

Reaching the Invisible Victim: Men’s Fraternity as Restorative Justice

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Abstract

This qualitative study was conducted to examine *The Quest for Authentic Manhood: Men’s Fraternity* through a restorative justice lens and to evaluate the program’s effectiveness at meeting the needs of prisoners’ invisible victims, their families. The study represents the inaugural evaluation of Men’s Fraternity in a maximum security prison. Drawing from in-depth, structured interviews with inmates who had completed Men’s Fraternity, researchers identified one major theme and four, closely related, sub themes. The major theme was that the delivery of Men’s Fraternity in an adult male maximum-secured correctional institution constitutes restorative justice. Theoretically, restorative justice attempts to repair harm caused to victims, victims’ families, the community and the offender’s family but little, if any, focus is directed to the latter group of stakeholders. While unintended victims of military conflict are commonly referred to as collateral damage, the researchers believe offenders’ families often remain invisible and their wounds and pains are seldom addressed. Men’s Fraternity is a much needed vehicle to include offender’s families in the restorative justice process. The four supporting sub themes were that Men’s Fraternity addressed issues with (a) parents, (b) spouses or partners, (c) children, and (d) fills a family void.

Key Words: Restorative Justice; Correctional Program Evaluation; Qualitative Research; Biblical Masculinity; Maximum Secured Institution; Prison Ministry.

Introduction

For decades, if not centuries, the argument between the effectiveness of punishment versus treatment has persisted. Criminal Justice practitioners, political authorities, social service professionals, interested citizens and academic researchers have participated in the debate. Punishment proponents, while focusing on the nature of the offense and the offender, argue that penal sanctions act as a deterrent to future criminal behavior on the part of the offender as well as other potential offenders. Treatment supporters, contend behavioral change is achieved through identification of and response to physical, emotional, and social issues which underlie the offense. Review of recidivism rates related to both programs leads one to believe goals are seldom met. In addition, current practices “fail to address all the injuries surrounding the crime” (Van Ness & Strong, 2002, p. 4), including the emotional, psychological, and physical injuries endured by the crime victim.

Restorative Justice offers an alternative perspective to viewing, understanding, and responding to crime within our society (Braithwaite, 2002). According to Galaway and Hudson (1996), three fundamental concepts construct a restorative justice definition and practice. Crimes are viewed as conflicts among individuals and interpersonal relationships (Zehr, 2002) that resulted in injuries to the main stakeholders (Braithwaite, 2002, p. 12) of the crime - the victims and their family members, the offenders and their family members, and the members of the community-at-large. Secondly, through party reconciliation and the repair of the violation of the social contract (Zehr & Towes, 2004) peace can be restored back into the community. Lastly, with the facilitation of active participation by all parties involved (the victims and their families, the offenders and their families, and the victimized community members) a solution to repair the social contracts is developed.

Restorative justice values, principles, and practices date back to earlier paradigms, not only in British and American history, but also in numerous indigenous cultures throughout the world (Unbreit, Vos, Coates, & Lightfoot, 2005). Throughout the restorative justice movement organized religions have provided a steady source of volunteers to ensure community involvement, have had a powerful influence in the restorative justice process, and viewed crime as a violation against people and families, rather than “the state” (Smith-Cunnien & Parilla, 2001).

According to Pranis (1997), the involvement of faith communities is essential to the success of restorative justice because no other institution in the community has as much moral authority to bring to the process (Smith-Cunnien & Parilla, 2001).

While programs between the offender and the victim and victim’s families, as well as with the community, abound, attempts to resolve issues between the offender and his family have taken a back seat. The effects of penal sanction, specifically incarceration, are well documented. In researching *The Fatherless Generation*, Sowers (1974) found studies linking the absence of a father to suicide, delinquency, behavioral disorders, school dropouts, substance abuse and incarceration. Also, research indicates children suffer emotional trauma from being present during the arrest of a parent (Jose-Kampfner, 1995) as well as coming home to an empty residence after a parent has been arrested (Fishman, 1983). The long-term effects of an incarcerated parent are also well-documented (Baunach, 1985; Stanton, 1980; Jose-Kampfner, 1991). Lastly the divorce rate among couples where one spouse is incarcerated for one year or more is 80% for men and close to 100% for women (Stritof & Stritof, 2003). The emphasis on restoring victims, victims’ families, and the community often comes at the expense of the offender’s family. The authors hope to better address the needs of these “invisible or hidden victims” through research.

