Research

Unlocking Men: Men's Circles in Prison

by David R. Karp

Despite mounting evidence of the effectiveness of correctional programs (MacKenzie, 2006; Cullen & Gendreau, 2000), offenders are woefully underserved. Two-thirds of all prisoners are released without any vocational or educational training; 75% have alcohol or substance abuse problems, but only 25% receive treatment while incarcerated (Petersilia, 2003, p. 93). Successful reentry is rare. Sixty-seven percent of former inmates are rearrested within three years of release, and 52% are reincarcerated (Petersilia, 2003, p. 140).

Members of a large voluntary men's organization called the ManKind Project have observed the dearth of prison programming, and some have responded by volunteering in prisons and offering an innovative program model. One program was developed in 1999 at Folsom Prison in California. In 2002, a second program followed in Massachusetts. A third, called the TRUTH Project, began in 2006 in Wisconsin.

Prisoner-Initiated Program

Pennsylvania Lifers Group Challenges Street-Crime Culture: Seeking Transformation Through Positive Peer Intervention

by M. Kay Harris

At a maximum-security state prison in Graterford, Pennsylvania, a group of long-term prisoners initiated a movement to end the culture of crime and violence that they viewed as wreaking havoc on urban communities. Acting out of the belief that they had been instrumental in creating and sustaining the same types of public safety problems they saw their families, neighbors, and an endless stream of youth falling subject to, members of the Public Safety Initiative (PSI) of LIFERS, Inc. concluded that they needed to become a meaningful part of the solution. They crafted a model for achieving that goal by working for transformation at the individual, institutional, and community levels.

Of particular interest here is the first-line approach employed by PSI, namely its model of personal change. Relying heavily on positive peer intervention, PSI members challenge one another "to reflect on past behavior, the cost and effect on our families, our communities, and ourselves, in an effort to cause a cognitive transformation—thinking in a new way through self-discovery—that becomes self generating" (LIFERS Public Safety Initiative, n.d.). The process involved is one of individual soul searching as to how the beliefs, values, and mores that the person has inculcated contribute to leading a productive, honorable life and square with acceptance of responsibility for the well-being of family, community, and self. The expectation is that people who come around to this new way of thinking will not only live as upstanding citizens, but also will work tirelessly to help pull others out of the street-crime culture and to eliminate the culture itself.

What Is the Public Safety Initiative?

The Public Safety Initiative is a project of the lifers' organization

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

designed by members in an effort to help eradicate the crime and violence that they once helped perpetuate. With roots going back to a number of earlier projects, especially an anticrime summit that the group held in the prison in April 2003, this multifaceted effort was launched officially in 2004. A series of discussions within the group that focused intensively on the prevalence and causes of crime and violence

the World Congress of Criminology and focused the attention of more than 100 criminologists from around the world on that material. More recently, PSI has developed a series of proposals, organized numerous task groups and an external advisory board, and carried out a series of projects to build community partnerships and otherwise advance the movement to end the culture of street crime.

One PSI leader, Sterling, summarized this vision in the following way:

means moving from individuals to populations inside the prison to the external community, specifically to transform neighborhoods that are crime-ridden, without safety and without economic opportunities. And as people who have violated those norms before, this transformation, having gone through it ourselves here collectively, we would now say, "Let's unify." Now that we've seen our mistakes, we made a decision to build where we once tore down, to become protectors of the community instead of those who harmed it.

The Public Safety Initiative is a project of the lifers' organization designed by members to help eradicate the crime and violence that they once helped perpetuate.

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in urban communities led to the conceptualization of a "culture of street crime" theory and a strategy for ending that culture. That work was reflected in an article written by members of the steering committee that appeared in the December 2004 issue of *The Prison Journal* (LIFERS Public Safety Steering Committee, 2004). In August 2005, a day-long mini-conference was held at the prison in connection with

Transformation is coming from one state of existence that's unfavorable to another level of existence that's favorable for life and for people. More specifically, it means what we have done here. We have, under these difficult circumstances, made a decision to transform ourselves, our thinking, inside this environment and thus transform our environment. So to me, the transformative movement

This article draws on structured, open-ended interviews I conducted in the spring and summer of 2007 with 29 PSI participants in order to learn more about their version of a cognitive transformation model and what transformation has meant in their own lives. Because I was investigating their model, I sought a targeted rather than a random sample of members to interview, drawing heavily on volunteers who helped lead and shape the overall initiative or specific projects.

Offender Programs Report™

Not surprisingly, given that the lifers' organization in this maximum-security prison sponsors PSI, almost all of those I interviewed are long-term prisoners, most serving life terms. In general, these sentences reflect the seriousness of the men's criminal histories and help make them, as self-described "bad men gone good," appropriate research subjects. Giordano et al. (2002) have noted that filling gaps in our understanding of people who turn away from involvement in crime requires studying "those who reach some reasonable threshold of frequent and serious criminal offending" (p. 1005). In addition, these scholars have reported that nonwhite respondents have been underrepresented in prior studies. All but two of those I interviewed were nonwhite. Thus, in a number of ways, the men I interviewed represent a group from whom a lot can be learned.

A major focus of this article is on describing changes that some PSI members have experienced, with the aim of illuminating what they mean when they identify themselves as people formerly immersed in street-crime culture who have turned their lives around. Also of particular interest here is the emphasis that PSI members place on encouraging other prisoners to engage in the personal soul-searching and subsequent steps that they believe are required for transformation to occur. This focus is relevant to the ongoing debate in criminological circles as to whether or not personal agency plays a significant role in desistance from crime (Maruna, 2001; Giordano et al., 2002).

PSI members come down firmly on the affirmative side of that dispute. As former members of the street-crime culture, they argue that they are uniquely qualified to penetrate, challenge, and help alter the perceptual reality of other incarcerated offenders by challenging the personal values and beliefs that these offenders may have accepted with little or no conscious thought. In the end, however, what PSI members describe as their role in the cognitive transformation process comes down to "assist[ing] those who are a part of the culture of street crime

to take responsibility for their own lives, and to assume control of their own futures" (Public Safety Initiative, n.d.).

In arguing that cognitive transformation is necessary for significantly reducing rates of reoffending, PSI members are not claiming that no one can quit crime without undergoing such a change. They recognize that people may end their participation in criminal activity for a variety of other reasons. They believe, however, that making significant inroads into the volume of ordinary crimes commonly referred to as "street crime" does require confronting and altering the beliefs, values, codes, and behaviors that are associated with street-crime culture.

PSI members also do not argue that everyone involved in crime is a member of street-crime culture. They acknowledge that other people may commit crimes but take the position

the street-crime culture were totally enmeshed in a set of values, beliefs, codes, and expected behaviors that were supportive of lawbreaking, violence, and other behaviors contrary to those supported by mainstream culture, they argue that transformation requires reexamining and changing almost everything in these people's lives. Woodrow described this wide scope of change as follows:

> Transformation means a total change from what you were doin,' thinkin,' being, to something totally different. It's a 360-degree turnaround and it's a process. You don't turn that far in an instant. You turn 45 degrees, then 90 degrees, then 180 before you get to that transformation.

Similarly, in explaining what transformation has meant for him, Marshall said:

> It affects every part of my life. It affects the way I carry myself every

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As former members of the street-crime culture, PSI members argue that they are uniquely qualified to help alter the perceptual reality of other incarcerated offenders.

