

**Using the *Touchstones*
Philosophy Discussion Curriculum
To Enhance Community Among Incarcerated Men**

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Curry School of Education

University of Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Jennifer Cutler Merritt

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APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation, "Using the *Touchstones* Philosophy Discussion Curriculum to Enhance Community Among Incarcerated Men," has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the Curry School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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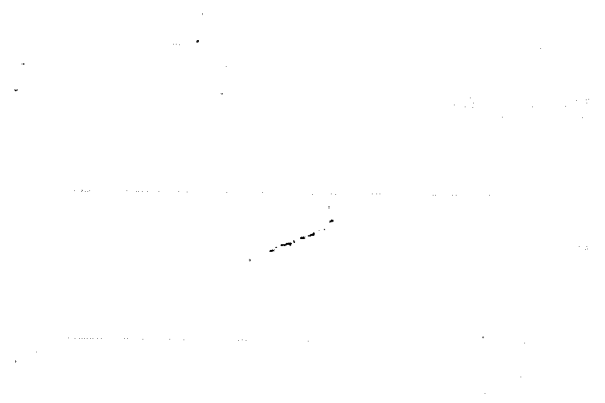
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July 30, 1999

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

Increasing incarceration rates, prison overcrowding and low access to educational and rehabilitative programming can cause dissonance in correctional institutions (Schlosser, 1998). One targeted program may reduce dissonance and enhance community life in correctional settings. The following study serves to illuminate the potential benefits of a reading, discussion and service learning curriculum called "*Touchstones*" as an educational and perhaps therapeutic intervention which may enhance relationships among students in a correctional setting and increase students' concepts of themselves as valuable, positive, contributing members of a community. The focus of this inquiry is to obtain a "summative evaluation" (Patton, 1990) of the initial effects of the *Touchstones* curriculum when it is implemented in a short-term format with students at the Charlottesville-Albemarle County Regional Jail.

The Problem

Increasing Incarceration Rates

In the early Nineteenth Century, America created its penitentiary system as a means of "rehabilitating" criminal behavior. Over one hundred and fifty years later, this system has grown to unprecedented proportions. In an article in the December, 1998 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*, entitled "The Prison Industrial Complex," Eric Schlosser illuminates the extent to which this frightening societal phenomenon has escalated:

- Today the United States has approximately 1.8 million people behind bars...the United States imprisons more people than any other country in the world-perhaps half a million more than Communist China.

- 'No other society in human history has ever imprisoned so many of its own citizens for the purpose of crime control,' states Marc Mauer, in his upcoming book *The Race to Incarcerate*.
- Throughout the first three quarters of this century the nation's incarceration rate remained relatively stable...in the mid -1970s the rate began to climb, doubling in the 1980s and then again in the 1990's...during the past two decades, roughly a thousand new prisons and jails have been built in the U.S...America's prisons are more overcrowded now than when the building spree began, and the inmate population continues to increase by 50,000 to 80,000 people per year.
- The enormous increase in America's inmate population can be explained in large part by the sentences given to people who have committed nonviolent offenses.

(Schlosser, 1998)

Discriminatory Incarceration

Schlosser goes on to explain that, over the last twenty years, the number of African American men convicted of non-violent offenses has realized a grotesquely disproportionate level of incremental growth relative to the number of white men who purportedly engage in similar criminal behavior:

- Among those arrested for violent crimes, the proportion who are African American men has changed little over the past twenty years, among those arrested for drug crimes the proportion who are African American men has tripled.
- Although the prevalence of illegal drug use among white men is approximately the same as black men, black men are five times as likely to be arrested for a drug offense.
- Half of the inmates in the United States are African-American.
- One out of every fourteen black men is now in prison or jail.
- One out of every four black men is likely to be imprisoned in his lifetime.

(Schlosser, 1998)

Increased Non-violent Convictions of Indigent and Under-Served Populations

Schlosser outlines a variety of overlying explanations for the prison boom of the late Twentieth Century linking the implementation of the nation's war on drugs to economic benefits wrought for the U.S. by the multi-billion dollar incarceration industry

or the "prison industrial complex." Such a prison business, Schlosser reasons, relies on the incarceration those less fortunate for its profits:

- 'No matter what the question has been in American criminal justice over the last generation,' says Franklin E. Zimring, the director of the Earl Warren Legal Institute, 'prison has been the answer.'
- The raw material of the prison-industrial complex is its inmates: the poor, the homeless, and the mentally ill; drug dealers, drug addicts and alcoholics...
- About 70% of the prison inmates in the US are illiterate. Perhaps 200,000 of the country's inmates suffer from a mental illness...60-80% of the American inmate population has a history of substance abuse.

(Schlosser, 1998)

Lack of Educational and Rehabilitative Programming Makes Problems Worse for Inmates

Conflict and dissonance comprise the cliché of prison life, but in the 1990's these maladies are exacerbated by the vast influx of non-violent offenders entering correctional institutions with educational and psychological deficits which are not being addressed.

Schlosser explains that when non-violent offenders, particularly those suffering from substance abuse problems, illiteracy, mental illness, poverty and general social depravity are incarcerated without access to rehabilitative programs, the problems that led to their convictions get worse and the cycle of dysfunctional behavior continues:

- Meanwhile the number of drug treatment slots has declined by more than half since 1993. Drug treatment is now available to just one in 10 of the inmates who need it.
- Studies have linked "double-bunking" and prison overcrowding with higher rates of stress-induced mental disorders, higher rates of aggression and higher rates of violence.
- Christopher Stone, the head of New York's Vera Institute of Justice, believes that prisons can be 'factories for crime' ...what happens during that time behind bars may effect how inmates behave upon release. The lesson being taught in most American prisons -where violence, extortion, and rape have long been routine- is that the strong will always rule the weak. Inmates who display the slightest hint of vulnerability quickly become prey.

(Schlosser, 1998)

While today's prisons and jails do provide some rehabilitative therapy and opportunity for educational improvement, such programming is frequently offered in short supply, particularly for minorities. For example, "a California study showed that two-thirds of drug treatment slots go to whites despite the fact that 70% of those sentenced for drug offenses are blacks" (Washington, 1999).

**Incarceration Practices in the U.S. Represent
Broad-Scale Human Rights Violations With Minimal Public Outcry**

Due in part to overcrowding and under-stimulation, the U.S. prison system has become a voracious melting pot of frustration, anxiety and non-productive activity where gang warfare is rampant and few exit with increased social competency. The lack of public outcry against this situation has been labeled by Katheryn Russell, author of *The Color of Crime*, as "the public's yawning response to infringements upon the rights of minorities and the poor" (Washington, 1999).

Schlosser's article seems to have served as a catalyst for scholarly evaluation of the wide variety of social maladies it illuminates. In March of 1999, The American Studies Association (ASA) Newsletter published a cover article encouraging academic analysis of the nation as a prison industrial state and quoting Bruce Franklin's response to Schlosser:

American Studies is crippled by not seeing how prison is related to all the fields we work in. The fact that *The Atlantic Monthly* is out there ahead of us in this analysis shows that we academics have not been on the job.
(Washington, 1999)

In her address at the ASA's American Prison and American Studies session in Seattle, Angela Davis demanded:

How is it possible that penal systems could have expanded so rapidly and that corporate interests could have become ensconced in punishment practices without a critical discourse developing? (Washington, 1999)

What Must Be Done?

It would seem that policy and public education initiatives directed toward preventing crime and incarceration would be necessary to curb the broad, multi-dimensional problem of skyrocketing incarceration, discriminatory conviction and lack of rehabilitation endemic to the US Criminal Justice System. However, the provision of educational and rehabilitative programming for those who currently reside within correctional settings may serve to help reduce the problem of violence that exists in American jails and prisons today. Additionally, such programming may support inmates in developing the personal and professional resources necessary to lead fulfilling lives both inside and outside correctional environments.

A review of literature in the areas of correctional education and correctional rehabilitation reveals that program evaluations have focused largely on the degree to which *long-term* (over six months) educational or rehabilitative programming *reduces recidivism* or fosters *individual academic or personal growth* prior to release. Some program evaluations have identified the *individual academic or personal effects* of *short-term* (under six months) educational or rehabilitative programming. While there exists a body of literature that describes short-term programs focused on *enhancing relationships between inmates* in correctional settings, few of these programs have been evaluated. This study attempts to address that gap in the literature by conducting a summative evaluation of the effects that one *short-term* educational/rehabilitative program exhibits on *relationships within the prison or jail environment*.

Guiding Research Question

This study explores the degree to which correctional education students who participate in the *Touchstones* program, a short-term reading and discussion curriculum centered on classical philosophy, literature and theology, will experience enhanced social relationships as a result of their participation. Additionally, the *Touchstones* curriculum, as implemented in the study, includes opportunities for students participating in the “core discussion group” to serve as facilitators of “satellite discussion groups” comprised of inmates with fewer opportunities to participate in educational programming. In this fashion, the curriculum attempts to help students develop heightened concepts of themselves as valuable, contributing members of a community.

Organization of the Forthcoming Chapters

The ensuing chapters attempt to shed light on the relative value of the *Touchstones* program as a tool for addressing the aforementioned problem. Chapter Two situates the study within the current body of literature. Chapter Three proposes a method for evaluation of the *Touchstones* curriculum. Chapter Four reviews the findings of the *Touchstones* evaluation, and Chapter Five provides a reflective synthesis of the information gathered.

CHAPTER 2 - REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Long-term Programming and Recidivism

The bulk of the literature related to correctional education focuses on the degree to which long-term educational or rehabilitative programming, (defined for our purposes as programming which lasts six months or longer), is positively correlated with reduced criminal recidivism. The Office of Correctional Education within the U.S. Department of Education has issued several reports to this effect as well as an annotated bibliography (Office of Correctional Education, 1999) of over forty studies that have scientifically linked prison education programming with reduced rates of recidivism. Perhaps the most comprehensive among these reports is a multivariate analysis of incarceration and recidivism statistics conducted by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. This study of a representative sample of BOP inmates (1205) released to the community in 1987 concluded that:

- Persons who were employed full time or attended school at least six months within two years of the time that they entered prison had a recidivism rate of 25.6 %, compared to 60.2 % for those not so engaged.
- Recidivism rates were inversely related to educational program participation while in prison. The more educational programs successfully completed for each six month period that inmates were confined, the lower the recidivism rates.

(Harer, 1994 in Office of Correctional Education, 1994)

Numerous studies have focused on the effects that particular educational initiatives, such as vocational, secondary and post-secondary education programs

delivered in correctional settings, have exhibited on recidivism rates. For example, a longitudinal study conducted by the Post Release Employment Project (PREP) found that inmates who participated exclusively in Federal Prison Industries' UNICOR vocational education program were less likely than comparison group offenders to have their community supervision revoked within their first year of release (Saylor and Gaes, 1994 in Office of Correctional Education, 1994).

A similar study of 760 released inmates from nineteen institutions in a Midwestern state compared adult releases who had taken part in vocational/academic training while incarcerated to a control group who had not participated in such training. This study found that the completion of a General Educational Development program (GED) or higher level of education achieved rendered higher levels of "post-release success" among inmates studied. Post release success was measured in higher employment rates, lower unemployment rates and lower criminal activity rates among inmates twelve months after their release (Schumacker, Anderson and Anderson, 1990 in Office of Correctional Education, 1994).

Another study that sought to determine the effects of post-secondary education (PSE) on recidivism found that inmates who had participated in PSE while incarcerated possessed a rate of recidivism of 3.9%. In contrast, those who qualified but did not participate in PSE while incarcerated experienced a recidivism rate of 11.5% (O'Neill, 1990 in Office of Correctional Education, 1994).

One unique program which was designed and evaluated in The Lafayette Parish Correctional Facility in Louisiana instituted peer tutoring among inmates to support the attainment of General Educational Development (GED), English as a Second Language

(ESL), and Adult Basic Education. The program also used inmate tutors to teach Spanish to prison staff working with Spanish speaking inmates. Volunteer Instructors Teaching Adults, a local literacy organization, trained inmates on how to tutor. Peer instruction was made available 14 hours per day, seven days per week. Of the inmates who received their GED while incarcerated (557), less than four percent have returned to jail compared to a national recidivism rate of sixty-five percent (Dugas, R.G., 1990 in Office of Correctional Education, 1994).

Long-Term Programming and Academic or Personal Growth

Some of the literature related to correctional education focuses on the degree to which long-term educational or rehabilitative programming fosters individual academic or personal growth prior to release. For example, the longitudinal study conducted by the Post Release Employment Project (PREP), mentioned below, also found that inmates who participated in Federal Prison Industries' UNICOR vocational education program were less likely than comparison group offenders to have a misconduct report within their last year of incarceration. In addition, unit teams rated study participants to have a higher level of responsibility than their comparison counterparts. This 'level of responsibility' refers to an inmate's dependability, financial responsibility, and the nature of the inmate's interaction with staff and other inmates (Saylor and Gaes, 1994 in Office of Correctional Education, 1994).

A collaborative program between community colleges and New Jersey juvenile correctional education programs at six sites that was designed to improve the math and verbal skills of students in the correctional facilities showed positive results in both academic outcomes and individual, personal outcomes for juvenile offenders. Data

collected on 104 students, including staff ratings, basic skills tests, a student questionnaire, on-site observations, and interviews with staff members and students, revealed that students improved math and verbal skills at rates double and triple (respectively) their rate of growth prior to program entry. "Over eighty percent of students learned to use computers and responded very positively to them. Success in computer-aided instruction was statistically associated with positive behavioral changes as well. Involvement of the community colleges contributed to the youth's self-image and helped neutralize the effects of labeling. Effects were greatest when the classes were conducted on the college campuses. Both college and correctional staff praised the students' behavior on college campuses. Observation and interview data suggest that most vocational programs helped students develop good work habits and a favorable attitude toward employment. Programs had a positive impact on students' attitudes toward learning. Behavioral changes included substantial gains in students' impulse control, readiness to accept responsibility for one's self and a diminished tendency to portray one's self as a victim" (Grissom and McMurphy, 1986).

In another instance, an experimental module designed to improve reading among incarcerated students by using "science and the natural world" as a context for reading realized modest improvements in reading skills among participants as compared to a control group. However, the most significant effects noted included dramatic improvements in enthusiasm for instruction (Dirkx and Crawford, 1993).

Post-secondary education has been related to improved personal outcomes in the correctional setting as it has led to reductions in behavior or discipline problems and/or prepared inmates for roles as positive contributors to community life. For example, a

collaborative post-secondary program between Lee College, Texas, and the Texas Department of Corrections featuring an emphasis on humanities and social science courses designed to help inmates face ethical, social and political issues led to a lower rate of rule violations among inmate students (Alston, 1981). Similarly, a program offered to inmates through Southside Virginia Community College (SVCC) in cooperation with some of Virginia's state correctional centers was shown to result in improved inmate behavior (Gendron and Cavan, 1988). Finally, a teacher education program offered to inmates through the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities demonstrated success in assisting students in developing effective teaching skills and preparing inmates to benefit their communities in needy areas (Black, 1975).

Short-Term Programming and Academic or Personal Growth

Additional literature on educational and rehabilitative programming in a correctional environment reveals the immediate academic and/or personal effects of short-term educational programs. For example, a study of learning styles among eighty highly functioning incarcerated students indicated that the most successful students (based in teacher ratings) scored highest in self-regulated learning. Results further indicated that correctional education students may require explicit instruction in metacognitive control and learning strategies, and that the epistemological beliefs of even high functioning students may cause them to fail to persist in the face of challenge. Program recommendations for enhancing learning in the correctional setting included providing learners with information that ties strategy use to specific learning outcomes and implementation of cognitive apprenticeships (Lindner, 1994).

Real Opportunities Behind Bars for Employment (ROBBE), a program designed to raise Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) scores five points after six weeks of skill instruction, realized an increase of thirteen points for reading and ten points for math among twenty ROBBE graduates (Tewksbury and Vito, 1994). An action research project collaboratively conducted by university researchers and selected faculty members at one of the units of the Texas state prison school system identified learning style preferences and brain hemispheric dominance among female inmates and then provided individual counseling emphasizing modality strengths (auditory, visual or tactile/kinesthetic). Inmates participating in the study showed improved test scores, reduced absenteeism and a general acceptance of the notion of school achievement versus school failure (Askins and Young, 1994).

The Youthful Offender Special Education Project in Florida taught correctional educators strategies for teaching special education students incarcerated in juvenile facilities. The results included positive gains with word decoding strategies (99% mastery required for word recognition and 65% required mastery for comprehension) and less success with goal setting strategies. Overall, teachers in academic settings met with more success than vocational settings (Platt and Beech, 1994). VisionQuest National Ltd., a residential treatment program for troubled youth based on Native American Philosophy and ceremony integrates education geared toward improving low reading and math scores with treatment for “acting-out” behavior, poor school attendance, distrust of teachers and poor attitudes toward education. The educational model has led to a high degree of student success with 90% of all students passing all subjects and realizing gains in reading achievement (Rosica and Wall, 1997).

Short-Term Programming and Relationship/Community Enhancement or Social Cognitive Growth

A few studies reveal the degree to which short-term educational or rehabilitative programs (defined for our purposes as programs with a duration of six months or less) exhibit immediate effects on relationships within the prison or jail community. For example, the Family Violence Drama Project attempted to break the cycle of prison and family violence in one Canadian penitentiary through violence education, role-play, writing, singing, risk-taking and the fostering of creative problem-solving skills and empathy. A qualitative evaluation of the fifteen-week program revealed that educational component of the program normalized the feelings of those who had been victims of childhood abuse. One participant reported, "The program made me see myself as one of the unfortunate kids, you know, that was at the wrong place at the wrong time." Other participants reported gains in conflict-resolution skills, an enhanced understanding of the cognitive connection between past choices and their negative consequences, and a sense of purpose within the prison environment. Perhaps most significant was the increased "sense of connection with the larger community, including the audience from outside the prison, professional artists and community health care professionals brought in as guests" (Cogan and Paulson, 1998).

The Prep Program, a University of Wisconsin initiative providing incarcerated men and women in three state prisons with opportunities to earn a two-year associate degree, included a cluster of courses focused on melding gender and multicultural experience. One history course entitled, "The Western Concept of Self and the Mythology of the Other," received especially positive evaluations from students for its affect on values and beliefs. A student noted, "I thought the perspectives were good in

spite of my religious beliefs. Getting a glimpse of the racist pigs we can be shook me up a bit but nothing wrong with exposure.” Student role-plays, while difficult at times, were considered valuable by the majority of students due to their requirement for cooperative decision-making in ethnically mixed groups (Thorn, 1994).

The therapeutic use of essay writing in correctional education seems to be one of the more widely used means of achieving increased cognitive social skills among students. One study noted the degree to which essay writing “helps many inmates examine and weight their values in light of the demands of participating positively in the general society.” After completing a brief baseline survey of study participants, researchers noted that over a third of respondents felt that “no one understands them” and over fifty percent “claimed that they were depressed.” These responses were indicative of a high degree of alienation perceived among participants. In addition, researchers found that inmates indicated a high degree of drug and alcohol abuse, suggesting restlessness and an inability to set goals. The writing program was designed to assist participants in better defining themselves by asking them to respond to questions such as “Who am I? What do I stand for? What do I do? What are my values? What do I believe in?” The combination of essay construction, self disclosure, critical thinking and public speaking in front of the class was expected to enhance self-esteem and group sharing. The qualitative assessment of the effects of the writing program showed that many students began to see contradictions in their lives related to their behaviors. Others noted that their problems were not part of a conspiracy “hatched by the MAN or the SYSTEM” and that they would need to change their own lives if they wanted to become positive members of society (Winters, 1993).

Another writing program entitled, "Writing for Our Lives" was designed to; shift offenders' self-identities from procriminal to prosocial, teach concrete problem-solving, enhance social perspective-taking skills and provide links to prosocial community activities. Implemented at a minimum-security facility in Massachusetts, this eight week course included journal writing, essay writing, problem solving exercises, short story reading and analysis of the characters' attitudes, and education on community services and activities. Course evaluations completed by participants and researcher observations showed that recording prosocial behaviors daily and sharing them in group settings seemed to increase the display of prosocial activity. Additionally, writing became habitual among participants. Only 11% of participants claimed previous success with writing and upon completion of the course, 82% stated that they planned to continue journal writing and self-reflection (Blinn, 1995).

A third study focused on writing as therapy evaluated a program designed to improve self-esteem of women offenders through process-based writing in a learning circle. The program offered such collaborative writing instruction to female inmates for three hours weekly over the course of eighteen weeks. Both quantitative data (Tennessee Self-Concept Scale) and qualitative data (participant questionnaires and teacher/researcher observations) were used to measure the program's effects. Findings indicated that participants increased their self-concept ratings significantly for identity, self-satisfaction, behavior, moral/ethical self, personal self, and family self. Teacher observations indicated that students were able to release some of their deeply held shame related to drug use and begin to "open up" and focus on themselves rather than living for others. Student writing samples included in the research report illustrated the students'

abilities to make written statements about a positive future beyond drugs. Student questionnaires indicated that the students; felt the class helped them improve their writing skills (89%), enjoyed working in small groups (89%), and liked the women-only nature of the classroom (78%) (Stino and Palmer, 1998).

Book clubs with writing components have been shown to promote social competency among adjudicated youth. One such club, based on social constructivist theory, supported interaction among readers, texts and the social context. At the completion of the short-term summer program, student responses to participation included; the desire to discourage friends and siblings from gang membership, interest in sharing book club material with roommates, expressed enjoyment of the camaraderie that book club instigated and the desire to help start book clubs in other classrooms (Hill and Van Horn, 1995).

Additional studies on a wide range of programmatic strategies reveal the degree to which short-term educational or rehabilitative programs exhibit immediate effects on relationships within the prison or jail community. For example, a “two-tiered, humanistic, pre-release intervention” offered education and small group counseling geared toward the improvement of interpersonal relationships, self-esteem, autonomy, communication skills and responsibility among inmates. Insights gained from the program evaluation included participant self-reports indicating that the program was effective in reaching its goals. In particular, inmates noted that they especially benefited from; opportunities to role-play anticipated situations on the outside, the open confrontation by fellow inmates, the chance to express opinions and have those opinions

valued by others, concrete assistance with resume writing and job search skills (Bowman, Lowrey, and Purser, 1997).

Another short-term study investigated the effect of the San Francisco Sherriff's Department horticultural therapy program on psychosocial functioning among forty-eight city jail inmates. The program used organic gardening to teach inmates; the benefits of productive work in a setting conducive to personal reflection and growth, how to nurture life and how to better care for themselves. The TCU/DATAR Self-Rating Form was administered at baseline, at discharge from the jail and three months post-release. Changes in psychosocial functioning while in treatment and post-release were examined within the context of inner city social ecology. Treatment effects, as indicated in the analysis of TCU data, included lower depression in participants who had emotionally detached mothers, reduced numbers of substances used, and a sustained desire for help. Reduction in hostility and risk-taking were not sustained at follow-up for white participants. (Researchers note that this may reflect the higher levels of childhood violence reported by these respondents.) At follow-up, African American participants showed decreased levels of hostility. Additionally, the study determined that the reduction in the number of types of drugs used post-release was greater in participants in the Garden Project (Rice and Remy, 1998).

A communication and rehabilitation regimen for incarcerated youth entitled Positive Peer Culture (PPC) studied 130 males, ages fourteen to eighteen, who had been incarcerated in a residential treatment center for four to fifteen months. The students were provided with PPC, a discussion program focused on problem solving that takes into account adolescents' unique characteristics such as responsiveness to peers, idealism,

caring, potential to engage in negative behaviors based on negative self-perceptions and potential receptiveness to service. They were pre and post tested on the Jesness Behavior Checklist. Analysis of scores on the Communication versus Inarticulateness scale indicated that the youth's perception of their communication abilities changed. Results suggest that PPC may facilitate communication ability for incarcerated youth (Traynelis-Yurek and Giacobbe, 1998).

Another study oriented toward the evaluation of social competency among inmates examined the relationship between a "life-skills plus vocational education intervention" and "eleven domains of Global Self-Worth" with adult male inmates. Eighteen participants were exposed to a 24-week half time plus literacy and half-time vocational education treatment and assessed using the Adult Self Perception Profile. A comparison was made to a control group of nine inmates. "Results were highly significant ($p=0.01$) for the Global Self-Worth subscale, indicating that treatment made a significant difference in the feelings of self-worth in the experimental group. A trend towards improvement in the Personal Appearance and Intimate Relations subscales was taken as additional evidence of improved self-worth" (Wenda, 1997).

Critical thinking curriculums have also been shown to improve cognitive social skills among inmates. One problem-solving model employed in conjunction with a literacy curriculum in an Adult Basic Education classroom resulted in enhanced "literacy among inmates as well as an improved capacity to pose problems, analyze them and act in cooperation with others" (Boudin, 1995).

Short-term alternative incarceration experiences have been designed to emphasize social skill development, positive work attitudes and remedial education among youth

offenders. One such program, Building Alternatives, offered vocational training and supportive services including caring mentors and teachers, job placements and apprenticeships, and easy access to community programs (housing, health etc.) for incarcerated youth in Maine over a sixteen week period. While a formal evaluation has yet to be conducted on the Building Alternatives program, it has been judged successful in light of the fact that only two of the first twenty-seven graduates had returned to criminal activity at the time of the publication of an article describing the program (Taliento and Pearson, 1994).

This Study

The aforementioned studies illuminate some of the positive cognitive social effects of a variety of correctional education and rehabilitation programs. This review of literature in the areas of correctional education and correctional rehabilitation has shown that program evaluations have focused largely on the degree to which *long-term* (over six months) educational or rehabilitative programming *reduces recidivism* or fosters *individual academic or personal growth* prior to release. Some program evaluations have identified the *individual academic or personal effects* of *short-term* (under six months) educational or rehabilitative programming.

While there exists a body of literature that describes short-term programs focused on *enhancing relationships between inmates* in correctional settings, few of these programs have been evaluated. This study attempts to address that gap in the literature by conducting a summative evaluation of the effects that one short-term educational/rehabilitative program exhibits on *relationships within the prison or jail environment*. This program, called Touchstones, employs a reading and discussion

curriculum in an effort to create more positive relationships between students. Additionally, it includes a “service learning” component designed to help students become involved in serving the needs of their immediate community in hopes of enhancing their desire to have a positive effect on others. Because the Touchstones program has not been evaluated in a correctional environment to date, research is needed to bring the full nature and effect of this program to light within the public domain.

About *Touchstones*

Created by Professors Howard Zeiderman, Geoffrey Comber and Nicholas Maistrellis of St. John’s College in Annapolis, Maryland, the *Touchstones* curriculum is comprised of a “core collection of short excerpts from multicultural classics of literature, philosophy, theology and the sciences” (Grieco, 1997). It also includes a series of follow-up questions and activities related to each literary excerpt that are intended to stimulate group dialogue. The structured discussion formats of both *Touchstones* “Volume A” (middle school version) and *Touchstones* “Volume I” (high School Version) are designed to encourage students to master complex material (Grieco, 1997) while bringing about social, academic and professional skill development through improved communication and critical thinking.

A newer *Touchstones* volume entitled “Courage to Care Strength to Serve,” incorporates values-centered inquiry with community service in an attempt to encourage social inclusion, increase self-esteem and heighten social responsibility. The overall goal of *Touchstones* is to produce improved community relationships and increased student awareness of the significance of his/her ideas.

To date, the literature on *Touchstones* does not include any formal program evaluations. However, the program has been implemented in hundreds of middle and high schools across the U.S. and around the world with largely positive results as reported by teachers and students. "I was so amazed at what went on in my first *Touchstones* class that I almost literally dragged our librarian into my room so she could see how these freshmen were handling, and effectively running, discussions after just one week of training," said Fred Murphy, chair of the English department at Rice High School in Harlem, New York (Grieco, 1997).

In addition to its implementation in middle and high schools, *Touchstones* has been introduced in senior centers and one Maryland correctional facility with positive reactions. "I like talking about issues," said senior George Shapiro of Annapolis. "I read a lot of Kant in college and these sessions give me a chance to think about subjects," (Felter, 1996). "In prison, everything is negative. Our discussions turn into fights, stabbings, that sort of thing," said inmate student Vaughn Barksdale, who is serving fifteen years for cocaine possession. But *Touchstones*, he said, has convinced the group that it is helpful to allow discussion with a few ground rules but no threat of violence. It helps them to learn and encourages them to read some of the greatest works ever written (Spangler, 1996).

About "Service Learning"

Educational programming which integrates useful community service with intellectual challenge and academic content to teach desired subjects or concepts is often called "service learning" (Alt, 1997). The components of service learning frequently include: engagement with community service, reflection on the service experience,

concept development on the part of participants, and testing and generalization of those concepts among participants.

“Service learning is distinguished from other types of experiential learning in that its participants engage in activities that serve an unmet need in the community on a volunteer basis” (Alt, 1997). Advocates of service learning espouse its benefits as: positive relationships built with those served, increased self-esteem, decreased school discipline problems, increased enthusiasm for school and an increased sense of civic responsibility (Alt, 1997).

CHAPTER 3 - METHOD

Rationale and Research Question

This study seeks to provide a summative evaluation of the degree to which *Touchstones* participants experience enhanced social relationships, heightened concepts of themselves as valuable members of a community, and the sense that their presence makes a positive difference in that community due to their participation in the program. This report attempts to summarize judgements made by students at the Charlottesville-Albemarle County Regional Jail about their immediate, short-term experiences as participants in the *Touchstones* curriculum.

