PROMOTING PROSOCIAL BEHAVIORS THROUGH RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRINCIPLES: EMERGING PATTERNS IN REWARDED BEHAVIOR

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Promoting Prosocial Behaviors through Restorative Justice Principles: Emerging Patterns in Rewarded Behavior

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ABSTRACT

The United States prison system has more recently become open to the incorporation of new principles like restorative justice practices. The Transition Center of Kansas City (TCKC) is a restricted reentry facility that aims to provide the needed tools for incarcerated people to successfully reintegrate into society. This study seeks to examine how prosocial values are integrated into TCKC's foundational principles of restorative justice and elements of dignity. Utilizing a mixed methods approach with archival and observational data, the study analyzes emerging patterns of prosocial values and their relation to other key principles. The study finds that the teaching of prosocial behaviors is apparent in the residents in a myriad of ways. Evidence suggests the design and policies of TCKC are put into practice through both shoutouts and course trainings. The combined usage of restorative justice practices, prosocial behaviors, and elements of dignity provides valuable skillsets to the residents.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, have examined a thesis titled “Promoting Prosocial Behaviors through Restorative Justice Principles: Emerging Patterns in Rewarded Behavior,” presented by Caitlyn Marie Jordon, candidate for the Master of Science degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The United States prison system often seems stuck in its old and punitive ways, but as time goes on there are new programs being created that have the potential to implement effective and lasting change. The current struggle is trying to incorporate these programs into the preexisting structure, as the punitive process has been in place for an extended period of time and are foundational to the prison system itself (Barnes, 1921; Bosma et al., 2020). Prisons are not the most accommodating places fit for rehabilitation and self-reflection, as incarcerated people are stripped of their autonomy and self-image through a variety of measures, beginning with the removal of all personal items upon arrival (Clemmer, 1958; Giallombardo, 1966; Sykes, 1958). Despite this, there are ways in which practices can be introduced to prisons that may create better spaces to allow for positive changes to occur.

Restorative justice is by no means a new concept, having been used by Aboriginal communities for many decades; however, it is a newer practice for the U.S. prison system (Wallace and Wylie, 2013). Restorative practices are ones that allow for growth and self-development, and helps individuals to build connections within their communities. Restorative justice can provide a change in the existing justice paradigm by supporting incarcerated peoples attempt to actively repair harm – allowing reparations of harm not just physically, but emotionally, through reconciliation and trust (Scholl & Townsend, 2024). Restorative practices are ideal for creating change in the individual, helping the victim, and uniting those that harm back with their communities (Crocker, 2015; Dhami et al., 2009). They aim at giving the offender a chance to take accountability and to connect with people in a way they may not have before (Johnstone, 2014). The site for this research is a secure community release facility that aims to blend restorative practices with more traditional

approaches to community reentry. Through the use of modeling by staff and community and encouraging prosocial behaviors with consistent positive reinforcement, restorative practices can shift behavior in a lasting way (Antonio et al., 2009; Collica-Cox, 2018). Through the integration of these practices, skillsets and tools taught to incarcerated people will aid them in shifting their perspectives, but more importantly, give them the ability to reintegrate into the community in a more successful way (Bourke and Van Hasselt, 2001; Schippers et al., 2001).

Research Questions

This study will seek to examine how the use of restorative practices promotes and encourages prosocial behaviors through positive reinforcement. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What patterns are evident in the teaching and utilization of prosocial values and behaviors at TCKC?
2. How are prosocial values related to TCKC's foundational principles of restorative justice and dignity?

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Current Prison Environment and Restorative Justice Practices

Working to incorporate rehabilitation and restorative justice practices in today's prison system is challenging due to the structure of prisons, seemingly opposed ideals of restorative justice and incarceration, and the enforcement of negative punishment. The primary goals of prisons are incapacitation, order, and security—priorities which do not lend themselves to programs that aim at dignity, empathy, and healing (Clemmer, 1958; Giallombardo, 1966; Sykes, 1958). As Sykes (1958) explains, prisons are attempts at social control through confinement, punishment, and internal order. Bosma et al. (2020) discusses how prison environments are not conducive to rehabilitation in general because they deprive prisoners of autonomy, security, movement, and services with an emphasis of utilizing negative punishment. There are also general structural barriers that impede successful implementation of restorative justice like overcrowding, staffing issues, and poor living conditions (Dhami et al., 2009). The restriction of these freedoms limits the effectiveness of any programs attempting to create change within prisons, which is why the integration of restorative practices holds potential to mitigate the harms of prison. Changing the environment and culture of prison will be important in order for the values and prosocial behaviors to be taught effectively.

Restorative justice principles are another way that justice can be issued while still aiming to rehabilitate the offender. There is no set collective definition of what restorative justice is, having been used in a number of ways all across the globe, but there are many common themes agreed upon. Largely, the ethos of restorative justice "emphasizes the ideal of repairing and maintaining optimally healthy relationships among offenders, victims, and

other community members" (Scholl & Townsend, 2024). In doing so, the practices aid in developing key skills like accountability, communication, and understanding. These themes and concepts are what help to develop a sense of community in prison and build up the prosocial behaviors that are being taught. The core values of restorative justice range from accountability, honesty, empathy, respect, dignity, empowerment, inclusiveness, open-mindedness, fairness and equality, trust, patience, healing, transformation, and partnership (Crocker, 2015; Dhami et al., 2009). These shared values indicate a sense of collective efficacy because the participants, staff, and community members have built a safe space to allow for group cohesion, trust, and shared expectations of intervention on behalf of others. As Sexton (2014) explains, community does not have to be defined solely by physical, geographic proximity, but can also be "bounded by commonality of identity and experience." Restorative practices do not work effectively without these community spaces that rely on others keeping people accountable and allow for connections to be made. The collective effort to engage in prosocial behavior by modeling one another and caring for one another is how they will create lasting changes in behavior. This aspect of restorative justice is part of the reason for why integration into the current system will be so challenging, as the prison system is not generally conducive to those types of behaviors.

Challenges for Change

Prisons are designed to create structure and order by removing dignity and freedom from incarcerated people; thus, making it difficult to integrate restorative practices (Giallombardo, 1966). Many prisons run on strict schedules that conflict with restorative programs' need for flexibility, and the lack of control over incarcerated people being transferred on little notice makes it challenging for participation and mediation to occur

(Dhami et al., 2009). The rigidness of prison structure and the looseness of restorative practices are difficult to mesh together. Many restorative practices work on creating community within a space to allow for open communication, but with the frequent movement of incarcerated people in and out of facilities it can be difficult to create that space. Programs will have very little control over how the system works, thus, making completion of the courses challenging.

