

Exploring Prison Podcasts: Storytelling as a Means to Recovery

Master Thesis

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Abstract

Background: There has been a call for a more strengths-based, positive approach to rehabilitation in prison as recidivism rates remain high. Prison podcasts, as an instrument for storytelling, may facilitate recovery. Although they are being produced for over a decade, there is a lack of research on the narratives they depict and what inmates think about them. This study aimed to explore the potential of prison podcasts to facilitate recovery. **Methods:** First, informant interviews were conducted with two leaders of prison podcasts from the Netherlands and Germany to gain insight into their perspectives. Second, two story types were selected which were salient in German prison podcasts. These were analysed in a three-step narrative analysis which addresses the social and normative complexities of narrating life in prison. Third, two focus groups with inmates were conducted in Germany to explore their perspectives on the podcast project. One focus group consisted of inmates involved in producing podcasts; the other consisted of inmates seeing the podcasts for the first time. The discussions were analysed using thematic analysis. Recovery processes were identified both in the podcast stories and discussions using the CHIME framework. **Results:** The leaders of prison podcast projects maintained that, provided that inmates are permitted full autonomy and the staff becomes involved in the project, podcasting provides a channel for prisoners to tell their stories, contributes to resocialization as prisoners and staff work collaboratively, and acts as a medium to connect inmates with society. Two story types were identified in the podcasts: 1) a story of limitation, which describes the prison bureaucracy as disempowering and a cause of disconnectedness; 2) a story of opportunity, which describes inmates experiencing meaning and connectedness in rehabilitative work. Focus group participants spoke about experiences of disempowerment, but also about maintaining a sense of agency in prison. They described the podcast project as a source of frustration and hope, with the potential to enable connectedness and empowerment, as it provides the opportunity to reflect, work as a team, and gain hope of creating awareness and decreasing stigma. **Conclusion:** Podcasts enable unique insight into the experiences of inmates. This study indicates various ways that prison podcasts are a valuable medium to foster recovery through storytelling, provided that the inmates can freely tell their stories.

Keywords: Prison Podcasts, narrative approach, qualitative research, focus groups, recovery

Germany's Federal Prison Act of 1976 (Strafvollzugsgesetz), paragraph 2 states that the primary objective of incarceration is "to enable prisoners to lead a life of social responsibility free of crime upon release". Paragraph 3 holds three principles for the prison system: first, requiring that prison life be as similar as possible to life in the community, second, any detrimental effects of imprisonment shall be counteracted, and third, organised in such a way as to facilitate reintegration into society. This third principle of social reintegration rests on two pillars: the right to dignity and to develop one's personality freely, and the notion that social reintegration is the end towards which the penal system should strive (Meijer, 2017). This principle of social reintegration was created to serve as the overarching principle for how sentences are applied and for dealing with offenders once the sentence has been served. The task of protecting the public from further criminal offences is to be regarded as resolved when an offender is reintegrated into society.

Despite the German Prison Act of 1976, the concept of resocialization has remained vague (Meijer, 2017), and the degree of effective implementation is questionable: A 48% reconviction rate over a period of three years and a 35% reimprisonment rate (Fazel & Wolf, 2015) are strong indicators of a need for improvement in rehabilitative interventions in prison. Despite establishing the principle of damage reduction in the German Prison Act, Sykes (2007, p.64) recently termed the detrimental consequences of incarceration the "pains of imprisonment" which have been, inter alia, identified as moral disengagement and prisonization (Haney, 2012; South & Wood, 2006; Thomas & Foster, 1972) and a strongly increased likelihood of severe health limitations (Schnittker & John, 2007). Hence, the question arises how rehabilitation can be improved to counteract the harmful effects of incarceration and decrease recidivism.

Towards a strengths-based approach to recovery in prison

According to Ward and Stewart (2003), a focus on reducing risk factors is a necessary but insufficient condition for effective correctional interventions. Various criminologists have advocated a shift to a strengths-based approach to rehabilitation which supports the change process of incarcerated individuals and emphasizes how criminal behaviour by persons who are at risk can be prevented through positive experiences (King et al., 2019, p.31; McNeill, 2006; Ward & Maruna, 2007). A focus on strengths conveys a belief in change and may therefore be essential in the process of rehabilitation of individuals serving prison sentences (Van Ginneken,

2016). Furthermore, it is an invitation to look beyond a focus on victimhood and stories of ‘the suffering subject’ (Robbins, 2013).

Rehabilitation is the objective of prison interventions, whereas recovery is the process that can be achieved only by the person in need of it (Gibson, Acquah & Robinson, 2004) as it involves a personal recognition of the need for change and transformation (King et al., 2019, p.36). Personal recovery entails a meaningful, satisfying, empowered, and hopeful life (Slade, 2013), in line with the strengths-based approach which advocates for the prisoners’ agency. The term recovery has been primarily applied in the field of mental health care and addiction (Price-Robertson, Obradovic, & Morgan, 2017), including behavioural health recovery (Leamy, Bird, Le Boutillier, Williams, & Slade, 2011). Recently, the need to promote a focus on recovery in prisons has been emphasized (Osher, D’Amora, Plotkin, Jarrett, & Eggleston, 2012). Therefore, a framework for recovery which provides basic domains that recovery projects in prison can be mapped against may be useful.

The concept of personal recovery was developed into a framework with the acronym CHIME by Leamy et al. (2011), which represents five recovery processes: connectedness, hope and optimism, identity, meaning, and empowerment (see Appendix A for a detailed description). These were defined by means of a systematic review of 97 papers and a narrative synthesis of studies showing positive results from recovery interventions. In line with strengths-based approaches, the framework affirms a need for a greater emphasis on the assessment of strengths and support for self-narrative development (Leamy et al., 2011). It is regarded as a comprehensive description of the process of recovery, based on a theoretically defensible and robust synthesis of people’s experiences of recovery in mental illness (Leamy, et al., 2011). Being one of the most rigorous and popular attempts at synthesising the many existing conceptualisations of recovery, it has been suggested as a suitable framework for recovery projects in the prison context (Best, Musgrove & Hall, 2018; Carpenter & Knight, 2018).

In line with the recovery process connectedness, recovery has been found to depend on the amount of contact allowed with the outside world (Dünkel, 2004; Meijer, 2017), and having somebody trustworthy to talk to (Durcan & Cees Zwemstra, 2014, p.89). In line with hope and optimism, opportunities to undergo treatment and therapy contribute to successful recovery (Meijer, 2017). Supporting the recovery process identity which includes overcoming stigma, Dirkzwager, Nieuwbeerta & van der Laan (2015) conducted a longitudinal study on the effects

of imprisonment and found that incarceration can adversely affect rehabilitation as a consequence of feeling socially outcast. The British social exclusion unit (2002) also observed a sharp rise in social exclusion of ex-inmates upon release which they found to be intrinsically linked with re-offending. The amount of contact with the outside world during the period of incarceration has been linked to rates of social exclusion post-release (Meijer, 2017). In line with meaning and empowerment, Durcan and Cees Zwemstra (2014, p.89) found that one of prisoners' primary mental health needs is having something meaningful to do.

In addition to the mentioned necessary factors for recovery, others may not be explicit or missing in the CHIME framework. Researchers have noted that accounts of recovery often ignore the role of material conditions (Gibson et al., 2004); prisoners have mentioned access to housing and adequate funds, especially through a job, as their first need for recovery (Durcan & Cees Zwemstra, 2014, p.90). The CHIME framework itself has been criticized as being based on western, individualistic underpinnings, representing an individualised framework in which the importance of social life and relationships is neglected (Beckwith, Best & Bliuc, 2016; Best, 2019; Price-Robertson et al., 2017).

To account for the mentioned criticism, Price-Robertson et al. (2017) point to a notion of relational recovery, stating that humans are interdependent beings, and their lives and experiences cannot be separated from the social contexts in which they are embedded. Though a person can recover themselves personally, they cannot reintegrate themselves. There is amounting research illustrating how recovery is dependent on the social context (Best, Bird, & Hunton, 2015; Mezzina et al., 2006; Topor, Borg, Di Girolamo, & Davidson, 2011). To emphasize the inherently social nature of recovery, recovery has even been defined as a social process culminating in a change in social identity (Jetten, Haslam, & Haslam, 2012). To account for the interdependence of individuals, a review of recovery conceptualisations from different countries added more social dimensions to the CHIME processes (Slade et al., 2012): connectedness was widened to also refer to the wider community and society as a whole; different types of support were included, such as peer support, support from professionals and the community, family, and friends. Hope included needing other persons to believe in them. Also, subcategories of finding meaning were included to be possible through social roles. Finally, empowerment was widened to include becoming an empowered member of society. By adding these social dimensions to the theoretical framework of this study, and the preconditions

of access to basic needs such as housing and occupation, the CHIME model may be used as a guiding framework to explore the recovery of incarcerated individuals.

Recovery through storytelling

Based on the knowledge that recovery is dependent on the social context of the prisoner for reintegration post-release, the question arises of how prisons can be made more open so prisoners can be visible members of society. One way may be to let prisoners tell their stories: White and Epston (1990) report that to make sense of our lives and to express ourselves, we story our experiences. When prison inmates are given the chance to tell their stories and narrate stories of survival and strength, prison environments can become more meaningful, enable recovery in terms of a positive identity transformation, and provide opportunities for personal development through offering resources for learning new skills (Mahoney & Daniel, 2006; Ward & Marshall, 2007).

Storytelling as a means to recover stems from narrative psychology. McAdams (1996) states that a constructed life story provides a sense of coherence, meaning, and purpose. There appears to be a narrative identity implicated in individuals' lives around the time of their offending that is deeply problematic in some respects (Ward & Marshall, 2007). Maruna (2001) illustrates the importance of offenders' developing a new narrative if they are to successfully desist from further criminal activities: He found that persistent offenders appear to live their lives according to a condemnation script, feeling there is little they can do to change their lives or themselves. Desisting offenders, on the other hand, appear to live their lives according to a redemption script, where negative past experiences are interpreted as providing a pathway to constructing a new sense of self in which they can transcend past mistakes and achieve positive future goals. Maruna (2001) found that facilitating the adoption of so-called "redemption scripts" enhances postprison success.

The narrative approach, consistent with the CHIME framework, emphasizes strength rather than pathology and recognises the effect of societal forces on individual functioning, which enables a broader understanding of cultural and contextual factors implicated in individual stories (Mahoney & Daniel, 2006). One of those cultural factors which narrative criminology emphasizes are cultural narratives about criminal offenders which tend to hinder inmates' chance of retaining and gaining status in society and are often the cause of humiliating dynamics. Casting inmates as intrinsically criminal, deviant, and morally suspect shows how a single

criminal act suffices to stigmatize a person as an “offender” indefinitely (Maruna, LeBel, Mitchell, & Naples, 2004, p.272). Almost all prisoners struggle with the burden of prison stigma post-release which often prevents them from successfully reintegrating into society (Haney, 2012). This demonstrates how narratives are consequential and can have influence. Also, this status quo points towards a need to change the cultural narratives about offenders by letting them tell their stories. This, and the importance of offenders’ establishing more adaptive narrative identities shows that a narrative approach to recovery appears to be appropriate. Despite challenges to the implementation of narrative strategies in correctional settings (geared toward problem or deficit models of intervention) (Mahoney & Daniel, 2006), there have been attempts to make the prison more ‘open’ through storytelling. A recent medium which may make the prison more ‘open’ through storytelling enabling prisoners to tell their stories to the “outside” has been prison podcasts.