In order to conduct a program evaluation of the *Touchstones* curriculum at the Charlottesville-Albemarle County Regional jail, the researcher implemented a shortened version of the curriculum in a format designed specifically for a short-term evaluation. Thus, the researcher selected a combination of readings from both the *Touchstones* "Volume A" (middle school version) and "Courage to Care Strength to Serve" to be read and discussed in tri-weekly sessions over the course of six weeks. In addition to participation in the discussions facilitated by the researcher, the core participants in the study engaged in periodic "service learning" activities by becoming facilitators of additional *Touchstones* discussions for "satellite groups" of inmates at the Charlottesville-Albemarle County Regional Jail.

Population

The Charlottesville-Albemarle County Regional Jail exists in an urban-rural, southern community. Its population (approximately 114,000 in 1996) includes an ethnic mix of 10% African-Americans, 2% Asians, 1% Hispanics and 87% Caucasians and

boasts a median household income of approximately \$36,886 (Morris, 1998). According to the 1997 Chamber of Commerce report, 18% of the population had no high school diploma, 20% were high school graduates, 22% had attended some college, 22% had completed a bachelor's degree and 17% had completed a graduate degree (Morris, 1998).

The Charlottesville-Albemarle County Regional Jail, an adult correctional facility, currently houses approximately 320 inmates, approximately 80% of whom do not have a high school diploma (Morris, 1998). Construction is currently underway to increase the bed capacity of the jail, and thus all physical/recreational activity for inmates has been placed on hold for several months and is presently being reinstated in limited amounts. Inmates spend 100% of their time confined within their "cell blocks" unless meeting visitors or attorneys, attending court hearings, attending an educational program or working out in the gym (when such opportunities for activity are available).

At any given time, approximately twenty to twenty-five male inmates and five to six female inmates are enrolled in an educational program offered through the local school district in an attempt to obtain adult basic education. These students attend study periods in the jail classroom for one hour each day grouped in classes containing five to six students each. The program, run by Ms. Thomas, the adult education teacher, is designed to assist students in obtaining a high school equivalency degree or to help them achieve basic literacy. Students remain in the program until they have passed their equivalency exam, a process that can take up to several years. Thus, a lengthy waiting list is maintained of those who wish to enroll in one of the thirty to thirty-five spaces available for adult education at the jail.

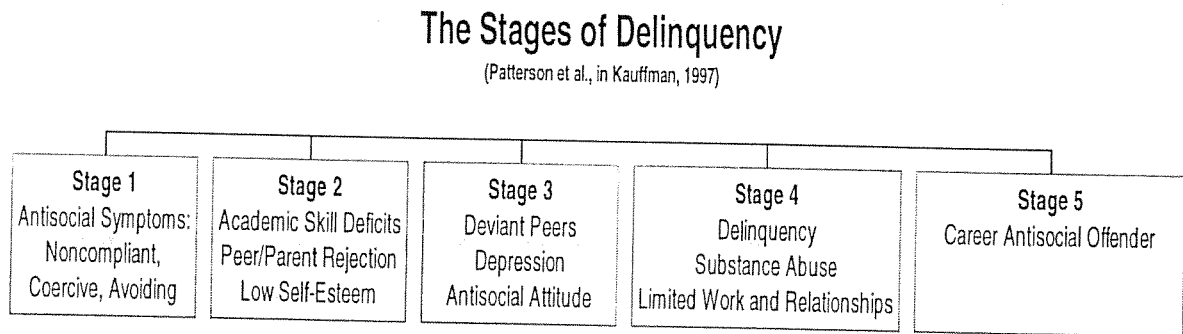
After seven months of volunteer service in the jail classroom as a teacher's assistant, including seven hours of weekly interaction and in-depth discussion with all five daily "classes" of students at the jail, the researcher observed the following student profile:

- Approximately 9% of the students are Caucasian, 1% Hispanic and 90% African American.
- Many of the students verbally indicated that they suffered from personal problems prior to incarceration including hunger, poor health, low grades, school failure and/or family dysfunction, abuse or neglect.
- Over half of the students expressed loneliness, sadness or apathy, negative self-perception, guilt, or pessimism, and/or showed signs of social withdrawal, aggression, or mood swings, physical discomfort, fatigue or illness (Kauffman, 1997).
- Approximately one third of the students displayed signs of giftedness as outlined in Gardner's multiple intelligence theory (Ford, 1996), such as: ability to pick up on attitudes and practices, effectiveness in reading behavioral cues, independence, originality, insight into complex issues and the ability to use stored knowledge to solve problems and reason by analogy.
- The majority of students are non-violent offenders who have outwardly expressed that they suffer from substance abuse problems that have led to multiple arrests and convictions. Many students appear to be trying desperately to "turn their lives around" through drug treatment (when

available), religion, and self-reflection (and reproach) in an attempt to make this their “last time behind bars.”

Numerous psychologists and social scientists have attempted to uncover some of the underlying psychological and social issues that lead to the creation of a career antisocial offender. Patterson’s five-stage theory of delinquency illustrates that delinquency becomes an escalating cycle of intermittent withdrawal (on the part of the individual) and rejection (on the part of society) leading toward “career criminal” type behavior.

Figure 1. Stages of Delinquency



In a conference on Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice Reform, sponsored by the University of Virginia Center for Children, Families and the Law, in November of 1998, one speaker quoted Patterson and Elliott’s multiple determinates theory of delinquency:

Four key ingredients determine the potential for delinquent behavior: association with deviant peers, academic performance, living in a high-crime neighborhood and family life. (Center for Children, Families and the Law, 1998)

This theory suggests that the social, educational, and occupational disadvantages that are associated with poverty may lead to criminal activity. While the *Touchstones*

curriculum is not expected to represent a solution to the problem of antisocial behavior among those incarcerated for criminal activity, it may serve as one positive step toward reversing the cycle of an individual's negative response to societal rejection. It is hoped that participation in *Touchstones* will support the individual's sense of intellectual accomplishment in a public arena and serve to validate his expressed ideas through positive social interaction. Ideally, that positive interaction will lead to positive relationships with others and the development of a self-concept grounded in a notion of one's inherent social and individual value.

Since this study does not make an attempt to quantitatively define the participants' self-perceptions related to social rejection, it may not conclude that participation in *Touchstones* definitively reverses the process of delinquency as outlined in Patterson's model. It may, however, make qualitative assessments of the degree to which participation enhances social relationships among participants.

Sample Selection

To "increase the utility of information obtained from a small sample," the study being presented employed one dimension of "purposeful sampling" known as "opportunistic sampling," a method that "takes advantage of sampling opportunities as they unfold" (Patton, 1990). Because the study was conducted with the support of the adult education teacher at the Charlottesville-Albemarle County Regional Jail, the researcher generated an "opportunistic sample" of study participants from the pool of students enrolled in adult education classes. By inviting all of the male students enrolled in the jail's adult education program at the outset of the study to volunteer to participate, the researcher hoped to obtain ten study participants. Approximately 20 men are enrolled

at any given time thus a 50% response would fill the study. If ten students had not been volunteered to participate, the opportunity to participate would have been extended to those male inmates currently on the waiting list for enrollment in the adult education program. Because female and male inmates are not permitted to interact, and because the female student population is significantly smaller than the male population and contains only five to six students at any given time, only one gender was represented in the study.

After reading the information on the study outlined in the official permission form, seventeen students from the male population in the adult education program elected to participate. Four students dropped out of the program within the first two weeks of their participation. In accordance with the participation contract, their initial interviews and their comments recorded during early Touchstones discussions were discarded. Three students were transferred to state prisons during the final weeks of the program. Since these students did not elect to drop out of the program, their initial interviews and comments recorded during Touchstones discussions were assessed as part of the data analysis. Ten students remained at the completion of the program and participated in efforts to obtain follow-up data.

Participant Recruiting

The program was explained to study participants as one that would “include eighteen reading and discussion sessions as well as opportunities to engage in service experiences, including outreach to other inmates, throughout the course of six weeks.” Prior to signing the agreement to participate, students viewed a ten minute videotape during their scheduled adult education class showing students from a Maryland correctional facility discussing their experiences as participants in the *Touchstones*

educational program. The initial response to this inquiry was positive and resulted in a 90% interest level.

Once the study was approved and the core group of participants had been engaged in *Touchstones* discussions for three and one half weeks, a memorandum was distributed among all of the inmates who were not currently confined in the maximum-security portion of the jail. The researcher personally circulated the memorandum and verbally invited these additional inmates to participate as recipients of the inmate outreach element of the study (or secondary volunteers). Initially, twenty-five participants were going to be selected by lottery from the pool of those who responded to the invitation for this aspect of the study. However, when the researcher observed the high level of enthusiasm for the program, an effort was made to include all those interested by rotating new students into the program as others exited or failed to arrive as scheduled.

The participation of the secondary volunteers was considered within the data analysis only as it related to their interaction with the core participants. Data was not collected on their individual impressions of the program.

Design: Naturalist Paradigm and Experimental Fit

This study employs the naturalist paradigm over the positivist paradigm to shape the framework of the study design. The naturalist paradigm provides a strong fit in order to conduct research on the development of communal relationships as an intervention for the dissonance that can arise in a prison/jail setting for the following reasons:

- The realities being assessed are “multiple, constructed and can be understood only holistically” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The reality of a student’s experience in *Touchstones* and cannot be studied as a series of variables which

can be understood in isolation. For example, a student would be hard-pressed to distinguish an increase in positive communal relationships as it relates to performing service, interacting with other discussants in the researcher-facilitated sessions, or interacting with family members from outside the jail environment. Rather, he is likely to say “I feel like a more valuable member of the community and feel closer interpersonal ties to others since I’ve been doing this *combination* of things with my life” or “I see no change since I’ve been engaging in these activities.”

- The “knower and the known are inseparable” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In attempting to learn more about the effects of participation in *Touchstones*, the researcher is apt to shape the research question and sub-questions based on her experience with the participants being researched. That response is likely to elicit a counter-response from the participant. Since the subject of the research is human, the researcher’s interpretations of the research will effect her response to that research. Thus, the issues being studied cannot resemble those observed in a sterile laboratory setting.
- It is possible, and perhaps likely, that the information obtained from this study could provide insights into similar situations should *Touchstones* be implemented within other correctional facilities. To this end, the conclusions of this study are transferable to other environments. However, it is not possible to observe the sample studied and to generalize that criminal offenders nation-wide will respond to *Touchstones* in the exact same fashion as the students studied. Regional and cultural differences may bring about

different results and thus programs would likely need to be tailored to the populations served.

- All of the entities in the *Touchstones* paradigm are in a state of “mutual, simultaneous shaping” so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects. For example, if a *Touchstones* student forms an improved relationship with a classmate, cellmate, family member, or inmate who’s discussion he is facilitating, the dynamic nature of that relationship will allow the “effect,” or improvement, to bring about another “cause.” Perhaps that cause will be the motivation to pursue the relationship further. Through naturalistic inquiry, we are able to study the entire dynamic process, rather than attempting to isolate specific causes and effects.
- The nature of the study is value-laden. In selecting the topic of study, the researcher expresses a set of values. The type of study, choice of theory, and context of the study each bring additional values to the research which contribute to the overall resonant or dissonant nature of the research outcome. A network of resonant values will produce more meaningful results. For example, if the topic chosen lends itself to holistic analysis, and the study has been designed to reflect a positivist paradigm of inquiry, it is unlikely that the results will provide a clear picture of the information or situation studied (Lincoln& Guba, 1985).

Responsive Evaluation: Subjectivist Epistemology

In addition to employing naturalistic inquiry as the paradigm for this study, the study relies on the subjectivist epistemology to conduct a responsive evaluation. Such an

evaluation emphasizes the transactional nature of the program processes and uses “various informal methods of investigation” to highlight the uniqueness of each interpersonal transaction (Patton, 1990). Responsive evaluations are known for their tendency to:

- Place importance on personalizing the evaluation process in a naturalistic fashion
- Use face-to-face transactions between participants and the evaluator to assess and analyze educational processes
- Use program personnel to react to the accuracy of portrayal
- Allow participants to react to the relevance of findings
- Allow the evaluator to observe the program before finalizing the evaluation process
- Support a design based on emerging issues
- Report results through direct, personal contact with themes rich in description and tailored to the audience

(Patton, 1990)

Data Collection

Each student participated in interviews prior to the onset of the program to obtain baseline data and after the program to obtain evaluative data (see Appendix A). In accordance with naturalistic inquiry, this study employed the data gathering technique described by Patton as the “interview guide approach” (Patton, 1990). With this technique, the interviewer uses a systematic process to create a specified questionnaire for each respondent (see Appendix A). Though the questions are determined in advance to better organize the interview and facilitate data analysis, the “interviewer decides the sequence and working of the questions in the course of the interview” (Patton, 1990). This allows the interview to take on a more conversational style and gives the interviewer leeway to react more spontaneously to the respondent. The study also includes

participant observations and analysis of journal writings as part of the data collection process.

During the initial interview, the students were asked questions related to: their individual notions of “community” and their concept of the level of “community” present in the surrounding environment, their role in that community and their perceived sense of self-value within that community. They were also asked the number of times that they had been incarcerated, their age and the number of children that they had in an effort to obtain some general background information about the sample as a whole. Two students were interviewed half way through the program in order to obtain feedback on positive and negative experiences that might be enhanced or improved respectively through alternative facilitation techniques.

During the final interviews, which were conducted after the program was complete, the researcher asked the same questions that were posed in the baseline interviews. Additionally, the researcher requested that students comment on their general reactions to the *Touchstones* program, the relationships of participants in the program, and various, specific aspects of program discussions. The adult education teacher was also interviewed on her perceptions of the program and her role in its implementation.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The researcher inserted code names in place of the actual names for participants when preparing this report.

Participants took part in eighteen *Touchstones* reading/discussion sessions led by the researcher who served as the *Touchstones* facilitator. The first session was an orientation session in which the participants established the “keys to success” for productive discussions and identified their goals as program participants. During

approximately two thirds of the following sessions, students listened to the facilitator (the researcher) read a short passage from the *Touchstones* curriculum and then were given time to reflect on the passage individually and in small and large groups. Students were requested to participate in the discussion by stating their own opinions on the topics, listening to the opinions of others, and introducing pertinent questions or observations. During the remaining one third of the sessions, the students facilitated discussions amongst themselves and other groups of inmates. Throughout the program, the researcher kept a daily journal of student conversations and significant occurrences.

Videotapes were made of two sessions of the discussion groups facilitated by the researcher, (one at the beginning of the program and one at the end), as well as two sessions of the discussions facilitated by inmates. The researcher reviewed all four videotapes and recorded observations. The researcher obtained videotape release forms from *all* of the students participating in the discussions prior to obtaining videotaped observations. After the program was complete, the students signed additional release forms to allow the tapes to be shown as part of the presentation of this study along with still photos taken at the completion of the program.

The core participants in the study were asked to keep journals throughout the program. Only two of the ten students who remained in the program at the end of the program submitted journals to be assessed as part of the data collection for the study.

Trustworthiness

This study attempts to achieve trustworthiness by ensuring “truth value” in the accuracy of its findings, “applicability” in the extent to which those findings may apply to other contexts, “consistency” in the expectation that the same students would exhibit similar responses upon study replication, and “neutrality” in the level of bias imposed by the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher expects to have realized this trustworthiness through the pursuit of credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability:

Credibility

Credibility is the naturalist’s equivalent for the conventional term “internal validity.” Activities which make it more likely that credible findings and interpretations will be produced from a study are said to enhance the credibility of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, credibility is achieved with the following techniques:

- Member Checking: to enhance credibility, the researcher submitted the transcripts from interviews with the program participants who were present at the completion of the six-week program and the teacher of the program to those individuals for their review. Some of the students made changes in the transcripts to clarify thoughts or language and returned them to the researcher. Most of the students did not make changes. Miss Thomas, the teacher asked the researcher to make grammatical adjustments to her transcript. Throughout the interviews, the researcher paused frequently for clarification and allowed interviewees to request clarification in a similar fashion.

- Plans for Further Credibility: if the study is to be continued, the researcher will engage in prolonged engagement and persistent observation.

Transferability

This study attempts to show transferability with thick description in the thematic analysis. In order to “provide the widest possible range of information for inclusion in the thick description,” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) the researcher has employed the following techniques:

- Triangulation: The researcher achieved triangulation by discussing student experiences with other students in the program. Such triangulation was requested in the most general sense by asking students what they thought of their relationships with other program participants. While family interviews and jail incident records could be used to confirm statements about improved relationships and further enhance credibility, such triangulation would likely be seen as invasive and undermine the positive attitudes of participants.
- Peer Debriefing: The researcher engaged in peer debriefing with two peer debriefers to clarify the nature of the issues being discussed in interviews. The teacher in the adult education program served as a peer debriefer who would either validate or challenge the researcher’s perceptions of program transactions. Another education student served as a theoretical consultant with regard to methodological and ethical considerations.

Dependability/Confirmability

Dependability and confirmability for this study may be observed in the information retained for two types of audits:

- **Dependability Audit Trail:** The materials which will be retained to support the dependability of the study include; copies of the Touchstones student text, teacher's manual and Courage to Care book, attendance lists, lists of prepared interview questions and extemporaneous interview questions, coded interview transcripts, the facilitator's daily journal in both the hand written and typed forms, signed participant permission contracts from both participants in the core discussion group and those who volunteered to participate in the program as service recipients, student journals and poems, letters from students, a sample graduation certificate, videotapes, still photos, a copy of the dissertation proposal in its original form, copies of all articles noted in the literature review, copies of presentation notes, lists of emergent themes, a copy of the methodological log and the Institutional Review Board's approval letter. These materials will be retained for future validity checks and presentations. Audiocassettes will be erased within one month of the study's completion in accordance with the contract of participation.
- **Confirmability:** the researcher feels that the materials retained in the audit trail will allow others assessing the same data to observe the same results and reach similar conclusions. The adult education teacher was provided with copies of the researcher's daily journal to confirm or refute the accuracy of the recordings.

Analysis of Data

This study employs inductive, generative, constructive and subjective data analysis in the following fashion:

1. While the study begins with a guiding research question and confirms it by reference to a supportive body of data, that data is not empirical but rather “subjective.” It asks the participants to “construct” or conceptualize their own experiences and world view for the purpose of analysis.
2. It uses the data itself to develop theoretical categories and relational propositions which “generate” new propositions and hypotheses in an “inductive” manner.

(Lincoln and Guba, 1985)

The researcher reviewed all of the observation journals as well as each interview transcript, videotape log, student journal and student letter and identified a variety of experiential themes which were separated into the coding units that follow. The thematic coding units were grouped into seven categories related to student experiences and further divided into two overarching constructs that seemed to represent two clear dimensions of the aggregate *Touchstones* experiences, student inputs and program outputs. Together, the themes, categories and constructs present a conceptual overview of the cumulative results of the study which are presented in the form of a theoretical model as outlined in the “conclusions” section of the report. The elements of the model are organized around the overarching umbrella of “student relationships” as they are effected by program inputs and evidenced in program outputs.

The following listing provides a linear view of the themes, categories and constructs used to analyze the data. This information comprises the framework for analysis that will be discussed in further detail in the Results section of this report. It will then be reviewed in the Conclusions section and displayed as a dynamic model, rather than a linear list of themes, categories and constructs.

Construct 1: Program Inputs *Effecting* Student Relationships

Category A: Student-Generated Inputs

- **Theme 1: Previous Experiences**

- Theme 2: Previous Ideas About Community
- Theme 3: Previous Relationships
- Theme 4: Desire to Participate/ Share with Others in a Positive Way
- Theme 5: Effort/Attendance

Category B: Curriculum-Generated Inputs

- Theme 1: Focus on Use of Materials: keys to success, goals, stories, questions
- Theme 2: Focus on Listening with Respect/Conflict Resolution
- Theme 3: Focus on Intellectual Shaping/Voicing of Ideas
- Theme 4: Focus on Fluid Interaction Between Students
- Theme 5: Focus on Sharing/Demonstrating Values
- Theme 6: Focus on Serving Others/Student Facilitation

Category C: Facilitation-Generated Inputs

- Theme 1: Motivational Attitude
- Theme 2: Conflict Resolution
- Theme 3: Positive Feedback for Students
- Theme 4: Administrative Organization/Initiative
- Theme 5: Demonstration of Care

Construct 2: Program Outputs *Evidenced* in Student Relationships

Category A: Intellectual Community

- Theme 1: Academic Esteem
- Theme 2: Enthusiasm for Group Process
- Theme 3: Role Modeling

Category B: Emotional Community

- Theme 1: Family-like Culture
- Theme 2: Conflict Resolution
- Theme 3: Stress/Pain Relief
- Theme 4: Mutual Understanding/Support/Caring
- Theme 5: Social Acceptance

Category C: Spiritual Community

- Theme 1: Faith Sharing
- Theme 2: Desire to Serve
- Theme 3: Development or Shaping of “A Calling”

Category D: Negative Experiences

- Theme 1: Trust Violation
- Theme 2: Conflict
- Theme 3: Lack of Mutual Understanding/Focus

Data Reporting

The initial proposal for this study stated that the reporting of study results would include the assessment of three cases and a cross-case thematic analysis. After the study was proposed, the methodology was changed to include case studies on all ten of the program participants. However, after observing the program for three weeks, it became clear to the researcher that a study designed to assess “community” could not be effectively evaluated from the independent perspectives of ten isolated participants.

Rather, the researcher has attempted to develop an analytical framework to assess the group of participants as a dynamic whole and the process of community-building as a function of several interactive experiences in order to best illuminate the results of the study. Thus, in the reporting of results, the researcher attempts to situate participant responses related to the “development of relationships” within a larger framework of ideas, rather than obtaining each individual’s phenomenological experience as an isolated entity.

Additionally, the researcher employs direct quotes from the students to shed light on the experiences that they shared within the context of the *Touchstones* program. Those quotes, excised from interview transcripts, student journals and the researcher’s

field observation journal, are presented in a form that supports the chronological integrity of their occurrence. The researcher refrains from interjecting an abundance of narration related to student experiences between the direct quotations in hopes of reserving judgement in the text and allowing the “story of the Touchstones experience” to be told by those who participated as students.

Person as Instrument: My Experience with the Topic

The researcher volunteered at the Charlottesville jail for seven months prior to the study. In this capacity, I conducted reading and discussion groups as well as art and music sessions with the inmates enrolled in the adult education program. Additionally, I met with the creators of the *Touchstones* curriculum and participated in a training session for *Touchstones* facilitators.

At the outset of the study, I had not yet engaged in lengthy conversations with students in the adult education program at the jail in a fashion that encouraged them to reflect on their sense of community in an introspective and analytical manner. In the course of my experience implementing the *Touchstones* Curriculum, I expected to learn a great deal about the interest that students have in reading and discussion programs in general and the degree to which such programs might contribute to improved communal relationships in the correctional setting. I hoped that participation in the program would, in fact, enhance “community” among students at the Charlottesville-Albemarle County Regional Jail and that my role in that effort would be rewarding.

In many respects, my hopes for the implementation of the *Touchstones* program were realized. However, the “reward” that I received as part of my participation in the complex matrix of overlapping student relationships far exceeded my expectations.

Listening to the students express their life experiences within *Touchstones* discussions was for me both a privilege and an honor. Many of the students allowed me to empathize with their many personal challenges and to develop a deep level of respect for their efforts to overcome obstacles through spirituality, often described in terms of faith in God. As the program continued, I found myself increasingly turning to the Lord with my own fears on a daily basis and releasing those fears and concerns to His care. As a result, my life became more peaceful.

I was able to share this enhanced spirituality with my husband, who seemed equally drawn and inspired by the stories of courage that I relayed from the jail. At the completion of the *Touchstones* program, as I shared my thanks with the students for all that they had taught me, intellectually and spiritually, I began to blink back tears. Some of the students reciprocated my tearful display and, to my great surprise, the entire room rose in applause, I believe gesturing their appreciation for the emotional and spiritual nature of the *Touchstones* program.

As a researcher interested in the sociological underpinnings inherent in the late Twentieth Century "race to incarcerate" in the U.S., I am motivated by a variety of issues in addition to the effect that overcrowding and lack of rehabilitative programming has on correctional communities. As I mentioned previously, 90% of the students in the adult education program at the Charlottesville-Albemarle County Regional Jail are African-American. The vast majority of these students are also non-violent drug offenders. Some have committed violent crimes related to drug use. Most of the students that I have met are trying desperately to turn their lives around in order to avoid repeated incarceration.

In a society where African-American males are punished five times more frequently than their majority-status counterparts, how do those students have a chance?

Schlosser's poignant statistics reveal the disproportionate level of minority confinement for violent and non-violent offenses alike. In a presentation at the Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice Reform Conference sponsored by the University of Virginia Center for Children, Families and the Law in November of 1998, Tracey Meares, J.D., a professor at the University of Chicago Law School, noted that 80% of African-American males "can't avoid violence in the street" (Meares, 1998). If this is the case, is it any more likely that those in urban neighborhoods can unequivocally choose to avoid contact with illegal drugs?

I remember Arthur, the 20 year old African-American, known as "Peanut," that I met at the Charlottesville Jail. Arthur now resides in a maximum-security, state correctional facility and is serving fourteen years for drug-related conspiracy because he was friendly with the "wrong crowd" and someone put his name on a list to reduce their own charge.

After listening to tapes of works by Maya Angelou and discussing her prose, Arthur wrote a poem entitled, "We Are A Race of Poets." Lyrical and optimistic, Arthur's poem beseeched his ethnic brothers to take pride in the artistic nature of African culture espoused by Angelou in a chapter from her book, "Even the Stars Look Lonesome." Rhymed in perfect Iambic Pentameter, the poem culminated in the command "Now let's get out and write!" I find myself wondering if Arthur will express the same spirited passion for writing and youthful idealism for living on hour three, day

two hundred and seventy one, of year twelve “down the road” (a prison euphemism for “in the state penitentiary”), where he sits amidst convicted rapists and murderers.

Standing in stark contrast to Schlosser's depiction of the late Twentieth Century "race to incarcerate" and its perilous consequences is a philosophy of offender rehabilitation revealed by Swift in a 1911 Atlantic Monthly article entitled "Humanizing the Prisons":

- Crime is a disease that usually exists in the body, of different entity from the person committing the crime. It is a disease of society, which merely breaks out in open manifestation in this and that individual in whom the social circulation particularly concentrates the poison.
- The State of Vermont contains a prison where the inmates are treated upon a novel plan. They are trusted and treated like other human beings... They are made to feel that their imprisonment is designed to improve them as men, and to restore them to social life not only with full self-respect but with the cordial respect of the community.

(Swift, 1911)

Swift goes on to detail a method of incarceration whereby inmates are entrusted with social and professional responsibility. They are provided with the necessary support mechanisms to achieve individual success. The result, he explains, is effective rehabilitation and positive social reentry.

I do not posit that the social ills inherent to rural Vermont at the turn of the century precisely parallel those endemic to urban American life in the 1990s and thus warrant parallel solutions. I do, however, wish to suggest that somewhere between the 1911 creation of “rehabilitative opportunities centered on trust and the building up of human value,” and the late Twentieth Century creation of the "prison industrial complex" featuring "gladiator wars between inmate gangs organized by prison guards" (Schlosser, 1998) we, as a nation, have forfeited the human dignity espoused by the U.S. Constitution in its declaration against "cruel and inhuman punishment."

I don't know what the solution to this problem might be. However, I believe that it is up to our society to offer healthy alternatives to a wretched life of incarceration for all Americans; bright and challenged, talented and troubled, hurting and healing; particularly for those suffering from the adverse effects of poverty, illiteracy and substance abuse. As a result of this study, I plan to continue to work with incarcerated individuals, those at-risk of incarceration, and community agencies effecting the implementation of criminal and social justice in hopes of developing positive alternatives to confinement within the "prison industrial complex."

Ethical Considerations Based on Guiding Principles

The ethical considerations taken into account for this paper are based on the guiding principles set forth by the American Evaluation Association Task Force: systematic inquiry, competence, integrity and honesty, respect for people, and responsibility for general and public welfare (American Evaluation Association, 1995). One specific ethical issue that was considered in the preparation of this study was centered on the tenuous nature of the prison environment. It was noted prior to the program that student inmates who reveal personal information within discussion sessions might become vulnerable to personal ridicule following the sessions. Since the researcher served as the program facilitator for the study, the researcher attempted to prevent such conflict by conducting a thorough orientation session prior to initiating group discussions within the program. In the orientation session, the researcher presented discussion techniques and established ground rules for "safe" discussions. The rules in the *Touchstones* curriculum guide were supplemented with one additional rule, "What is said in *Touchstones* stays in *Touchstones*."

The students seemed very much in favor of this rule and exercised self-policing to insure that it was carried out. On one occasion, when a *Touchstones* conversation was discussed after-the-fact within a cell block, those who overheard the discussion reported it to the facilitator and the adult education teacher. Because the facilitator was not going to see the student who violated the rule before the next *Touchstones* discussion, the adult education teacher volunteered to meet with that student individually to remind him about the rule. From that point on, whenever the students approached a sensitive conversation, one student would remind the group, "What is said in here stays in here." Similarly, most of the students emphasized this rule when they became facilitators of satellite discussion groups.