Restorative justice practices and incarceration are two ideals that struggle to coexist due to the oppressive prison structures that tend to suffocate restorative principles. There are conflicting opinions on whether the two can successfully work together. Dhami et al. (2009) explains this conflict, "The balance of power in prisons is asymmetrical and hierarchical, that is antithetical to RJ which presupposes equality between participants and a 'flat' structure." This idea that restorative justice cannot be implemented because of opposing ideals is common for many. They fear that it disrupts the rationale of prions and may encourage more violent behavior due to lack of deterrence and retribution (Crocker, 2015; Johnstone, 2014; Lanni, 2021). Though the two may seem antithetical, they do have similar end goals of preventing recidivism and keeping the community safe. The approach of reaching these goals is different, but there may be room to merge and coexist to successfully achieve said goals.

In order for restorative practices to be integrated, some change will need to be made in the ways in which punishment is administered. The current system focuses on a deterrent and retributive process that utilizes negative punishment to correct behavior, but as it will later be discussed, this method is often insufficient in creating lasting change. Research indicates that punishment-only systems cause individuals to temporarily change their behavior to avoid extra punishment, but then revert back to their original behavior once the

threat of sanction is removed (Bandura, 1977; Petersilia, 2007). Incarceration itself does little to rehabilitate because people enter and alter their behavior in order to survive. They adapt to the system and do what is necessary to avoid added punishment, but there is little incentive to engage in positive behavioral changes. Restorative justice practices could provide the needed tools to incarcerated people to assist them in initiating those positive changes.

Implementing a restorative justice system within the current incarceration system will be a difficult task. If added, it could create the needed reform to allow offenders to make the changes they want to see in their lives. In order to set up a prison-based restorative justice project, it is vital to listen to offenders' aims, understand the required outcomes, and ensure that the means for meeting those needs and reaching the outcomes are available (Wallace and Wylie, 2013). For these programs to be successful the needs of the participants must be considered. If they feel that the goals set for them are unattainable and unrealistic then the likelihood of buy-in is minimal. Additionally, if programs do not have the needed tools and resources to actually help people meet their goals, it will discourage participation and diminish chances of community. Wallace and Wylie (2013) further discuss what a restorative program would look like in prison stating, "prisoners are encouraged to face up to the impact of their actions; the handling of disputes and conflict within the prison community is remodeled; and relationships are supported and developed between prisoners, staff, family members, friends and communities." The installation of restorative practices should model and seamlessly incorporate prosocial behaviors into everyday actions within prison. They will further act as means to create a community within the institution that emphasizes accountability and mediates disputes in a peaceful manner (Dhami et al., 2009). When everyone is in on the process the chances of success are much more likely. Encouragement

from all angles will reinforce the prosocial behaviors and strengthen bonds (Collica-Cox, 2018). Consistent collective ideology will then impact all aspects of the prison setting, making it more conducive to rehabilitation. With the use of positive reinforcement and the teaching of prosocial behavior, restorative practices can be integrated into the prisons and used to create better environments and individuals.

Prosocial Behavior

One element that is crucial to creating social cohesion and well-being of self and others – necessary elements of restorative justice – is prosocial behavior. The teaching of prosocial behaviors in prison can assist in creating positive change in the system and communities through restorative practices connecting the two and allowing for accountability (Dhami et al., 2009). Teaching prosocial behaviors results in a more positive self-identity, the ability to successfully communicate with others, and helps develop a better understanding of the harms their actions have caused (Bourke and Van Hasselt, 2001; Crocker, 2015; Dhami et al., 2009). One study found that positive emotions cause people to see the needs of others; thus, pushing for prosocial action (Aknin et al., 2018). Engaging in those actions then creates positive affect and emotions for the individual. With these programs it is important to allow offenders to have opportunities in which they feel positive emotions, as this will encourage them to want to help others. Bourke and Van Hasselt (2001) further emphasize this concept that positive assertion like compliments, words of affection, apologies, praise, and appreciation, work as important social reinforcers that express care for others and help to maintain relationships and reciprocity of social interactions. These kinds of skill sets are what are necessary for offenders to develop a community and care for those around them.

Prosocial behavior goes beyond just actions, and these simple verbal communication tools can aid them in growing their interpersonal skills.

The improvement of these social skills is what allows people to connect with one another and discover shared values and goals. Many incarcerated people do not have those kinds of communities, and having the skills to effectively and positively communicate with people can help bridge that gap. Shippers et al. (2001) found that social skills can be learned even in adulthood, leading to increased knowledge of prosocial behavior, less social avoidance, and less anxiety in social interactions. The development of these skills is an imperative first step for the behavioral change to actually occur (Bandura, 1971). The decreasing of social avoidance and anxiety will aid incarcerated people in a number of ways. Being incarcerated can cause a lot of isolation, and having bonds with people is needed for growth. Removing barriers of avoidance and anxiety will create space for healthy communication and acceptance. It is further found that restorative justice programs help people feel growth in self-development, deal with their emotions, develop sympathy, see each other as people not criminals, and understand the harm they did to victims and the community (Crocker, 2015). The prosocial behaviors that are ingrained into restorative justice practices give offenders the chance to take accountability for their actions and try to make it up to the victim and community they impacted.

Many studies indicate that in order for prosocial behaviors to be implemented, positive relationships between staff, community members, and residents are vital. The forming of these bonds helps to make connections and gives residents something to model and trust in. Collica-Cox (2018) found that, “The dedication and commitment of the civilian staff is essential to achieving both rehabilitative and reintegrative goals; the bonds that

develop between incarcerated people and staff will determine whether such outcomes are viable." Crocker (2015) discovered that participants felt the inclusion of community members in their program was critical. The connections to the outside world and creation of a community gives the participants the needed support to make changes. The attachments to mentors and staff allow for positive bonds to happen, and then they can serve as role models to promote prosocial behaviors related to ways to interaction with others. In many cases, these bonds will stay with them even into reintegration which gives them a sense of community before they are released. The process of reentering society can be isolating and challenging, but by forming these bonds prerelease there is a set community for them and members they can connect with once out.

