

**Lessons from the Cellblock: A Study of Prison Inmate
Participants in an Alternatives to Violence Program**

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Introduction

This paper is a follow-on to preliminary research on the Quakers conducted in the fall of 2000. That inquiry looked at other-regarding principles in the Quaker religion and how they are applied in practice.

Underlying Quakerism is a deep regard for all people. The Quakers believe that “God is in everyone.” They are strongly anti-violent, very receptive of people of other faiths, and generally very tolerant in their approach to life. Because of these principles, Quakers are frequently sought out as mediators, counselors, and leaders of organizations committed to non-violence. The strength of their beliefs about the goodness of all other people led me to the notion that this principle might be transferable and useful as a means of fostering cooperation. It seemed logical that the degree to which one person regards another would have a bearing on his or her willingness to cooperate. If other-regarding/other-valuing (I will use these terms together frequently throughout this paper) can be instilled and reinforced in people and their willingness to cooperate subsequently shown to increase, then we should be able to draw the conclusion that modifying these values produces a positive effect on cooperation. My theory is that it does, and I will present an analysis that supports this conclusion herein. A second, and more difficult question, is whether or not the other-regarding behavior can be generalized across a broader segment of the population (beyond the immediate group). That question is not specifically addressed in this project, but it is a logical extension of the research.

The principal literature on cooperation (vs. competition) argues two divergent positions. First, competition is inevitable, part of a Darwinian selection process, and unless actively controlled, will be the default *modus operandi* of human interaction. Axelrod (1984) best articulates this school of thought in his work on the Prisoner’s Dilemma game. He argues that cooperation has to be instilled (or at least supported by some interventionist strategy). The opposing view is that reflected in the works of Kohn (1986, 1990) and Deutsch (1973), who see competition as strictly a learned behavior, one that can be unlearned, as well. Both of these views, however, focus on external factors influencing cooperation and fail to appreciate the significance that our view of others has in determining our willingness to cooperate. For the practitioner, this is a crucial gap, for while external factors are clearly relevant, they are not sufficient to explain cooperation. This paper will show the influence of other-regarding behavior on cooperation, and while the group under study is somewhat unique, the lessons learned here are of relevance to practitioners in a more generalized context.

I will begin the paper with a brief explanation of the setting in which my observations were conducted. A narrative account of my experience follows. I will then provide an analysis of what I observed and how it relates to the research question. The narrative approach I have employed here follows that of William Foote Whyte, whose work, *Street Corner Society*, I greatly admire. My objective is to tell a story as much as it is to conduct research, and while two prison workshops are clearly insufficient to establish a case for prison

reform, it should not escape the readers of this piece that helping prisoners develop alternate ways of dealing with violence is an appropriate objective, even in the absence of any broader interest. One must keep in mind that most of the prisoners in the system will ultimately be released from prison into society. I, for one, would like to see them employ non-violent means of addressing conflict once they have rejoined us. But this paper is about more than just alternatives to violence; it is about how values affect the development of behavioral skills. That is what I hope will be the most useful discussion for management practitioners, the audience I wish most to address.

The Setting and Methods

To test my theory, I studied a group of prison inmates participating in an Alternatives to Violence (AVP) workshop in a state penitentiary. AVP was developed by the Quakers in the 1970s in response to a request from inmates at Green Haven Prison who were trying to help young inmates deal with violent behavior. The Quakers were a logical choice to help structure the program. AVP has become popular worldwide and workshops are now conducted in Africa, Ireland, Russia and Bosnia. At the correction center I studied, over 2000 inmates have completed the workshop in the last eight years. To my knowledge, no follow up research has been conducted to determine the long-term effectiveness of the program and this might be a fruitful topic for a future project. In addition to the basic workshop, which I attended and which forms the basis for this paper, AVP has expanded now to include workshops on Bias Awareness, Manly Awareness (dealing with gender differences), and Forgiveness, as well as an advanced course and a train-the-trainer module. The workshops are facilitated by outside volunteers, with prison sponsorship, but no prison officials participate in the sessions. Three inmate volunteer-trainers led my workshop (a lead trainer, a trainer and a novice trainer). I participated as a trainee, the usual process for someone wishing to become a facilitator. Other than the wonderful woman who is the volunteer coordinator for AVP at the correction center, I was the only other outsider in the workshop.

My initial contacts with AVP were made through the people at the Friend's Center in Philadelphia who put me in touch with the facilitators in the area. Through them, I made arrangements to participate in the training program and conduct my research in parallel. Access to the prison system was a bit problematic. Police background investigations are required, which take some time to process. Outsiders are viewed initially with some skepticism, at least until intentions are clear. My initial approach to the research caused a bit of a flap because of the sensitivity over potential for publication. Because prison officials do not sit in the workshop sessions, they were concerned that unauthorized communications might find their way into print. This concern was overcome with the assistance of the former National Director of the Alternatives to Violence Program, who facilitated approval for my research with senior administrators in the state prison system. To him, I am eternally grateful. Prisoners, as it turns out, are a protected population when it comes

to research and this, too, required some maneuvering through the university's Internal Review Board (IRB). The state prison system also has an internal IRB that had to approve the project.

The correction center is a state prison. The inmates in the program are incarcerated for a variety of offenses, ranging from homicide, to drug offenses, to DUI. The state does not operate a county jail system, so both felony and misdemeanor offenders are placed in the same facilities. The workshop was conducted in a currently unused building that served formerly as the education building. The building is inside the prison compound. Once inside, volunteers are not allowed to leave until the workshop is completed. A Correction Officer is assigned to the workshop and serves as escort and security for the volunteers. A prison counselor accompanies the volunteers, but does not sit in the workshop. Resources for the program are scarce. There are no viewgraph machines, computer generated presentation systems, audio or visual aids, or even flip charts on which to write. The trainers used white plastic trash bags and erasable marking pens to make charts and record comments during the evaluations. There were pencils available for the inmates to write with and a few handouts, but not much else. The trainers and facilitators appear dedicated to AVP principles and speak with passion about the topics. They seem to have significant influence on the participants.

I participated in the workshop as a trainee and conducted my observations during the course of the sessions. Since I was asked not to take notes the first day, my notes were reconstructed in the evening after the day's sessions concluded. Details are, therefore, a bit sketchier than those of the second day, when I was allowed to make notes. I participated fully in all exercises and talked to the men during the few minutes before and after the break. I could not accompany them out into the compound during the break periods and we were required to remain inside the Ed. Building when the men went to lunch and dinner. I was not allowed to conduct formal interviews and had to rely on the few brief informal discussions in which I was able to engage. My observations were conducted during the two-day workshop. Except for the start of the workshop, I made notes and later converted those to more detailed description. My detailed notes were later analyzed and coded to identify behavioral patterns. I should mention here that I attended two AVP workshops separated in time by about two months. My narrative describes only the first workshop for two reasons. First, the behavioral patterns in the second workshop were so similar to the first that it would add little insight to the paper. Second, a sample of two was not felt to add much statistical significance to the findings, and in the interest of reducing the length of the paper (I am operating under a page limitation), I elected to omit the description of the second workshop. Suffice it to say, however, that everything observed in the first workshop was observed in the second. Only the participants were different.

The method employed for the study is taken from Emerson, et. al. (Emerson, et. al., 1995), particularly in its attempt to structure a thematic narrative. This is also consistent with my effort to emulate Whyte's *Street Corner Society*. It was felt that the prison would be a rich setting for telling a story as opposed to a "tightly

organized analytic argument” (Emerson, et. al., p.170). I wanted to convey a small sense of what the experience was like for me as much as I wanted contribute to the research. This is consistent with Emerson’s guidance on “description” and the need to provide “concrete details” (Emerson, et. al., 1995, pp. 68-69).

The Workshop

The winter wind is blowing cold and strong across the open fields around the correction center and as I drive up to the complex, the wind hits the car broadside, rocking it back and forth. This is not an inviting place, I think, and the bitter weather just makes it worse. The high chain link fences, topped with coils of concertina wire make clear the purpose of the facility. The buildings are plain, made of concrete block and painted beige. Mostly, they are windowless. I follow the “visitor parking” signs down a driveway off of the main road and park in a lot in front of the gatehouse. It must be shift change, because guards are walking out to their cars on the other side of the lot. I park and go into the gatehouse. There is a large entry door and then an interior door, which is controlled electrically by a guard inside a heavy glass control room. The guard eyes me indifferently and pushes some unseen button, which unlatches the second door. The door is massive, made of glass, but it feels heavier than it looks. Probably bulletproof and bombproof, I think. I am then in the waiting room and find myself facing a guard at a desk who screens people coming through the door. He asks me, gruffly, if I am visiting an inmate. “No,” I say, “I am a volunteer and I am supposed to meet Counselor S¹ here at 0800.” His tone and attitude change immediately from cool condescension, to a little more friendly posture. He says, “You can have a seat in there (pointing to a separate area of the waiting room) if you like. She should be here soon.” “Thanks,” I reply, and proceed to where he has directed.

Counselor S and ML² (my Quaker contact) arrive about 0825. I am the only one waiting in the area, so they assume, correctly, that I am their AVP volunteer. They seem glad to see me and shake my hand vigorously. We exchange pleasantries and they explain some of the procedures that have to be followed to get into the prison: no wallets, money or metal objects, no metal cans or bottles (we had to bring our lunch, but only plastic drink bottles are allowed)

I filled out an extensive approval form prior to the session, which had a long list of rules about interactions with the inmates, so I am reasonably prepared.

¹ Counselor S is an employee of the correction center and is the focal point for the volunteer programs.

² ML is an outside volunteer and is not affiliated with the prison. She was my principal contact for the AVP program. She is referred to later in the narrative as Marvelous ML.

We proceed to the guard desk and put our coats, lunch bags, and loose items into the x-ray machine. We then walk through a metal detector. The procedure is similar to airport security checks. We collect our things and then proceed through the door down a long hallway. At the end of that hallway we come to another heavy door. A guard in a control room opens it and we enter. The door closes behind us and we are then in a closed area with another door in front. Counselor S goes in to a side room and picks up a telephone, which she informs us we will carry over to the education building. She says our guard (I will use CO...for Correction Officer...from here on) for the day will be coming to meet us and escort us to the education building. He arrives a minute or two later. The door in front of us opens and we all walk out into the compound. We have to go through one other building to get out onto the path that leads to the Ed. Building. Once on it, we walk about 100 yards on the outside pathway to another set of high chain link/concertina fences. The first gate slides open and we walk through. The gate behind us closes and then the gate in front opens. This all happens automatically, without any radio calls or hand signals. Whoever is watching us obviously knows exactly who we are and where we are going. We are now in another area of the compound. This is the real inside of the prison, an area where inmates are allowed to roam during certain periods (code greens). There are no inmates in the area at the moment. We proceed on to the Ed. Building and our CO unlocks the door. We go in and began preparing for the workshop. It was cold and windy outside and I am glad to be inside. Chairs have to be retrieved and set up in each room (two sessions are planned today and tomorrow), so Counselor S and ML put me to work. After organizing things we wait for the inmate participants. The CO and Counselor S have to call each of the buildings to ask for the inmates to be sent over. It takes about 20 minutes for all the participants to arrive.