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that such individuals do not constitute the offender population of most concern to the public or make up a significant share of the convicted offenders headed to prison. Equally important, PSI members focus on street crime and the culture that they believe supports and sustains it because, for most of those involved, that is where they have the greatest knowledge and experience (Lifers Public Safety Steering Committee, 2004).

The Meaning of Transformation in PSI Members' Lives: Change on Many Fronts

The primary explicit focus of the transformation that members of the Public Safety Initiative discuss is cognitive, but the changes that they expect to result when a person is transformed are far reaching. Because they believe that people who have been part of

day. It affects what I do with my time, the company I keep, the way I raise my family when I go home. It affects everything. The way I think, most of all. Before, when I first came to jail, I'd be makin' wine, smokin' weed, in frivolous conversations about who had more of this or that on the street, how tough I was, trying to impress my peers through negative stuff. I wasn't readin'. If I was, it wasn't no value. I just cared about myself. I definitely didn't worry about how what I did affected other people, as long as it satisfied me. I had really low self-esteem. I didn't think I deserved better.

In beginning to identify the direction of the shifts he experienced, Sonny likewise described a multifaceted

and extensive set of changes coming along with transformation. Reflecting on the importance of certain values, especially respect, in the street-crime culture, he commented on his shift from reacting to perceived violations of the code supportive of those values, to being able to see another person's position and make more measured responses:

> Well, to me it means the total opposite of how I was living—reacting off of emotions to things I felt to be violative—rather than thinking things through, versus now being more empathetic, understanding, optimistic, tolerant.

Russell also described the powerful effects of transformation in terms of values that he believes a transformed person displays using language that brings to mind the group's use of the

how much good you can do and that's gonna have a positive effect.

Transformation and Turning Away From Crime

PSI is a movement to end the culture of crime and violence. Yet, as the quotations above make evident, discussion of the transformation model at the heart of the movement does not necessarily begin with, or even center on, a change in criminal behavior. PSI members identify other shifts that take place first, which then are followed naturally by a turning away from involvement in crime. In the following passage, Levon identified the importance to desistance from crime of becoming less selfish and more concerned about other people:

> I can tell if a guy is at least on the road to transformation. It puts you in a different place—that you care for other people—and then you just stop

to see why my family didn't want no parts of that. My mother smoked and took a drink, but she didn't want no parts of hot goods or other parts of the criminal lifestyle.

In sharing a way in which he came to realize the depth and extent of his own change, Bishop referred to the high standards that he believes transformation obliges him to hold and echoed Christopher's point that maintaining these standards includes unwillingness to benefit from others' criminality. For Bishop, transformation requires consistently making choices consistent with the values that he now espouses:

> It's basically your approach on life, so you're constantly confronted with how you've been seeing things, and now taking on these values and beliefs of transformation, how you see things now. For instance, if you come out of a criminal background, you want to get out of jail. Your first instinct on how to get money to get out of jail would be some criminal activity to raise the money. Now, for me, the test of was I really into transformation was not just not being willing to participate in criminal acts to raise some money, but also not soliciting money from anyone involved in criminal activity. That was the test for me. Had I really come over the line? It's these types of choices that's based on this new value system.

Over and above refraining from criminal activity and refusing to partake of its spoils, the PSI approach emphasizes that a transformed offender will feel an obligation to engage his peers in reconsidering the thought patterns and values associated with street-crime culture. As Myles put it:

> We understand in PSI that we have to transform the way our peers think in order to transform the violent and criminal actions that we perpetrate on our families and communities.

Although Myles described the commonly expressed idea that transformation demands continuing action on the part of the person who has been transformed as an obligation, he and other PSI members also characterized this new sense of responsibility to act as

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Participants are expected not only to stay away from crime personally, but also to refuse to condone or benefit indirectly from illegal activity.

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butterfly as a symbol of the process of change involved:

> I think transformation is a metamorphosis that brings about a consciousness that leads a transformed individual into a position of being responsible, being just, being fair and being aware of their own humanity and the humanity of others.

Similarly focused on values, Bishop centered his discussion of the meaning of transformation around the fundamental idea of goodness:

> Transformation is embracing—it's an unwavering belief in good, in the power of good and the power of love and from there, moving from that position takes you into the realm of possibility—that anything is possible, based on what's right and good. There's no ceiling on right and good. If you do bad, eventually it's gonna take its toll and you can't do but so much bad. It leads to dire consequences. But I don't believe there's any limit on

committing crimes. They change who they used to be. They are always reaching out to other people. Not just saying, "I'm gonna go get education."

PSI certainly does envision that transformed members will not participate in criminal behavior. Indeed, participants are expected not only to stay away from crime personally, but also to refuse to condone or benefit indirectly from illegal activity. This expectation was reflected in Christopher's comments about the need to alter a mindset that is accepting of criminal behavior as a facet of everyday life:

> People who need to transform grew up in the culture. Particularly, it's aimed at the criminal mindset, to people who think it's acceptable to buy hot goods, because that's accepting the criminal lifestyle. I didn't understand that for years, but by studying it over and over, when you review your thinking under the microscope, the light comes on. I got

empowering. Jerome expressed this idea with the analogy of gassing up a car:

> When you talk about PSI, transformation is something real, real radical. It's like putting gas in the gas tank. It has an empowering element that makes you want to get up and go. You got to do something. You just have to.

PSI members recognize that in addition to employing positive peer intervention to eliminate the harmful behavior that otherwise would come from their peers, lasting change requires working to see that young people do not continue to be drawn into the culture of street crime. This understanding accounts for the fact that the core mission of the Public Safety Initiative is to work to eliminate that culture as a necessary part of making society a safe and just place in which to live and raise children.

Russell articulated parts of this broader vision in describing what he sees as the major goals of the PSI transformation process:

> I would think that they are to bring about a condition which ends the way of thinking that creates a sense of responsibility to a culture that is detrimental to the well-being of the individual, the community, and people as a whole. Besides ending the violence and the culture of crime that produces the violence and allows the criminal activity to be accepted, I think it's a social model that would unite people in the development of themselves and the people they come in contact with, their collective responsibility to themselves and the communities. I think the strongest principles or goals of it is to bring about dignity in all human beings.

The Role of Agency in the Transformation Process

The PSI transformation model emphasizes voluntary participation, personal responsibility, and empowerment. PSI members reach out to peers to engage them in honest dialogue about the street-crime culture and its consequences for themselves, their loved ones, and their communities. With those who become participants, they encourage deep self-reflection supported by caring peers who have been through the process ahead of them. They seek sufficiently heightened self-awareness that will lead to observable changes in behavior and lifestyle. Throughout the process, the emphasis is on the individual:

- Making a decision to change;
- Deciding what he needs to change; and
- Choosing how to act in a way consistent with his new way of thinking.

In describing the evolution of the PSI approach from earlier efforts to reduce recidivism with which some of the members were connected, Levon explained the importance of bringing about a cognitive change before expecting behavioral change:

> I worked with [an ex-offender organization involved with reentry work], believing people needed jobs and things like that. [The director] did a good job. But the failure rate is so high. These guys had everything they needed. They had jobs. They had family. But they had the mentality of "I'm just trying to get over." Reentry without a change in values means a guy will act out of those old values. So we got together and said we've got to work on guys to transform their thinking and give these values up. Unless a guy is prepared to give up those old values and place other things of importance higher up, most guys are gonna fail.

