Chapter 9
Pen Pals: An Examination of Human–Animal Interaction as an Outlet for Healthy Masculinity in Prison

Angela K. Fournier

This chapter discusses interactions between dogs and men who may be especially primed for the benefits of human–animal interaction (HAI) and at the same time a potentially risky group to entrust animals to—men in prison. After describing male imprisonment and the impact on expressed masculinity, prison-based animal programs are introduced and discussed. Following this review, an empirical study is described, which examined a dog training program in a men's prison. Researchers examined specific behaviors emitted by inmates when interacting with dogs, focusing on men in the general population. Findings are discussed in the context of prisonization and toxic masculinity. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

Men in Prison

Beginning in the 1970s, the role of incarceration in the United States shifted from an effort to provide rehabilitation for inmates to an emphasis on "incapacitation" and "containment" (Ogloff 2002). As a result, psychological treatment for inmates was drastically reduced, despite an increase in the number of incarcerations (Haney 1997). The United States incarcerates a larger percentage of its population than any other country in the world. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) over 6.8 million men and women are under the supervision of adult correctional systems (BJS 2014a). That figure includes 1.5 million people incarcerated in prison, with men making up 93 % of the population.

A.K. Fournier (✉)
Department of Psychology, College of Health Sciences & Human Ecology, Bemidji State University, 1500 Birchmont Dr. NE, Bemidji, MN, 56601, USA
e-mail: afournier@bemidjistate.edu

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Each year, a proportion of incarcerated men are released from prison and returned to society. Unfortunately, a large percentage of those released resume criminal behavior and are then sentenced to additional incarceration. In 2005, the U.S. Department of Justice tracked prisoners released in 30 states. Recidivism was extremely high; of the 286,829 prisoners released, 67.8 % were rearrested within three years and 76.6 % were rearrested within 5 years (BJS 2014b). Poor psychosocial functioning is just one of many variables that put men at risk for recidivism. Research suggests this poor functioning can be present prior to incarceration, but psychosocial abilities can also decline as a function of taking on the norms of the prison environment.

Prisonization

The Stanford Prison Experiment (Haney et al. 1973) is likely the most notable demonstration of the detrimental effects of incarceration. In this investigation into the power of the situation, psychologically healthy college students placed in a prison-like environment quickly took on the role of an inmate, becoming blindly obedient and suffering acute psychological trauma (Haney and Zimbardo 1998). Prisonization is a process in which inmates take on the customs, habits, and general culture of a correctional facility (Clemmer 1940). The prison culture includes adopting the inmate code, a code specifying an alliance *with* fellow inmates and *against* the facility administration and its policies (Clemmer 1940). In this process of socialization to the prison environment, inmates reject societal norms. The two primary theories used to explain prisonization postulate that (1) inmates take on the characteristics of prisonization as a way of coping with life in prison, called the deprivation model (Sykes 1958), or (2) prisonization is the result of maladaptive behaviors and values from the community entering the prison via those incarcerated, referred to as the importation model (Irwin and Cressey 1962). There is evidence for both models and many experts agree both sources contribute to the prisonization process (e.g., Rhodes 1979).

In a study of prisonization, Walters (2003) compared criminal thinking and criminal identity in novice inmates (i.e., never before incarcerated) and experienced inmates (i.e., having at least one prior incarceration) at the time of incarceration and after 6 months of their sentence. Both groups showed an increase in criminal thinking and identity after 6 months of incarceration, particularly the novice inmates. Although these changes related to prisonization may be adaptive for an inmate while incarcerated (e.g., reduces inmate-to-inmate violence), they are maladaptive for the man who is released back into the community, and may contribute to criminal behavior and subsequent return to prison. Haney (1997) suggests incarcerated men and women undergo a psychological “deep freeze” in prison and must recover from the negative effects of incarceration prior to reentering society. Men may be particularly at risk for the detrimental effects of incarceration, as they are forced to adapt their expression of masculinity to the confines of the prison environment.

Masculinity

Gender role conflict occurs when the gender roles ascribed someone by society have negative outcomes for them and others (O'Neil et al. 1995). For men, this can mean socialization of restricted emotionality, obsession with achievement and success, restrictive sexual and affectionate behavior, socialized control and power, extreme competitiveness, and homophobia (O'Neil 2008). The prison environment can magnify these characteristics. Research indicates gender role conflict is prevalent in incarcerated men and is a significant predictor of violence in prison samples (Amato 2012).