Podcasts as a medium for storytelling

Podcasting is a relatively new medium used both for information and entertainment (Lindgren, 2016). Though until now they only reach a smaller audience, their easy accessibility makes it likely that they shall continue to become more mainstream and remain a medium for alternative storytelling (Cecil, 2020, p.52-53). It has been argued that the recent movement towards personal narratives is linked to the intimate nature of the emerging audio medium (Lindgren, 2016). Narratives, such as those shared in podcasts, can enable the listener to develop insight and understanding as they listen (Sleeper & Bochain, 2013), and may decrease the degree to which the storytellers are stigmatized. At the core of prison podcasts is the aim to humanize those who are incarcerated and to narrow, possibly even erase the line between “us and them” (Cecil, 2020, p.60). In addition, consistent with Mahoney and Daniel (2006) those who tell their story reflect and learn about the meaning the experience has to them. Prisoners making podcasts may understand themselves and their own life story better, and how they came to be in prison. They have already shown to be valuable in giving a voice to disadvantaged groups of people by fostering their self-expression, their understanding of their situation, and also having a broader societal value: Bruce and Lin (2009) conducted a podcast project with Mexican youth and argue that podcasts are valuable because it is easily learnable to make them, ideas and feelings can be articulated, and podcasting can act as a research tool that guides learning activities. They found that a process of meaning construction took place when participants made podcasts, which

served both as a means and an end in the participants' learning. By reflecting on their lives, the researchers observed an increased sense of belonging and reward in the participating youth. On the other hand, capturing and sharing deeply personal experiences also carries a risk of exploitation (Lindgren, 2016). Taking this risk into account, podcasts may be a valuable new medium to enable prisoners to tell their stories, share them with society and thereby combat stereotypes and stigma, and encourage and facilitate recovery.

A dramaturgical and dialogical approach to exploring prison podcasts

To explore podcasts as a prison project, Goffman's (1978) dramaturgical approach to narrative may be valuable as an analytical tool, as it offers a conceptual framework to analyse the meanings that prisoners give to their experience, thus enabling a deeper understanding of role enactment in the podcasts. He states that individuals engage in a theatrical performance created for a specific audience at a specific time and thus points towards the influence of the context on what kind of stories are told. Dramaturgy focuses on the performative aspects of identity and its relational and situational nature (Neale, Nettleton & Pickering, 2011) and points towards identities as being performed in the dialogue between the inner and outer world. Criticism has been voiced that dramaturgy ignores social structures (Edgley, 2016, p.88). The importance of contextualizing observed interactions within the broader social structures in which they take place should therefore be noted. In addition, it has been suggested to enhance Goffman's work by interfacing it with Bakhtin's dialogical approach (Cresswell & Hawn, 2011).

This dialogical approach Bakhtin developed first argues that speech, even internal, always has an intended audience (Holquist, 2002); this is referred to as addressivity. Further, it proposes that 'a word, discourse, language or culture, undergo "dialogisation" when it becomes relativized, de-privileged, aware of competing definitions for the same things.' (Holquist 1981, p.427). It is similar to the dramaturgical approach in stating that narrators can actively construct relations with others and reposition themselves on the planes of for example visual media. Furthermore, Bakhtin's dialogical approach maintains that personal narratives are positioned to display the connection between humans' individual experiences and larger socio-cultural discourses (Vitanova, 2013), thereby countering the neglect of social structures attended to in the dramaturgical approach. Applying a dramaturgical and dialogical approach to the context of this study, dialogue may be interpreted as a reciprocal process in which the prisoner is positioned by

the outside world, but also anticipates a certain kind of audience in the performance of a certain identity to the public.

The Present Study

In order to address the call for strength-based approaches to recovery in prison and the lack of knowledge about how experiences are narrated in prison podcasts, the research questions of this study are threefold:

1. What do persons leading prison projects think about the potential of prison podcasts to foster recovery?
2. Which narratives about recovery can be identified in prison podcasts?
3. What do prison inmates think about prison podcasts, also in terms of possible recovery processes?

To answer the research questions, a triangulation of data sources and methods of analysis was deemed appropriate. First, informants were interviewed to explore their perspective, second, a selection of podcasts was analysed based on a dramaturgical and dialogical approach, and third, focus groups with inmates were conducted to contextualize what is depicted in the podcasts and to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning podcast projects have for prisoners. A conclusion will be given by reflecting on how prison podcasts may open up new avenues for enhancing recovery in prison.

Methods

Informant Interviews

First, informant interviews with two leaders of different prison podcast projects were conducted. The aim was to explore their experiences and observations to gain a more holistic impression of the objective behind prison podcasts, and thereby an understanding of the motivation and beliefs of those who called such podcasts to life. Special attention was given to new and unanticipated issues and ideas, and to statements by the informants regarding the role podcasts may play for the recovery of prison inmates. The interviews were not transcribed but summarized and used as an initial guide.

Podcast project “Podknast”

Data collection

The focus of attention in this study is the German prison podcast “Podknast”. It began in 2008 and is now an ongoing project in 10 prisons in the German state North Rhine-Westphalia. The project aims to show people what life in prison is like and realistically depict prisoner experiences. Also, the project aims to allow inmates to learn how to use media. To participate in the project, inmates have to be judged as suitable, as they need to be able to tolerate some frustration and be compatible in working in a team. A certain selection bias is therefore assumed. A majority of the podcasts are produced as videos. There are currently 116 podcasts uploaded on the website <https://www.podknast.de> (in March 2020) and on Youtube. Their length varies between 6 and 18 minutes.

In the podcasts, the prison inmates either sit in front of the camera and speak about their experiences or re-enact typical prison scenes (e.g., the experience of entering the prison and beginning a sentence). Before anything is recorded, participants are educated about the risks of giving up their anonymity by showing their voice and/or faces. Some episodes are also self-created rap songs which are expressions of their thoughts and feelings as prison inmates. Also, some episodes are produced as “prison news”, and some are interviews with employees or volunteers of the prison. The content is censored when keys or prison documents would otherwise be visible.

Procedure

First, the podcasts themselves were explored. Only podcasts produced by male adult inmates were analysed. Further inclusion criteria were that there was spoken word and that prison inmates spoke themselves. Exclusion criteria were podcasts in which only employees or volunteers spoke or when only instrumental music was played. Furthermore, podcasts were excluded which were not in German. In order to gain an overview of the variety of the podcasts, all 27 podcasts that met the inclusion criteria were first screened for the type of experience shown in the podcasts, and a catalogue emerged based on this. From this catalogue, the two types of experiences ‘limitations in the bureaucratic system’ and ‘finding meaning and connectedness in work’ were selected, to represent two contrasting types of experiences. For the analysis of the storyline “finding meaning and connectedness in work”, special, one-time events were excluded, as they appeared to depict a different kind of experience to those done daily in prison. Each type of experience was analysed based on two podcasts respectively, which were selected as they

were found to have the same storyline. The podcasts included for analysis were transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis

A three-level narrative analysis was used to analyse the podcasts, based on Bamberg's (1997) positioning analysis extended with Burkean storyline analysis for Level 1 (Murray & Sools (2015). This method of analysis enables the exploration of similarities and differences in storytelling across media and acknowledges the uniqueness of the individual telling their story (Murray & Sools, 2015). The stories in the podcasts were used to "uncover sociocultural patterns and experiences within their unique context" (Patton, 2002). Storyline analysis takes into account temporal, cultural, and social contexts (Lohuis, Sools, van Vuuren, & Bohlmeijer, 2016), and thereby provided room to address the complexity of the incarcerated individuals' story while minimizing bias (Lohuis et al., 2016; Murray & Sools, 2015).

The narrative analysis includes a series of steps, which were slightly modified according to the aim of the study (see Table 1). Step 1, formulate the storyline title, was done based on the type of experience. The podcasts representing the same type of experience were analysed and compared. Based on Kenneth Burke's "Grammar of Motives" (1969), starting with the exploration of the participants' words, five story elements were identified which make up a pentad, and were connected into a meaningful whole (Sools, 2010, inspired by Burke, 1969): (a) setting, the background of the story; (b) agent, the main character in the story; (c) acts and events, what is done and what happens; (d) means or helpers, what helps accomplish the purpose; and (e) purpose, why or for what the story develops. The breach, the core element in storyline analysis, represents an imbalance between two storyline elements, which should indicate an interruption of sense-making that was taken for granted (Murray & Sools, 2015). Thereby, the breach should explain how the storyline elements connect into a meaningful whole. Quotes are used throughout this article to describe participants' lived experiences and to illustrate the researchers' interpretation of the data. These were translated from German to English.

Table 1

Analysis steps of the podcasts in this study (adapted from Murray & Sools, 2015, p.139)

Part	Step
Introduction	1. Introduce storyline
Level 1: Storyline analysis	2. Identify and describe storylines, elements, and breach
Level 2: interactional analysis	3. Positioning of storylines 4. Positioning of storytellers/listeners
Level 3: Contextual analysis	5. Positioning of storylines, storytellers, and listeners in the wider social, societal and political context with a focus on dominant and counter narratives
Analysis of recovery processes	6. Identify CHIME elements and those that may be lacking/missing/negative development Identify the role the elements play in the storyline

Next, an interactional analysis was conducted. In this step, it was explored what happens to the storylines in interaction with the anticipated audience, in line with Goffman's dramaturgical theory of the self (Goffman, 1978) and Bakhtin's dialogical approach (Holquist, 2002), thereby exploring how the inmates' way of describing their experiences in prison is affected by the anticipated audience. The researcher thereby focused on how the storylines were presented in the podcasts, how the actors present themselves, and what the storytellers identify as important and desirable. For example, how power is described in the podcasts, how inmates are treated, and the dialogues between the inmates were analysed in this step. All utterances are examined as context-specific claims, as they intend to tell a certain story to the audience watching/ listening to the podcasts (Sools, Engen, & Baerveldt, 2007).

Third, a contextual analysis was conducted. In this step, the storylines were put into the wider social, cultural, and societal context (Murray & Sools, 2015), exploring which influence the relational, societal, cultural, and temporal context may have on the narrative. In this step, a focus was put on identifying and exploring what Bamberg and Andrews (2004) refer to as dominant or master and counter narratives. They define master narratives as storylines that depend on commonly held assumptions about what is true (p.10) which can give them power. Counter narratives are stories which offer resistance to master or dominant cultural narratives” (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004). Bamberg and Andrews (2004, p.5) found that the boundary between the two is largely influenced by who the ‘teller’ is. Furthermore, Torre et al. (2001, p.151) comment that counter stories are neither fully oppositional nor untouched by the dominant stories, and can use dominant stories to tell different stories. Bamberg (2004) stated that when counter stories are uncovered, they may help to develop alternatives to public, institutionalized power relations and result in a more just society with universal moral respect. Contextual explanations for the findings based on literature were also included (Murray & Sools, 2015), which enabled the researcher to “identify or distance [her]self from the meaning-making of the participants”.

In the final step, after the three levels of analysis were conducted, the podcasts were analysed thematically according to the CHIME recovery processes. The researcher looked for utterances that are in line with the CHIME elements of recovery and the above-mentioned social dimensions of the CHIME recovery process as described by Slade et al. (2012). Based on the 5 CHIME themes, 5 main codes were identified, and utterances indicating the opposite development of the elements (e.g., disempowerment) were coded in the same manner, resulting in 10 codes in total. To ensure rigorous analysis of all podcasts, the programme ATLAS.ti. (Atlas.ti, n.d.) was used to structure the data. By exploring the context-specific meaning the participants give to their experiences in prison, one could identify how these affect the enactment and interpretation of their recovery process (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005).

Based on these steps of analysis, an answer was given to the second research question. Commonalities and differences concerning the breach were regarded as central (Murray & Sools, 2015), but also more overarching conclusions regarding general storyline patterns and contexts and the recovery processes were drawn.