In adulthood it can be difficult to form strong social bonds, but if created, it can lead to shifts in an offender's life course and help with the desistance process (Collica-Cox, 2018). These bonds are incredibly important to maintaining a meaningful life post-release and work to create positive change in behavior. This relationship with mentors and staff shows residents examples of ways to behave and engage in social cohesion. The bonds work as reinforcement for prosocial behavior. Antonio et al. (2009) explained how staff trainings should teach that, "modeling and correcting behavior work in tandem to promote a good social environment within a prison… staff are instructed to always model the desired behavior by accepting personal responsibility for their own actions." The interactions between participants and staff are the most frequent interactions they will have, so if staff is modeling the correct prosocial behavior that is desired and forming bonds then it will continue to reinforce those desired behaviors.

Positive Reinforcement

The showcasing and teaching of prosocial behavior is beneficial, but in order to enact change in behavior there needs to be reinforcement of actions. Reinforcing prosocial behaviors is vital in creating actual change, but the way in which that reinforcement occurs is important in whether it will be temporary or lasting change. Burdon et al. (2011) found that positive behavioral reinforcement should be facilitated through change in cognitive processes by encouraging the full participation in program activities and behaviors that promote the changes sought after. The cognitive process does not change overnight and the repeated involvement in program activities that target behavioral change is what is needed to create the lasting change. In compelling participants to actively engage, the acknowledgement of participation is important. Since participation cannot be forced without reduction of autonomy, emphasizing the value of their actions will be vital. Incarcerated people involved in the process should have a degree of input so they are able to fully understand the conditions in which they are involved. Rewarding the participation and other positive behaviors should be frequent and consistent. Petersilia (2007) suggests that, "positive reinforcement should outweigh negative sanctions by at least four to one" which means that while negative sanctions still serve a purpose, it should not be the primary tool of reinforcement. The effectiveness of reinforcement on behavioral and attitudinal changes is also contingent on participants having a voice in reward types (Elbers et al., 2022). Rewards that are generally more favorable are ones associated with giving back some sense of autonomy and freedom. As previously mentioned, prison settings are notorious for stripping these concepts from incarcerated people, so the chance to regain them is a big motivator. Relinquishing this strict hold within prisons is vital in allowing these practices to work

effectively. There are many different rewards that would not be outside of the scope for prisons to allow, such as more recreational time, low-cost canteen items, and even group celebratory meals or movie nights (Burdon et al., 2003). This opportunity for autonomy and freedom, gives a sense of dignity back to the individual which is a primary focus of restorative justice practices.

The effects of positive reinforcement are ideal for promoting prosocial behavior and have added self-benefits. Reward based systems in prison treatment programs are under-utilized, but can have numerous beneficial effects. Using positive reinforcement can encourage participants to partake in activities leading to increased treatment retention, reduction of unexplained absences, and improved social adjustment while also decreasing criminal behavior for violent offenders (Burdon et al., 2003a). More time in the treatment activities will increase the likelihood of them taking hold and understanding the concepts being taught. As incarcerated people participate in the restorative justice programs, positively reinforcing their exhibition of prosocial behaviors will aid in the practices being absorbed and utilized.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a mixed methods approach to understand the dynamics of prosocial behavior within the Transition Center of Kansas City (TCKC), a secure correctional reentry facility with an innovative Restorative Reentry Community (RRC). Specifically, data were collected and analyzed to answer the following research questions:

1. What patterns are evident in the teaching and utilization of prosocial values and behaviors at TCKC?
2. How are prosocial values related to TCKC's foundational principles of restorative justice and dignity?

In order to answer these questions, archival and observational data were inductively analyzed for emergent themes related to prosocial behavior and its intersection with core TCKC principles.

Site Location and Description

This thesis is part of a larger study being conducted by Dr. Jennifer Macy and Dr. Lori Sexton on the implementation of the Nordic model of incarceration in the United States.[1] Data for this thesis are drawn from this study, and were collected from a single site: the Transition Center of Kansas City (TCKC). TCKC was opened in 2022 by the Missouri Department of Corrections; it is the first facility of its kind in the state of Missouri, and aims to incorporate Nordic principles with a restorative justice model in order to facilitate transition of residents into the community once they are released (Macy and Sexton, 2023).

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In partnership with the Center for Conflict Resolution (CCR), a local restorative justice organization, TCKC operates as a Restorative Reentry Community, or RRC. In the RRC, residents proceed through phases that prepare them for release from the facility and reintegration into the community. There are four phases that residents move through at their own pace, and many remain involved in the program after graduation as mentors or leaders for new participants. The RRC aims to create a culture unlike that of typical prison environments where cooperation and collaboration is the norm between residents, staff, and administration. The relationship between residents and staff is integral to TCKC's mission, as it is the foundation of the "community" element of the Restorative Reentry Community.

Through the use of restorative practices, the RRC seeks to "enhance the existing reentry process by creating a supportive community on the inside to better prepare and connect participants to more resources available on the outside." Kansas City community partners have many close ties to TCKC and work with the residents during and after graduation to help them reenter successfully. The goal is to provide a network of support and service providers for those in need. Within the RRC, community is also supported through the use of "shoutouts": positive recognition slips that can be written by and for anyone—resident, staff, or administrative member (Macy & Sexton, n.d.).

Data Collection and Description

There are two types of data that were collected in this study: archival documents and observational fieldnotes. The archival data were collected in the form of foundational TCKC training materials, an RRC executive summary, and written shoutouts. The primary training material is a 40-page manual ("CORE: Conflict Resolution") which is utilized in a two-day training required of all TCKC residents, staff, and volunteers. Another key archival document

is an executive summary detailing the transitional phases and goals of TCKC. The final form of archival data is shoutouts themselves—short messages that can be written by, and sent to, anyone in the institution (e.g., resident, staff, volunteer). Shoutout data for this study consist of scanned copies of all shoutouts written at TCKC during two months of 2025 (N=403). The shoutouts were collected, scanned and deidentified by a CCR staff member and provided to the research team. The archival data allow for an analysis of the role of prosocial behavior at TCKC in both design (e.g., through the CORE training manual) and practice (e.g., through the act of writing a shoutout—a form of prosocial behavior—and the behaviors acknowledged in the shoutouts).