Phillips (2001) suggests that men in prison are deprived of all resources for enacting manhood, including women, money, clothing, weapons, and access to goods and services. Instead, inmates must demonstrate manhood through acts of bravery and physical power. This results in a constricted version of masculinity. Sabo et al. (2001) describe prison as an "ultramasculine world where nobody talks about masculinity" (p. 3). In their discussion of gender and punishment, they suggest prison facilitates and accentuates the relatively maladaptive behaviors of hegemonic masculinity, in which inmates, staff, and administration stress male dominance, violence, and competition. Kupers (2001a) refers to this constellation as *toxic masculinity*, a term that delineates socially destructive masculinity from prosocial expressions of masculinity (e.g., pride, achievement orientation). This is beyond the fear of the feminine (e.g., Blazina 1997, 2003; Neumann 1994) and normative male alexithymia (Levant 1998) that the average man in Western society is subject to. According to Sabo et al. (2001), prisons have four earmarks of a patriarchal institution. These earmarks are (1) homsociality—all inmates and most staff/administrators are men, (2) sex segregation—men only interact with women, including family, in infrequent and highly controlled visits, (3) hierarchy—status is carefully regulated, with violence-prone men at the top of the hierarchy and feminized men at the bottom, and (4) violence—relations between men, including inmate–inmate and staff–inmate, are negotiated and maintained through violence. These characteristics support a cu lture of violence in which many inmates are victims of physical and sexual assault (Kupers 2001b). In addition to being limited to expressing and falling prey to toxic masculinity, men in prison are unable to fulfill important roles in life that are meant to be continued once they are released, such as fatherhood.

Fatherhood

Approximately 51 % of men incarcerated in state prisons and 63 % in federal prisons are parents of at least one minor child (BJS 2010). Of those in prison, 78 % are in contact with their child(ren) via mail, telephone, or face-to-face visit. However, only 38.5 % are in contact weekly or more and all contact is under the close supervision of prison staff. Most incarcerated fathers will eventually be

released, but many struggle to reestablish family connections. Dyer (2005) credits its unsuccessful reunification to interrupted confirmation of the inmate's identity as a father. While incarcerated, the inmate is not able to behave in ways that are meaningful to his identity as a father. As such, he may abandon this aspect of his self to bring his perceived identity into congruence with his actual experience. Dyer suggests this father identity disruption can negatively influence reestablishment of family connections upon release. This is important because children with a parent in prison are at risk for problems such as depression and anxiety, behavior problems, and academic difficulties (Dawson et al. 2013). Moreover, successfully maintaining connection to family is associated with decreased problems for children (Pleck and Masciadrelli 2004) and reduced recidivism for inmates (Hughes 1998). It is possible the relatively new advent of working with animals in prison allows for inmates to enact some roles relevant to their identity as a father. In fact, inmates in a dog training program did report improved parenting skills as a result of working in the program (Turner 2007).

In summary, most U.S. prisons incarcerate men. Men's prisons are characterized as hypermasculine, where manhood is expressed through extreme competition, dominance, and violence. These norms may be adaptive while incarcerated but are maladaptive upon release into the community. Maintaining the toughness required to do "hard time" upon release can hinder reunification with family and reconnection with children for the large percentage of prisoners who are fathers. Given the increasing number of prison-based animal programs, one wonders whether interacting with animals can help to instill or extract the other side of masculinity, allowing men to express their full self.

Prison-Based Animal Programs

There is a significant history of prison inmates interacting with animals, whether adopting those that wandered onto the prison yard (e.g., Conover 2000; Paluch 2004) or working with livestock on a prison farm (Strimple 2003). However, many current interactions are the result of planned programming with HAI at the core. Furst (2006) refers to such programs as prison-based animal programs (PAPs). And although there is an underlying premise that programs will benefit the inmates, there is a clear distinction between PAPs and typical animal-assisted interventions. Prison programs are not primarily designed to be therapeutic for the inmates. They are generally designed as a type of work for the inmates, for the purpose of benefiting the animals and/or humans who will eventually keep the animals as pets or service providers (Furst 2011). Potentially improved functioning and reduced recidivism for the inmates are secondary objectives. Although inmates most often work with dogs, animals as diverse as birds, horses, and fish are involved in PAPs (Strimple 2003). Inmates' duties range from controlling the day-to-day operation of fisheries to training dogs for adoption or human service. The latter is the type of program evaluated in the present research.