Focus Groups

To explore the meaning the podcast project has for inmates, particularly concerning possible recovery processes, two focus group discussions were conducted in a German prison in which a prison podcast project was being conducted. Focus groups make explicit use of group interaction to enable a wide range of experiences and feelings to be elicited efficiently (Morgan, 1997). Researchers have found that focus groups are particularly valuable for understanding the collective experience of marginalized groups (Pollack, 2003). The correctional institution is a context in which issues of power and disclosure may be amplified, and focus groups may facilitate the expression of opinions through interaction. Furthermore, focus-group methodology has been found to evoke information on the social and political processes that affect individual experience (Wilkinson, 1998). The differences between what the informants described, the narrative in the podcasts, and what the inmates said may elicit “counter narratives” to dominant discourses that frame experiences, needs, and behaviours of incarcerated individuals as deviant and deficient (Pollack, 2003). Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that there may be a tendency in focus groups to reveal merely negative criticism (Powney & Watts, 1987), or that a group dynamic develops that requires consensus instead of openness to differing opinions (Morgan & Krueger, 1993, p.10). The first focus group consisted of three prison inmates who were not involved in the podcast project and who had never seen or listened to prison podcasts before. The second group consisted of two inmates who were part of the podcast team and had produced podcasts themselves, and one inmate who had recently joined the team but had not yet produced podcasts himself. The research has been approved by the ethics committee of the faculty of behavioural sciences (nr. 201085). Permission to carry out the prison-based focus groups was also provided by the general manager at the prison.

Participants and recruitment

Six participants were recruited with the help of an employee in the prison. He organized both focus groups. Inclusion criteria were interest in participating in a focus group discussion about the podcast project, mastery of the German language, and adequate hearing to participate. No special writing skills were necessary. For the second focus group, inclusion criteria were additionally that they were members of the podcast project group. Some self-exclusion took place as some inmates who were asked to participate denied participating for unknown reasons.

There were three participants in each focus group. The age range was 28-39 ($M = 34,8$; $SD = 3,71$). Level of education ranged from no graduation from school and no training to having

a high school diploma and formal training, e.g. as a cook. Five of the participants had graduated from school, and four had finished some formal training. The inmates had spent between seven months and 14 years in prison. Two inmates indicated having been in prison repeatedly. The participants reported having a remaining prison sentence between 6 weeks and 15 months.

Materials

A semi-structured focus group interview schedule was developed. The questions prompted participants to describe their opinion regarding their perception of the podcasts, their opinions, and the meaning the podcasts have for them. For example, they were asked “What do you think does or does not represent life in prison?” and “What audience do you have in mind who should watch the podcasts?” The second group, with inmates who produced podcasts themselves, were additionally asked about their role in producing podcasts and what it meant for them to be part of the team creating podcasts. The full interview schedule can be found in Appendix B.

Data Collection and Procedure

The data collection took place in a German prison on the 28th October 2020, together with a prison employee who was responsible for the podcast project in the prison. The focus groups were conducted in German. The procedure took between 60 and 80 minutes per group. First, the purpose of the study and the general procedure was explained. The anonymity of the focus group was emphasized. Then, they were asked to sign an informed consent, and to provide biographical information regarding their age, level of education and/or profession, duration of incarceration, and expected duration left in prison. Next, the inmates watched three podcasts that were analysed in this study: “Jailwash”, “Weicher Ton und harte Kerle” and “Das Antragswesen”. After watching, general rules of conduct for the group conversation were explained to them, before they were asked different questions which prompted sharing and discussing opinions.

Data analysis

Both focus groups were recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. A data-driven, inductive form of thematic analysis was deemed appropriate to explore sense-making processes and opinions. This was done based on a realist position which “reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach has been deemed useful when investigating an under-researched area or with participants whose views on

the topic are not known (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following guidelines provided by Braun and Clarke (2006), the first step was familiarising with the data after transcription by reading and rereading the data and taking notes of initial ideas. Next, initial codes were generated inductively, using Atlas.ti, based on themes that were identified and by gathering all data relevant to each theme. The identified themes are a reflection of the content of the focus group data.

Next, the themes were reviewed and clear definitions and names for each theme were found by refining the details of each theme during ongoing analysis. During this iterative analysis process, discrepancies in the codes were addressed and resolved, and themes were expanded or contracted. The adequacy of the coding scheme and themes was tested by returning to the raw data and comparing it to the developed themes to make sure that all conclusions are firmly grounded in the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An example of a change made in this step was conducted in accordance with Morgan's approach (1997) that the best evidence of a topic being significant is a combination of three factors: how many people mentioned a topic; how many groups mentioned a topic; and the energy and enthusiasm the topic generated amongst the participants. Therefore, the theme "perceived censorship of podcasts" was added, as it was mentioned by several focus group participants (FGPs) who spoke about the topic with a strong display of emotion.

Prevalence of the themes was counted at the level of the individual occurrence of the theme across the data sets. The coding scheme including a description of each code with related quotes is depicted in Appendix D. The results of the analysis of both focus groups were compared, and similarities and differences were explored. The data from the focus groups was then analysed based on the CHIME framework. Utterances in line with the CHIME elements of recovery and the above-mentioned social dimensions of the CHIME recovery process as described by Slade et al. (2012) were focused on. All utterances that were identified as meaning units reflecting characteristics of the CHIME recovery processes were coded in the same manner. Quotes used were translated from German to English.

Results

First, the results of the informant interviews are briefly described. Second, the results of the storyline analysis and the elements of recovery uncovered in the storylines are presented.

Third, the results of the thematic analysis of the focus groups and the recovery processes as identified in the focus group discussions are presented. Figure 5 displays an attempt to integrate the findings from the informant interviews, narrative analysis of the podcasts, and focus group analyses.

Informant Interviews

Both informants are anonymized. The first informant Mr. A. was a former prison director of four Dutch prisons, now pensioned but still active in prison reform. The second informant, Mrs. B., was the leader of a German prison podcast project. The informants emphasized several core themes: First, they both stated that podcasts can contribute to ensuring the right to freedom of speech; Mr. A. stated that this right is not protected for inmates in the Netherlands. Second, they both spoke about the importance of involving the staff in prison with the podcast project. Mr. A. expressed his wish for staff to permit prisoners more autonomy; Mrs. B. expressed that the staff should be more involved in the project in order to improve the relationship between staff and inmates. Third, both informants mentioned that podcasts are a medium to bring together and connect prisoners with society by making them more visible and heard. Fourth, both pointed out the positive impact making podcasts can have on the prison inmate as he reflects on his own life, and on the impact the podcasts can have on different kinds of listeners. Fifth, both described creating podcasts as an empowering process for the inmates. Mr. A. emphasized that giving inmates a channel to speak can contribute to making prisons a place of recovery. Mrs. B. stated that the project contributes to resocialization because they work in a team. Finally, both agreed on the relevance of conducting research on prison podcasts to create awareness for their value in enhancing recovery. A detailed summary of the interviews can be found in Appendix C.

Podcasts

In this section, the two main story types that were identified are presented. They represent distinct ways in which prison is experienced from the inmate's perspective. The story types are derived from two podcasts respectively. After the story type is introduced, the results of the analyses on the three levels are presented. Finally, the results of the analysis of the CHIME recovery elements are presented. A summary of the results can be found in table 2.

A story of limitation: becoming a number in the bureaucratic prison system

This storyline is based on two podcasts from the prison Aachen and Siegburg, which are about the pains of imprisonment as inmates lose their independence to the bureaucratic system.

One podcast is an interview of two inmates about an art project, in which they created a prison cell and used different objects to represent the different challenges they face in prison due to the bureaucratic system (see Fig.1)

(https://www.podknast.de/flash_player/index.php?objId=20285294). This podcast was produced in the prison in Siegburg. The second podcast, from the prison in Aachen, has the format of a movie clip. A prisoner named Jonny does push-ups in his cell to pass time and then wants to wash his clothes but is confronted with the regulations in the bureaucratic system which make it a challenge to do so (see Fig.2)

(https://www.podknast.de/flash_player/index.php?objId=17861124). The events in the movie are commented on by a background speaker. This podcast in the form of a movie clip is analysed as an enactment of the experiences that are described in the interview.

Storyline analysis. Agents. In the interview two inmates called Christopher and Kai, the main agents, speak in low, monotone tones of voice about their experience of being inmates within the prison system and being stripped of their agency. An anonymous interviewer as co-agent asks them questions: “*Kai, can you, first of all, tell the listeners, what kind of clothes hangers it is about, and what they were originally for?*”. In the movie clip, the agent is the prison inmate ‘Jonny’, a young man, new in the prison system, wearing only a white undershirt. A voice behind the camera as co-agent comments on the scenes: “*Washing clothes in prison is not easy. You have to first make an application. How that is done, we will show you now*”.



Figure 1. Artwork depicted in the podcast “*Interview um alte Kleiderbügel und Antragswesen*”. Source: Podknast, 2019.

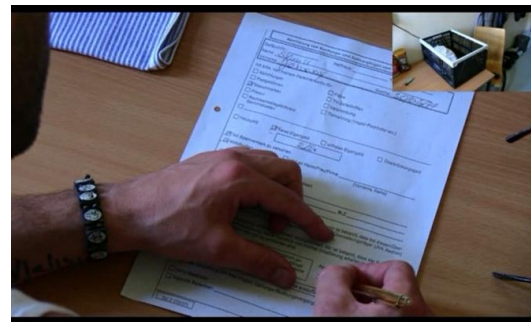


Figure 2. Scene from the podcast “*Jailwash*”. Source: Podknast, 2012. Screenshot by researcher.

Screenshot by researcher.

Acts and events. The prisoners Kai and Christopher are asked to explain their artwork, and the two inmates explain the meaning of the different objects in the “self-made prison cell” and how they reflect their experiences in prison. The clothes hangers represent having had to give up their clothes when they entered prison: *“And for me, that means putting my old life in a bag and putting on a different life which one cannot determine”*. They explain the system as making it difficult to see their loved ones: *“I even have to write an application to see my children two hours a month”*. Their only alternative to having regular contact with the outside world is via letters, which they have represented by hanging up many post stamps. Furthermore, they personified the bureaucratic system as a figure in the artwork: a figure they called ‘Otto’. They state that they aimed to make their artwork represent the nature of the bureaucratic system and how they are at its mercy, as they cannot make decisions themselves. Describing it is therefore an act of pointing to their overall lack of agency. They then read out a text they wrote about the system, and one inmate describes almost forgetting his name as he is labelled with a number, which he has to mention in every request. One interviewee expresses his frustration about the experience of loss of freedom to make decisions as he exclaims *“Can you really call this a life? I call it wasted time”*.

In the movie clip, Jonny learns what he has to do to be able to wash his clothes. He needs to fill out a specific application in the correct way to get permission to clean his clothes and is thereby dependent on the system. A thought bubble appears beside his head with an image in which he happily skips through the prison hallway with clean clothes in a box. Then, he receives the response from an employee that he filled out the wrong form and will have to wait till the next day. His lack of control over when he can clean his clothes is represented by a door to the washing machine shown slamming shut every time something comes up that Jonny filled out incorrectly and every time employees take time to process the application meaning another day passes. Permission even for necessities is denied if the inmate is too late or forgets to fill out a paper correctly. The application is shown being handed from one person to the next. The background speaker adds to explaining why the process is repeatedly delayed and postponed to the next day: *“Because it is already late and the post has already been collected, Jonny’s application form is brought to the main prison post office the next day”*. In both podcasts, the

inmates describe needing to make requests even for simple things: “*The only thing I am allowed to do independently is use the toilet flush and open my cupboard*”. The acts and events of this story type display the inmates’ lack of control over simple daily activities, as the only thing he has control over is whether he writes applications or not.