Dr. Robert Lewis developed and authored *The Quest for Authentic Manhood: Men’s Fraternity*, a three-part program to assist men, young and old, living a life of manhood under the model of Jesus and the direction of God. Lewis’s first program *The Quest for Authentic Manhood*, directly devotes eight of its twenty-four sessions to family issues. Furthermore, other sessions indirectly addresses family issues by helping men uncover emotional wounds, become servant leaders and learn to define manhood biblically. Clearly, the sessions and topics addressed in *Men’s Fraternity* bear relevance to incarcerated males and the family victims created by their behavior, attitude and absence. Although not specifically designed for prison inmates, the program has been presented systematically throughout prisons in Arkansas and Texas and sporadically throughout other prisons across the United States. This completely volunteer program is attractive to prison officials facing tight budgets and reduction of other programs. Unfortunately, no evaluations regarding the effectiveness of *Men’s Fraternity*, within the walls or outside, could be found. The current study attempts to answer two questions: (a) Is *Men’s Fraternity* a restorative justice program and (b) Is it an effective means to meet the needs of the invisible victims, the family?

Literature Review

Today’s criminal justice system focuses on the offender and ensures offenders are held accountable for their crimes. The system does little to encourage offenders to understand the repercussions of their actions. There is also little interaction among those affected by the commission of a crime and frequently, one or more of the affected parties are neglected as a result of the focus on prosecuting and punishing the offender. This emphasis overlooks the physical and emotional needs of those involved and fails to establish a healthy relationship among stakeholders.

The extensive focus on offenders ignores the needs of the other parties involved. One must consider the victim or victims of the crime, the offender and his family, and the community in which the crime took place. When the offender commits a crime, he strains relationships.

The concept of restorative justice works toward including all parties involved and mending or restoring the relationships between them, rather than exclusively concentrating on the offender. One might define restorative justice as “a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense and to collectively identify and address harms, needs and obligations, in order to heal and put things right as possible” (Zehr, 2002, p. 37).

Howard Zehr (2002), one of the developers of the idea of restorative justice, argued that the criminal justice system excludes the actual victim from the criminal justice process, often recognizing the state as the victim (Zehr, 2002). The main idea of restorative justice is to give victims a voice and a chance to express the emotional, psychological, and physical injuries experienced by the crime (Van Ness & Strong, 2002). It also encourages victims and their families and members of the community to actively participate in the criminal justice process by attempting to restore the harm from the crime between the victim, offender, and community (Van Ness & Strong, 2002). Currently, when the offender is punished for his crimes, he fails to take responsibility for them.

Incarceration, according to Zehr (2002), neither encourages nor mandates the offender to take responsibility for his crimes. Despite the needs and benefits of punishment, the offender must make things right to fully understand and accept responsibility for his actions. Once the offender understands the consequences of the harm done and begins taking responsibility, he can attempt to make amends with all stakeholders, particularly the victim. The offender should make things right both actually and symbolically. He should work to repair all strained relationships because he has an obligation to the community and to the victim to fix any harm he has done.

The concept of restorative justice strives to influence the offender to experience a change within himself. This change is likely to come from making right the harms that may have resulted from his actions, treatment for any problems such as drugs and alcohol, or increasing his personal abilities. Zehr (2002) observed that an offender takes responsibility by coming to terms with what he has done. After the offender accepts responsibility for his actions, he can begin making right the wrong done. Accepting the responsibility is better for not only the offender, but for the victim and society as well (Zehr, 2002). The community is also a key participant in restorative justice. Zehr (2002) noted that communities are also victims when crimes are committed. Restoring the relationships between the offender and the community and the offender and the victim are important because these relationships stimulate a wholesome community. Also, if the offender is to be reintegrated into society, the relationship must be healthy in order to help the offender transition as smooth as possible. A reintegrated offender becomes a productive member of society (Zehr, 2002).