Confidentiality presents an additional ethical consideration in a correctional environment. The researcher planned to use code names on interview transcripts and in all data analysis and written material. However, the participants who took part in final interviews all noted that they would like to have their real names used as opposed to code names. The researcher elected to honor this request but to use only first names of students who completed the program in order to protect confidentiality. Those who did not complete the program because they were transferred to prison are referred to with code names. Those who withdrew from the program are not mentioned in the data analysis.

Likewise, the researcher planned to destroy videotapes and audiocassettes after the analysis was complete, but one student suggested that the tapes be used to show "other people the *Touchstones* program like the researcher showed the Charlottesville students a tape of participants at the Maryland correctional center." Thus, the students

signed additional permission forms so that the videotapes and still photos of their participation could be used for presentations. Photographic material of those who did not sign such forms will not be included in presentations.

Participants will be debriefed after the entire research presentation is complete. Rather than providing participants with a debriefing statement, students will receive a copy of the final report. No information obtained in interviews will be shared in the debriefing session if the sharing of such information could be harmful to any participant.

The potential costs and benefits to all concerned parties are summarized in the following chart:

Table 1

Costs and Benefits of Research

Party	Cost	Benefit
Researcher	time, travel, legal liability	credit for dissertation, relationships, new knowledge of topic
Respondents	time, image, privacy, risk of being misrepresented	having a voice, spotlight on progress, self-clarification, insight, enhanced community relationships
Sponsoring Institution (UVa)	legal liability	student progress
Charlottesville-Albemarle County Regional Jail	legal liability	further insight into program outcomes

Limitations

This study is limited in that the purposive sample consists of only a small group of male students. While the experiences of these students may be transferable to other students who may have the potential to participate in programs similar to *Touchstones*, they are by no means representative of all incarcerated people.

In addition, the study is limited in its ability to triangulate, or to check facts with appropriate third parties. Information including incident reports, family interviews and future court records (in the event that the researcher would like to measure recidivism after an extended, longer-term program evaluation) would likely provide additional support for the evidence presented.

Finally, while the participant observations recorded in the researcher's daily journal attempt to capture key conversations and interactions that took place within the *Touchstones* program, it was not possible for the researcher to record every word spoken during *Touchstones* discussion sessions. Therefore, the material recorded, while selective, may be construed as relevant to the degree to which it is reinforced with data gathered in interviews and documentation analysis, such as journal and attendance sheet assessment.

CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS

Organization of the Findings

In reporting the findings of this study, the researcher attempts to arrive at a “balance between description and interpretation” whereby direct quotes are combined with analytical assessment to produce an accurate representation of the evaluation outcomes (Patton, 1990). This employed a guiding research question focused on the degree to which “students would experience enhanced social relationships, heightened concepts of themselves as valuable members of a community, and the sense that their presence makes a positive difference in that community” as a result of participation in the Touchstones program. However, The subject of community is difficult to assess.

Defining Community: The Amalgamating Force of “Student Relationships”

Webster defines community as “a body of people living near one another and in social relationship, a body of people with a faith, profession or way of life in common and a sharing” (Lexicon, 1988). Yet in order to assess the degree to which students experience enhanced social relationships, heightened self-concepts and increased personal value within a community, we must rely not only on the definition of community given by language authorities, but on the definitions stated by the students themselves.

The students were asked to define “community” in both the baseline and follow-up interviews. While definitions differed between students, and as stated by individual students before and after participation in Touchstones, the notion of “people experiencing relationships with one another,” (either negative or positive, based on physical proximity or interpersonal interaction) remained central to most definitions. The researcher has

employed the use of themes, categories and constructs to present a conceptual overview of the cumulative results of the study. Together, these elements of analysis form a theoretical model of “the *Touchstones* process” which may be viewed as a series of program “inputs” and “outputs” reflecting the amalgamating force of “student relationships.”

Construct 1: Program Inputs *Effecting* Student Relationships

In order to understand and evaluate the *Touchstones* philosophy discussion program as it was implemented at the Charlottesville-Albemarle County Regional Jail, the researcher first assessed the program “inputs,” or aspects of the program that impacted student relationships and thus exerted an effect on the “communal” nature of the students’ interactions. The researcher has divided these inputs into three categories:

1. Inputs *generated by the students themselves* as noted in their baseline interview statements regarding previously held ideas, experiences, relationships and attitudes,
2. Inputs *generated by the curriculum* evidenced in the materials presented, student behaviors and student comments exhibited throughout the program as recorded in the researcher’s journal, and in student attendance records, and
3. Inputs *generated by the facilitation process* as described in the researcher’s journal and evidenced in student-facilitator interactions and the administrative management of the program.

Construct 2: Program Outputs *Evidenced* in Student Relationships

Second, the researcher assessed the program “outputs,” or aspects of student interactions that were “communal in nature” and emerged throughout the course of the program. The four categories of outputs include:

1. The *enhancement of the “intellectual dimension of community”* as evidenced in students’ final interview comments related to their intellectual esteem, enthusiasm for the group process and participation in role-modeling relationships
2. The *enhancement of the “emotional dimension of community”* as evidenced in interview comments related to the family-like nature of the group, the development of social acceptance, the emergence of mutual understanding, care and support, the resolution of conflict and the relief of stress and pain
3. The *enhancement of the “spiritual dimension of community”* as evidenced in final interview comments, journal writings and program observations related to the sharing of faith, the expressed desire to be of “service” to others and/or the desire to pursue or shape a “calling,” and
4. The *experience of negative transactions* related to the violation of trust, the development of conflict, and the lack of mutual understanding or focus as evidenced in student journal writings and interview comments.

By developing a theoretical, conceptual model of “the Touchstones process” that separates the analysis of program inputs and outputs, it is the researcher’s intention not only to illuminate the transactional nature with which student relationships are developed

in the *Touchstones* program, but to provide a thick description of those transactions that maintains the integrity of their chronological significance.

Construct 1 Findings: Program Inputs *Effecting* Student Relationships

Category A: Student-Generated Inputs

When the student participants in the study entered the *Touchstones* program, each brought with him a set of beliefs based on his previous life experiences, previously held ideas about the nature of community, and previously held relationships. Those relationships might have been with fellow *Touchstones* participants, cell block roommates, or friends and family “on the outside” of the jail. The researcher noted that these factors would likely have an impact on the outcome of the evaluation. For the purpose of this study, such factors have been labeled as “student-generated inputs.”

In baseline interviews, students were asked the following questions:

- a) How would you define “community?”
- b) What is your impression of the “community” among your classmates and roommates or is there none at all?
- c) How do people that you know in this facility interact with one another?
- d) Do you feel that you have an effect on the community (or on people) here?
- e) If so, what is that effect? If not why not?
- f) Do you feel valued by the people here? If so, in what way? If not, why?
- g) Do you stay in touch with people outside of this facility?
- h) Do you feel that you have an effect on the community outside of this one? (family, community at large)
- i) If so, what is that effect? If not why not?
- j) Do you feel valued by the people outside of this community? If so, in what way? If not, why?
- k) How old are you?
- l) Do you have any children?
- m) How many times have you been incarcerated?
- n) How long have you been here?

The material obtained in the baseline interviews, as summarized in the chart below, attempts to shed light on some of the “student-generated inputs” which could effect the implementation and evaluation of the *Touchstones* program.

Table 2

Student-Centered Inputs: A Top-Line Overview

Student Definitions of “Community”	People living together (8 responses), Everybody helping, Working together, A neighborhood, Family, Getting along as one, People involved in a certain area
Student Impressions of “Community at the Jail”	Up and down, Packs/different groups, Some people that want to change and some that sit, A good living environment, No respect, Lack of communication, Mostly not a community, They joke a lot, Completely mad, A family, Divided, Nice
% of Students who: Believe that they Effect Jail Community	75
% Students who: Feel Valued Inside	67
% Students who: Believe they Effect Outside Community	92
% Students who: Feel Valued Outside	67
% Students with Children	77
% Students with Prior Incarceration	77
Average Age of Students	35
Age Range of Students	18-63
Range of Time Served for Current Offense at Time of Interview	2 months - 32 months

The researcher noted that the majority of students; defined “community” as “a group of people living together,” felt that they had an effect on both the “inside” and “outside” communities, had been previously incarcerated and were parents. While the majority of students expressed that they did feel “valued” by people in both the “inside” and “outside” communities, still approximately one third of the students stated that they did not feel valued or were unsure. (The information on effect and value for one respondent was not clearly recorded and that data has been left out of the summary.)

Finally, the researcher noted the broad range of ages represented in the study. The youngest respondent, who expressed that he did not feel valued, explained his answer in the following way:

Taz: They like to be around me but they don't value anything I say and I'm probably the youngest.

JCM: How old are you?

Taz: 18. They look at me like that. They just ... I don't know nothing.

Effective participation in the *Touchstones* program relies on the ability of the group members to respect the opinions of others, regardless of age or any other factor. Thus, such issues would have to be resolved if this student were going to participate by sharing his opinions within the *Touchstones* program.

As the youngest participant in the *Touchstones* program, Taz was perhaps the most forthcoming of the students with regard to his feelings about being heard. However, Goliath, the oldest member at 63 years of age, soon became known for repeating the statements, "that's what I was saying," and "you didn't listen to me."

Other students similarly established their "roles" early within the *Touchstones* program. Jerroll, Drayton, and Nieson could be relied upon to relate to the spiritual dimension of each story. Each of these students also faced sentencing during the six-week program for drug-related crimes with standard punishments ranging from two to forty years.

Martain, the second-youngest in the program, enjoyed writing poetry, as evidenced in the journal that he submitted for evaluation. Before the baseline interviews were conducted, the researcher occasionally brought flowers to the jail for the students to

enjoy or paint with watercolors. Once, Martain sat for an entire hour fondling a small bud, recalling that it had been months since he had last seen a flower.

Mohamed, as the study reveals, never completed elementary school. However, he learned to read and write and, during one *Touchstones* session, attempted to provide a Freudian analysis of one of the readings. Phil, perhaps one of the more guarded students, as evidenced in his baseline claim that there are “no friends in prison,” shared the researcher’s Italian heritage. After I revealed my ethnic background, he repeatedly asked me to elaborate on my upbringing until I agreed and shared the Italian cultural emphasis on food and hospitality.

Forman, a student from a small town in Virginia, missed several sessions due to illness and the fact that he was elected to the highest leadership position in the drug block at the Charlottesville-Albemarle County Regional Jail during the *Touchstones* program. Several of his comments throughout the program illustrated his leadership characteristics. For example, he frequently responded to other students’ statements of distress by consoling them and encouraging self-reflection and hope.

Teg was known for his clever one-liners, such as “keep plugging in ‘till you get some electricity,” or “if it don’t apply, let it fly.” Drake, Rino and Harley, three students who were sent “down the road” prior to completing the *Touchstones* program, each shared unique contributions prior to their departure. A concert saxophonist, Drake often sat moving his fingers during *Touchstones* discussions as if improvising his part in harmony with the current speaker. Rino, one of the three students in his early twenties, tended to alternate between inviting the interaction of others and shooing them away. Sometimes he sat with his head between his knees, seemingly ignoring the rest of the

group. At other times, he shared thoughts that seemed highly emotional and elicited emotional responses from the rest of the group. When he was called from a *Touchstones* discussion to pack up and embark on his five-year prison sentence, Rino simply stood up, smiled and said with a Mississippi lilt in his voice, "I'll be see'n y'all down the road or somethin'." Later, Ms. Thomas, the teacher, and I received a note from him saying, "It ain't over." It was signed, "God's Little Rebel, Rino."

Harley, a student in his late forties, almost never spoke in class before participating in *Touchstones*. When he did speak, with what appeared to be considerable effort, his voice alternated between high soprano and bass. Although Harley was sent down the road before the *Touchstones* program was completed, the personal stories that he shared during his tenure with the group seemed to have made some of the most profound impressions of the entire *Touchstones* experience. This was evidenced in comments made by several other students during the follow-up interviews.

Theme 1: Previous Experiences. Throughout the course of the baseline interviews, students referred to previous experiences both "inside" and "outside" the correctional setting as part of their attempt to explain notions of community. Their stories paint a vivid picture of life "on the streets" and "behind the wall" [in prison]. Somewhat surprising to the researcher was the wide array of scenarios, both negative and positive, that students used to depict prison and/or jail life. Phil's description of his incarceration in a state institution illuminated the violent nature of the environment:

Phil: A situation in prison where I had witnessed another inmate raping an inmate and I went straight to the police about it, so the guy says he was going to have me killed.

JCM: Did he ever come after you?

Phil: No. I went in solitary. I went into another situation in solitary confinement where I spent almost 2 years.

Drayton added credence to Phil's statement:

Drayton: There's a lot of things in prison that you can't do. You better know you can't do, because this is the way it is. A lot of guys in prison probably done got stabbed over touching something that didn't belong to them.

While it is not a bastion of murder and gang warfare, the Charlottesville-Albemarle County Regional Jail confines some inmates with similar violent tendencies:

Forman: I was in F5 when I first come here about 2 months, 2 months and a half. Very unruly, uncontrolled. Very high level of attitude. The least little thing could throw you off, throw someone off. Like such as the TV and all. It's uncontrolled...who watches it. It causes fights and arguments....A fight could happen any time...Physical, yelling. A lot of time it goes physical.

Forman's explanation of why fights take place sheds light on one of the unique factors that distinguishes the experience of incarceration in a jail versus confinement in a prison setting. Since jails are designed to house inmates for shorter periods of time, they may have less programs and services to soften the agony of a twenty-four-hour lock down policy:

Forman: Yeah, because there's tension, building up of tension. You've got your problems anyway...the least little thing blows you off. You explode on that next person, that person explodes on you, but you ain't got no rules and regulations. You've got the jail rules but you have no one there to enforce it at all times. A guard just comes by routine and checking on you... It's such a confined area too. No more than 12, maybe 12 feet by 8 feet and you've got 6 cells in there. Six cells with 12 people in there. Small environment just living in there.

Drayton and Rino's comments resembled those of Forman:

Drayton: Sometimes we fight each other.

JCM: Is there a lot of that?

Drayton: No. I'm surprised it's not, because we don't have nothing to do. We can't...got a lot of tensity. Guys got a lot of anger in us. I guess most of the guys work out. That's the only way they can burn that off and I'm surprised there's not a lot of fights than there usually is in here because of that. We finally got rec. We get some recreation. That helps. We don't really get that much, but every little bit helps.

Rino: Well, there is a community but it's like broken into different groups. You have in this particular place, you have people who have good intentions and yet their surroundings promotes a different attitude. You have people who really stay focused on what they want to do that are changed by circumstances. Some run in packs like wolves.

Relationships with correctional officers, positive or negative, can have a significant impact on an inmate's morale:

Drayton: I know I done something wrong, but some of the correctional officers just, they'll come here and they'll just say, well, this is a job. I get my paycheck. Screw with the inmates. They ain't nothing but animals behind the cells. Sometimes we can get that impression from some of them, but I try not to bother them as much as possible because I know that some of them can kind of bring their problems to work and they take them out on me. I have to try to use positive thinking just to get around that instead of cussing them out or saying this or that or--

Inequities in treatment can cause further tension:

Goliath: You've got to understand another person... You've got to be able to understand that they have their rules and the rules are sometimes aren't so strict and a lot of inmates...rebel against it. That's why they don't trust. They figure... Everybody against them and everybody want what I got and nobody going to take what I have because this is a-- That's what you say with a community that they don't trust nobody. It's like no trust for each other. They have no trust.

Some students recalled the brighter side of jail life when revealing previous experiences:

Jerroll: I think we got one of the nicest cell blocks in this jail. We don't never argue. No fight goes on in our cell. And like last night, what we had, we had a like a little Bible study. We read the scriptures and we talked about it, and there were about 5 of us and after that, we held hands and like 2 different people led in prayer. Then we closed out with it, and that's good.

Mohamed: We've done a play [in the drug treatment block]. All of us got together. We put on-- We wrote a script. We did a script last Thursday and it was really nice that we all come together and put our heads together and wrote this script ...And lot of people in Virginia came down to see us.

Goliath: The block I'm on [the drug block], in that block, we have respect for each other in there and we demand each other to give us respect, so that way we can get along ... That is more community like. That is more like a family. We call it a family because we understand because I'm on a particular block. I'm on a drug block.

Rino: Everybody's normal. The community is normal. It's just like the outside.

Life on the streets, as explained by the students, can be strikingly similar to life in a correctional setting when it comes to issues of trust and security and the quest for happiness. Drayton explained the concept of "street life" and the street community:

Drayton: How do they know me off the street? Because I'm a street persons. I live in the street. I'm a street man and basically everybody that come in here, basically they live, their life is in the street. The street life.

JCM: A lot of people say that, but what exactly does it mean?

Drayton: Hang out in the street. There's a lot of things in the street that you can you can get into. A lot of wrong thing basically when a person hang out in the street, you can get into a lot of things that you're not supposed to get into. If you was a home person, there's nothing really you can get into. You're taking care of your home. You're taking care of your responsibility. If you work there's nothing in the street but trouble basically. If you stay in the street the majority of the time and there's a lot of things in the world. A lot of corrupt things. Drugs. Women. Parties. Stuff like that that really ain't going to benefit you and--

JCM: Does that mean really literally hanging out like around the community, like around the neighborhood or does it even mean like going to bar? Is that considered being in the street because you're not in your house?

Drayton: Sure. That's the street. What you get in a bar? Nothing but get drunk. Mind get all confused. You meet women. You know what I'm saying. Drugs.

JCM: It's like entertainment.

Drayton: Entertainment. Something that, entertaining more to the flesh. Flesh has a lot of desires. A lot of wrong things. Women. Drugs. You get these cravings for that type of thing. Basically it'll lead you to jail right here. Everybody I know in here I know from the street. They know me. A lot of the young guys, I've been locked in with their fathers. That's real strange. 'I know I remember you was a little kid. I was locked up with your father about 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 years ago. Now I'm locked up with you.' They know me and they probably know me from their father talking about me or people talking about me and 'watch that guy, Drayton. He'll get you.' You know what I'm saying? 'He's no good.' You know what I'm saying? You get that reputation from the streets.

Martain: A lot of guys while you're out in the street and you could do something for them, they call you your friends and everything but the minute you decide to go a different road, you don't want to do the same thing they doing and you want to preach or something from the Bible you want to do it, get a good job, or you want to settle down and live a good life, they figure that, oh, he not that much of a man no more because we used to like this and now all of a sudden ... a lot of guys, they try to prove a point that they such a tough guy, they just fall back into the same trap like me.

Martain: I think a lot of people need to get some time sometime just to stay away from the outside society. Some time where you can sit back and relax and really think what you was doing. How many people you was hurting. You may not think you was hurting people but you still hurt the outside community when you do wrong because a lot of people don't feel safe in their houses no more. Nobody feels safe walking in the street because a lot of people out there shooting and robbing and selling drugs and what these people mostly see is drug dealers doing this, that, so they're afraid for their life, so I don't think it's bad when the judges and the court system give a lot of time. It's not bad. It gets you to relax and think about what you was doing. If you stay out in the street, you'll never start realizing all that.

While students like Martain noted some of the advantages of incarceration versus life on the streets, other students stated that the inhabitants of the "outside" environment didn't seem to have their best interests in mind. Some revealed personal experiences with what they viewed as "unjust legal practices" or dichotomous social standards that rendered them behind bars:

Taz: People tell on each other. People like to tell everything people do around here. Anything. Even outside of here. Taz went outside and kicked the dog and they-- Anything. They tell anything.

Taz: I've seen teachers doing things, do stuff, and they think it's okay. But we do it, it's so bad we get kicked out of school or something...Anything. Drinking ...They get drunk. They do drugs. Really doing drugs. One of them was doing crack.

JCM: At school?

Taz :I don't know about at school, but he looked like he can't go around without no crack... just go and do it all the time. Commit the same crime, but they just-- Jail time. That's all they do. For trespass or anything. Any little charge. That's all they say. 'I think you should do jail time' and none them help a person...That's all they talk about is jail time. No type of program and nothing ... You should do this or try to do this. It's just jail time. That ain't going nothing to make somebody worse...They've got programs. They don't take you to them, don't put you them.

JCM(to Rino): You only lived in Charlottesville for 2 weeks?

Rino:For 2½ weeks and what it was was I got into a fight with a girl and she got upset and she told the police a whole bunch of other stuff that basically had nothing to do with me and because I'm not from here, and she has friends and it was like me against everybody in court and I didn't have no one to testify for me, so I just stayed silent for the trial and just took whatever they gave me...It's like they're more so itching just to get a prosecution as if they had a quota to meet for the year or something because the evidence was insufficient. Everything was crossed up lies and all this was going on in the courtroom, but I remained silent and I took my time what they gave me. I just said okay. I couldn't even cry about it.

Rino: I tried to defend myself. My lawyer, he wasn't really doing what I asked him to do and my voice was like just overlooked, just like I said. They have a tendency to look over the younger crowd and I don't try to make it a racial issue and I'm not even going to take it there because I'm not being on that, but basically it was just as they said on the docket, the Commonwealth of Virginia versus Rino. I didn't have no backup. The lawyer that they gave me was from the Commonwealth of Virginia when I know I coulda gotten a lawyer, but I said I'm just going to take this and see how it goes. I'm going to give God a try for the first time in my life, really just lean in him and so I'm still stuck here for the time anyway.

Draytonw: I don't bother nobody but I just like getting high and it was just so much fun and I don't bother a soul and I didn't sell nothing to nobody and they said that I did, but I didn't. See what I'm saying.

Theme 2: Previous Ideas About Community As the students began to share their notions of “community” during baseline interviews, some acknowledged the symbiotic nature of communal relationships, pointing out that humans are interdependent beings, regardless of the inherent quality of their relationships:

Phil: Each inmate has an effect on everybody else. Their actions. If they don't do something the officer says, the officer can take the TV by what one inmate does, so each person has an effect. It could be good; it could be bad...

We don't have friends in jail. There is no friend because your best friend is your worst enemy in a situation like this. If you pending charges or somebody else has pending charges, if you befriend them and they tell you everything in their case, the first thing inmates try to do is... They go tell the judge and the cops and the police exactly what you tell them, so they can get their sentence cut down where they can go home early...

Just basically giving these guards a hard time, to have something to do... The people I was in the hole with were followers, not leaders. If I did something, then they mimicked what I did by giving the guards a hard time or whatever. I can't say too much right now.

One student, the quietest in the group, revealed his attempt to avoid harassment at the hands of fellow inmates, thus reinforcing the notion that “negative communal relationships” permeate the jail environment:

Harlie: They don't know when to quit... Call names. Make fun of you.

Another voiced his frustration with the lack of a sense of togetherness among inmates at the jail and shared the thought that more productive relationships were possible:

Mohamed: You'd be surprised at the things the people can do if they just pull together. Nobody wants to pull together ... There's no trust. No one

wants to trust nobody...Honestly? I don't think it ever develops. I honestly don't.

Martain and Jerroll shared their visions for a more positive support group:

Martain: How to prevent each other from coming back into this place. How we express our feelings to other people because I see a lot of people they mostly shy or won't want to try to really try to hide certain emotions inside and if you let it out to certain people, you know you'll feel way much better with yourself and most poeple who do it, even if you're probably thinking I'll benefit yourself but you might benefit the next person and the next person might be hiding that emotion inside of them and really want to see somebody else come out where you see that that is all right. That person can express his feelings, so why he can't do the same thing, so probably that's what most people need is a couple of people just to express themself and give them that open door that it's all right to talk about things like that, any type of probems.

Jerroll: I think that's how unity become. That's how unity come within. You start doing things that people like. You start talking more-- If you start communicating more with each other, then I'll know you and you'll know me. You'll know my likes and my dislikes.

Goliath's notion of community seemed to forge a balance between having the ability to live according to outside standards and subsisting within a turbulent inside environment:

Goliath: I think more or less it could be a community but you have to have rules and people have to follow the rules, then you could make a community because by being locked up into an institution or prison like this, it's kind of hard because some people have like what you call things over them, trials come up and things happen to them, and they're mad about it and so that way you've got to have to have someone to talk to them so they can get that part of their life over so they'll be more comfortable there with the problem they dealt with, they've got to understand and they have broken the law. They have to do certain things, but yet everybody'll say I am innocent, I'm not doing this and they believe that they're taken advantage of. I believe a lot of inmates here don't have the education and don't understand something that you have to follow the rules. You have rules all over. That's life.

Theme 3: Previous Relationships

The existing relationships that students mentioned in baseline interviews covered a spectrum that ranged from amiable relationships with fellow inmates to discordant relationships with correctional officers they seemed to despise or tenuous relationships with outside relatives they felt they had wronged or simply missed:

Jerroll: My classmates are all right, because the majority of them I know. Can you say a person's name? Like Drayton. I know Drayton from the student, so me and him, we can relate to each other. I might have a problem but I can talk to Drayton about it because I know him. I know a couple of dudes in my class, so like I said, I wouldn't call that a community. I'd just call that a class.

One preexisting friendship between *Touchstones* participants was, in part, based on a timid student's need for protection from the cell block bullies:

Forman: The person was there, [the timid student from] the classroom, and the person was giving him a rough time, threatening, like he was going to take his tray [of food] and just giving him a rough time, period. And so I talked to that person and told him to defend himself, but the more he tried to defend himself the more they threatened him so what I did was I did have that person-- It was 2 of them, I did have them removed from the block. I did request them removed from the block. That person didn't have to go through with that.

Phil recalled his ill-fated escape attempt with apparent resentment for the officer that reeled him in:

Phil: I hate to say it like this because it's a negative attitude, but instead of attempting to assault an officer, a police officer, I would have went ahead and did it because I wouldn't have got no more time.

Some students recalled their families with a tone of self-deprecation:

Jerroll: Yeah. I have effect on my family because-- It's not a good effect. It's a bad effect, because I put myself-- I keep putting myself and my parents and my brothers and sisters through the same hassle and I tell them when I get out I'm going to do right, I'm going to do right and I never-- I never do all right. I always resort to the same thing, so now I'm shooting

for some help. I need help. Penitentiary not the answer for me no more. I need help. I'm not a bad person trying to be good. I'm a sick person trying to get well. And I learned that philosophy from somebody else I heard. See, I'm not bad. I just told you what type person I was. I'm not bad. I'm just sick, and when you sick, you do things out of the ordinary. I do things that sick people do.

Forman: Yeah. Back in Waynesboro, I really did. I haven't been in Charlottesville long. But back in Waynesboro, I did, especially on my family because where I lived at, it was like my whole family. The community was my family. The street was basically my whole family. We all pitched in and helped in the church. We just had a group. Made sure the kids had little picnics and stuff during the summer, went to King's Dominion, so I did have an effect on the community, and then coming to jail was a big effect, especially on my mom. I left her at a critical time. She was building a home. So I left her at a bad time.

Drayton: They love me. I'm their own brother. I had another brother and ever since he got killed about 20 some years ago, I've just been-- My sister just-- I can manipulate them anytime I want to, because I guess because they feel that I'm the only brother really left alive, actually alive, in the flesh. They value me because they don't want to lose me, I guess...He was 26 he got killed. I was about 21. I think he was about 5 years older than I am. My birthday's June. His in July...My mother deceased. She really valued me. She always used to tell me Drayton, live a life of God. I can still hear her right now. Give your life to God...when she see me, she look at me, she say, oh, 'you're fat.' Yeah, I'm fat. I guess she figure I was going to be out there, you know how the drugs make you small. She waited on me when she died, too, and I finally got there. She died from cancer. She waited until I got there. And I prayed.

Theme 4: Desire to Participate/ Share with Others in a Positive Way

The researcher noted that many students shared their desires to participate in both intimate, immediate interactions and macro-level outreach efforts with a spirit of service that almost seemed redemptive. Such preexisting attitudes might in fact enhance the

Touchstones outcomes:

Drayton: Everybody knows me from the street, so if they see me change, and hopefully I'm changing, sometime you can't see yourself changing but other people can see you change and they'll tell you, hmm, you've changed. I had a lot of guys come up to me, Drayton, you're changing. I had a guy not too long ago tell me, Moondog came to me, he

said, man, you ain't nowhere near like when you first came here about 2 years ago ...because I came out. I got in 2 or 3 fights because I was irritable. If somebody said something wrong to me, I fight them. It wasn't really about them. It was just about me, about the mess I was going through. He told me about a couple of weeks ago, you've changed man, and that felt good when he told me that because that's what I've been trying to do. That's what I know I need to do, to change.

Drayton: Yeah. Hopefully I can make a difference with other brothers out there. I know that's out there. That's in the street. That's on drugs. They see me change. They say, well if Drayton can change, I can change. I hate to hear a brother say when a brother leave out the door say, oh, he ain't going to do nothing but go out there and do the same thing. Give the man a chance. We all can change. It's not easy. It's not an overnight thing, but how long we've been in the street, so it's not going to take one day.

Teg: Well, me myself, I feel if I going to do some good to help anyone, I just can't tell them to do this or do that. I don't call myself on another level than anyone else, but I get into the level that they at and talk to them and slowly guide them into the light. That if I can see them, I see somebody working for them, direct contact that say do this and do that, don't work with some people. You have to be there with them to show them why.

Teg: Right. For example, ...if I see you consciously disturbing someone else, and maybe you don't know it, and I just can't tell you leave that person along. I could pull you to side and come and say do you realize how you're making this person feel or you're not aware of it or are you aware of it? And then I want to know why you aware of it and why do you want to treat that person that way and just be there for them and on their level instead of just trying to be harsh and gruff.