Furst (2006) conducted a national survey of state department of corrections offices. Of the 46 states that completed the survey, 78 % ($n = 36$) reported having at least one PAP. Administrators reported a total of 159 sites across the country. The most common type of PAP reported was a community service model, in which animals are rehabilitated and adopted by someone in the community. For a discussion of the impact of acting as a teacher or mentor to animals, see Arluke (2007). Furst (2006) found that dogs were the most common animal reported in PAPs, making up 66 % of cases. Also quite common were service animal socialization programs and livestock care programs. The PAPs were implemented with men (56.7 %) more than women (22.4 %), and 20.9 % were implemented with *both* men and women. When asked their opinion of the program, administrators reported overwhelmingly that they would recommend the PAP to other prison administrators, with a lack of revenue being the only negative factor identified. Administrators reported the main benefit for the inmates was a sense of responsibility, instilled from having an animal depend on them. Other benefits reported included job skills, parenting skills, a sense of pride or accomplishment, and relationship skills. These reported benefits were anecdotal; empirical evidence of PAP outcomes is relatively sparse.

A review of the literature on PAPs shows there is a great deal yet to be understood about the impact of these programs. There are many descriptions of PAPs, reporting subjective evidence of program outcomes (e.g., Deaton 2005). Although empirical investigation of PAPs has increased in recent years, studies are limited by small sample sizes, selection bias, and nonexperimental research design. Evaluations of PAPs have considered a variety of dependent measures, including but not limited to: symptoms of psychological disorders (e.g., Suthers-McCabe et al. 2005), self-esteem (e.g., Walsh and Mertin 1994), self-confidence (Moneymaker and Strimple 1991), and vocational skills related to animal care (e.g., Bustad 1990). In addition to the methodological issues already listed, there is a significant shortcoming in the research. There are no studies investigating exactly *how* the inmates interact with the animals. Instead, HAI is treated as an independent variable—some inmates receive it and some do not—and psychosocial variables are the measured dependent variables.

For example, Turner (2007) reports on a qualitative study investigating the experiences of male prisoners who participated in a dog training program. Themes from interviews suggest inmates experienced increased patience and self-esteem; gained skills in parenting, helping others, and socializing; and experienced a greater sense of normalcy and calm. But their discussion of HAI is limited to describing the PAP as a community service program in which inmates train future service dogs in a wide variety of tasks.

Given the contrast between the toxic masculinity of men's prisons and positive psychosocial outcomes reported by investigators, it is important to understand the underlying processes governing PAPs. The specific ways in which inmates interact with the animals is one yet unexplored factor. A second gap in the research relates to the boundaries of HAI. Researchers describe the outcomes of PAPs for inmates directly involved in the program, whether training dogs (e.g., Turner

2007) or caring for livestock (e.g., Adams 2001; Blowen 2001). But there are no data regarding the degree to which nonparticipating inmates interact with the PAP animals. Since the average number of inmates involved in a PAP is around 20 (Furst 2006) and prisons hold hundreds or thousands of inmates (BJS 2008), it is important to know whether there are any spill over effects for inmates who are at a prison with a PAP but not actually involved in the program. The present study improves upon these shortcomings in the literature by (1) asking inmates to describe the actual behaviors they engage in with PAP animals and (2) studying HAI in inmates from the general population. In addition, data were analyzed in the context of men's issues, exploring the ways in which a PAP might impact men's expressions of masculinity. Regarding the latter, analysis of inmate reports was guided by the overall question—can PAPs provide an outlet for healthier gender expression and buffer men from the toxic masculinity of prison?

The Present Study

Pen Pals

Pen Pals is a dog training program in which dogs are selected from local shelters and trained by inmates in prison for 8 weeks (Virginia Department of Corrections 2015). During that time, dogs live with selected inmates who are educated in dog training skills from a certified animal trainer. Working as a team, four inmates are assigned to one dog, providing for the dogs' basic needs (i.e., food, shelter, grooming), and training them in obedience. After the training period, the dog is adopted by individuals in the community. Inmates become involved in the program by first applying for the position and then being selected by the coordinating correctional officer. Participation in the program is voluntary and is in addition to the inmate's regular responsibilities.

Pen Pals is located at a minimum-security men's prison in southwest Virginia. The prison has been in operation since 1960 and has a maximum capacity of 352 inmates. Men are housed in two buildings, where they live in a dormitory-style setting. Exclusion criteria for this facility include inmates serving sentences for kidnapping or abduction, violent sex offenders and those inmates determined to be escape risks. All inmates have fewer than 5 years of incarceration left to serve on their sentence. In addition to these criteria, the facility is limited to inmates with a history of substance abuse or legal charges related to alcohol or other drugs.

Participants

A total of 102 male inmates participated in the research. Fifty-four of those participants would go on to be studied in a quasi-experiment assessing the outcomes

of the program. The detailed findings of the quasi-experiment are presented elsewhere, but in general, results suggested the program had a positive impact on social skills, reduction of institutional infractions, and enhanced progress in substance-related treatment (Fournier et al. 2007). This discussion describes the 102 inmates who initially signed up to participate in the research, prior to any formal participation in the PAP.

