



**EVALUATION OF
THE ALLIANCE FOR CALIFORNIA TRADITIONAL ARTS (ACTA)
ARTS IN CORRECTIONS (AIC)
DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM**

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Overview of the Evaluation

The Alliance for California Traditional Arts (ACTA) conducted a demonstration project, the Arts in Corrections (AIC) program, in California Correctional Institution (CCI). This program evaluation assessed the effectiveness and impact of traditional arts programming on the program's participants using qualitative methods consisting of in-depth phone interviews. The evaluation focused on 13 male inmates at California Correctional Institution (CCI) who participated in storytelling, music, or visual art programming. This evaluation involved the collaboration between the Asian American Center on Disparities Research (AACDR) at the University of California, Davis and the Alliance for California Traditional Arts (ACTA).

It was expected that participation in the Arts in Corrections (AIC) program would lead to a number of potential effects on the inmate participants, both personally and individually, as well in terms of their internal (e.g., CCI inmates and staff) and external (e.g., family) relationships. Topics addressed with the participants in the evaluation included: (1) experience in the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) program at CCI, (2) institutional atmosphere, (3) personal relationships, (4) personal change and/or growth, (5) psychological well-being, and (6) future skill development.

Description of the Program

The *Alliance for California Traditional Arts* (ACTA) was founded in 1997 by cultural workers, arts administrators, and traditional artists to address a void in statewide support of folk and traditional artists. Folk and traditional artists are tradition bearers: people who transmit what they believe, know, do and create with others who share a common heritage. From Ohlone basketry and African-American quilt-making to cowboy poetry and Vietnamese opera, California is home to hundreds of diverse traditions. ACTA promotes and supports ways for these cultural traditions to thrive now and into the future by providing advocacy, resources, and connections. ACTA connects artists, communities, and funders to each other, information, and

resources through convenings, research, and technical assistance. Recognized for its leadership, intellectual capital, and excellence in program administration, ACTA is the state-designated entity for all folk and traditional arts. Through programs and services, such as the Arts in Corrections (AIC) program, ACTA works to cultivate the growth of traditional arts and culture through nurturing California's unique cultural landscape, services to artists, and connecting people, resources, and information.

The *Alliance for California Traditional Arts* (ACTA) promotes and supports ways for cultural traditions to thrive now and into the future through the arts. The ACTA *Arts In Corrections* (AIC) demonstration project, held at the California Correctional Institution (CCI) in Tehachapi, CA, aimed to utilize traditional arts and heritage practices to positively impact the mental health of the inmate participants. The traditional arts forms represented were Traditional Chicano muralism technique through transformative drawing practices and artistic skill development (aka: Drawing Transformation), Traditional Americana, African American, and Chicano songwriting through an exploration of blues, gospel, Hip Hop, R&B, spirituals, American popular music, folk, and collective & individual songwriting techniques (aka: Songwriting and Music), and Traditional African American Storytelling practice (aka: Traditional Storytelling). Master teaching artists of traditional expressions provide *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) programming in Mexican jarocho music and verse composition, Native American beadwork, African American storytelling, songwriting, and African drumming, Chicano poetry, and/or other traditional arts disciplines in California state correctional institutions. With the support of the California Arts Council, and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), ACTA currently offers 27 arts programs (for 13 weeks each) at 8 different prisons throughout the state as part of the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) program. To date, ACTA has been an AIC service provider for three years, and has conducted forty-two 13-week traditional arts residencies with artists at eight CDCR facilities: California State Prison, Corcoran; Valley State Prison; California Correctional Institution; Pleasant Valley State Prison; Avenal State Prison; North Kern State Prison; California State Prison, Los Angeles County; and the California Rehabilitation Center.

Arts in Corrections (AIC) programs provided direct instruction and guidance in the creation of and participation in the visual, performing, literary or media arts to inmates in correctional settings. AIC programming was provided by professional artists, who are individuals who have actively participated in their particular arts discipline and who are recognized as experts by their peers in the arts field. ACTA aimed to work with traditional artists who possess high levels of talent and skill, but who are also deeply rooted in communities of practice. ACTA strived to work with artists who view their creative endeavors not merely as a means of mastering a technical art form, but as a tool for creating community and culture within the context of a lineage of practice connected to a specific heritage. The expressions of African American storytelling, African American & Chicano songwriting, and Chicano muralism and arts practice were intended as familiar and culturally relevant expressions for those who came from working class communities throughout California. The artists that ACTA employed to teach in the AIC program came from similar neighborhoods as many of the CCI inmates, and being artists of color from similar backgrounds, the inmates may have seen themselves reflected in their example.

Description of California Correctional Institution (CCI)

Located in Tehachapi, California, California Correctional Institution (CCI) opened in January 1933 to house female inmates. In 1952, CCI was closed due to an earthquake and then re-opened in 1954 as a prison for male inmates. CCI is an adult prison operated by CDCR, and covers 1,650 acres. CCI's mission is to incarcerate and control felons, while providing the opportunity for meaningful work, training, and other programs.

The institution is designated as a maximum security prison, and is separated into five independent facilities: Units I, II, III/Reception Center, IV-A, and IV-B. The units house a range of general population and sensitive-needs inmates classified from level I (minimum security) to level IV (maximum security). Units I and II house level I to level II (medium security) sensitive-needs inmates. Unit III contains a reception center where the prison receives new inmates who must undergo classification assessments to determine their initial security level and either be endorsed to stay at CCI or sent to another prison. Units II, IV-A, and IV-B contain administrative segregation units, which are maximum security facilities specially designed to house disruptive or victimized inmates. Units IV-A and IV-B also contain security housing units designed to house inmates whose conduct endangers the safety of others or the security of the institution. Unit IV-B has an Outpatient Housing Unit, which houses inmates needing medical monitoring or isolation from the prison's general population.

Within California Correctional Institution (CCI), ACTA offered three distinct and separate *Arts in Corrections* classes as a part of the demonstration project: (1) Traditional Storytelling, (2) Songwriting and Music, and (3) Drawing Transformation (Visual Arts). A detailed description of each AIC class, including information on the instructor(s), the class schedule, and a summary of class topics, is provided below.

Class Descriptions

Traditional Storytelling

Instructor: *Michael D. McCarty*, well known Los Angeles based African American Storyteller

Class Schedule: 12 weeks (Mondays; October 24, 2016 – January 4, 2017); offered 9am-12pm (averaging 10 inmates) and 12:30-3:30pm (averaging 10 inmates) each week; Note: Class #5 (11/21/16) was cancelled due to lockdown

Class Summary: The goal for this class was to get participants to get in touch with their own stories and articulate their stories in a significant and entertaining way. Another goal was to have the participants understand that their stories have value and need to be told.

1. Introduction of storytelling principles and types

- Modeling of stories
- Introduction of 'Story Bag' exercise

2. Detail storytelling techniques

- Group storytelling exercises

- Title exercise
- Develop individual stories

3. Participants tell their stories

- Develop articulations
- Significant truth
- Entertaining
- Share with group and learn
- Method of “appreciations and suggestions”

4. Refine individual stories

- Practice presentation skills

5. Culmination

- Group performance of individual stories

Songwriting and Music

Instructors: *Juan Perez*, renowned Chicano bassist (guitar instructor)
Quincy McCrary, well-known African American pianist, singer, producer, and songwriter (vocals and keyboard instructor)

Class Schedule: 15 weeks (Saturdays; October 22, 2016 – February 18, 2017); offered 9am-12pm (averaging 7 inmates) and 12:30-3:30pm (averaging 6 inmates) each week

Class Description: Voice, Guitar and Keyboards

1. Introduction Voice, Guitar and Keyboards

- Breathing & Scales
- Assess each student’s musical/vocal background
- Breathing techniques, Basic 7 letter musical alphabet and 8 note (octave) scale
- Intervals, Intonation

2. Keyboards and Guitar: Chord Structure & Harmony

- Introduce harmony and chord structure via piano using 7 letter musical alphabet and octave scale
- Explain how intervals make “chords”
- Introduce complex intervals
- Use intervals, teach students to play triad chords C Major, F Major
- Show how triads help in songwriting process
- Have students sing and repeat a vocal bassline
- Instructor will play chords on piano, then encourage one or two students to play chords while others vocalize

3. The Elements of a Song (lyrics, rhythm, melody harmony)

- Introduce prosody, metaphors and symbols - what makes you 'feel' a song, object writing exercise. There's a song for every situation, how to find inspiration everywhere.
- Lyrics and Rhythm (Top Line),
- Present song example - work on lyrics and rhythms without melody and harmony, object writing exercise.
- Melody and Harmony (Top Line)
- Song example - work on melodies without lyrics, add lyrics and rhythm back in. Object writing exercise.