Restorative Justice in Prison

Unfortunately, there is little evidence indicating an inverse relationship between length of sentence and crime rate. There are few programs available that have a positive impact on prisoners which limits the possibility of rehabilitating the offender by using incarceration. Some offenders require incarceration, but introducing restorative justice to the prison system offers a relatively new approach in rehabilitating offenders. Incarceration and the idea of restorative justice are not mutually exclusive; both can be used at the same time (Dhami, Mantle & Fox, 2009).

Restorative justice seeks to involve all stakeholders in the process (Zehr, 2002). In order to involve all stakeholders, restorative justice programs in prisons might include community service performed by the inmates, victim awareness programs, victim-offender mediation, or offending behavior programs. These programs can also allow fellowship staff from the prison or trained community volunteers to enter the prison and work with the offenders. Integrating these types of programs in prison may stimulate personal transformation and, in the long term, lower the crime rate. The goals of both incarceration and restorative justice are similar. Both work toward decreasing reoffending by looking at the causes of the offender's behavior and attacking this behavior. When an offender is released from prison, he can be effectively reintegrated into society, just as restorative justice can mend broken relationships between the parties involved in the crime. The prison system and restorative justice both strive to encourage offenders to take responsibility for their crimes and the resultant harm (Dhami et al., 2009).

Restorative justice programs inside prisons can provide offenders with many opportunities. The offenders who participate in community service programs can gain skills and knowledge they can use when released.

These benefits assist the offender with reintegration into society. These programs can also provide offenders with the option to ask forgiveness of the victim for their actions. They can help the offenders repair broken relationships with family members as well as with the community. Some restorative justice programs can also help offenders establish a more positive outlook on the community (Dhami et al., 2009).

Exclusively relying on incarceration separates the offender from the victim and community, but restorative justice attempts to bring all of the parties back together. Restorative justice calls for the offender to participate willingly and begin making things right in his own way. Using incarceration to punish an offender for a crime can be a lengthy process. There is often a significant amount of time between the commission of the crime and prison, but restorative justice strives to piece together a disagreement swiftly (Dhami et al., 2009). While the literature is replete with restorative justice initiatives addressing victims, their families and the community, there is a visible absence of programs connecting offenders with their families. Traditionally, family visits, despite their infrequency, have served as the espoused program for incarcerated males while evidence-based parenting is more likely to be mandated to drug court participants or offered to institutionalized females (Zaplin, 1998).

The Quest for Authentic Manhood: Men's Fraternity

Men's Fraternity, a program developed by Dr. Robert Lewis in 1990, seeks to help men find their character. It aims to answer tough questions about becoming a man, offers a scriptural definition of manhood, explains how an individual actually becomes a man and identifies how one lives his life when he reaches manhood. The Quest for Authentic Manhood looks at why today's men struggle with becoming a man by focusing on how to unpack any accumulated "baggage" preventing them from achieving this newfound definition of manhood. Robert Lewis (2003) looks at the roles of both the mother and the father throughout a man's life, addressing both the absent parent and the overbearing parent. He also teaches those on the quest how to overcome parental roadblocks in order to successfully complete the journey toward manhood (Lewis, 2003).

Robert Lewis (2003) identifies contributions and experiences that every son needs from his father. In *The Quest for Authentic Manhood*, Lewis also reminds fathers that it is never too late to mend their relationships with their sons by providing suggestions on how to accomplish this. In addition, he reveals ways for the men to restore broken relationships with their fathers, such as forgiving them or means for resolving personal issues. He also explores the needs of men when they are lonely and explains how to address this loneliness. Lewis believes every individual needs friends to encourage him and give him compliments. Additionally, he discusses how one can be a good friend to others presenting ways to maintain a healthy relationship with friends. Lewis (2003) presents many scenarios of broken relationships with different people in a man's life and offers ways for fractured relationships to be rebuilt.