Participants ranged in age from 21 to 50 ($M_{age} = 32$) and had completed a mean of 11.9 years of education. All participants were able to read at an eighth grade reading level or higher, as indicated by intake assessment scores reported in their institutional file. With regard to race or ethnicity, 40.2 % of the participants identified as White or Caucasian, 17.6 % as Black or African American, 8.3 % identified as Hispanic, and 2.1 % identified as American Indian or Native American.

Materials

Materials included the Human Animal Interaction Scale, inmate applications to the PAP, and focus group transcripts.

Human Animal Interaction Scale (***HAIS***). In order to better understand the specific interactions that occurred between the inmates and the dogs, the research required a measure of HAI. While there were validated measures of constructs that may *predict* human behavior toward animals, such as attitudes toward animals (e.g., Herzog et al. 1991), empathy for animals (e.g., Paul 2000), and animal preference (e.g., Daly and Morton 2003), there were no measures to assess behavior emitted when a person interacts with an animal. Thus the Human–Animal Interaction Scale (HAIS) was created, consisting of an 11-item 4-point rating scale on which participants were asked to report their interactions with Pen Pals dogs over the past week.

To develop the scale, a pool of items was created by the authors based on a thorough review of the literature on HAI, observations during animal-assisted interventions, and informal interviews with animal-assisted therapy providers. Items were written to reflect the range of behaviors that may be emitted by a human while interacting with an animal. These initial items were then piloted in a laboratory. Volunteers interacted briefly with an animal and then responded to the items, providing feedback on content and clarity. Researchers also observed these interactions, adding or deleting items based on observations. The reliability and validity of the measure was tested with 161 adult volunteers who completed the HAIS in one of several different contexts.

A total of 41 undergraduate men and women completed the HAIS, reporting on any HAI experienced in the past six months; 57 undergraduate men and women completed the HAIS after a brief unstructured interaction with either a companion animal (e.g., dog or cat) or a small caged animal (i.e., rat, rabbit, hedgehog); and 63 men and women completed the HAIS following an equine-assisted growth and learning session. Participant ratings on the HAIS were compared with

the Companion Animal Bonding Scale (Poresky et al. 1987) and the Companion Animal Semantic Differential (Poresky et al. 1988), providing convergent and divergent validity, respectively. Researchers observed interactions and also completed the HAIS, recording the interactions they observed between participants and the animals. Correlations between observers' and participants' ratings on the HAIS were above 0.70, providing initial evidence for concurrent validity. Analyses indicate good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.822 overall and alpha's of 0.724 and higher across the different species and settings (Fournier et al. 2015).

Procedures[1]

The research was announced to all inmates through flyers placed in the dormitories, stating that research was being conducted on the prison dog program and that any inmate who had not already been a part of the program could participate in the research. As an incentive, inmates were informed that research participants would earn a Certificate of Participation to put in their institutional file. Those interested in participating attended a single mass testing session in which the principal investigator administered the HAIS to all volunteer participants at once. After data collection was complete, participants attended a 90 min focus group. Lastly, since each participant had applied to the PAP, program applications were reviewed, with participant consent, for qualitative data related to the research questions.

Results

A total of 102 men participated. Although each of them had applied to the PAP, only 35 of them met criteria for the program. At the time of data collection, all participants were in the general population (i.e., not working in the dog training program).

HAI

Table 9.1 provides descriptive data for the HAIS. For each item, the mean score is provided, as well as the percent of participants endorsing each response on that item. For example, when responding to the item, "How much did you *talk* to the dog(s) in the past week?" 42.3 % of the participants responded with a 4. Total HAI ranged from 0 to 44 ($M = 24.9$, SD = 12.3). Scores ranged from 0, indicating "*Not*

[1]All procedures were subject to full review and were approved by the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board for Research with Human Subjects and the Human Subjects Review Board for the Virginia Department of Corrections.