Setting. Within the prison walls, a rigid bureaucratic system governs every aspect of the inmates’ lives. The strict regulations, lack of space to move freely, lack of autonomy and freedom evoke frustration. The bureaucratic system is perceived as incomprehensible and unreliable: “*Some applications I feel like I have to write 100 times until I get a response [...]*”. In the interview, the inmates do not explain why they decided to represent the bureaucratic system in the form of a figure with a face that humanizes the bureaucratic system, although it contributes to a certain setting: The figure's face is grim, its red mouth is pulled downwards, and the eyes appear to be half-open, making the impression that the figure is tired, inattentive and lethargic. This depicts the system as made up of indifferent individuals. In the text the inmates read which describes the figure, he emphasized their lack of autonomy by reading out “*All decisions I want to make are made by other people*”. ‘Otto’ the “Antragswesen” [no English equivalent; literally “application creature”], represents the bureaucratic system, which to the inmates is responsible for stripping them of their agency. The system is described as an actor which the inmates are dependent on, as they describe “*We stuck lots of application forms to [Otto’s] suit, which we have to often use, so to receive toilet paper, toothbrush, toothpaste...*” or “*when my visitors did not come for some reason, and I want to call my loved ones because I am worried*”.

In the movie clip, the door to the washing machine slams shut whenever something happens that results in a delay in Jonny being able to wash his clothes. This emphasizes the extent to which the prison environment evokes frustration. A little screen in the top right corner shows Jonny’s dirty clothes piling up, which contributes to emphasizing how long even simple processes can take in prison.

Purpose. The storyline is about the loss of independence and sense of individual self in prison due to the bureaucratic system. A desire for individuality is described as one interviewee says “*your name is replaced with a number[...] And with time, you forget your name, and that’s sad*”. The inmates also desire freedom, as one interviewee describes “*there are different dates [stuck to the clothes hangers], our dates of release, which help us orient ourselves so we can focus on freedom and don’t forget it*”. The podcasts show that the inmates are at the mercy of

“Otto” but need to understand the system and actively request things to get them. This can be observed in the process of Jonny learning the rules for making applications, thereby the process of conforming to the system and becoming a number in the system.

Means/Helpers. The employees contribute to the process of stripping the inmates of their autonomy. They are shown explaining the rules to Jonny and controlling the application form before permitting him to wash his clothes. For example, one employee is shown reading Jonny’s application form and then shaking his head. One interviewee describes the staff taking away his personal belongings and being given clothes that deindividualize him: *“a sweatsuit, shoes, underwear from the first world war, which umpteen people wore before me. Where I think, okay, I feel uncomfortable this way, but this way everybody looks the same”*. This way the staff’s actions contribute to the process of stripping the inmates of their individuality.

Breach. The breach is between the inmates and the bureaucratic system. The inmates do not want the system to take away their autonomy and individuality, while that is the purpose of the system. This becomes clear as Christopher and Kai describe how they suffer from the limitations caused by the bureaucratic system. In the second podcast it becomes evident as Jonny wants to wash his clothes but is confronted with the bureaucratic system which makes it difficult for him to do so.

Interactional analysis. Positioning of storyline. The storyline is pushed by the desire to show the audience, the ‘outside world’, the lack of autonomy, and deindividualization caused by the bureaucratic prison system. In both podcasts, the inmates display themselves as victims of the bureaucratic system as there is no escape or alternative but to obey. Both podcasts aim to show the audience the frustrating experience of having to conform to the bureaucratic system and to highlight the lack of autonomy and challenges the inmate’s experience. To achieve this, the storyline focuses on the inmates’ point of view. They present themselves as victims of a system in which they are stripped of their agency and lose their independence. By describing the process of becoming a number in the system, the inmates display a loss of identity and humanness. Both podcasts display the power of the bureaucratic system, with the employees being the executives.

In the movie clip-type podcast, the employees are displayed as neutral, indifferent, and impersonal members of the system who simply tell Jonny what he needs to do to be permitted to wash his clothes, or as they are shown checking the application form, which conveys the impression that there is no interpersonal relationship between inmate and employee apart from

the employees exerting the power of the system over the inmates. Feelings of powerlessness and frustration in face of the situation are conveyed to the audience via Jonny's facial expression when an employee tells Jonny "*no, no longer possible [to wash] today, too many are washing today already*". Here also, the prisoner is displayed as a victim but becomes more agentic by using the story to critique the prison system. In the way the prisoners position themselves, they show how their social identities as inmates and as victims of the system are made and remade through the interactions with the staff in the prison context.

It appears that the inmates describe their experiences with the system in great detail to account for the storyline which they construct as undesirable. They do this in two particular stylistic ways. First, they make use of irony when they comment "*the most independent thing I am allowed to do is flush the toilet*". This as an ironic act of independence highlights the extremity of their lack of autonomy. Second, they use a rhetorical question as a device to convince the audience of their suffering: "*Can you really call this a life?*". Their use of language to critique the system underscores their message to the audience.

Positioning of storytellers/listeners. The prisoners as the storytellers determine how the prison system is depicted and the impression of the system as oppressive becomes increasingly clear in the course of the story. The storytellers appear to want to be "rehumanized" and combat the indifference towards their suffering in prison. In the interview, the inmates explain what they want to show people who see the artwork, e.g. the many post stamps they hung up "*should represent that we can only stay in contact with our family via letters*". This functions to inform the audience of how the prison system works, but also to evoke sympathy. By explaining the artwork 'Otto' and what it means for them, the inmates may want to bring close to the audience how they experience the regulations of the bureaucratic system executed by the prison employees, who may not be particularly concerned about the inmates' plight. Furthermore, the storytellers express a desire to make individuals responsible for their situation. Although the inmates are victims in the podcasts, they become more agentic in the way they tell the story in the podcast. The anticipated audience, which, ultimately, is society, has the power to determine the validity of the storyline, and their perception of prisoners and the penal system may be influenced by the story and how it is told.

Contextual Analysis. In order to further understand the story told in these podcasts, one must take into consideration what influence the social and societal context has on the narrative.

There may be reasons why the inmates portray themselves as suffering victims of the system who are in need of aid, support, and sympathy. A prominent societal assumption appears to be that criminal offenders are “bad”, as LeBel (2012) found that the associated stigma of (formerly) incarcerated individuals is strong. Furthermore, Möller (1997, p.32) claims that the public generally has a negative attitude towards prison inmates and that negative stereotypes persist; that society regards them as ‘scapegoats’ and therefore may not want to change the image of the criminal as a member of an outgroup, because, with this attitude, everybody not in prison can count as belonging to the “good” members of society. This appears to be the dominant narrative the prisoners relate to, as they offer a profoundly different narrative.

This dominant narrative may also explain why the prison staff is depicted as lethargic as is represented by the figure ‘Otto’ and their reason for not expressing empathy and developing a relationship with the inmates. Scott (2006) states that although prison officers also suffer from the ‘structured pains of confinement’, they often fail to acknowledge the suffering of prisoners. Research indicates that as a result of negative societal attitudes towards offenders, prison staff often retains distance so as not to be identified with them and tends to uphold strong stereotypical attitudes towards them (Maruna, 2001; Möller, 1997, p.32). Also, Goffman (1961, p.87) explains that prison staff tends to develop a particular “institutional perspective” that justifies maintaining social distance from the inmates and upholding a stereotyped view. Therefore, the dominant narrative appears to include the assumption that the inmates are “bad”, whereas the staff is the “good” one who keeps order in prisons, and societal attitudes appear to contribute to upholding this dominant narrative also inside prisons themselves.

Comparing how inmates and also staff are depicted in the podcasts with what research shows to be the dominant story, the story of limitation appears to use exaggeration and irony to subtly present an alternative criminal script, questioning dominant attitudes and offering resistance to the dominant narrative of prisoners as evil criminals who have lost their right to humane treatment and also uncovering the staff as executives of painful bureaucratic procedures who thereby are the ones causing harm to the prisoners.

Recovery processes. The storyline as a whole is one displaying experiences of disempowerment when faced with the bureaucratic prison system as a prisoner. The incomprehensibility and frustration due to the prison administration system result from a lack of control over one’s life and total dependence on the system. This development of

disempowerment is closely connected to an experienced loss of identity, as one inmate describes “*And for me, I put my old life completely into the clothes bag [upon prison entry], and put on another life, which I cannot determine myself*”. This storyline shows how a positive identity change is further impeded by the bureaucratic system and prison setting. There is one exception to these experiences of disempowerment: creating the figure ‘Otto’ collaboratively can be regarded as an act of empowerment, as it holds the system accountable for the process of becoming no more than a number that the inmates experience. They describe the presence of hope once when explaining that the post stamps represent their date of release, which is an orientation for them. Meaninglessness is depicted as the agents exercise to pass time or focus on their date of release while lacking meaningful activities and social roles. The policies and procedures as described in the podcasts, e.g., making inmates have to apply to be able to see their children two hours a month, make it difficult to maintain contact with family and community ties, leading to the development of disconnectedness, as they make it more likely for inmates to lose contact to them and to be socially isolated upon release from prison. The recovery elements hopelessness, connectedness, meaning, and a positive development of identity are not depicted in this storyline. A table with the prevalence of occurrences of the recovery elements can be found in Appendix E.

A story of opportunity: Self-development through connectedness and meaning in work.

The following story type is based on two podcasts from the prison in Aachen. They are about meaningful activities in prison through which there is the opportunity to develop and connect with others. One podcast is about the experiences of a man in social therapy who does gardening (see Fig.3) (https://www.podknaest.de/flash_player/index.php?objId=20145136). The second podcast is about a man in pre-trial custody who first has nothing to do in prison, but is then assigned to occupational therapy, where he creates objects from clay (see Fig.4) (https://www.podknaest.de/flash_player/index.php?objId=17862411).

Storyline analysis. Agents. The first podcast is about Benko, a man who works in the garden as part of his social therapy. He speaks calmly and appears to choose his words carefully, in a well-articulated manner. Throughout the podcast, he is mostly serious. The second podcast is about a man whose name is not mentioned who creates things out of clay in occupational therapy. Throughout the podcast, his voice is tuned in as he describes his thoughts and experiences. He speaks in short sentences with a foreign accent.



Figure 3. A scene from the podcast “Der Gärtner”. Source: Podknast, October 2019. Screenshot by the researcher.



Figure 4. A scene from the podcast “Weicher Ton und harte Kerle”. Source: Podknast, March 2012. Screenshot by the researcher.

Acts. In the podcasts, the inmates explain what they do or what their work consists of. Benko is shown sitting, talking, and working in the garden. He looks after vegetable plants, bushes, and green areas. He describes beginning his daily work routine “*first, we go out in the morning together into the garden. There we come together as a team, discuss who takes over which responsibilities*”. He explains why work in the garden is meaningful for him: “*it’s also extremely important that I work with my hands because otherwise I work 16 hours only with my mind. When I’m outdoors, I am glad that I can really touch something, then I’ve got something done*” and “*Why it is special to work in the garden: Well, for me because I don’t have the feeling of being other-directed. That I am self-determined*”. The other man describes not doing much in prison before beginning occupational therapy and is then shown working and walking along hallways. He creates figures and other things such as plates from clay. Benko and the man in occupational therapy both speak about the challenges they encountered at the beginning of the therapy. Benko states “*You have to be open to social therapy from the beginning, and that’s hard, you’re still with your old behaviours, old thoughts, and the therapy goals appear to be utopian at the beginning, what do they want from me?*”. The inmate in occupational therapy describes initially not understanding the sense behind working with clay: “*when I went to the therapy for the first time, I felt stupid, that I should work with clay. I was also told that really it’s killing time, so I am not just hanging around*”.

