

Learning to Pass: Sex Offenders' Strategies for Establishing a Viable Identity in the Prison General Population

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Abstract: *This article endeavors to illustrate the realities of prison life for sex offenders and the means by which they attempt to establish viable identities and acquire a survivable niche in the prison general population, particularly when established identities and protective niches are put at risk by entry into a sex offender treatment program. Qualitative data was collected by repeatedly interviewing a cohort of sex offenders for 6 months as they completed a basic sex offender treatment program. The findings indicate a need to include consideration of treatment context in understanding the limits of treatment gain in prison-based programs.*

Keywords: *sex offenders; prison adaptation; qualitative research*

As popularly depicted in the media and generally accepted by a great many people, sex offenders sent to prison to serve terms of incarceration are a highly stigmatized group vulnerable to harassment and other forms of abuse. Popular notions include the scenario that, on being admitted to prison, sex offenders can expect to be physically and sexually assaulted and generally survive their terms as members of a pariah caste on whom other inmates freely inflict various forms of abuse. The prison research literature tends to confirm these perceptions but such findings tend to be anecdotal. This article endeavors to illustrate the realities of prison life for sex offenders and the means by which they, individually and collectively, attempt to establish viable identities and acquire a survivable niche in the prison general population, particularly when established identities and protective niches are put at risk by entry into a sex offender treatment program. The participants in the study from which this material was drawn were inmates in a Colorado correctional facility undergoing a core sex offender treatment program.

PRISON AS A UNIQUE PSYCHOSOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The prison social world essentially consists of correctional officers, other facility staff, and inmates. Correctional officers and other facility staff play a more peripheral role in inmates' lives compared to that of their fellow inmates. In her study of prison life, Cordilia (1983) noted two major contradictory themes evident in inmate social relations. One major theme, inmate cohesion, was repre-

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sented in the inmate code by which inmates demonstrated solidarity and loyalty to fellow inmates by sharply distinguishing themselves from prison staff through a set of prescribed behaviors and attitudes. Notable among these attitudes was a severe distrust of correctional staff and prohibition of staff involvement in inmate affairs. Inmate alienation, the second major theme, was manifested in the prevalence of distrust, exploitation, and harm among inmates. Cordilia's research indicated that inmates primarily felt alienation from other inmates rather than solidarity for a number of reasons, including fear of other inmates and a desire not to be associated with other more criminal inmates.

A salient feature of prison life is the attempt by many inmates to establish dominance over their peers. Sykes (1958) described the dominance game, a process in which an inmate's willingness and ability to stand up for himself was assessed. The inmate passes if he demonstrates, usually through violence or other aggressive display, that he won't be exploited, bullied, or insulted without a fight, a clear indication that he is a man to be reckoned with and thus deserving respect. Toch (1998) observed that worthy men defended their reputations and honor with their fists and stood in contrast to the feminine male who failed to take aggressive action in the hypermasculine world of prison. According to Sykes, if an inmate should fail in responding to a challenge with an adequate show of aggression, he is thereafter targeted for ridicule and identified as an easy mark for victimization.

Obviously, adjustment to prison violence and harassment are key issues for inmates. McCorkle (1992) identified two major strategies by which convicts attempted to minimize vulnerability to exploitation and abuse: (a) withdrawal from prison society and (b) displays of aggression. McCorkle found that older, more fearful, and socially isolated inmates used avoidance strategies whereas younger inmates, identifying more with inmate culture, used proactive violence to fend off attempts of other inmates to victimize them. Regarding displays of violence, McCorkle (1992) stated, "unless an inmate can convincingly project an image that conveys the potential for violence, he is likely to be dominated and exploited" (p. 161). Edgar and O'Donnell (1998) also found prevalent among inmates the belief that willingness to act violently decreased the likelihood that one would be victimized. Thus, a willingness and ability to aggress was highly valued in the world of inmates. McCorkle concludes, "Within a value system which promotes force as a means of resolving problems, the principled decision not to use force, if interpreted as weakness, might be no more effective as a strategy of self-protection from assault" (p. 63). Ireland and Archer (2002) found that many inmates identified more positive than negative consequences of violent action in response to perceived bullying by other inmates. Leddy and O'Connell (2002) found the prevalence of inmates engaging in the bullying of other inmates to be slightly more than 25% and that the majority of these inmates had themselves been victimized. Most common forms of bullying were verbal abuse, theft, and assault (with or without a weapon). Dumond (1992, 2000) found sexual assault to be an alarmingly common occurrence in prison. Edgar and O'Donnell, in their study of assault in prison noted, "Prisoners felt that there were various