4. Song structure - building blocks (verse, chorus, bridge, vamps/hooks)

- Verse writing - what's your song about? Writing Verses.
- Object writing exercise.

5. Chorus

- Making a song memorable - Hook, Vamps - why the repetitive nature of music ideas lyrically, melodically and harmonically are important.
- Practice chorus ideas. Object writing exercise
- Free write / solo writing begin taking the students through constructing their own song. Object writing exercise.

6. Improve & Collaboration

- Co-writing and collaborative group writing exercise. Begin with object writing and determine a consistent theme. Write group song. Rehearse this and existing song ideas in preparation for class performance.

7. Presentations

- Practice performing your song/telling your story - emoting. Bring an unfinished song, chorus or idea to share with the group. Object writing exercise. Rehearse song ideas in preparation for collective performance.
- Rehearse for Class Performance
- Finish song ideas in preparation for collective performance

8. Class Performance

Drawing Transformation (Visual Arts)

Instructors: *Omar Ramirez*, Los Angeles based Chicano artist
Fabian Debora, formerly incarcerated Chicano artist and counselor at Homeboy Industries

Class Schedule: 13 weeks (Saturdays; October 22, 2016 – February 18, 2017); offered 9am-12pm (averaging 6 inmates) and 12:30-3:30pm (averaging 7 inmates) each week

Class Description: Through the use of traditional arts practice, process, and aesthetics, this class examined artist principles, drawing techniques and tools (graphite and paper), made use of Restorative Justice Principles (which focused on the rehabilitation of offenders through reconciliation with victims and the community at large) to contextualize the content of the work, and introduced drawing techniques through a structured 13-week course for inmates. This class was designed as a beginners arts class and culminated through an independent studio course. At the end of the series participants completed 3 drawings weekly and 2 large-scale artworks on paper as a culmination.

The instructors aimed to expand the technical abilities of students while engaging them in critical thinking about their work as artists. Most inmates who sign up for the program came in with an understanding of realism and portraiture drawing. The *AIC* students are rarely given the opportunity to challenge themselves creatively by rethinking and looking at their artwork through a critical lens. The class objective was to increase students' knowledge base to include landscape, line, gesture, and still-life drawing in order to create discussions during the workshops to study, challenge, and identify new ways of seeing their world through the manipulation of dry-drawing materials.

1. Introduction to Artist Principles

- Traditional aesthetics
- Innovative concepts
- Art as message
- Art as a voice
- Art beyond art sake

2. Introduction to Drawing Techniques

- Scale
- Line and gesture
- Still-life
- Perspective
- Value
- Composition
- Figure drawing

3. Tools

- Learn to work with graphite (pencil) and paper
- Various small size papers
- Large works on paper
- Informative references
- Still-life Objects, Photographs, Magazines, Books, Letters, and figure mannequins

4. Restorative Justice Principles

- Critical thinking
- What do participants already know and understand
- What are the different epistemologies participants maintain
- Fostering and building positive relationships
- Fostering growth and healthy behaviors
- Reduce recidivism

Description of the Sample

The total sample consisted of 13 inmates (4 from Storytelling (30.8%), 5 from Music (38.5%), 4 from Visual Arts (30.8%)) who had participated in the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration program at California Correctional Institution (CCI). Attempts were made to hold interviews with a total of 15 inmates (5 from Storytelling, 5 from Music, and 5 from Visual Arts) who participated in the demonstration project.

The following section provides a brief description of each inmate in the evaluation sample. Evaluators did not obtain personal identifiers. Not all inmates were included in the qualitative sample because two declined the interview request (noted below).

Traditional Storytelling

S1 is a male general population inmate at California Correctional Institution (CCI) who resides in a single cell. He attended a total of 10 Storytelling classes (based on attendance records provided by ACTA).

S2 is a male general population inmate at California Correctional Institution (CCI) who resides in a shared cell. He attended a total of 10 Storytelling classes (based on attendance records provided by ACTA).

S4 is a male general population inmate at California Correctional Institution (CCI) who resides in a shared cell. He attended a total of 10 Storytelling classes (based on attendance records provided by ACTA).

S8 is a male general population inmate at California Correctional Institution (CCI). He attended a total of 7 Storytelling classes (based on attendance records provided by ACTA).

S9 is a male general population inmate at California Correctional Institution (CCI). He attended a total of 7 Storytelling classes (based on attendance records provided by ACTA). He declined to be interviewed for the evaluation component of the project.

Songwriting and Music

M1 is a male general population inmate at California Correctional Institution (CCI). He attended a total of 8 Music classes (based on attendance records provided by ACTA).

M2 is a male general population inmate at California Correctional Institution (CCI). He attended a total of 7 Music classes (based on attendance records provided by ACTA).

M3 is a male general population inmate at California Correctional Institution (CCI). He attended a total of 7 Music classes (based on attendance records provided by ACTA).

M4 is a male general population inmate at California Correctional Institution (CCI) who resides in a single cell. He attended a total of 7 Music classes (based on attendance records provided by ACTA).

M5 is a male general population inmate at California Correctional Institution (CCI). He attended a total of 7 Music classes (based on attendance records provided by ACTA).

Drawing Transformation (Visual Arts)

V1 is a male general population inmate at California Correctional Institution (CCI) who resides in a shared cell. He attended a total of 9 Visual Arts classes (based on attendance records provided by ACTA).

V2 is a male general population inmate at California Correctional Institution (CCI). He attended a total of 10 Visual Arts classes (based on attendance records provided by ACTA).

V3 is a male general population inmate at California Correctional Institution (CCI). He attended a total of 7 Visual Arts classes (based on attendance records provided by ACTA).

V4 is a male general population inmate at California Correctional Institution (CCI). He attended a total of 7 Visual Arts classes (based on attendance records provided by ACTA). He declined to be interviewed for the evaluation component of the project.

V5 is a male general population inmate at California Correctional Institution (CCI). He attended a total of 7 Visual Arts classes (based on attendance records provided by ACTA).

Sampling Procedures

The evaluation sampled from a total of 41 inmate participants in ACTA's *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration project, conducted from October 2016 to February 2017. Of the 41 participants, 17 (41.5%) were in Traditional Storytelling, 12 (29.3%) were in Songwriting and Music, and 12 (29.3%) were in Drawing Transformation (Visual Arts). All inmate participants still at California Correctional Institution (CCI) were randomly assigned an ID number by class. A random number generator was used to select five inmates from each class to participate in the evaluation. In total, 5 (29.4%) inmates from Traditional Storytelling, 5 (41.7%) inmates from Songwriting and Music, and 5 (41.7%) inmates from Drawing Transformation (Visual Arts) were included in the evaluation. Two inmate participants (one from Storytelling and one from Visual Arts) were originally sampled, but declined to participate.

Interview Procedures and Protocol

Separate semi-structured interviews were completed for each selected inmate. *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) inmate participants were contacted approximately one year after the completion of the demonstration project period. Following the random selection of the inmate participants to be interviewed, participants were approached by ACTA staff and asked if they would like to participate in a phone interview. Two (13.3%) of the 15 inmates selected declined to be interviewed.