Observational data were drawn from a guided, one-hour facility tour provided by a program administrator, processing time at the institution, and two eight-hour days participating in the CORE training course, for a total of 20 hours of observation in the field. The guided tour included the living arrangements, classrooms, recreational center, and administrative center, and provided the opportunity to speak informally with some of the residents present. The CORE training provided a more formal and structured environment for observation. The course was taught in a classroom to about thirty people—a mix of new staff, residents, and community members volunteers from a local partner organization. The training consisted of two, eight-hour days with intermittent breaks. Each day of training involved a mix of the facilitator working through the content of the manual, utilizing videos, collaborative activities, and discussions to impart and reinforce conflict resolution skills and other foundational tenets of TCKC. The purpose of the observations was to examine how key concepts and themes (e.g., prosocial behavior, emergent themes from the archival data) both are described in an ideal sense, and how they play out in practice—particularly with

regard to staff and resident interactions. During these observations, handwritten fieldnotes were taken describing personal interactions and conversations, site descriptions, and reflexive notes during experience in the field (Patton, 2015). Further notes were recorded following the observation for more extensive details until thick description was reached (Geertz, 1973).

Analytic Strategy

All archival and observational data were qualitatively coded using ATLAS.ti to evaluate the emerging patterns and themes, and to identify how those patterns were associated with prosocial behaviors and restorative practices. Archival and observational data related to the CORE training were coded for themes found in the prosocial behavior, positive reinforcement, and restorative justice literatures. The data were then coded inductively, in order to detect emergent themes, relationships and patterns. Once no new themes were found, initial memos were written for the major themes identified. Focused coding was then used to apply previously determined codes to the entire body of data. Throughout the coding process, integrative memos were written to join themes into cohesive theoretical frameworks. The coding process for the shoutouts differed from that of the archival documents and observational fieldnotes, but connections were made in order to see relationships across policies and practices.

Shoutout data were analyzed separately to determine the nature of the shoutouts, and patterns among them. Reoccurring themes in the content of the shoutouts included the key words: ‘thank you’, ‘helping’, ‘good friend’, ‘good work’, ‘positivity’, and ‘congrats’. These codes were utilized through ATLAS.ti to see the frequency of co-occurrence, and further explored in a descriptive quantitative analysis described in the next paragraph. The codes

applied to shoutouts were not used to analyze the larger dataset, but were later connected analytically to the themes evident in those data.

In addition to the qualitative analysis, shoutout data were transcribed and coded in SPSS for descriptive quantitative analysis. The shoutouts were coded to indicate the nature of the shoutout content: encouragement, compliment, appreciation, and advice. To account for overlapping content types, each type was coded as its own dummy variable (0 = no, 1 = yes). Shoutouts that were determined to be encouragement in nature were those that contained messages of motivation to continue good works and actions or in maintaining a positive attitude. Compliment based shoutouts were those that acknowledged a positive deed, trait, or accomplishment. Those with appreciation held messages of gratitude for assistance or emotional support. Then those of advice were shoutouts containing words of what to do, or not to do, in order to find success. Shoutouts could be coded using more than one variable depending on the nature of what was written. Once coded, descriptive frequency analyses were conducted on the sample as a whole, as well as subsamples of shoutouts written to residents, and shoutouts written to staff.

The written content of the shoutouts was intended to be analyzed as a source of both direct and indirect data on prosocial behavior. These behaviors were operationalized as forms of positive and productive communication aimed at building relationships and acknowledging good deeds from others, as well as, utilizing the tools of compliments, appreciation, praise, and honesty to recognize and uplift the community. Directly, the decision to write and issue a shoutout to another person at TCKC is itself a form of prosocial behavior; indirectly, shoutouts were expected to be "shouting out" a variety of prosocial behaviors done by others. In both of these ways, shoutouts were expected to be a rich data

source for both acknowledgement and indicators of prosocial behavior. What I found upon collecting the shoutout data, however, is that the written content of the shoutouts sheds very little light on the prosocial behavior of the shoutout recipient, providing little indirect data on prosocial behavior. Thus, the act of writing the shoutouts as a demonstration of prosocial behavior (i.e., communication) becomes the primary source of data, rather than the written content of the shoutout.

TCKC Foundational Code Co-Occurrence

The coding for the observational fieldnotes, CORE manual, and RRC executive summary was determined through pulling common concepts from restorative justice principles, prosocial behaviors, and elements of dignity. The three have many overlapping concepts and connections. A radial network conceptual graph was created to examine shared values and ties as seen in Figure 1. Within the map, some codes appeared in more than one group so they were reduced to a singular code in order to avoid splitting any connections.