Setting. The work the inmates describe takes place together with other inmates, in a team environment, in which they collaborate and help each other. For the man working with clay, the

setting is a prison cell, in which he is shown spending most of his time, alone or with another inmate before he started occupational therapy. The room in which he then starts to work with clay is somewhat dark, but there seems to be a quiet atmosphere of concentration, as other inmates are also shown working and not looking up or speaking. While Benko speaks, he sits on a bench in the garden he works on. There seems to be a peaceful and pleasant atmosphere in the garden, as the sun shines and birds are heard chirping.

Purpose. The podcasts are about the process of learning and doing something meaningful in prison, finding joy in what one is doing, and connecting with other inmates. The system prompts the inmates to work. Benko describes the process of learning to do something meaningful as he states “*How do you get to work in the garden? Well, first of all through your participation, through reflection that you have displayed, that you have built up trust within the team*”. The man in occupational therapy describes finding meaning in his work: “*with time I learned that I can create many things*”. The podcasts also focus on the process of changing one’s behaviours and attitudes, as Benko describes “*And at some point, you think to yourself, well, do I change my behaviour? That has to do with your attitude. When I change my behaviour, then I am also engaging with the therapy, and then many things are easier*”. A process of self-development is shown, which depends on the inmates aligning with the systems’ purpose.

Means/Helpers. Fellow inmates are relevant both for Benko and for the man in occupational therapy. In the occupational therapy podcast, other inmates teach the agent how to work with clay, which he enjoys as he describes: “*A lead worker first showed me what kinds of things I can make, I saw that oh, I can make cool things with it*”. Benko also works in a team, and further describes how he has a lot more contact with prison staff than he would have if he were not in social therapy, which he thinks is good. Fellow inmates also become significant when they encourage the man working with clay: “*and many people say, can you make something for me too, because they see that I can make something beautiful*”. The staff as helpers assign the inmates to specific tasks and set the expectation that the inmates must be motivated and productive. Finally, the opportunity to be outdoors, to make beautiful things and the tools involved are means to achieving the purpose.

Breach. The story depicts a coming-of-age type narrative as it is about the prisoners’ inability to make sense of the situation and struggling, before they find meaning and joy in their

work, change their attitude and align with the purpose. The clients' agency lies in accepting or rejecting the systems' purpose.

Interactional Analysis. *Positioning of storyline.* The storyline shows the audience 'good examples' of prisoners who developed personally and found a passion or talent. It also shows that life in prison can be pleasant and that inmates are given opportunities for positive developments and positive relationships. Piano music in the podcast about occupational therapy and birds chirping while Benko sits in the sun emphasize this message. Being shown working in the garden or making things from clay are activities that the audience can relate to; it makes the experiences they describe more real for the audience and brings their experience closer to the audience. Simultaneously, the lack of agency remains apparent as they initially describe being coerced to work.

Positioning of storytellers/listeners. The main aim of the storytellers appears to be to convince the audience that they are just as human and capable of changing positively as any other human being. Both inmates explain their motivation to work, for example as the man in occupational therapy states "*I enjoy having finished something, and I see that it's beautiful [...] and when other people say, I've done it well*". This emphasis may be regarded as a response to an audience that is anticipated to have a view of inmates as incompetent and not motivated to work.

The podcasts display stories in which work therapy as a form of rehabilitation in prison is effective, whereas the lack of freedom of the storytellers is also shown as the podcast with Benko begins by showing the inmates coming together and an employee with a large bunch of keys unlocking the door so they can go outdoors. The man on his first day at occupational therapy is shown looking confused and irritated, stating "*Nobody told me that I was being put in occupational therapy*". By mentioning that he didn't know what kind of work he was assigned to, not only a lack of agency but also the issue of lack of consent is raised.

Contextual Analysis. This story type appears to place the responsibility of recovery on the individual by emphasizing the necessity of change in attitude to find meaning, though it also points to the role of prison staff and fellow inmates as helpers. This is consistent with the dominant discourse around rehabilitation in terms of a "metamorphosis" taking place in rehabilitation during which the inmate transforms personally (Farrant, 2013). Indeed, recovery through fostering personal responsibility has recently begun to be regarded as a means to

rehabilitation in prisons (Meijer, 2017). Additionally, this story type also appears to act as a counter-narrative to the dominant criminal script in two ways. First, it depicts rehabilitation as ‘authoritarian’ or ‘pressured’ rather than ‘anthropocentric’, as the inmates are coerced to work as part of their rehabilitation (Day, Tucker, & Howells, 2004; McNeill, 2014; Rotman, 1990), and non-attendance or lack of commitment has significant, negative consequences (Crewe, 2011). This is contrary to the wide consensus that rehabilitation must be voluntary and the assumption that this is how it is implemented (Dübgen, 2017). By describing their experiences with rehabilitation as coercive, they offer resistance to the dominant narrative that prisoners are treated well and have the best opportunities and as much freedom as possible, as the Prison Act (1976) postulates. The second counter narrative this storyline offers is in displaying the inmates as having the potential to be contributing members of society. The storyline describes a process of taking personal responsibility and growth, as the incarcerated individuals describe discovering meaning and joy in their work. Thereby, they are presented as individuals who are worthy of trust and have the potential to desist from crime. This stands in contrast to society’s tendency to have negative attitudes towards offenders (Boag & Wilson, 2014), e.g. viewing offenders as having no morals (Mbuba, 2012). This positive criminal script may have the potential to make society more willing to welcome them back into communities and be supportive. Therefore, this story type narrating prisoners as individuals with a high level of motivation to work can be regarded as a counter narrative, offering resistance to the dominant narrative of prison inmates.

Recovery processes. The presented storyline is primarily about recovery processes of meaning, empowerment, and connectedness. A lack of meaning is initially described, as Benko describes that in the beginning “*a lot of what is told to you appears to be utopian for you,...what does he want from me?*”. Meaninglessness and disempowerment are depicted when the man in occupational therapy describes not knowing what type of work he has been assigned to but being told that he will earn a meager wage. This is in line with the counter narrative depicted in the storyline. After some time, the results of their work enable the development of a sense of meaning and connectedness, as the man in occupational therapy states “*I enjoy it when I have completed something, and I see for myself that it is beautiful, [...] and when other people say that I have done it well*”. Thereby, a positive sense of identity and the development of empowerment appears to take place. Similarly, the man in occupational therapy describes “*In the beginning I thought, with this shit, I can’t do anything, but with time I learned that one can make many*

things from it". This empowerment develops as the inmates have the opportunity to learn a new skill and use their strengths at work. For Benko, empowerment means being self-determined, as he states *"Why it is special to work in the garden: Well, for me because I don't have the feeling of being other-directed. That I am self-determined"*. While working, they experience being part of a team, which is in line with developing a sense of connectedness. The man in occupational therapy describes *"[...] showing the other inmates that one is capable of working together with them, and that one wants to. That was easy for me because I enjoy being with other people"*. Benko explains how one comes to be able to work in the garden *"through showing that one has built up trust in the team"*. As mentioned, several utterances included more than one recovery element. Utterances of disconnectedness, lack of identity, and hope/hopelessness were not found in this storyline. A table with the prevalence of occurrences of the recovery elements can be found in Appendix E.

Table 2

Summary of CHIME recovery elements in the storylines.

Story of Limitation	Story of Opportunity
Barriers due to the bureaucratic system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disconnectedness (missing communication with family outside) • Lack of identity (wearing prison clothes) • Disempowerment (other-determined in daily structure and work) • Meaninglessness and hopelessness (feel they are wasting time) • Empowerment (creating artwork to hold the system accountable) 	Opportunity to learn through work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of meaning initially (challenging requirements, earning little money) • Connectedness (working together in a team with other inmates and staff, experiencing trusting relationships and collaboration) • Empowerment (discovering strengths and skills, working in a self-determined manner) • Meaning (learning a skill, creativity, production of beautiful things) • Identity (appreciating results of own work)

Focus Groups

While watching the podcasts, the first focus group, consisting of inmates who saw prison podcasts for the first time, appeared to be slightly bored and displayed little reaction to the podcasts. The second group, which consisted of inmates who were involved in the project, appeared to be more entertained while watching them. They made comments and jokes while watching and laughed at certain scenes, such as Jonny not receiving permission to wash his clothes.

In the following, the five main themes which were discussed in the focus groups will be described. An overview of the frequency of references among each focus group is depicted in appendix D. Then, the recovery elements depicted in the discussions will be presented. An overview of the positive and negative recovery processes described by the focus group participants (FGPs) can be found in table 3.

Perceived censorship of podcast

One inmate in the first focus group indicated that he believed the podcasts were censored and therefore did not want to participate in the discussion: *“I prefer not to say anything. I think things are shown from the wrong perspective. I would do it very differently. It’s all manipulated, I think, the way things are presented”*. In the end, he voiced his desire to speak freely: *“If it is possible to speak without being censored, I would want to do so. But not in the language used in the podcasts, which was not freely spoken. You can hear it in the way they speak, that it was just read out loud, not spoken from the heart”*. Members of the second focus group also experienced censorship, as one inmate stated *“they want us to present the ideal case, the way things should be”*. One participant of the second group made the judiciary responsible: *“Everything is checked by the ministry of justice. That’s why some things are displayed a certain way”*, and that *“You also have to be careful whether what we’re doing is politically correct”*. Specifically, the second focus group described having created a podcast about the situation in prison during the COVID-19 pandemic which was not allowed to be published. They also stated they would like to make a podcast criticizing the lack of preparation for release and the desperate financial situation many people, therefore, find themselves post-release, some people becoming homeless, but not believing they will be permitted to: *“that would be interesting, but I am sure that we will never*

be able to report on it". [Note: the staff stated that such censorship in terms of the ministry not permitting a podcast to be published happens extremely rarely].

Autonomy in prison: podcasts vs. own experiences

A recurring theme was criticism that the podcasts exaggerate in how little autonomy the inmates have. All participants agreed that inmates retain a certain degree of freedom to make decisions in prison, e.g., to decide how best to use their time in prison. Also, two inmates from the first focus group repeatedly stated that they feel responsible for the situation they are in, stating for example: *"at the end of the day the prison staff can't help that you're in prison. It's up to you whether you end up in prison"*. One inmate from the second group criticized a podcast misrepresenting the penal system, saying *"the bureaucratic system, in my opinion, was not so well explained. Saying the only thing I can decide for myself is to flush the toilet. If you make yourself a victim, that's how you show yourself. [...] I graduated from school while in prison, I decided to do that myself. I also decided to get up every morning and to go to school to get my grades.[...]"*.

The desire for podcasts about deficits in the prison system

When asked for suggestions for what prison podcasts should be about, the most common suggestion was criticism of the current prison system. This included the lack of measures for resocialization, how bureaucracy blocks opportunities in prison, the harm caused by the hierarchical system in prison, the consequences of measures taken in prison in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and lack of preparation for prison release. One inmate in the first group suggested making a podcast about how the ministry blocks resocialization, stating *"maybe [show] how difficult it is to achieve something here, how the judiciary makes it difficult. That sometimes resocialization is prevented"*. He made the bureaucratic system responsible for his difficulties: *"because of the bureaucracy I couldn't start any training [for two years], and now my time left here isn't enough to start training. Now I've been here for two years, I could have achieved so much already"*. A prisoner in the first group expressed his desire to criticize the measures taken during the pandemic: *"I would talk about things going wrong here, e.g. about the pandemic, that only recently officials started wearing masks, although they come in from outside. [...] At the beginning [...] we had no visitors for three months, and couldn't see mother and father. These kinds of things are not shown in the podcasts"*. In the second group, one inmate criticized that the podcasts do not broach the issue of the problematic prison culture: *"I didn't see*

deep stuff in the podcasts. Things that are worth changing. Such as interactions among inmates and officials. What happens behind the scenes, the hierarchy". The second group also voiced their desire to create awareness about the lack of support for life post-release and the problematic material conditions post-release, explaining "*many are released and don't even know where they will live*".