Once the inmates begin arriving, it is apparent that some of them know ML and Counselor S. ML exchanges hugs with many of the men and greets them warmly. The inmates are a mix of ages, ranging from early twenties to late fifties. About a third of the men are black. I am introduced to several of them and shake hands with each. We all file in to our respective rooms to begin the workshop. ML introduces me to the group and I explain the informed consent forms. I can feel a sense of uneasiness about what I am doing there, but after some questions and a little more explanation everyone agrees to sign.

Session I – Saturday morning 0930-1025

The workshop begins with a discussion of logistics and ground rules. This is called the “opening rap.” Participants are advised of the agenda for the two days, how breaks will be handled, behavior expected while in the workshop, and a few other details. Everyone is advised that the workshop is strictly voluntary. Some of the men are under court order to attend some type of program to deal with violent behavior, but they are advised that irrespective of any court order, they do not have to attend the workshop (the workshop facilitators are under no obligation to accept involuntary participants, so anyone not wanting to be there

will be excused). Everyone is also counseled that full participation is expected if they stay. No one opts out.

The first exercise of the workshop is “adjective names.” Everyone is asked to think up an adjective name using the same first letter as his name and to use that throughout the workshop when speaking. For example, my selected name is “Slick Stan,” and every time I speak during the two days, I am expected to start by saying, “I’m Slick Stan...” Whenever an exercise involves rotational speaking, the participants are expected to end with, “I pass to...,” and insert the adjective name of the person next to speak. Selection of names proceeds in rotational fashion, with each person selecting a name and passing on to the next person. Each person attempts to state orally the adjective names of every person that has spoken before him. The group consists of eighteen inmates, so it becomes increasingly difficult as the exercise progresses, with the last person having to try and recall the adjective names of the eighteen preceding inmates. Other than about the first three or four men, no one gets all the names correct. I am close (I am the fifteenth person and get all the names but one). The names chosen are; Merciful M, Battling B, Mighty M, Charismatic C, Courteous C, Spiritual S, Dynamic D, Magnificent M, Tenacious T, Magical M (inmate trainer), Joyful J, Radiant R (inmate trainer), Dandy D, Marvelous ML (outside facilitator, also a Quaker), Miraculous M (inmate trainer), Terrific T, Victorious V, Tidy T³. We are not given a purpose for the exercise, but it seems to force concentration. Normally, one would take some time to remember the names of people in an unfamiliar group. This put everyone on the spot in front of others. If you could not remember names, you were a bit embarrassed. Consequently, everyone worked a little harder than normal to remember the names. The use of “adjective names” helped a bit as it was easier to associate people with the selected names. There was a story behind the name selections, and these were shared with the group as we went around the room. We were encouraged to select positive names and everyone did. This activity struck me as a kind of verbal Rorschach test, in that everyone picked the name that apparently came first to mind, as I did. It seems that the men had an ulterior motive in selecting names. As they stated their selected name, most of them smiled or chuckled about it. Everyone was very forthcoming with a name selection, as well. No one hesitated when it came time to share their name with the group. I wanted my name selection to create a positive impression (this required a bit of an explanation as “Slick” does not automatically convey a positive image) on this group of unfamiliar men and I am sure that was running through the minds of the other participants. The net effect of all this was to force everyone to think about the others in the group and associate with them a positive image derived from the adjective name. This set a norm for the workshop about how others would be viewed and about self-efficacy that would be a foundation of the later exercises.

The participants are a diverse group and some description of them is in order. Mighty M is the youngest of the group at 20. His family called him Mighty Mouse when he was younger. Joyful J is serving an 82-year

³ Counselor S is not listed here because she did not participate in the workshop. As a prison official, she remained outside in the Ed. Building.

sentence for homicide. He said he found spirituality and that had truly made him joyful. Dandy D is a former general contractor. Miraculous M is a former educator who is lead trainer for many of the inmate run programs including the GED program that the prison operates. Battling B says he chose his name because he has had to battle his whole life (not clear over what). Charismatic C is anything but and I suspect he selected his name as a spoof. Spiritual S is a big man with huge arms and a barrel chest. He looks like the inmates in the movies who spend their days lifting weights. He has a lazy eye, a wild haircut and a frightening look about him. When I first saw him and thought about being locked in the building with him and only one CO, I began questioning my research choice. Spiritual would be the last name I would have associated with this man (until I get to know him later). Magnificent M is a young (24) black man who looks like an NBA player. He is about 6'4" and could be a movie star, as well. I get to know him better than any of the other inmates. He is the father of five, is intelligent, affable and will later prove to be a marvelous actor in the role playing sessions. Merciful M looks like a rock musician. The prison must allow long hair, as his is shoulder length, but none of the other inmates have long hair. Courteous C is, in fact, very courteous. Radiant R, true to his name, is the most outgoing of the lot. He seems to be the most "into" his role as trainer. Everyone has a rationale for the names they pick, all of them conveyed in a positive story. All in all, they are a colorful group.

The inmates all wear prison uniforms consisting of white cotton pants and v-neck, pullover shirts. The men have winter coats, also white. Everything has "DOC" marked on it in black letters. The pants have it on the front of one of the legs, the shirts on the back. The jackets are also marked on the back. A few of the inmates have white knit wool caps. Many of the men wear "state boots," a high-topped brown work boot that is issued as part of the prison uniform. They are also allowed to wear athletic shoes if they have money to buy them (they may receive money from home) and about half of the men are wearing an eclectic assortment of styles of Nike, Addidas, Converse, and a few other brands of shoes. The shoes look out of place, given the uniformity of everything else. The v-neck shirts have a breast pocket and most of the men have something in it. There are eyeglasses in cases, pens and pencils, some in pocket protectors, and "top" (tobacco). Because of the cost of finished cigarettes, most of the smokers have pouches of loose tobacco and rolling papers. At break time, they prove to be very adept at quickly rolling fairly uniform cigarettes.

Marvelous ML and Miraculous M ask me not to take notes the first day so that the men will not be distracted by it. I find that to be a severe limitation with all the activity. This is all so new. I try to make mental notes as the day progresses, but I feel overwhelmed. I also have to become comfortable talking to people I have spent most of my life condemning for their failings. I have given little thought to the possibility that these are real people.

The inmates talk a lot about what their lives are like in the correction center. They tell me they like to interact with outsiders, particularly someone who seems to be interested in them and trying to help. I

wonder if this is because they see an opportunity to manipulate someone they perceive will be sympathetic to their predicament. Later, I will come to the conclusion that this is not their motive, based on extensive interaction and observation, and the fact that I can in no way influence anything about their lives either in prison or post-release. The men all know this, so influencing me would have no payoff for them.

During conversations either one-on-one or in the small groups that I join during breaks, I have to stop them frequently and ask for definitions of some of the terms they are using. As a result, my vocabulary has now grown to include; top (tobacco, a precious commodity in the correction center); shank (knife or weapon); cellie (cell mate); code green (period when inmates are allowed to be out of their cells and walk around the complex); tier (cell block); SHU (security housing unit, a place dreaded by the inmates, the equivalent of solitary confinement); hit (denial of parole and set back of the next possible date for review). There are other phrases, as well. The inmates have a particular slang that includes “Y’now what I mean” (frequently inserted in sentences, sometimes with as few as one or two words on either side of it), and “brother” (used frequently when referring to another inmate, but not used exclusively between any particular racial or ethnic group). A ground rule in the workshop is that profanity not be used and only once does an inmate slip. Mighty M relates a story about how his girlfriend had tricked him into thinking he was the father of her child, subsequently pressuring him to support the pair. This charade apparently went on for some time before Mighty M received a call from the natural father, supplying him with the facts. Referring to his girlfriend, Mighty M says he felt like “throwing her ass out the window.” He is promptly chided by Miraculous M and does not repeat the offense.

As I watch the group, I wonder why they are here. Is there a sincere interest in changing their behavior? Are they here for other reasons? I probe these questions whenever I have a chance to talk to the inmates during breaks. I am also sensitive to behaviors that would expose ulterior motives. If there were a lack of sincerity, I would expect uncooperative behaviors to occur during activities that place the participant under stress. Examples of this would include unwillingness to participate in the various exercises, or lack of interaction in the one-on-one exchanges. I detect none of these behaviors, however. There is also the underlying fact that none of the inmates have to be there. Without exception, they tell me they want to be here, that they heard AVP was a good program, and that they want to learn how to avoid violence so that they will be better men down the road. My guarded conclusion is that there are few, if any, inmates here with ulterior motives.

At about 1025, we take a 10-minute break. The smokers immediately break out their tobacco pouches, quickly roll up cigarettes, and proceed outside. The others drift outside as well. Conversations are muted. Other than a couple of men who know each other, the men keep to themselves as they go out. I get the impression that they are not all comfortable with each other. The initial workshop exercises have set the

group on a path of other-regarding behavior and self-efficacy, but this does not yet extend outside the classroom.

Session 2 – Saturday afternoon 1035-1500

Everyone comes back into the room and sits down. The session begins with a “re-entry” exercise. These are simple individual activities that start every new session, serving as a re-acclimation to the workshop. For this reentry, everyone has to complete the sentence, “I feel good about myself when...” We go around the room sequentially, following the protocol of using our adjective names and passing on to the next person, stating his adjective name. The responses are split about half and half between achievement oriented responses such as, “I feel good about myself when I finish something that I started,” and humanistic responses such as, “I feel good about myself when I help someone who’s down.” While the diversity of answers reflects individual differences, the exercise forces everyone to tell something about themselves to the group, exposing a personal feeling. Some of the men seem uncomfortable having to make an oral statement to the group. They shift in their chairs and fidget with their hands nervously. Some are clearly confident and comfortable addressing the others. When his turn arrives, Spiritual S leans back in his chair, clasps his hands behind his head and says he feels good about himself when he, “can help someone who hasn’t got it all together, y’know what I mean.” The low even tone of delivery and the body language indicate no lack of confidence or discomfort. A cool character, I think to myself. I watch people’s reactions to the statements and notice that there is a lot of head nodding as well as a few verbal affirmations. Everyone is paying attention to those speaking, apparently sincerely interested in what is being said. This reinforces everyone as they offer up their responses.

The exercise seems to serve as a means for the men to seek personal affirmation in a “safe” setting, thereby establishing that it is OK to open up to strangers⁴. It suggests that strangers (others) can be good people. Since it is early in the workshop, it is clear that everyone is not yet fully comfortable with this (evident from body language, verbal hesitation and nervous gestures) but a level of comfort seems to be developing.

Next is a section on active listening. Everyone is provided a handout on effective listening skills that includes the following:

- Body language – use SOLER (Squarely face, Open posture, Lean forward, Eye contact, Relax)
- Encouragers – Smile, nod or say something like, “Tell me more.”

- Questions – Use probing open-ended questions that cannot be answered with yes or no. Use clarifying questions to check out if what you heard is what the speaker meant or to get specific information.
- Restatement – Rephrase by repeating what the speaker said, only in your own words. Reflect back the speaker’s feelings, such as, “I bet you’re glad that happened.” Summarize what has been said.
- Avoid giving advice, distracting comments, judging, interrupting and changing the subject.