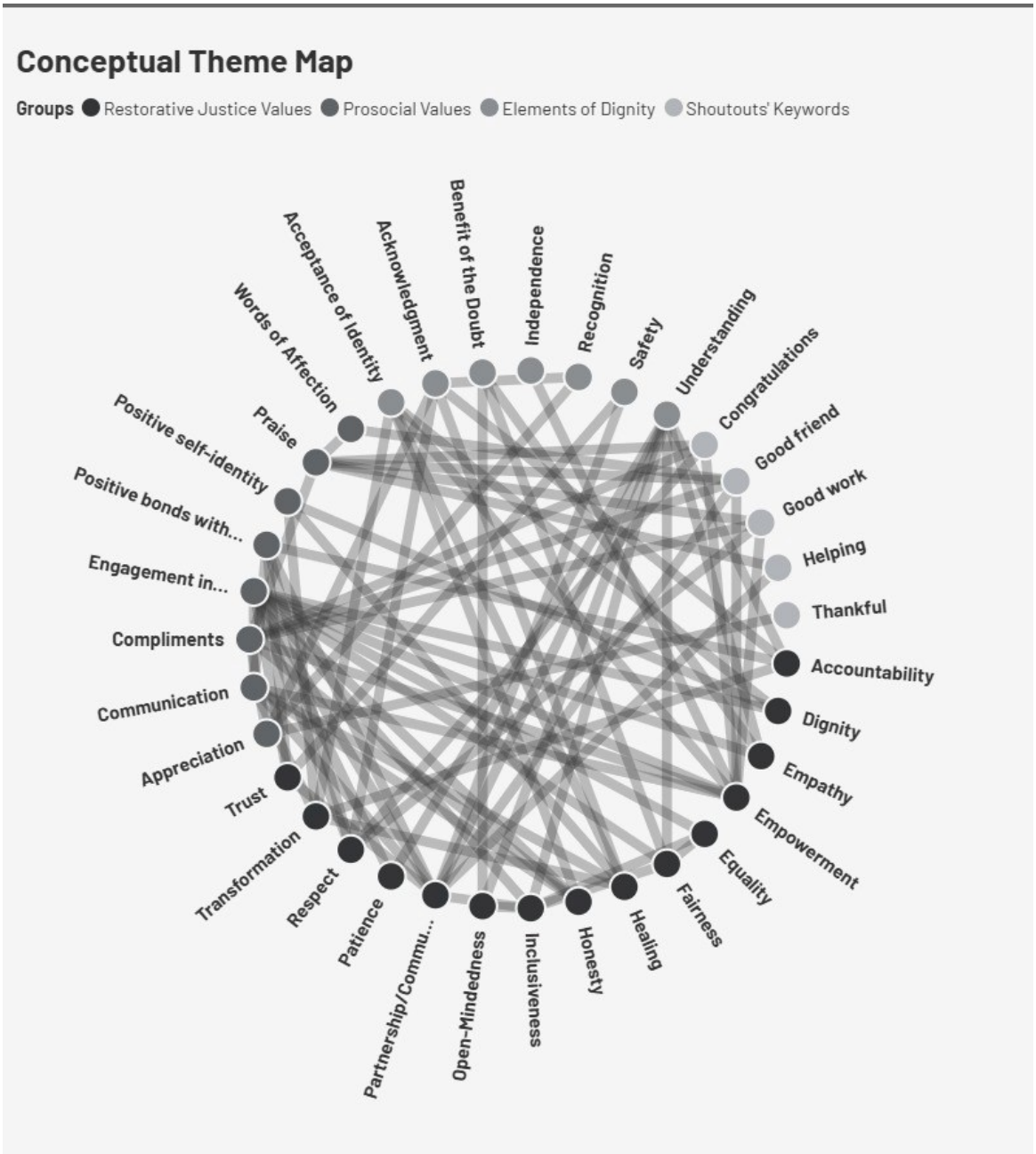

Figure 1:A conceptual theme map depicting the connections between key values found in the thematic analysis.

The graph provided a groundwork of themes to watch for in the thematic analysis, and upon further understanding of the data, emerging themes were selected and then coded to discover connections throughout. Within ATLAS.ti, there were nineteen total archival codes relating to these themes. The observational fieldnotes were first analyzed and examined for

prosocial themes specifically in relation to person-to-person interactions within the institution. The analysis done on the foundational documents was then used to examine how the policies included were showing up in practice in the trainings that were observed. Once thorough and thematic coding was complete, the 'Code Co-occurrence Analysis' tool within ATLAS.ti was utilized which creates a heat map of sort to examine which codes appeared most frequently in relation to one another, and simultaneously indicated the codes used most. The codes with high co-occurrence were then examined to determine any patterns that arose from the quotations or tables selected. The analysis of the archival and observation materials was then examined for relationships with the codes of the shoutout data set to examine patterns that emerged of policies being used in practice by the residents.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The Connection between Prosocial Values and TCKC Principles

Much of the teachings within TCKC fall into three categories: restorative justice principles, prosocial values, and elements of dignity. There is quite a bit of overlap in the concepts, and some key themes arose when conducting analysis. The goal was to examine how these concepts work together to instill prosocial behaviors in residents through the teachings in the manual and in practice through the CORE training. There were many patterns that emerged from this analysis indicating prosocial behaviors both in theory and practice.

The manual and course trainings showcased the benefit of community within the institution and a need to break out of stereotypical prison type relationships. Both work to encourage everyone at TCKC to engage in different positive behavior and resolve conflict in a healthy manner. The practice of prosocial behavior supports the ideals of TCKC and provides residents with useful tools that can aid in success upon release. There were many emerging patterns observed in the archival documents and in practice that uplift these values, demonstrating the ways in which restorative justice, prosocial values, and elements of dignity work together to promote prosocial behavior.

In order to engage with these concepts, TCKC sets itself apart from typical prison environments and practices, and the members of CCR directly speak on how they want that to be the case. There were multiple instances in which a program administrator spoke to changing the dynamics and relationships between staff and residents to cultivate a culture of learning and accountability that was more reliant on the residents themselves rather than corrections officers. This is a perspective change for both staff and residents and there is a

section in the manual titled, Three Shifts to Expect with Restorative Justice, that provides the types of changes expected in the program and ways in which it will differ from typical punitive processes. The shifts are listed as follows:

> Shift #1: The shift acknowledges that troublesome behavior is normal and creates opportunities to learn important social and emotional skills. Making things right is a powerful learning experience.
>
> Shift #2: In this shift the person in authority acts more as a convener and facilitator.
>
> Shift #3: This shift moves the locus of responsibility for well-being of the community from the shoulders of the experts to the community itself. The community is strengthened.

From this section of the CORE training a program administrator emphasized how, unlike in prisons, TCKC endeavors to create an environment that allowed for growth at the hands of residents and the corrections officers were not there to "fix" issues. This type of teaching and future opportunities allows residents to put to use the conflict resolution and restorative justice practices they are taught and thus engage in prosocial behaviors like communication and understanding. This also works to attenuate the innate power imbalances in place between the residents and corrections officers, striving to place them on a more even level in which they work together to resolve issues.

In working to further shift perspectives, there were a number of exercises done in the training course that aimed to create a community within TCKC that removed the "us versus them" mentality between residents and staff. Since the training courses combine both new residents and staff, it allowed for intermingling to discuss shared goals and interests to create

common ground and begin positive bonds. The exercises consisted of tasks like finding ten similarities between themselves, common shared needs, shared ideas of what makes a community, and rules for class engagement. The tasks utilized a number of concepts like open-mindedness, understanding, respect, and communication to provide small opportunities of prosocial engagement.

The goal of the training furthermore was to showcase to all involved that within TCKC, they were their own community. At one point the group was asked to list what they felt made up community; answers included: people, network, trusting, shared values, lifting others up, BBQ together, education and skills, working together, setting goals, accountability, and fun activities. A program administrator then pointed out that these are all qualities they have within TCKC and that everyone involved is who dictates what that community does and means. Many of the concepts listed are aspects of restorative justice, prosocial behaviors, and elements of dignity, and all were offered up by residents and staff. In engaging with these during their time at TCKC, residents can have positive experiences that allow for them to learn these behaviors and develop a sense of what a positive community looks and feels like.