Reflecting on the path he followed between first being incarcerated and the present, Cleveland described the process he went through, from becoming open or ready to change, to considering the types of adjustments he could make, to altering first his thought patterns and choices and then his behavior. His comments reflect a sense of agency and achievement, first, in investigating the meaning and utility of cognitive transformation and second, in having learned how to keep old response patterns in check:

Upon entering this institution, I didn't really believe I could be totally transformed. In fact, I didn't have the desire to be transformed. PSI has afforded me an opportunity to dig deep inside and challenge myself: "What can I do differently?" And I believe that's what I'm doing. Do I still have the old behaviors inside? I believe I do. Do I exhibit those behaviors by acting them out? I believe I've arrested that through this transformational process. The single most important key to transformation is thinking in a new way. I'm sold on that. Cognitive change. I looked it up, dissected it. If a person thinks differently, I think you act differently.

In discussing his understanding of transformation, Antwan, like Cleveland, made reference to the fact that a transformation process is dependent on carrying out a great deal of introspection. In addition, Antwan identified the need to understand and accept that other people may not reach the same conclusions or act in the same way that he might, even if they too

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Lasting change requires working to see that young people do not continue to be drawn into the culture of street crime.

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have been transformed. His comments also reflected a clear sense of personal agency: They indicated that he has studied the lives of men who could serve as role models for someone wanting to change his own life. Even more striking is the emphasis he placed on not being reactive. For Antwan, at the heart of the transformation process is learning to identify one's choices and to conform one's actions to what one has decided is the proper course. He also incorporated reference to the fact that for him, transformation entails a commitment to nonviolence:

> The individual has to really know themselves, to know they're transformed. He doesn't necessarily always make good decisions. And he doesn't always make the decisions I would.

For example, a man's cellie [cellmate] punched him in the eye. His stance was he wasn't gonna fight the guy. So he went and told the guard. Maybe I wouldn't say to the guard, "He hit me." Maybe I wouldn't say anything *and* not return any violence. Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Malcolm X took this stand: "You're not gonna make me react." I'm taking this stance. I'm not going to cause violence by my hands. For me, that's being totally transformed.

Antwan also stressed the importance of using a process of analysis and anticipating likely future outcomes as being key components of cognitive transformation. In doing so, he contrasted that anticipatory mode with his prior thought patterns and behavior:

Transformation is when you begin to think more futuristic. You begin to think in long-term perspective. I'm thinking about the future in a way that's always productive, your next move. You're cognizant of the

Transformation is a process whereas you challenge your old way of thinking, while adopting new alternatives, which consequently are better and more mindful alternatives. It's responding instead of reacting, while always keepin' the end in mind. I equate that with, I have a drug history in my life, and I remember when I first picked up a marijuana joint. There wasn't a lot of hard thought done there. But if I would have saw at that point what that first-time use was gonna spiral into, I never would have picked it up.

Jeff contrasted the approach used by PSI with that employed by the Department of Corrections, describing the PSI model as resting more on individual understanding, choice, and volition. He expressed belief that involvement with PSI had effects on him that were more significant to his future than those that might flow from program participation, education, maturation, and spiritual growth:

I was a dog trainer on the outside. It's repetitive. "Stay." "Sit." "Good." "Stay." "Sit." It's exactly the same in the [prison-run] programs here. They don't deal with why am I capable of making good

that came out repeatedly in the interviews and described how he sees them as being linked together:

I believe that the first step in transformation is ownership—actually owning up to our having been or being the cause of the social problems that we're having and also how if we don't do something to change the current social ills, that we will be contributing to generational incarceration, poverty, and a lot of other problems that contribute to crime and violence. So I think that transformation starts with us acknowledging that we do have a role in the way things are. . . . It's getting beyond the blame game, deciding that I want to do something about it. It's becoming discontent with sitting in the pews and wanting to get actively involved or participating in the process whereby we can bring about some changes.

In large part, PSI is about self-empowerment, and while factors like poverty and mass incarceration contribute in some way, it's about me looking at myself. It's about every person looking at themselves and deciding/wrestling with the question, "What's my part? What can I do to make a change?" 'Cause you gotta understand, if I just focus on outside forces, then I'm disempowering myself, and this is an empowerment movement. This is not a disempowerment movement; it's an empowerment movement.

What Jerome described as ownership contrasts sharply with understandings of the role and responsibility of criminal offenders in creating and perpetuating community problems articulated by populations of offenders identified as *persisters*, who tend to blame extenuating circumstances or other people for their criminality and to deny or minimize the extent of harm that their acts have caused (Maruna, 2001). Jerome's comments also highlighted the way in which PSI members balance acceptance of their own previous contributions with awareness of the role and weight of larger structural forces, such as poverty and intergenerational incarceration, in sustaining community conditions in which crime and violence flourish. Recognizing that hopelessness and self-pity can undermine constructive personal change

> ### *The first step in transformation is ownership—actually owning up to our having been or being the cause of the social problems that we're having.*

direction in which your decisions are leading you. If you want a positive outcome, you're gonna make positive decisions to achieve that.

Transformation for me is thinking in a responsible way. I told somebody the other day, reflecting back on when I was younger, I didn't really consider the feelings of other people or the outcome of my actions. It's like a guy says in a commercial I see on television. He says, "I don't think. I just react. Bam, bam." In my youth, I didn't really think out the outcome.

In discussing the importance of changed thinking, Darnell likewise stressed the need to be both mindful and responsive, rather than simply reactive, and to look ahead toward the consequences of actions taken:

choices for myself. They don't get deep down inside. . . . I know when the time comes, I'm not gonna go through that revolving door. It's not because I'm [more than 50] years old, or because I got an education, or because I got spiritually enlightened. It's because I got to know myself. It's because I know the system and I want to be involved in changing it. That's what PSI does.

The themes of personal responsibility (ownership), empowerment, and an obligation to take action are not only the core of the Public Safety Initiative's transformation model but also appear regularly in narratives of people who have desisted successfully from crime and other highly generative adults (Giordano et al., 2002; Maruna, 2001; McAdams, 2001). Jerome highlighted each of these topics

and social action, members emphasize the importance of each person's looking at his own part in the problem, not just in the past but in every interaction, while striving to do whatever possible to make things better.

When asked what being transformed feels like, Marshall also juxtaposed feelings of increased freedom with those of obligation and the desire to make a difference:

> Beautiful. I feel freer even though I'm here [in prison]. I know this is just a circumstance and I know I don't really belong here anymore, and maybe at one time I did belong here. I just feel, it's like, I feel freer, not all those things holding me down. I feel I have something to contribute, something positive. It makes me feel better about myself, realizing that.
>
> It's scary though sometimes, 'cause the responsibility. I realize the potential I have to change things and I know there's always opposition and I can't just sit back and wait for somebody else to do it and I always think what kind of drama's gonna come with that. My community is so messed up right now and I've done so much wrong in my life. It's like I'm obligated to do something, and I *want* to do something. It's not just that I'm obligated. I want to. I have to.