Inmate's prejudice against podcast project

A common theme that arose only in the second group was that prejudice from other inmates may be a barrier to inmates creating podcasts. One participant stated that when he talked to other inmates about his joining the project, the response was based on prejudice that primarily sexual offenders are obliged to participate in special projects, for example "*sure they are all child fuckers*". The participant went on to explain how this prejudice is a barrier to participating: "*I think there are many more who would be interested in the project, but don't want others to say they are hanging out with the sexual offenders*". An inmate explained that "*Many who don't know what we do there make jokes about it and then you have to be self-confident enough*".

The audience

When asked who the podcasts are worth producing for and why, one participant in the second group firstly remarked its potential to create awareness about their situation, replying "*so that we are not forgotten. People speak about everything, but you never hear about prison*". One inmate in the second group explained that if people can see how it truly is in prison, they can develop a differentiated image of it. Inmates in both groups agreed that the podcasts are worth showing to young people and potential offenders. Also, participants in the second group suggested the value of making podcasts to show to relatives, so they may hear about what life is like in prison, what goes on in prison, and because then family members might intervene: "*say stop, inform the press, for example*". While the first group did not see any value in showing podcasts to other inmates, the second group came up with ideas on how this might be of value, e.g. showing a podcast about the rules in prison upon entry. The suggestion also came from the second group that each prison should make a podcast on the facilities they have and the opportunities there are. Thereby, if prisoners saw what it's like in other prisons, the inmate representatives might speak up, e.g. for the prison to invest in a library: "*For example, Cologne doesn't have a library. If you report about that, then maybe something will change. The inmates can better advocate something when they know it exists in another prison*". The second group

criticized that the podcasts are known neither among the public nor among the inmates themselves.

Why be part of the podcast project?

In order to explore whether creating podcasts can contribute to recovery, the second focus group was asked about their motivation to participate and what producing podcasts has meant for them. All agreed on being motivated by the opportunity to spend more time outside their prison cell, and to find a distraction from their monotonous daily routines. One inmate explained his aspiration that *“the public knows what is going on in prison [...] and can make their own picture of what things are like here”*. Furthermore, the inmates explained that in the project some of them learned for the first time to listen to others’ opinions and accept them, how to work in a team, to reflect on their behaviour, and how to make a plan and work in a structured manner. Furthermore, they explained that they got to know other inmates in a personal way they otherwise would not, stating *“A great strength of the project is working together with others. Firstly with inmates you otherwise wouldn’t get to know. And I think for many, they weren’t used to working in a team outside [prison], to find a structure and make plans. We sit together, discuss ideas, decide which steps to take”*. In a similar vein, another inmate added, *“you learn social competencies, and to accept different opinions”*.

Recovery Processes

An overview of the most prevalent recovery processes uncovered in the focus groups is presented in table 3. Disempowerment was the most prevalent element depicted in both focus groups. This appears to be due to the participants’ recurrent focus on censorship. Participants from the second group stated, *“First [the podcast] was censored and then it was taken out completely and you get frustrated, and you think they could say the truth, why not? But no honest explanation is given for why [it’s not published]”*. Positive utterances of empowerment and hope occurred and were primarily depicted in criticisms voiced that the podcasts exaggerate in displaying inmates as having no autonomy at all in prison: *“everybody can develop personally and individually. Even here. There are always ways”*. Hope in the potential of the podcast project was shown when one inmate said *“and generally, that we can wake up people, that we can say, hey, judiciary, you can do something better here”*. Hopelessness was depicted in utterances regarding not being allowed to criticize deficits in the prison system. A sense of disconnectedness was voiced repeatedly regarding the strictly limited permittance to receive

visitors during the pandemic in the last months, which they perceived as going unseen by the public: “*But in the news, you hear nothing about what it’s like for us. Not a single time. And we didn’t have any visits for three, four months. And now only behind a glass wall*”. Connectedness and hope were found in the same utterance, as a participant imagined new ways of creating and using the podcast project “*Using the instrument in a more goal-oriented way. Maybe also asking other inmates, not only those in the team, to let paper go around, ask, which topics are relevant. Then we would have more heads and way more ideas*”. Developments of meaning were found only in the second focus group discussion, and these were all about their motivation to participate in the podcast project. For example, when they discussed the potential of the project, one participant voiced his motivation to create a podcast about COVID-19: “*Because when we made the video about COVID-19, we were motivated because we said awesome, people outside will be able to see what it’s like for us in here. Then of course you are much more motivated*”. Perceptions of meaninglessness were found in utterances about the lack of authenticity of some podcasts and when discussing the podcast about occupational therapy. Utterances of identity were about having self-confidence, both with regards to life in prison in general and when faced with prejudice by other inmates, and when presenting oneself in the podcasts. A lack of identity was found when they explained that some inmates do not participate in the project out of fear of prejudice. An overview of the prevalence of the CHIME recovery elements can be found in Appendix F.

Table 3

Positive and negative recovery processes described by Focus Group Participants (FGPs).

Negative recovery processes described by FGPs	Positive recovery processes described by FGPs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disconnectedness (indifferent staff, missing family and people outside, feeling that media and society are not interested in their plight) • Hopelessness (not believing that critical podcasts will be published) • Lack of identity (some inmates do not join podcast project because they fear negative judgment) • Disempowerment (censorship) • Disempowerment and disconnectedness (feeling let down by justice system not supporting social relationships, judiciary not explaining why publishing of podcasts not permitted) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hope (belief that the podcasts can create awareness and social change) • Identity (self-confidence to withstand prejudice experienced when part of podcast project) • Meaning (Motivated to make podcasts, e.g. about prison life during pandemic) • Empowerment (perceive selves as agentic) • Empowerment and hope (Belief that people can develop personally in prison and resocialize)

An attempt to synthesise the findings, demonstrating the recovery processes depicted in the podcasts and the focus groups, into a coherent and useful conceptual framework is shown in Figure 5.

PRISON PODCASTS AND THEIR POTENTIAL FOR RECOVERY

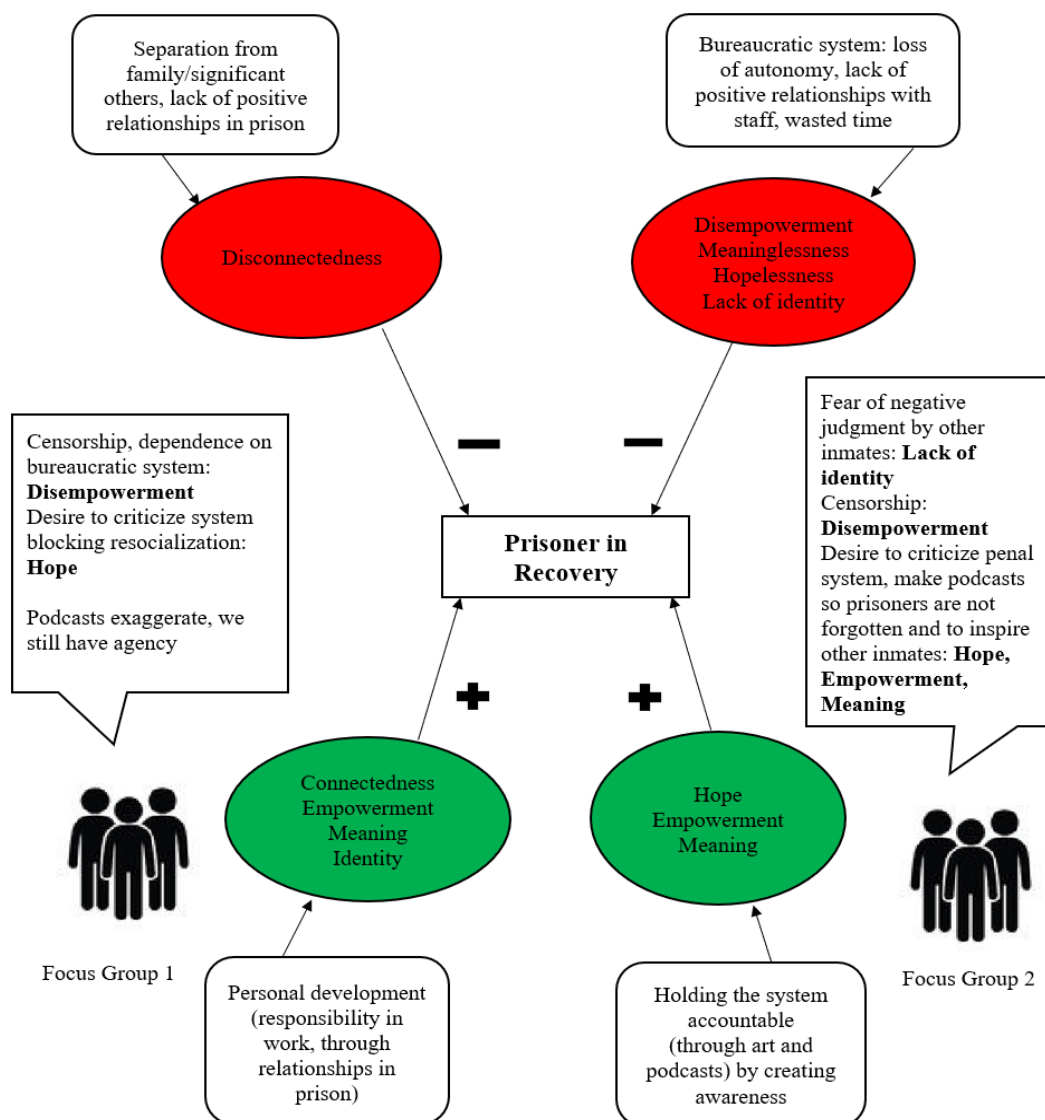


Figure 5. Synthesis of findings, showing the recovery processes as depicted in podcasts and focus group discussions. Red ovals represent negative recovery processes, green ovals represent positive recovery processes. The speech bubbles represent what the focus groups added to the results of the storyline analysis of the podcasts.

Discussion

This study aimed to address the call for positive, strength-based approaches to recovery in prison, and the lack of knowledge about how experiences are narrated in prison podcasts. This was done by exploring how experiences of recovery are narrated in prison podcasts, and whether prison podcast projects may facilitate recovery.

According to two coordinators of prison podcast projects (in Germany and the Netherlands), podcasts provide a unique channel for prisoners to tell their stories, contribute to resocialization as prisoners create them collaboratively in a team, and act as a medium to connect inmates with society. They criticized that inmates need to be given more autonomy, and that staff should become more involved so staff-inmate relationships may improve.

Two story types were uncovered in the podcasts via three-level storyline analysis: The story type ‘of limitation’ is based on podcasts depicting experiences of disempowerment and disconnectedness in the bureaucratic prison system, and characterizes inmates as victims who struggle to adapt to the strict regulations. The prison staff is characterized as distanced and indifferent executives of the bureaucratic system. Contrary to common attitudes towards criminal offenders (Möller, 1997), this story type humanizes the inmates and evokes sympathy for their suffering. The story type ‘of opportunities’ is based on podcasts depicting experiences of developing meaning and connectedness in work as a rehabilitative activity, and characterizes inmates as capable of personal growth, even though rehabilitation is somewhat coercive. This story type evokes the impression that, in line with common assumptions, rehabilitation leads to transformation and positive development (Farrant, 2013). Despite the contrast between the story types, both were found to differ from popular depictions of prison(ers), offering resistance to societies’ tendency to demonize prisoners as intrinsically evil criminals who have lost their right to humane treatment and are incapable of living productive and crime-free lives (Boag & Wilson, 2014; LeBel, 2012; Mbuba, 2012).