All interviews were conducted over the phone by a trained program evaluator. The interviewer conducted the phone interview from the Asian American Center on Disparities Research in Davis, CA, while the participant was in a designated Board Room at California Correctional Institution (CCI) in Tehachapi, CA. A CCI correctional officer and ACTA Program Manager were stationed outside the Board Room door but were not in the room during the interview to allow for privacy. The actual interview began shortly after the interviewer read the Consent Form and the participant verbally consented to be interviewed.

The final semi-structured interview protocol, developed by an evaluation team, consisted of a series of questions concerning the potential effects of the *Arts in Corrections* programming on the inmate participant, personally and individually, as well as how the program affected participants in terms of their internal (e.g., CCI inmates and staff) and external (e.g., family) relationships. Topics addressed with the participants included: (1) experience in the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) program at CCI, (2) institutional atmosphere, (3) personal relationships, (4) personal change and/or growth, (5) psychological well-being, and (6) future skill development. The interviewer asked the following questions:

1. When did the [Activity: *Storytelling / Music / Visual Arts*] class begin?
2. How frequently were they conducted (i.e. bi-weekly, weekly, or monthly)?
3. Approximately how many [Activity: *Storytelling / Music / Visual Arts*] classes did you attend?
4. What is your current living situation in the institution? Solitary or general population?
5. What got you interested in the [Activity: *Storytelling / Music / Visual Arts*] class?
6. From whom did you learn [Activity: *Storytelling / Music / Visual Arts*]?
7. What have you learned from the [Activity: *Storytelling / Music / Visual Arts*] class, and how has this changed the way you tell stories/play music/paint, etc.?
8. How would you describe your relationship with your instructor(s)?
9. What role does [Activity: *Storytelling / Music / Visual Arts*] play in your life?
10. What personal changes have you experienced as a result of your participation in the [Activity: *Storytelling / Music / Visual Arts*] class?
11. Has your participation in the [Activity: *Storytelling / Music / Visual Arts*] class had any effects on your living situation in CCI?
12. How has your involvement in the [Activity: *Storytelling / Music / Visual Arts*] class changed your relationship with other inmates? (Please give examples.)

13. How has your involvement in the [*Activity: Storytelling / Music / Visual Arts*] class changed your relationship with CCI staff? (Please give examples.)
14. Have people that you know (e.g., family, correctional officers, etc.) noticed changes in you personally as a result of participating in the [*Activity: Storytelling / Music / Visual Arts*] class?
15. Do you have any plans to further develop your skills in [*Activity: Storytelling / Music / Visual Arts*]?
16. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about how the [*Activity: Storytelling / Music / Visual Arts*] classes have changed you personally?
17. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about how the [*Activity: Storytelling / Music / Visual Arts*] classes have changed your relationships with others you know?
18. Do you have any suggestions in terms of how the [*Activity: Storytelling / Music / Visual Arts*] classes can be improved?

The interviews varied greatly in length from 13 to 40 minutes. On average, the interviews lasted 20.5 minutes ($SD = 7$ minutes).

Data Coding and Analysis

The final interviews were transcribed and analyzed at the Asian American Center on Disparities Research (AACDR) at the University of California, Davis. To organize and segment the results of the completed interviews ($n = 13$), a code template based on the interview protocol was first applied to the data (Crabtree & Miller, 1999) before proceeding to a line-by-line thematic analysis that was informed by grounded theory procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The codes for the data were generated through two iterations of coding between two evaluators. The evaluators consisted of a social psychologist with a Ph.D. and a Human Development M.S. student. First, evaluators read each of the transcribed interviews independently. A content analysis of each sentence of the transcripts was conducted whereby the evaluators came up with general, overarching themes associated with the demonstration program. Themes were then compared between the evaluators. A total of 7 main themes were agreed upon and subsequently applied to the transcribed interviews: (1) Initial Interest in *AIC* Programming, (2) Improved Relationships with Others, (3) Enhanced Mental Health & Psychological Well-Being, (4) Personal Growth, (5) Future Development & Applications, (6) Increased Arts-Based Knowledge, and (7) Recommendations for Future *AIC* Programming.

Each evaluator went through transcripts line-by-line a second time coding sentences that reflected the key themes. Following independent coding, evaluators met to compare their coded transcripts. The evaluators agreed on the codes approximately 88% of the time. In the remaining 12% of cases where the two evaluators did not agree, they discussed the coded transcript before coming to a consensus on the major code.

Once the major themes were identified and finalized in the transcripts, each evaluator independently re-read all of the coded interviews and developed a list of sub-codes under each of

the seven key themes. Sub-codes were then compared between the evaluators. The process resulted in the identification of a number of sub-themes (number is dependent on the major theme). Each evaluator read through the transcripts a third time sub-coding sentences that reflected the specific sub-themes. Following independent sub-coding, evaluators met to compare their sub-coded transcripts. The evaluators agreed on the sub-codes approximately 93% of the time. In the remaining 7% of cases where the two evaluators did not agree, they discussed the sub-coded transcript before coming to a consensus on the sub-code.

Results

Motivation for Initial Involvement

Participants were asked to explain their initial motivation for participating in the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration project. Four major reasons emerged, including (1) inmates with previous experience in the art form looking to improve their skill sets, (2) limited programming options at California Correctional Institution (CCI), (3) applying the art form to real-life situations, and (4) a desire to try something new.

Previous experience – looking to hone skills. Four (30.8%) of the inmate participants mentioned that they had previous experience in a particular art form (writing, music, visual art) and hoped to gain additional feedback and guidance in an effort to improve their skill level.

“What interested me in the music class, for one, I love music and I’ve been doing music when I was on the streets as well.” (M2)

“I’m an artist and they were offering an art class, or storytelling, or a music class, so I picked the art class. And it was my first yard being on after being in the shoe for seven years, and so man, I just couldn’t wait to get into the art.” (V1)

Limited programming at California Correctional Institution (CCI). Five (38.5%) of the inmate participants expressed the lack of programming options at California Correctional Institution (CCI). Thus, their initial involvement in the AIC program was motivated by a desire to participate in an activity outside of their cell. Once they attended the first class however, the inmates found the program to be enjoyable.

“It was one of the very few available programs.” (S2)

“Because depends on where I’m at, there’s really no programs going on.” (S4)

“They didn’t have many groups here at CCI, and I love music, so I wanted to try it out, and it was worth coming back to. We learned a lot of stuff.” (M1)

“I was just doing that because they had no programs here [at CCI] – absolutely nothing going on here. But I keep out of trouble and get my sign in, because it’s a music class and the two musicians that come in are you know...musicians, and I figured I could learn from them. If nothing else, I could teach myself – pick up where I left off years, years

back. You know, try and pick up the guitar to try and accompany myself with my vocals. I figured it couldn't hurt." (M4)

"It was actually nothing to do with music. It was actually something, initially, at first, to get out like the cell. To do something productive, to you know, venture off something else...then once I started going to the classes...I actually started learning guitar. And then I was actually surprised that I actually liked it." (M5)

Real-life application. Two (15.4%) of the participants offered specific reasons for signing up *AIC* programming, specifically the Traditional Storytelling class. Both participants hoped to improve their communication skills.

"I've been writing, doing different scribing, experimenting with different types of writing, mostly short stories and essays. I also have had a problem in the past speaking in front of groups because of my shyness and so I thought the two would work together. That the storytelling class would also help me speak in front of others and would also help me better define my stories or give me insight into what I was writing." (S1)

"It was connecting the...it was, how you say, preparing myself vocally. For, before a, for a [*parole*] board." (S2)

Try something new. Eight (61.5%) of the inmate participants stated that they wanted to try a novel activity and the *AIC* programming offered them a different means to spend their time.

"It was something new." (S2)

"Honestly, it was something new." (S4)

"I wanted to try something new, wanted to, you know, just expand myself. Different things I've never done, so I'll give it a try." (S8)

"Just [*for*] the art itself." (V3)

Participants were then asked to describe the ways in which they had been affected by their participation in the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration project. Qualitative analyses of the interviews identified 5 major effects that the program had on participants: (1) Improved Relationships with Others, (2) Enhanced Mental Health & Psychological Well-Being, (3) Personal Growth, (4) Future Development & Applications, and (5) Increased Arts-Based Knowledge. Most of the five major effects could be further classified into a number of specific effects or subthemes. Both the major effects and the sub-themes that represent and define these effects are explained below.