We then practice active listening using these techniques. Everyone is asked to pair up. Some of the men are quick to engage someone they know in the group, but others seem hesitant to approach someone else. The discomfort is evident from the time it takes them to pair up and the body language. I am cognizant of my outsider status. I feel a little stressed about the idea of having to discuss a personal matter with someone I do not know and with whom I have not naturally developed an affinity. The method of forced pairing with a stranger is what seems to be the difficulty. Eventually, I catch Joyful J’s eye and we have a pair. The topic is goals. Each person, in turn, has three minutes to talk about his long-term goals. Then the other person has two minutes to relate what he has heard. The first person then has one minute to cover anything that has been left out. The roles are then reversed. I go first and talk about my goals. Joyful J listens well, missing only one or two things, which I subsequently discuss per the protocol. We are employing the techniques from the handout, sitting forward in our chairs, making direct eye contact. Joyful J nods approvingly as I relate details about my goals (basically to finish my research project and go on to complete my degree). When it comes to his turn, I am taken aback when he says he is serving an 82-year sentence and has not really thought about goals. I am facing him squarely, looking him in the eyes and nodding, but all of a sudden I am caught unprepared to deal with what he has said. I cannot very well nod approvingly about the fact that he will likely never get out of prison. I do not know what to do, so I say something stupid, “Wow, that’s tragic, man,” trying desperately to be empathetic, but cool. He goes on to tell me he is trying to get his conviction overturned, and if he is not successful in so doing, he will be in prison the rest of his life. “Long term goals seem a little pointless,” he says. This gives me pause. If Joyful J has so little realistic hope of ever getting out of the correction center, why is he in the workshop? Why is he so obviously engaged in the exercises? I think that he could be here out of boredom or out of sincere desire to change. He is too engaged for the boredom conclusion, so there is at least some probability that he is seeking insight and change. I decide to watch him closely as his motives for being in the workshop are likely to be among the purest.

⁴ Through discussions with the men, I learned that only four of the participants knew each other (two pairs). Some of the other men had seen or worked with others, but said they did not know them well.

Miraculous M says, "It's break time," and everyone gets up to stretch and roll cigarettes. The men collect into small groups and pairs. I hear them talking about the previous exercises as they go out. They seem to be more comfortable with each other than earlier. I see smiles and interactions that were not evident this morning. I find that forcing myself to communicate with Joyful J has quickly transformed us from strangers to acquaintances. We shake hands as he leaves to go outside.

There are threads of other-regarding values woven into this exercise. First, talking about one's life's goals with a stranger is not a normal behavior. Sharing thoughts and aspirations and having someone respond with interest and engagement, the techniques of active listening, establishes an immediate bond. Second, by selection of the particular topic, the exercise facilitates listener empathy with the speaker. Active listening is a commonly addressed topic in other workshops and settings (it is used in my company, for example, in training programs), but here it produced a much more intense engagement and a quicker attainment of affinity between the pairs. The topic was personal and each person knew it. If, for example, the topic had been focused on something about daily cellblock routine, I doubt the level of interest would have been as high. Part of the dynamics may be attributable to the men being in a common circumstance and therefore having a rather universally shared curiosity about others' hopes. But part of it was about learning to talk about one's self and receiving affirmation from the listener. A quid pro quo was then expected when the roles reversed. It forced two-way other-regarding behavior. The exercise made me think of the Meeting House and the tradition of standing up and sharing your deepest thoughts and beliefs with the assembled group. There, the members are quiet, passive listening being the norm. But at the Meeting House, it is believed that God has motivated the people to speak, He is speaking through them. Here the exercise was active listening, which is different than what is practiced at Meeting, but the similarity is that people stand up in front of a group of others and express deep thoughts. In both situations, one has to have some regard for the other people present in order to be able to do that with any degree of honesty and credibility.

Session 3 – Saturday afternoon 1500-1930

After the break, the reentry topic is, "something I have learned today is..." We go around the room in sequence; everyone completes the sentence and passes on to the next person. Several of the responses are about what the men have learned about other people in the group. Some of them say they have learned how alike they are. There seems to be a noticeable increase in the level of interaction and empathy at this point in the workshop, judging from the way people lean forward, make eye contact, and engage the subject. The techniques of active listening just practiced in the previous session are in evidence. Yet, the application seems to flow naturally, as no mention of it was made prior to the start of the exercise. Active listening was not in evidence prior to its introduction in session 2, so it appears that the group has learned something from the session and taken it to heart, applying it spontaneously in a group interaction. I make a mental note that the men are unusually quick to learn a behavior and adopt it. The motivation seems to be tied to the pattern of sharing something personal and receiving group reinforcement for so doing. By now

everyone is starting to enjoy the reinforcement and we have all learned that in order to get it we have to share important thoughts. There is also the quid pro quo, namely, engage, be interested and reinforce others. Once again, the dynamics of the session seem to be tied to other-regarding behavior. I also notice more smiling and changes in body posture that seem to indicate an increasing level of comfort within the group. The earlier reluctance to speak up seems to be fading, replaced by an increasing willingness to “open up.”

Next is a “rap” (topical discussion led by one of the trainers) about transforming power. According to the handout, “Transforming power is a power everybody has to transform violent or potentially violent/hostile situations into less violent or non-violent outcomes. It can change hostile people into friends and bring justice out of injustice, and it begins with changing yourself.” The handout lists four basic principles that open us to transforming power; (1) There is something good or of God in everyone; (2) We must be willing to approach each conflict as though a nonviolent, positive outcome is possible; (3) We must change ourselves first; (4) Using transforming power is a skill that must be practiced. Wall charts, placed around the room, emphasize the message, using slightly different wording. They show transforming power at the center of a circle. In another circle outside the first, are the words, “respect for self,” and “caring for others.” In an outside circle are the words, “expect the best, think before reacting, and ask for a non-violent solution.” The rap is one way. It is intended to convey a message, but there is no interaction between the group and the trainer. I see the men looking around at the wall charts or reading the handout. No one questions the message. The first sentence about “God in everyone” is clearly a Quaker message, I think to myself. Magical M, who is leading the exercise, repeats the four points and drills home the message.

This discussion is about convincing the men that they can change. It builds on the previous sessions that helped develop a sense of self-efficacy (established in the “exposure-reinforcement” cycle), and other-regarding (learned in the active listening exercise and others), which is very much related to the “God in everyone” idea. The development of self-efficacy gives the men a sense of control and self-confidence. “Transforming Power” is a logical extension of these ideas. It is really about emotional intelligence (EQ) and the message is that everyone has the ability to change. As Goleman says, “Self-regulation – managing impulse as well as distressing feelings – depends on the workings of the emotional centers in tandem with the brain’s executive centers in the prefrontal areas (Goleman 1998, p. 82).” What the session is about is trying to get the message across on self-mastery, albeit couched in different language. While EQ is certainly not a new concept, what is different here is the rapidity with which the group seems to learn and modify behavior, as well as the apparent total acceptance of the key messages and concepts. This likely has to do with motivation produced by recognition that a discontinuity has been reached and that a significant change is in order (see Boyatzis, pending, p.8). Self-mastery will be a crucial requirement for these men in the future if they are to avoid revisiting the correction center. The recognition of this fact produces a heightened motivation to learn. This would explain the rapid learning and behavioral change exhibited by

the group. This is also consistent with Boyatzis' description of the three reasons for developing emotional intelligence, a desire to increase effectiveness and potential for promotion (promotion here could be interpreted as transition to the community), wanting to become a better person (this motivation seems clear from the comments made during the various exercises), or wanting to help others develop emotional intelligence or pursue either of the above objectives (ibid. p.6)

The next exercise is "I statements." The idea here is that statements that start with "you," usually put people down or tell people what is wrong with them. An example of a "you statement" is, "You only think of yourself." Statements that start with I usually give information about the speaker, his feelings and his needs in a way that show respect and concern for the other party. This gives the other person a choice as to how to react, rather than feeling he has to defend himself. We are all provided with a formula for crafting I statements, *I feel ___(feeling)___, when ___(situation or action)___, because ___(reason)___*, along with some examples and a list of "feeling words" broken into two categories, comfortable and uncomfortable. Comfortable words include; appreciated; confident; excited; glad; hopeful; proud; satisfied; trusted. Uncomfortable words include; angry; bugged; disgusted; frustrated; guilty; humiliated; sad; silly; troubled. This exercise proves difficult for some of the men. Many have a tendency to mix I and you statements and it takes a few tries to get the idea across. Everyone practices and, eventually, most everyone gets the idea. The active listening techniques are evident in the men's behavior. In the evaluation at the end of the session, the consensus is that the exercise was very valuable. Several of the men comment that this gives them a new way of approaching confrontations. While the "I vs. you statements" exercise was a bit complex because the trainers wanted the wording crafted a certain way, what I took from the exercise was the notion that consideration of how others interpret what is said has a lot to do with how they react. Therefore, a little more careful choice of wording can be useful in avoiding confrontation even if a properly constructed I statement is not used. I talk with Joyful J about this as he had had some difficulty with the exercise and I find that he has taken away the same idea. It is likely that others took it the same way. The notion of considering others' feelings strikes me, once again, as a very Quaker idea.

Next is "six-part problem solving." This is an exercise in trying to reach a win-win solution to problems. The steps involved are; (1) identify the problem; (2) identify needs and wants; (3) brainstorm solutions; (4) evaluate solutions; (5) choose a solution; (6) affirm partner. First, the trainers go over the process and explain each step. Some examples are offered. Once the men say they are comfortable with the concept, a role-playing exercise is initiated to illustrate the process. Magnificent M and Radiant R (inmate trainer) are the actors. The situation they select is one where two inmates are at odds because one of them is "tight with the cops" (too friendly with the COs on the tier) and apparently reporting his fellow inmate for a variety of minor infractions. Magnificent M and Radiant R (he is the one tight with the cops) exchange heated remarks. They really get into the role. Radiant R smiles in the middle of one of the exchanges as he overacts a bit and finds it funny. He smiles and holds back a laugh. Magnificent M smiles back, but keeps

on acting. Eventually, they apply the six-part process and arrive at a solution entailing an agreement to keep things between the inmates. Radiant R agrees to distance himself from the COs a little to make his fellow inmates less suspicious.

The group is then asked to partner up and work through a problem based on some aspect of prison life using the six-point problem solving techniques. I am a bit handicapped in this exercise by not being an inmate and I have difficulty understanding how things work in the prison. My partner, Courteous C, comes up with a scenario based on the prison laundry, where one inmate is working more than the other and carrying a disproportionate load. I try and work through the exercise, but I do not understand the language, the setting, or the routine of the laundry, and my attempt at meaningful practice is strained. Courteous C tries to explain things in an effort to help me, but the amount of time taken for explanation consumes most of the exercise. We do finally arrive at a solution using the six-part method that entails some work sharing. Courteous C and I affirm each other. I apologize for struggling and Courteous C says, "It's cool, man." At the end of the exercise, Miraculous M asks how everyone felt about it. Comments are positive. Charismatic C pays Magnificent M a pointed compliment. He says Magnificent M had it "right on the button," in the way that he had portrayed his role. Many of the men show agreement by either nodding their heads or verbally commenting. When asked what he thought of it, Magnificent M said, "I guess you just have to understand where people are and go with the flow." The exchange surprises me. Charismatic C was not one of the more interactive members of the group at the start of the exercise. He is one of the older men there (probably in his late forties or early fifties), whereas, Magnificent M was one of the younger (24). Yet, something moved him to offer overt praise to Magnificent M. Something "clicked" between this unlikely pair.