Similarly, in describing his understanding of transformation as something much larger and more active than simply not being involved in crime personally, Kareem addressed what he sees as the obligations to the community that come along with transformation:

> Transformation is a verb, not just a noun. So, if you stop committing crimes, that only makes you a desister. Transformation is a connection movement. It's a movement geared towards seeing yourself as being a part of a larger community. It means that you are obligated, responsible for being involved. So if I see a young guy on the road to prison, it's my job to intervene in his life in whatever way I can. That's your job as a transformed man. It becomes a responsibility. That's not just your kids; they're my kids. That's not just your community; that's my community. You not gonna be able to help everybody, but you

have to contribute to the betterment of everyone around.

Transformed People as Stakeholders

At the heart of the efforts being made by the Public Safety Initiative of LIFERS, Inc. to eliminate the culture of street crime is a strategy for initiating a process of cognitive transformation within members of that culture through positive peer intervention. As defined by PSI, "cognitive transformation involves a process of heightening levels of an individual's self awareness sufficient to cause cognitive/behavioral shifts that are manifested through observable changes in feelings and thoughts expressed, lifestyles and coping strategies, and a fundamental shift in focus on the future" (Public Safety Initiative, 2008, p. 6).

These are important perspectives that should be heard in the criminological and public policy debates on how best to reduce crime. They contribute to a richer understanding of the meaning of cognitive transformation, the potential for achieving it, even among "hard-core" prisoners, and the role that former perpetrators who have changed their thinking can play. The voices reported here lend weight to the view that transformed people like those in PSI should be recognized as stakeholders and incorporated as actors in the challenging task of building safer and more just communities.

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> *Transformed people like those in PSI should be recognized as stakeholders and incorporated as actors in the challenging task of building safer and more just communities.*

This article has sought to help flesh out the meaning of that definition by presenting examples of how members describe changes in attitude, thinking, worldview, and behavior that they have undergone as a result of involvement in the PSI transformation process.

This article also has endeavored to help round out our understanding of the concept of agency as it plays out in PSI's transformation process. PSI members believe that while people who have been involved in the culture of street crime can be stimulated and supported by their transformed peers, they have to make deliberate choices to reject that old way of life and to think and act in different ways. Those who accomplish that feat can then expect to be propelled by a newfound sense of empowerment to help extricate others from the street-crime culture, to dissuade youth from entering the culture, and to work in every way they can to make communities safer. In the PSI model, transformed offenders become a powerful force for change on many levels.

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Although the two older programs provide descriptive information on web sites (Inside Circle Foundation, *http://insidecircle.org*; Jericho Circle Project, *http://www.jerichocircle.org*), there has been no scholarly attention to these programs. The purpose of this paper is to describe these programs and identify key program elements and goals. One simple goal is to educate readers about these programs, but a more important goal is to specify program features clearly enough to stimulate and enable formal evaluation of their effectiveness.

Program Backgrounds

Inside Circle Foundation (ICF). ICF was founded as a not-for-profit organization in 1999. It has its origins in an exchange of poetry by a Folsom Prison

truth and be real and find that authentic voice (Morrison, 2008).

Jericho Circle Project (JCP). Steven Spitzer, a sociology professor in Boston, founded JCP as a nonprofit organization in 2002, largely modeling it after ICF. JCP has sponsored prison intensives in a federal medical facility and a minimum-security and a maximum-security state facility. The organization also sponsors weekly circles in those facilities and in a county jail. Although the organization's name refers to the biblical battle of Jericho and the success of the Israelites in bringing down the walls of the city, the organization is secular. After teaching courses about the criminal justice system and participating in the ManKind Project, Spitzer decided to work directly with men behind bars. He served as a volunteer at several ICF prison intensives, and implemented the Folsom model in Massachusetts:

of activities: group discussions, games, guided visualizations, journaling, and individual process work. The entire training is designed to help each man get in touch with the truth about himself—not his job, not his possessions, not his roles in life—himself" (ManKind Project, 2007). More than 30,000 men have attended the NWTA, and more than 3,000 participate each year.

In addition to the NWTA, MKP encourages men to "integrate" their experience at the NWTA by joining an integration group (I-Group). These self-directed support groups of five to 15 men are free and tend to meet weekly or biweekly. The participants gather to discuss personal challenges and pursue opportunities for growth and community service.

MKP is an international organization, with centers in most states in the United States and in countries such as England, Australia, Germany, and South Africa. Because of the scale of MKP, many offshoot projects have emerged, including a women's organization, The Woman Within; a project for youth, Boys To Men; outreach to military veterans, Veterans Journey Home; and the two prison projects that are the focus of this paper.

Mythopoetic Men's Movement. MKP and its organizational offspring are part of the "mythopoetic men's movement" (Barton, 2000a), which is the largest voluntary organization within the men's movement. Shepard Bliss (1995), who coined the term, writes that the phrase comes from "the word 'mythopoesis,' which refers to re-mythologizing. It means re-making, so the mythopoetic approach means revisioning masculinity for our time" (Bliss, 1995, pp. 292-293). According to Barton (2000b):

Feelings are often deeply buried in men, who have been socialized by North American culture and society to ignore or deny most feelings except anger.

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inmate and a Sacramento, California, accountant. The accountant, Don Morrison, who has long been active in the men's movement, men's support groups, and the ManKind Project, encouraged the inmate, Patrick Nolan, to form a men's group with fellow inmates. As Morrison describes it in an interview with the author:

> Wayne Liebman [1991]…wrote a book called *Tending the Fire*. It captures the essence of what happens in a circle when men tell the truth. I gave Nolan that to read and that fired his imagination, and I gave him all the books by Bly [1990] and Meade [1993], and he devoured them. He was growing by leaps and bounds and developing his own pathway. And as he read something, he'd take it out on the yard. He tried to have groups on the yard and that didn't work, so he got them going inside the chapel with the help of the chaplain. They were very crude by our standards today, but they worked. This stuff isn't brain surgery. It works at almost any level if men are willing to listen and tell the

> My initial goal was very simple. First, I wanted to learn and change myself—to bring down my own walls. What I had discovered at Folsom and elsewhere as we started our groups was a critical part of that process for me. While I began with the idea that I came to teach, I soon discovered that I had come to learn… The other part of it is that I had hoped to contribute by providing skills and tools for inside men to both experience their incarceration in a positive way and to live their lives inside and outside with some kind of mission. A key piece was to give men inside a chance to "re-author" their lives in a way that gave them direction and served their brothers, families, communities, and themselves (Spitzer, 2008).

ManKind Project (MKP). The prison volunteers are largely drawn from members of the ManKind Project. MKP is a men's organization that sponsors the New Warrior Training Adventure (NWTA), which, according to the organization's web site, is "a finely coordinated series

> Mythopoetic men's work uses myths and poetry as vehicles for accessing inner emotions, inner realities, and feelings. The accessing of these feelings is part of the remythologizing of the man and his masculinity for this time. These feelings are often deeply buried in men, who have been socialized by North American culture and society to ignore or deny most feelings except anger. By using the tools of myth, poetry, and experiential processes, a man can access these

feelings and emotions to re-vision a form of masculinity that is healthier for himself, his family or household, his relationships, his community, and his planet (p. 3).