Improved Relationships with Others

The first major theme that emerged from the interviews was the improvement of relationships with other individuals. Through involvement in the *Arts in Corrections* demonstration program,

inmate participants across all three classes developed meaningful relationships not only with (1) their class instructors and (2) classmates, but also with (3) other inmates and (4) correctional officers at California Correctional Institution, as well as with (5) family members.

Relationship with instructor. Many of the inmate participants reported that their relationship with the instructor of their *Arts in Corrections* program developed and strengthened over the duration of the demonstration program. Almost 85% of the inmate participants commented on how they felt they could relate to the instructors and how they viewed the instructors as personal role models, mentors, and/or key leadership figures in their lives.

“It may sound funny, but [*Michael McCarty*] is kind of like a father figure, cause he is the type of person...he allows you to change, for the better, and he always wants the best for all of his students.” (S4)

“I owe everything to Mr. McCarty...I studied him pretty close and I took a lot of things from him,...he’s just a fun person to be around, so I took that and I also took the leadership qualities he has and I tried to spread it around as far as being a leader, and it has some good effects.” (S4)

“Those guys [*Juan Perez and Quincy McCrary*], they’re like family.” (M2)

“We can identify with them both [*Fabian Debora and Omar Ramirez*], and they can kinda identify with us because...first of all they’re both artists and Omar is involved with restorative justice so he’s able to talk to us and understand, you know, where we’re coming from and what we’re going through.” (VI)

“He [*Fabian Debora*] shared with us how he got into art, his background – which also identified with us – that he overcame that type of life and environment that he came from which was basically the same as we came from, it was encouraging to us.” (VI)

The respect and closeness that many of the inmate participants felt with their instructors appeared to have facilitated honest interactions and open discussions of personal histories and life circumstances.

“With Quincy and Juan, it was so open, so respectful, so inviting...it’s disarming. You know their whole motive is to help you, in whatever way they can, I mean, through this program...and they are very earnest about it. They’re very, I mean, ferocious in their way of continuously showering you with all types of respect and embrace and drive and motivation and it’s like you can’t not want to do better. I mean, even if you don’t want to do better for you, you’re like, ‘I can’t let Juan down, I can’t let Quincy down.’” (M2)

“He [*Juan Perez*] came and talked to me a number of times when he saw I was in the mood and didn’t have my head on my chest from depression. I was in the mood to talk, he would bring me out of it, you know, tap in on the shoulder and told me, ‘Wake up, wake up’...something to learn from someone like that.” (M4)

“I spilled my guts to him [*Juan Perez*], I opened up to him...he would talk to me, he would confirm me. Not standoffish or as a convict. Like he was interested.” (M4)

“They [*Juan Perez and Quincy McCrary*] treat you like a human being instead of, you know, the stigma inmate – ‘You’re criminals and there’s no rehabilitation for you.’ It was nothing like that. It was actually really down to earth and human interactions.” (M5)

Inmates also expressed how impressed they were with the background, credentials, and personal commitment of the instructors ACTA selected for the *Arts in Corrections* program.

“What made me come back [*week after week*] was the instructors. I mean they embraced the dedication, the motivation. It was just like, okay these people [*the instructors*]... don’t look at us any different. They treat us...as you would if you met us on the streets. They’ve given us the benefit of the doubt. This is a human being and I mean...their attitude towards us plus the involvement, it would make you want to come back.” (M2)

“You see their passion for it, and their drive, and their...zest to try to help us.” (M2)

“He’s [*Juan Perez*] no slouch; they didn’t just pick someone off the streets who wanted to come in to see what convicts are like. Juan was a real musician.” (M4)

Even though the *Arts in Corrections* program is no longer offered at California Correctional Institution, many of the inmates expressed that they missed their instructors.

“Those are some real cool dudes right there [*Juan Perez and Quincy McCrary*]. Man, we’ve been missing them like crazy. Like, ‘Dang, I thought today they was coming back.’” (M2)

Relationship with classmates. More than half of the inmate participants mentioned that through participation in the *Arts in Corrections* demonstration program, they were able to develop and maintain strong relationships with the other program participants. The relationships described appeared to be beyond the typical scope of relationships between fellow inmates.

“I was surprised at how well the group of inmates as far as how open they were. A lot of the times you have guys that will put on a mask and hold back because they put on a different presentation when they are in front of other inmates than they would rather in public...but the group was surprisingly open and everyone received the others stories well. There’s no derogatory comments or anything...it was very open and honest.” (S1)

“There was a mindset amongst the general population...you’re going to get up and tell a bunch of fake stories or you’re gonna talk about what a wonderful gangster you were and all...but the group wasn’t like that at all.” (S1)

“You get to know a person for who they are, you know what I mean? The façades or the personas that people want to get – that’s stripped away once...someone’s relaxed or they don’t feel that they have to be anything other than themselves in front of you. Then, you

know, after that...we might end up playing basketball an hour...find out ‘Oh, it’s your birthday?’ We might not get it on your birthday, but we know we’ll be coming to class on Saturday so we might put a little spread or some food together and surprise the person or something...Really, we became like a family.” (M2)

“[*Participating in AIC programming*] introduces you to other people you may not have without this program. I mean, get close to, or spoke to, or got to know. So it opened those types of doors, and...when you’re in there, it’s such a relaxed...homely type of feeling where you can actually be yourself. It’s prison so a lot of people walk around with a façade sometimes, or this persona, but you put a person in an environment where they can be themselves, you got all these grill-hard criminals laughing and coming together. And you’re putting your minds together trying to figure out ‘Okay, what this bridge in this song should be,’ and you get to learn people’s personality for who they are. Instead of, ‘Okay, I’m black, you’re white, you’re Mexican, he’s whatever,’ whatever the case may be...you put all that...affiliation and non-affiliation aside and get to know the person for who they are.” (M2)

“There wasn’t even a fistfight, the whole time [*during the AIC classes*]...which is really good in here, because...there is at least one fistfight every time they open up the courtyard, somebody causes trouble.” (M4)

“[*Participating in AIC programming*] further developed like relationships with inmates that were inside that group. They were like, ‘Okay, when we, when we’re outside of the group, we’re inmates,’ but...when you’re inside the group, it was like, you try to forget, not consciously, you try to forget, but it was like the whole thing, the image of the inmate was kind of removed and you started to see people be actually who they are.” (M5)

“I would say for us who were in the class, it brings us like special bonds because we were able to help each other out,...share each other’s art with each other, and talk about it. Being there even throughout the week, and you know just pretty much wait for them [*the instructors*] to come again ‘cause it bring us closer. Even some guys, we were different races and normally I guess we wouldn’t be communicating that great, but it did bring us a lot closer.” (V1)

“I think if anything, it brought us closer together because [*when*] we are doing classes like the art, everybody has to come together and do their part. So it’s sort of like teamwork.” (V3)

Relationship with other California Correctional Institution inmates. Almost half of the participants also felt more open to fostering better relationships with other inmates at California Correctional Institution who were not in the *AIC* program.

“Before I wouldn’t really talk to a lot of people. Now I just go up to people like, ‘Ayy, how you doing?’” (S8)

“This music class has helped me kind of, rid that of my character. Because like I said, you’re here on the prison yard, and you don’t know who’s who, or what the next man is thinking. So you’re always on the defensive and it’s more or less like, you don’t have to approach everybody in that always on the defensive...give the person the benefit of the doubt. If something happens, it happens, but don’t just write a person off as being one way or another.” (M2)

“Now I have more friends to share with...and the advices I take and I gave some advice on my space, on my life, and there are a lot of things I can share as a human being.” (M3)

“Walking out of that shell forced myself to recollect my past and realize I am not the dark person that I allow myself to be...so I come out of the shell, and I get to tell them [*other inmates*] stories. Talking to these guys, I tell them, ‘Hey, I used to be a hippie. You know, I’m nothing like when I’m walking around, walking around here acting like a hardcase. You guys know that’s the other side of me, don’t you? Must have to.’ As soon as I tell them, they realize, ‘Hey, you know what, we went through the same thing one period. It’s just that we’re convicts, you know?’” (M4)

Relationship with California Correctional Institution staff. One of the most common themes reported by more than three-quarters of the inmate participants was improved relations with staff at California Correctional Institution (typically the Correctional Officers) as a result of their participation in the *Arts in Corrections* demonstration program.