Many students spoke of acting on their religious convictions and/or becoming involved in the jail's religious community as a means of exerting a positive influence:

Nieson: Well, the block that I'm downstairs—GK [now known as God's Kingdom], back here it's been over a year ago I helped set the tone to make a "Christian" block where we incorporate Bible studies. It used to be just about every day but now we've got it like 3 times a week, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays.

Nieson: Virtues. The Bible is just a basic guide for life. If we were following the principles of the Bible out there on the streets, then none of us would ever been up

in this situation at all because the Bible teaches us how to be better fathers, better husbands, better sons, better providers for the family, how to bring up children, how to have love and respect for God. The two biggest commandments was that you love God with all your heart and you love your neighbor as yourself. Now, if I love my neighbor as myself, I wouldn't be sitting up there trying to sell my neighbor no drugs. I wouldn't be sitting up there trying to fight or kill them or I wouldn't be setting up there trying to cheat them or lie to them or just taking advantage of them. That's one of the things that you know that had to grow into me when I got here.

Drayton: We share things like we pray together. We pray for the guy who goes to court and the cases. We pray for them when they have a crisis in their family or even we pray for the whole jail basically. Some crisis in the other cell blocks throughout the jail we pray for. It's just a few guys that does that down there, but when we do have [prayer sessions] about the whole block participates and we join hands in a circle and join hands and we pray.

Jerroll: I'm trying to lead my girlfriend to God now, but one thing about it, I only can just give her the Word and it'll be up to her to accept it and take God as her personal savior as I did...The real Jerroll is-- I would classify myself as a very good kind-hearted intelligent person.

Jerroll: I think that's what God is using me for. To get to other people and I feel that's why my life hasn't ended yet because he has a mission for me, and I never fulfilled that mission yet. And I think He got me in here now so He can reshape me to what He want to me and He going to send me out there on my mission and if I fail again, I don't know what's going to happen. I don't know what's going to happen.

Rino: I try to set a positive mood but at the same time I set an example of being human. I don't try to outshine anyone. I'm myself and ... originality is a must for survival... I try to promote the [idea that] you only need one thing as a means of survival, that's the Creator period. I just try to show people to keep their heads on their shoulders, not lean towards every other man for the answer. Look it up for yourself if you've got the heart to do it.

Rino: When you're in a small place, even in a dorm, I mean in this community as a whole what travels is bull. If you promoting bullshit, then it flies faster than the man who's trying to promote maybe peace or just a subtle behavior. It travels more. And my impact, I'm versatile. I show anger and everything so I get around but it's not like it could be. Say, for instance, if I went to speak to a group of students at a school, they would have maybe 200 to 350 in a crowd and the message would go a little further, but since the environment is so closed, it'll only stick for so long. It'll only stay for so long because I don't get around to speak to people like I should.

Rino: I don't communicate with too many people outside of this facility. I want to a chance to. I wrote the judge and asked him if could have a chance to talk to schools, to go around to the schools and talk to people...I would more than likely promote like I said the subtle. It's just my character ...I consider myself to [be] true in my ways and I would promote originality and try to tell them how to get their anger out without doing like the kids did in Colorado and Pearl, Mississippi. My message would basically be understanding. I feel like a voice for the young because a lot of people don't listen ... God has given me a way with words. I can write things on paper and it comes out better than we just speaking freely

The desire to keep children from becoming at-risk of incarceration resonated throughout several students' interviews:

Nieson: Over the last couple of years I've gotten letters complimenting me on trying to educate youths by correspondence. I got letters from the general counsel from the NAACP and Children Against Crime out in Los Angeles, California... Basically teaching. I want to make sure youths don't fall in the same footsteps that I fell into, nor anybody else in here. I think that a lot of me go wrong that are in jail or incarcerated because they didn't have any real male role models on there on the streets. I grew up in a household where my mother played mother and father and even though there were male role models out there, it ain't like having your father being a male role model and kids pick up on that and they imitate anything they see, so if they don't have any positive male role models out there, what do they do? They look at something like TV, things like New Jack City. New Jack City just sat up there and showed how young people became drug dealers and a lot of people just went out there and imitated that. TV fashions what you see out here on the streets now? A lot of it.

Teg: I'm sure I have an effect on people on the outside. Today where I am, I get into things that effect people because I care about people. I put myself down for that, such as with children. When I was out the last time, I worked with the youths at the youth center. Kids their parents is on drugs or are not there for them. I just give them some hope...I think I feel valuable to people out there because I have comments about children parents and stuff. The kids always talked about me and things I done with them...I hope to be working with kids when I get out of here of some sort. I don't have any right now, but I'm sure that I'm [needed].

Theme 5: Effort/Attendance

In addition to reviewing the dynamic nature of the students' interactions in group discussions, the researcher elected to analyze attendance records as a means of assessing the degree of effort that students exerted within the *Touchstones* program. Each student

participating in the *Touchstones* program was given the opportunity to attend fifteen meetings with the “core group” and two to four meetings as a co-facilitator of a satellite group. Each student co-facilitated at least twice, depending on the day of the week that their satellite group was scheduled to meet and whether they offered to substitute as a facilitator for a student who were transferred to prison unexpectedly.

The analysis of attendance records excluded attendance for one day, when attendance was not recorded, and included only two co-facilitation sessions per student, since not all of the students possessed the opportunity to attend more. The results show that, on average, the ten students remaining at the jail and in the *Touchstones* program at the conclusion of the study attended 85% of the meetings scheduled. Three students, Drayton, Jerroll and Mohamed, showed perfect attendance. Three other students, Goliath, Teg and Phil, missed only two sessions each. Forman displayed near perfect attendance until he was elected to one of the highest offices in the drug program, when he missed three classes consecutively. Only one student missed a session that he was scheduled to co-facilitate.

Martain and Taz, the two youngest members of the group, displayed that highest rates of absence missing five and six sessions respectively. Yet, it is difficult to attribute 100% of the responsibility for absences to the students themselves. On several occasions, some of the students complained that the corrections officers did not come to pick them up for class, or that they had been infected with a virus that was traveling through the jail.

Category B: Curriculum-Generated Inputs

In *Analyzing the Curriculum*, Posner states:

Some claim that the curriculum is the content or objectives for which schools hold students accountable. Others claim that a curriculum is the

set of instructional strategies teachers plan to use. These conceptual differences are based on a distinction between a curriculum as the expected *ends* of education, e.g., the intended learning outcomes, and curriculum as the intended *means* of education, i.e., instructional plans. Others argue that plans, either for ends or means, are insignificant when compared with actual learnings.

(Posner, 1995)

The third definition of curriculum is the one embraced by the researcher and, as such, forms the platform from which to observe the curricular aspects of the *Touchstones* program. The curricular inputs for “the *Touchstones* process,” that is, the student “learnings” within the *Touchstones* program, were evidenced in:

1. The researcher’s field observations of their reactions to the materials presented, and
2. The students’ individual behaviors, interactions and comments exhibited throughout the program as recorded in the researcher’s observation journal, and

Below, they have been organized by “learning theme” in a fashion that attempts to shed light on “overall student learning experiences.”

Theme 1: Use of Materials: learning to employ the keys to success, goals, stories, and questions

The first day of the *Touchstones* program, I conducted the orientation as outlined in the curriculum. I read the text and passed out the handouts. People took time to reflect and then split into small groups to read the ground rules. I explained to the students that “We are calling them keys to success because they have too many rules to follow here already.”

Each small group leader stated their group's selection of the ground rule (or key to success) that they felt would be most difficult to follow. After the teams reported their selections, we discussed each key to success and why it was important. Most of the groups picked keys #2 (listen to what others say and don't interrupt) and #3 (speak clearly). Mohamed broadened the definition of this last key to mean that one must speak in a way that conveys openness to others and welcomes their opinions, and

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their engagement. Goliath, the oldest participant, spoke a lot about the way that people tend to interrupt and talk over one another.

I then asked the individuals and teams to select the goal that they thought was most important from the list in the text and to tell the class why they selected it. The older men in the group spoke easily. Many of the younger students held back at first but when it was time to share their goals, they spoke out.

Rino noted the importance of “listening well enough to understand the other person so as not to squash their spirit when giving them feedback.” He added that his goal was “To touch down on stuff people are afraid of.” (I asked him if *Touchstones* was one of those things and he said yes).

Martain said his goal was “To try to do better in life to avoid being incarcerated again.” Draytonw said that he was not that bright but wanted to learn by listening.

When the class time came to a close, Jerroll said that he thought the group enjoyed the session.

Theme 2: Learning to Focus on Listening with Respect/Conflict Resolution

As we began the first unit, I read the passages, “The Tortoise and the Rabbit” and “The Tortoise and he Antelope.” After I read the passage, following the curriculum, I asked the students to choose whether to work in small groups or independently and to answer the questions on the handout. Initially, only one small group formed. This group went into the next room to complete the assignment. The rest of the students seemed to be working independently, until a few compared notes at one end of the room.

When the group reassembled and the discussion began, Taz sat in the corner with his back to the class. He maintained that posture for the remainder of the session. As we began to discuss the stories, the students were asked to reveal why they chose to work in small groups or independently. Rino said that he had chosen to work alone because he wanted to “voice his own opinion.” Others responded with similar retorts.

Goliath said, “I ran a race like the turtle once and I decided how I would win. I knew that I had to run one mile every ten minutes to make the time to qualify to stay in the race. Since I did that, I decided that I won. I wasn’t competing against anyone else. I was just competing against myself and I WON!”

When discussing the benefits of working in a group setting versus working alone, most of the students stressed the importance of productivity. If working in a group would render one more productive, than it would be good to work in a group. Likewise, if independent work would facilitate a project, than the work should be done independently. Mohamed explained that it would not be good to have a group working on an engine, since someone might put something into the engine or leave something out without the knowledge of the rest of the workers. This situation could ruin the engine. Others agreed and noted instances when working with a group would enhance productivity.

Jerroll said that when working alone, "you know if you have done it right."

When some students noted examples of group work that would possibly impede the speed of a project, Phil said, "Well, if it is hourly work, that is good because you will all be paid more." (Phil named his daughter Miranda. "Like in the Miranda Rites" he later told me.)

I mentioned that the importance of "making progress" is an American value and noted that most of the examples that had been brought up pertained to the importance of making progress in a work situation. I then asked if it would ever be a *good* thing to have a group member that would slow down the rest of the group, perhaps because they did not have the same skill level as the rest of the group.

"How," I asked "would that benefit the less skilled member as well as the other group members?" The comment was intended to instigate conversation on the benefits of "being supportive," a virtue that I thought would benefit the recipient of support as well as the giver of support. The idea backfired.

The students looked puzzled. Then I asked if it was the responsibility of the more active members of our discussion group to encourage those who are not participating. More confused looks appeared among the group.

Then Goliath, the oldest member of the group, proclaimed energetically, "We can't take responsibility for the ones that's not speaking. We need to keep the group moving or it will die." He emphatically extolled the importance of moving on and driving the discussion, regardless of the participation of less vocal members. This statement provoked immediate controversy among the rest of the students and I instantly regretted posing the question.

"What if I don't want someone to try to make me talk," someone said?

“What if I don’t want to push someone else to speak,” insisted another.

As Goliath kept attempting to clarify his statement, many of the comments were directed toward him. “You always have to have things your way Goliath,” Mohamed said with anger in his tone.

One student, fifty years Goliath’s junior, (and Goliath’s “big brother” on the drug block) came to his rescue. “Now, wait!” he said gesturing Mohamed to hold off. The conversation dissolved from there until we decided to move on to the next story.

The second story was about a man stranded on a desert island. Despite several bouts with depression and physical difficulty, he survives and is rescued after many years. Early in the conversation, a problem emerged. The students were asked to tell the group what two things they would want to have with them if they were similarly stranded. Mohamed said that he would need his faith in Alla and the knowledge to survive.

Goliath responded intensely, “Faith does not go very far when you are starving. You need to get out there and get food.”

“You didn’t listen to me,” said Mohamed. “I said that faith and KNOWLEDGE would help me survive.”

“But you need to get out there and do it, make it happen,” said Goliath. Others began to join in the argument and suddenly the room was awhirl with side conversations and accusations.

“Wait” I smiled. “Remember the ground rules!”

“We don’t have ground rules” reminded Phil, “They are keys to success.” It took a while for my feeble attempt at illuminating the lack of mal-intent in Goliath’s comment to quiet the discomfited group.

As soon as Taz emerged from his reclusive silence, (still bearing his back to most of the class), to look over his shoulder and lightly say “I would like to be on an Island by myself,” the chaos returned.

“What do you mean?” someone laughed.

“By yourself?” another jeered.

“Yea,” Taz held firm. “It would be my own island. I’d build a boat and sail around and live on my own island. It’d be cool.”

“You don’t have a boat,” someone said, “that’s the problem!”

"Well I'd build me a boat out of a tree," he responded.

"How you gonna build a boat?" someone pressed.

Phil grinned, "I'd bring an ax."

"I wouldn't want to live on an island," Martain said softly. "I'd need to be with people in a society. I just want a brick house in a nice city."

"Wouldn't you want to have your own island?" said Taz.

"No," said Martain, "I need society."

"It's just as hard to survive in society as it is on an island," said Forman. "You have to do what you can to survive, to get by, you know?" he continued.

"Drugs are like an island," said Drayton. "People need them to survive so they do whatever they can to get that fix."

Before long the time was up. The group sat back and discussed the relative success of the Touchstones process. They concluded that respect was lacking and that interruptions were too frequent. We dismissed with the intention of focusing on the keys to success at the next meeting. Immediately, Taz came over to Martain and said "I didn't mean to argue with you about having my own island."

"It's no problem," Martain said, and the two began to chat warmly.

Theme 3: Learning to Focus on Intellectual Shaping/Voicing of Ideas

On the third session of week one, I pointed out a new poster displaying the *Touchstones* keys to success and reminded the students about the need to respect religious beliefs as the material becomes increasingly spiritually oriented. I then read a passage about a father who leaves his land to his greedy, lazy sons with the promise that his "treasure" is buried in the land. The sons dig for the treasure unsuccessfully year after year. Annually, as they give up their search, they plant the tilled soil as an afterthought and reap the benefits of profitable crops. Ultimately, the sons realize a treasure in the annual expenditure of hard work and its rewards. Later, it is revealed that such an outcome was the father's intent all along.

After a period of individual reflection, Mohamed opened the discussion with a summary of the story and an affirmation of the father's plan. Teg added that the "treasure" was learning to work. Drayton noted that hard

work makes one appreciate rewards more than they would if the rewards were free. Jerroll said, "yea, like when you make a lot on a hustle you don't appreciate it." Goliath said that the land itself was the treasure.

When asked what else the farmer might have done to teach his sons the value of work Drayton replied, "Leave them nothing, then they would have to work."

Martain said, "Tell them the truth, that they need to work to survive."

When asked if students are generally greedy impatient and confused, Mohamed responded, "Yes, because they want something but they don't know how to get it and they want it immediately."

The next question was, "If some students are greedy impatient and confused, how can they be taught?" Drayton explained that they must be nurtured. The teacher must act as a parent, telling a child why work is important, what it will get them some day, and what his parents do now that he will need to do for his own children in the future. He emphasized kindness and understanding, telling the class the exact words that he would use in a loving and warm way. Nieson pointed out that in his school district in New Jersey, many students began carrying guns to school in the middle school years. That kept some kids away who feared for their safety.

At this point we broke from the *Touchstones* questions in the teacher's manual to address the question, "How can teachers help students to reconcile the long-term purpose of school with their short-term needs?" I explained the question twice. Students began to discuss the purpose of schooling, the problems that children have which pull them away from school, including peer pressure, the call of the streets and difficult home situations. We then discussed the roles of teachers and parents in helping students to stay in school. Most everyone seemed to agree that education was important, (yet, most of the students in the class must have dropped out of school at some point or they would not likely be in the GED class.)

When I asked if it is the school's fault if children drop out, many students began to emphasize the significance of the parent's role in keeping kids in school. They explained that if a child's home life is not in order, the child will not be able to focus in school. Rino, who had been silent for most of the first two sessions, sitting slumped over with his legs spread wide apart, said, "I am sick of hearing this. It bores me. Everyone always blames parents. Some of you may or may not know that my mom was a crack addict and when I was real young I was hospitalized for mental reasons and these doctors kept saying, 'You're upset because of your mom,' And that's when I tuned them out because I knew, because my grandmother

taught me, that even if my mom was on drugs and everything, she was still my mom and I still loved her and I still respected her. So I'm bored when all these people (gesturing to the group) say it's the parents' fault and I'm sick of hearing it."

"Well you're going to keep hearing it because that is the way things are for a lot of people," said Jerroll.

Other students put the emphasis on the child himself, saying that if the child is "of age" he should take responsibility for his own education. Jerroll added, "It depends on what you mean by education. Some people learn in the streets. That is a whole education itself and some people go there instead of going to school."

Later, Rino elaborated on his personal story. "When I was young, my legal guardian had asked me about my dreams and goals. He encouraged me to pursue them, but when he found out that my dream was to own a hair and nail salon, (I have this thing for hair I don't know why and my grandmother told me that I'd have to have pedicures 'cuz the ladies like to have their feet done) he told me no, don't do that." So Rino came back with an idea for a collaborative program for kids and asked for funding. When the guardian refused, Rino checked out of his home and his life. His conclusion was that adults/teachers were not into supporting dreams.

Later I tried another angle to ask for the students' thoughts on schools today. "I want to know what you all think of this. It is my impression from spending time in a whole lot of elementary schools last year (as part of a research project in Baltimore) and in high schools this year that a lot of kids who are very bright are bored in school. The teachers apply rewards and punishments and talk down to them by yelling 'Everyone be quiet and have respect or else (shaking finger)' and the kids find that unstimulating and they drop out. What do you think?"

Rino replied, "When I was at the alternative school they had stations and you could do science or math or literature any time you wanted. I did well there but I think the teacher failed me on purpose because she liked me and I was doing well but she wanted to push me. I didn't like those schools where they tell you to do science at this time and art at this time. I'm artistic and creative in my sleep, not just at this time or that time."

Teg added that in his school in the '60's the whole class was doing one thing at a time. "If people were on different levels, they didn't have time to teach to all of those levels."

"That is the hottest issue in education today," I replied, "teaching for academic diversity, or different levels in one classroom." Students shared

more views on this subject and then I dropped a bomb. “I know some students who have had difficulty at the alternative school and they have stopped going to school. Their probation officer has caught up with them and sent them to Staunton, a juvenile facility on the other side of the mountain.” (The crowd smiled widely. They nodded that they are very familiar with Staunton and seem to find my qualifying explanation humorous.) I continued, “Now I know this might sound weird, but incarceration seems to me to be an awfully severe penalty for truancy. This is a free country, why should people have to go to school if they don’t want to?”

“Oh no,” everyone yelled. “Kids need to have a penalty for staying out of school.” “If you don’t have one,” said Rino, “it’s like holding up a feather to someone’s back and saying if you don’t do this I’m going to cut you with this feather. They’ll never do it.”

“I left school in the fourth grade and my parents never made me go back and I’m very upset about that,” said Mohamed.

“You dropped out in the fourth grade?” someone said. “I was kicked out for something that was not my fault. I was running away from the bullies that used to beat me up every day and I ran down the stairs. I ran past a girl and the bullies were right behind me and they knocked her over and broke her collarbone. I got blamed and kicked out.”

“If I kid doesn’t want to go to school, there’s nothing you can do to make him. I’ve been talking to this kid that quit school and doesn’t want to go back and he’s hooked on life in the streets,” said Jerroll. “He said that when kids start school in the fall most of them have new clothes and shoes. He doesn’t have new clothes or shoes, so he is embarrassed to go.”

“What have you said to him?” asked Rino. Suddenly the entire room was embroiled in a discussion between Jerroll and Rino on how to counsel a kid that is dropping out of school. The conversation went on for some time.

After two hours, we ended the discussion and reflected on the relative improvement in our process since Tuesday.

Theme 4: Learning to Develop Fluid Interaction Between Students

In the third week, we read the story of Life and Death, a tale of the Blackfoot Indians. In that story, the only woman and man on Earth must determine the way that future generations will live. They have to decide if their offspring will live forever or die. They weigh the benefits and costs of both options. After reading the story, the first question on the

worksheet was, "If you had to choose whether people should live forever or die, would you like to make that decision alone or with someone else?"

"I'd like to make it with someone else," said Phil. "No one person should have the right to say whether others should live or die. Like, for example, if I am in the hospital and they have to decide whether to pull the plug, they will ask my wife or children. That is single mindedness."

"When I make the decision, I will be happy with it" said Jerroll. Sometimes people make that kind of decision to keep you from suffering and sometimes you tell them to do it."

Martain looked up and said, "Drayton" but Drayton didn't hear. Just then the cardboard poster displaying the Touchstones Keys to Success fell off of the wall and right on to Drayton's head. The poster was light, but Drayton rolled out of his chair and crouched down on the floor. Everyone chuckled and when Drayton looked up and saw that it was only a poster, he seemed embarrassed.

In the story of the Blackfoot Indians, the man throws a stick into the water and states that if the stick floats, people will live forever. The woman does not like this idea. She insists that they throw a rock into the water and if the rock floats people will live forever. Goliath made reference to this part of the story as he rekindled the conversation. "I would want to make the decision alone because I would have a problem with someone else that they might come up with the same stupid idea as the rock."

Annoyed, Mohamed responded, "So what are you saying?" There was a pause and I offered to interpret what Goliath had said but the group took over. Martain and Taz joined forces to explain the statement made by Goliath and to ease Mohamed's tension. I was gratified that the Touchstones group seemed to be moving away from the need for a facilitator.

Forman interjected that he would want to make the decision with someone else, emphasizing the enormity of such a decision and his desire to make the right decision.

Drayton said that he would want to make the decision with someone else and that he would say that people should live forever.

Phil raised the issue of assisted suicide, informing the group of Dr. Kavorkian's numerous encounters with legal repercussions as a result of his desire to help people end their own lives.

"If I was suffering," said Drayton "I'd want to go to heaven."

"You see people in nursing homes and they are suffering..." said Jerroll.

"But with Kavorkian," said Forman, "he didn't make that decision alone."

"For example," said Drayton, "my mother, she had MS for 30 years and she was ready to go. She waited for me to see her and then she went. She was laying in the coffin and you could see the peace all over her face."

"But if you have to pull the plug on a member of your family," said Forman, "it's a rough decision and I'd rather have someone with me."

"I believe that a person has a right to die if they want to," said Goliath. "If I choose to take my life, it's my life. I have a right to."

At this point I noticed that people were still directing most of their comments to me and decided to try a technique that worked once before. I stood up and brought the handout and the questions from the teacher's manual to Martain and asked him to continue the facilitation. He refused. I walked over to Taz and handed him the manual. He refused to accept. "Goliath's a leader, give it to him," Taz responded with a smile. I handed the materials to Goliath. He gladly accepted.

The conversation continued and students offered their thoughts on whether or not people would be better off living forever or experiencing death. "I agree with Forman's reason for choosing death," said Drayton. "If you let people live forever, you would have no need for each other."

"Why not?" I asked.

"You would go on for years without needing food," Drayton explained. "I wouldn't need you to feed me. People would get a big head. The world would be over populated."

"If I live forever, that's not gonna change me," Jerroll offered. "I could still be in jail with one leg missing. I could have all kinds of problems."

"I don't think that people need to die in order to get or give sympathy," said Forman. "There are people in my jail cell that give sympathy all the time. In this life, people help each other when they are sick."

I looked around and noticed several members of the group leaning forward.

"If people didn't die, we wouldn't know what loss was," Mohamed interjected.

“Why is that good?” I asked.

Mohamed replied with a pause, “I don’t know.”

Marino observed another aspect of the story “I liked the fact that they made an agreement about how to make a decision.”

“Would people still have friendship, get married, have children?” asked Goliath, attempting to facilitate. But as the students responded to Goliath’s question he began to ask follow-up questions with the same intensity that he had shown earlier in the program. Students began to return his tone of defensiveness. Soon the entire room was out of control. Students were speaking over one another and failing to show respect for Goliath as the facilitator or for one another.

As the argument about the benefits of eternal life on Earth became circular, and students began to contribute increasingly similar statements with heightened levels of antagonism, I suggested that the group begin a new story. They agreed that a new story might provide a fresh arena for discussion and they began the story entitled, “Money Makes Cares.” This Chinese folk tale, about an unhappy, rich man who gives money to his poor, happy neighbor, points out the problems that can arise when a person becomes focused on wealth rather than enjoying each day.

While many of the students were ready to begin anew after the aborted discussion about eternal life, Goliath, who was still playing the role of the facilitator, had adopted a defensive attitude. As he had done before, he took time to remind the group of points that he had made earlier in the discussion long after the topic had changed. He used phrases like, “that’s what I was saying” over and over. I made a mental note to remind him privately, or perhaps publicly during a facilitator training session, that the facilitator is not supposed to share his or her own opinions, but rather encourage the opinions of others. The remainder of the session seemed tense and I realized that the entire group would need to spend time discussing the concept and process of facilitation prior to embarking on their roles as facilitators of Touchstones discussions with other students.

Theme 5: Learning to Focus on Sharing/Demonstrating Values

Valuing Love: By the second class of week two, the group dynamic had changed considerably. We skipped to the back of the Touchstones book, and the topic, taken from Plato’s Symposium, centered on love. It was a

complicated reading and the questions on the work sheet were more difficult than those in past weeks.

The students completed a handout asking them to place in rank order “things worth loving.” Eleven topics listed on the sheet ranged from “a person’s mind” to “my country,” “fame,” “power” and “money.” After doing the hand out, the class formed groups of four and consolidated their top picks and bottom picks and then shared them with the entire class. Overall, the top selections, or things ranked most worthy of love, were “a person’s mind,” “understanding things,” and “respect of others.” Generally, at the bottom of the list sat, “power, money and fame.”

Harlie, a very soft-spoken student in his forties, picked the love of country as his first choice. Phil, who seemed to do all required speaking for Harlie, interpreted this selection to the group. (Since I have known Harlie, at least six months, I have rarely heard him speak to a group. I was pleasantly surprised that he elected to participate in *Touchstones*.)

“I just want everyone to know that I hate my country,” Rino announced. The group laughed.

After the exercise was completed, I read the text. This time, the story involved a discussion between Socrates and Diotima on the nature of love. Diotima insisted that love may take many forms, but that it always reflects the lover’s longing for happiness and beauty. Thus, people love what they find to be beautiful. I opened the discussion with the question, what element(s) of love has been left out of the story?”

Jerroll responded, “The spiritual aspects of love.”

“I like that,” Goliath seconded.

Once again, Phil’s opening comment formed the cornerstone for the rest of the group discussion. I don’t share my feelings with anyone any more because I have been hurt too many times,” he explained. “Now I just keep it all inside. That’s why I put love of a person at the bottom of my list.”

This statement opened the door for Drayton to share some wisdom that he had been considering with the counsel of Ms. Thomas for several weeks. “Listen man, if you shut yourself off, after a while you won’t be able to love anybody. If you shut yourself off, you won’t be able to feel. If somebody loves you, you won’t be able to tell them. Then you won’t be able to have a relationship.”

With this statement, the group took on the nature of a therapeutic community. Many of the comments shared were directed toward Phil.

“To you Billy,” Teg said, “You gotta keep trying. Somebody else might not treat you the way she did. You got to keep plugging in until you get that electricity.”

(Ms. Thomas later told me that, at this point in the conversation, Phil was beginning to blink back tears.)

Nieson chimed in, “I had one of those old Georgia Dads. He didn’t believe that men should show their emotions. If you got hurt you couldn’t run to him crying and expect a big hug. The only time that he ever told me that he loved me was when I got this gun shot wound here,” he said pointing to his chin.

“What kind of gun you have?” Taz asked enthusiastically.

“Now you don’t want to be playing with guns,” Drayton scolded.

Nieson told Taz what kind of gun it was and continued his story. “The only time my dad told me he loved me was when I was in the hospital. That made it hard for me to show my emotions for a long time.”

“They used to call me ‘bucket of tears,’” said Jerroll. “If you hold it in you get to hitting on women and stuff. I never hit a women. I cry all the time. My girlfriends say I cry more than most women they know.”

“Men will cry in front of a woman more than around a man,” said Mohamed. “You cry in front of a woman because she will give you the emotional attention you need.”

“If you are around some real brothers, they’ll grab you too,” Jerroll challenged.

“I never cry,” 20 year old Taz said chuckling.

The older students shook their heads smiling. “I’ll tell you Taz,” Drayton counseled, “You get older and you will have many women until you decide to settle down. And if someone hurts you, you will cry. You better get ready to learn how to love now.”

“You don’t have to cry on the outside,” Teg added. “You can cry on the inside and pee it out.”

“I cried every night when I was a kid,” Taz said. “I can’t cry now. I just can’t.”

“When I was a kid, my mother wasn’t around. She had to be in New York all the time,” said Goliath. “But I had a grandmother and she was like a mother to me. But it was hard without my mother.”

“Sometimes we don’t appreciate what our parents were going through,” said Jerroll. “Like maybe your mother had to be in New York because that was where the jobs were. But you were upset because she wasn’t with you.”

As the students shared their stories, Phil continued to blink back tears.