National bestsellers like Robert Bly's (1990) *Iron John* and Sam Keen's (1991) *Fire in the Belly* are popular expressions of mythopoetic ideas. In the 1980s and 1990s, personal growth workshops emerged, and both the resulting literature and the gatherings have been the focus of some scholarly work in gender studies (Schwalbe, 1996; Barton, 2000a; Kimmel, 1995; Messner, 1997).

Prison Circle Programs. The ICF and JCP prison programs have two basic components: weekly support circles and intensive weekend training. Both are facilitated by volunteers drawn largely from their participation in MKP, and at Folsom by some inmates with lengthy experience with ICF. The weekly circles, which generally last two hours, provide an opportunity for a small group of inmates (approximately eight to 10) to meet and discuss matters of concern to them in a confidential forum. Sometimes facilitators will provide specific topics or lead the participants through particular exercises. Other times, the agenda will follow the participants' requests to work on issues most important to them at the time. Some groups are ongoing, while others may form and disband after a prespecified number of meetings.

Prison intensives are three or four days in length, and generally include 12 to 15 inmates who have been active participants in the weekly circles. They are staffed by 15 to 20 volunteers, who spend long days (8:00 AM to 8:00 PM) with the inmates. At the beginning of the intensive, each inmate selects a volunteer to be his mentor for the duration of the weekend. Meals are taken together; the group meets as a whole, and also splits into small groups of inmates and staff during some of the activities.

Study Data

The data from this study come from individual interviews with program directors and volunteers with JCP and ICF programs. Thirteen interviews were conducted between June and September 2006. In addition, the author was a participant/observer for one Jericho Circle intensive in June 2006. The interviews were semistructured, each relying on a common set of open-ended questions. Interviews lasted from one to two hours. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Data were coded and analyzed using a qualitative software program, *Atlas. ti*. The interview quotations included in this paper were selected because they are articulate and representative of volunteers' perspectives on their work.

Volunteer Facilitation Experience

All of the volunteers brought significant group facilitation experience to their participation in prison work. Of the 13 interviewees, one was the founder of ICF, the other of JCP. Most had little or no prior experience volunteering in prisons, but two had worked extensively as prison staff in counseling and administrative positions.

All of the men had a background with MKP. Inside this organization, experience is generally defined by the number of times a man has staffed a New Warrior Training Adventure. While all men have been participants of the NWTA, many go on to staff additional weekends. Nine of the 13 men had significant backgrounds with MKP, with at least 15 NWTA staffings and as many as 50. In addition, men active with MKP typically belong to an I-Group. Men therefore drew on their facilitation skills and personal experiences of their I-Groups in addition to their experiences with the NWTA. Most of the volunteers also drew on facilitation skills learned outside of MKP: For example, some were professional therapists or coaches, while others had participated in programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous, the Landmark Forum, and various spiritual disciplines.

Program Components

Like many rehabilitation programs in the prison setting, the men's circle program holds the promise of personal growth but is more focused on creating a particular environment within which the men can choose to explore issues of personal import. The topics to be covered, therefore, are left open. Men are given the choice to participate and to be as forthcoming as they are willing to be.

The volunteers generally do not talk about specific programmatic goals, although they recognize that other parties have goals that often coincide or that programmatic institutionalization necessitates some specificity. In particular, the volunteers note that correctional administrators are interested in having compliant inmates who do not have disciplinary problems, and this may be one outcome of the circle work. Foundations and other funding sources want reassurance about program effectiveness and are looking for data that demonstrate

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National bestsellers like Robert Bly's **Iron John** *and Sam Keen's* **Fire in the Belly** *are popular expressions of mythopoetic ideas.*

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positive outcomes inside the prison settings, such as greater program participation and success by inmates and low recidivism rates after release. The volunteers do have beliefs about program outcomes, which are discussed in a later section of this article.

Volunteers describe the "amorphous, watery, fluid environment" as having two fundamental features that make their program unique:

1. A "safe container" that allows men to develop enough trust with each other to speak openly about personal issues; and

2. A feature called "doing work," which refers to a set of techniques that enables the participants to explore personal problems and identify root causes, develop ways to solve these problems, and identify and pursue

individual goals that give their lives a sense of direction, meaning, and purpose.

Safe Container. The volunteers seek to create enough trust inside the circle that the men can speak honestly and experiment with new, prosocial identities without fear of judgment and ridicule. The achievement of this trust is a primary goal, and crafting it requires several interrelated activities and conditions. The term "container" is widely used by men in the ManKind Project and refers to "the intangible atmosphere in any space where people are gathered together" (Lassoff, 2005, p. 2). A "safe" container is not achieved immediately but develops slowly over many months. Volunteers place a great emphasis on providing the opportunity for men in the circle to share issues of concern to them. The value of

the importance of creating a sacred atmosphere, but one that is inclusive of all participants' particular religious or secular beliefs. This approach sets the programs apart from prison ministry projects, which may have religious conversion as part of their agenda.

Equality and Acceptance. A safe container is created when participants actively endorse a belief that each man in the circle is equal and that each man should be fully accepted by the circle. The volunteers seek to welcome participants without judgment and to accept them in spite of their crimes, addictions, personal histories, or characteristics.

The volunteers reject essentialist distinctions fostered in prison culture among inmates and between the inmates and others. This includes a rejection of a series of structural hierarchies. Inmates self-stratify by crime and race, and the men's circles

production of shared agreements and the assurance that if these agreements are violated, the transgression will be addressed. Although some of the terms are nonnegotiable, such as confidentiality, all are discussed, and the men will customarily provide a gesture of assent, such as a "thumbs up." Building a safe container is, in part, a democratic process of creating shared understandings of what is and what is not permissible behavior among circle members. Once agreements are reached, the circle holds each member accountable to the agreements by challenging men who violate agreements to recognize the impact of that behavior on themselves, the circle, and others. The volunteers believe that holding men accountable strengthens the container by providing clear boundaries. Having clear boundaries fosters trust that other men will not betray participants' confidence and also that, within the container, it is acceptable to "let go," even "push against" the container in order to test its relative safety.

In sum, the volunteers are quite intentional about the need to create a safe container, a space that is distinctive from mundane or routine group environments. To do so, they try to cultivate a distinctive atmosphere through ritual practices. They try to reduce distinctions between volunteers and inmates by opening the circle to any man's concerns and treating all members equally, including and especially volunteer facilitators. And they co-create normative agreements and make use of specialized processes like "clearings" to hold participants accountable to those commitments.

> *Most volunteers describe the importance of creating a sacred atmosphere, but one that is inclusive of all participants' particular religious or secular beliefs.*

creating a safe container is in allowing men to feel comfortable enough to talk about whatever is most important to them, without fear of criticism.

Ritual and Sacred Space. One belief among the volunteers is that when men enter the circle for a meeting, they can experience a psychological or spiritual shift, one that enables them to become more mindful of themselves and the others in the room. There is a greater emphasis on this shift in ManKind Project groups outside of the prison, which often make use of Native American ritual forms such as smudging (burning sage bundles) and calling in the directions (a form of prayer), as well as drumming, meditation, guided visualizations, poetry recitation, and/or displays of valued or sacred objects. The volunteers believe that the inmates are less interested in such ritual activities but still focus on having the participants consciously alter their mental attitude as they arrive for a meeting.

The ManKind Project and the prison circle programs are nondenominational. Most volunteers describe

actively encourage integrated groups, although integration is sometimes difficult to achieve, given that prison systems often segregate inmates to reduce racial conflict.