The session teaches the participants some classic negotiating skills. What is added, however, is the notion of other-regarding that has been built up in the group throughout the day. The net result seems to be an intensified motivation to reach mutually acceptable solutions to the role-play problems and an increased willingness to compromise one's position to attain that.

We are asked to evaluate the session. Magical M tapes a chart to the wall made from a plastic trash bag cut in two, and using white-board markers, prepares to write down everyone's inputs. The inmates are quick to offer likes, dislikes and suggestions for improvement. I am struck by the enthusiasm shown by almost everyone for the various aspects of the workshop. Most everyone says they very much like the program, so far, and feel they are gaining valuable insights into themselves and others through the exercises. Enthusiasm is evenly distributed, as well. I have been through many workshops of various sorts over the years, but I cannot remember one where the participants seemed so pleased with the program. When someone offers a comment, someone else reinforces it. As people speak, others nod their heads in agreement or mutter affirming comments. Even Charismatic C, who seemed to be the least engaged at the

start of the workshop, offers his praise. The high degree of motivation in the group is unmistakable. The high level of performance achieved is also unusual. Everyone seems super-charged.

It is time for the inmates to return to the tiers. I sense an air of sadness or perhaps regret from the men. We all say goodnight and the CO unlocks the door. I watch the men walk out into the compound and head for their buildings. Marvelous ML, Counselor S (she has been outside in the hallway with the CO all day) and I wait until the compound is clear and then walk out with the CO, retracing our steps of that morning back to the gatehouse. It is dark out and I can see the COs in the watchtower that overlooks the area where we were walking. When we approach the first big chain link gate, someone opens it. They obviously knew we are there. We go in and the gate closes behind us; the second gate opening once the first one is securely closed. I comment to Counselor S that someone must have been watching us. She says, "someone is always watching in this place." I am chilled, as much from her comment as from the biting wind that is blowing through the compound.

Session 4 – Sunday morning 0900-1120

We repeat the previous day's steps in entering the prison and proceed to the education building. We have a different CO than the previous day, a young man who seems very friendly and outgoing. We call all the buildings and wait for the inmates to arrive for the day's sessions. It takes about 20 minutes before everyone is there. There is a problem with one of the men (Tenacious T) and Miraculous M says he has been sent to the SHU. This draws a strong and somber reaction from the group. Several of the men groan. We find out later that this is not correct when Tenacious T shows up, about a half-hour late, to the relief of everyone. The report about the SHU was inaccurate and Tenacious T was merely at sick call for a minor medical problem. The inmates dread the SHU. When they talk about it, they use hushed tones and lower their eyes. There was a lot of empathy for Tenacious T when everyone thought he had been sent to the SHU. The emotions seemed genuine. The group is clearly closer knit than yesterday. In discussions with some of the men at break, I learn that many of the inmates are on medications for behavioral problems and have to report to the infirmary on a regular basis. I now recall that at the start of the day's sessions, the first thing that the trainer did was ask if anyone had scheduled medications so that they could plan accordingly. While no one in my workshop was had scheduled medication, it dawns on me that in a prison population there are probably some people with serious behavioral disorders. I wonder if they show up in AVP programs periodically and, if they do, how they are dealt with.

The group settles in and after a brief discussion of the day's agenda, we start our reentry. I ask if everyone would be comfortable with me making some notes as the session progresses and there is unanimity that it is OK. This takes a load off my mind, as it is much easier to record things in real time than to reconstruct

them later. The first topic is, “Something you probably don’t know about me is…” We go around the room sequentially and complete the sentence following the adjective-name introduction and passing-on protocol of yesterday. Many of the men complete the sentence by describing their families and/or children. A few talk about their careers on the outside. Dandy D says he was a successful general contractor and misses his boat and fishing. Charismatic C says his son has just graduated from Harvard. He looks at me when he says this, perhaps seeking recognition or differentiation from the group that he thinks I might provide. Courteous C, Magnificent M and Radiant R all say they love to cook. Courteous C says he and his brother are going to open a restaurant when he gets out. There is a hint of sadness in their voices as the men speak about themselves. The group seems particularly attentive during the exercise. People are leaning forward in their chairs with their eyes focused on the speakers. Active listening now seems to come naturally. The group is bonding, no longer simply practicing the workshop material, but transitioning to friendship. Miraculous M finishes up the exercise by asking what we learned from it. Everyone says it was good to learn about the other men in the group. One of the men says he thinks they all have a lot in common. Thus, the day starts with the exposure-affirmation pattern from yesterday. The men now seem eager to share information about themselves with the group at large.

Next is an exercise called “hassle lines.” This begins to move the workshop closer to the issue of violent behavior and how to deal with it. We form up in two lines facing each other. We are given a scenario and asked to role-play a solution. One person pretends he has gone to retrieve his dog (purported to be a priceless world-class show dog), said dog having proceeded to dig up the neighbor’s prize-winning flowerbed. The neighbor is beating the dog with a belt. I am the neighbor; my partner, Joyful J again, is the dog owner. As I begin acting out my role, my partner tries to intervene by placing himself between the dog and me. This seems to be a viable strategy as Joyful J is big enough that I would think twice about pushing him out of the way to get at the dog. Once the action is interrupted, it is easier to engage in a dialog around seeking some form of resolution to the problem. Joyful J apologizes profusely for his dog’s actions and offers to have a landscaper come out and repair the damage. It seems like a reasonable solution to the problem, so I agree and the matter is settled. Some members of the group are quite creative in solving the conflict. One man grabs the dog’s leash and quickly removes the dog from the scene, thereby calming things down. Several men try to apply the negotiating skills acquired in the earlier sessions by offering to replace the flowerbed or hire a landscaper to make repairs, a la Joyful J’s approach. No one, even in jest, resorts to violence or confrontation to end the conflict. Given the group’s previous history, I am surprised. There are two other scenarios that we role play, one involving a bully who was blocking a doorway, preventing another man from passing, and a scenario involving a kitchen helper who spilled a pot of spaghetti on the floor and is subsequently confronted by the cook. These are approached in similar ways to the first scenario and with similar results. The men are quite creative in working out solutions to the problems using skills learned in the workshop. The effort put forth by the group in seeking alternatives to a

violent solution is apparent. No one makes a joke of the scenarios. The role-playing is taken seriously and the protagonists work to make the scenarios realistic.

This exercise applies in practice what has been taught in the previous sessions and for the first time, we can see how some of the ideas put forth can really influence violent situations. Practicing the behavioral skills gives us a sense of control over things and a feeling that there are alternatives that we can, in fact, bring into play. There is one other important dynamic here, at least for me. That is the notion of understanding and empathy for the other person in the confrontation. I am now beginning to see that person in a different light, his or her behavior driven by a situational problem that I can defuse rather than escalate. I think of the other person as having the potential for being calm and rationale, but just not yet made aware of that ability. This is a fundamental change in the way I would have approached a potentially violent situation previously. While I do not have a history of violent behavior as do some of my workshop colleagues, I can see the concept applied to many other aspects of life. For example, when someone cuts me off in traffic the next time, I may view them as having simply made a mistake or being in need of driver training rather than responding with a stream of pointed epithets. Rather than see them as a villain, I can see them as simply human. The idea of other-regarding seems to be at the core of this change in perspective.

The evaluation of the session produces similarly enthusiastic responses as the day before. Everyone seems to like the role-playing. One of the men says it has given him a “new way of approaching things.” Dandy D says, on reflection, that he has had a tendency to “explode” in certain situations and he could now, “think of how other people had applied the techniques taught in the workshop (albeit unknowingly) to calm him down.” It was not clear if he was referring to experiences in the correction center or before he got there, but a few other comments from the group reinforced the value of the lessons learned here in a variety of prison scenarios. Some of the men offered up examples of how they could have used these techniques in the past. Magnificent M described some of the inmates on the tier as being particularly incorrigible and having no interest or motive to change their lives. He thought that what he learned in this session might help deal with those people in a more effective way. The fact that the men were even talking about how to engage and influence others in more positive ways is indicative of the other-regarding influence of the workshop.

Session 5 – Sunday afternoon 1200-1630

After lunch our reentry is, “Something I like about this group is...” The responses are; participation; conscious thinking; cooperation; dedication to learning; it gives me some tools for when I get out; it makes me realize what people are about; honesty; everyone is easy to talk to; everyone makes me laugh, something I don’t do too often; everybody gets along, it helps me sharpen my communication skills so I can avoid violent situations here and on the outside; my anger got me in trouble and these sessions help me deal with anger; a man needs to be able to deal with situations and not always react, this group helps me do

that. Merciful M is leading the session and thanks everyone for his response. I note that the responses are all positive. Everyone has an answer and offers it up as soon as their turn comes. The answers are delivered with feeling and sincerity.

We then break into teams of four for the next exercise. Each person on the team is given a set of four cards on which are clues about a murder. The team has to determine four things, the victim, the murderer, the weapon, and the location of the murder. The clues are somewhat ambiguous, requiring a fair degree of coordination and communication within the group to determine the answers. Clue cards cannot be passed around, only discussed. It takes a lot of work to arrive at the answers. Team members decide they have a relevant clue and want to get the group to accept it. Someone else sees it as not relevant and tries to convince the first person so. The team quickly learns to exercise restraint and consideration for other members in order to get to the truly relevant clues. Our team has everything figured out except whom the murderer was. We have selected one of the two logical possibilities, but two members of the team are uncomfortable with the choice. Miraculous M is circulating among the groups and observing progress. He whispers to me that our selection for the murderer is wrong, so the team goes back to work and selects the only other possible (from our point of view) perpetrator. That turns out to be correct. The other teams eventually arrive at the answers to the questions.

In discussing the exercise, we are asked about the dynamics of the group. What cooperative skills did you see emerge? Were you able to operate as a group? Did a group leader emerge? Were you able to follow the leader? Most of the men say yes to all the questions or nod indicating concurrence. A lively discussion ensues about the details of the crime. Magnificent M says he lived in a neighborhood where there were a lot of shootings and he had never seen anyone die from a gunshot to the thigh (one of the clues). Mighty M says most murders are the result of jealousy (the murder in the exercise was the result of an ill-fated love triangle). It strikes me that I am playing a murder mystery game with some actual murderers. What a strange choice of topic for an exercise in a prison, I think. Our group of four works well together and there is a genuine cooperative dynamic that develops. Dynamic D is proactive in asking questions of the other members, "What do you think?" "Is that the way you see it?" This keeps everyone participating and makes him feel that his opinions are valued. Again, I cannot help but compare this group to some other I have worked with recently in my professional life. This group is motivated, mature and effective at teamwork. If only it was like that outside the correction center!