Some of the most important relationships in one's life are those with family. Robert Lewis confronts these relationships in his *Men's Fraternity*. He provides information for men to use in order to develop and maintain excellent relationships with their parents, wives, daughters, and sons. Lewis (2003) points out differences between men and their roles and the other members of the family and their roles and presents ways to cope with and overcome these differences to keep the relationships strong. Discussing the various types of relationships between man and wife, he suggests the positive aspects and the negative aspects of each type. In his examination of a man's relationship with his family, Robert Lewis (2003) addresses the relationships with sons and daughters. He studies different types of parenting styles which can strain relationships with sons and daughters. While some parenting types cause problems, others, such as very involved parenting, can be helpful for the children as they get older. Lewis touches on the different needs sons and daughters require from their fathers as they age in order to sustain a healthy relationship. He points out that a father's relationship with his son is very important because the son often sees the father as a role model. Although the daughter's relationship with the father is different, Lewis (2003) stresses that the relationship is still important but notes that there are challenges. *Men's Fraternity* provides men with suggestions to overcome these challenges in order to preserve a wholesome relationship.

Although Lewis's original focus was not prison inmates, *The Quest for Authentic Manhood* fills a void that traditional restorative justice programs neglect. Most inmates enter prison with a history of strained family relationships and, frequently, new strains evolve as a result of being incarcerated. They also have unresolved conflicts or problems in their lives.

Men's Fraternity addresses these relationships and conflicts by helping the offender understand and cope with relationships with family rather than just those with the victim, the victim's family and the community. For male inmates, *Men's Fraternity* can help restore family relations which ultimately impact past, current and future criminal behavior.

Methods

This qualitative study was conducted to examine The Quest for Authentic Manhood: *Men's Fraternity* through a restorative justice lens and to evaluate the program's effectiveness at meeting the needs of prisoners' invisible victims, their families. In order to properly evaluate the program, the research team was provided a listing of prisoners, who had participated in Men's Fraternity at an adult male maximum secured correctional institution from January thru July, 2010. Once potential participants were identified, the prisoners were sent a letter designed to ascertain their willingness to participate in the study. Those who returned letters to the prison Chaplain with an affirmative response, were contacted by prison administrators to schedule a date, time and location to complete an open-ended interview with the researchers. Prior to each interview, participants were advised of the potential risks and benefits of participating in the study and were asked to sign an Informed Consent Form, indicating that they knowingly participated in the study. Finally, researchers assured prisoners of confidentiality by removing from the research records any elements that might indicate their identities.

When reporting the findings of this study, participants' real names have been changed to a pseudonym. Because the researchers had firm ideas about what they wanted to discover during the interview, a formally structured schedule of interview questions was developed so that responses to questions would be comparable (Babbie, 2001). The predetermined questions were designed to elicit the participants' thought, opinions and attitudes about Men's Fraternity. To accommodate for the various language levels, the interview scheduled was composed at a six-grade reading level. While the interviewer was required to ask participants to respond to each question, exactly as worded, the interviewer was permitted to ask probing questions to extract more complete stories from participants (Berg, 2007). Interviewers were also permitted to answer participant's questions to make clarifications. Interviews were conducted individually at the prison with fourteen of the eighteen prisoners who completed Men's Fraternity. Interviews ranged from twenty to forty-five minutes in length and were tape recorded to ensure accuracy. The recordings were transcribed verbatim.

Analysis of data involved three tasks: (a) identifying themes, (b) coding and connecting themes with actual text, and (c) linking themes with Restorative Justice model. First, themes were identified by repetitious words or concepts that were effortlessly recognized throughout the transcriptions. Additional themes were identified through prisoners' use of metaphors and analogies to represent their experiences and thoughts. The next step in data analysis involved organizing the various themes into codes and applying the codes to chunks of text. NVivo, a full-featured text management software program, was utilized for the coding process. NVivo allowed transcripts to be directly imported from a word processing package and coded electronically. Coding stripes were made in the margins of each transcript to organize codes. Also, it was possible to write messages in NVivo about particular portions of transcripts and link these to pertinent sections of text in other transcripts (Gibbs, 2002). If the code existed from one transcription to another, the researcher just clicked on the code and the highlighted chunk of text was then associated with that code. If a new code was needed, the researcher would name it and add it to the "Coder" or codebook (Bernard & Ryan, 2010).