The focus group discussions provided a contextual frame for understanding the story types depicted in the podcasts and the potential of podcasts to foster recovery. The participants thoroughly discussed censorship in terms of depending on the ministry for permission to publish podcasts, it being a cause of frustration during the pandemic. Despite their frustration and experiencing prejudice by other inmates, the participants who were producing podcasts were highly motivated and saw great potential in the podcasts to create awareness and facilitate a process of change. Their motivation for joining the podcast project was to pass time, but also because it was a source of hope, meaning and empowerment. Despite feeling treated unjustly by the restrictions, inmates in both groups pointed out that they perceive a greater degree of autonomy in prison than the podcasts display. They described working as a team in the project as

a means of learning to reflect on their behaviour and developing relationships with other inmates they otherwise would not.

Links to previous research and discussion of results

The pains of imprisonment

One major finding of the study was the problem-focused story of limitation constructed from the podcasts which may contribute to a more sophisticated understanding of the “pains of imprisonment” (Sykes, 2007, p.64). It uncovers the harm caused by the prevailing institutional power dynamics and the structurally created deficits in the penal system, and is consistent with knowledge that recovery is dependent on the social context (Price-Robertson et al., 2017). The staff-inmate interactions depicted in this story type, but also data from the informants and the focus groups demonstrated the disempowering, dehumanizing and hopeless process of adapting to the prison world, consistent with previous literature describing a process of “prisonization” (Thomas & Foster, 1972, South & Wood, 2006, Haney, 2012). These findings may partly explain why persistent offenders develop what Maruna (2001) termed a “condemnation script”, a sense of being doomed to their situation in life.

This negative story type is further contextualized as the second focus group spoke about experiencing censorship and lack of communication from the ministry. Contrarily, the German informant stated that freedom of speech is ensured in the project. It may have been an exception that they were not permitted publishing, and there may have been special reasons [as the employee argued], considering that the ministry permitted critical podcasts to be published in the past. On the other hand, Shuman (2015) claims that taking authorship for one’s own story can shift authority relations, which the judiciary might want to prevent. Nevertheless, this finding indicates how the judiciary limits the inmates’ ability to express themselves, to own their stories and share them with the public, and can be coined an example of the infantilization of prisoners (Haney, 2012), adding to the experienced pains of imprisonment.

Although the FGPs described their personally experienced ‘pains of imprisonment’, they also criticized that prisoners’ lack of agency depicted in the podcasts belonging to this story type was exaggerated. From a dialogical (Holquist, 2002) and dramaturgical (Goffman, 1978) perspective, the use of exaggeration may be explained by the message the podcast creators wanted to convey to the anticipated audience: the identities may have been performed in such an extreme manner with the intention to provoke a change in society’s perception of prisoners. In

addition to being audience-oriented, the prisoners telling their story in the podcasts used satire but also humour as a form of resistance to common assumptions and thereby used it as a mode of empowerment. Therefore, exaggeration may not hold up to the criterion of accuracy, but as an artistic expression, it appears to be a powerful genre. Also, this issue lends support to the dialogical approach that language is influenced when the speaker is aware of competing views (Holquist 1981).

Opportunities for transformation in prison

The story of limitation and several descriptions by the FGPs display inmates as victims of an oppressive system that prevents recovery, whereas the positive, strengths-based story of opportunity found in the podcasts, contextualized by hopeful utterances from the FGPs, depicts how it is also possible for offenders to develop what Maruna (2001) calls a ‘redemption script’ in prison, as they develop a change in attitude towards work and themselves after beginning therapy. Thereby, this study supports the notion that society should look beyond a focus on victimhood and “see the full picture” that inmates are also capable of taking responsibility and of positive self-development while in prison (Robbins, 2013).

This positive story type appears to convey multiple meanings. On the one hand, it implies that a change in attitude and finding meaning in their situation are essential to prisoners’ recovery, and places the responsibility for personal change on the prisoner; this was supported by one FGP stating that it is up to them to make the best of their situation in prison. In line with this narrative, participants from the first focus group also pointed out that they are aware of their responsibility for being incarcerated. Literature indicates that taking responsibility for the consequences of their crime is important for offenders’ personal development (Elisha, Idisis, & Ronel., 2013; Mapham & Hefferon, 2012; Maruna, 2001) and increases the likelihood of desistance (Vanhooren, Leijssen & Dezutter, 2017). This notion supports the recent focus on fostering personal responsibility as a means to rehabilitation in prisons (Meijer, 2017). On the other hand, although this story type depicts a change in attitude and taking responsibility as key ingredients for recovery, it also depicts recovery as an interpersonal process, be it between inmates and staff or among inmates who teach each other a craft; This is consistent with previously mentioned research (Best et al., 2015; Jetten et al., 2012; Mezzina et al., 2006; Price-Robertson et al., 2017; Topor et al., 2011). Finally, although termed a ‘story of opportunity’, this story type subtly depicts prison rehabilitation as authoritarian and paternalistic, as inmates are

coerced to participate. ‘Pressured’ rehabilitation appears to be another aspect of the system the inmates must adapt to. This aspect, and the focus groups’ elaboration on censorship and unjustified policy changes uncover how inmates are infantilized and their agency is undermined, even when argued to be in the best of the inmates’ interests (Haney, 2012).

The two contrasting and ambiguous story types uncovered dynamics in prison that both prevent and facilitate recovery. By illustrating the complex reality of recovery processes in prison, they appear to set up a reified reality of system versus person. Further, they suggest that while the development of meaning and a change of attitude are necessary and possible on an intrapersonal level, recovery is an intrinsically social process.

Can podcasts contribute to recovery?

The first way that podcasts may facilitate recovery is derived from descriptions by FGPs on how telling their stories in podcasts facilitated reflection. This lends support to previous research findings that being given the chance to narrate one’s own stories in prison facilitates positive identity transformation, personal development (Mahoney & Daniel, 2006; Ward & Marshall, 2007), adoption of a more adaptive redemption script (Maruna, 2001), and that creating podcasts is a valuable means to do so (Bruce & Lin, 2009). However, the FGPs criticized not being in charge of the stories told in the podcasts. This points to an issue of power between tellers and listeners, and has been linked to broader societal stances about who can talk and what is tellable (de Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2019, p.5). Shuman (2015) points to the unstated rule that the person who suffered or experienced an event has the right to tell it and retain a sense of ownership. This argues that prisoners need to be given narrative ownership if podcasting is to foster recovery.

Also, this study indicates how prison podcast projects can improve the social context of prisoners in two primary ways. The findings and literature suggest that if staff and inmates create podcasts collaboratively, their relationships may improve. This is supported by the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954), though additional conditions may be necessary for contact to successfully improve intergroup relations (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003). Research also indicates that improved relationships (with staff) may assist inmates in constructing more adaptive self-concepts (Maruna, 2001; White and Epston, 1990). Not only inmate-staff relationships may improve as a result of podcasting, but also relationships among inmates. As prisoners need to “get tough” to avoid victimization by other inmates (Haney, 2012), this appears

all the more challenging, yet important. Despite prisoners' chastising project group members, one FGP suggested that podcasts can and should be created to connect to and inform other prisoners about opportunities in prison. This indicates a desire to use the podcasts to empower other prisoners, and implies a sense of "we-ness". Indeed, a shared social identity has been found to be crucial for the effective organization of prisoners to challenge authority and promote social change (Haslam & Reicher, 2012). A shared identity may not only be fostered among prisoners creating podcasts together; podcasts may also enable them to connect with inmates who are not involved in the project.

Finally, the FGPs stated that podcasting gives them hope to connect to the outside world and to humanize the prison population. Podcasting may not only give prisoners a voice in power relations during incarceration, but also to reduce the prison stigma they will (almost) all experience post-release. To combat social exclusion, the strengths paradigm calls for opportunities for offenders to make amends, demonstrate their value and potential and contribute (Burnett & Maruna, 2006). Podcasting may be such an opportunity. It is acknowledged that prison podcasts are not a "one size fits all" solution and will not meet all needs of incarcerated individuals for a successful recovery, such as sufficient preparation for release and positive material conditions post-release (Gibson et al., 2014) which a FGP also pointed out. However, if offenders' podcast stories are listened to, and offenders take responsibility and make amends, it appears justified to presume that societal attitudes towards ex-prisoners may change so they can become members of communities and society once again. Then, also the material conditions of ex-offenders may improve.

Strengths and Limitations

To my knowledge, this was the first study to explore the potential prison podcasts may have in facilitating recovery. Furthermore, this was the first study to examine the narratives in German prison podcasts, and the meaning they have for prison inmates. A three-level narrative analysis of the podcast stories enabled the recognition of societal forces on the inmates' experiences and lives, so a broader understanding of relevant contextual factors was gained. Taking a dramaturgical and dialogical approach enabled a detailed analysis of role enactment and the influence of the anticipated audience on narratives in the podcasts. The informant interviews, analysis of prison podcasts, and the focus groups interviews in this study complemented each other in such a way as to elicit a deeper and more complete picture of the

participants' experiences in prison and the potential of podcasting to foster recovery. Including multiple data sources and methods may have reduced investigator bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.109).

A first potential limitation is that the story types were constructed from the narratives of one German podcast project and the focus groups were conducted only in one German prison, which raises the issue of generalisability of the study results. The story types resulting from the analysis of other prison podcasts, and the perspectives of inmates who are not male, from different age groups, or more or less educated may differ greatly.

A second limitation is that the FGPs' knowledge of the research lens may have influenced which themes they brought up and discussed, although open questions were asked, and I avoided prompting them in any direction. To account for this limitation, I aimed to derive understandings from the themes which occurred more naturally instead of gathering a more complete account of experiences in a theme-oriented format. Nevertheless, it is recognised that in interpreting the findings, there remains the issue of multiplicity in narrative meaning and narrative ownership (Smythe & Murray, 2000). Therefore, the researcher takes full responsibility for the interpretations given to answer the research questions, which may not be consistent with the participants' perspectives (Clandinin, 2007, p.549).

A final limitation is that negative dynamics within the focus group may have inhibited the participants from freely expressing their opinion (Kitzinger, 1995). This may explain why one participant in the first group remained silent, despite being encouraged to voice differing opinions and appealing to the silent participant directly. As a consequence, some relevant topics may have not been voiced.

Future recommendations

Despite the aforementioned limitations, this study might be a crucial contribution to scientific research in the field of narrative and positive criminology, as it enabled a unique and detailed view on the process of recovery in prison by discovering two nuanced story types and exploring their positioning vis-a-vis dominant and counter narratives. Further, this study demonstrated the value of the CHIME framework to explore recovery processes in the prison context (Carpenter & Knight, 2018; Best, Musgrove & Hall, 2018), and lends support to the call to acknowledge the relational aspect of recovery (Price-Robertson et al., 2017). Of course, this study raises additional questions as well as it offers some answers. To answer the research

question, this study uncovered only two story types based on two podcasts respectively, to gain an in-depth understanding of the narratives they depict. Future research can repeat this research by analysing prison podcasts from other projects, and by doing an international comparison. Such a comparison can give insight into which story types are unique to the German context and which are also valid in a broader context.

Since the results cannot be generalised, future research can explore what the leaders of prison podcast projects and prisoners of different nationalities and prisons think about prison podcasts, in order to set conclusions on a broader sample.