Then Rino, who walked in in the middle of class, rerouted the topic. “What did the group pick? I have money back in Mississippi and that doesn’t do anything. I need love here in jail. But I think understanding is most important because you need it to be able to love. If you don’t understand things, you won’t understand love.”

“I like what you said about understanding,” said Jerroll. “That is one of the main things that you need in life. Knowledge brings forth wisdom, which brings forth understanding.”

At the end of the class, Goliath said that he enjoyed the discussion. “I love it, love it, love it,” he said. I asked if the group felt that the discussion went well and most shook their heads signifying that it did.

I took the opportunity to share another of Plato’s philosophies. “This is exactly what is supposed to happen. Plato believed that groups come together to have discussions so that we can all realize that we exist in the same world. Sharing our stories helps us to see that we exist in one world together and that increases our self-esteem.”

Valuing Forgiveness: By the third session of the second week, the group seemed to have adopted a light-heartedness that was not previously present in its discussions, although a fourth student had dropped the class. “He is going through I tough time right now,” Ms. Thomas said, “and he doesn’t think he can handle it.” This reason for dropping the discussion had become a pattern by this point, and I began to wonder if the highly emotional nature of the program would ultimately cause more people to drop the class.

This session’s topic was taken from the Koran and was focused on the benefits of forgiveness versus revenge. As the group began to define forgiveness, Nieson explained that forgiveness is predicated on acceptance of that forgiveness. One must have the humility to accept forgiveness if the forgiveness is to be fulfilled.

Goliath mentioned the example of his ex-wife and the experiences that led to their divorce. "She said that she forgave me for the things that I did to hurt her but she kept bringing them up again. I said, 'I thought you forgave me,' but she kept throwing it up in my face."

"You have to learn how to forgive yourself in order to forgive someone else," Teg said.

"A lot of things we did to ourselves we got to forgive ourselves for," Jerroll said. "And we gotta forgive a lot of people."

As the conversation about forgiveness led some students to focus on defining the difference between deceit and lying, Mohamed said, "Lying about someone is the worst thing you can do. I do not like it. I do not like it. I do not like it."

"Tell up how you really feel," I joked. The group laughed, I smiled and Mohamed sat staring quizzically. "I'm only kidding," I responded, and he cracked a smile. I remembered Mohamed's story about the little girl who had him expelled for breaking her collarbone when he had not been the one who pushed her down the stairs. Lying was not a joking matter to Mohamed and I instantly felt remorse.

Phil, who had become a regular instigator of interesting dialogue, once again posed an "illustration" that led to a rich discussion on the meaning of forgiveness. "Let's say that I went to a drug dealer and bought some dope from him and he sold me dummies. Now, that is deceit but it is also a lie.

"I think you should forgive that dealer," grinned Jerroll, because he might be an addict and he might need the drugs himself." The room exploded in laughter.

"Sorry I sold you those dummies Phil," Drayton comically retorted to thunderous laughter.

"What if he wasn't a dealer but he sold you something he had because you asked for it? Like I sold this woman something and I never said it was drugs and she gave me \$20 and I took it," said Jerroll.

"Then she should ask your forgiveness for assuming that you were a drug dealer," Forman called out. Again the room roared.

Everyone started to speak at once and I said, "Remember the pie. This is not a 0-sum game. If you can't convince someone of your opinion, it's not like you get a smaller piece of the pie. Everyone has their own pie."

“You know, any black man that dresses nice is assumed by police to be a drug dealer,” said Jerroll seriously. “When I came back from the penitentiary and I had on my Tommy Hilfigers and Timberlands, they thought I was selling drugs. But talking about forgiveness, God sacrificed His son and His son didn’t do anything. If God can forgive then man can forgive.”

“Is it possible to go through life without hurting someone?” I asked.

Everyone nodded or said “no,” and then Goliath had another thought. “I think you can go through life without hurting anyone. My great grandmother never tried to hurt anyone.”

The class began to refute Goliath all at once.

Jerroll interrupted, “It depends on how you define hurt. There is mental and physical hurt.”

“Didn’t your great grandmother ever tell you the truth and it hurt?” Forman questioned. “The truth hurts.”

“You were thinking of physical hurt,” someone said.

“Yea, I guess I was thinking of physical hurt. She never tried to hurt anybody physically,” said Goliath.

“I’d rather someone hurt me physically than mentally,” said Nieson.

Valuing The Ability To Trust God: On the second day of the third week, I selected a story from the supplemental Touchstones book entitled, *Courage to Care Strength To Serve*. This was a segment from the writings of Benjamin Franklin that focused on the idea of human virtue. In it, Franklin discusses his own desire to improve his shortcomings and pursue several personality traits that he deemed virtuous.

After reading the passage, and providing a definition of the word virtue, I asked the class what they thought were the greatest human virtues. Goliath began, “Understanding another person.” I found this to be interesting because Goliath often made statements to the class such as, “You’re not listening to what I’m saying,” or “That is what I was trying to say.”

Drayton continued, “Compassion and Love.”

"I like to get free food," said Taz. "Like when you are walking with a friend and they can get hooked up with free food. What does that mean?"

Before the discussion could get off the ground, Mohamed interrupted, "I want to go in the other room and talk to Jerroll. He seems to be upset about something." Jerroll was sitting with his head down and staring straight into the floor.

Jerroll responded, "I'm OK. I talk too much sometimes. My virtue is patience. Yesterday, I got out of character. I asked the guy (a corrections officer) to get my pencil (which was left in the classroom). He didn't get it. Said he'd get it later. I cussed him out. These guys are younger than me and they..."

"You have to humble yourself," said Drayton. "You are being tested and it is part of your growth."

"What is the virtue in that?" I asked.

"Being long suffering," Drayton replied. "The C.O.s, they got power."

"I am going for sentencing this week," said Jerroll. "I am stressed out in jail and I was gonna hit him."

"It was a test," Drayton continued. "We are under authority. We don't have freedom. We have to have discipline. Even when we get out."

"Being in this place is Hell," said Mohamed. "I'm working hard on submitting to authority. The acceptance part. The authority they got over me I can't change." He recited the serenity prayer "I have to have the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference."

"That's right. For example," said Drayton, "the other day they asked me to paint the walls. This place was like this before I got here. I am not here to paint. I am here because I did something wrong. They said they were gonna take the TV. They can take the TV."

"The phone, the TV, they just give you that stuff so they can dog you with it," said Jerroll.

"I want to thank you guys for helping me to be humble," said Goliath. "I go to court tomorrow and I can blow up."

"Some of us are here because we got dogged," said Jerroll. "Both my cases are like that. I know God is with me. There is this guy in my cell."

He wants to control the TV all the time. He takes the remote with him everywhere he goes. The other day he took it to the sink to brush his teeth. I told him, 'You go down the road and you better buy your own TV. You try to control the TV there and somebody's gonna put something up in you – I mean a piece of steel.' I've been behind the wall. The devil just rode me yesterday. He used to ride me with my girlfriend. He use to make me think she was cheating on me. Now, I ask God for the strength to trust my girlfriend. He doesn't ride me about that any more."

"When you get angry," said Teg, "it's easy to give your power away. When you get closer to God, the devil is gonna be on you. You will always find another officer like that. When you get angry, it's easy to give your power away."

Jerroll continued to share his frustrations with the officer and his fears about sentencing. When he paused, Goliath said, "How do you feel now? You need to let it out."

Drake sat in the background as he often had in the past just listening and playing the air drums.

Jerroll continued, "If I get out, I'll never be back. I submit my life to God. I got power over the devil. I know that I thank you all."

I thought of Jerroll's sentencing at the end of the week. He had asked me to serve as a character witness. I was eager to tell the Commonwealth and the judge that Jerroll was ready to pursue a new life, free from drugs and focused on serving God. I wondered if they would listen.

"The hardest thing for a man to do is change," said Teg. "You have to stick with it because if you fall back, you will get the same results."

The jury recommended 20 years for Jerroll but the judge has the authority to decide whether or not 20 years is appropriate for his case. Jerroll had mentioned before that he wanted to ask the judge for admittance to a two-year drug program.

"Somebody told me that he wouldn't take the recommendation for 20 years if I would tell on somebody," said Jerroll, referring to legislation that allows drug offenders to receive lighter sentences in exchange for confessions that incriminate other drug users or handlers. "70-80% of the people in my block told," he continued. "I told them I think its wrong for me to get somebody else locked up if I did something wrong."

"I'm glad you let me talk," said Jerroll. "I feel like you are a family. I can't talk to people in my block. I think this is like the drug block but we

don't talk about drugs, we talk about *Touchstones*. I think this is a good program man. We talked about forgiveness and I told a guy in my cell that I forgave him. I have sympathy in my heart for that guy in my cell man."

"He told me not to be scared and to talk." I had known Harlie for approximately seven months and never seen him initiate a statement in a group. I was shocked to see him speak out.

"Jerroll did?" I asked.

"Yes," Charlie replied.

"How did that make you feel?" I asked.

"Better," Harlie replied. "I used to get water thrown on me and stuff. He told me not to be scared and to talk. I was on the phone with my girlfriend and one of the guys got on the phone with my girlfriend and told her that I was his man."

Jerroll spoke to Harlie directly, "Down the road, you don't have to get 'done.' You stand up as a man and you'll be OK. Put your trust in God and you can overcome anything."

"Thank you," Goliath said to me. To Jerroll he said, "You needed this or you would explode."

Jerroll looked at the teacher, Miss Thomas, sitting in the back of the room as she had throughout the *Touchstones* sessions. "I care a lot for her. Miss Thomas, I learned a whole lot from her. I talk to her about stuff and I go back to my cell and think about it. And she's a good woman too man," he said pointing to me.

"Miss Thomas told me I was shining. That made my heart feel this big," Jerroll said holding out his arms. "When you are shining, people can see you. This group is good. If she could record this and we could listen to it, it would be dynamite. Jen told me my comments were good and I think about that."

"You have to listen to people or you might miss a blessing," said Teg. You can't decide not to listen. You might miss something."

"Yesterday I was tired," said Jerroll. I decided to lie down for a while. Then I suddenly felt better."

"You came off your pity pot and stopped feeling sorry for yourself," said Mohamed. "These guards have a job to do. They do stupid stuff to get you mad but if you let them get you its like throwing gas on a fire. If you let it get to you they'll keep doing it."

"You too!" Mohamed continued to Harlie, referring to Harlie's tendency to allow cellmates to harass him.

"You do push ups," Taz said to Harlie. "Do push ups."

Seemingly out of the blue, Goliath told Jerroll, "Drugs will come at you. You only have to hold out for a moment."

Finally, I had to ask a question that I had been harboring for some time. I began by noting that people often referred to God and their faith in our discussions. I mentioned that people also described several situations where they experienced injustice or mistreatment at the hands of cellmates, judges, juries or officers. I recalled that people often described the need to be humble before God in order to handle mistreatment. But what about seeking fairness? Did people feel the need to seek changes in the system?

"Fair to me is hobby-horses, merry-go-rounds and circuses," said Teg.

"Trust God," said Goliath.

Forman put it another way, "Everything good comes from God. God also tests us. Everything that happens to me, I just give God thanks for it whether it is good or bad. You might have 25 years but God can make that 10 days. I have to know that He has the best for me."

"I prayed to God and I got a recommendation of 20 years. I didn't pick up my Bible for a whole day," said Jerroll.

"I had 200 years for 26 counts of forgery," said Forman. "I got 10 months and they'll take it out if I get into a program. If you put the Bible down you are just using God. He can punish you too. I came out of court and I said 'Thank you God!'"

Forman continued, "I told Harlie, 'Your punishment is not for people to put you down and call you faggot. You are a human being like everybody else. Trust God. He'll take care of you.'"

"God is present with us in this inner circle right now," said Goliath.

"Forman taught me to give thanks God for the good things too."

Taz sat flipping through a copy of *Essence*.

"I told Goliath," said Forman, "I was an alcoholic. I lost my apartment and all of my possessions. I can get all of that stuff but I can't get another life."

"I was looking at 44 years," said Mohamed. "I went to court and by Grace I came out with two. But I raised and pitched. But coming down here I realized what I got and came to terms with this. I am thankful for what I have. I don't have trees and grass I can reach out and touch, but I am thankful for so many things. So when you get on your pity pot, you say a prayer and be thankful for what you got."

"I like what you said except 'pity pot,'" responded Jerroll. "And everything you said I like," he said to Forman.

Forman continued, "People think you can come here and pray and the next day go home. But look how long you were out there playing with the devil! You have to show God and society that you can make it and change."

"I had 20 years and it was suspended, said Drake. "I used to pray and stop as soon as I got what I wanted. But since I've been here, I pray every night...for these people over there fighting...wherever they are fighting. I pray for my family. I give thanks. And I am happier. I had a dream. I went on a wonderful trip. I ain't never been on a trip but it was nice."

"Isn't it nice to be able to dream?" seconded Mohamed. "When you are upset, you can't dream."

"I can't pray for you like you can pray for yourself," said Teg. "You are the only one who can explain your feelings to God. He knows anyway but He wants you to tell him."

"I used to be an atheist," said Goliath, "but people taught me how to pray. Have a conversation with Him. I came to believe in a God. Now I pray every day. I used to have this thing about my grandmother. I couldn't talk about her without breaking down. We were always together like we were married. She was my mother, my grandmother, everything. She held my first child. That was a blessing from God that He kept her here that long. She told me 'never hate your mother. God said honor your father and mother.' I am blessed. You have to thank God for everything. You have to thank God for each other. You gave me something here today."

Valuing Friendship and Fidelity: On Monday of the fourth week I announced to the class that this would be the week that they would begin to facilitate discussions with their own groups of students. I asked each student to make a list of 3-4 people that they would like to work with as co-facilitators and told them that we would spend part of the next day preparing to do facilitation. “You need to list 3-4 names,” I explained, because you will be working with groups of two or three. I’ll do my best to give every person the chance to work with at least one person from their list.”

Next, we read a story about friendship entitled. The story posed a dilemma related to friendship and loyalty. If you had a friend that was doing something wrong, it reasoned, should you drop your friendship with that person, or not, and why?

We began the session by splitting up into small groups to discuss the moral implications of the scenario. Goliath reported on the results for his group. “It is hard to find friends, so we said that we would still be friends. We could try to change him but we would still be there for him [if he didn’t change].”

Nieson’s group reported similarly. “A true friend will tell you how it is – right from wrong. We would be there for him.”

“If you are a friend, you will be with him regardless,” said Mohamed on behalf of his group.

“What makes friendship last?” I asked.

“Honesty, trust,” replied Drayton.

“Understanding,” said Rino.

“Respect,” added Jerroll.

“Someone I can depend on when I need them,” said Goliath. “In this life you need a friend. A good friend is hard to find.”

“In hardship, you find out who your friends are,” said Drayton.

“I had a friend I used to play cards with,” said Goliath. “A lot of time has passed but if we need someone, the other one will get up and go. Death, birthdays, we are always there for each other.”

Teg elaborated on the notion of friendship, "Having a friend or being a friend, you have to tell him his faults, even if it hurts him. Then you can put a Band-Aid on it."

"This minister was here yesterday," said Jerroll. "I was feeling depressed. He told me 'If you hold resentment in your heart it is like a dark spot. You have to forgive. The devil throws stuff out and its not yours unless you grab it. If you grab it, it makes you tired.' Like I just want to lie in bed. He said 'Jesus forgave all our sins and died for us so why can't we forgive?' That was an inspiration because I was being cheated out of my blessings. That minister, he is a friend because he brought me the word."

"You have to look out for yourself in the issue," retorted Teg. "Like saving a friend. It's like swimming in the ocean. You can't save him if you're going to drown. So I'll go in the stream [not the ocean] but sometimes you have to save yourself."

"Why do friendships break up?" I asked.

"Dishonesty, deception, lack of trust, messing with girlfriends. People who don't keep it to themselves when you tell them something personal," replied Drayton.

"Its different being friends versus partners," said Teg. "Friends keep each other on the right track. Partners might rob a bank or something."

"Sometimes you are friends and then they try to sleep with your wife," said Goliath.

"Then they weren't your friend," said Jerroll. "I don't accept anyone as my friend just like that. I'd play with you for a while first. Drop a couple hundred on the floor and just see what he does."

"Sometimes you can be friends for years, then you find out that the person was never your friend," said Goliath.

"I have a question for you Goliath," Nieson challenged. "If you are married and you mess around one time, does that mean you were never married? Where is forgiveness?"

"If you ask forgiveness and they accept it then you can still be friends," Goliath said thoughtfully.

"So if that person deceives you he's still your friend?" prodded Jerroll.

"No," said Goliath. "If he deceived me for a long time and I found out, but he didn't come to me [with the information himself], then he is not my friend."

"I personally believe that there are no friends in the world today," said Phil. I stopped taking notes and looked up at Phil. The whole group seemed to notice and I detected suppressed chuckles around the circle. Undaunted, Phil continued, "With friends like this, you sure don't need enemies. My best friend deceived me in court."

Returning to Goliath's original topic, the entire group erupted into simultaneous discussion (bordering on argument) about the definition of friendship in the context of infidelity. The argument centered on the analysis of a case scenario presented by one student. "If a guy goes to a married woman's home when the man is not home, what are his intentions? Could they really be as altruistic as cutting the grass?" Apparently such situations are common to the students' experience. While incarcerated, many have felt threatened by men on "the outside" who have made advances toward their wives and girlfriends.

"Now its really *Touchstones*," said Drayton laughing.

"You can touch a stone but don't touch his wife," said Teg.

Nieson returned the conversation to a serious note "A woman isn't going to send a man to her friend's house."

"We just mentioned trust," said Goliath. "If your friend gets smart with your wife, she will come to you. If she goes along with it she's no good herself. I have to trust my wife because I can't watch her 24 hours a day."

"But if you're my friend, you don't belong at my house," said Jerroll. "But if she doesn't tell me, that doesn't make her bad. My wife might handle it better than I would."

Without warning, a small voice almost never heard before in the *Touchstones* class spoke up seeming to command silence with the surprise it raised, "What can you do if it happens to you?" In a room that ten minutes before sounded like the foyer of Monticello in high tourist season, you could suddenly hear the hum of the ice machine down the hall. "It happened to me," Harlie said quietly and then slightly louder. "It happened to me."

After a short pause someone said, "Your best friend?"

"It was two of my best friends," Harlie replied.

Again dead silence and then Taz whispered from a corner, "They were doing a choo-choo train!?" Others attempted unsuccessfully to suppress laughter.

"Talk Harlie," said Goliath.

"She wouldn't tell me. I had to force her to tell me."

"How did you feel?" asked Jerroll.

"How did you handle it?" asked Drayton.

"Did you confront it?" someone else chimed in.

"No," Harlie said sheepishly. "She was afraid of him. He was bigger than her. She had hip problems."

After a brief pause someone questioned, "She didn't get rape counseling?"

As if oblivious to the concept or legal definition of rape, Harlie replied "She's living with someone else now."

"Forget her. Get another," said Taz matter-of-factly.

"Our kids are taken away. They said they were mistreated," Harlie continued.

"How do you deal with it?" asked Teg.

"He's not dealing with it," said Drayton. "He keeps it inside."

"It hurts too much," Harlie responded.

"You see how this is helping him, letting it out?" said Goliath.

"I was so depressed. I was at Western State," said Harlie.

"Now you have to forgive those guys and forgive your wife," said Jerroll. "Even if you don't know how to forgive, you just have to ask God. You will feel a whole lot different."

"I didn't want to say anything," said Harlie, "but you all were talking about it."

"It shows growth in you," said Mohamed.

“We have to be friends with ourselves,” said Drayton. “When you keep things inside, you are not being friendly to yourself.”

“Since I’ve been coming to this, I understand,” said Goliath. “We had such a great discussion last week. It was great. We came up with all kinds of things.”

“Everything that is said in here stays here,” I reminded Goliath and the group, referring to the fact that even discussions from last week were not fair game for repeated conversation because some of the group members were not present when personal information was shared.

“I feel like you all are my family,” said Jerroll. “This is my drug block. If I can’t say stuff around you all, I’ll want to keep it all inside like Harlie.”

“Just be careful with yourself,” said Mohamed.

“I can’t say anything that will hurt me,” said Jerroll. “If someone else says something and he can’t be trusted, he’s gonna cross himself.

“I get a lot out of being here,” said Drayton. “I haven’t missed one day.”

“We have a lot of different ages represented in this group,” I mentioned. “Some people are twenty years older than others. Do you think that you can be friends with people of different ages?”

The group nodded yes.

“I hope I live to be his age,” said 18-year-old Taz pointing at 63-year-old Goliath.

“You will,” I said smiling, and hoping.

Several students mentioned that older people have a lot to teach younger students.

“Sometimes they want to tell you stuff but you want to learn it yourself,” said Taz.

“Sometimes you can tell younger guys something,” said Jerroll. “Like you (to Taz) have a yellow badge [signifying a less severe charge]. Don’t ever let yourself get an orange badge [signifying a state offense]. I never used to want to listen to my parents. My mother never wanted to see me go to prison again. That would kill my mother and I would never forgive myself.”

“This group helps me out,” said Jerroll. “Sometimes I’m like Goliath. I’m pumped to come here.”

Theme 6: Learning to Focus on Serving Others/Student Facilitation

Serving in General: On Tuesday of the fourth week, we conducted a short discussion and then the students spent a large portion of the class time preparing to facilitate *Touchstones* discussions with their own groups of students.

During the early part of the class, the conversation centered on the idea of “forgiveness” as outlined in a *Touchstones* parable. Drayton responded to the parable with one of his own. He told a story about Martain, one of the soft-spoken, younger members of the group, and an encounter that Martain had with an inmate in the cell block that Martain and Drayton shared. One day, the other inmate became enraged with something that Martain said or did. (Martain is so quiet and gentle in class that I found it hard to imagine him saying anything that could anger another person. He typically spends the entire class period listening to others and twisting a small portion of his hair with one hand. Once, when I brought flowers to class, he sat cradling a small bud for a full hour before whispering that he wanted to go back to his cell and draw the delicate petals).

Drayton told the class that the other inmate had “come at Martain with a pen.” I remembered the incident that the Superintendent had once relayed to me about an inmate who stabbed a ballpoint pen several inches through another man’s shoulder. I wondered if it was the same perpetrator that had attacked Martain. “I had to pull him off of Martain,” Drayton said. “But Martain responded with kindness and love. Later, he came and gave the man 10-15 cakes. The man felt so guilty, he was hanging his head. That was the spirit of God.”

Drayton’s story about Martain takes on particular significance in light of the sugar economy inherent to prison and jail life. Sometimes when inmates who used to be substance users and addicts find themselves incarcerated and deprived of most every type of stimulation formerly available to them, new cravings arise. In the absence of caffeine, alcohol, tobacco and other substances, they turn to the one form of pleasure available through the prison commissary (or “Canteen”) for a little energy boost, sugar. Even those who previously had no substance problems may find sugar comforting while incarcerated. Sugar is sold in the form of a variety of cellophane-packaged goods ranging from Moonpies to Twinkies but commonly known as “cakes.”

The students explained that the phrase, "Do you have enough cakes?" is a prison or jail term of endearment, suggesting that the asker is willing to share some of his stash with the friend in need. Conversely, if someone demands double repayment for gifts extended, and the recipient is unable to repay the gesture at a 100% rate of interest, he may be expected to respond with "the loss of his manhood," meaning the delivery of sexual favors. Some inmates even "steal from themselves," meaning that they eat their cakes while hiding under their bed sheets so no one can see what items or how many they have concealed in their tiny, private space.

Those who have no "money on their books," or a cash balance of zero in the prison or jail accounting office, are left at the mercy of those generous few inmates, like Martain, who are willing to share their cakes unconditionally. They receive only the state ration of hygiene items, including private label toothpaste and off-brand shampoo, when the Canteen cart arrives. I later learned that the man who attacked Martain with a pen was a member of the indigent among indigent at the jail, and out of sheer kindness, (according to Drayton) Martain continued to supplement the man's state ration of hygiene products with cakes from his own short supply.

Student Facilitation as Service: On Friday of the fourth week we began the student-facilitated classes. Drayton and Phil led the first student-facilitated class. They had three participants. Three students did not show since the class was offered so early.

Drayton opened the program by introducing himself and Phil and asking the students to introduce themselves. He then introduced Ms. Thomas and me and I stood up and explained the official permission form for Touchstones. The students signed the permission form and Drayton began the session by reading the orientation section from the Touchstones book.

After reading about Touchstones, Drayton explained the program in his own words. He talked of his experiences in Touchstones and explained the keys to success. "Giving others your respect is important," he said. "But we can challenge others on their opinions. We have a right to challenge others on their opinions." Phil asked the new students to keep what was said in the program private and then Drayton shared that he took all of the eleven goals outlined in the Touchstones and embraced them as his own upon entering the program. "This program is about community, listening, communicating and understanding," he told the group.

One student mentioned that both his fiance and a fellow inmate had told him that he needed to become a better listener. "The guy asked if I *ever* listen and he really rocked me," the student said. Drayton gave him a huge smile.

Phil read the story that he and Drayton had selected, *The Tale of the Hopi Indians*. Then Drayton asked if everyone was comfortable and if anyone wanted water. *The Tale of the Hopi Indians*, one that we had analyzed with the core group of Touchstones students, was about the “man who couldn’t see and the man who couldn’t walk.” The story emphasized the benefits of working as a team and I couldn’t help but notice the way that Drayton and Phil exemplified the team concept as co-facilitators. They traded off speaking before the class, sharing the key information about the Touchstones program and the selected story without overlapping information.

“The topic doesn’t have to be kept exactly on what we are reading,” Phil said after one student’s comment about the symbolism inherent in the story. “This is about having a discussion.” When one student seemed to dominate the discussion and another student had been listening without speaking for a while, Phil made the effort to involve the “outsider” in the conversation. “This is a good question,” he said to the silent student, appearing to seek his involvement. “Why is it hard to cooperate with some people?”

“Why is it hard to cooperate with some people?” Drayton repeated to the class, taking Phil’s cue to encourage wider participation.

The silent students remained silent and the verbose student continued speaking. After several minutes of patient listening and nodding, Drayton tactfully broke in by saying, “OK, let’s move on to the next question.”

The verbose student explained that he had been diagnosed as anti-social at one time and that he had noticed Drayton when he first arrived at the jail. “When I first met you,” the verbose student said to Drayton, “I noticed something about you and I said to myself, ‘That cat – I really want to know who he is.’” Drayton explained that he wasn’t very social at one time.

“A lot of us were like that before this program,” Phil said. “We used to just look at Jen. But now things are different.”

Class 2: Friday – 9:00 AM

Taz and Rino led the second class. Rino had selected a story that the core Touchstones group had not yet discussed called *The Life of Lycurgus*. It was a story about a man who was hired to change the ^{city} for an entire city. Taz began the session by tentatively reading *The Orientation Session*, from the *Touchstones* book. Then he asked the class to look at the poster of the keys to success that was posted on the wall. “Like

everyone might have trouble with one of them. Which one do you think you might need help with?" he asked one student.

The student looked a little shy or confused so Rino chimed in, "I am outspoken and rude. I don't listen. I want to get my point across." He didn't mention that he was working on these issues in *Touchstones* and I'm not sure whether he intended to imply that he was. The students remained silent and Rino proceeded to read the story for the day.

As Rino launched the group discussion with a clearly stated and thoughtful question that he had written himself, instead of using the *Touchstones* teacher's manual, the group began to participate, sharing their ideas about the justice inherent within Lycurgus' laws.

As one student shared a unique insight, Rino responded, "I didn't even look at it like that. I was so focused on the end. That was nice the way you broke it down."

"How would you write the laws?" Rino asked the class. One student asked for clarification about the story and Rino responded, "He was referring to whatever you want him to refer to. I just want to know your opinion."

A brief pause arose after a few responses and Rino addressed the pause this way, "Anybody else want to touch down on this 'cuz I *do* have another question?" The room remained silent but before moving on to the next question Rino asked his co-facilitator if he had anything to say, "Taz?"

"Man, that dude was crazy," Taz added.

Rino's last question began like this "This question is about how these laws resemble the laws of today. I'm not being funny or anything but everyone should have an opinion about this because we are in jail." He went on to ask the class to compare their thoughts on the laws that Lycurgus made with the laws by which we are now governed. This led to a debate about the lack of access to rehabilitation programming in jail. The students discussed the way that the lack of access to programming increases recidivism versus the way that people make active "choices" to become incarcerated regardless of social intervention.

Category C: Facilitation-Generated Inputs

When speaking of facilitation-generated inputs for “the *Touchstones* process,” the researcher is referring to the elements of facilitation contributed by:

1. Herself, as initiator of the program implementation, developer of the conceptual particularities inherent to the program, and discussion facilitator for the “core group” of *Touchstones* students, and
2. Ms. Thomas, the adult education teacher who played a significant role in managing the program logistically and facilitating student interactions both during and outside of the *Touchstones* group sessions.

As facilitators for a number of satellite groups and at least two entire sessions of the core group discussions, the students managed the selection of stories and control over the group process for their own “satellite classes.” However, their participation as facilitators for specific segments of the *Touchstones* program is being addressed as an element of “curricular learning,” as opposed to overall program planning and management for the project at the macro-level.