ways in which individual characteristics might increase vulnerability to assault. One was to be known to have been convicted of a sex offense” (p. 643). Others have found that the label *sex offender* made an inmate vulnerable to both violent and sexual assault (Ireland, 2002; Leddy & O’Connell, 2002). In sum, the prison research literature has redundantly described prisons as brutal environments and sex offenders as a particularly vulnerable subpopulation. What has been lacking are descriptions of how sex offenders establish viable identities despite being members of a highly stigmatized class of inmates. This article hopes to fill out the picture of sex offender adjustment to prison by describing the experiences of a set of sex offenders in entering treatment and then a prison-based sex offender treatment program.

SEX OFFENDERS IN PRISON

In the study (Schwaebe, 2003) from which this article was drawn, qualitative data was collected by interviewing 10 inmates monthly for the duration of their participation in a 6-month prison-based sex offender treatment program. Two of the participants had multiple sex offense convictions in their current offense, and 5 had prior sex offense convictions or were granted a deferred judgment and sentence for a sex crime. Seven of the participants’ current offenses included sexual assault on a child, 4 were rapes, and 1 was the prostitution of a child. Although the initial research plan intended to focus on inmates’ perceptions of the prison-based sex offender treatment program, it became obvious early in that study that the most salient aspect of the treatment experience of the participants was the fact that their treatment was received in a prison context.

The participants in this study generally described their introduction to prison as a terror-filled time in their lives characterized by fear of the unknown life before them and fear of this life as depicted to them by the popular media and rumors from associates encountered in county jails as they awaited transfer to prison. Participants described the transition from civilian to convict as occurring in three distinct phases starting with their incarceration in county jails, moving to their Regional Diagnostic Center (RDC), and concluding with their placement in a specific Department of Corrections (DOC) facility.

Incarceration in county jails provided these men with their initial orientation to the lives they would lead in prison. In county jails, the majority of them were segregated from the non-sex offender population. Here, they learned directly that sex offenders were a highly stigmatized group subject to humiliation and violence. Although most sex offenders were segregated in county jail from other offenders, those that were placed in the general jail population quickly learned that denial of their status as a sex offender was essential for their well-being and possibly their survival as illustrated in the following brief dialogue with inmate designated by *I* and researcher by *R*, respectively:

- I: I did feel that in the county jails, you know. I didn't tell anyone about why I was in there. I even made up a couple of stories when some of the guys asked, "Why you in for?" You need to be able to quickly come up with something otherwise they know you're hiding something.
- R: What did you come up with?
- I: I just told them I was in for computer crimes, computer fraud, since I knew computers really well and it's also semitrue; it was child pornography and computer fraud.

This ploy worked for this inmate as he was able to pass as a non-sex offender. Despite his ability to directly avoid harassment or assault in jail, he witnessed the treatment received by other sex offenders who were not so fortunate.

Existence in jail required significant adjustment, especially to the prevalent might-is-right ethic that replaced any notions of fairness and order that characterized their lives in society. Jails were characteristically described as chaotic places that lacked the inmate-enforced structure of prison as most jail inmates had never done hard time and did not know how to conduct themselves as proper cons.

Following their sentence to the DOC, the inmates were transported to a RDC where their security level and program needs were assessed. It was in the RDC that most inmates finally registered the immensity of their situation, as the inmate below recalls:

- I: I got to DRDC (Denver RDC), and I cried. And I didn't cry after that for a long time, until just recently, you know, but, after I left DRDC and I got to the diagnostic center in Canon City, that's when I knew I was in prison. And they stuck me in that little cell, and them bars closed, and I heard the noise, and I seen the hundreds of people just walking around, and that's when I was like, whoa!

RDCs were described as 23-hr a day lockdowns offering minimal privileges and activity. For many men, it was in the severely restrictive environment of the RDC that they came to feel firsthand the awesome power over their lives that the DOC held.

Unfortunately, the transition from county jail to RDC and prison did not necessarily represent a set of clean breaks from one's status in one facility to that in another, with opportunity to redefine one's status as a non-sex offender. Often one's offense followed the individual through informal means from one facility to another as represented in the following account.