Once the thematic patterns had been coded, the final stage of data analysis involved explaining the themes. The literature was reviewed and the patterns were linked with previous restorative justice research.

Findings

Reviewing the interview transcriptions led the researchers to identify one major theme and four, closely related, sub themes. The major theme was that the delivery of The Quest for Authentic Manhood: *Men's Fraternity* in an adult male maximum-secured correctional institution constitutes restorative justice. Theoretically, restorative justice attempts to repair harm caused to victims, victims' families, the community and the offender's family but little, if any, focus is directed to the latter group of stakeholders.

While unintended victims of military conflict are commonly referred to as collateral damage, the researchers believe offenders' families often remain invisible and their wounds and pains are seldom addressed. Men's Fraternity is a much needed vehicle to include offender's families in the restorative justice process. The four supporting sub themes were that Men's Fraternity addressed issues with (a) parents, (b) spouses or partners, (c) children, and (d) fills a family void.

Inductively, applying a theme or paradigm to coded data led the authors to a new and uncharted direction; Men's Fraternity met the needs and addressed wounds of the "hidden victims", the offender's family.

Men's Fraternity as Restorative Justice

A review of the chapter titles for *The Quest for Authentic Manhood: Men's Fraternity* reveals that eight of the twenty four chapters addressed family relations between inmates and their parents, spouses, and children. Additional chapters require participants to reflect upon their life, identify unaddressed personal issues, identify and tend to various emotional wounds, and practice servant leadership. As one of the inmates, speaking of Men's Fraternity, pointed out:

"I believe in here it impacts us more because of the damage that may have been done to us and the damage we have caused to others. . . . You can think about what we are learning, ways to maybe fix the damage we have done to others."

Many inmates grow up either without, or with inadequate, role models and acquire a very unconventional, streetwise, definition of manhood. One which is more self-centered, shuns responsibility and treats others indifferently or contemptuously. Men's Fraternity provides a more biblical definition of manhood and enables participants to identify and adopt a new and more spiritual-based definition and results in transformation of both attitude and behavior.

A different inmate phrased it best, "After you finish Men's Fraternity, it's like you have a different outlook on life and how you treat people." The reversal of attitude and acceptance of responsibility all address the previously unmet needs and hurts of the offender's family.

Many of the participants readily admitted they had buried or avoided their own hurt and anger and, as the program evolved, realized how their lack of confrontation may have contributed to their criminal behaviors. Caleb, imprisoned for the past twenty-four years, commented, "...Dr. Lewis says men need to confront your own issues to open up the suitcase and take a look at it and see what's going on." Caleb, who often delivers messages during worship services, acknowledged that until he confronted his past issues he was destined to perpetuate his lifestyle. He now encourages other offenders to accept responsibility and understand where their hurt and anger originate. Caleb advises other inmates to "Unpack your suitcase, ...confront those deep-seeded issues that you are holding on to."

Other participants shared that by identifying and dealing with past issues participation in Men's Fraternity created a sense of inner peace, the ability to soften and to view interpersonal relations in a much different light than in the past. As a different inmate commented, "It's been a complete turnaround, a 180. From being full of rage and anger and violence now I have a lot of peace and joy and I'm really calm." While the major theme affirmatively answered the research question, is Men's Fraternity a restorative justice program, four sub themes emerged which explained how Men's Fraternity meets the needs of the invisible victims, the family.

Men's Fraternity Addresses Issues with Parents

The Quest for Authentic Manhood devotes four specific chapters to parental relations; 'Remembering Dad', 'Facing the Father Wound', 'The Overly-Bonded with Mother Wound', and 'Making a Health Break with Mom.' During those sessions, many participants recognized they were hurt by parents and admitted to or displayed resentment and anger toward their parents. Caleb vividly recounted how he needed to resolve an issue with his mother in order to resist violent tendencies. According to Caleb:

"I saw things in Men's Fraternity that I hadn't addressed with my mother. I just covered them over so I did have to go back and address some things about her not being there, address that pain so that in the future it wouldn't come out violently."