Future research can also explore and evaluate new ways of incorporating podcasts into rehabilitative interventions in prisons. More research is needed to explore whether there are additional barriers to participating in prison podcast projects in addition to fear of prejudice by other inmates. Furthermore, future research on the effect of prison podcasts on public perceptions may determine whether and how prison podcasts can decrease stigma and facilitate social reintegration post-release. A practical implication derived from this study is to educate prisoners about the value of using various stylistic devices such as exaggeration, humour, and satire in podcasts to convey their desired message, as this may contribute to empowering them to use podcasts to their full potential.

Conclusion

In the spirit of “nothing about us without us”, this study demonstrated how prison podcasts, telling the stories of prisoners, are valuable tools to foster recovery that to date have been neglected by research and practice. They have the power to enhance personal development, improve staff and inmate relationships, and spark hope by offering resistance to prison stigma. Censorship, lack of autonomy and prejudice may prevent their potential from being used. If prisoners are permitted to freely and collaboratively tell their stories with the support of prison staff, podcasting may contribute to an implementation of the second and third paragraph of the German Prison Act of 1976, and act as a stepping-stone for prisoners towards a justifiable, hopeful attitude towards themselves and their future.

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Appendix A

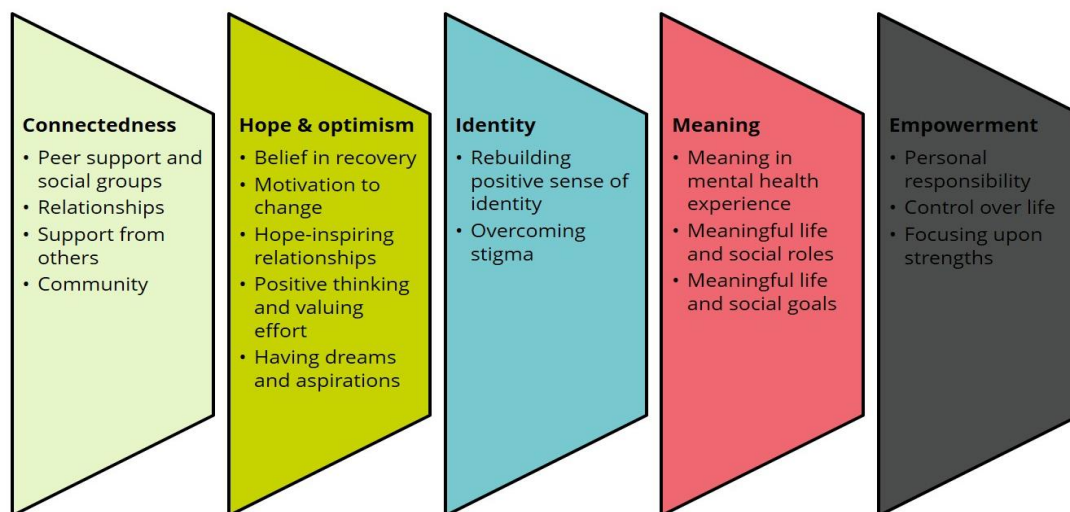


Figure A. Essential Components of the CHIME framework for personal recovery. Source: Leamy et al., 2011

Appendix B

Interview Schedule for Focus Groups

After introducing myself:

Our topic is the project “Podknast”. I would like to know what you think about the podcasts and the meaning they and the project in general, have for you. (If they have participated in the project: What meaning it has had for them to co-create these podcasts).

The results will be used only for this independent thesis. The first aim is to find out how the podcasts uncover recovery processes that may take place in prison. The second aim, which is why we are sitting here together today, is to explore what meaning the podcasts have for you personally. Are there any questions about this?

There are no wrong answers but rather different points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Keep in mind that I’m just as interested in negative comments as positive comments, and at times the negative comments are the most helpful. You’ve probably noticed the tape recorder. I am tape recording the session because I don’t want to miss any of your comments. People often say very helpful things in these discussions, and I can’t write fast enough to get them all down. I won’t use any names in the report. You may be assured of complete confidentiality.

1. If they were themselves involved in the project: What role have you played in producing the podcasts?
 - a What was your motivation to join the project?
2. In general, what do you think about the project “Podknast”?
3. When and where do you watch the podcasts?
4. What value does watching the podcasts have for you as prison inmates?

PRISON PODCASTS AND THEIR POTENTIAL FOR RECOVERY

5. What are the main themes you see in the podcasts? What interests you in the podcasts?
6. How do you feel when you listen to or watch a podcast?
7. What do you think does or does not represent life in prison? Why/Why not?
8. What audience do you have in mind who should watch the podcasts? What do you think people watching the podcasts think about prisons? (Probe: Do you believe that it has an effect/ it's worth producing them and putting them online?)
9. Suppose you had one minute to talk to the minister of justice about the project, what would you say?

After summarizing and giving a review: Of all the things we now talked about, what is most important to you? Have we missed anything?

Probes:

"Would you explain further?"

"Would you give an example?"

"I don't understand."

Appendix C

Summary of informant interviews

Interview with Mr.A

Mr.A. worked for forty years in closed institutions and was the general director of five prisons in the north of Holland before retirement. He is an international expert on forensic psychiatry and prison reform, coach, speaker, teacher, and host of the podcast ‘the Prison Show’ in the Netherlands. He is also known as a promoter of restorative justice. In the interview, he described himself as wanting to give life back to the prisoners and to support those suffering from the system, and also to give autonomy back to the staff. He stated that throughout his career, he “always was on the thin line between within and outside the system. I brought in new developments within the system, and also focused on bringing those inside back into society”.

As a result of the laws and restrictions in the Netherlands, Mr.A. is not able to conduct podcast episodes directly with current prison inmates. Instead, he interviews different people who have been involved with the prison system. Thereby, he wants to give all parties involved a chance to speak and to be heard. Mr. A. emphasized the power of giving people the chance to speak, that their intimate stories are brought close to the listeners, and they can easily relate.

Mr.A. stated that podcasts can be powerful on several levels: First, the individuals podcasting can listen to themselves tell their story, which can empower them. Second, their families can listen to their stories to come to understand their perspective. Third, for other inmates, it can be empowering to listen to others’ stories, to hear that they are not alone, that their situation is being made public. For the prison staff, listening to the inmates’ stories can have a rehumanizing effect. Fifth, the victims can listen to the inmates’ stories and maybe understand them better. Sixth, society and media, who tend to portray prisoners as monsters, may come to change how they portray them and contribute to raising public awareness of the realities of prison inmates. Mr.A. also expressed his desire for politicians and policymakers to listen to the podcasts, as he believes that stories have the power to influence political decisions.

Mr.A. stated that for podcasts to make a significant change, prisoners have to be truly free to tell their stories. He states that in the Netherlands, this is currently not permitted, and regarded this as a human rights violation. He pointed out that prisons as closed systems are bad for prisoners, the staff, and society, that podcasts are a way of opening up prisons, and can be a strategy for “bringing the inside world outside and the outside in”. Thereby, he believes that the

prison system can become more human and less repressive, and prisons can become a place to recover from the period in which the crime was committed. Finally, Mr.A. stated that research on prison podcasts is valuable if it shows what is obvious for him, namely the value of prisoners being able to tell their story.

Interview with Mrs. B.

Mrs.B. is the coordinator of a German prison podcast project since 2008, including a several year break. She states that the aim of the project is the reflection of one's own life story and of the causes of incarceration. The podcasts are used in public spaces such as youth centres and schools by the police, teachers, and social workers for education and to raise public awareness. By showing the podcasts, Mrs.B. explained that the unimaginable is made real and understandable for people outside. Particularly because in the first few years the podcasts were made only by juvenile incarcerated individuals, young people were enabled to see peers speaking about their feelings, fears, and thoughts in their language, making them particularly relatable.

Mrs.B. explained that she finds it important that the inmates learn how to use media, and learn about their rights and freedom of speech. By participating in the project, they also feel taken seriously in an institution that by nature does not leave them a lot of freedom and autonomy. The participants are given the freedom to decide what they create, and the supervisor only takes part in the discussion and educates them about their rights, about the system, and what is (not) allowed to be displayed on video. For example, keys are not allowed to be on camera, or entrances from outside the prison. Mrs.B. emphasized that in the project, the inmates are met "at the point they are at", at face level. By being fairly free to decide what they create, she experienced that their intrinsic motivation is high, and they reflect their experiences in prison on a deeper level. Furthermore, they are encouraged to think about which content is relevant for the audience and thereby for society.

Mrs.B. explained that in the beginning, the podcast project was criticized a lot because for the first time prison inmates were allowed to come in contact with media. However, it is now an established and standard part of the justice system in North Rhine-Westphalia. Every prison director could and can decide whether the project is launched in the prison. Mrs.B. stated that she wants the project team leaders to be interdisciplinary and has always tried to involve other prison staff, particularly those working in shifts who have the most contact with the inmates and who also tend to have the least positive relationship with the inmates. She described experiencing a

change in the attitude of the prison inmates towards the staff who are otherwise often regarded as enemies. Also, social workers participating in the team have come to experience the inmates as having a different nature and attitude when they are working on a podcast because there, they are part of a creative team, with a purpose and intrinsically motivated. The inmates also learn to deal with frustration while creating a podcast, as they discuss and decide as a team what to create, and because video recording is hard work and they often have to retake scenes several times, depending on the kind of podcast being created.

Mrs.B. explained how the podcasts encourage the inmates to reflect on their own life stories and to learn to work with media and in a team, and strengthens the motivation to make a new start in life. She stated she is sure that it, therefore, contributes to the “Resozialisierungsgrundsatz”, but that she can only guess what it is and how it does so.

Appendix D

Coding Scheme for Focus Groups

Table D

Description of each code with related quotes, the overview of the frequency of references among each focus group (FG) (n = 2), and the total reference frequency.

Code	Description	Quote	FG 1	FG 2	Total
Perceived Censorship of Podcasts	Participants perceiving they cannot freely make podcasts	<i>“It’s all manipulated, I think, the way things are presented.”</i>	3	8	11
Autonomy in prison: podcasts vs. own experiences	Participants compare how autonomy is depicted in the podcasts to their own experiences	<i>“If you make yourself a victim, that’s how you show yourself. “</i>	2	3	5
Desire for podcasts about deficits in the prison system	Includes different suggestions on what participants want to criticize and increase awareness about	<i>“maybe [show] how difficult it is to achieve something here, how the judiciary makes it difficult. That sometimes resocialization is prevented.”</i>	5	3	8
Prejudice towards podcast project from inmates	Being regarded as sexual offenders because of participation in podcast project	<i>“there are many more who would be interested in the project, but don’t want others to say they are hanging out with the sexual offenders.”</i>	0	5	5
The audience	Descriptions of who the participants think podcasts should be made for	<i>“so that we are not forgotten. People speak about everything, but you never hear about prison.”</i>	7	8	15
Why be part of the podcast project?	Reasons motivating participation in podcast project	<i>“you learn social competences, and to accept different opinions.”</i>	0	2	2

Appendix E

Table E

Prevalence of CHIME elements of recovery in the story types.

CHIME elements	Story of Limitation		Story of Opportunity	
	+	-	+	-
Connectedness	0	1	7	0
Hope	1	0	1	1
Identity	0	2	4	0
Meaning	0	1	4	1
Empowerment	1	4	6	1

Appendix F

Table F

Prevalence of the CHIME elements of recovery in focus groups, the overview of the frequency of references among each focus group (FG) (n = 2), and the total reference frequency

CHIME elements	FG 1		FG 2		Total	
	+	-	+	-	+	-
Connectedness	0	1	8	13	8	14
Hope	2	0	6	5	8	5
Identity	0	0	6	4	6	4
Meaning	0	0	7	3	7	3
Empowerment	6	4	5	14	11	18