“[*Participating in AIC programming*] allowed me to ask staff members certain questions that I usually wouldn’t ask...cause they usually wouldn’t be used to being asked by inmates. As far as...Do they read to their children? Do they have children? What things are they interested in reading? Because I like to read too, so by giving me their advice or this answer it allowed me to go to the library and read as well to see if I can get the same kind of reaction to the book that they did.” (S4)

“I get to talk more with the COs...like ‘Ayy, how you guys doing?’ you know? Keep friendly with them.” (S8)

“They [*COs*] said I’ve become...more approachable. I’ve been in prison for eleven years, and most of my time is been like I am now, on a level 4-180, which is the highest security you can in California, unless you in the shoe. You know, years of being on these and trying to make sure you make it home...you become very protective and closed off, or closed in...it becomes second nature because of our living situation. I’m a convict...so we don’t do the friendly thing.” (M2)

“I gotta confess I got a bad attitude with all any types of authority...ever since I was a kid. [*Participating in AIC programming*] allow[ed] myself to at least become at least civilized and not have all that negativity...just because some staff wants to talk respect to me, or you know, they created a negative response. ...Some of them have approached me and actually try to break through that. ...Once they find out what I’m about, they try to

get to this good side of me, make conversation...and I go, ‘Wow, I can’t walk with this negative attitude I’ve had since I was a kid,’” (M4)

“I think that we were blessed and lucky to have the staff that was in there. Can I say his name? Because I think it does like I guess play a part on which type of staff we have in there. Because the ones that we did – he was Officer [*name redacted*] – and he got us out of cell before Omar and Fabian showed up and was you know, real professional...that plays a big part in how the class is gonna start off.” (V1)

“It’s good because every time they [*CCI COs/staff*] walked by and they see your painting, they say, you know, I’m doing a good job and keep it up.” (V2)

“I’m painting murals right here in the institution...so that helps me, that motivate[s] me to open up a little more with staff and people in here.” (V2)

“When they see my artwork on the wall they always compliment me: ‘That’s pretty good stuff,’ because they know I was in art class.” (V5)

One inmate participant referenced both positive and negative experiences with CCI staff during his participation in the *Arts in Correction* program.

“As far as the negative side, ‘You know what, they’re inmates. They don’t deserve...the enjoyment or to have any joy. They should be punished here.’ And then the positive side was like, ‘You know what? Give them something to do, get them out of the cell.’ So yeah, a little bit of a mixture; it was interesting to see that.” (M5)

Relationship with family. More than half of the *Arts in Corrections* inmate participants also highlighted the impact of the program beyond the walls of California Correctional Institution. In some ways, participation in the program led to observable personality changes and inmates reported enriched family relations as a result of participating *AIC* programming.

“I started a program with my children...every time I call my children, I always tell them to read me a book. Whenever they read me a book, then the next time I call them, I read them a book. We got to manage to pick the same book...and then we finish the book together. I’ve been doing that since the last time I was in storytelling, so it’s been a while now.” (S4)

“My family tells me I’m more talkative. Before I would be like, ‘Ayy, how you guys doing?’ I really didn’t have much to say to them and now I kind of talk to them more. Especially my girlfriend...before I was really like shy, but now I get to talk to her more, and tell her different things you know?” (S8)

“I have a child, so sometimes I mean, I might write something out, either sing it or rap it to her over the phone. That’s the way we communicate. It helps bring me closer to my daughter, because she likes music too.” (M2)

“They [ACTA] took a couple professional-like, professional photographer coming in after that end of the classes. We each got two really nice black and white [photos]. They were done by a professional. I know a little bit, enough about photography to be able to tell. So I sent one of them – one of these large photos, these glosses – to my sister, which prompted her to send me my guitar.” (M4)

“They [family and friends] see my ideas have more detail to them.” (V3)

“I send a lot more art work now...They [his family] really like my artwork and they put it up in the house.” (V5)

Enhanced Mental Health & Psychological Well-Being

A second major effect that emerged from the interviews involved an improvement in mental health and psychological well-being. Inmate participants perceived the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration program to be (1) a form of group/class therapy, (2) a mental escape or break from their normal schedule at California Correctional Institution (CCI), and (3) a means to reduce stress.

Group/class as therapy. Two (15.4%) of the inmate participants stated that the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration program classes served as a form of group therapy within California Correctional Institution (CCI).

“It wasn’t only about the music and the art. The instructors would sit. We would speak. Sometimes if we have something to get off our chest, there would be a sounding booth...we would delve into some stuff.” (M1)

“So it wasn’t just about art. It was...in a sense, I would say like therapy.” (V1)

“I would say for me it’s more therapeutic.” (V1)

“Escape” from routine of prison life. Five (38.5%) of the inmate participants mentioned that the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration project programming provided a break from their regular day-to-day schedule at California Correctional Institution (CCI). Participants highlighted both experiencing mental “escapes” and feeling more physical freedom due to increased hours outside of their cell.

“My head becomes clear...compared to everything else I’m weighted down with, physically and emotionally. My head becomes clear and I realize...it’s a spiritual thing.” (M4)

“It [music] caused me to cut my mind out of it sometimes.” (M4)

“I think it was more...the unexpected enjoyment that I actually got from learning an instrument...I think it wasn’t necessarily a dramatic change because it [the AIC program]

wasn't that long, but I think if the program was prolonged...that would have been my escape. Something to take me away from this negative environment sometimes." (M5)

"Leaving my cell and going to the gym...was a sense of freedom. Being there for three hours – it felt like I wasn't here [at CCI]. Every week, I know me and a few other guys...that's all we look forward to because we were somewhere else and it was a great feeling." (V1)

"It's more of like an escape." (V1)

"I get to come out more often from the cell and spend more time outside." (V2)

"It took me 'away' from this place a lot. I spent time doing my artwork." (V5)

Stress reduction. Four (30.8%) of the inmate participants found the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration project programming to be an unexpected source of stress reduction.

"It [class] helps me be more relaxed speaking in front of others." (S1)

"Music and art – it's not only a form of expression, it's stress relieving." (M1)

"Music for me is a stress reliever...so if I'm going through something – whether it be good or bad – whether it be pure blank, or something is on my mind, I got the time to sit back and I mean, really dig in. That's a form of expression for me." (M2)

"It [art] keeps me busy...it calms me down a lot. It takes a lot of time. You know, trying to make it through the day." (V5)

"I think it [art] changed me personally. I think it mellowed me out a bit." (V5)

Personal Growth

The third major theme that emerged from the interviews centered on personal growth as a result of participating in the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration program at California Correctional Institution (CCI). Inmate participants reflected on the various ways the classes facilitated the development of positive and prosocial character traits. Interviewees described personal growth in four main domains: (1) improved communication and social skills, (2) patience, (3) empathy, and (4) optimism and motivation.

Better communication & social skills. The majority (84.6%) of the inmate participants indicated that the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration project programming led to increased communication and improved social skills. Inmate participants discussed how they were more motivated to approach others and felt more confident in their ability to explain themselves more effectively to others. These communication skills were related to what the inmates were learning in the AIC classes and may have been effective in motivating the inmates to build and maintain relationships, as outlined earlier in this report.