- I: I got put in my first pod in Bueny (Buena Vista Correctional Facility), and a gentleman that knew me from county, which is a year prior to me coming down . . . And he had told me in county that he was going to make sure that my life was miserable inside prison, for the simple fact he knew my crime. And the first thing he managed to do was go and tell everyone about my crime. But he told everybody not the truth. He told everybody that I molested 2-year-olds and that I was having sex with 5- to 10-year-olds, full intercourse. And all of the sudden my roommate turned into my arch-enemy. He threatened me daily. I wended up paying extortion to one black gentleman because he said "If you didn't, I'll have my crew take care of you." So forth and so forth. That's when it hit me hard that I'm actually in that environment where I

could be killed for an action I actually did, or a mistake that I actually did, a choice that I made that I didn't think at the time was a big deal.

As this account illustrates, denigration and harassment of sex offenders, as a pariah class of inmate, was common, and the degree of harassment did not depend on the actual offense committed by the inmate as accounts of the offense could readily be fabricated or exaggerated at will. As sex offenders, these inmates rarely had recourse to arguing their case about their offenses. It was enough, to effect harassment and violence, to allege that another inmate was a sex offender. The inmates participating in this study quickly recognized the dangers of their status and the need to create a niche for themselves in a hostile environment.

The initial introduction to prison itself was usually quite shocking for the inmate. It was quite common for interviewees to describe prison life in terms reflecting the central metaphor predator and prey. Life in prison was variably described as a food chain; a place where the principle "I'm bigger, I can do what I want to the weak" ruled; or more simply, as expressed by one inmate, a predatory environment. Initial requirements for adjustment to prison included an increased sense of self-vigilance, a willingness to defend oneself through violent action, and discerning self-disclosure, particularly concerning the nature of one's offense:

I: In the life here, it's really hard in here. If you let yourself get too open with the wrong people, you're in big trouble. So you, at least I, and a lot of people, are fairly guarded about their private selves. There's one gentleman who confided in somebody who blabbed it around. He's having kind of a hard time now. But personally, I think that's because of the friends he chose to hang with. But it's still a problem.

All of the men in this study recognized the basic fact that as sex offenders they were members of a highly stigmatized group and thus vulnerable to harassment and assault. In addition, larger, stronger, or more aggressive inmates habitually preyed on the weaker, smaller, or less aggressive inmates and sex offenders as a matter of course. Self-protection was best achieved by any combination of strategies, including the establishment of a reputation as one capable of self-defense, denial of status as a sex offender, involvement in a gang or other protective clique, and prudent choices regarding associates and disclosure of one's offense.

THE PRISON CODE

Across the interviews, participants identified the issue of obedience to the prison or convict (or con) code as a major factor in their daily lives. The participants first became directly familiar with the code through associates encountered in county jails. Several participants noted that they were given a heads-up about prison life by former inmates they encountered in county jail, whereas others learned of the code, particularly the harsh treatment of sex offenders, by way of threats issued at them for their sex offender status. Though generally segregated in

county jails, each of the sex offenders who participated in this study related that their status as sex offenders placed them in elevated jeopardy in the already danger-filled world of prison. One inmate provided this overview of the convict code:

- I: The prison code? The prison code is basically what an inmate lives by within the facility, such as, no narcing, no messing with the elderly. Like, if somebody has gray hair or is up in age, no matter if he is a gang leader or not, you win no points by hitting him, confronting him, or badmouthing; you don't gain any points. What I mean by points is, if you are a part of a gang, here in this facility, you gain points by taking certain people out, or making yourself more noticeable or more visible. Um, certain places you eat in the chow hall, certain sections that certain people by race, by affiliation, you don't eat at. Just, common laws, like common codes, like, no cutting in line, uh, don't walk up behind somebody and tap them on the shoulder, no badmouthing, talking about somebody else, you know, blab off to somebody else about anything, you know, because you don't know what kind of retaliation you're gonna get off of it. Just little things like that, common sense, things people on the streets take for granted. You talk to your buddies about things. In here, you don't talk to your buddy about your neighbor. You don't go into your neighbor's cell house, your neighbor's house, without knocking or asking permission, you just don't walk in. That's another way of getting yourself beat, hurt, or anything like that. You don't steal, that's a given here in prison. You get caught stealing and you're blackballed, you're just in trouble. Then you got those ones like, don't tell your crime real fast. And then, if your crime is bad, don't tell, cause then you just wind up in the category of being a sex offender or something.