After the break we move back to our circle formation. Miraculous M asks us to complete the sentence, "I feel trust in another person when..." The responses include:

- when they help me out
- when they keep it real with me (honest, straightforward)

- I got to feel a person out, they got to've gone through the things I've gone through
- since I've been here, I've learned to trust everybody once
- it takes time for someone to show me I can trust them
- I had problems with my own family...trusting them
- you can trust the COs (the group chuckles)...I mean in their job, not as people
- once I lose trust, they're done
- trusting is a major factor in here, people come in every day with a game
- it's hard to trust anyone here
- I will give a person a chance unless they prove otherwise
- when after a period of time I get to know them and they have shown me that they are honest
- when it feels right
- I'm not one to just give trust, you have to earn it
- last couple of days have felt pretty good in this group
- I would have to get to know somebody before I would open up to them

The responses seem to be targeted outside the group. As the men speak, others affirm their feelings by nodding their heads or commenting. Everyone seems engaged in the discussion and the sense of mutual support is unmistakable. One of the men makes a point that there is a higher level of trust within the group than outside in the tiers. Others nod or verbally agree at that point. It is clear to me that the group has developed a degree of cohesiveness that did not exist at the start of the workshop. It is also clear that trust is a big issue for most of the men, yet they have developed a high degree of trust amongst themselves in less than two days.

The issue of trust is linked to other-regarding, in my mind. It is difficult to trust someone you do not hold in relatively high regard. Conversely, as you develop other-regarding behavior, you begin to see that others can be trusted. In this workshop, trust is developed through the exposure-reinforcement cycle that I described earlier, and the experiences of the exercises. Trust seemed to be a precursor to the strengthening of other-regarding behavior. As the group developed trust, it then adopted other-regarding behavior, fostered by the themes and messages of the planned exercises.

The next exercise follows the "trust" theme of the previous one. One person is to lead another, blindfolded, through a makeshift maze set up in the hallway outside the classroom. Joyful J is my partner, once again. I don the blindfold first. I grab Joyful's left arm with my right hand and he leads me carefully through the maze. He speaks to me as we move out of the room into the hallway. "We're gonna turn left," he says, and I dutifully turn left, letting him guide me. We move down the hall, Joyful J giving me advanced warning of upcoming obstacles and impending turns. I can hear someone moving up and down the hall with a rattle or something that sounds like that. Because he is moving around, the noise is disorienting. There is also some

machinery running towards the end of the hallway and it is loud enough to be distracting. I had thought the exercise to be trivial when I started, but it really is not. I know I am not in any real danger, but there is enough uncertainty given the distractions that I do feel dependent on Joyful J to lead me through the maze and back to the room. He gets me through it all without a single trip or collision. We then reverse roles. I feel under pressure to do a proper job with the exercise. It suddenly seems important, not trivial at all. I have Joyful J put his left hand on my left shoulder and I carefully lead him out into the hallway. Like he had done, I give him verbal clues as to which way we would be moving, “Left turn coming up,” “Close to the wall, now,” “Careful of the box on the floor.” I now see what the rattling noise was. It is Merciful M and he has a maraca. It is decorated with a painted palm tree and some colored lines. The image of a Latin band with men in shirts with frilly sleeves and people dancing that briefly enters my mind seems incongruous. We get back to the room and Joyful J takes off the blindfold. We smile at each other.

When asked how the exercise felt, most people say they felt tenser being the leader than being led. The notion of responsibility seems to weigh on their minds. Charismatic C tells a story about undergoing jungle warfare training in the mid-80s in Panama, and what it was like playing follow the leader in a thick jungle in the middle of a nighttime rain storm. He says if you got lost on that exercise, you were really lost. When asked what they got out of the exercise, most of the men say they learned that sometimes you have to place your trust in someone else and let them lead. Sometimes, they say, you are completely dependent on others. Once again, the seriousness with which everyone took the exercise surprises me. The group is much more intense than the last group of executives with whom I undertook corporate training. I think to myself, if the people I work with were this serious about learning, they would be a lot more effective.

The last exercise for this session is “space invaders.” Miraculous M has everyone arrange themselves in two circles, an inner and an outer, with about six feet separating the two. Each man in the inner circle is to slowly walk up to their opposing person, who is supposed to say stop when the person approaching them reaches the point of being too close for comfort. I am opposite Dandy D. On cue, I begin closing the distance. I get closer and closer. I get to the point where I expect Dandy D to say stop, but he does not. I keep moving in, but now I am getting uncomfortable. He finally says stop when I am about six inches from his face. Something is not right. He cannot be comfortable with me being that close and I say, “Do you really feel comfortable with me here?” He does not respond and just smiles. This is weird, I think to myself. I back up. Next, we are asked to return to our starting positions. Miraculous M, who is leading the exercise, has the outer circle shift left. I am now lined up with Spiritual S. We are then asked to move in to the point where we feel comfortable. I stop about two feet from Spiritual S. I notice that there is a fair amount of variance in the distances that other people have chosen. A few men are significantly farther away than I was from my partner. Several are closer.

Miraculous M asks us what we have learned from the exercise. The consensus seems to be that while everyone knew they had a comfort zone of their own, they had not thought about other people's comfort zones. What most people seem to get from the exercise is an appreciation for that fact. Many also say that they noticed certain clues when they got too close, either facial expressions or body language. People say that they will be sensitive to such clues as they interact with people in the future. As we are discussing this, Dandy D finally owns up to what was going on with me in the first round of space invaders. He says he was playing a game, trying to intimidate me. He said he used to do that to put people on the defensive. It worked, I tell him. We laugh about it as if he was not really trying to intimidate me, but rather, was engaging me in some sort of playtime. His explanation suggests, however, that his motives in the workshop are not all pure and that he has not quite gotten the other-regarding message. This is the only instance of defection I observed in the workshop, and it seemed to be something that Dandy D had turned into a game in the past, so I could write it off to an anomaly. It does bring me back to the reality that the workshop is probably not perfect, and that there are some in it whose motives may not be totally congruent with the objectives.

Session 6 – Sunday evening 1700-1900

The last session of the workshop begins with the usual reentry. Once again, we have to complete a sentence; "A goal I have for the future is..." The answers come back:

- Be patient, cooperate
- Be more grateful and appreciative
- Reestablish ties with my family
- Stay out of the criminal justice system and get on with my life
- Get back to my community and teach kids about drugs and jail
- Get out of here and break this cycle
- Give the younger generation an opportunity to keep out of here
- Be where I was before I came here, financially
- Speak Spanish fluently
- Get a degree in journalism
- Do what I have to do to get out of here, but at the same time, learn something to help keep me out
- Work with the ministry and troubled youth to help keep them out of here
- Help others avoid this
- Reestablish family ties and religion
- Be lead trainer in some of the more advanced workshops

The men seem a bit somber about this exercise. The smiles and jocularity that have been continually increasing over the course of the two days are missing. Eyes are cast down at the floor. Some of the men lean forward in their chairs with their elbows on their knees and their hands clasped together underneath their chins. The sense of remorse over their situation is unmistakable not only from their responses, but from their postures and expressions, as well. I have a profound feeling of sadness at this point. These are not stupid people. They are not unfeeling people. How and why did they go so wrong? Had they failed society, or had society failed them? What a tremendous waste of talent and ability I see sitting in the room this late winter afternoon. How sad. I realize that I am starting to identify with the group. I feel a part of them. My feelings are clearly different than yesterday morning. I am becoming a bit of an insider. Part of this emotion has to do with the other-regarding behavior that I have developed as a trainee alongside the other men. I can see that they accept me much more than they did at the start of the workshop. They seem comfortable talking to me now, whereas they seemed suspicious of my questions yesterday. This is tremendously helpful in understanding their feelings and reactions to what is going on in the sessions and about prison life. It adds some risk, though, in maintaining an objective perspective about things and I caution myself about being “hoodwinked” by clever potential manipulators. Keep your balance, I say to myself.

We all need to shift the mood and the next exercise, a “light and lively,” is just the thing. It is called “croc and frogs.” We all push the chairs back against the wall. Miraculous M and Merciful M put “lily pads” down on the floor simulated by sheets of newspaper. The floor around the lily pads, we are to imagine, is water. We are the frogs. Merciful M is the croc. He shakes the maraca, making a loud rattling sound, and we are to imagine that he is the croc swimming around looking for frogs to eat. Once the noise stops, the croc attacks and everyone has only a second to get on a lily pad. If you get caught off of the lily pad, you are croc food. The first few rounds are easy and almost everyone makes it onto a lily pad when the attack comes. Magnificent M starts taking up lily pads about two round into the game, however, making it increasingly more difficult. As lily pads become progressively scarcer, there is not enough room for the men to get on (which is, after all, the objective). Those of us left in the game begin devising ways to help each other, like letting someone stand on your feet, or letting them get one foot on the lily pad so they can lift up the other one, and then holding on to them so they will not fall. This works to a degree, but a few more men get “killed” each successive round. I am doing well and am still in the game until there are only five of us, and one lily pad left. I think to myself, it is possible that we can all fit on that lily pad when the next attack comes, save for one minor problem. One of the remaining players is Spiritual S. Between his mass and what must be size fourteen state boots, there is no hope that we will all fit. The croc attacks and Spiritual S is on the lily pad in a flash. One other inmate makes it on alongside him. They grab at a couple of men, trying to help them get on the lily pad, but there is not enough time to work the problem and the

rest of us are dead. The game is great fun and everyone is laughing. Spiritual S and Radiant R, the winners, get a roar of approval from the group and some high-fives as they leave the last remaining lily pad. I am amazed at the degree of camaraderie that is displayed during the exercise and how different the group is than when we first came together. This is the only competitive exercise of the workshop, but the group's behavior is not at all competitive, it is cooperative. The men do not try to squeeze others off the lily pad; they try to help them get on. No mere game in my mind, Crocs and Frogs cements the notion that the group has become highly other-regarding. A "tipping point" has been reached and the group has moved noticeably to cohesiveness and cooperation. This game seems to have pushed them "over the top."

It is getting late and everyone is getting tired. It has been an intensive two days. The men have not been able to take a break for several hours because there is some foul up in the prison routine and there has not been a code green since lunch, other than a direct march to dinner and a quick return.

We have two more things to complete, but Marvelous ML (the outside facilitator) wants to read a story before we proceed. It is the *Aikido Story*, and is about three men on a Tokyo subway train. One is an angry and drunk young Japanese man. One is a wizened old Japanese man in a traditional kimono. The third is a young American who has been studying Aikido in Japan for some years. The drunk is trying to pick a fight with people on the train, being abusive and obnoxious. The American, determined to protect the travelers from evil, is preparing himself to do battle using his Aikido skills. The sage old man is simply taking it all in. As the drunk and the young American man lock eyes and prepare to do battle, the old man intervenes by engaging the drunk in a conversation. The drunk is much bigger, much younger, and much angrier than the old man was, but that does not faze him. Through a series of questions, the old man quickly comes to understand that the drunk has recently lost his wife, his job and his apartment. He is so ashamed of himself, he says to the old man as tears stream down his cheeks, that he has gone out and bought a bottle of sake and chugged it down. The old man talks about how he too has suffered some tragedies and done a similar thing, some years before. The drunk eventually ends up sitting with the old man, crying and begging forgiveness for his behavior, while the old man calms and soothes him. The young American watches the proceedings and realizes how wrong his approach had been. He sees that kind words and compassion, not force, are the essence of conflict resolution.