Table 9.1 Reported human–animal interaction ($N = 102$)

Item	*M* (SD)	Percent rating				
		0	1	2	3	4
Watch	2.90 (1.20)	4.2	6.0	23.2	22.6	44.0
Hear	2.11 (1.34)	6.5	23.2	24.4	16.7	29.2
Talk	2.81 (1.21)	2.4	11.9	20.2	23.2	42.3
Pet	3.08 (1.12)	2.4	5.4	20.8	19.0	52.4
Play	2.62 (1.46)	6.6	13.9	15.1	16.9	47.6
Hold	1.79 (1.66)	24.4	11.9	17.3	11.9	34.5
Hug or kiss	1.79 (1.65)	26.2	9.5	13.1	17.3	33.9
Groom	0.87 (1.37)	47.0	12.5	16.7	6.0	17.9
Feed	1.49 (1.67)	31.7	15.0	16.2	10.2	26.9
Train	1.19 (1.56)	38.6	14.5	14.5	9.0	23.5
Walk	1.10 (1.62)	41.3	12.6	6.6	12.0	27.5
Total HAI	21.19 (12.21)	–	–	–	–	–

Table 9.2 Percent of participants rating the item 1 or higher

Item	Percent
Watch	94.1
Hear	90.1
Talk	96.0
Pet	97.0
Play	90.0
Hold	65.3
Hug or kiss	64.4
Groom	36.6
Feed	54.0
Train	45.0
Walk	39.0

at All" to 4, indicating "*A Great Deal*" on every item. As can be seen from the table, there was variability in ratings between the different items, with *Pet* rated the highest and *Groom* rated the lowest. Table 9.2 provides another view of the data, showing the percent of inmates who engaged in each behavior at all. The data were recoded from the 0 to 4 rating scale to a dichotomous yes/no variable. Responses of 1 or higher were coded as Yes, the behavior was reported. This illustrates the high rate of HAI, as several behaviors were reported by 90 % of the sample or more.

Figure 9.1 provides a comparison of reported HAI between inmates who had been approved for future entry into the PAP with those inmates who had applied but did not meet criteria, according to prison staff. Note that although some inmates had been approved for the PAP, none had begun the program at this point. Still, all inmates reported experiencing HAI, and there appear to be differences in HAI between these two groups of inmates. One-way ANOVAs were calculated,

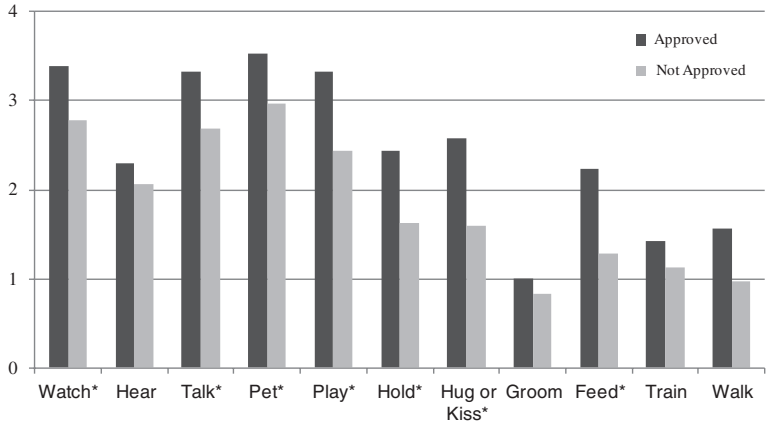

Fig. 9.1 Reported HAI by participants who were approved for the PAP ($n = 35$) and those who applied to the program but were not approved to join ($n = 67$). Groups were compared with one-way ANOVAs, $*p < 0.05$

comparing HAI between the two groups. There was an overall pattern of men who were approved for the PAP reporting more HAI than those who applied but were not approved, with those reports being significantly different for 7 of the 11 items.

The items on the HAIS included a variety of behaviors one could emit when interacting with an animal. Note that the list included behaviors that anyone in the general population who came across a Pen Pals dog might have been able to engage in, (e.g., *Watch*, *Hear*, *Pet*, *Talk*), while other items addressed more intimate behaviors, perhaps reserved for inmates who were dog trainers or otherwise more familiar with a particular dog (e.g., *Hold*, *Hug or Kiss*). Still other items addressed behaviors specific to caretaking, which would likely have been reserved for the dog trainers (e.g., *Train*, *Feed*, *Groom*). However, that was not the case, as *all* items were endorsed and *none* of the participants were working in the PAP. Even the more intimate items were endorsed by a large proportion of men, with over 64 % of them reporting they had hugged or kissed a dog in the past week. It is possible inmates approved for the program sought out interactions in preparation for their future role in the PAP. But looking again at Fig. 9.1, it is clear that there was no interaction between the different behaviors and the two groups of inmates. Inmates approved for the PAP rated all items higher than inmates not approved, regardless of how active, intimate, or relevant to dog training the behavior was.

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data were collected from two sources—Pen Pals applications and focus group responses. Applications had been completed prior to beginning the research; the focus group was held at the conclusion of the study.