“The useful lesson in telling the parable. There’s a story for every moment, for each mood. There’s a story to fit every situation...There is a story to tell for each moment of the day, you know? So it continues. I’m just more aware now, more aware of...how do I answer certain situations, or how do I try to help someone else understand?” (S2)

“I also use a form of storytelling when I am in other group[s]. For example, in AA, alcoholic recovery, when they ask us a question, I go into a story-tell mode to make others, I guess, understand how I’m answering the question.” (S2)

“One guy...he told me that I speak sort of metaphorically, or I use analogies...my choice of words is different, and how I explain things.” (S2)

“It helped me to get better across and not be so bold with my words, but to share a story. Short or long story, just to sometimes just to kill the waiting process or the processing or just to avoid the silence.” (S2)

“I don’t have a board date...but I’m thinking when I do, it [*storytelling*] would better help me to answer certain questions.” (S2)

“Through storytelling I’ve been communicating with a lot of people. I’ve been to the chat forums a few times to express my gratitude for storytelling because it allowed me to open up. It allowed me to really rationalize and really think about the situation I’m in, as far as being in jail. It allowed me to really converse with people on a different level.” (S4)

“It [*storytelling*] helps a lot of people, especially people that keep to themselves a lot. Cause a lot of them inmates keep to themselves because they don’t want to engage in conversation with other inmates. But it really, really helps. It’s good to express yourself sometimes. Because sometimes you just hold a lot in and people like know ‘just keep my mouth shut,’ but it’s good to express yourself to people because it’s helpful and I think this class would help a lot of people like it helped me do that.” (S4)

“It allows me to express my feelings more, to my family, to my cellmates, to the correctional officers. Cause at first, I was more of the person that was...I was kind of aggressive when it came to talking to people. And the storytelling, it allowed me to take a breath – take a breath, relax, and explain myself. See that it’s possible to listen to what the next person has to say...instead of being in a rush.” (S4)

“I’m more, more open to having relationships, talking to people. You know, being able to go and make friends. Before I was really, like, kept to myself because I didn’t know how to express myself and talk to people. And now I engage in conversations. Like, I want to start conversations.” (S8)

“[*Participating in AIC programming*] opened up a new avenue that would have otherwise been closed. You actually realize ‘Well, okay, you know, it’s kind of cool,’

because interactions with everyone, where we call the ‘outside world’ is like, still possible. So it helps to...adapt, or to hone your social skills after a while.” (M5)

“[*One of the fellow inmates in AIC programming*] had difficulties communicating with anybody other than inmates. So...him being able to talk to Omar, Fabian, and...some interviews on camera, man, he had like, big stage fright and nerves, everything. You know, we were all there and got to give him support...and it just brought him out of his shell, big time. He wasn’t an artist like that before, but he was able to paint his own portrait, and that kind of really, really opened him up. It really changed his life, you know?” (V1)

“Just really did help my communication with others...not just with other inmates, but also with the staff and also with Omar and Fabian that had come from ‘out there’ into here.” (V1)

“I get to communicate with a lot more people. I open up to a lot of...[*people*] outside of the class.” (V2)

“I have changed a lot, because before I wouldn’t communicate with a lot of people – and they came and they opened a lot. They opened...a door that I didn’t see before.” (V2)

In addition to increased communication and improved social skills, a number of the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) inmate participants from the Traditional Storytelling class indicated how the content of their conversations with others have become more meaningful.

“Instead of the usual, everyday recycling conversations we go through, storytelling kind of gets us out of the box.” (S2)

“[*Participating in AIC programming*] allowed me to talk to other races I really usually wouldn’t talk to because it gave me something to actually talk about. Instead of being one-sided, it’s like more dimensional. The conversation is more dimensional now.” (S4)

“Before, I didn’t know how to really talk to people, have long conversations with people. Now, I’m more like I know how to have better conversations now with people and express myself more. Before I took the classes I didn’t. It was just short conversations, and that was it.” (S8)

Inmates from the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) Songwriting and Music and Drawing Transformation (Visual Arts) classes highlighted how they engage in self-expression through the art form.

“I feel like music and poetry are the best expressions, so it’s my biggest way of expressing myself.” (M1)

“Like, man, I can really get out there, and do art, and express myself out there with all this different types of paint and paintbrushes.” (V1)

“I communicate through [*art*] with a lot of people.” (V2)

Patience. Two (15.4%) of the inmate participants expressed that the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration project programming led them to be more patient with themselves and with others.

“It builds your patience. You have to do a lot of things...it opens your mind up.” (V3)

“It helped me a lot with being patient. The main thing was being patient.” (V3)

Empathy. Five (38.5%) of the inmate participants mentioned that the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration project programming resulted in cultivating more empathy for others.

“It changed a lot. It changed me opening up to people, because I really wasn’t a person type of person and it allowed me to view people in a different light. Like, different nationalities, different races; it allowed me to approach them with a sense of everybody is human, and everybody makes mistakes, and everybody can get past our mistakes if we open up and listen to each other.” (S4)

“Without storytelling, I don’t think I would be in this prison right now, because I wouldn’t have the opportunity to reach out to other inmates to see if I can get some kind of cordial understanding.” (S4)

“I’m the type of person that usually wouldn’t talk to people if I don’t know too much about them or if I already wasn’t ready to learn the different about, you know, other people’s lives.” (S4)

“My mind is very different than before. I am very understanding towards other people, and the way I explain myself...I have time to listen to other people and they can do the same. That way we can share each other the way to speak to each other.” (M3)

“[*Participating in AIC programming*] allows me [*to*] temporarily change my whole psychology and temporarily to identify with some of the other guys in my classes...I would sit there and walk laps during the yard time and tell them – and normally I wouldn’t say nothing about my music background – I became a chirping canary, telling them all about my history.” (M4)

Optimism and motivation. Eight (61.5%) inmates stated that participating in the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration project programming resulted in increased personal motivation and optimism.

“Dedication – like if this [*music*] is something that you’re passionate about, then really do it. I mean, stretch your mind and take advantage of it. And it’s changed because I’ve taken it more serious. Like, I feel like I’ve been down a lot. So before a while it really wasn’t anything on my mind...until we had classes that were offered to us.” (M2)

“I’m more and more motivated to go to other different programs. So it [*music*] motivates me.” (M3)

“I actually have a joy for you know, learning guitar. I was actually surprised that I enjoyed it and that I took to it very well. Even the instructors were saying that, you know, ‘you have your own style,’ so I was like, okay, that’s pretty cool. So...that was a surprise to me; that was a good one.” (M5)

“I would say it opened up a new...dimension and more of a thirst to do different types of art...it gave me more like hope.” (V1)

“All of my family members that I talked to...I would tell them about the Arts in Corrections class that I was taking on Saturdays. So all of them knew that I have spent all those years obviously in the shoe...and you know, I would send them art all throughout the years when I was in the shoe. Now I was out and I was able to, you know, use these different types of art supplies and stuff. I was happier and more optimistic about the future. Just happy that I even made the decision of coming out of the shoe... yeah, I am really happy now and I am sure that my family noticed it big time.” (V1)

“It [*art*] motivates me to keep on learning more.” (V2)

“I like to draw, so for me it [*AIC programming*] gave me something that I like to do.” (V3)

Future Development & Applications

The inmates also discussed future plans to develop and apply the skills they had learned in the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration program at California Correctional Institution (CCI) to other opportunities beyond the program itself.

Student becomes teacher. Five (38.5%) of the inmate participants mentioned that following their experience in the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration project, they hoped to share what they had learned with others.

“I took the leadership qualities he [Michael McCarty] has and I tried to spread it around, as far as being a leader, and it has some good effects.” (S4)

“I would like to...teach others what I learned already.” (M3)

“I was going there sometimes both days, both in the mornings and afternoon. I was trying to...I was helping people out, too, how to learn.” (V2)

“I’ve had a lot [*of*] people asking me for tips, as far as when they are doing artwork... they were asking me tips like how to shade this, which way to shade that.” (V5)

Desire for improvement. Two (15.4%) of the inmate participants mentioned that they hoped to continue taking *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration project programming in the future. Moreover, both expressed that they sought to improve their skills they acquired during the demonstration project phase.