The overall environment for the course was open and welcoming. Residents were able to ask questions about certain concepts, challenge things they disagreed with, and have conversations about approaches to accountability. One such conversation opened the floor to much discussion amongst the residents about holding others accountable and the ways in which to do so. One resident felt that accountability and shaming was important, and that people should be called out when they do something wrong. Another spoke up stating he would not be receptive to a call-out like that and it would be better in a one-on-one conversation. This further led into a discussion of bystander effect, and the residents provided

examples of fear of harm for speaking out. Ultimately, they came to the conclusion that people need to understand where others are at before calling people out, and that community is needed to reach that point. Despite their conversation getting slightly heated at times, they each were very respectful with one another and willing to hear the other out. Though they had differing opinions and approaches, they came to a consensus with little intervention from staff. This was a great example of prosocial behavior from the residents of being able to facilitate their own conflicts and disagreement, and turn it into a positive learning experience.

In an attempt to further teach accountability, the group did an exercise answering different questions about harm and discussed the steps needed to take accountability. Through honesty, understanding, and acknowledgment the group was able to have some tough realizations. A program administrator asked the group a series of questions, "How did you feel when someone hurt you? What did you need after being hurt? How did you feel when you harmed someone? When you harmed someone, what did you need?" which resulted in a variety of answers. The questions that yielded the most intriguing answers are the two concerning needs. With both of those questions, there were shared answers that emphasized the importance of support, resolution, and comfort when attending to human needs. The exercise worked to show what victims need, and how harm can impact those needs. The activity closely tied into the section of the manual titled 'Until We Reckon: Violence, Mass Incarceration, and a Road to Repair' which showcases the steps to accountability. It discusses acknowledging responsibility for one's actions, acknowledging the impact of those actions on others, expressing remorse, working to repair harm done, and learning to not repeat the same harm. Emphasizing the importance of this section of the training, an administrator told the class: "if you make a mistake, come to these pages."

Accountability is a key focal point for restorative justice practices and is central to TCKC's principles of repairing harm and developing prosocial behavior. This is done in practice through circle processes. The CORE manual states, "The Circle is a process that bring together individuals who wish to engage in conflict resolution, healing, support, and decision-making in which honest communications, relationship development, and community building are core and desired outcomes." When conflict arises TCKC's goal is to give residents the needed skills to positively engage in these processes and facilitates an environment that allows for growth. The theory of these concepts is taught in courses, but they also allow for the residents to partake in the practices. The latter portion is when they are able to develop prosocial behaviors like communication, understanding, and engagement of positive actions simultaneously with elements of dignity and restorative justice values.

These principles and practices are further highlighted by the themes that frequently appeared in the analysis; themes of communication, open-mindedness, understanding, community, and honesty were the most prominent in the data. In trying to prepare residents for release, TCKC takes an approach of giving them the tools to remain calm and have conflict in a healthy non-violent manner. These skillsets are a combination of prosocial behaviors and restorative principles which are developed through practices that give the residents opportunities to feel safe in engaging in these newer concepts. One such opportunity is the morning circle that is conducted by a CCR member prior to the day's activities beginning. Sitting in a large circle in a mix of residents and some staff, the CCR member leads a brief discussion then asks three questions to the group. A talking stick is passed around, and while everyone in attendance is encouraged to answer, no one is forced. On day one of observation the questions asked were, "What is your name, temp, and favorite

cartoon? What is a recent self-realization you've had? What is your favorite compliment you have received?" Of the group, a majority participated on each question, which allowed for self-reflection, connection, and safe space to express themselves. The overall environment was relaxed and open, and even a bit vulnerable. The circle time seemed to give them opportunities to connect with one another without judgment. This practice is one that builds up community through shared experiences and engages them in open communication with themselves and others. Having staff members present--and also participating--helps to bridge the gaps of authority by relating to one another, and acts a form of modeling to the residents of how to interact and share in a positive way. This was one of many examples of teaching the residents how to participate in prosocial behaviors even if not explicitly mentioned.

One principle and practice of TCKC that was incredibly important, as evidenced by it being posted throughout the building and discussed heavily in the training, is dignity. Among the first few pages of the manual there are two sections, one titled 'Ten Essential Elements of Dignity' and one titled 'Ten Temptations to Violate Dignity' which detail the ways in which people should treat themselves and others with dignity, and how they are at risk of harming one's dignity. Many of the elements align closely with restorative justice values and prosocial behaviors like understanding, accountability, acknowledgment, and fairness. During the CORE training this section was a key focus at the start of the first day. The group went down to a different section outside of the classroom to sit in a large circle and read through them one by one. Upon discussion, the group was asked which they like the most, answers being 'inclusion', 'safety', 'understanding', 'benefit of the doubt', and 'accountability'. However, it was also asked which one they struggle with the most, and the residents answered 'benefit of the doubt,' listing reasons for lack of trust due to institutions and being harmed be people in

the past. Though they seemed to take most of these concepts at face value, there was definitely hesitancy to fully adopt some practices. As for the ways to violate others dignity, this hesitancy increased. Residents were much quieter on which ones they struggled to follow, with most answers coming from staff members. There was more pushback on concepts and discussions of struggling to change. This conversation was important to showcase that many of the prosocial skills being taught challenge preexisting beliefs and experiences that have developed from past harms, and continual work is needed to get them more comfortable with engaging in the practices.

A way in which the skills are further taught is how to properly deal with conflict, with conflict resolution being a significant portion of the training course and manual. The discussion began by the administrator asking people to draw and describe what conflict means to them. Every single participant proceeded to depict something negative or destructive. The first goal, then, was to shift perspectives in understanding that conflict is not inherently negative and can be positive, resulting in resolution or new views. This section focused on how important it is to utilize various skillsets like communication, open-mindedness, understanding, and benefit of the doubt suggesting that people are taught to react negatively to conflict or avoid it all together, thus, never resolving the issue. There is a section of the manual that is a chart depicting various choices one can make in conflict. It is often assumed that in conflict there is a winner and a loser or there is a compromise in which neither party fully wins, but the course argues that through collaboration both parties can 'win' without shorting themselves. This option requires the usage of all the skills they are learning and they were encouraged to keep it in mind the next time a conflict arises. The main goal of the section was to provide everyone with examples of different types of conflict

and ways to resolve it, as to indicate it is not as black and white as it may seem. The work to shift mindsets is one of the first steps in having a better grasp of the policies and practices they are working to instill at TCKC.