Charlie, another participant, added "We as men have a tendency to talk about you know heart wounds and issues with our mothers. We tend to shy away from those things. Being in [Men's Fraternity] opens them things." Charlie went on to relay an incident where one of the volunteers prayed with him and encouraged him to talk to his mother about how he felt when his grandmother passed away. "So I did and that opened up a door with my mother and with a couple of my sisters to where we communicate a lot better, and that's something that I wasn't able to do before."

The absence of a father, emotional rejection, and the need to resolve longstanding issues were consistently identified as wounds which needed to be healed before restoration could be completed. Jasper recalled one of the sessions dealing with parental wounds: “I seen a lot of guys having issues when we started dealing with parents and unresolved issues. It wasn’t as much mom as it was dad and you could feel the atmosphere in the room. There’s a lot of unfinished business in here. You could feel the sadness of having to revisit some of those things but in the end feel the relief.” Based on his perception, the parental sessions, although emotionally uncomfortable, brought needed emotional relief to long-held wounds and potentially laid a foundation for better communication and improved relations.

Another inmate, Moses, wept while explaining the hurt and resentment toward his father who had divorced his mom and started a second family with his new wife. Moses explained:

“Things were going on inside my heart and were affecting my behavior. My father wasn’t in the home when I was growing up but he made sure I knowed who he was....Everybody knew who I was but I wasn’t part of his family in the way that the other kids was.” While some may believe the time lag between these parental strains and their attempted resolution is too great to bring about needed healing, inmates frequently felt it was never too late to resolve the issue. Jasper explained the importance of resolution:

“I guess the number one thing is so many times in life when we have bad things happen, whatever they are, a father who drank too much or an abandonment issue with our children. So many times we choose not to deal with those issues. We choose to just move on in life and that’s it. We still have communication with some of those people but we haven’t dealt with that issue. I think that unpacking that old stuff, even when it’s a decade or so two later, in some instances, you clear that stuff up to where you can have a real open Godly relationship because then you experience a level of honesty that you haven’t experienced before.”

Men’s Fraternity Addresses Issues with Spouses

Of the four sub themes, attempts to address or reconcile issues with spouses or family partners garnered the least amount of attention among the participating inmates. Only three, of the fourteen inmates, discussed the impact of Men’s Fraternity on their marriage. Moses, who had been separated from his wife for the past fourteen years, reflected on the impact of Men’s Fraternity on his relationship with his wife. “I have had benefits with my wife and we have had discussions that we haven’t had for thirty years.” Terrance, a relatively younger participant who entered prison as a teenager commented on how his newly found definition of manhood affected the relationship with his wife, “So, when I started readin it I realized this is how a man is supposed to act, treat his wife and how he is supposed to live his life. I accepted it you know, I accept it.”

Simon, also shared how his behavior to his wife and his children had changed for the better since completing Men’s Fraternity. “I work harder at maintaining a relationship with my family. I understand more about the relationship with children and being a spouse. I let my family know I love them, I am proud of them for making good decisions.”

Lastly, Terrance commented on the change he had seen in one of the other participants who, according to Terrance, had been unwilling to help or intervene with raising his children. In Terrance’s words:

“He is more positive now, started talkin to his kids. His baby momma was having problems with the kids, you know. You got to unpack that, you gotta take care of that and he did it because of being in that class.”

Men’s Fraternity Addresses Issues with Children

The separation of children from an incarcerated parent places added pressure on the custodial care provider, may serve as a source of pain or embarrassment, and can lead to emotional scars and wounds impeding cognitive and social development.

As previously mentioned, the relationship between fatherless children and several social ills, including but not limited to, delinquency, substance abuse and incarceration is widely accepted (Sowers, 1997). While some contend visits from children are a viable method to maintain contact and influence, it is not always practical. Some children are placed in foster care or custodial care and have limited access to the institution where their parent is housed. In other instances, the child or children are placed with family members but transportation costs limit visitation opportunities. For others, the inmate is under disciplinary action and is not permitted visitors. Last, some inmates victimized their own child and are prohibited from contact.