A second layer of hierarchy exists between prison staff and inmates. Although the men's circles have not included correctional officers—though that is an aspiration—volunteers believe that correctional treatment staff can not create the same level of equality that is achieved by the circle volunteers.

Ultimately, the volunteers identify with the inmates as equals. They believe that they and the inmates have fundamentally similar issues to work on, and the volunteers expect to do their own work as participants in the circle, thus bridging the divide between the "treaters" and the "treated." This kind of equality enables volunteers to role model emotional openness and trust, as well as provides inmates an opportunity to enact social support.

Agreements and Accountability. A third feature of the safe container is the

Doing Work: The Process

The men's circle volunteers see themselves conducting an intensive personal growth program, one that volunteers believe "goes deeper" than traditional group counseling, but that also falls outside the traditional domains of psychological counseling and religious ministries. Building a safe container is the first step. This section explores what happens inside the safe container. Volunteers generally call this process "doing work."

"Doing work" refers to a group therapy process where:

1. The group's attention is placed on one man's personal issue;

2. One or more men act as facilitators; and

3. The rest serve in support roles.

Primarily, the circle programs emphasize emotion work: verbally identifying feelings and expressing them in healthy ways.

In describing emotion work, volunteers use terms that are widely employed in the ManKind Project. The first, *bioenergetic work*, refers to group techniques that elicit or intensify emotional expression. In part, bioenergetic work refers to the facilitator's attentiveness to physical expression of emotion (body language). Facilitators will also use physical techniques to increase expressiveness. As a simple illustration, if a man who is "doing work" says that he feels "burdened" by his problem, the facilitator might have some circle members place their hands on the man's shoulders and bear down on him while the man continues to tell his story, thus physically intensifying the feeling of burden. Volunteers also use *psychodrama* as part of doing work. Psychodrama would include role playing that reenacts past, usually traumatic, situations, or that rehearses future scenarios, such as practicing a healthy response to an impending confrontation.

Doing work involves bioenergetics, psychodrama, and a third element drawn from the mythopoetic men's movement, which itself draws on Jungian psychology (Schwalbe, 1996): The volunteers believe that insight about personal struggles can be found in myths and legends, like the story of Iron John (Bly, 1990), that describe dramatic struggles of noble figures. They maintain that solace and hope and fortitude can be found by envisioning one's own drama as a "hero's journey."

Volunteers often refer to four mythopoetic *archetypes*. These are referenced as primary characteristics of masculinity, and each can be expressed positively or negatively. Many MKP members were influenced by Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette's (1990) book that describes these archetypes, *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine*. In doing work, facilitators will often explore these archetypes, not necessarily referencing them by name or conforming to a preconceived format, but as important dimensions to be examined in the work process.

Doing Work: An Illustration

Doing work inside the container begins with the identification of a feeling, often referred to by volunteers as a "charge." Strong charges are starting points for an exploration of dysfunctional behavioral repertoires. Because of the confidentiality of the container, the volunteers were unable to provide me with detailed examples of how the work unfolds. However, a recent online radio program featured members of the Inside Circle and their work at Folsom Prison, including James McCleary, a leader in the ManKind Project and in ICF intensives (Get Real Radio, 2007). The show included a call-in segment. Since the topic of the show was about men in prison, the hosts encouraged listeners to call in and respond to the idea that everyone, in his or her own way, is in prison. A lengthy discussion with the hosts (Bill, Dan, and James) and a caller (Tom) illustrates some of the dynamics of "doing work" in the prison programs. Because it is available online, this is an illustration that does not breach confidentiality. As mentioned above, the work begins with an examination of an emotional charge:

Tom: My prison bars are shame and fear… I have shame about my anger, so I have fear about expressing my anger because I don't know if I can control my anger…. So if I feel threatened, I might snap at somebody. For example, the other day—I'm a P.E. teacher, I teach kids Kindergarten through sixth—I had this game where the children were supposed to chase a group of children, but not chase the ball. And that is a really hard task for kids to do; there is a very natural instinct to chase a ball instead of a group of kids. And I decided to pick one student out even though a bunch were doing it and yell and shame that kid because that one kid was chasing the ball. I lost control. I had fear that I was going to look stupid. So instead of letting myself get out of control, instead of letting myself look stupid, I decided to lunge out and yell at this third grader, a girl, a third grade girl.

Bill: My guess, Tom, is that you didn't decide to do that in advance. It's the way the brain operates. Rage and fear are part of the evolutionary biology of survival. Our bodies have to respond to threats and fight to

> *The volunteers believe that insight about personal struggles can be found in myths and legends that describe dramatic struggles of noble figures.*

the death or experience fear and run away and survive. Rage and fear are emotions that all of us experience, men and women, but maybe with men, we have more fear about experiencing those powerful emotions. What do you think, James?

James: I hear you saying that and part of me almost thinks that you're explaining it from a detached place. I'm wondering if the kid felt the same way or would even be interested in your description of how rage comes out of a biological instinct? What do you think about that, Tom?

Tom: … She looked like she was in shock. 'Cause she turned around and just stopped and with big eyes looking right at me, like, "What did I do wrong? Every other kid was doing the same thing. How could you do that? Who do you think you are?"

In this opening sequence, the man doing work, Tom, shares a recent emotionally troubling personal experience. Similarly, in the prison circles, men are invited to "do work," meaning

that they can share something that is worrying them. While one talk show host offers a theoretical explanation, another, James, focuses on the interpersonal, emotional consequences. In mythopoetic terms, James is addressing the "lover archetype," with its emphasis on emotion, and what can be learned by identifying it.

Until this point, the conversation reflects the first stage in doing work. The man explores an emotional charge and its resulting dysfunctional behavior. Facilitators may seek to elicit a much greater emotional expression by having the person doing work visualize, describe, and recall the emotion, often also employing psychodramatic techniques (role playing). The dialogue then shifts to a second stage, exploring the idea that the dysfunctional behavior has its roots in a childhood wound in which the transgressor was once the victim. The volunteers, using mythopoetic terminology, may reference the "magician archetype," typifying the idea that long-standing dysfunctional behaviors can be transformed by recognizing their origins:

> **Tom:** My original work for me is around my dad. Where nothing was ever good enough for me. And I say that like a cliché, but that's really, really strong for me. Nothing was ever good enough for me and I learned to hold onto the lies about myself. I learned to say that I'm a terrible father; I learned to say that I was useless. Everything for me was black and white.
>
> **Dan:** So these are messages you got from your father?
>
> **Tom:** These are the messages I got and that I've learned since are not true. But those are the things I use to beat myself up.

In this stage, a developmental model is constructed. The child experiences a wound and develops a defensive coping strategy and a negative self-concept. This strategy and self-concept are carried into adulthood, generating dysfunctional behavior in response to situations that trigger the early emotional wound. Volunteers describe this predicament as operating from one's "shadow."