The RRC Executive Summary further works to support this idea, stating how the goal inside TCKC is to 'normalize' and 'resocialize' with the combined efforts of residents, staff, and administration. Normalization is the idea that within the institution life should simulate society as closely as possible to limit difficulty of transition. Through a guided tour of TCKC it was easy to see how they work to create that type of environment with residents allowed to walk freely, wearing personal clothing rather than a prison jumpsuit. There were vending machines available, open recreational spaces to watch movies and play games, and seemingly little supervision. There are obviously certain liberties that cannot be taken as they are still a secured correctional facility, but largely the environment was relaxed and welcoming for visitors compared to a regular prison. As for resocialization, the summary suggests the goal is to "foster prosocial behaviors like accountability and personal development to prepare individuals to lead a life free from crime and violence". There are many previous examples of this indicated both in the manual and discussed in the course training which indicates it is a policy that is well integrated into practice. The combined efforts of the two working in tandem with the shoutouts provides the residents with ample opportunities to learn and engage in prosocial behaviors.

Prosocial Values in Action

Throughout the data, many key themes arose and showed the intrinsic ways prosocial values appear within TCKC. Communication is the strongest overall theme in the dataset as a whole—both archival and observational. It is most evidently and explicitly found in the

shoutouts. One of the key priorities of TCKC is to teach the residents the needed skills to successfully communicate with others, both to form positive bonds and to resolve conflict non-violently. There was an open and understanding environment within TCKC that allowed for easy communication, and safe spaces to give residents the opportunity to have discussions over topics they otherwise may not have. Communication was evident in the way residents held discussions during the training course, morning circle meetings, and most obviously – shoutouts. The utilization of shoutouts as a form of communication is a practical application of prosocial values that is easy to partake in; while also acting as reinforcement. Furthermore, shoutouts allow for other prosocial behaviors like engagement in positive emotions and action and creating positive bonds. The residents are able to engage in expressing gratitude, positivity, and encouragement through the messages in the shoutouts. The sending and receiving of shoutouts works to establish bonds amongst the residents and staff through continual recognition. Prosocial values are evident in the teachings of TCKC and can be seen in the shoutouts and observational data.

Any TCKC staff or resident can write a shoutout to other staff or resident. Of the 403 shoutouts in the sample, 58.8% of the recipients were residents and 41.2% were staff members—a split consistent with the intention of using shoutouts to acknowledge resident progress through the RRC program. With regard to who writes the shoutouts, a far more lopsided distribution appears; despite the fact that staff are explicitly asked to write shoutouts to residents to encourage prosocial behavior, a remarkable 0.7% (n=3) of the shoutouts were written by staff—and none of these were written to residents. The implications of this will be explored later in the findings.

Substantively, most shoutouts fell into one or both of the categories of compliment or appreciation (80%, n=403). When splitting the sample into those written to residents (n=237) or to staff (n=166), those compliment and appreciation remained the two most common categories, but the top-most theme differed between the groups. When writing to other residents the content tended to be that of compliments, with roughly 59% containing messages relating to doing a good job, being a good friend, having a positive attitude, and congratulating others on completing a course or getting a job. Those written to staff were largely messages of appreciation with approximately 78% relating to gratitude for help in a number of ways.

With a majority of the shoutouts being written by residents the shoutouts can serve as a physical example of positive relational bonds among residents and between residents and staff members. This engagement in positive actions and acknowledgment of positive emotions further reinforces many key prosocial concepts such as communication, honesty, acknowledgement, and empowerment. The actual written content did not generally call out specific actions or words, but rather spoke to the intentions behind actions. Through shoutouts of appreciation there was continual gratitude for assistance in finding a job, completing a task, or being emotional support. The shoutouts including compliments work to uplift fellow residents and serve as physical reminders of good behavior. By engaging in writing the shoutouts, the residents are able to recognize and encourage further prosocial behavior. Ideally, staff members would also use the shoutouts more to point out specific instances and forms of prosocial behaviors. This would be particularly useful, as many of these concepts are somewhat new to residents, making it more difficult for them to identify specific examples of the types of prosocial behavior that TCKC is trying to encourage. This

could be one reason why the content of the shoutouts tended to be more general, rather than specific. Despite this, the messaging in the shoutouts still indicates prosocial values in more discrete ways.

How they Work Together

There is much variety in the content of the shoutouts, and they each point to different kinds of positive learned behaviors. Shoutouts that relate to concepts of appreciation and acknowledgment were the most common, especially those written toward staff members. The shoutouts as a whole have a sort of inherent quality of gratitude for whatever the action may have been, but many are used to indicate appreciation for help in some manner. Examples of such said “Thank you for sharing your story with us it’s helped a lot of us open up” which was one written from a resident to a staff member. Having an open and honest relationship between staff and resident is vital in creating an environment for growth and allows for relationships to form more organically. Seeing staff members open up encourages residents to do the same and is a great form of modeling. Another one written to staff states, “Helping us cook breakfast, being really good at it, and always having words of encouragement” is a more specific one for a particular task and acknowledges the help that goes into it. As previously mentioned, TCKC wants to limit the authority hierarchy within it as much as possible, so having staff regularly engage with and assist the residents creates an atmosphere not present in typical prisons. This is an active example of their policies being put into practice and it does not go unnoticed by the residents. An example from resident to resident is “Being so helpful around TCKC. Thank you it is because of him I am getting myself together” which also ties into the importance of close positive bonds within the institution. It

is common within the shoutouts that the residents all help each other out, and frequently take on mentorships like roles.

One of the keyword themes in the shoutouts that ties closely is ‘good friend’ which sought to identify instances of positive partnerships and bonds in any capacity like friend, roommate, or mentor. This one also shows promise of a developing community within TCKC where they can rely on one another and reach out for help and encouragement. Most of the shoutouts with this theme are written to other residents and indicate good relationships amongst them. One example is, “Being a good friend and experienced, positive resident who also happens to be a flawless and worthy Mario Kart adversary” that speaks to shared experiences and mentorship that occurs with TCKC. Another one states, “Being a good friend and coming a long way, Proud of you bro” which engages in recognition and praise to uplift a friend. The shoutouts showed the connections between the residents and the ways in which they interact and help one another.