The code itself consisted of a loosely bound set of behavioral prescriptions and cognitive orientations perpetuated among inmates. Compliance with the code indicated that one was a straight con (one that understood how things worked in prison) and tended to keep one out of unnecessary trouble. Three major areas emerged in reviewing the con code. First, the behavioral prescriptions of the con code seem to offer a remedy to the chaotic nature of jail life, as described by the participants, through the provision of an inmate-enforced code of conduct. Second, it provided a guide for relations with correctional staff. Third, most importantly, the code provided an orientation to other inmates.

If prison life were said to have a particular ethos, it would be that of a defensive hyper-masculinity. In prison, perception of any slight or challenge could readily be cause for violent action. The inmates in general population either accepted abuse or stood up to abusers with a readiness to fight, if unable to avoid situations that portended to challenge. In prison, inmates were either men or victims. Even the inmates who wished not to be involved in violence or exploitation had to establish themselves, minimally, as poor choices for victimization:

- I: It's a food chain here, also, which plays into it. I'm bigger than you are, I can call you what I want, you know, and it's a power and control thing. I can do what I want to you or with you, you are a bitch, you are a punk. In here, you don't want to be perceived as that, as either of those things. And I'll admit, I've tried my hardest not to be perceived as either of those things. Have fought about it, you know. And, I'll admit that

it would be real hard for me not to fight about it now, but the difference now, is that I will try to go out of my way not to.

Paramount among the strategies employed to demonstrate that one is a solid con is the readiness to stand up for oneself with violent action. In prison, the worst one can do is to fail to fight back as such individuals, henceforth, are marked as victims. The following inmate succinctly illustrates the proper and viable attitude toward personal challenge:

I: And that's another big one, keeping face. If a fight begins, or a confrontation between another inmate, try to keep face, I mean, stand up for yourself, don't back down. As soon as you back down, you're weak. That's just another mark against you. And then you wind up paying extortion fees—this, that, and whatever. I mean, it snowballs into a big effect.

This inmate's experience in prison includes having paid extortion, having been assaulted, and having had his possessions taken. He concluded, as it was commonly held in prison, that it was better to take a beating than to be considered a punk.

As the evaluative yardstick for behavior and appropriate convict identity, reference to the code was implicated in nearly all that they did and in their decision-making processes.

Although it was evident that none of the inmates completely subscribed to the code, the code was referred to as what one was expected to do to get by in prison but not what one believed in one's heart of hearts.

THE IDENTITY GAME

Given the prevailing hostility and free license to inflict harm and humiliation on sex offenders in prison, protection of one's identity as a sex offender and details of one's offense are crucial. According to prison staff, a full 65% of the 1,400 offenders housed in the Fremont facility are convicted of a sex offense. The popular belief among inmates is that upwards of 80% of all offenders in Fremont are sex offenders. This situation (sex offenders comprising the majority of convicts in a nonspecialized prison setting) is something quite unusual in prison settings. However, this arrangement did not preclude sex offenders being stigmatized as the lowest status prison inmates. This situation also resulted in a rather unusual dynamic among the sex-offending majority and the non-sex offender minority. The minority non-sex offender convicts were considered as higher status, real cons, and despite their numerical supremacy, sex offender convicts were subject to the usual harassment (at a somewhat lower level as perceived by the inmates with experience in other facilities) that has traditionally been their lot in American prisons. What was surprising was the attempt of many sex offenders to

pass as non-sex offenders through harassment and exploitation of other sex offenders. The dynamic of passing as a non-sex offender through harassment and violence toward other sex offenders was referred to by many interviewees as the game.

As the following inmate describes, the game starts with one's placement in a cell house. On entry into a cell house, each inmate is informally checked-in by other inmates. Checking-in consists of reviewing an inmate's paperwork, which includes their crime of conviction.

- I: Then a person, you go to your cell house, and everybody wants you to check in. "Let's see your paperwork." "Well, let me see yours." "Well that's not what I'm asking." "Why should I show you my paperwork when you ain't gonna show me yours?" But, then when you do, "Why, you're the same thing as what I'm being accused of, so why are you calling me that . . ." And they get pretty pissed off. "Well, that wasn't the thing, you just let me see yours," you know. First thing he has his buddies with him and everything, you know, and they all want to check you in but they don't want you check 'n them out. So it's pretty—I guess you can say it is two different worlds: this one and out there.