The group listens to Marvelous ML carefully. When she finishes reading, everyone says they enjoyed the story. Some say they thought it was profound. The story moves me, as well. It suggests that even when you think there is no alternative to violence, there may in fact be one. Subtler perhaps, is the example of skill in applying alternatives-to-violence in a real world scenario. It suggests that mastery of difficult situations is possible. This plays well with the notions of self-efficacy and other-regarding that have been instilled in the group over the course of the workshop. The story also serves as a "case study" for the group and seems to be an effective way to demonstrate the AVP themes in a real life setting.

Our closing exercise is the “yarn toss.” Magical M has everyone arrange their chair in a circle about 15 feet in diameter and sit down. A ball of yarn is then progressively passed from one person to the next, across the circle, unraveling the yarn in the process. Each person has to hold on to the string before passing the ball along. The effect is to create a web of yarn connecting all members of the group. The person passing the ball of yarn “affirms” the person he elected to pass it to, drawing from his experiences of the previous two days. Marvelous ML starts things off and the ball moved progressively around the group. Most of the affirmer’s comments are about how much the affirmees have made a difference to the group at large, and in many cases to individuals in the group during the two days. I am sitting across from Tenacious T in the circle and when my turn comes, I decide to say something to reinforce him. Tenacious T has been one of the more introverted members of the group, and I sense that he might be having some problems (he was the one who was late to the session that morning and was rumored to have been transferred to the SHU). While this ultimately turned out to be incorrect, the fact that it was assumed initially to be correct by the group at large, is an indication that he has some known problems. I toss the ball to him and say that I thought working with him on some of the exercises has been a very positive experience for me. It has enabled me to get to know a little bit about him and I feel like a better man for it. I thank him for the experience. Tenacious T looks directly at me during the exchange and smiles as I speak. When I finish, he nods his head and says, “thanks, man.” It strikes me that I seldom have such direct and gut level communication with people.

The group continues the process until the web is complete and then the process is reversed. Instead of unraveling the yarn ball, we are now raveling it. Affirmations proceed in reverse order. The affirmations are delivered with feeling and clarity. I am surprised at the level of emotion obvious in some of the comments. Courteous C and Charismatic C, an unlikely pair at the start of the workshop, now seem to be bosom buddies. Courteous C affirms Charismatic C and his comments are delivered with obvious warmth and feeling. Charismatic C passes the yarn to Magnificent M and says how much Magnificent M’s role - playing in the earlier session has affected him. The affirmation is delivered with obvious feeling. As I was the second person to receive the yarn in the first round, I am the next to last in the second round. Marvelous ML is the last person in the chain. I pass the yarn to her and say that I think she really is marvelous because of her dedication to AVP and the time she gives to the inmates with no personal gain other than the satisfaction she derives from helping the men. It was an easy affirmation to give. The yarn is now rolled back up into its original ball.

The men have applied all the techniques that they have learned in the workshop during this exercise. I notice that they lean forward and make direct eye contact when they deliver their affirmations. Most everyone sits pensively for a moment and considers their comments before speaking. There is little or no hesitation once people begin to speak. The people receiving the affirmations also lean forward and make

eye contact. Most of them say, “Thanks, man,” once the affirmation is delivered. Even the most introverted of the group, Dynamic D and Terrific T, effectively employ these techniques. The improvement in group communication style and effectiveness since the start of the workshop is obvious. It is also noticeable that everyone has a good, solid affirmation for someone else. No one struggles over something meaningful to say. Without exception, the men are articulate and emotionally engaged when delivering their affirmations. The inmate trainers are also fully engaged, delivering and receiving affirmations on an equal footing with the other men.

We take a final break since there has not been a code green in effect for a while and the men are loath to miss an opportunity for a smoke. I watch as several of the inmates extract “top” from pouches stuck in their breast pockets and quickly roll cigarettes. The break lasts about fifteen minutes. When the men come back in to the room, we move all the chairs to one end, arranging them in rows three chairs deep and six chairs across. It is time to award the completion certificates and everyone sits down to await the ceremony. The trainers, Marvelous ML, Radiant R, Miraculous M, and Merciful M collect at the front of the room. Miraculous M reads off the names in sequence and the recipients proceed forward where Merciful M hands them their certificate. Everyone shakes hands with each trainer and hugs are exchanged (without exception). The men return to their seats. When all the certificates have been passed out, the trainers all thank the group for their participation. Miraculous M says he hopes to see everyone at the advanced session in the next few months. The workshop is declared complete.

We all fold up the metal chairs and put them in one of the rooms. The boxes we have used during the various exercises are folded up and stacked in a corner. A few bits of trash that are lying around are picked up and thrown in a small wastebasket in the corner. Once the rooms are clean, the men gather at the door waiting for the CO to unlock it so they can return to the tiers. I say goodbye to everyone. Many of the men ask me if I will be back. “Yes, I say, “I’ll see you next month.” Several of them say they hope so. I make a point to talk with Magnificent M before he leaves. We talk briefly about his five children, his ambitions, his life in the correction center, and his job in the kitchen. Just before he leaves, he grasps my hand firmly and looks me in the eye. “Thanks,” he says, “it’s really good to know that someone cares about us.” I watch him and the other men don their white coats. Some of the men put their watch caps on. The CO opens the door and everyone moves out of the building into the compound, heading for the tiers. We wait for the CO to secure things around the building and the men to clear out of the compound. Then Marvelous ML, Counselor S, the CO and I go out into the compound and head for the gatehouse. The sodium lights, high atop 100’ poles all around the compound perimeter, turn night into day. The first electric gate opens slowly as we go in. It closes behind us, and the second one opens in front. We walk through. A CO is patrolling the fence line with a guard dog, a pitch black German Shepherd. We exchange greetings and the pair goes on their way, the dog eyeing us indifferently as we go by. Except for the sodium lights, it is a dark, cold night. The sky is crystal clear. The stars shine intensely against a black background. We enter the last

building and proceed down the long corridor that leads to the gatehouse. Counselor S drops off the phone and keys. I drop off my visitor badge and collect my driver's license, which had been left as collateral. We all go out through the gatehouse door and begin walking to our cars in the parking lot. I thank Counselor S and Marvelous ML for all their help and say I will see them at the advanced session. I walk to my car, but before I get in, I look back at the prison. I think how much I have learned about the men behind the fences and concertina wire, but more importantly, how much I have learned about myself.

Analysis

Roles and relationships

AVP is an inmate program. The lead trainers are inmates, the participants are inmates and the setting is a state penitentiary. Except for a single outside facilitator, and in my case an outside trainee, there is little outside influence exerted on the program participants.

There is a system of "security levels" in the correction center that equate to an inmate's trustworthiness. There are twelve levels, with level one being maximum security. Inmates at that level are not allowed out of their cells except under escort and shackled. At the other end of the spectrum, level twelve inmates are allowed to hold jobs within the prison, are able to go in and out of their cells during normal working hours unescorted and have other privileges that make this a generally desirable goal. Inmates come into the facility at level one. In order to progress upwards, inmates have to obey prison rules (there is a demerit system) and engage in training aimed at improving either education or helping them deal with past problems (e.g. drug abuse seminars). Excess demerits are cause for holding back "promotion" or demotion from one level to a lower one. The men get "credit" for AVP completion, which may explain some of the high degree of motivation exhibited. In discussions with the inmates, I got the sense that there are a variety of workshops for which they could receive credit, but AVP is popular because it has a reputation for being effective (several of the men told me that they signed up for AVP because they heard it was a good workshop) and the topic is viewed as worthwhile. This suggests that the inmates who come to the AVP workshops arrive with an already elevated motivation level.

While the security levels serve to differentiate the inmates according to the privileges they enjoy, they do not appear to create a status hierarchy. All the AVP participants have security levels that allow them out of their cells and tiers, and enable attendance at workshops of this sort. Most of them have enjoyed that security level for some time. Therefore, the workshop participants and the trainers view themselves as being of roughly equal status. There did appear to be some deference shown by younger inmates to those more senior in the group, but this was not universal. For example, Merciful M was the second or third

youngest participant but also a trainer. He was just as effective in the trainer role as his more seasoned colleagues.

Because everyone was of equal status, the trainers had to be sensitive to leadership and communications style. Lacking authority over the group, they had to develop a rapport and foster cooperation and participation in order to conduct the training. Likewise, the participants had to be convinced of the trainers' competency to conduct the workshop since their only expertise was having completed the various levels of the program and the trainer training. This did not prove to be a problem for either the trainees or the trainers at any time during the workshop. The trainers proved to be adept early on and the trainees accorded them appropriate deference. One example may help prove the point. The convention in the workshop was that when silence was desired, a trainer would raise his hand. As soon as anyone saw that motion, he was also to raise his hand. Once your hand was up, you were supposed to be silent. Over the course of the exercises there were several occasions when everyone became boisterous. As soon as a trainer raised his hand, the group followed suit and quickly quieted down. No one ignored the trainers or challenged their leadership.

The trainers worked as a cohesive team. While it was clear that Miraculous M was the most experienced and senior trainer, he worked on equal footing with Radiant R and Merciful M. Merciful M was the least experienced of the trainers. Trainers rotated exercise leadership. When they were not leading, they participated along with the rest of the group. When critiques were solicited, the trainers discussed what they had learned and what they liked or disliked about the sessions just as did everyone else, indicating that they learned along with the group. On a few occasions Merciful M looked to Miraculous M for guidance or clarification about some step in the exercises he was leading. Miraculous M helped him out in those cases. Radiant R was more experienced and needed no such guidance. When there was decision to be made about some aspect of the agenda or schedule, the trainers collaborated to decide on the appropriate action. Marvelous ML and I were treated a little bit differently than the rest of the group. She carried a higher status with the inmates, most likely because she is known for her work with this program over the years. I seemed to be more of an "honored guest" than anything. Both Marvelous ML and I were, of course, outsiders to the prison, which probably contributed to our status. In retrospect, we probably contributed legitimacy to the session. Marvelous ML has been doing these workshops for years and is held in high regard by the inmates who run the AVP program. Her motives are to help the men and they respect her for that. I was a bit of a question to the men at first. A couple of them told me that, at the beginning of the workshop they thought I was with prison internal affairs or undercover in some way. As they got to know me and understand what I was really doing there, I quickly became accepted into the group. In fact, Marvelous ML later told me that she was amazed at how quickly I had become close with the inmates. I suspect this is partly because of gender difference. Most of the facilitators are women and it may be easier for the men to relate to me. I can joke with them and converse about subjects that are either unfamiliar to the female facilitators or uncomfortable for them to discuss. Once the men found out what I do in

professional life (discovered through questioning during breaks) they seemed to be very impressed that I would take time to participate in the workshop. This gave both Marvelous ML and I stature with the group, which in turn, added to legitimacy.