A third stage emphasizes the distinction between behavior and self-concepts guided by early wounds and those guided by mature and conscious intentions. Taking action that overcomes old patterns is viewed as "heroic." Therefore, the volunteers often draw on the "warrior archetype":

> **Dan:** So what is the truth, Tom?
>
> **Tom:** The truth? The truth is that things are not black and white. The truth is that I am a good father at times. I have difficulty identifying my feelings, but I'm also in a position where I can slow down and identify them.
>
> **James:** And I hear that's what happened in the example that you gave. That it came from an unconscious place, you snapped at the little girl, and you see the results of your behavior in that little girl's face. And so just to bring yourself full circle, what was your accountability? What did you do to make it up to that little girl?
>
> **Tom:** I didn't do anything to make it up to her yet.
>
> **James:** And do you have a plan for that?
>
> **Tom:** No, I don't.
>
> **James:** What might your plan be, if you did?
>
> **Tom:** In the past, I've made up by apologizing, saying "I'm sorry I yelled at you like that." And that's a simple thing; I just never did it that day. And that's something I'll need to do tomorrow.
>
> **James:** Is there anything else that you can give that little girl by way of your eldership? You learned a lesson. You are an elder to her because you are her teacher. You are an adult, and she is looking to you for something. What uniqueness, your gift, your medicine, what can you provide her with other than just "I'm sorry"?
>
> **Tom:** She has passion. I'm thinking out loud. She has passion, great energy; she's a lover of life. I'm trying to figure out how to translate that for a third grader.
>
> **Dan:** It doesn't have to be complicated. It can be something simple. Maybe let her be captain of the team?
>
> **Tom:** Right, exactly. Let her pick a part in an activity that we do. Some

are more desirable than others, and just have her be one of those positions, after having talked to her so she knows she's being acknowledged.

With a "warrior" focus, the talk show hosts challenge Tom to take responsibility for the harmful effects of his behavior. The goal is to identify a concrete action that is symbolically meaningful as a reparative action, but also one that is proportionate to the offense and logistically feasible. Once that step has been accomplished, the work turns to "honoring" or "blessing" the man for his willingness to share his vulnerability and take charge of his actions. This movement is a shift in focus to the "king" archetype:

> **James:** So, I'm hearing that your particular uniqueness, as an elder and a teacher, is that you see her, and that possibly by letting her know those things that you see in her is a way that you can mentor her into her own medicine and uniqueness … You know, I can tell the difference in your voice, Tom, from when you were describing how you can be acting out of your own shadow and own unmentionable behavioral strategy to a place where you are honoring yourself as a seer. Those are your gifts. Otherwise, you probably wouldn't be a teacher. I just want to let you know that I see you also. In the same way you can see that little girl, I can see you, too.

Although this exchange between Tom and the talk show hosts illustrates the kind of work that is done in the prison circles, it is limited by context. While one of the hosts volunteers with ICF and this was a radio show about the prison program, the man "doing work" was not in the program himself, nor was he an inmate. Because this work was conducted on a radio show, there was no "safe container" that would enable the work to become emotionally intense and very personally revealing. The participants did not employ any bioenergetic techniques or psychodramatic role plays. Nevertheless, the dialogue does provide a window into the nature of "doing work" in a men's circle by illustrating its progression through the four masculine archetypes.

Worth Reading

by Stacy Calhoun*

Smoking Cessation Intervention for Female Prisoners: Addressing an Urgent Public Health Need

by Karen Cropsey, Gloria Eldridge, Michael Weaver, Gabriela Villalobas, Maxine Stitzer, and Al Best

98 (10) American Journal of Public Health (2008), 1894-1901

Smoking tobacco cigarettes plays a big part in prison life by serving many roles, such as a stress reliever or a substitute currency. So it should come as no surprise that the prevalence rate of smoking is generally higher among prisoners than it is among the general population. Over the past decade, however, there has been a big push to implement smoking bans in correctional settings throughout the country, mainly to protect nonsmoking staff and inmates from secondhand smoke, but also to reduce prison health care expenditures. Thus, the inmates are forced to quit, because they are confined within a correction facility with no opportunity to smoke.

The smoking bans prove only to stop inmates from smoking temporarily, however, as many start smoking again within a couple of months after release. As a result, many researchers feel that offering smoking cessation programs along with the smoking bans would help maintain the inmates' abstinence from smoking after release.

While there are numerous studies on smoking cessation programs with various populations, very few focus on smoking cessation interventions with prisoners. But even the few that were done with prisoners were conducted with an all-male sample and had a small sample size. The current study attempts to expand the knowledge base on this subject by looking at the effectiveness of a smoking cessation program within a female prisoner population. The authors hypothesized

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that the group exposed to the intervention would have higher rates of quitting at all time points compared to the control group.

Methods. Recruitment of the female inmates took place from June 2004 to June 2006 at a prison located in the southeastern part of the United States. A female inmate was eligible to participate in the study if she met the following criteria:

- Was an adult smoker who smoked at least five cigarettes a day;
- Was interested in smoking cessation treatment;
- Had the ability to participate in group psychotherapy;
- Had no contraindications for nicotine replacement;
- Was housed in the general population; and
- Had at least one year left to serve.

While there are numerous studies on smoking cessation programs with various populations, very few focus on smoking cessation interventions with prisoners.

Participants were randomly assigned either to the smoking cessation intervention group or to the wait-list control group; however, everyone enrolled in the study had the opportunity to receive the intervention. (Those in the control group received the intervention six months after they were enrolled in the study.) Initially the first two cohorts were randomly assigned to the intervention or the control group. But as participants in the control group crossed over to the intervention group, all new participants were placed into the wait-list control group. The wait-list control group did not receive any instructions or advice about quitting or reducing their use of tobacco cigarettes.

The women in the intervention group received a behavioral intervention based on mood management training and a pharmacologic intervention. The behavioral intervention consisted of a weekly group session over a period of 10 weeks; the session covered examples of smoking triggers encountered in prison and presented coping strategies. For the pharmacologic part of the intervention, participants received NicoDerm CQ nicotine replacement patches during the third week of the intervention. The participants were asked to quit smoking immediately after receiving their first supply of patches between the third and fourth week.

The participants in the intervention group completed a baseline assessment, 10 weekly assessments, and follow-up assessments at three, six, and 12 months. The participants in the wait-list control group completed a baseline assessment and follow-up assessments at 10 weeks, three months, and six months. The control group did not complete a 12-month follow-up because they crossed over to the intervention group after the six-month follow-up. The baseline interview asked them about demographic information, height and weight, smoking history, weekly measures of smoking, number of cigarettes smoked the previous day, type of cigarettes smoked the previous day, and type of cigarette last smoked. Also, during the baseline assessment, the carbon monoxide (CO) concentration in parts per million (ppm)

Program Goals and Outcomes

Once the men have built a safe container and done their work, what is it that they expect will be achieved? Why go to all of this trouble? The volunteers described five programmatic outcomes:

1. Emotional well-being;

2. Personal insight;

3. A sense of belonging;

4. Improved behavior inside the prison; and

5. Greater success on release.

None of these five goals have been systematically evaluated, so I am making no claims here about the program's efficacy. The purpose here is to identify what the volunteers see as valuable, and doing so can in turn guide future evaluation research. We will now examine each outcome in a bit more detail.

Emotional Well-Being. Volunteers describe dramatic changes in the inmates because of their participation in the circle program. They observe the inmates achieving a sense of "peacefulness," having "less anger," and being more "contented." Such changes are particularly noticeable after a weekend intensive.

The volunteers also mention comments made by correctional officers, prison treatment staff, and administrators that confirm their impressions. Thus, the volunteers find that inmates experience a greater sense of emotional well-being through their participation.