Pen Pals applications. Each participant in this research had applied to work in the Pen Pals program and consented to researchers reviewing their program applications. The application form was written by staff at the facility and all selections for the PAP were made by the coordinating correctional officer. Researchers read and coded responses to the question, "Explain why you want to participate in the dog program, and how your participation will benefit the program." A content analysis of the participants' responses was performed in order to identify common themes, following the constant comparative method (Bruner 2004). The most prominent motivation reported for wanting to work in the program was love for animals in general or dogs specifically. For some men, this was the only response. For others, they expressed additional reasons. In these cases, five themes emerged as motivators for applying to the program. Inmates perceived the program as (1) a means of coping with incarceration, (2) an application of the inmate's talents, (3) a connection to family, (4) a way to contribute to society, and (5) identification with the dogs as unwanted or abused.

First, men indicated the program would help them cope, stating it would help them "*stay positive*," give them "*something to do that's positive while I'm here*," and decrease stress, "*I feel that being able to deal with the animals, that I won't sustain too much stress*."

In a second theme, the men described positive attributes they had that would help the program. Some of the attributes listed were related to dog training. Participants reported knowing about dogs, having experience with dogs as pets, and having experience training dogs. Another group of men discussed more interpersonal attributes, including patience, kindness, caring, and responsibility.

References to the dogs as family provided a third theme. Several inmates wrote about the dogs as "*kids*," "*children*," or "*family*." They compared their commitment to care for the dogs to a parents' commitment to a child, stating "*I will treat the dogs as if they were my kid*." They also referred to the significant commitment required, writing "*our pets depend on us 365 days a year*."

A fourth theme consisted of wanting to make a positive contribution. Men reported wanting to help the dogs, wanting to "*give back*," and wanting to help the families who will adopt them. For example, one man stated he wanted to help "*prepare the dog for some little boy or girl who needs a best friend*."

Finally, several applications indicated the men identified with the dogs specifically because they were shelter dogs and could relate to their situation:

> I care deeply for dogs, especially ones that no one else wants….I can relate to these animals because they have been left behind, abandoned, mistreated, etc. I know how it feels to be unwanted, but I also know how to love something that needs and wants love.

Overall, the program applications reflected an altruistic tone, with men reporting an interest in promoting the Pen Pals program, the dogs, and the community. Expected personal rewards were psychological in nature; inmates expected the program to be positive and to reduce stress. The applications suggested none of the toxic attributes of masculinity described in prison literature. Conversely, comments reflected a sense of nurturance, sacrifice, emotional sensitivity. This tone was presented even more strongly in the focus groups.

Focus groups. Fifteen of the 102 volunteers participated in a focus group, in which they were encouraged to discuss their impressions of the Pen Pals program. Focus group participants were recruited through announcements by prison staff. The focus group was scheduled by the prison staff according to inmate schedules and safety policies. Although there was substantial interest in attending the focus group, only 15 inmates were approved by staff and available at the scheduled time. Because the factor determining focus group attendance was practical rather than personal, there is no reason to suspect the other inmates would have responded differently to the researcher's questions.

Comments were reviewed and analyzed following the same methods described for reviewing applications, resulting in several distinct themes. First, participants reported that they were glad to be helping the dogs. It was a way they could give back to the community, to make up for what they took in committing their crime. A second theme centered around benefits to the inmates that made up for what prison takes away. Men reported having new feelings of accomplishment when helping to care for and train the dogs. The men also said that the dogs give them "*a sense of humanity*," describing how they felt like they mattered to the dog and to the other inmates on the [dog training] team. They also related interacting with the dogs to a sense of freedom:

> I always had dogs. I was surprised to see dogs in prison. I think the whole environment is different. It's like therapy – it's a little bit like home. It helps me feel less homesick. And it's like a little freedom. Just watching 'em play is like a little freedom.

Finally, the most prominent theme consisted of reported benefits to the inmates regarding mental health and well-being. The men described interacting with the dogs as helping them cope with and reduce stress, increasing self-esteem, helping them learn responsibility and patience, and facilitating emotion regulation:

> You learn how to deal with emotions, when you get frustrated or when you're sad about one of the dogs leaving.

The men were quite open, even in a large group of peers, discussing the sadness and grief they experienced when a dog would graduate from the program and leave prison to be adopted. They reported feeling sad and even talked about "*shedding tears*" over the loss. They also described feelings of joy and excitement at meeting a new dog entering the program. This open expression of emotions is counter to the stoicism expected in typical prison settings and is an example of the ways in which PAPs might be countering the toxic masculinity of prison.