The researcher’s role as both director of the inquiry and primary facilitator of the *Touchstones* program might have posed a significant challenge to the integrity of the study had the methodology been taken from the positivist paradigm. However, the “transactional nature of the subjectivist epistemology” allowed the researcher to attempt to influence the students’ experience within the *Touchstones* program as one of the many, dynamic, spontaneous and unpredictable aspects of the aggregate “*Touchstones* process.” Since no conversation or experience within the *Touchstones* program can ever be replicated in its precise original form when implemented for a second time with different

participants or upon different occasions, the researcher's role in the creative formation of the *Touchstones* experience is validated.

The researcher elected to highlight the following five aspects of program facilitation, as described in her observation journal, in an attempt to create an anthropological overview of the facilitation experience as a transactional process. The themes presented below represent a set of cultural values that the researcher, in her role as facilitator, attempted to embrace and exhibit with the support of Ms. Thomas.

Theme 1: Motivational Attitude

Displaying Respect: During the baseline interviews, the students emphasized the importance of "showing respect" in prison/jail settings. Thus, on the first day of the program, prior to the orientation meeting, I served coffee and bagels on a silver tea set as a gesture of respect. The students smiled and fingered the packets apple cinnamon cream cheese intellectually before deciding to partake of the basket or to pass it on.

Next I told the class that they were a very talented group but that in the interviews, many people mentioned the importance of being humble. I said that they would probably not be willing to introduce themselves and state what was great about themselves so I asked them to take a few minutes to talk with the person beside them and then introduce that person to the class. They were asked to state the person's name and mention something about that person, preferably something positive.

Being Humble: At the outset of the second session, I publicly recalled one of Jerroll's comments from the previous day. Jerroll had noted that participants in *Touchstones* should ask others about any words that they are unfamiliar with. He said that he had asked me about a word that he did not know during our interview, (the word was philosophy), and that I had clarified it for him. I reminded Jerroll in front of the class that, in fact, he did know the meaning of the word and that when he asked me, "Does it mean this...?" I said "yes." This, I informed the class, is a good example of a student having knowledge but not having confidence in that knowledge.

After reminding the class about Jerroll's comment, I recalled that in yesterday's session, some students had gone as far as to say that they were "not bright" or were "slow learners." I told the students that, when I was a child, I lived in Connecticut from the ages of three to six. During that

time, when I was in the first grade, I was immature and unable to sit at my desk. Instead, I roamed the class each day as the teacher spoke. As a result, I received all F's on my report card and failed first grade.

All of the other children in my first grade class called me "the dumbest kid in the class." They said it everywhere I went. "You are the dumbest kid in the class!" I thought it was some kind of distinction. I went home and told my mom with pride, "I am the dumbest kid in the class." "Don't say that!" she replied emphatically. I told the class that I actually believed that I was the dumbest kid in the class until I was 29, when I entered a challenging educational program and completed it. I told them that I did not graduate in the top of the class, but I completed the program, and then suddenly, I started speaking with confidence. To my amazement, people responded with confidence in my ability. They treated me as though I had expertise.

I said that, after seven or eight months working with many of the students now participating in *Touchstones* and getting to know the others during their interviews, to the extent that I understand intelligence, I believe that everyone in the program is very bright. However, many people may not have awareness of their intelligence and thus are hesitant to speak with confidence in front of a group. Perhaps participation in *Touchstones* would help them to achieve that confidence.

Theme 2: Conflict Resolution

Sharing Authority/Modeling Harmony: I asked Ms. Thomas to begin the second session by telling the entire group the same thing that she had told one small group the day before when they asked for her advice during their small group discussion, and she agreed. "Just because one is incarcerated it doesn't mean that their mind has to be incarcerated," she said. "*Touchstones* may allow you to free your minds and speak in a way that will vent your feelings of frustration." She added that the "criticism" given as part of the *Touchstones* process should be given in a "nice way."

I have realized that Ms Thomas will be an important part of the curriculum and should be interviewed to assess her perspectives on the program at its completion. It is her presence, I believe, standing behind her desk looking out over the discussion group, that keeps the class orderly at times when arguments might erupt over differing opinions. Additionally, after the second discussion session, when a part of the discussion between Goliath and Mohamed became disrespectful, Ms. Thomas took time during the next day's class sessions to discuss the importance of "respect" with *Touchstones* participants. She did this in each of her classes, all of which were held before the next *Touchstones* meeting.

During these chats, Ms. Thomas told the *Touchstones* participants that she wanted the program to be a success and that it was the responsibility of the whole group to make respect a priority for each member. If they were not able to do this for her, she said that she would have to stop showing movies on Fridays for them. They objected, saying that only those who violated the key to success about respect should be excluded from the movies. She responded by saying, "On the cell block, don't they punish everyone for one person's violation? Then why should this be different?" She told me that she was kidding when she posed the threat but I am not sure that the group knew this. They were very quiet when they reentered the *Touchstones* program for the third session the next day. Without a doubt, Ms. Thomas will effect the curriculum in a significant way and this effect should be noted in the study.

Reconciling Mistakes: When I discussed the conflicts of the second day with Ms. Thomas, she said that she could see both Mohamed and Goliath's points but that Goliath needed to show respect for Mohamed's position because "all he has in here is what he believes. If someone takes that away from him he has nothing." That afternoon, I returned to the school to meet Mohamed during his regularly scheduled class time. I told him that I didn't think I did a very good job of facilitating the discussion that day and that I wanted to apologize. "You have obviously had a lot of enthusiasm for the program from the beginning," I said, "and you have a lot of leadership qualities to share with the group. I would hate to lose you if you began to feel discouraged with the process. I will try to reinforce the need for respecting people's religious beliefs." Mohamed was receptive and agreed to review the upcoming unit on the Koran in order to serve as an authority during that session.

Encouraging Individual Role Modeling: After one conflict-oriented session early in the program, I divided the class into pairs. The final work sheet asked students to define ways that they think they are doing well in the *Touchstones* discussions and ways that they would like to improve. They were then expected to share their thoughts with their partner and provide feedback to one another on areas that might be improved. I placed Phil with Drayton, hoping that Drayton would take on a nurturing role and help Phil to become less defensive. Ms. Thomas assigned herself to that group as well. She later told me that she and Drayton both gave Phil similar advice. "No one was disrespecting you, Ms. Thomas told Phil. Your weakness is that you think you are not important when somebody else overlooks you. You take it to heart. That is something that you have to deal with."

Theme 3: Positive Feedback for Students

Giving Sincere Praise: Monday, before class, I told Drayton that his comments from the previous week about how to talk to children were very profound. He obviously had some gifts in working with kids. "I know you have worked with children before," I said, thinking of a story he once mentioned about doing community service hours at a day care center. "I remember you said that they offered you a job and that you refused. It just didn't pay enough right? But it sounds like you have a real gift in that area."

"I just wasn't ready," Drayton replied. "Maybe now I would be." We exchanged smiles and he sat down.

On other occasions, before and after class, I tried to get the attention of individual students to ask how the program was going and recall some of their outstanding comments. Some mentioned that this encouraged them to talk more during the group sessions.

Theme 4: Administrative Organization/Initiative

Displaying Administrative Organization: Ms. Thomas has helped to manage the logistical success of the program by communicating with all of the jail staff who might effect its outcome. For example, she has written memos to the top correctional officers, (C.O.s), giving them information on the program and requesting the delivery of students to the classroom in different time slots. She has sent copies of the informed consent materials to the superintendent and to the chief correctional officers to "keep them in the loop." She asked me to write a memo on *Touchstones* to the heads of the drug program, (T.C. program) to ensure that the three student participants from the T.C. block would not be chastised for the additional time spent away from their 24 hour a day drug therapy. Everyone implementing *Touchstones* in a correctional setting should have someone like B.J. Thomas on their side to navigate the political barriers to success and share her referent authority with the students in an effort to advance the cause of the program.

Taking Initiative: On Thursday of the fourth week of the *Touchstones* program, I returned to the jail expecting to observe the two *Touchstones* student-facilitated discussion groups scheduled to begin that afternoon. In an effort to enlist additional students to take part in discussions led by the core group of *Touchstones* participants, I had created sign-up sheets to be passed out in each cell block. I planned to use a process of random selection to select 25 names from the list of volunteers and then to separate the names selected into five groups of five each and assign two to

three of the previous *Touchstones* participants to serve as facilitators for each group.

When I arrived, Miss Thomas informed me that, although she had given the sign-up sheets to the lieutenant in charge, he misunderstood that she expected him to circulate them throughout the cell blocks and had not given them to the correctional officers to circulate amongst inmates. The discussion groups scheduled for that day would have to be cancelled because there were no “students for the students” and thus the service learning portion of the program would run behind schedule.

Three more groups of student-facilitated *Touchstones* discussions were scheduled for the following morning. I knew that if they were to take place we would have to enlist participants immediately. I spoke with the lieutenant in charge and he informed me that he had no staff to support the sign up process. Feeling the pressure of the 24 hour deadline, I asked if I could circulate the sign up sheets myself and he agreed.

Within a few minutes, accompanied by the chaplain’s assistant, I began my tour through two floors of men’s cell blocks. The routine was relatively uniform at each block. The chaplain’s assistant would summon the cell residents’ attention by turning down the TV and asking people to listen to an announcement. Then I would begin.

“Excuse me. I don’t want to disturb you but I just wanted to make a quick announcement. We are conducting a philosophy discussion program in the school and we are looking for volunteers to participate in reading and discussion sessions led by the students in the GED program. It will take approximately three to four hours of your time over the course of three weeks. We’ll be using this little book and I will be writing up the program in a report after the sessions are complete. Only non-federal students may participate. If you are interested, please sign up here and we will select 25 names from this list. When you come in we will have a more detailed permission form for you to review.”

Each time I spoke, before I could catch my breath, I would find myself gazing around the small, oppressive dwellings in stupefied disbelief. Cement floors, walls, and ceilings approximately eight feet deep by thirty feet wide and twelve feet high enclosed large numbers of people (20-30 I’d say depending on the type of cell block). Many of the cell block inhabitants lay on cots sleeping, reading, staring blankly at the wall or focusing intensely on the twelve inch TV screen glowing from the outside of the bars. Some people sat on chairs hunched against the bars, resting their arms against a small ledge on the inside and leaning as close to the TV as captivity would permit. Others did push-ups in the middle of the

space or paced around the few feet of "common area" weaving between TV watchers and card players.

Since the jail had been under construction, gym-based recreation was only beginning to be offered to the inmates for one hour every two weeks after a two-year hiatus. I had heard inmates speak of their exercise routines, which consisted of focusing on any small window that might be visible high on the cell wall and running in place for hours at a time. Though I didn't see any stationary marathons taking place as I presented before each new group of prospective students, I recalled Drayton's explanation of the way he had used such activity to relieve stress in the miniscule confines I was observing.

Showers in the rear of several cell blocks ran, steaming up the tight quarters. As moisture floated up over the hand-repaired and tentatively secured plastic shower curtains, I found myself choking back the knot forming in my throat. Attempting to conceal my empathy for fear of appearing patronizing, I forced a smile as I listened to several prospective students note their previous experience studying sociology, anthropology or philosophy and their interest in taking part in Touchstones discussions. One student asked, "Is there any reason that you are discriminating against federal inmates?"

"Unfortunately," I responded, "it is a jail policy that federal inmates can't attend school. I wish they could."

"Well I am taking that up with the A.F.L.C.I.O., the man continued. I have been denied the right to education since I've been here so I'm filing a law suit."

"I hope you win," I responded.

"Well, you are my witness," he explained.

"Let me sign that," one man said, asking another to pass the registration sheet.

The other man mumbled something and started to give the form back to me.

"Let me sign," the man said again.

"I said the PEN IS OUT STUPID ASS!" the mumbling man erupted.

"Let's get another pen," I said. Both men signed.

As I entered one block, I was perplexed by group of people huddled as close to the TV as the bars of their cell would permit who were all engaged in an act that looked something like fishing. They were holding a long pole that stuck out between the bars in a half moon shape pointed toward the TV. As I neared the fishermen I could see that the "pole" was in fact several pencils taped together in a long arc. They were using the makeshift pointer to push buttons on the TV in order to change the channel and adjust the volume. "Where's your clicker?" I asked.

"Can you get us one?" they responded.

"I work in the school," I responded.

"Well will you ask someone to get us one?" someone persisted.

"I can try," I said.

"Do you promise," the asker demanded.

"Yes, I'll ask the lieutenant in charge," I said.

"That should be good," A few people laughed and went back to watching their program.

After we signed up twenty-five students I wanted to stop the sign up process. "It seems unfair to extend the offer to people and then to turn them down," I said to the chaplain's assistant. As an inmate himself, I expected the assistant to agree.

"If you stop now," he responded, "it won't be fair to those who didn't have a chance to sign up. You said you were going to all of the blocks. Don't you want to make the rounds."

I thought for a moment and remembered what Ms. Thomas had told me about a teacher who worked in the jail before her. When the teacher extended special privileges to the students in the G.E.D. program and those privileges were not extended to other inmates, the other inmates complained and the privileges were cancelled all together. "I guess you are right," I responded.

When I returned to the classroom after visiting the cell blocks, I saw many of the *Touchstones* students who were attending their regularly scheduled G.E.D. class. Chuckling, they asked how things went down in the blocks.

"Well, we have 50 people signed up," I responded. "I don't want to cut anyone, so I think we will take the first 30 people and then rotate the

others in as space becomes available. Maybe we can continue the program beyond the time of the study if you are willing to do some extra teaching.”

“What did you think of it down there?” Drayton asked.

“Well, to be honest, it made me sad,” I said.

“Why?” Drayton probed.

“Because I don’t believe that people should be locked up. It doesn’t seem like the right way to handle things,” I said.

“Some people DO need to be locked up,” Drayton insisted emphatically.

I paused for a moment, realizing that it would not be wise to explain my position by referring to people as victims of circumstance or social oppression. By now I had learned that the students in the *Touchstones* class did not think of themselves as victims and that referring to them as such would be perceived as paternalistic. They seemed to manage the emotional challenge of incarceration by accepting responsibility for the actions that rendered them incarcerated. Thus, they seemed to gain a sense of control over their current and future experiences. “Yea, I guess I see what you mean,” I said. Then the officers arrived to pick up the students and everyone filed out. “See you tomorrow morning at 8:00,” I reminded Drayton.

“See you then.”

Theme 5: Demonstration of Care

Sharing Materials: After the orientation session, several students wanted to show me their journals. Martain, Jerroll, and Phil were eager to share their writing. Martain, in particular, had spent time thinking about his personal goals after the orientation session. He wrote a poem about wanting to be a good friend and asked me if I had any poetry books that I could bring in for him to review. I had given the school a few of Mia Angelou’s books and Ms. Thomas had one of them in her desk so I gave it to Martain. He immediately opened it and began to read.

Acquiring Materials: One morning during the second week of class I stopped Mohamed. “Look what I have?” During our discussion the week before, when I apologized to Mohamed for not doing a better job of facilitating the group in order to maintain respect for people’s religious beliefs, Mohamed had told me that he was Muslim and didn’t have a copy of the Koran.

"I really want to study," he had said, "but it is hard to find copies in paperback and we can't have hardback books." I presented Mohamed with a paperback copy of the Koran donated by the owner of Blue Whale Used Books.

"Technically, I have to donate it to the school and Ms. Thomas can lend it out to you. You know I'm not allowed to bring things in for people but you can use it if it is from the school. Technically, you should just bring it back to the school before you leave, but if you have to pack up quickly and don't have time..." I left the statement hanging. When inmates are moved to new facilities, or released, there is usually very little time for them to say goodbye to people, much less visit the school. Advanced notice is considered to be a security risk.

"I'll bring it back," Mohamed said with conviction. He sat down, opened the book and read it throughout class. (I didn't want to embarrass him by asking him to put it down. But I made a mental note to distribute such materials at the end of class next time.)

Sharing Support: After Drayton shared the story of Martain giving cakes to the cell bully, he explained, "I used to be tough. But I was the toughest on myself. I'm not really tough."

Several times, Drayton has mentioned that people in jail know him "from the streets." His street persona was, according to him, an imposing and off-putting character. When he arrived at the jail, two years and two months ago, according to his own account, people were afraid of him. "They were afraid to kite me," said Drayton, "because I was so big and I didn't talk." "Kiting" is a system through which inmates register complaints about one another and request that they be removed from one another's cells. If one person is causing trouble in a cell, others may send a "kite" to the administration. When enough kites have been sent in protest of a particular person, that person will be removed and placed in another cell.

Drayton has also mentioned that, once people stopped fearing him, they "kited him" constantly. "I didn't understand what I had done," Drayton said. "I'm just a big guy, but I was born that way. I can't help my size."

Throughout my nine-month tenure at the jail, I had heard Drayton speak of his past with apparent remorse. He didn't seem to like the image that he had once portrayed and often spoke of his transformational walk with faith. "I have to stay in the Word," he said repeatedly.

That night, I looked at the torn slips of paper that had been handed in by each student that day. Each slip contained the name of the individual who turned it in and two to three names of other students that they would like to work with as co-facilitators. Reading the names scrawled on each individual list, it was obvious that several small groups had gotten together to discuss potential partnership. However, almost every single list contained one common feature. Almost every person in the class wanted to work with Drayton. Clearly, something had changed in Drayton's relationships with others since his incarceration.

The following week, I would have the chance to share that story with Drayton and with the judge at Drayton's sentencing. After over two years of incarceration at the Charlottesville jail with no information about the aggregate length of his term, Drayton was finally going to hear if his 13 year sentence had in fact been suspended or if part of it would still need to be served. He had asked me to serve as a character witness; a gesture that left me deeply honored and completely terrified. After reading Drayton's name scribbled over and over in at least ten different hands, I knew how to begin telling my story.

When Drayton walked into the courtroom, he looked like a giant, blue, grinning penguin clutching a small fish between his front flippers. His feet were shackled and his jail blues-clad, six-foot-five-inch figure swayed from side to side. Between his cuffed hands he grasped his bible and a manila envelope.

I had spoken with Drayton's lawyer a few days and moments before the hearing. He had prepared me for questioning. "Just tell us what you know about Drayton," he had said. During my testimony I relayed stories of his leadership in the *Touchstones* program and shared the story of the secret ballots. Drayton spoke after me, explaining his commitment to stay "in the Word," and sharing numerous certificates of achievement from therapeutic and religious programs. Finally, his father confirmed that Drayton seemed indeed to have changed.

"Will the defendant please rise for sentencing."

"God is good," Drayton proclaimed loudly as he struggled to his feet.

"It appears that you have done a great deal of things to improve yourself while in jail. However, I have to take the Commonwealth's position into account, and take his statements about the community's position on drug offenses seriously. Based on your records, your testimony and the testimony of Ms. Merritt, I sentence you to two years and five months with release to Piedmont Halfway House." The judge droned on about

probation and other things that I didn't understand. I focused on the sentence, "Two years and five months."

Drayton's lawyer was clarifying the judge's words, "concurrent with the time served?"

"Yes," said the judge.

As Drayton was escorted out of the courtroom, his family, lawyer and I met in the rear of the courthouse. "Well," his lawyer said, "he only has to serve 86% of the sentence. I believe that with two years and two months completed of a two year and five month sentence, they might let him go this week, or soon after."

Drayton's girlfriend started crying. His father smiled. I stood mesmerized. Drayton was going home.

Construct 2 Findings: Program Outputs *Evidenced* in Student Relationships

In Posner's chapter on curriculum evaluation he states:

The problem with measurement-based evaluation, according to its critics, is its focus on trivial and contrived tasks. These tasks may not test the students' ability to use their knowledge and skills in the real world. In contrast with measurement-based evaluation, an integrated evaluation tends to be more consistent with an experiential perspective, though its proponents would likely object to any label. Like experiential education, integrated evaluation tends to be growth-oriented, student-controlled, collaborative, dynamic, contextualized, informal, flexible, and action-oriented.

(Posner, 1995)

In concurrence with Posner's notion of "integrated evaluation," this report attempts to follow the "experiential perspective." As such, it attempts to provide a summative evaluation of student perspectives on their experiences in the *Touchstones* program. It therefore allows students to control the expression of results according to their own observations of personal growth in a flexible and informal fashion. The findings focus on the students' own experiences within "the dynamic, collaborative (or

conflict-oriented) *Touchstones* process” and note the action-oriented aspects of the individual and aggregate experiences that took place.

In follow-up interviews, students were asked the following questions:

- a) How would describe the Touchstones program to someone who was considering participation?
- b) What were your first impressions of the program?
- c) What did you think about the other people in the Touchstones program?
- d) Did you know them before Touchstones? If so, what was your relationship like?
- e) Did any of your relationships change in any way – for better or worse – during Touchstones?
- f) Was there anyone in particular you got to know better? How? What was your relationship like?
- g) We spent a lot of time talking about faith. That wasn’t really planned. What did you think of that?
- h) How would you define “community?”
- i) How did you like teaching?
- j) Did you feel that you had an effect on the Touchstones group?
- k) If so, what is that effect? If not why not?
- l) Do you think your sense of being valued changed in any way in the course of the program? If so, in what way? If not, why?
- m) Did you participation in Touchstones have an effect on your relationships in the community outside of this one? (family, community at large)
- n) If so, what is that effect?
- o) What did you think of the overall experience?
- p) Can you think of ways that the program could be improved? Were there any particular problems?

The chart below, juxtaposes the material obtained in the baseline interviews with that obtained in follow-up interviews in hopes of illuminating some of the predominant “outputs” of the program.



Table 3

Comparison of Program “Inputs” and “Outputs”: A Top-Line Overview

<u>Before Participation</u>	<u>After Participation</u>
<p>Student Definitions of “Community” before Touchstones:</p> <p>People living together (8 responses)...Everybody helping...Working together...A neighborhood... Family...Getting along as one... People involved in a certain area</p>	<p>Student Definitions of “Community” after Touchstones:</p> <p>Loving, caring sharing people helping each other...Accepting another person’s ideas or what he believes in...A bunch of people coming together as one...Closeness-everybody on one accord...Being social, interacting, common bond, respect, love, concern at a time of need, unity...A little better than outside because we had to learn how to deal with one another...Unity, a group that has unity...Coming together on one thing...A whole lot of people living around each other</p>
<p>% of Students Who Felt Valued Inside Jail at Baseline: 67</p>	<p>% of Students Who Felt Valued in General after Touchstones: 78 * one student was not asked</p>
<p>% Students Who Felt Valued “Outside” at Baseline: 67</p>	<p>% Students who Felt Touchstones Effected Outside Relationships: 50 * students were not asked if these effects were negative or positive but the implication in their comments was that they were positive</p>
	<p>% Students Who Stated that They Enjoyed Teaching: 100</p>

Observing the comparison of “definitions of community” the researcher noted the wider variety of definitions that appeared following participation in *Touchstones*. Before the program, the vast majority of students described a community as “a group of people living near one another,” without much elaboration on the concept. In the post-participation definitions, students delved into greater detail with their definitions and used more expressive language, defining a community as “a group of people who share love, unity, a common purpose and a desire to help one another.”

In the post-participation interviews the percentage of students who stated that they felt valued by others increased by eleven points from 67% to 78%. Perhaps most significant was the finding that 100% of the students who were present at the completion of the program stated that they enjoyed teaching.

In follow-up interviews, most of the students spoke highly of their experiences with the *Touchstones* group discussion process. One such example was Taz, who stated at baseline that he did not feel that his opinion was valued by the older students in the jail:

Taz: I'd do it any time, any day.

JCM: Do you feel appreciated by the people in the group?

Taz: Yes.

JCM: Did you feel like they were giving you respect?

Taz: Yeah. Everything I said they had to respect me. I didn't say that much, but I just said things that was right and people was going off ...talking about, saying stuff. I argued back.

JCM: Do you feel like people listened to you, like when you had something to say, they listened?

Taz: Yeah.

The researcher attempted to summarize the student experiences as stated in follow-up interviews and expressed in student journals and letters. Only two students submitted journals to the researcher at the close of the study, an optional homework assignment that began at the start of the program. The findings have been grouped into four major categories related to program "outputs" and centered on; the shaping of an intellectual community, the further development of a sense of community related to

emotional support, the enhancement of spiritual community and the transactions experienced that seemed to possess negative outcomes.

While the findings shed light on the nature of student relationships and interactions as experienced within “the *Touchstones* process” the researcher does not wish to imply that the intellectual, emotional and spiritual communities discussed were *created* as a result of *Touchstones* participation. Rather, I wish to suggest that the *existing* dimensions of intellectual, emotional and spiritual communities were enhanced as a result of the *Touchstones* experience.

Category A: Shaping Intellectual Community

Theme 1: Academic Esteem Since the student participants were all 18 years of age or older when incarcerated and similarly all enrolled in a program to obtain their high school equivalency degree, we can be reasonably certain that the vast majority of the students had dropped out of school. Yet, throughout the follow-up interviews, students expressed their apparent passion for intellectual dialogue. They noted that their participation in *Touchstones* helped them to develop confidence in speaking before a group and organizing academic material, an activity with which some students were engaged for several hours.

Additionally, the students stated that they enjoyed facilitating, or *teaching* the *Touchstones* process to other students. Thus, one might characterize the burgeoning intellectual community as one that promoted that development of “academic esteem,” or confidence centered on engagement in intellectual discourse.

Mohamed: Confidence as I said earlier, like at that talk, a lot of confidence on speaking. Speaking. Saying my opinions. Voicing my opinions, whatever, and putting more trust in people. I have more confidence in those people and trust in them...Not only the group. To other peoples as

well. Touchstone, this group has really opened me up a lot in voicing my opinion and say something goes to group, I have no problem with it and that's the honest truth. I have no problem with voicing my opinion. The guys in the block look at me and 'hmm, you be changing.'

Taz: It was positive [for real]. Had some people thinking better about theyself, better about things, and talking about stuff though was positive. [Wasn't] negative. No.

Goliath: I can't point out nothing hard. To me it's easy. Maybe it was hard for somebody else. To me it was easy. It was right down my line... To me, it made me aware of myself. Made me could express myself more in some things. I'm able to talk with other peoples in different things.

Some students noted that, beyond the respect gained from their peers,

Touchstones helped them to gain respect from correctional officers:

Nieson: I've always been quiet comfortable with guards here, but you find out that more guards have more respect for individuals that are trying to advance instead of those that's laying on their bunks all day long or just not doing anything with themselves. You have some guards that's interested. What'd you do today? What'd you do upstairs?

JCM: What did you think of teaching *Touchstones*?

Taz : I just read. I like to read so I just read. It was all right to seeing other people do it...I don't know... (In response to a question about the way he encouraged his satellite group to participate)...It always feels good to get something started like being the first to do something.

Martain: I enjoyed [teaching] the most because it was like a test-- I really got to test myself and see how much I really learned from it.

★ Forman: I really enjoyed it. It kind of made me feel like-- From the group that you had, that I had learned something because I never had heard of *Touchstones* before, but it made me feel like I had learned something and got something accomplished that I was able to give to others, so I really did feel [good] about teaching.

Mohamed: Some ... of those questions, I have like a total maybe 6 questions on a sheet of paper and some of I have like 4 to 6 hours time just trying to come up with the right phrase or the right question to ask... Just constantly going over the book and trying to get the right meaning out of it

and putting down the right to ask and so far in my class I haven't got to ask them all.

Phil: It's fun. It's interesting...I got prepared [to teach] when I walked in the room.

One student formed a *Touchstones* discussion group among his cell-mates and served as facilitator for sessions that ran late into the night:

Teg: I enjoyed teaching it. I found myself when I teaching that I am really wanted to put my input but teaching, it was good...I enjoyed teaching it because I put a little work in it before I came into the group.

JCM: Didn't you say you stayed up until 4 in the morning doing it?

Teg: We stayed up until maybe 4 or 5 hours elaborating on one story. It got to be a fun thing in the cell block now because [of] which we still do it.

JCM: You still do it?

Teg: Yeah. ...I just asked some few people let me read this and tell me what you think and a couple more people walked up, but really it was these guys from college that was from Harrisonburg, JMU, and they really loved the *Touchstones* program and we had fun with it.

Other students saw teaching as a leadership opportunity or a service to others:

Jerroll: [Teaching] It's all right. It showed me that I can be a leader. I don't have to follow nobody. I can be a leader and have other people follow me.

Drayton: I liked teaching. If I can help somebody. If I can teach something positive that make some sense to somebody, sure.

Mohamed: And I think that some of the classes I give, I had guys come up to me and 'good job,' you know, or 'I liked that piece' or 'I think you've done well'...Guys come up to me and 'you did a good job,' so yeah. It makes you feel good. It feels-- It's a good feeling.

One student who participated in one of the satellite groups and wanted to join the "core *Touchstones* group" wrote the following letter:

Hello! I hope this isn't inappropriate but I've wanted to ask you several times if there was a way I could become involved in your Touchstones group. The opportunity never really presented itself and I don't like competing for attention.

I've been involved with quite a bit since being here in this jail, including... From what I've seen, your discussion group exceeds them all. It seems to cover a large range of topics, issues and ideas, which is very stimulating and quite refreshing for obvious reasons. I have to search high and low for things that challenge my mind while I am here and Touchstones 'fits the bill.' If what I am asking is not feasible I more than understand, but I had to ask. I'll look forward to being involved with whatever group you deem. Thank you.