The interesting observation here is that the trainers were able to influence the group and conduct an effective workshop. They had no particular differential authority or status from the group, but were able to lead and develop followership. Group dynamics were counter to my expectations, as well. In most groups in which I have been a participant, members tend to challenge either leadership or subject matter. Acceptance of leadership is frequently a problem, some members being unwilling to accept the leader(s) unless they have credentials sufficient to differentiate them from the rest of the group. This seems particularly prevalent when any type of training is involved. None of that dynamic was present at the AVP workshop, however. The group became cooperative early on. They readily accepted the leadership of the trainers. What contributed to this behavior? One major factor may be the setting of the workshop. The correction center is a closed community. All the inmates share a common circumstance. All of them have a common experiential base; at least as far as their prison lives are concerned. Almost all of them seem to have a common desire to change their behavior, hence, a shared motive for being in the workshop. Therefore, even though the participants in this workshop did not previously know each other (with a few exceptions), they came to the workshop with a very common frame of reference; they were kindred. Their situation was also more conducive to cooperation than to competition, because no one could benefit from another inmate failing to complete the training, fostering a cooperative environment. Deutsch (Deutsch 1973) describes this as a *positive cathexis*. All of the men were motivated to be in the workshop, either because they had recognized a need to change their lives in the correction center, or because they wanted to ensure they never returned once released. Their comments during the workshop indicated remorse (in about half of the men) for past behaviors and a sincere desire to be a different person. Some of their motivation was, no doubt, triggered by a desire to maintain their security level, but whatever the underlying reason, the general level of motivation was very high and the resulting learning rapid.

The sessions

The workshop consisted of six sessions, further broken down into “raps” (discussions of a relevant topic), practical exercises, re-entries (warm up at the start of each session), Light & Livelys (play time), and evaluations. The workshop followed a consistent progression. First, a topic would be discussed and examples would be given. Then the key point would be reinforced through practice. Most of the practice exercises were contrived, but they all provided meaningful reinforcement of the theme or topic. Appendix 1 lists the exercises during which observations were made, as well as some of the observed group behaviors. Only those activities during which meaningful observations were made have been included in the narrative herein.

An analysis of the agenda⁵ for the two-day workshop shows that establishing self-worth, recognizing the value of others, and creating a sense of control over one's actions (self-mastery in emotional intelligence terms) were key themes. These notions were established in the first half of the session (Saturday morning and afternoon). The balance of the workshop consisted essentially of exercises to reinforce these themes. Self-efficacy was fostered through the exposure-affirmation cycle, previously described, during which the participants learn that they are OK and that others view them as such. They learn confidence and develop trust in others with whom they do not have a pre-established affinity and from this a sense of other-regarding emerges. Others are OK, too. Self-efficacy serves to strengthen the idea that the participants can, in fact, influence the outcome of situations using the tools and techniques taught in the workshop (these help to reinforce the sense of mastery) which, in turn, triggers a behavioral change toward others.

Quaker values, particularly other-regarding and other-valuing, were evident throughout the exercises, noticeably in the Transforming Power "rap" (notion of God or goodness in everyone), the effective listening exercise (sensitivity to speaker's concerns), the "I Statements" exercise (concern about other's feelings), and six-part problem solving (need to understand the other's point of view and sensitivities). The sessions built progressively upon prior messages and reinforcements. There were frequent breaks (except on Sunday afternoon) and the pattern of delivering and reinforcing themes or messages was broken up by frequent "play," the light and lively exercises. The formal parts of the workshop were fairly intense. Everyone was either in their chair listening or practicing learned skills, or they were in a structured exercise. The light and livelies made for an enjoyable session for the men, one that was not too intense. The light and livelies also served an important role in the development of relationships among the men. The light and livelies were unstructured, no particular message was being delivered and no one was tasked with anything other than having a good time. The men were able to pair up with new-found friends or work across sub-groups and this helped to foster familiarity and interaction among group members.

Underpinning the observed attitudinal changes is a set of skills and tools taught in the workshop that include active listening, negotiating and conflict resolution. These are skills that were clearly missing (or at least underdeveloped) in the group because of the men's backgrounds. Many of them were in prison for violent crimes perpetrated in response to an inability to control confrontation or fostered by a disregard for others. All of the men expressed regret at being in the correction center. The idea that there were tools and techniques that could be used to defuse potentially violent situations, while something most of us would take for granted, is not universally understood by inmates, many of whom are victims of child abuse and who had role models that exhibited a noticeable predisposition for violence⁶. Hence, the ideas put forth and

⁵ The agenda can be found in Appendix I. Note that some of the exercises in the workshop are not included in the narrative as I attempted to select only the most relevant and illustrative material.

⁶ Marvelous ML and Counselor S explained this over lunch on Saturday. While I could not obtain statistics, Counselor S said that a significant number of the inmates had been victims of abuse.

the techniques taught in the exercises were a revelation to the group, having far more impact here than they would have with an average group on the outside. The high motivation level of the group coupled with this revelation of viable alternatives to violence explains much of the rapid change in behavior. What is so different about this group is the motivation level and the rapidity with which the group adopted workshop concepts and put them into practice.

Observed Behavior

This project attempts to determine whether other-regarding and other-valuing behaviors are evident in the workshop and if (and how) they influence cooperation. To that end, observations were analyzed to identify patterns of other-regarding/other-valuing behavior in the inmate participants. The evidence sought for other-regarding/other-valuing behavior included; eye contact, verbal affirmation, body language (e.g., leaning forward in a chair or nodding in an approving manner), verbal expression of concern, expression of affinity with others, deference toward others, cooperation (e.g., as in an exercise that required cooperation or collaboration), sharing (e.g., of stories about oneself), power sharing (e.g., collaborative behavior between trainers in solving problems), and expressions of vulnerability (willingness to expose sensitive feelings to the group). Where the behaviors were observed, they are described in the narrative.

Some of the exercises were about establishing self-esteem, an assumed problem in the inmates given their situation. While this is probably a very necessary foundation for other-regarding/other-valuing, it is not the focus of this paper and I will ignore that aspect of the workshop henceforth.

An analysis of the observed and coded behaviors indicates that other-regarding/other-valuing was low at the start of the workshop and high at the end. The progression was, however, not completely linear. There was a “tipping point” at which other-regarding/other-valuing went quickly from low to high. This point occurred at the culmination of the trust exercise on Sunday afternoon. By the end of the “Crocs and Frogs” light and lively exercise, the group could be characterized as highly cooperative. The degree to which the inmates struggled to help each other during that exercise versus competed to win, was unmistakable. It is likely that tipping points occur during other efforts aimed at increasing cooperation and that attempts to structure activities to reach the tipping point as quickly as possible would be more “economical” than those that assume a linear progression. The tipping point for this group seemed to be when the participants reached a level of comfort with and trust in each other. Once the “threshold” was achieved, it seemed to be permanent. At least in the workshop, there was no evidence of regression. The progression of this group suggests that the concepts of self-efficacy, trust and other-regarding behavior advanced incrementally up to the point where these attitudes were instilled generally in the group. A trigger then served to demonstrate to

the group that these attitudes were shared. In this case, the Crocs & Frogs game provided a demonstration of the shared values and provided the final “cement” that pulled the group closely together.

A pattern emerges from an analysis of the exercises that is relevant in understanding the dynamics of the workshop. Initially, a group of strangers come together. They are uncomfortable with each other (or at least not comfortable). Then through a series of exercises, they repeatedly expose themselves psychologically to each other, either individually or en masse. Because the exercises are repetitive and the participants rotate, no one gets to select a preferred partner and stay with him. Over the course of the workshop, therefore, people learn that they can be open with strangers and not suffer “injury.” From listening, they learn that others are a lot like them. From the multiple exercises, they get substantial practice in communicating, using the tools provided in the workshop. Thus, a perception emerges that people other than those with whom some affinity has already been established are approachable. They are OK. In the “real world” we tend to establish affinity with either individuals or groups with whom we are associated. People outside of that structure are outsiders. There is not normally a forcing function that makes us interface with outsiders (beyond formal interactions) and we would seldom think of sharing deep feelings or stories about ourselves with them. We tend to devalue outsiders because they are not part of our inner circle and we do not see the likelihood that they will ever become insiders. The structure of the workshop makes one realize that outsiders are like you more than they are different. It also teaches that others have value, that they can be positive reinforcers in your life. In short, it broadens your horizons substantially.

For example, exercises 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 3a, 3c, 3d, 4a, 4b, 5a, 5c, 5d, 5e, 6a, 6b, and 6c (see appendix A) all involved this pattern of exposing feelings to the group or individuals in it. These represent most of the workshop exercises. The use of active listening techniques that are taught in the workshop makes for more effective listening and that serves to further reinforce the goodness of the process (the speaker gets frequent positive reinforcement). Affirmations, used repeatedly in the exercises, also reinforce the speaker. A sense of self-efficacy and self-mastery emerge and subsequently produce trust and other-regarding behavior. The workshop participants learn to interact (as opposed to react) with others and establish trust one-on-one. The net result is that perceptions about others are altered substantially in a very short period of time. This is not the pattern that would occur absent an intervention like the AVP workshop.

This pattern may also provide substantiation that other-regarding behavior can be applied outside of an immediate group to a broader, more generalizable population. The AVP workshop forces you to interact with strangers, and in so doing, you learn to value them. Because the participants do this in rapid succession, the notion is well reinforced. Once you begin to see that others are OK, you start to generalize the notion. I would argue that this lays the foundation for generalizing other-regarding behavior exogenously. The power of the workshop for the men in the correction center is that it gives them skills to

apply to their lives in prison, skills much in demand in the violent, confrontational and often petty atmosphere of the tiers. While most of the men are motivated by the notion of eventual release, AVP skills will serve them well while they remain incarcerated.

The group demonstrated characteristics consistent with other experiments in which the performance of cooperative groups was compared with competitive ones. Deutsch, for example, describes (Deutsch, 1973, p.26) four patterns that differentiated a cooperative group from a competitive one; (1) more effective communication, (2) more friendliness, more helpfulness and less obstructiveness, (3) more coordination of effort, more division of labor, more task achievement orientation, and (4) more feeling of agreement and similarity of ideas and confidence in one's own ideas and the value that other members of the group attached to those ideas. All of these factors have elements of other-regarding/other-valuing embedded within them. While we do not have a competitive inmate group to compare this one to, it is clear that the group both exhibited these behaviors and was cooperative (by the end of the workshop). The pattern also supports both Deutsch's and Kohn's (Kohn 1986) view that competition is not an inevitable outcome of human interaction. The best evidence of this was the Crocs and Frogs exercise wherein the group could clearly have engaged in competition (in fact, it was the expectation that they would do so), but did not. Patterns are also consistent with Boyatzis' (Boyatzis, pending, p.3) notion of emotional intelligence. The group members exhibited an increasing maturation of EI competencies over the course of the workshop (in fact the underlying intent of the workshop is to increase EI, although that term is not used), including social awareness, empathy, influence, communication and conflict management, all competencies that have other-regarding/other-valuing implications. I propose that, in addition to some immediate environmental factors ("captive"...no pun intended... audience, clear motives for wanting to change behavior, equal status, lack of competitive external pressures), the development of other-regarding/other-valuing behavior in the group explains much of the high level of exhibited cooperation. This is supported by a review of the exercises, which shows a pattern of continuous exposure of feelings, followed by positive reinforcement from the group or individuals and subsequent direct affirmation of the individual. As the workshop progressed, so did other-regarding behavior and cooperation.