If a con discovered that an inmate was convicted for a sex offense, that inmate's status could be shared throughout the cell house, making that inmate the target of harassment, exploitation, and assault, or such information could be withheld for the purpose of extortion. For players, the game provided protection of one's identity as a non-sex offender through this demonstration of proper con attitude toward sex offenders.

The measures to which inmates were willing to go to get information on a fellow inmate could be impressive and not necessarily limited to resources inside prison. In the following transcript, an inmate describes his thinking following discovery that an associate, notorious for his abuse of sex offenders, has been rumored a sex offender:

- I: It was so funny, recently, in the unit I live in, there was a person who, when I got here, was one of the main instigators of violence against sex offenders, as far as strong arming and what not. And here I come to find out, he has one of the worst crimes of anybody in that unit. And everybody, everybody's secrets come out in prison. You're confined with a bunch of people. Eventually, somebody's going to come around that knows what's up with you. And now, this person is living in his shell, living in his house, won't come out but to go to work. I guess. I'm going to find out for sure, because I don't know myself. He told a good story about what it was for and it didn't happen to be the case. I'm only hearing rumors about the totality of his criminal past. So I'm going to find out for myself. I'm going to have somebody put his name and DOC number probably on the internet.

This inmate went on to explain that, armed with such information on a fellow inmate, he will be in a position to extort various favors and goods from this inmate.

ENTRY INTO SEX OFFENDER TREATMENT

Entry into sex offender treatment (Phase 1) represented for all participants a critical and dangerous point in their prison careers. Whatever measures they had taken to preserve their identities as non-sex offenders could be undone by the simple observation that they had entered into the Mental Health building. Entry into Phase 1 was equivalent to risking announcement of one's identity as a sex offender. As noted above, many of the harshest harassers of sex offenders were themselves sex offenders wishing to disguise this aspect of their identity. To control the damage to their respective identities, inmates developed a number of responses. Generally, inmates disclosed their offenses to as few persons as possible. Selected friends could be made privy to one's offense but generally even friends did not ask nor were they told about another's offense. Inmates in a particular Phase 1 group did not converse with sex offenders from other groups lest their association with possibly identifiable sex offenders become known, indicating their own sex offender status. Privately one could converse with members of one's treatment group in the yard but never in earshot of others. The familiarity of group disappeared once the inmate entered the yard.

Within one's treatment group, wherein it is mandatory that disclosure of one's crime is made, a standoff situation was evident as each member was motivated not to out other group members as he would stand to be outed himself. Several inmates described a single incident that represented to them a crisis in their attempts at identity management and that succinctly illustrated the stakes involved. In this particular episode, an inmate was briefly sent to isolation for a scuffle between him and his cell mate. He was gone for less than a week but had missed a significant module of his Phase 1 treatment, specifically the sex education module. The inmate was informed that he would need to be recycled into another new Phase 1 group and repeat all of the curricula he had so far completed or make up this module in another Phase 1 group. The several inmates who discussed this episode noted that his presence in the other Phase 1 group shut it down, that the inmates in the standing group became unwilling to talk or identify themselves, as this would out all of them to an inmate who was not tied into their web of mutual stand-offs. This situation led to a great deal of dissatisfaction with treatment staff and anxiety about possible leakage of sensitive information about each offender. The situation was finally resolved as related by the inmate involved.

- I: I had to make up the sex education part of the class. So, I was sitting in sex education with two different groups, and I guess they had visitors. And we had to introduce ourselves. We want you to sit in this group and introduce yourself and why you're here to a bunch of strangers. I'm like what? I was like, well, to be honest, I don't really think this is too fair, but I'll do it, put aside all my distortions and stuff and just introduced myself, why I was here, and it like opened up the door for everybody else, cause everybody else had a problem with it, too. So once I introduced why I was here, everybody went around the room and did the same thing.

This episode illustrated the fragile truce that existed between inmates based on the mutual ability to out each other as sex offenders. The inclusion of this inmate in a group disclosure upset the fragile balance as he stood to gain knowledge of a number of other inmates' offenses. Likewise, he was exposed to a number of inmates who formerly had little or no information about him. The matter was resolved to the inmates' satisfaction when all participants in the group, including the newcomer, were required to make disclosure of their offenses. All were equally outed, and the stand-offs reinstated. The strength of this observation was substantiated by its mention by several other inmates who participated in this event.

A lingering concern of all inmates was that a group member would share sensitive information disclosed in group sessions as it would place their carefully constructed identities at risk in the general population. As the following inmate describes, concerns for confidentiality were strongly addressed by staff and inmates.