“If that class should come back, I would definitely sign up. Because the more practice that we use, that we learn, it has better gains, better gains. The more familiar we get with storytelling, the more techniques, the more assignments we receive...it’s like a lifelong building process.” (S2)

“I had a conversation about two weeks ago with one of the guys that was in the class with me. Me and him, we go back and forth with our ideas, we talk ideas back and forth about how to keep the conversation going as far as storytelling. But one thing is, it’s just me and him really want [*the class*]...it’s going to be a challenge.” (S4)

Larger aspirations. Four (30.8%) of the inmate participants stated plans to complete large-scale ventures as a result of their participation in the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration project programming. These plans included writing a book and painting a large mural at California Correctional Institution (CCI) for visitors to enjoy.

“Well, actually, I was in the process of writing my own book.” (S4)

“From the littlest things I got from storytelling...I’ve been thinking about it, just writing a book about my life.” (S8)

“They [CCI] want to let me do another mural because the one we had was so small. I’m going to try to work on one for the gates and one for the pictures. I just want to – anytime I do something like that – I just want to do it better and better.” (V2)

“We wanted to do a mural...where people can have a background and their pictures. Like in the other prisons. They got one here, but it’s small. So we want to do a nice big scenery or something in the background. So where you take pictures with your family, you know, you can see it in the back.” (V5)

Increased Arts-Based Knowledge

The fifth and final major effect that emerged in the analyses was the increase in arts-based knowledge. More than three-fourths of the inmate participants indicated what they learned about a specific art form during their time in the Traditional Storytelling, Songwriting and Music, or Drawing Transformation (Visual Arts) classes.

“I was able to learn...these basic ideas about the storytelling. So how you present – how you best present it in front of others, how it’s important to have enthusiasm. It’s one of my- the most difficult things I had, which I was not able to overcome, was that he [*Michael McCarty*] said it was important to keep eye contact with your audience...My problem is that when I make eye contact with anyone, I tend to lose what’s in my head.

At the time because I have this nervousness about speaking in front of others, so this is something I was not able to overcome. But as far as the rest of it, it did help things.” (S1)

“[*Participating in AIC programming*] helped me better my writing. When you’re speaking, there is a different process going on in your head rather than when you’re just sitting at a desk and writing...sometimes one brings out points that the other wouldn’t, you know, as far as the story and what/how other people interpret it...one enhances the other.” (S1)

“You want the story to have a definite ending, and you don’t want it to last too long. It’s good to provide some type of an extra emphasis during storytelling. Might be by the movement of your body, the expression of your face, the loudness, the softness of your voice.” (S1)

“My choice of words is different and how I explain things.” (S2)

“I was in the process of writing my own book...so [*participating in AIC programming*] gave me a lot of insight on how I can go about writing a book and it also allows me to express the words to other people who are already interested.” (S4)

“We learned a lot of chords and chord progressions, but it’s also for lyricists and vocalists.” (M1)

“I was a lyricist and I sing, so it was good to learn the chords and everything. We learned a lot of chords...that’s what I most picked up from the class.” (M1)

“[*Fabian Debora and Omar Ramirez*] both knew all the basics about painting but they had their own different styles and own different ways they were able to teach us...different type of brushes, different type of techniques, different type of mediums, different types of papers.” (V1)

“[*The instructors*] show you how to draw...how to get in the right posture...how to be patient, detailing things more, sketching things out to make things look better – to how you want it.” (V3)

“He [*Fabian Debora*] taught us how to mix colors...and blending colors in, shading. It improved my skills as far as art work.” (V5)

Upon the conclusion of each interview, inmate participants were presented with the opportunity to suggest recommendations for future *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) programming. Their feedback is provided in the following section.

Recruitment, Implementation, and Retention

Suggestions for future AIC programming centered on the following five areas: (1) selection of instructors, (2) recruitment of participants, (3) class implementation, (4) a need for consistency or routine, and (5) program recognition from the institution.

Selection of instructors.

“I would get a little assistance for the team musicians. They try to be teachers – teaching somebody – couple of guys are going to be receptive of that kind of teaching. And somebody that can identify with the knuckleheads and tell them, ‘Shut up, and don’t even come in here again if you’re going to sit there and talk and do this. We can see you’re not even listening, these guys.’...even if it’s a guard. If it’s a guard that absolutely has music interest and knows how to establish order here, and not necessarily to slap some of these knuckles, but to guide them in an appropriate direction and know who should be in there and who shouldn’t.” (M4)

Recruitment of participants.

“There was only five or six of us. So maybe, you know, if there was a little bit more people.” (S2)

“A pre-approved list of the inmates that are on the roster. If they’re not involved in any of the incidents, lockdowns, or security risks...they shouldn’t be prevented from going to the group if the lockdown, or a modified program happened.” (M5)

Class implementation.

“He [*Michael McCarty*] gave us topics and ideas in our lives that we can write about to make our own personal books, but I can say that actually sitting down and writing...that could be a better improvement, because it can show us the direction that we’re headed. And if we’re headed in the wrong direction, we also can be corrected before we get to the end of our destination.” (S4)

“More feedback [*from the instructor*].” (S4)

“Meet more than one time a week.” (M1)

“More instruments, if we could...I know it’s kind of restricted because we’re in a 4-180 [*Level 4, 180-Degree Security Yard*], but try to somehow come to an understanding with the staff or whoever runs the actual prison...drum set or something. Just more instruments, you know that other people, that people might be more interested in than just keyboard or, you know, the guitar. Or...the little pad-padded up beat machine, or something like that for more of those that are more hip-hop.” (M2)

“A variety of hybrid offering...with music too, like bring some CDs. I mean, I suggested it to them and they said that’s a good idea, but they never did it. I said, ‘Can we bring some CDs in here and play them on the keyboard and have these guys follow along?’

because I know from experience. I know from experience doing time, trying to play music, and trying to teach people.” (M4)

“Better clearance for the instructors to get into the program. For example, some of them had a problem actually getting in [to CCI].” (M5)

“There was discussion with Quincy and Juan, and couple of other ones part of the administration, talking about getting us – when the program is under off time or even during it – that we could be able to be provided with like, little guitars. Mini guitars, or training guitars, something like that.” (M5)

“Just in general, more material.” (V2)

“Only thing that we pretty much needed was like, more drawing paper, more pencils.” (V3)

“More paint...outside of the class.” (V3)

Need for consistency/predictability/routine.

“There was a different officer in each group and that different officer would do things differently. Every officer did things differently and you didn’t know what to expect.” (S1)

“The classes are not guaranteed [*due to lock-down*]. I meant, we’ll just be ready like, okay we’re going to attend Monday and Tuesday, but due to a lockdown – which is a normal thing here – we won’t. It just becomes a cancelled class. So we never get to finish...and it just takes one lockdown.” (S2)

“Me and a couple of guys who used to attend class – we come to the yard and I asked them, ‘Did they open your door, did they call you for the class?’ We waited like four months and then we just gave up. We just figured something had gone wrong, you know?” (M4)

“The prison started changing the yard times and programs, and we had a lot of lockdowns.” (M5)

Buy-in/recognition from California Correctional Institution.

“Giving us chrono would have been nice, if they signed them, to make them more legit, instead of just giving us that piece of paper.” (S2)

“There’s no acknowledgement in the end. There’s nothing like that, you know? What gets me is if we were told later in the future, have you been ‘programming’ and I say ‘yes’ and explain the situation, there’s no documented proof.” (S2)

“Do the pictures and graduation ceremony and everything like we did in the first rotation...Because it’s not only that they completed it, I mean they- everybody puts in a lot of work into everything, and kind of, being able to showcase what you’ve been working on as well.” (MI)

Following the interview, the majority of the inmate participants requested that the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) programming return to California Correctional Institution (CCI) in the future.

Discussion

For the inmate participants in the ACTA *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration program at California Correctional Institution (CCI), the program seemed to be most effective at fostering improved interpersonal relationships, building stronger communication and social skills, and increasing the participants’ knowledge of a particular art form. Findings from the qualitative analyses indicate the program likely had an effect at both the institutional and individual level. Interview narratives suggest signs of improved relationships between the inmate participant and his instructor, classmates, family, and CCI staff/inmates, in addition to individual growth through the weekly group learning and mastery experiences.

