going*'⁹ becomes the defining feature by which we understand 'who we are' because this story, this self-narrative, intuitively guides us towards what we choose to do (and not to do) in the present, and what we intend to do (and not to do) in the future. One therefore never passively 'has' or 'receives' a life story; one must actively 'make' this story, by writing and re-writing it so that the narrative can continue, logically, feasibly, to 'keep going'. Moreover, desistance is always a process to which one has to continually commit; rather like stopping, and not restarting, smoking, or losing, and not regaining, weight. People who successfully give up crime are those who are able to create and sustain a 'new, improved' version of self, within which the commission of crime and the lifestyle that involves no longer 'fits', because it does not keep the new, and now preferred, narrative 'going'. Two seminal examples from desistance research explain this point well.

Drawing upon the life stories of 180 ex-offenders, Peggy Giordano and colleagues plotted a four stage process of change through 'cognitive transformation'. The potential desister was ready to change, but this 'cognitive openness' had to be matched by an opportunity — a 'hook for change' — which provided 'an important opening in the direction of a new identity and concrete reinforcement during all phases of the transformation process'.¹⁰ This 'hook' made change possible, though certainly not inevitable: the difference between desisters and persisters was the willingness and ability of the former to recognize, connect with, and capitalize upon the 'hook'. This in turn required the development

My argument is therefore that the TC can provide that all important 'hook for change', upon which to hang one's aspirations for, and efforts to, change and by which to create a replacement self or redemption script.

of a 'replacement self': a consciously fashioned 'better' version of oneself through which all decisions could be filtered, and all actions assessed, for their consistency with the new identity. The final stage in the change process occurred when the desister repeatedly chose to behave in a way which was relevant to and reaffirmed the 'new' (pro-social) identity, whilst actively deprecating and rendering redundant the 'old' (anti-social) behaviours associated with the 'old' self.

Similarly, Shadd Maruna¹¹ found, in his comparison of 30 desisters and 35 persisters, that those who had given up crime had established for themselves a 'redemption script'. This script did not merely retell the past passively, but positioned the narrator as an active agent of change. It explained, to the author's satisfaction, why involvement in offending had once been salient, but was no longer, and brought together the different chapters of the life into one unified, purposeful, and convincing 'prototypical reform story'. For many, this involved asserting that their previous long-term criminality was not part of who they really were 'deep down', or that they had learned from the mistakes they had made and the indignities they had suffered during their criminal careers to become older and wiser 'wounded healers' who had now 'made good'.

My argument is therefore that the TC can provide that all important 'hook for change', upon which to hang one's aspirations for, and efforts to, change and by which to create a replacement self or redemption script. Human agency is, as ever, vital to the process of change: TC residents had to be willing and able to journey to 'the dark places of your life' (Josephine, Send) and 'put yourself through this serious, *really* serious, *really* hard work; it's the hardest bit of sentence you will ever do' (Richard, Grendon). They had to, in short, take advantage of, or allow themselves to be 'hooked by', the opportunities to change which the TC offered them. Since my interviewees had typically

-
7. Jenkins, R. (2004) *Social Identity*, 2nd edition. London and New York: Routledge; page 5.
 8. McAdams, D. (1996) 'Personality, modernity, and the storied self: A contemporary framework for studying persons', *Psychological Inquiry* 7 (4): 295-321.
 9. Giddens A (1991) *Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press; page 54, emphasis in original.
 10. Giordano, P., Cernkovich, S. and Rudolph, J. (2002) 'Gender, crime and desistance: Toward a theory of cognitive transformation', *American Journal of Sociology* 107 (4): 990-1064; page 1002.
 11. Maruna, S. (2001) *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild their Lives*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

served several sizeable sentences previously and 'done loads of courses' (Nick, Grendon) in 'the system', clearly there was something atypically attractive and compelling about the particular opportunities or 'hooks' residents found within the lived and situated experience of the TC regime and of which, this time, they felt able to avail themselves.

That something, I suggest, was the TC 'difference'. Interviewees contrasted their trenchant criticisms of system imprisonment and its reliance on cognitive-behavioural interventions, with their appreciation of, and pride in, the 'humane environment' (Raymond, GTC) of the TC and 'the real deal' of multi-factorial TC treatment (Colin, Grendon). This TC way combined unflinching, yet supportive, group exploration of behaviours and attitudes and the excavation of their 'hidden' meanings and significance in therapy, with the sociability, yet responsibility, of the regime. Telling one's story in therapy was essential in order to understand why residents had offended and how, at that time, crime had 'fitted' into and did make sense, psychodynamically, to the unfolding of that life. The insights residents gained into the 'emotional stuff [that's] gone on that turns us to the way we are' (Tony, Grendon), however, and its 'links' to the present, observed in the community and explored collectively by one's peers, also enabled residents to learn how to change habitual ways of thinking, responding, and behaving, now and for the future. Practising new roles and personas such as an empathetic auxiliary therapist or a reliable community member was equally important, because this fostered the relinquishment of old (anti-social) ways of being and their replacement with new (pro-social) self-esteem enhancing, dependency-reducing, and capacity-building roles, *including* all the normative behaviours and qualities associated with the 'old' and the 'new'. In short, as residents' self-awareness developed, and they were given opportunities to demonstrate, to themselves and others, behaviours consistent with becoming 'more' and 'better', so residents gained increasing confidence that they really could become 'more' and 'better'.

The 'true meaning' of residents' dismissal of 'system thinking', 'system screws', and 'standard' rehabilitative interventions, is then revealed. The need to apply to, and be accepted by, the TC encouraged the shared sentiment that residents are privileged to have joined a special, select, penal 'club'. As the anthropologist Richard Jenkins observes,¹² social identity involves defining an 'us' in opposition to a range of 'thems'. In their claims to superiority — of rehabilitative method, of interpersonal relationships, of dedication to

the sustenance of a therapeutic culture of enquiry — TC residents created an 'us' which disowned not only the 'thems' of 'the system' but *their own* 'old' former prisoner identity. In other words, when residents created this cognitive divide, and discursively differentiated, between *where* they were imprisoned and where they are now, it facilitated the more important creation of the cognitive division from *who* they were and who they are now and intend to go on 'becoming'.

Conclusion

My research situates for the first time the achievement of the prison-based TC as the enablement of desistance-focused identity reconstruction. As Neil (Grendon) explained:

I've become here the person I've always wanted to be; the person that's always been there underneath but was scared to come out and got covered up with all the bollocks of my lifestyle and attitudes ... I am the person now I was always meant to be, but who got lost somewhere along the way.

For some residents, these changes did indeed require the creation of a 'new me': someone entirely divorced, cognitively and emotionally, from whom they were, and for whom the past no longer had any place in, or claim to, their present self-conception. For others, it was a more subtle (re)discovery of the 'real me': 'the nice person I was, before I went wrong ... a functional, decent human being' (Nate, Grendon), or 'the me that I always wanted to be, but was never allowed to be' (Natalie, Send). Either way, their self-perception 'shifted', allowing for the emergence of a redemption script which was intrinsically incompatible with a return to the 'old me' who committed crime or caused 'trouble' in other establishments. Given the unpromising criminal and prison histories of many residents, this experience of 'evidence-based' hope for desistance was novel, and was felt to be credible and significant: 'I honestly don't believe I will ever offend again because I'm not that person now. I've found a better person here' (Ben, GTC). This, then, is desistance in process, in prison. The challenge for 'system' prisons is to help TC graduates maintain and further develop these positive changes throughout the remainder of their sentence, so that the promise of desistance, cradled in the TC, can be realized in desistance in reality, upon release.

12. See note 7.