Several inmates referenced attempts to better or, in some cases, to re establish relationships with direct offspring, step children or nieces and nephews. One inmate explained how his participation impacted his relationship with a college-age daughter and how he stood by her to overcome her anxiety of leaving for school:

“...she is probably ... gonna be able to share with you our father awareness that’s increased, what a father is and what a father should be. Even being incarcerated when she headed off to college, I wasn’t able to be there but I was on the phone with her. We packed together, it’s everything but being right there. Sometimes people give her going away gifts and maybe a sweater or a party but I like that knowledge that she turn back to it in 20 years later that I gave her.”

Another Men’s Fraternity graduate voiced his opinion about the relationship between fathers and sons residing in the same institution. “We have a lot of males in here whose sons are in here and they think it’s cute. I’m seeing more of the reality and the devastation.”

Other inmates have shared principles they learned in Men’s Fraternity to their children in hopes of providing a better direction. An inmate stated:

“The majority of them in here use it for their own common good for their kids. ... That’s the difference the guys in here apply this to when they call home. We get on the phone with them and not here. The mother can only show a boy so much but you can’t tell them how to be a man.”

Moses echoed those sentiments in discussing how the session on the heart wound affected his interpersonal relations. “Once I was comfortable with the issues, like my heart wound, I was better able to relate to the guys on the yard my family better, my son better, especially my son. Certain things he won’t have to deal with now and if he do get in them, he will be better equipped.” Moses explained that he was so committed to preventing his son from repeating the sins of his father that he had given his *Strive Bible*, a graduation gift from the volunteers, to his son as a reminder of authentic manhood. The guidance gleaned from Men’s Fraternity is not limited to being shared with immediate family or offspring. Some inmates without children reported applying the principles to nieces and nephews. Jack, in discussing the relationship with his 15 year old nephew commented, “Before Men’s Fraternity we weren’t as close as we are right now.” Jack further explained how the bond extends beyond the 15 year old. In his words:

“I have six nieces and nephews. I write them and they have started writing me back more. I write them letters and let them know I love them and try to send them pictures. I tell them I am proud of their decisions.”

During the DVD sessions, Dr. Lewis consistently encouraged participants to tell family members how much they are loved and how proud the participant is of them. It is clear that some of the participants have not only accepted, but are applying those principles.

Men’s Fraternity Fills a Family Void

Through incarceration, many inmates are isolated from their families and, without proper support, face an uphill battle to change attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors which contributed to their initial criminal violations. Without a supporting network inmates are at risk of violating prison regulations and the criminal law. Such violations often lead to administrative segregation, loss of good time or additional sentences. Inmates facing these penalties are likely to be embittered and reject attempts at restoring and reconciling interpersonal relations. The inductive review of interview transcripts identified a connection among the inmate participants and the volunteers delivering the program. The researchers believe this bond serves as a substitute for family support and aids and encourages participation in the restorative process.

In response to a suggestion of using inmates to facilitate Men’s Fraternity, one of the participants commented: “...because we just haven’t had the type of relationships with our father or mother. Sometimes we do have to take on mentors to help us through life and that’s what I honestly believe is the best part of the program. Men’s Fraternity would be fine if inmate led or if a staff led it, but it is the volunteers that make the program a success.” Frequent comments inductively gleaned from the interview transcripts show inmates believe the volunteers are authentic, good listeners and don’t judge them like many others do.

As previously mentioned, for a variety of reasons, many inmates seldom receive visits from family or friends. Jacob, shared that he hadn’t had a visit in over ten years. Waylon and Howard both noted how sessions with the volunteers offset the lack of family visits.

Waylon noted “Being in here you really don’t get much contact with your family like you really want to. Having volunteers come in, it’s more like a visit. And for us, for myself, I am very appreciative.” Howard, characterized his thoughts from a broader perspective:

“A lot of guys don’t get visitors. If you go in our visiting room you will see every week about the same amount of people and the same style and the same family. There are 1500 men at this institution and maybe 40-80 guys receive visits while the rest aren’t...I feel like the faith-based volunteers have really helped us in a way and gave us care and love that we sometimes don’t get from our own families.”