When asked if *Touchstones* worked because students were afraid of having their Friday movies cancelled if it failed, (as Ms. Thomas had jokingly threatened) Jerroll replied:

Jerroll: *Touchstones* worked because we put effort to make it work and we didn't want to let, you know, I think that's what it's most about, most of all we didn't want to let you down and ourselves down because it's like we're setting out a goal to do this and we wanted to show y'all just because we locked up doesn't mean that we still can't be successful on what we do. I mean, that would be my attitude. Just because I'm locked it don't mean that we can't go through with this program and most of all, I really wanted to show that man [the Superintendent]... that education and stuff can be done here. It's bad that they don't have no programs for this jail, man. You got to sit in your cell, man, 24 hours a day.

Theme 2: Enthusiasm for Group Process All of the students that participated in follow-up interviews stated at some point in their interview that they enjoyed participating in *Touchstones*. Those who kept journals shared their enthusiasm in writing:

Martain's Journal – 4/25: Well touchstones at first I did not think so much people was going to be in it and if it was, it was going to be so that they can come out of the cell block but as time was going by everyone was having a good time.

Phil's Journal – Friday, week 4: Today we started with our class. [The one he facilitated.] It went okay on 3 of the 6 people showed up But It's

going to take sometime to get people to open up and talk, I think we broke the ice so we can move forward. It's hard to get people to open up when they do know who is apart of the group I think all will turn out okay. I think Jennifer picked a good group for us to work with.

Martain's Journal- 5/1: Me myself I love touchstones because its all about life and everything that a person have to go through life day by day.

Taz: It's a great discussion group...It's just gets stuff off your mind. Rejuvenates you a little bit...I didn't say much, but I learned some stuff. Everybody got a little personal all the time, but I was just sitting back and listening. The stories are all right.

Teg: I would tell them[prospective participants] *Touchstones* is a program that we read short stories and elaborate and we speak our own mind on this. It's not a matter being right or wrong. Just open you up to have your own opinion on the story and really you can learn from other people about their own opinions on the story, stuff that you never thought of that would come up out of such a short story and it's be different every week that we do it because people grow and grow into the *Touchstones* program.

Teg: *Touchstones* came, it came good to me because that's the type person I am and I just got the therapeutic group, the TC program, and I'm just that type of person and it fit me and I love doing that type of stuff, but I think for people that may not think they like *Touchstones*, I think they'll like *Touchstones* because it really don't put you out there, you could get respected for whatever you got to say. See, I can disagree with someone and learn, you know what I mean?

Phil: I described it to some of the people in my cell block that I was trying to get to sign up for it, and the way I described it to them is it's interesting and fun. It's open topics about anything basically. It's not only topics about the regular agenda that the *Touchstones* people had set for the classes, but it's a wide variety of everything, so you can talk about personal business or whatever. I like it.

Goliath: But I just say I like it and I hope you continue, I hope *Touchstones* continue to go...I think *Touchstones* can help a lot of peoples...especially with the peoples locked up, peoples in confinement and they not communicating with somebody. I think they should continue dealing into those things, continue doing things like that because it uplift a person and make them appreciate themselves better because I heard it when you was in here.

Ms. Thomas echoed her support for the students' efforts:

Ms. Thomas: I think everybody was effective, because I know when we first started, a lot of people weren't talking, but at the end everybody was pretty much talking. Everybody was involved. Everybody was voicing their opinion. I think everybody felt comfortable with each other. Even when they went out and started facilitating, they expressed it in their facilitating. The warmth that they had gained from the group, they carried it with them... They were able to take what they had learned and do well with it as facilitators. I think they did an excellent job.

Theme 3: Role Modeling Some students expressed their desire to serve as a role model within the context of *Touchstones* participation or stated that they looked up to other program participants. Forman, who entered the drug treatment block approximately one month prior to enrolment in *Touchstones* had recently been promoted to "Chief" of the program, a high honor, at the time of his follow-up interview. He noted that "being a good role model" was part of the reason for his promotion:

Forman: I've been chief for a week. Friday before last, I think. That day we had the class with you. That day after that. Wednesday or Thursday. Last Thursday... I didn't think I'd go up that quick, so yes, in a way, it was kind of a surprise to me.

JCM: How do you get picked for something like that?

Forman: The way you participate. The way you control your negative behavior and all. Being a good role model.

Forman: [*Touchstones*] helps me down in the drug as well. That I can control a group of men or people. Not actually control them, but get them to the point where they'll follow instructions and that I can be a leader. Most jobs I've had I have been a leader, but it let me set down in more quiet environment, more stable environment, and know that I can lead in that type of situation.

Nieson noted that he found the researcher to be a role model in the area of facilitation technique:

Nieson: Like when I was facilitating, I hardly even used any questions that were there. I just used questions that were off the top of my head that would relate to the story, but I had gotten that from you because it was a lot of times that you played off key, that you closed the book, and then

you started asking questions. I guess the questions that were in your heart you had already exposed them and that was neat.

Ms. Thomas recognized her own significance as a role model for respectful behavior:

Ms. Thomas: Just a role model. I've learned that if you give respect, then you will always gain respect. The one thing I tell my students--when they come in class, is 'if I never disrespect you, then I expect you to do the same for me,' so I've gained a trust with them and a respect with them.

Drayton and Martain developed a mentor-mentee bond that was never discussed between them. Obtaining such feedback from each of them separately supported triangulation:

Drayton: Me and Martain met.... Man, we got closer... so I think he kind of look up to me now as a father figure or maybe a big brother, and when he was saying the story about his father was on crack. I told him, I said, man, look, I can feel that because I have a son the same age. I didn't exactly do the same things your father did to you, but I did some of the things to my son. I've took from him because of my drug addiction, so don't come down hard on your father. he has a problem. You have to deal with and don't feel that you have to go out and do this and do that and prove that because your father is on drugs. You still have to become a man. You can't keep blaming your father. You still have to go on your own. You still have to live. You still have to become a man yourself so you just can't keep blaming everything on your father for your actions.

The things that you do because your father done that because that'll keep you doing what, the negative things that you do. If you keep blaming, looking at your father. You just got to go on and learn from it and make whatever the negative things that your father did towards you, make them into a positive thing. That's what I told my son. My son should do the same thing. He said, 'well, dad, if you wouldn't—' I said, 'look, son, you're not going to keep making me feel guilty about that. I already acknowledged what I've done you and I've explained to you how I felt and cried tears about it, but I'm not going to have you keep-- Every time you run into a situation and keep blaming me for because you know right from wrong. Use me as an example.'

Taz too, shared that he had learned from the example of older students and the life experiences they had relayed:

Taz: The situations they talking about. They said a lot of things they done went through that I been going through and all... That I wouldn't go through they done tell me already... They got all personal and saying something. I'm soaking it up. They tell me stories. I ain't going to do that. I caught that quick.

Martain: I think mostly it built a bigger relationship between me and Drayton because he basically in my cell, you know. We both was roommates bunking in together and basically when we came up to *Touchstones*, certain things that he say, I never knew that he'll get emotional like that, so it been like a stronger bond because he's to me even though he's still locked up in here, but certain things that he say inspired me to live on still life.

When I used to go through those little part of stress, he always will conversate with me and talk to me so I look to him basically as a so far as the place that we in, I look to him as a role model for me because as he talked all his problems and what he had been through, it's real good that the way his life started changing and his beliefs and everything, and I think that's good for people once older people, once they can make a change in life like that because that jail work basically is.

A lot of people mostly talk about how bad it is, but I don't think it's that bad because it's a place that you show you all the good things that you have out there in life and how we just take it for granted... but then once we get in a place that we got our life taken away us like this, taken away from our loved ones and things that we love to do, we really get to think that just on little things in life that matter. I look at him like a role model to me.

Category B: Developing Emotional Community

Theme 1: Family-like Culture While some students described their cell-mates as “family” prior to embarking on the *Touchstones* process, participation in *Touchstones* seems to have brought about new bonds between those who had never met and enhanced previously existing friendships. One student compared the personalities of several participants to those of his own family members:

Nieson: Excited. One word--excited. When I first got into *Touchstone*, I didn't know exactly what to expect because I didn't know exactly what it would be like. I kind of figured it was going to have to do with feedback and sharing on particular topics, but it went a lot farther than I-- Because

a lot of folks started bonding. At first, you didn't feel comfortable because when you're in a room full of strangers, naturally you don't feel comfortable but after the first day and you start feeling folks out, then you kind of settle down a little bit and you start respecting them because you start to know their traits. Well, if one person likes to talk all the time, you know what they expect. If one person is quiet all the time, you know what they expect. If somebody has something personal that they relate to when it comes to stories, you know what to expect. You start knowing people's, how police say it--MOs. And you can identify with them because everybody got somebody in their family that they know they can read, that they can relate to when they look at another individual. I got one guy that reminded me of an aunt... That always tells jokes. Drayton. Drayton is there. Then Taz, he reminds me of my cousin [Curmorez] all the time. Then I have, when it come down to Teg, Teg reminds me of my Aunt Bernice. Martain reminds me of my half-brother Mario. Even Ms. Thomas, she reminds me of my cousin Seneta. You remind me of my Uncle Jasper.

Forman: There's a very good community there I really think. A real developed community, developing community.

JCM: How would you describe the Touchstones community?

Forman: Very strong. Getting to be receptive. Getting to be humble to each other, respecting each other. Getting like a family. Get to the point where one's not there to ask question, what's wrong? Is he all right, and things like that. Getting to care, caring part coming in.

Forman: We get to find friends and then we came together as a group. We got to where we would share to each other and sharing personal things. So we are more or less a family so you care for that family because we was giving each other knowledge and advice. We've got to respect each other for that.

Forman: I've been a person to help people, so I do feel appreciated, especially downstairs [in the drug block]. One thing I like about [it] though, it makes me have two families, one upstairs and one downstairs and not constantly with the same family, so I do feel appreciated because [of] my input while I was up here and down there, and I think people are using it.

JCM: Do you think it had any effect people's relationships outside of the Touchstones group, like back on their blocks?

Forman: Yeah. I really do. I've seen a few coming down the hall. They just waving and happier. It was chance for me to clear the system out, to me.

Theme 2: Conflict Resolution While the *Touchstones* curriculum emphasizes the importance of resolving intellectual conflict and promoting mutual understanding, in the correctional setting such results imply a reduction in the physical violence that often accompanies interpersonal disputes. Jerroll viewed the non-violent resolution of conflict as one dimension of an “overall group mission”:

Jerroll: We set out a mission and we accomplished it, so we is community. We stuck together.

JCM: What was the mission?

Jerroll: To go 6 weeks in *Touchstones*. Wasn't it 6 weeks? And we made it 6 weeks. We set out a goal to have the people come in and we facilitate. We did that and everything worked out all right. Ms. Thomas said that she hoped it worked out because she didn't want no fighting in her class. Ain't none of that turn out. No fights happened. No arguments or none of that.

Mohamed: They're good guys. Some of them get to [running off ...] but each one of them got their own opinion and that why I've learned to respect everybody's opinion. That's what the thing had taught me to respect other's opinion.

JCM: Really? You think more so than you did before?

Mohamed: Yeah. I would be arguing with them. Before I would argue with them...but I learned to respect other's opinion.

Teg: In the *Touchstones*, I found something out that when I have my opinion on something or someone else give their opinion, that I can look at things in a whole different way and still hold onto to my opinion too.

Teg's comment about conflict resolution may have originated in the “analogy of the pie” that the facilitator had repeated like a mantra throughout the program:

JCM: It's not like there is only one pie and if you don't convince him that you are right your piece is smaller and his is larger. Everybody has their OWN PIE. You can have yours and let him have his. The idea is to understand his point.

Drayton explained that violent tendencies were often related to relationships that began as conflicts on the "outside" and carried over to the correctional setting. A problem that he thought *Touchstones* helped to resolve:

Drayton: I think a lot of us know each other from the street. A lot of us didn't care for each other in the street because we on the same basis as far as conniving and doing this and doing that and I think *Touchstones* has brought some of them people, put away some issues that they dealing with on the street because they wasn't in the frame of mind that *Touchstones* puts you in. So I think they have learned to care for one another.

Pondering the long-term possibilities for the use of *Touchstones* as a conflict-mediation program I asked Nieson:

JCM: I wonder what do you think it would be like if people were doing it for a year?

Nieson: You'd see dramatic changes in the attitudes of a lot of folks that's incarcerated, a lot of images. Why? Because it's things that they have on their chest that they're able to get off. I'm talking about as far as the trust issue. The respect. The willing to be open to listening and talking and sharing. I remember one guy who couldn't express himself and he felt he got cut off. He was able to say, well, I felt hurt and offended because I couldn't finish saying what I was saying.

Theme 3: Stress/Pain Relief Several students described the presence of emotional pain and/or stress that seemed to hover over their being like an inexhaustible itch. In

Touchstones they seemed to find at least short-term relief:

Jerroll: It's a program that allow you to give your opinion on something that someone else read and it give you a chance to see where you at as far as mentally, what level you on and I think it helps you relieve something

you might have on you mind and you just can't come out with, but by in *Touchstones* you can get it out. That's what I think it would do.

Martain: I know I appreciated what other people had to share with me. It showed me how to survive more around life, how to deal with more stress, basic things in life that we need to learn about... We had a special bond. There's a special community... I think is better than the ones in the street because in the street the community out there, all they do is criticize you and talk about what you did, but they ain't really helping by criticizing somebody... Some time I felt like crying because of my situation but I figure that once I'm trapped in jail, there ain't much I'm going to do. I'm going to cry, feel stressed. They ain't going to let me out of jail even if I say I'm sorry and I'm truly sorry for what I did. I'm going to have to pay for my time anyway, so I think *Touchstones* helped me a lot ... just laying out my stress and communicating with people helped me a lot.

Drayton: A positive frame of mind and a caring frame of mind, because you see it. You see it what's going on, your issues and identify with each other. A lot of them been through the same thing. A lot of us have pain and once we see that, somebody can tell you something that can help relieve that pain.

Drayton: It's like Harlie the other day. I used to try to talk to Harlie. How you doing, Harlie? Doing okay? Have a good day. He never-- I know he still was suffering inside because he just got here inside. You can feel it, you know? You can feel pain. You can feel when a person in pain. And he came out. That certain conversation. I'm not going to talk about it. It's personal, but he spoke for the first time. I said, wow. He spoke. He's been dealing with ... we were talking about [it] and it was hurting him so bad that he-- And that's good. That helps a community grow strong. We can trust in one another. That helps a community grow strong.

Ms. Thomas: When we first started, I was kind of skeptical because having so many people in the classroom at one time, having so many guys in the classroom at one time could cause conflict. I know that a lot of inmates are under stress so it doesn't take a little thing to flare them up, for something to go. But then as I read the book that you gave, as I read the outline and everything, I felt that it was very interesting. I just thought about how it could help inmates or how it would be an asset to inmates, relieving their stress and the things that they have to deal with on a daily basis. So once I read more about the program and I was able to visualize how it could help them on a daily basis I was like, okay, we'll go for it.

Goliath: I think it's giving more freedom than it have here in this facility.

Theme 4: Mutual Understanding/Support/Care Some students used the group

discussions to begin to assess their shortcomings in a safe environment where they could find the support to accept more responsibility for their past mistakes and future opportunities:

Mohamed: To me, I would say for me, this *Touchstone* project was a place where I could come and meet new people, get closer to new people, to other people and by getting used to other people, more people I can have like defining my problem, I can give them things. They can give me feedback on them.

Mohamed: Another thing this group helped me realize by the things that I've been working on and helped me realize that what I'm going through nobody done this to me. I done it to myself...A lot of things what I'm going through I done to myself and I learned to be acceptive to what I have done and go ahead on with it and correct it and not do it any more.

Goliath: So it teach me that I do need other peoples to help me on sometime when I have a problem I can't solve, that I might need someone else to help me to get the goal that I'm trying to achieve.

Forman:I would tell them it's a good learning experience. What I'd tell them about is first of all, you get to meet other people and to get experience other people's feelings and things because it does come that at times. And you learn more about yourself. Are you receptive and humble to take things, other people's decisions and things. It's a very good learning experience because things come out from within you that you might've not known about. You can hear it through another person.

Forman:I gained more understanding of people. I've always been understanding of people, but in some situations I haven't, but I became more understanding and more-- I sat and listened more instead of just giving my, being as chief, my opinion of it. I can listen to that person's side more, so it really gave me a better learning and understanding to other person's feelings, people's feelings.

Martain: My opinion about it is it's like a program to help you express your feelings, help you mostly understanding people emotion, help you how to go around people emotion without hurting them, how to pull people more into the open, express theyself mostly. Like most of the group, I get along with other people I think and bring them more closer to people.

Taz: I didn't know them before. I just knew them to talk to them. They ain't never got like that to me...I see where they been coming from now, why they do things. See why they act the way they act.

Nieson: Before the program, a lot of folks that we socialized with around here couldn't get in touch with their feelings or would be scared to express themselves, but through the program you see a whole lot of program, even the quiet ones, starting to come out and share their thoughts, share their opinions, share their feelings on the different topics that's up and that's great as far as growth. I know one guy that's real timid and wouldn't discuss any kind of emotions that he had that he'd built over a couple of years. When it was finally his turn to talk, he came out with a whole lot of things that's surprised a whole lot of folks and everybody was supportive... And that was beautiful because you didn't have guys sitting up there trying to make fun of you. You had guys sitting up there trying to help you out to overcome those type of things and help you and that was beautiful.

Nieson: I teach Bible studies on Thursday. Like tonight is my night. But it's things from *Touchstone* that I can actually incorporate into different teaching since I teach strictly Bible and that's questions, questions, questions because to every question you have 2 sides--your opinion and somebody else's. The only thing you want to do is bridge the gap, to get on common ground where everybody can get a basic understanding.

Ms. Thomas: I saw a lot of growth in a lot of the students and I saw a lot of change. I saw people address things that I would've never imagined them to address because they felt the trust in the group and so they felt comfortable when they addressed the things that they needed help with... I saw a lot of respect from the inmates toward other inmates about their opinions. I saw a lot of caring... A lot of giving as well as taking.

Drayton: Community now. What I think of community now? I think community now is a strong community. Since I've been in *Touchstones* with these guys and listening to their opinions and what they feel about themselves and about other things and other issues and I can respect them, their opinion and what they feel about an issue. I hope they respect my and I think it's strengthened the community, and I think we strengthen each other by what we share and what our different opinions is. We would have to look at their opinion also. A lot of these guys, some that's good, you know? A lot of guys say things in there that helped me, that I think about right now. And that I never thought of ... like a chain coming together.

Teg: It would be coming together on one thing. Maybe you have different stories or different feelings, but everybody can understand

everybody for what you doing and just finding peace within that. You know, give another man respect for what he want to do in the community and just respecting one another. There's just a togetherness thing.

Theme 5: Social Acceptance The participants in the *Touchstones* program seemed to be acutely, and sometimes painfully aware of their general perception among inhabitants of mainstream society. Some expressed the concern that they were seen as social rejects. Others openly said they wanted nothing more than to be of value to someone. Some thought that the development of a culture of acceptance in the *Touchstones* classroom may serve as a springboard for the establishment of more positive relationships on the outside:

Nieson: When you see guys sharing, you see most of them at the end or before they get here, they shaking hands, they hugging while they walking in the doors, they carrying on conversations, there's good vibes going on and even after the discussions, I don't care how much they disagree with one another or voice their opinions or if they thought one guy talked too much, one guy wasn't saying enough, different perspectives of religion, you'll find out that when they get up, they leave all that right there and they start communicating. They start networking and that's the beautiful thing about is because if they were anywhere else, in the jail, they might not have opened up as warmly to strangers because "the status around here is that don't trust nobody."

Phil: I'm pretty much the type person that try to respect everybody, so I mean in *Touchstones* program I did the same thing. I guess it didn't really change. (Then later in the interview)... I think a lot of people grew closer to each other because they know more about each other now.

JCM: What about with Drayton? He was your partner for the teaching, right?

Phil: Me and him became friends. We didn't know each other before... Because we're both pretty much-- We're on the same level and we talk about things together... We enjoyed working together. We do that a lot. I could tell pretty much how he felt day to day.

Jerroll: Because a lot of people got to see the real me and they never thought that I was the type person I was. They probably thought I was another type person being that I ain't on drugs or nothing now.

Jerroll: Maybe by me using my experience in my personal life, other people won't be afraid to share their's. They might have something seriously on they mind...when Drayton said about how he used to be intimidated and he used to hide stuff back because he has something inside that really couldn't let out and stuff like that. People feel more-- Like when I came out with the stuff I came out with, they were like, well, Jerroll said that about hisself. Well, maybe when I go out there and say this about myself and nobody going to feel bad about me.

Nieson: Me and Jerroll are the best of friends now. We talk about any and everything...Jerroll came in and told me on many occasions. 'I've got to talk to you. I've got to talk. Let's talk about this. Let's talk about that. I like what you said.' And I turned around and I said the same thing when he says something that I like.

Jerroll: Do I feel appreciated? Yeah. Why do I feel appreciated? ... because I mean Drayton said some good things to me that like "I like what Jerroll said" or "I can relate to what Jerroll said." And then-- Just by a person telling me that they can relate to what I said.

Nieson: Even though you're in this type of setting and society looks at you as "a reject, bad influences, and a lot of folks just were misguided." Here, it's been a wonderful. It's been a wonderful experience.

Phil: It's an interesting program and I think it'll go a long ways in the communities if they try to get some kind of community participation in. You know how they have church services. Well, they could have a *Touchstones* programs similar to like having church services and bring people from the outside community to a meeting room or whatever and hold 4 or 5 groups or whatever...It's just like a business...Maybe it would bring people that live around each other, maybe make them grow closer so they can deal with each other instead of you live over here, I live right here. You stay over there. I'll stay here type thing...I would get involved in it.

Category C: Enhancing Spiritual Community

Theme 1: Faith Sharing Although a number of religious backgrounds, ranging from Muslim to a wide variety of Christian denominations, were represented among the *Touchstones* participants, the desire to discuss God, faith and spiritual redemption seemed to cut across many barriers. Though the stories contained in *Touchstones* were

selected for their philosophical, literary and theological nature, the students seemed to have no difficulty alternating between discussion of the theoretical and the personal:

Drayton: There's a lot of spiritual testimony. If you look at, there's a lot of spiritual things in the story, like the truth and the falsehood and that's basically what spirituality is based on--evil against good.

Drayton: As far as faith, I knew faith personally was going to play a part. That's basically what I'm all about right now. That's what I'm trying to be all about now, and it was okay with me. I didn't have no problem with it. I don't have no problem with anybody else's faith and when I [direct] someone, I always try to say 'I,' personally, for me, 'I'm not speaking for nobody else. I'm just speaking for Drayton. If you feel there's something that's not agreeable, bring it to my attention and we can talk about sensitively.'

Martain: *Touchstones* itself is, like I said, it helps you bring out your emotion and helps your feelings and there's a lot of the basic things that people don't want to talk about that *Touchstones* does not [inquire] for people to talk about, but just the *Touchstones* itself, I think it just touched the inner part inside of you that makes you express yourself ... so I think that's why it led to the religion and seeing everybody else's beliefs.

Nieson: As far as *Touchstone*, their faith is that they can discuss anything. Get feedback whether they like it or not. Whatever they can use they pick up. Whatever they can't use, they disregard. They get different opinions on other folk's faith to see where they at. If they're long faith in that area, then something that somebody said they're able to pick up on and that helps them develop their faith to make it even stronger than what it was.

See, faith is is that I can go into *Touchstones*. If I read a particular story and it touches home, if you had problems at home with your mate, your spouse, or something like that, I got enough faith that I can sit up here and I can put that out on the floor and don't have to worry about it going any further. Faith is because I trust these folks. The stories that was in the *Touchstone* books, different philosophies, I'm able to share on it. If I'm not able to relate to it, then somebody in the group that can break it down whereas I can relate to it, and there's an amount of trust because there's so much knowledge in different areas of different people.

Goliath: I think it did. I think-- A lot of people when they share they belief and different thing, I think as a rule we accept that. A lot of people, ourselves, Muslims or whatever, we didn't argue about it, but you've got to watch yourself. You've got to watch yourself when getting into this spiritual and the religion part of life because someone believe

their way is right, so you supposed to believe. You supposed to accept another person way too. That's become the understanding. If you can't do that, you has no spiritual... way about you. You lost.

Some students seemed to find one another's comments to be prophetic. They viewed their classmates and themselves as "messengers" from the Higher Power.

Forman: I felt good because you learn a lot from it. A lot of times it's God talking to you.... That's mainly the way God answers your prayers is through other people, so if you sit there and listen and listen real good, you have a situation and you hear somebody else bring it up, most of the time it's an answer there for you.

JCM: Did you have anybody in *Touchstones* share, say, Forman, what you said to me really meant something to me today?

Forman: Yeah, Jerroll. When we was talking about his case and I told him to take the good with the bad. If he go to court and they give him 20 years, told him to thank God for it because God can change situations around. If you do right. If you follow Him, and he come back and say yeah, Forman, you right, because I got appeal going, so it made me feel good. It strengthens my heart, too, and let me know that God's working in my life and his too.

Jerroll: I believe a lot of times God was in the room with us, because a lot of time we talk about religion, and I really enjoyed that group... I believe a lot of time religion came up because a lot of religious people in there. A lot of people that say they religious anyway, because don't nobody know where is but God.

JCM: What made you feel like God was there?

Jerroll: Because God said whatever it is, 1 or 2 or 3 to gather in His Name, He's in the midst of it. That might not be the correct wording but it's similar to that.

Forman: And the only thing God wants you to do is tell people about Him, lead people to Him. It's in the Bible that Jesus say that you will do greater works than me.

JCM: I didn't know that.

Forman: That's in the Bible and it's all John and Mathew and all them books, about Jesus's life. But the Bible says that Jesus was telling the people that you will do greater works than me and everybody wonder

well, what is that, what is that? And the greater works is bringing people to God. I say it's all it is, but some people think what is. What is that great miracle? That's what it is. I'm sitting here, you tell me about God, and you telling me that, making me know that I got strong faiths. See, we work together with each other.

Forman: Goliath in *Touchstones* with us--he come up to one Saturday, I was laying back there in the bed and he said, you know, Forman, I lost my apartment, I lost my furniture, all my stuff from fooling with...I said, well, Goliath, what you need to do is get on your hands and knees and thank God for taking it from you. And Goliath did that and 5 minutes later Goliath came back and said 'thank you, Forman.' He did. He said, 'thank you, that's what I needed to do.' He said 'I can get that stuff back.' I said, 'I know, God'll give it back to you.' I said 'He took it from you. He didn't *take* it from you, but you *lost* it and he can give it back to you.' He said, 'God, that really helped me.'

Drayton: It was something that Rino had said just before he left about-- I done forget the story. It was a story... something he had said about... 'Are you willing to die for God?' and you know what? I had an experience and it was something. He was speaking to me personally, on a personal level. I don't know about everybody else, so that's why I [was] caught up in it. Because when I first came here ... when I was in the drug block, and you don't have to agree with me now but I know it happened, I was laying on my bunk. It was about 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning and ... there was a cool breeze coming because I felt the cool come in. Something spoke to me, 'Drayton, are you ready to die for me?' And I woke up like that. Spoke to me and I know it wasn't but God. I said, 'Yes, I'm ready to die for you.'

He said it again [through Rino], because... I'm getting close to getting back out in the world, so I have to-- What God means [is] you got to give up the world. Would you give up the world for God? That means you dying for God. That's what Christ did. Christ ... overcame the world. He gave up his life for me but He gave life, spiritually, eternally, for ever everlasting and I have to [give] myself in this and my flesh. I have to take it to cross like Christ went to the cross and then die for Christ. And spiritually I live for Christ because Christ is in me and I have to give up my desires, things that I have worshiped like drugs, women, things like that that God don't want us to deal with because He know it's going to make us stumble and we going to wind up in trouble.

Martain's Journal-After Study was Complete: What I think about my life with no *Touchstones*? I think that my understand about humility and my wisdom for people will not be so good because understand people is the best gife that a book or a person can give to me and by me having

touchstones and person like...and Ms. Thomas play a part in my life today
and every day of my life so thank you God for the two of them.

Theme 2: Desire to Serve As expressed across the previously discussed themes, among *Touchstones* participants, the desire to serve others resonated with deafening volume. Many students expressed empathy for those who are now only beginning to make the mistakes that have caused them a lifetime of anguish:

Martain's Journal-4/27: The only reason that my poems came to be was so that someone that need a friend can understand my poems can know that they can trust me as a friend that they can talk to or come with any problem that I can help with to me.

Mohamed: I want to get myself straight. I done been out there long enough. Life has done got short. Time for me to turn everything around and do something for myself. I done took-- The world don't owe me nothing. The community don't owe me nothing. I done took a lot from the community. It's time for me to pay something back to what I done took. Some that I done took it's time for me to give it back now.

JCM: That was something you decided in *Touchstones*?

Mohamed: Yeah. I ...started paying some of what I done took back, started paying my dues back to society.

The subject of forgiveness came up repeatedly in the *Touchstones* group discussions. The students in both the "core" and "satellite" groups frequently mentioned the need to forgive both themselves and others:

JCM: What was the most meaningful discussion to you, whether it was good or bad actually?

Jerroll: All of them was good...but I would say the blind man with the man that can't walk...Goes to show me that no matter what kind of defect you got, you can still make it to where you want to go or what you want to do. You just got to combine your good parts together.

JCM: Did you feel like there was any person in there that you became closer to in particular?