Findings in the Context of Masculinity

Results from the HAIS, Pen Pals applications, and focus groups were analyzed in the context of masculinity. Specifically, data were reviewed using the positive psychology/positive masculinity framework (Kiselica and Englar-Carlson 2010),

Table 9.3 Findings in the context of healthy masculinity

Reported by inmates	Healthy masculinity[a]	May be experienced by	
		Pen Pals	General pop.
Playing, grooming, training behaviors	Action-oriented relating	x	x
Identify with dog as unwanted and care for them	Action empathy	x	x
Care for dogs as family, children	Generative fatherhood	x	
Interact with dogs to cope with incarceration	Self-reliance	x	x
Work with dogs in addition to regular job	Worker/provider	x	
Facing fears of dogs	Courage, risk-taking	x	x
Work in teams of 4 to care for/train dog	Group orientation	x	
Contribute to community, society	Humanitarian service	x	
Playing and laughing with dogs and teammates	Humor to attain intimacy	x	x
Train dog to save from euthanasia	Heroism	x	

[a]Positive aspects of traditional masculinity, from Kiselica and Englar-Carslson (2010)

a framework for studying men's issues that focuses on men's strengths rather than deficits. Table 9.3 lists each factor in the positive masculinity framework, alongside findings from the present study. The third and fourth columns indicate whether the factor could be expected to exist for inmates in the Pen Pals program, inmates from the general population, or both. For example, the positive masculinity framework suggests men relate with others through action (i.e., action-oriented relating) (Kiselica 2010). It is likely that both inmates in Pen Pals and in the general population could experience playing, grooming, and training behavior, suggesting the PAP could be an outlet for men to express this aspect of their masculinity. Note that while each of the healthy masculinity factors could apply to inmates in the Pen Pals program, inmates in the general population would likely be more limited. For example, inmates from the general population could use HAI to cope with incarceration (i.e., self-reliance), but because they are not responsible for the care and training of the dog, may not feel responsible for saving the dogs from euthanasia (i.e., heroism) or caring for them like their children (i.e., generative fatherhood). These findings suggest a prison environment quite different from the toxic masculinity (e.g., violence, dominance, competition) expressed in many men's prisons. Since factors of toxic and healthy masculinity were not measured, we cannot say whether a shift from toxic to healthy masculinity occurred as a result of HAI or the PAP. However, given that the major themes relate to these more prosocial aspects of masculinity, there is cause for study of these variables in future research.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which inmates in the general population interact with animals in a PAP program, gain insight into the actual behaviors inmates emit when interacting with PAP animals, and to examine inmate–animal interaction as it intersects with expressions of masculinity. Overall, the results indicate that inmates from the general population were experiencing a significant amount of HAI. A range of behaviors were endorsed, including passive behaviors like watching or hearing the dogs, as well as more intimate behaviors like holding, hugging or kissing the dogs. And even though none of the inmates were active participants in the PAP, many of them reported behaviors relevant to the dog training program, including grooming, feeding, and training the dogs. These data suggest that in addition to PAPs benefiting the select few who are chosen to participate in the programs, inmates in the general population can have substantial exposure to the animals and may also be benefitting. Considering prisons are in need of cost-effective rehabilitation programs, PAP programs are quite prevalent, and PAP programs tend to employ a small number of inmates, it is important that future evaluations of PAPs include an analysis of the program as it impacts inmates in the general population. Anecdotally, staff and administrators of the facility studied here reported significant improvements in the "culture" of the prison, stating there was a more positive atmosphere in general since the dogs had arrived. The findings of the present research warrant further study to determine whether HAI in the general population is specific to this particular facility or if it is common among PAPs.

Beyond the *quantity* of HAI occurring between the inmates and the dogs, the *kinds* of behaviors emitted by inmates are more consistent with healthy aspects of masculinity (Kiselica and Englar-Carlson 2010) than the toxic masculinity found in men's prisons (Kupers 2005). With 64.4 % of participants hugging or kissing dogs, 65.3 % holding dogs, and 90 % playing with dogs, one gets the image of inmates who are more nurturing than aggressive, more expressive than stoic, and more cooperative than competitive. Likewise, qualitative data from PAP applications indicate inmates saw the program as a way to give back to society and experience a family-like connection. Inmates also reported identifying with the dogs because they were shelter dogs who had been locked up, unwanted and in many cases abused. Themes from the focus groups reinforced statements made on applications regarding a desire to give back to society; they also suggested having the dogs at the prison returned a sense of humanity and helped them cope with the stresses of incarceration.