- I: Well that is a big problem. I've seen it in other groups, and I've heard it from other people. In our group in general, I haven't yet. At first, we had a member of our group that dropped out within the first two weeks because of that, because of being called upon about saying what somebody's offense was. What they were doing is trying to pay him to tell what this guy's offense was. There's guys in the facility that were trying to pay him tokens to say what this guy's, this other guy's offense was in our group. And he didn't say no right away. He just said, "Well, I'll let you know." And it got back to one of us, and we heard about it, and the next thing you know, he was gone, because confidentiality is a huge thing in that group, and if you can't trust them, you're not going to; you're taking away from the group members, from saying things in the group.

To help protect themselves, all inmates were resistant to making disclosures about prior sexual behaviors beyond that indicated in official records and, hence, verifiable by Phase 1 staff. These limited admissions, required for Phase 1 participation, make sense in the prison context as one stands to suffer significant consequences from release of sensitive personal information into the general population. In the broader study, it was found that the issue of deviant sexual interest—such as strong interest in pedophilia, rape, or other unlawful sexual behaviors—was not disclosed despite substantial staff emphasis on the importance of dealing with deviant sexual arousal patterns. Inmates, borrowing from treatment materials, universally couched their offenses, particularly their descriptions of their offense cycles, in terms of acts deriving out of an acute experience of loss of power and control. Rapists (relatively highly esteemed among sex offenders) and pedophiles (the lowest status sex offender) found a common frame of reference for accounting for their offenses in the idea of loss of power and control. This minimized identification of their offense behaviors as sexually deviant, emphasizing rather distress, which is perceived as less consistent with a typical sex offender.

As was evident in inmate descriptions of Phase 1, expectations and practices and life in the general population, a dichotomous set of expectations and

normative standards for conduct existed between the emphases of Phase 1 and the realities of life in the general population. The immediate consequence of the split worlds of Phase 1 and life in general population was simply summarized by the following inmate.

- I: Well, it's [Phase 1] a safe area because we can talk about anything we want to talk about, our offenses, whatever our problems are, but we can't do that out in the pod. You can't do that on the outside. Once you walk out of this door, it's not safe anymore.

The ethic of open, honest disclosure of one's thoughts, emotions, offense and related behavior (with the caveat of avoidance of disclosure of deviant sexual interest, noted above), discussion of problems with prison life, and (to a limited degree) fellow prisoners that characterizes participation in Phase 1 stands in contrast to the often brutal realities of life in the general population

All interviewees recognized that split and separate worlds existed for inmates in the domains of Phase 1 and general population, and each dealt with this split in their own ways. A number of interviewees dealt with the split by avoiding the usual activities involved in con life such as gaining prestige through violent acts and gestures or violating prison rules, actions that would cause them to be terminated from the Phase 1 program for breach of their treatment contract. Still, their behavior in general population could not be as exceptional as to attract notice. Passable demonstration of solid con behavior was required for survival in the general population.

Inmates agreed that within groups, they could confront each other about attitudes and behaviors that arose in group sessions, but this did not carry outside of group. Behavior that occurred outside of group was not to be taken into group in other than a general way lest one be labeled a snitch and subjected to harassment and assault.

In essence, to a significant degree, inmates lived double-lives between the worlds of Phase 1 and the general population. In a Phase 1 group, one could demonstrate self-assertion that in general population would set one up for assault. Similarly, in one's treatment group, confrontation of a fellow group mate's behavior was an acceptable, if sometimes precarious, endeavor. To do the same in general population amounted to challenging an inmate or snitching and, thus, guaranteed reprisal. One inmate noted that he did not have much difficulty living this double-life, as this was consistent with how he lived on the streets prior to his incarceration.

- R: How do you balance out the code and what you're doing in therapy?
I: It's hard but I've lived a double life for so long. I would be married and have children, and I would financially support my wife and my child to make myself believe I was normal, to put a mask out for everybody else. And then on the side, I'd be selling drugs and prostituting women and gang banging, you know? And so, maybe my therapy is part of the pretend to be normal.

SUMMARY

Future efforts in understanding the response of inmates to prison-based programming would do well to take into account the prison context in preparing staff and curriculum as well as in evaluating the microenvironments in which inmates acquire new skills and attitudes. The above research supports efforts to incorporate the use of half-way houses and intensive release supervision in postrelease programming as the receipt of prison-based services may well not translate into community readiness.

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