The remaining themes from the shoutouts ‘good work’, ‘congrats’, and ‘positivity’ also relate to concepts such as praise, recognition, empowerment, and compliments. These shoutouts are key examples of positive assertions which are vital to engaging in prosocial behavior. These shoutouts were also primarily to other residents uplifting them and their many accomplishments. There are shoutouts regarding finishing a course in TCKC saying, “Completing Goodwill BZT course! You’re awesome, and smarter than you think!” which is a common course that is mentioned that seems to be a big deal to complete. They also encourage one another with messages like, “Not giving up buddy you’re doing great get your wins you got this!” that speak to the tenacity and perseverance they have to getting better. Getting a job is also a big deal as it is part of one of the latter phases in TCKC, and they are

often congratulated, “obtaining employment and keeping a positive attitude”. There also some that speak to the staffs’ positivity and how helpful they can be, “Always being a positive influence and brightening up the day” which means a lot to the residents that staff are smiling and happy to be there. Staff bringing positive attitudes helps to make it a better environment for all, and allows for the residents to feel more welcome.

The lack of shoutouts from staff was quite surprising and does not support what was anticipated prior to the study that staff would utilize the shoutouts as a form of positive reinforcement. When taking a tour, some of the residents mentioned how the shoutouts make them feel proud and feel like an indication they are moving forward. They enjoy the acknowledgment and positivity that comes from them. The question then is why is staff not using the shoutouts to reinforce and encourage the residents? Though it could be that the batches of shoutouts received are not representative of most months, it is dismaying that there were only three total staff written shoutouts and none of which were written to residents. While residents’ high levels of engagement in prosocial actions through writing shoutouts is clearly aligned with TCKC’s principles, it is clear that the shoutouts are being completely underutilized by staff as a tool to encourage prosocial behaviors, and to recognize them when they occur. Staff are more likely than other residents to recognize and fully understand examples of prosocial behavior being done by the residents, and should therefore be the ones to point it out more explicitly so the residents are able to better identify it themselves in the future. The shoutouts act as physical reminders of good deeds and work to reinforce the actions that were committed. Staff modeling is a key factor in the retention and learning of prosocial values, and while the staff may be verbally communicating the reinforcement, having the shoutouts allows for resident to visualize and recall the behavior.

Generally, TCKC does a good job of taking policies and concepts and turning them into practices that the residents can actually engage with, but in this case, it would be much more beneficial if staff members were also engaging in the practice of writing shoutouts to serve as examples for the residents.

From these findings, it is clear that the act of writing the shoutouts is more of a prosocial behavior than the actual content of the shoutout. The physical act of writing it allows for residents to engage in a multitude of behaviors that will further serve them in naturally developing the skills. This is an easy, repetitive tasks that can break down the walls that may come with being slightly vulnerable with people because it comes in the form of a note rather than in person. The shoutouts are also posted in the hallways before being handed out at the end of the month so they can work as motivators for other residents as well. Furthermore, when receiving the shoutouts they are able to have the reinforcement to continue in good behavior with possible hopes of getting more in the future. The writing and receiving of shoutouts is a cyclical rotation of prosocial behavior, promoting many of the foundational principles of TCKC.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This study sought to examine the emergent patterns relating to prosocial behavior in tandem with TCKC's core principles of restorative justice and elements of dignity. It was discovered that the prosocial behaviors were embedded in policy and practice through archival documents like the RRC Executive Summary, the CORE training manual, and the written shoutouts, as well as seeing the interactions and discussion that occurred during fieldwork observations. There are recurrent themes of communication, engagement of positive emotions and actions, understanding, and more. Through the use of restorative justice and elements of dignity, prosocial behaviors are facilitated in spaces like TCKC. The CORE manual details many key behaviors that aid in developing such skillsets, and the course training gives the residents the necessarily practice to engage in those behaviors. The utilization of the shoutouts further supplements the trainings by providing repeated opportunities to use the skills learned, and they work to reinforce the positive behavior. TCKC's policies are being put into practice in a number of ways and work to provide residents with tools that will be imperative to success upon release.

The findings in this study help to alleviate the idea that these concepts like restorative justice, prosocial behaviors, and elements of dignity have little place in prisons, and shows that these behaviors and skills can be taught. TCKC is unique in nature within the United States correctional world, but indicates positive changes that can be made. Restorative justice and prosocial behavior are frequently used in youth-based programs, but TCKC showcases how these concepts work with adult incarcerated people. In making some changes to the way they operate and interact with the residents they are able to better pass along the tools that are learned from such concepts.

One noteworthy—and unexpected—finding was the lack of shoutouts written by staff members. Prior to the study there was an expectation that there would be substantial amount of shoutouts coming from both residents and staff, but that was not the case. This was informed by TCKC's encouragement of staff to use the shoutouts as positive reinforcement for the residents to acknowledge good acts—so for no shoutouts to be written from staff to residents was intriguing. It could be entirely possible that reinforcement happens verbally instead of through the shoutouts; which due to limited time observation, could have been missed. Regardless, the written shoutouts act more as an enduring, tangible reminder of good behavior that the residents can keep, rather than a fleeting moment of praise. Residents even mention how much they enjoy receiving shoutouts, and that would likely be the sentiment for staff-written ones as well. Further analysis would need to be conducted in order to understand why staff are not more open with their written praise or reinforcement of positive behaviors, but it suggests an intriguing dynamic in the institution designed around the idea of an inclusive, participatory community that values restorative practices. TCKC does a good job of putting many of their policies into practice, but this is one area that could use some more aid. Furthermore, TCKC could look into allowing shoutouts from community volunteers as Crocker (2015) mentioned, the involvement of community members was important in creating connections to society beyond the institution. These shoutouts could provide an added layer of external validation and reinforcement for the residents.

One main limitation in the study was limited observational hours. Though rich and detailed fieldnotes were gathered over twenty hours of observation, it would have been ideal to attend some other courses and group meetings. There were a number of scheduling conflicts and due to the nature of some of the group meetings there is no set time in which

they occur. These additional observations could have possibly provided more information on the interactions between staff and residents, and could have given insight into the lack of staff written shoutouts. Future research into the institution could examine this relationship and further see how modeling and positive bonds with staff aids the residents in developing their prosocial skills.

Overall, the study was able to find connections between prosocial behaviors and the core values of TCKC – restorative justice and elements of dignity. The activities, trainings, and discussions they conduct work to instill and develop these skills on a day-to-day basis. The emerging patterns of communication, understanding, building positive bonds, and more will aid the residents in many different ways. Prosocial behavior is so important to being successful in society, and the teaching of these skills will be a great benefit for years to come.

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VITA

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