Personal Insight. The volunteers often look for evidence that the men have gained some self-awareness:

• Why they behave in certain ways;

• How their antisocial reactions are patterned after early traumas; and

• How they can change.

Participation, for the volunteers, leads to a process of self-examination and a broader perspective of how to do their time and plan for the future. Inmates begin to explore new ideas and experiment with healthier behavioral repertoires.

Sense of Belonging. The volunteers see inmates shift from a position of isolation, conforming to the prison code of "doing one's own time," to membership in a community of trust. They have noticed that the inmates are able to develop positive relationships. This process is slow and does not necessarily occur after one intensive, but it unfolds over time with the ongoing weekly circles.

Belonging to a community of men who are able to speak openly about their personal struggles and collectively celebrate their triumphs is an important goal. One volunteer noted an evolution in some circles from initial risk-taking to confident belonging.

Particularly at Folsom, volunteers observed that the community formation in the circles was strong enough to enable some men to break their ties to gangs.

Finally, particularly at Folsom, volunteers observed that the community formation in the circles was strong enough to enable some men to break their ties to gangs and extricate themselves from the obligations of violent retaliation. In this sense, the circles are a powerful, resonant alternative to gang membership.

Improved Behavior. The volunteers tend to view prisons as "toxic environments," with continuous stressors on inmates that make positive change difficult to achieve and sustain. Despite these conditions, they believe that the program does yield change.

More specifically, program directors have expressed interest in collecting data on behavioral changes. Inside prisons, one measure that they are considering is reductions in disciplinary reports. Another measure is participation not only in the circle program but in other correctional programs (to the extent that the opportunities are made available).

Successful Reentry. Although some of the inmates who have participated in the circle programs are serving life sentences and will not be released, the volunteers are concerned about reentry.

The circle programs are not reentry programs, but they have provided some limited support to men on release. Circle programs have tried to find ManKind Project I-Groups for men to join and have sometimes provided money for rent and cell phones with preprogrammed numbers for the men to call in case they need help. Some volunteers knew of men who had been released. Some have been returned to prison, others have not, but no hard data has been collected.

The volunteers find that successful reentry is possible for participants and that their program's unique contribution is providing circles of support for the men after release through the ManKind Project.

A Unique Opportunity

The Inside Circle Foundation, the Jericho Circle Project, and the more recent TRUTH Project are innovative correctional programs that provide weekly support circles and intensive experiential weekend experiences for men in prison. This paper has reported the findings of interviews with circle program founders and volunteers. Volunteers identify key programmatic features, intended outcomes, and the theoretical framework guiding the programs. The volunteers believe that the programs have been well received by inmates and by the hosting correctional facilities. These programs have grown in scale and now warrant systematic evaluation.

Figure 1 summarizes the findings of this study by incorporating them into a program logic model. Logic models are used to specify program features for evaluation and to disclose the theoretical relationships between these features and intended outcomes (McLaughlin & Jordan, 1999). In this study, the logic model was developed inductively, based on the views of program founders and volunteers.

The men's circle programs do not build on or refer to popular correctional treatment models. Therefore, they lack empirical validation and remain largely unknown in the treatment landscape. According to program

Figure 1: Prison Circle Program Logic Model

Program Structure →	Components →	Outcomes
Intensive Weekends	*Safe Container*	Emotional Well-Being
Weekly Circles	– Ritual and Sacred Space	Personal Insight
ManKind Project	– Equality and Acceptance	Sense of Belonging
Volunteers	– Agreements and Accountability	Improved Behavior
		Successful Reentry
	Doing Work	
	– Emotion Work	
	– Bioenergetics	
	– Psychodrama	
	– Hero's Journey and Archetypes	

volunteers, however, the model offers a unique and powerful opportunity for inmates to experience personal growth and transformation by developing emotional intelligence and personal integrity. Volunteers have no formal training or certification but often have well-developed skills that they have gained from years of experience within the ManKind Project. In prisons with limited programming, exploiting the volunteer potential of this organization may add significant value to the facilities' rehabilitation efforts.

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from expired air was measured using a Vitalograph BreathCO, in order to determine whether participants were currently smoking.

Smoking status (smoking vs. abstinence) was the primary outcome at each time point. Abstinence was confirmed by a CO exhalation of two ppm or less. Participants who withdrew from the intervention or had missing data during follow-up were coded as smoking. For those who were transferred to another facility or released after the intervention ended, the authors used their last assessment results for subsequent follow-up points.

Participant Characteristics. A total of 250 participants took part in the intervention. About 44% were white and 56% nonwhite. Their average age was 33.8 years, and 41% had completed high school or had a GED. Over half of them reported a history of treatment for mental health problems and substance abuse. The mean age that they started smoking was 13.7 years, and the mean age that they started smoking on a daily basis was 16.2 years. Their smoking patterns changed considerably after entering prison, with a little over half reporting increased smoking. The number of women who smoked unfiltered or hand-rolled cigarettes increased from 0.9% to 22.8% after entering prison.

There were no significant differences in demographic and smoking variables between the following comparison groups:

- Participants who entered the intervention vs. participants who withdrew or were transferred before the intervention began; and

- Participants who completed the intervention vs. participants in the control group.

When the authors compared participants who completed the intervention with participants who dropped out of the intervention, they found that there were no significant differences in age,

race/ethnicity, number of cigarettes per day, time since last cigarette, or rated difficulty of last quit attempt. Those who dropped out of the intervention were more likely to be single and to have started daily smoking at a younger age, however. The author did find significant differences between participants who completed the intervention and control participants who did not start the intervention.

Results. The findings show that the intervention was successful in promoting smoking cessation among female prisoners when compared with the wait-list control group. There were significant differences between the two groups from four weeks through six months but no significant differences from baseline to week three. At week four (the week after the targeted quit date), 29% of the intervention participants had verified abstinence, whereas none of the participants in the wait-list control group had verified abstinence. The quit rate for the intervention group declined over time, however, to 18.4% at the end of treatment, 16.8% at the three-month follow-up, and 14% at the six-month follow-up. In contrast, the quit rate for the wait-list control group remained essentially the same throughout the duration of the study but increased slightly, to 2.8% at six months.

With regard to relapse rates, half of the intervention participants had at least one week of verified abstinence, with 20.8% of them remaining abstinent throughout the study. A little less than half relapsed after one week of verified abstinence, 14.1% after two weeks, and 11% after three weeks. When the authors examined the effect of group attendance on smoking cessation, they found that the number of sessions attended was significantly related to smoking cessation at all time points. They also found that compliance with nicotine replacement was significantly related to smoking cessation at the end of treatment and at the three-month follow-up but not at the later follow-up periods.

Conclusion. As this study shows, many women either started smoking or increased their smoking after entering prison, and the number of women smoking hand-rolled unfiltered cigarettes increased as well. Smoking in general is associated with many preventable health problems, but smoking unfiltered cigarettes in particular has been shown to increase the risks of several cancers, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, heart disease, and overall mortality. Thus, there is a great need to reduce smoking among women who are incarcerated in order to improve their health and to reduce the costs associated with their medical care. Findings from this study show that a combined pharmacologic and behavioral smoking cessation intervention has the potential to reduce smoking among women prisoners at similar rates to those found in community samples. ∎