Close examination of the qualitative interviews revealed that a number of the inmate participants mentioned the strengthening of relationships with individuals, both inside California Correctional Institution (e.g., classmates, other inmates, correctional officers) and outside the institution (e.g., instructors, family). Past researchers have found that inmates think of art instruction differently than they do authoritative systems of one-way learning experienced in a traditional classroom—the teacher teaches and the student passively learns (Durland, 2002; McMillan, 2003). In contrast, artist-instructors are regarded as being there to help, assist, guide and mentor inmates in learning how to create. In other words, art programs offer the opportunity for inmates to form positive relationships that are based on mutual respect as artists rather than on authority (Dean & Field, 2003). As a result, art programs tend to be more accessible, engaging and rewarding, and therefore, more likely to be taken seriously by inmates (Clements, 2004; Gussak, 2007).

Further, art and the creative process can provide a safe and acceptable way to express, release, and deal with potentially destructive feelings such as anger and aggression (Blacker, Watson, & Beech, 2008). Previous literature suggests that close social relationships may serve as major protective factors against mental health problems. Social relationships define individuals’ role identities, which impart meaning and purpose in life. These relationships also provide individuals with a sense of belonging, and thus contribute positively to well-being (Durkheim, 1865/1966; Thoits, 1983, 1985). Participation in the ACTA *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration program may augment the individual’s perception that they are a part of, contribute to, and are a valued member of their community. Many of the ACTA Arts in Corrections demonstration program participants reported enhanced interpersonal relationships within their institutional community. Social integration appears to have a direct, positive association with mental health (Lin, Ye, & Ensel, 1999; Thoits, 1995). Commitment to and involvement in a group can serve as protective sources of strength, both personally and socially, against mental health problems. Many of the ACTA *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration

program participants reported positive feelings of dedication and belonging to a group through learning and sharing their art form. The ACTA *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) Program could be a mechanism by which individuals enhance their psychological well-being within a correctional institution.

Other scholars have noted that arts education can help those struggling with issues of self-worth, confidence, and empowerment (Matarasso & Chell, 1998; Jermyn, 2001). Marian Liebmann (1994) argues in favor of arts education in prison as an effective means of communication for those who have problems expressing themselves. He found the arts to be a useful means of self-expression and self-exploration. Prison arts programs in Norway, for example, were found to contribute to self-development through improving motivation, social, and life skills (Langelid, Maki, Raundrup, & Svensson, 2009). Prison arts programs also can act as a gateway to further learning through building self-efficacy and self-esteem (Brewster & Merts, 2012; Cohen, 2009; Silber, 2005). Studies have shown that the arts can encourage a state of readiness to learn by increasing self-esteem and developing basic communication and other essential skills (Anderson & Overy, 2010; Hughes, 2005; Langelid et al., 2009).

The program may also provide the inmate participants with a sense of personal empowerment. Past research suggests that empowerment is a process through which individuals and communities gain mastery over their affairs (Rappaport, 1987). Empowerment has been found to operate through self-efficacy, which has implications on psychosocial functioning (Bandura, 1986, 1989). Individual self-efficacy can be enhanced in four fundamental ways, and the most effective approach to developing a resilient sense of efficacy is through mastery experiences (Bandura, 1986). The ACTA *Arts in Corrections* demonstration program may construct and reinforce a unique mastery experience for all participants. The program offers inmates a special opportunity to develop their communication and social skills and acquire a sense of self-improvement – two elements critical to adaptive functioning. Each instructor and inmate participant also spends a concentrated amount of time cultivating and refining skills specific to an art form. Participants reported a sense of personal accomplishment and viewed their skills and competencies as resources to the CCI community. The development of competencies and assets often render people more resilient to stress and adversity. Therefore, the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) demonstration program may potentially correlate with improved psychosocial and mental health functioning.

Participation in the program appears to have also provided a temporary mental break from the regular routine within a high-security correctional institution. The ACTA AIC demonstration project was designed for level IV inmates who had been in long-term SHU, a solitary confinement space in maximum security prisons. While in solitary confinement, inmates are isolated from human contact for the vast majority of their day (e.g., 22-24 hours). Many of the ACTA *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) program inmate participants appeared to have developed stronger communication skills and were more motivated to approach and engage with other individuals within CCI. Thus, the program should be considered as a potential transition strategy for inmates returning to the general population following prolonged time in solitary confinement.

Overall, the qualitative analyses identified a number of possible, compelling effects the ACTA

Arts in Corrections (AIC) demonstration program often can have on its inmate participants. The present qualitative study utilized a fairly small sample and it is unclear if the findings and effects that materialized in the current interviews would replicate in a more representative sample. Moreover, the small sample size limited the ability to examine modality-specific effects (e.g., are certain types of art forms more effective?). Additional evaluative studies are necessary to assess and replicate the effects of the *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) Program. Nevertheless, the evaluation findings strongly suggest that the *Arts in Corrections* demonstration program can enhance psychosocial factors that are related to improved social relationships, better mental health, and personal growth among inmate participants. Clearly, the promising potential of this program warrants further investigation in terms of demonstration projects complemented with both qualitative and quantitative evaluations to more definitively determine the Program’s impact.

Appendix

Table 1

Demographic Information for ACTA *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) Demonstration Project Program Participants at California Correctional Institution (CCI) ($n = 13$)

ID	Gender	Living Situation	Cell Type	Number of Classes Attended	Notes
S1	Male	General Population	Single	10 (Storytelling)	
S2	Male	General Population	Shared	10 (Storytelling)	
S4	Male	General Population	Shared	10 (Storytelling)	
S8	Male	General Population	N/A	7 (Storytelling)	
S9	Male	General Population	N/A	7 (Storytelling)	Declined Interview
M1	Male	General Population	N/A	8 (Music)	
M2	Male	General Population	N/A	7 (Music)	
M3	Male	General Population	N/A	7 (Music)	
M4	Male	General Population	Single	7 (Music)	
M5	Male	General Population	N/A	7 (Music)	
V1	Male	General Population	Shared	9 (Visual Arts)	
V2	Male	General Population	N/A	10 (Visual Arts)	
V3	Male	General Population	N/A	7 (Visual Arts)	
V4	Male	General Population	N/A	7 (Visual Arts)	Declined Interview
V5	Male	General Population	N/A	7 (Visual Arts)	

Table 2

Themes Cited by *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) Demonstration Project Program Participants ($n = 13$)

Effect Mentioned	Frequency of Participants Reporting Effect	Percentage of Participants Reporting Effect
<i>Improved Relationships with Others</i>		
Relationship with AIC Instructor	25	84.6%
Relationship with AIC Classmates	12	61.5%
Relationship with Other CCI Inmates	11	46.2%
Relationship with CCI Staff	14	76.9%
Relationship with Family	10	53.8%
<i>Enhanced Mental Health & Psychological Well-Being</i>		
Group/Class as Therapy	3	15.4%
“Escape” from Routine of Prison Life	9	38.5%
Stress Reduction	4	30.8%
<i>Personal Growth</i>		
Communication & Social Skills	26	84.6%
Patience	5	15.4%
Empathy	7	38.5%
Optimism and Motivation	10	61.5%
<i>Future Development & Applications</i>		
Student Becomes Teacher	8	38.5%
Desire for Improvement	2	15.4%
Larger Aspirations	4	30.8%
<i>Increased Arts-Based Knowledge</i>	18	76.9%

Table 3

Administrative Recommendations for *Arts in Corrections* (AIC) Demonstration Project Program Based on Participant Feedback ($n = 13$)

Recommendation Mentioned	Frequency of Participants Reporting Recommendation	Percentage of Participants Reporting Recommendation
Selection of Instructors	1	7.7%
Recruitment of Participants	2	15.4%
Class Implementation	10	61.5%
Need for Consistency/Predictability/Routine	6	38.5%
Buy-In/Recognition from CCI	4	15.4%

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