Jerroll: Yeah. Harlie. I had an experience one night. He came to the thing and people was teasing him.

JCM: He came through your block?

Jerroll: Yeah, to clean up. And some people was teasing him and I told them, I said you all shouldn't do that. I said the man got a problem. They was teasing him because of his charge.

JCM: How does everyone know his charge?

Jerroll: Because you can't hide nothing in jail. You can't hide nothing. One person find out, then somebody else tell that person, that person ... In my cell, people was teasing him, and I said, 'man, that's not right. Y'all shouldn't do that. The man got a problem' and I told him, I said, 'man, everything going to be all right.' I said, 'you go down the road. Nobody going to bother you. You just be a man that you supposed to be. Don't give in. You be all right.' I said, 'I forgive you for what you did. Just get out. Don't do it no more.'

He said, 'I ain't, man.'

I said, 'you know, you realize what you did was wrong. Okay. Boom. You got another chance to get out and do right and go back to the peoples that you did such and such to and apologize to them people, man. Ask God to help with your problem and you'll be all right.' And you don't remember that day when he said in [the *Touchstones* discussion] I made him feel better?

Drayton: I hope I can make a difference or touch it in some kind of way. I hope I can say something to encourage somebody or make sense to somebody. It's like what they said, people said things that helped me and I didn't realize, I didn't think about until they spoke it. That shows you how when a community get together and they start communicating with each other and try to understand one another, how it helps each other.

Drayton: I thought about what you was telling me the other day about kids. I would like to work with kids. Kids that not really-- Young peoples frustrates me. That's why I didn't go to the drug block because you'd be trying to tell them things and they don't listen. And I know from experience. I used to be young. I used to be hard. I used to didn't listen. But I had to go out there and learn the hard way and waste a lot of time in my life and it hurts me to know that they're going to have to go through that too. It grieves me.

Drayton: If I could help, I ask the Lord use me. Anyway You want to use me. I don't know. I guess that would be not boasting, bragging on myself, but I have that experience. I could be a walking testimony to somebody at

least see me, my life has changed. I'm off drugs. I might can tell them something. I might can help them make a difference.

Drayton: I know what they feel out there because I know. I've been out there. I know how it feels to be standing on the corner looking crazy, [stealing] for drugs, confused. Don't know which way you're going. Family just don't want to deal with you because you done hurt them so bad. You done hurt them so much that they just rather just leave you alone just to keep from feeling that pain and I know how it is.

Drayton: I don't now if I'm being valued or not, but I want to be valuable to somebody. I never have been. It's been a long time since I've been valuable to somebody, I guess. It feels good to be valued by somebody. I've been failing a lot of people, especially my family and my son, friends I had.

Drayton: You can sit here and just start realizing and examining yourself and thinking about yourself and teaching yourself about the things that you need to change about yourself and I asked God everyday, use me. Whatever You see fit... *Touchstones* help me do that. It helped me to reach down in myself, feel good about myself, knowing that I'm somebody. I have a purpose. I'm finding out who I really am even and what I need to do and how I need to keep feeling like I'm feeling--good about myself. Happy. Joyful. Pleasant. Gentle.

Theme 3: Development or Shaping of "A Calling"

Martain's Journal – 4/25 12:15 PM (one hour after the first *Touchstones* meeting):

[I want To be]

I want to be that special friend, someone
you can Trust. Closeness between us is a must.

I want to be that person in which you can
depend on.

I for one will be there for you through thick
And thin. By us talking to each other you will
Start to know me right away, by the way I
Express myself and by the things I say.

A special friend you can tell all your worries
And cares that will keep your secrets as if
they were theirs.

I'm that type of person who is willing to hear
Your thoughts, your dreams or even your greatest
Fears to have someone like that is very
Rare! That special kind of friend is me,

And I'm beyond compare.

By: Martain

Copy right for the Touchstones Discussion project

A number of students explained that they had special goals for their lives that included doing some form of work or social service. It seemed that some had engaged in self-reflection, others made direct references to prayer and still others took counsel with trusted friends. The result was the development of "a calling," or the knowledge of a unique purpose and direction for their lives. For Taz, having a regular job filled the bill:

JCM: If you were making the laws, what would be the most important thing for you about making new laws?

Taz: My city be right. Everybody be eating good, having fun, working. I like work, so when I was smaller I didn't like it, but I ain't that old but I got like 16, 17, I [decided] I like work. Liked to go to work.

Other students noted that in the past few weeks or months they had recalled a long-held desire to help children or adults in need and used the *Touchstones* discussion time to allow that dream to take shape:

Forman: I plan to work with kids.

JCM: When did you make that decision?

Forman: I did it years ago...but I did a more promising decision to do it after I got here and to realize that things and then I seen a little 18-year-old boy that's in our cell block and the ones that's over in TC, 18 and stuff that don't need to be in places like this, so I'd like to stop it before it gets here. Try to anyway. Stop it before it gets here.

Mohamed: Something that I really wants to do. I wants to be a counselor when I get out of here. I hope to be able to get back in with Region 10 as a counselor and I think this *Touchstone* will give me a lot of confidence that-- There's nothing like confidence in helping me over my speaking part and voicing my opinions and helping others. So I ... get me ready to fulfill a goal that I want to fulfill or accomplish.

Mohamed: Of course. I always mention [on] my call[s]. I mentioned this group to them. I always do. I always talk very highly of this

Touchstone project we got going on... Mostly they always say, yeah, well, that's good. Good. At least you're getting-- You're putting down a start of something that you want to do. I told them, I think this place, this work is helping me to become that counselor that I want to be. It help me come out a whole lot and so far, they're behind me 100%.

Drayton: You might run across a project or something and we get our heads together... some kids or something. I would like to be with kids, because I remember when the last time when I got on out, I remember I think I shared with you before about my community service. I had 300-400 hours and they put there in a day care center with a lot of kids. I said, no, I can't deal with all those babies, a lot of kids, but it was fascinating. I really enjoyed them kids.

If I deal with kids, they have to be at least probably about 8, 7, 9, 10 where you can really kind of-- You can kind of really talk to them and it's more like having fun. You can teach them how to play basketball and you can really get them to like you because you can do things with them that they enjoy. Find out what they enjoy. Find out what makes them happy and do it with them. You can more kind of talk to them if they start liking you. You get 12 and 13 and 14, they're halfway doing what they want to do, man. Man, it's going to take a miracle.

Jerroll: I want to be a drug counselor and I think I can do. All I can do is get pointed in the right direction and I'm even going to tell the judge. I want to get out and be a drug counselor. I want to help people that got problems just like me and they don't have to go through what I went through to become a drug counselor.

JCM: When did you decide that?

G: About one month ago.

JCM: What made you decide to do it?

Jerroll: Because it's a lot of people out there need help and some of them want help and they don't-- They too ashamed to come forward and admit that they got a problem.

Category D: Negative Experiences

Some aspects of participation in *Touchstones* were not as rewarding as they might have been. Despite attempts at resolving interpersonal differences, promoting emotional

safety, fostering religious tolerance and keeping conversations on track, some students expressed dissatisfaction in each of these areas.

Theme 1: Trust Violation

Phil's Journal – 5/17: Things are going well with class today we talked about #30 the Ethics. I was a little out in center field cause I couldn't here what was beening said. So I tried to focuses on what was beening said. For my own reasons I don't feel I can share any more cause of some problems that keep happening. I really like the program and wont to see how it turns out I would have droped it. But that's my problem I've always ran from my problems. So now I'll deal with them from head on. I think touchstones is a very good program but some people try and use what we say against us. I hope the touchstones program keeps going. As far as I can tell I'd take it if it was.

Drayton: The only negative experience I had was when we, I guess one guy was really dealing with personal things and a few guys was ... They were kind of laughing out and that really bothered me. I wanted to say something but I'm glad I didn't say anything because I might've would boomed out of proportion and knowing me, my old self mighta rose up so I have to be careful what I say sometime. Sometime it's not good to say anything. You know it is and that was good.

Theme 2: Conflict development

Phil's Journal – 4/27: Today group wasn't Like I think It should have been...The group should be Conereted of Each other,We need to have more understanding to what is said. We Need to Learn to Read the direction befor we start the work.

Drayton: When you brought up this thing, before you even explained to me and I said there and talked with Ms. Thomas about it, I said, you know what? This *Touchstones*, it might be these little stories but some of these stories will pertain to somebody's personal life and it's going to be maybe some conflict between some of us or there's going to be opinion made but somebody's not going to agree with that opinion and it seems like it's going to get in a little confrontation and exactly what I said, that's what happened in some of these cases. There were confrontations. It wasn't serious whether anybody was ready to beat up on one another because we won't let it go that far. AS far as I'm concerned, I wouldn't let it go that far, but things like that was going to happen, and I knew it was going to happen.

Taz: Discussing, take 2 hours to discuss something one short story. They just kept going and going...They arguing too much...That's why I

just most the time I ain't even say nothing because I was just, I didn't want to get to arguing.

In his journal, Phil noted an "internal conflict" that was brought about through the *Touchstones* discussion:

Phil: I wish I'd kept them [my feelings about my family] inside, most of them, because it's been a year now since I've been locked up. Tomorrow makes 1 year and my separation will be 1 year on the 26th so all I did was reopen old things... I don't use up a whole notebook trying to write a letter to my wife... Rip them up... and rip it up.

Theme 3: Lack of Mutual Understanding/Focus

Mohamed: When you're talking to God, God is God no matter whatever his name you may call Him, God or Jehovah or-- God is God. There's only one God. Basically everybody's talking to the same God and I think it was only one time that I got what I felt a little uncomfortable and that was the group that I gave Thursday, I think... and a couple of guys in there got to talking about the Koran and I didn't agree with that at all. I didn't agree with that when they got to [arguing back] about the Koran

Taz: I read the Koran and the Bible, so I don't [segregate] nothing. The Koran, that's pretty much, I think is Revelations in the Bible. That's the... book of Revelations.

JCM: How did it make you feel when people were talking about their faith and their beliefs and stuff like that?

Taz: I didn't even get into it.

JCM: But it wasn't offensive to you in any way? It didn't bother you? Make you angry?

Taz: No, it didn't make angry. I was just looking at them like it's wrong trying to segregate all the time. Some of them, like 40 years old, talking all crazy... talking about some signs. I don't even think they knew they were talking.

JCM: Did anything that anyone said like inspire you in some ways, make you feel, think about your own beliefs?

Taz: Nope. As I was saying... I learned about situations, but when they talking about stuff like that I ain't learning.

Phil: I came from a Roman Catholic background, so a lot of people's faiths I don't pay much attention to because there's a big difference between a Roman Catholic background and a Baptist background and all those different religions, denominations, so I can't say whether it was good or bad on either side.

JCM: Were you comfortable with it, with the discussion?

Phil: Not really, because religion and politics cause a lot of trouble when it's discussed among whether it's friends or whatever.

Teg: I felt it was all right, but long conversations and I don't feel there was enough time for and then it take you off focus of the story itself and that's one thing I seen in the original group that we had was it get off from the story, but it was fine. I don't mind listening to someone talk about their faith or religion or what not, if that was the story, but that's one thing that I found in *Touchstones*, they took their own opinions and just drifted away with it into something else. We got maybe to 1 or 2 questions about the whole story and I feel that it was more time maybe than we could get back to the story.

Jerroll: This one person just thought just because that he older than everybody else that he know more, but that don't mean nothing because today times ain't like it was back then, so a lot of things we went through today he didn't go through.

Drayton: I know people like that. I know that. You can sit there sometimes and don't say nothing. We need to know. If something we hear and if we get baffled about it and kind of make it come to our attention, we need to ask them. Well, look, I don't understand what you saying. It sound interesting, whatever you was saying, but please break it down where I can understand it so it might be something than I need or something I'm missing.

JCM: Do you think there's some people that didn't understand almost the entire time?

Drayton: I believe there is some people that were sitting there and didn't understand what we was talking about.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSIONS

Review of the Problem

In Chapter 1, the researcher began with a discussion of the broad, multi-dimensional problem of skyrocketing incarceration, discriminatory conviction and lack of rehabilitation endemic to the US Criminal Justice System. The researcher then explored the notion of educational and rehabilitative programming for those who currently reside within correctional settings. It was acknowledged that such programming may serve as a means of reducing the problem of violence that exists in American jails and prisons today while supporting inmates in developing the personal and professional resources necessary to lead fulfilling lives both inside and outside correctional environments.

Review of the Literature Analysis

In Chapter 2, a review of literature in the areas of correctional education and correctional rehabilitation revealed that program evaluations have focused largely on the degree to which *long-term* (over six months) educational or rehabilitative programming *reduces recidivism* or fosters *individual academic or personal growth* prior to release. Some program evaluations have identified the *individual academic or personal effects* of *short-term* (less than six months) educational or rehabilitative programming. Few evaluations have focused on the *immediate* effects that *short-term* educational or rehabilitative programs exhibit on *relationships within the prison or jail environment*.

The aforementioned studies illuminate some of the positive cognitive social effects of a variety of correctional education and rehabilitation programs. However, it was established that additional research is needed to bring the full nature and effect of short-term correctional education programming geared toward the enhancement of social

relationships within the correctional setting to light within the public domain. This study attempted to address that gap in the literature.

Guiding Research Question

This study explored the degree to which correctional education students who participated in the *Touchstones* program, a short-term reading and discussion curriculum centered on classical philosophy, literature and theology, experienced enhanced social relationships as a result of their participation. Additionally, the *Touchstones* curriculum, as implemented in the study, included opportunities for students participating in the “core discussion group” to serve as facilitators of “satellite discussion groups” comprised of inmates with fewer opportunities to participate in educational programming. In this fashion, the curriculum attempted to help students develop heightened concepts of themselves as valuable, contributing members of a community.

Review of the Method and Organization of Findings

Chapter Three proposed the evaluation method of “responsive evaluation: subjectivist epistemology” within the setting of naturalistic inquiry for evaluation of the *Touchstones* curriculum. This method was intended to illuminate the transactional nature of the program and thus to provide a fertile and non-judgmental framework from which to assess the research findings.

In Chapter Four, as part of the effort to conduct a summative evaluation of the *Touchstones* program, the researcher has employed the use of themes, categories and constructs to present a conceptual overview of the cumulative results of the study. Together, these elements of analysis form a theoretical model of “the *Touchstones*

process” which may be viewed as a series of program “inputs” and “outputs” reflecting the amalgamating force of “student relationships.”

In order to understand and evaluate the *Touchstones* philosophy discussion program as it was implemented at the Charlottesville-Albemarle County Regional Jail, the researcher first assessed the program “inputs,” or aspects of the program which impacted student relationships and thus exerted an effect on the “communal” nature of the students’ interactions. The researcher has divided these inputs into three categories:

- Inputs *generated by the students themselves*
- Inputs *generated by the curriculum and*
- Inputs *generated by the facilitation process*

Second, the researcher assessed the program “outputs,” or aspects of student interactions that were “communal in nature” and emerged throughout the course of the program. The four categories of outputs include:

- The *enhancement of the “intellectual dimension of community”*
- The *enhancement of the “emotional dimension of community”*
- The *enhancement of the “spiritual dimension of community”* and
- The *experience of negative transactions*

By assessing and analyzing the program inputs and outputs, it is the researcher’s intention not only to illuminate the transactional nature with which student relationships are developed in the *Touchstones* program, but also to provide a thick description of those transactions.

In Chapter Five, the researcher attempts to synthesize the study's findings, situate those findings amidst recent literature in the area of corrections and to point toward further research that may continue the assessment of the *Touchstones* curriculum.

Synthesis of the Findings

Up to this point, the researcher has assessed the findings in a linear fashion. The constructs, categories and themes have been discussed and arranged so as to maintain the integrity of their chronological significance. For example, the discussion of the students' preconceived notions of community, relationships, personal experiences, and attitudes prior to participation in the *Touchstones* program was followed by the discussion of their experiences within the curriculum, which was later followed by a discussion of their responses to those experiences.

Heretofore, it has been important to reveal the study's findings in the order of their occurrence so as to allow the reader to experience the *Touchstones* process as seen through the eyes of the student participants. For example, by reading the description of the program as it was experienced from one week to the next, one might note the following changes that occurred over time:

- From week one to week three the students continued to encounter conflict and that conflict was managed/resolved with the support of the facilitator. After week three, the student group began to self-monitor conflict-laden situations and to handle their own resolution.
- As time went on, the students began to physically direct their comments to one another, rather than looking to the facilitator between statements.

- During the first two weeks, the students seemed to make statements that were frequently unrelated to the statements made prior to their own. In the third week, the students began to listen to others more carefully and to respond to the thoughts that were being shared within the context of the dialogue.
- By the third week the students began to cultivate a more esoteric, intellectual dialogue, rather than merely stating flat opinions. In the discussion of the U.S. educational system and its drop out problem, the students explored hypothetical arguments in addition to sharing concrete personal experiences. They also found that they could disagree with a sense of humor and laugh at themselves, as evidenced in the discussion of “selling dummies.”
- Finally, in week three, the spiritual dimension of community began to develop with the discussion of Jerroll’s impending sentencing, and the emotional community began to take shape as Harley shared the story of his wife’s rape. Both dimensions of community continued to flourish from that point on.
- The dialogue recorded in the researcher’s field journal after week three is much easier to read. During this time, the conversation flowed more smoothly and logically. The group required minimal facilitation and students began to take over the facilitation of the core group as well as the facilitation of their own classes.
- The journal entries written about the satellite group discussions reveal the fact that students in the core group generally related to their own students in satellite groups in a more nurturing way than they did their fellow participants in the core group. Rino, who had been known for prefacing most of his

statements in the core group with “I don’t care what any of you all think but...,” told one of his satellite group students, “that is a good point, I would never have thought of it that way.” He also made a visible effort to seek diverse opinions among his students and encourage participation. Goliath, who spoke as a participant when facilitating the core group, gave none of his own opinions when facilitating the satellite groups.

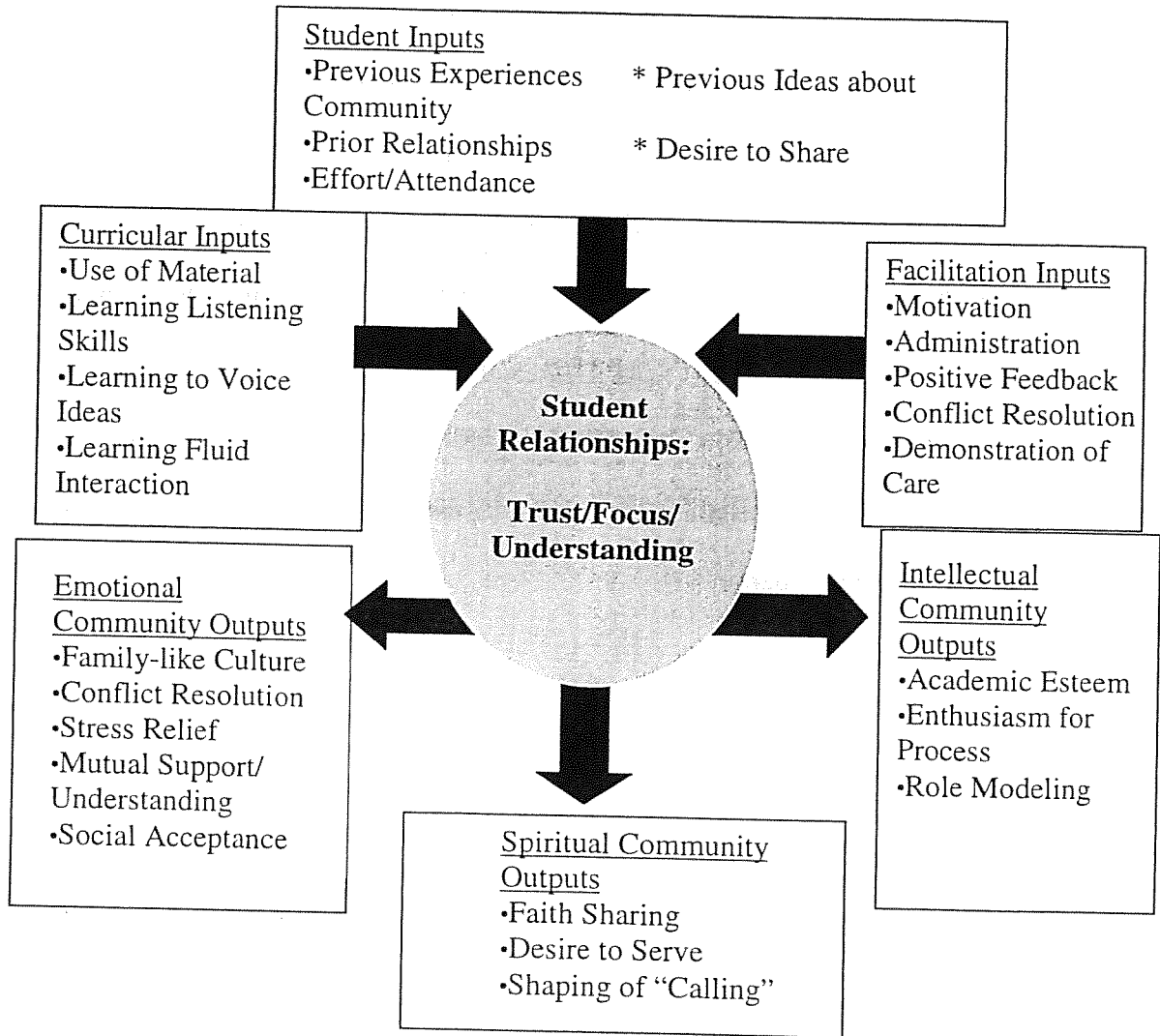
However, to embrace a theoretical, conceptual model of “the *Touchstones* process,” one must not only understand the linear aspect of the program, but also the dynamic and cyclical nature of the process. The process inputs, as exemplified in the students’ experiences prior to engaging in the *Touchstones* program, the students’ experiences within the curriculum and the students’ interactions with the *Touchstones* facilitators, are continuously effecting the process outputs, as evidenced in the enhancement of intellectual, spiritual and emotional community. Those process outputs, in turn, effect new process inputs, as evidenced in subsequent student experiences within the curriculum. These new process inputs further effect subsequent process outputs. Thus, student relationships within the *Touchstones* program are in a state of “mutual and simultaneous shaping,” the hallmark of the naturalistic paradigm.

As a result of the aforementioned observation, the researcher created the illustration below (Figure 2) to depict the dynamic and circular nature of the *Touchstones* experience. The shaded, square areas represent the construct of “inputs” into the *Touchstones* process. The non-shaded, square areas represent the construct of “outputs” from the *Touchstones* process. Each box represents a different category of inputs or

outputs, and lists the themes associated with that category. Both constructs hover around the amalgamating force of “student relationships.”

In the center of the diagram, underneath the words “student relationships,” lies a list of the terms associated with the negative experiences that were identified by some of the students participating in the *Touchstones* program. These themes sit at the center of the model in order to show that negative experiences within *Touchstones* may be perpetuated or reduced depending on the actions of the students and facilitators as the curriculum is implemented. The researcher asserts that the negative effects noted in the study may either be arrested by the inputs of students or facilitators, or take shape within the outputs of the program.

Touchstones Model



Research Findings

As shown in the model above, as the student, curricular and facilitation-centered inputs effect student relationships in the context of the *Touchstones* program, those relationships give way to larger notions of community as experienced in concert and manifested in intellectual, spiritual and emotional dimensions. Statements made by the students in baseline interviews indicate that some degree of intellectual, emotional and spiritual community existed among the students prior to participation in *Touchstones*. However, this study illuminates the way that each of these aspects of community was enhanced as a result of participation in “the *Touchstones* process.”

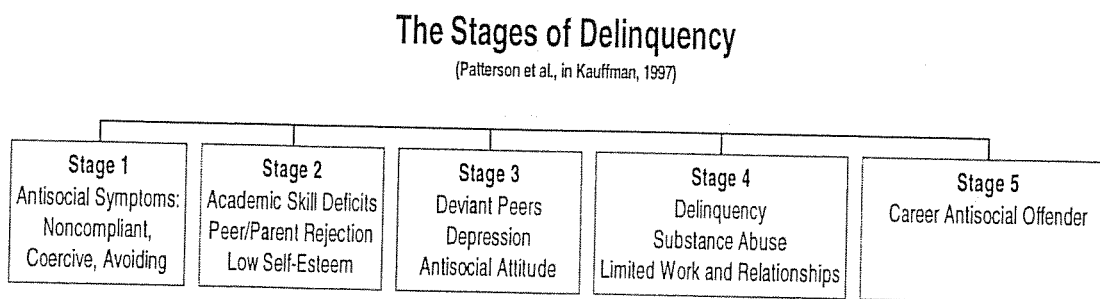
Findings Seen in Light of Recent Literature

A recent article in the *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation* outlines a “relatively new alternative to incarceration in the United States” called Day Reporting Centers (Bahn & Davis, 1998). Characterized by high surveillance and diverse services and programs, these programs are purported to offer outstanding potential for rehabilitation because they simulate real life circumstances. Preliminary evidence reveals some success in reducing costs, overcrowding and recidivism (Bahn & Davis, 1998). Such programs might serve as excellent platforms from which to deliver the *Touchstones* curriculum. In such a scenario, the service learning component of the *Touchstones* program might include a vast array of volunteer service options ranging from substance abuse counseling to public speaking.

Opportunities for Further Research

While participation in the *Touchstones* curriculum is not expected to represent an unequivocal solution to the problem of antisocial behavior among those incarcerated for criminal activity, it may serve as one positive step toward reversing the cycle of an individual's negative response to societal alienation. Recalling Patterson's "stages of delinquency" (Figure 3) we may note that participation in the *Touchstones* program could potentially counteract anti-social behavior as noted in stage five by reducing the social rejection inherent to stages one through three. Additionally, by elevating academic esteem, participation in the program may encourage a spirit of academic interest which could lead to a reduction in academic skill deficits inherent to stage two. Finally, by promoting understanding and respect for difference, participation in the program may lead to improved relationships with those at work, school or home, thus counteracting the desperation that leads to delinquency and substance abuse in stage four. To establish this notion, further studies must first assess the degree of "social rejection" felt by each participant prior to participation in the program.

Figure 3. Interrupting the Stages of Delinquency



It is hoped that participation in *Touchstones* supports the individual's sense of intellectual accomplishment in a public arena and serves to validate his expressed ideas through positive social interaction. Ideally, that positive interaction will lead to positive relationships with others and the development of a self-concept grounded in a notion of one's inherent social and individual value.

Further research may expand on this evaluation by providing a long-term (over six months) outlook on *Touchstones* participation with both quantitative and qualitative assessments. In particular, one might hypothesize that implementation of the *Touchstones* curriculum with incarcerated juvenile offenders, or adults or juveniles participating in alternative day reporting centers, might yield promising results in reversing the stages of delinquency.

Additionally, further research may address some of the shortcomings of this study by:

1. Employing a more generalizable quantitative measure in addition to qualitative assessment
2. Assessing the program in its entirety, rather than in a format designed for a short-term evaluation and
3. Collecting more detailed demographic and psychographic data on participants at baseline and follow-up.

APPENDIX A

Interview Script

Purpose of the Research Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of participation in the Touchstones reading/discussion/service learning curriculum on students in your educational program. As part of the study, you are being asked to participate in 18 reading and discussion sessions with other students from your educational program. You will lead some of those discussion sessions as part of the "service-oriented" portion of the program. Four of the discussion sessions that you participate in will be videotaped. You will also be asked to keep a journal of your experiences in the program.

I plan to evaluate the effects of participation in the Touchstones reading and discussion program on interpersonal communication and community by asking you some questions about your self and your relationships with others before and after your participation in the program. The questions are intended to be broad and open-ended to allow you to share the information that you feel is most relevant.

Baseline Interview Questions

1. How would you define "community?"
2. What is your impression of the "community" among your classmates and roommates or is there none at all?
3. How do people that you know in this facility interact with one another?
4. Do you feel that you have an effect on the community (or on people) here?
5. If so, what is that effect? If not why not?
6. Do you feel valued by the people here? If so, in what way? If not, why?
7. Do you stay in touch with people outside of this facility?
8. Do you feel that you have an effect on the community outside of this one? (family, community at large)
9. If so, what is that effect? If not, why not?
10. Do you feel valued by the people outside of this community? If so, in what way? If not, why?
11. How old are you?
12. Do you have any children?
13. How many times have you been incarcerated?
14. How long have you been here?

Interview Questions Following the Program

1. How would describe the Touchstones program to someone who was considering participation?
2. What were your first impressions of the program?
3. What did you think about the other people in the Touchstones program?

4. Did you know them before Touchstones? If so, what was your relationship like?
5. Did any of your relationships change in any way – for better or worse – during Touchstones?
6. Was there anyone in particular you got to know better? How? What was your relationship like?
7. We spent a lot of time talking about faith. That wasn't really planned. What did you think of that?
8. How would you define "community?"
9. How did you like teaching?
10. Did you feel that you had an effect on the *Touchstones* group?
11. If so, what is that effect? If not why not?
12. Do you think your sense of being valued changed in any way in the course of the program? If so, in what way? If not, why?
13. Did your participation in *Touchstones* have any effect on your relationships in the community outside of this one? (family, community at large)
14. If so, what is that effect?
15. What did you think of the overall experience?
16. Can you think of ways that the program could be improved? Were there any particular problems?

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