According to the inmates, the instructive sessions serve as a strong emotional connection with volunteers from the outside, but are looked forward to and reflected upon. Waylon proudly noted “I looked forward to every session, I never missed a one.” Another inmate noted the connection between inmates and volunteers: “There is a connection between the VICs and the inmates, especially at each table. When someone is missing, it is very noticeable.” That same inmate summarized his feelings after attending a session “I always feel better about myself so far as how I look at myself after they leave.”

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

Traditional responses to criminal behavior, punishment and treatment, are questionable at best. Stakeholders, government officials, and society are looking for methods to effectively alter attitudes and behaviors and ultimately lower the rates of recidivism and incarceration.

Restorative justice programs have been implemented to address a broad range of crime-related injuries (Van Ness & Strong, 2002) and have the potential to repair interpersonal relationships which underlie or are damaged from criminal activity and subsequent punishment (Zehr & Towes, 2004). While the literature supports reconciling offenders with their families (Braithwaite, 2002), most attention is devoted to repairing relations among offenders, victims, victims’ families, and the community leading the researchers to label offenders’ families as “invisible victims.” The guiding research question of this study was whether or not *The Quest for Authentic Manhood: Men’s Fraternity* constituted a restorative justice program when delivered in a maximum security institution. The authors believe the answer is overwhelmingly yes. Not only does the program devote a third of its content to addressing family relations, it spends considerable time uncovering and resolving family issues which have been denied or withheld for decades in some cases. The researchers believe Men’s Fraternity offers true healing to offenders and their families and can positively impact behavior, both during incarceration and upon re entry to society.

Interviews with fourteen inmates who completed the program support the researchers’ conclusion. Not only have participants understood the lessons and principles of the program, they have actively applied them to their personal lives. An inductive review of interview transcripts showed that inmates reconciled with their “invisible victims.” They have reconciled with parents, became more open in their communication, supported and connected with spouses and encouraged children toward conventional behaviors. In addition, the program resulted in personal and emotional connections with volunteers who act as a support group, especially for inmates without family support. Obviously these are self-reported findings and the researchers will attempt to verify participants’ perceptions through future analysis of interviews with the volunteers, staff members and selected family members or friends. At a time when state and federal budgets have been dramatically reduced and correctional programming has been cut or, in some cases, eliminated; Men’s Fraternity offers a viable alternative. In addition to the success reported by participating inmates, the authors believe *The Quest for Authentic Manhood* provides several benefits to the dilemma facing today’s correctional institutions:

Men’s Fraternity is inexpensive and readily available. As a volunteer organization, there is little cost beyond basic security issues. There are numerous Men’s Fraternity organizations across the state and each institution should have ready access to a number of volunteers. Men’s Fraternity positively impacts the behavior of participants and potentially can reduce unacceptable behavior and can create a more positive environment and reduce the amount of divisive disciplinary procedures. The authors believe that early involvement with Men’s Fraternity can heal family relations, provide the inmate with a stronger support group and thus result in fewer behavior problems, generation of good time, and ultimately an earlier release date. The benefits of early involvement are realized not only by the inmate but also by the host institution and taxpayers.

The study presented here represents the inaugural evaluation of *The Quest for Authentic Manhood: Men's Fraternity* in a maximum security prison. Although the program has been offered in other institutions, contact with Men's Fraternity officials revealed an absence of evaluation. Because this study is in its infancy, the researchers offer several recommendations. The program should be expanded to other prisons and should be evaluated once the program has been delivered. Specifically, the researchers recommend a multi-state approach, expansions to institutions with lower security levels and to women's institutions. Dr. Lewis has partnered with Jeremy R. Howard and Shaunti Feldhahn in developing a counterpart program for women: The New Eve. The researchers are unaware whether the female program has been offered in a prison setting. While the initial delivery shows promise, there is a recognized need for follow-up or after care. Some participants face long sentences and, without consistent reinforcement, the resultant change in attitudes and behaviors will be challenged and, in some cases, short-lived. Innovation will be important to maintaining contact and ensuring continuation of the ideals of the program.

The authors believe Men's Fraternity is a viable restorative justice alternative to traditional punishment and treatment models of incarceration. The first-stage of the evaluation of the pilot program in Missouri shows great promise. The authors encourage continuation and expansion of the program as well as constant evaluation.

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