Other-regarding/other-valuing may have another implication for cooperation. It mitigates the frustration-aggression cycle. Berkowitz (Berkowitz, 1962, p. 28) suggests that aggression may be a result of frustration (he also describes conflict and frustration as synonymous). He goes on to hypothesize (p. 32) that the "strength of the aggressive reaction to some thwarting is a joint function of the intensity of the resulting anger and the degree of association between the instigator and the resulting cue." It is likely that the degree to which one values or regards the instigator is also a factor in anger. We are less likely to react angrily to someone who we highly regard; than we are to someone we do not. We are also less likely to react angrily

when we are confident in our ability to handle situations in a different way. It is a simple extrapolation to posit that learning to value others would serve to reduce frustration-aggression and foster cooperation

Implications

There is clear evidence that other-regarding/other-valuing was a determining factor in fostering cooperation in the AVP workshop. This suggests that practitioners seeking to improve cooperation would do well to assess the level to which the target group possesses these characteristics. If, as Kohn (Kohn, 1990, p.93) claims, “cooperation is an essentially humanizing experience that predisposes participants to a benevolent view of others,” it should follow that a benevolent view of others would predispose people to cooperate. Consequently, deliberate efforts to establish mutual respect and esteem should be undertaken as part of any intervention strategy that attempts to initially foster or enhance cooperation. Where these behaviors are absent or minimal, deliberate efforts to enhance them should be incorporated. The techniques used in the AVP workshop would be useful in this regard.

An effort to reach the tipping point in cooperative behavior as soon as practicable also may be desirable, in that it saves time and energy. In order to determine initial group predispositions, instruments to determine the level of respect and trust could be applied, including survey questionnaires, interviews or background histories, depending on the circumstances and makeup of the group. Workshops and exercises aimed at fostering cooperation, and thereby reducing aggression, should then focus on establishing other-regarding/other-valuing behavior using tailored approaches early on. A means of determining progress against that objective should be incorporated in the design, and flexibility to adjust dynamically to different rates of progress should be maintained. Facilitators should be able to recognize other-regarding/other-valuing behavior and reinforce it when it occurs.

Validity

The prison environment poses some implications for validity that need to be exposed. On the plus side, the environment affords an opportunity to study a group essentially unaffected by external factors such as work, daily home life, child or parental care pressures, or the societal pressures associated with everyday living. All members of the group were of essentially equal status. There were no prison officials or other authority figures present to influence behavior and none of the inmates was in a position to provide a benefit to any other, save for perhaps a cigarette. The group is in prison because they have demonstrated a lack of other-regarding/other-valuing behavior either directly through crimes against persons, or against other people’s property, or indirectly by failing to consider the consequences of their actions on their families. The effects of AVP in instilling other-regarding/other-valuing behavior should be, and in fact was,

noticeable over the course of the workshop (see narrative and Appendix A). Internal validity is therefore, high.

A potential problem in this study is external validity. The very environment that makes this group so attractive to study, also threatens external validity. Inside the prison, the men are motivated to change their lives. The immediacy of their predicament is unavoidable and they have little else to worry about other than wanting to do everything they can to ensure on-time release. They are also protected from some of the negative influences that were present on the outside. Drugs, while available, are expensive and relatively scarce. There are also fewer financial pressures, less opportunity for gambling and other obsessive behaviors, unsavory influential acquaintances, etc. The question this raises is whether or not the effects of the training would be as effective on a group in those external circumstances, with less motivation to alter their behavior. One potential answer to this can be found in Boyatzis' (Boyatzis, pending, p.8), wherein he argues that self-directed change and learning often begin when a person experiences a discontinuity, a moment of awareness and a sense of urgency about their situation. Clearly, the men in the correction center have experienced a discontinuity (through their removal from society) and their eagerness to modify their behavior probably derives from that. It could be argued that as long as a discontinuity has been reached, the behavior of any group in a similar situation would be the same, but there would potential inconsistencies about the degree of homogeneity of the group, as well as other differences. In the case of the inmates in this study, they have all certainly reached a discontinuity. Other groups might not have the same level of homogeneity. In summary, while external validity is a concern, I do not believe it is a major issue and the findings of the study should be reasonably generalizable. One final note on validity, the inmates were all men and that raises a question about generalizability across gender boundaries.

Summary

I have demonstrated that other-regarding/other-valuing themes and behaviors are evident in the Alternatives to Violence Program and that these values are imparted to the participants through the exercises that comprise the workshop. I have provided examples from the literature that reinforce my theory that other-valuing/other-regarding influences cooperation as well as arguments that my findings are valid. Further, a case has been made that efforts to improve cooperation should take into account other-regarding/other-valuing behavioral predispositions in structuring interventions and these interventions should focus on increasing the degree to which group members regard or value others. Leaders, managers and other practitioners interested in improving cooperation need to be aware of this phenomenon and incorporate it into the methodology they employ in their daily routines. It is hoped that the importance of other-regarding/other-valuing has been clearly presented here and that practitioners will find the information useful in improving their efficiency and effectiveness and that of the organizations they lead. The study should also serve to show how motivation can enhance group performance.

One final note, the impact of AVP on the inmates in my workshop was profound. The skills the men learned are potentially of tremendous benefit to them, both while they are inmates and when they are released back into society. They are, therefore, of potential benefit to society. Most of the men in the correction center will ultimately be released and I, for one, would like them to have violence avoidance skills. If this paper does nothing more than demonstrate the effectiveness of AVP on its target population, generating continued support for the program, I will consider the effort involved worthwhile.

References

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Acknowledgement should also be given the work of the Quakers who developed the AVP workshop materials from which much of this paper was drawn. These have not been published.

Appendix 1 – Exercises, Key Themes, Observed Behaviors

<i>Exercise</i>	<i>Key Themes</i>	<i>Observed Behavior</i>
Opening “rap”	Voluntary nature of the workshop	Group was quiet, no questions or comments
Objective names	Pick a “positive” name	Names suggested positive self-images
Session 1.a. introduction	Agenda, logistics, expectation of participation	Group was quiet, no discussion
Session 1.b. Light & Lively	Use of the “big wind” (trainer says “there’s a big wind blowing” and everyone is to move quickly to another seat across the circle) to move the group around if things became too quiet or un-engaged	Everyone practiced quickly moving to another chair. Some smiles. Group seemed unsure of expectations.
Session 2.a. reentry	I feel good about myself when...	Group responses equally split between achievement oriented answers (...I finish something I started) and humanistic answers (...I can help someone who’s down)
Session 2.b. brainstorm violence/non-violence	Give examples of violence and non-violence	(Group) list included physical implementations of violence as well as mental (e.g. mental cruelty).
Session 2.c. active listening	Be conscious of body language. Use encouragers (e.g. “tell me more”). Ask probing, open-ended questions. Restate what the speaker said. Avoid giving advice, interrupting or changing the subject.	Everyone applied the techniques in a practice session. Body language was apparent (squarely face, open posture, lean forward, make eye contact, relax...SOLER).

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Session 2.d. concentric circles	Reinforcing exercise for listening skills.	Everyone rotated around a circle and practiced active listening skills one-on-one. People were smiling and seemed to be “getting into” the exercise. There was lots of palm slapping (prison handshake variant) as each person finished with one partner and moved on to the next.
Session 2.e. evaluation	What were the likes, dislikes, and suggestions for improvement?	Some negative comments about brainstorming violence/non-violence. People asked, “Why did we do that? We didn’t use it for anything.” Other comments were positive.
Session 3.a. reentry	Something I learned today...	Several responses were that they had learned about other men in the room. One participant said he had learned how “alike” everyone was counter to what he thought at the start of the session.
Session 3.b. transforming power “rap”	Justice; God or good is in everyone; positive (non-violent) outcomes are possible; caring for others is important	Everyone listened. No comments.
Session 3.c. “I” statements	Don’t use “you,” it’s a put down and makes people defensive; “I” statements give information on the speaker and give the other person a choice as to how to respond w/o feeling that they have to defend themselves.	Many of the men struggled with this conceptually. It took several rounds of practice and trainer guidance before everyone was clear. Those who understood the concept helped those who did not.
Session 3.d. six-part problem solving	Identify the problem; identify needs and wants; brainstorm solutions; evaluate solutions (find a win-win); choose a solution; affirm the other person	Role-playing was highly interactive. Everyone was engaged. Everyone was able to reach a win-win solution to their sample problem.

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Session 4.a. reentry	Something you don't know about me is...	Most comments were about the men's families or prior careers. Group listened intently (e.g., applied active listening techniques)
Session 4.b. "hassle lines"	Apply what you have learned to a role-playing scenario involving a potentially violent confrontation.	Almost everyone (2 exceptions) developed non-violent solutions. Most men sought a win-win approach and attempted to negotiate a settlement.
Session 5.a. reentry	Something I like about this group is...	All the men expressed satisfaction with the group. Some comments lauded values such as honesty, understanding (makes me realize what people are all about). Some focused on communication skills that were aided by group activities. Some were about how group activities had helped the men discover alternate ways to deal with anger.
Session 5.b. murder mystery	Cooperate to determine answers to complex questions.	The four teams eventually determined the correct answers to four questions. Teams had to develop techniques for communicating, sharing power, listening carefully to others and collating information.
Session 5.c. gathering	I feel trust in another person when...	Most of the men expressed difficulty in establishing trust (comments were aimed at people outside the group).

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<p>Session 5.d. trust exercise</p>	<p>Demonstrate trust by leading blindfolded partner through an obstacle course.</p>	<p>Majority of the group felt that leading was harder than following. Most participants said they learned to place trust in or be dependent on others.</p>
<p>Session 5.e. space invaders</p>	<p>Be sensitive to other peoples' "comfort zones." Look for body language and other cues.</p>	<p>Consensus was that although everyone had recognized that they had a comfort zone, they had not realized others might have a different one. Many of the men said they had recognized certain cues in the exercise that would help them judge comfort zones in the future.</p>
<p>Session 6.a. reentry</p>	<p>A goal I have for the future is...</p>	<p>Comments: change my behavior (2), exit the prison system and return to prior lives & families (7), help others avoid this situation (4), learn a new skill (2)</p>
<p>Session 6.b. light & lively (croc and frogs)</p>	<p>Frogs (inmates) had to get on a lily pad (piece of newspaper) when the croc attacked (signaled by stop of maraca rattling). Lack of lily pads precluded everyone from finding a lily pad when attacked. Game continued until there was only one lily pad and two men left.</p>	<p>Obviously great fun for the group. Everyone was laughing. Those who made it on to a lily pad tried to help those who had not by holding onto them or allowing them to stand on their shoes.</p>

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Session 6.c. yarn toss	Form a web by passing a yarn ball from person to person, sequentially, across the circle of chairs, each man holding onto the string before passing the yarn. Each man has to affirm the person he passes the yarn to. The process was then reversed.	Majority of inmates took a moment to consider the affirmations. Most delivered them clearly and without hesitation. Active listening methods appeared to be employed by most of the group (eye contact, body language). Impression was that everyone took this seriously and wanted to deliver meaningful affirmations.
Session 6.d. completion certificates	Present certificates to each trainee. The four trainers and Marvelous ML called each name and Miraculous M handed the certificates out as each person came forward.	Every participant shook hands and hugged each trainer. The group applauded as each person received his certificate.