All of these data go against the prison code of acting tough, working against the law, and avoiding emotion at all costs (Sabo et al. 2001). It is important that research replicate the present findings and extend them by exploring *how* PAPs might be facilitating a different expression of masculinity by inmates. It is possible that the inmates feel freer to express healthy masculinity with animals present. Research indicates dogs can serve as a nonjudgmental other, more so than

humans (e.g., Allen et al. 1991). Perhaps the animals are more salient than the unwritten rules of the prison, allowing inmates to respond innately to another living thing (Wilson 1984), rather than conforming to the constricted behavior typically allowed in prison.

Although toxic and healthy masculinity were not measured explicitly, the findings warrant their study in future work. Using an objective self-report measure, such as the Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS) (O'Neil et al. 1986), would be useful for comparing scores facility-wide before and after implementation of a PAP, as well as for individual inmates before and after participating in a PAP. These kinds of pre–post comparisons would shed light on the impact of PAPs on inmates. Studying GRCS and HAIS scores together would extend our understanding beyond PAP outcome, providing information on underlying processes as well as providing more information about HAI in general.

This research should also be followed up to determine the limits of these findings related to masculinity. Although the inmates were not yet involved in the PAP, they had all applied to work in the program. It is unknown how these men differ from men who chose not to apply. They could differ in ways unrelated to the question at hand (e.g., presence or absence of dog allergies) or in ways that are directly related (e.g., expressed masculinity). Even for the men in the study, who made reports consistent with healthy masculinity, it is unknown whether that gender expression was constricted to their interactions with the dogs and dog trainers, or whether it generalized to other aspects of their lives. While any movement in the direction of healthier gender expression is important, a global improvement in gender expression could have lasting implications for inmates. A global shift toward healthy masculinity might result in improved functioning during incarceration and increased success upon release. Anecdotally, reports from inmates, staff, and administration suggested a global improvement in inmate behavior—toward each other and toward staff. However, the data collected do not address this question and further research is required.

Participants reported engaging in significant caretaking behaviors, with 36.6 % grooming dogs, 45 % training dogs, and 54 % feeding dogs. Several of them were committed to caring for the dogs like they would a child, and compared the dogs to "kids" or "family." This is consistent with Turner's finding (2007) that male inmates credited a prison-based dog training program with improved parenting skills. Although this research did not study father identity, these data warrant further investigation into the ways in which PAPs might allow inmates to enact fatherly roles (e.g., provider, teacher, nurturer). Doing so might promote confirmation of the father identity, which is an important factor in reunification with children upon release from prison (Dyer 2005).

Finally, research is needed to explore the clinical utility of PAPs in facilitating physical and mental health. Comments from the focus groups suggest the inmates experience a full range of emotions with the dogs, which is quite different from the constricted emotional expression allowed by the prison code (Clemmer 1940) or even normative male alexithymia evidenced in many otherwise healthy men (Levant 1998). It is possible that emotions experienced with the dogs could

be used as an avenue for exploring deeper issues. Currently, PAP work is reserved for the healthiest inmates and serves the animals and animal organizations, with inmates involved solely as workers. Staff and administrators report clinical implications for inmates; empirical evidence is limited by ceiling effects (i.e., trying to find healthy inmates getting even healthier). A more useful approach would be to determine the impact of PAP animals on the health of inmates with physical impairment (e.g., dog walking for inmates with cardiovascular disease) and mental health issues (e.g., animal-assisted therapy for inmates with anxiety or depression). Animals and our relationships with them can serve as metaphors for other aspects of life, a cornerstone of some animal-assisted interventions (EAGALA 2009). With some guidance, it's possible inmates could use PAP animals to conduct a transderivational search (Gordon 1978), learning about themselves through HAI. For the average inmate without physical or mental health problems, animal-assisted learning (Friesen and Delisle 2012) might be used to address everyday psychosocial functioning. In this way, relationships with animals are used to learn about interpersonal and intrapersonal functioning (e.g., social performance, self-disclosure, empathy) (e.g., Seiz and Koralewicz 2003).

Limitations

The findings and implications of the present research must be considered in light of several limitations. Perhaps the most important limitation is that the data rely on self-report. Inmates reported specific behaviors on the HAIS but those reports were not corroborated with observations. It is possible the inmates reported more interaction than had actually occurred, in order to please the researchers or to improve their chances of being selected for the PAP. Researchers tried to prevent this by stating clearly that selection and participation in the PAP was not at all related to their participation in the research. On the other hand, given the tenets of the prison code, it is surprising these participants rated the more intimate behaviors so highly. Playing, holding, hugging and kissing a dog are hardly consistent with doing "hard time." In that regard, it's possible the HAIS reports were actually conservative. Future research would be improved by asking staff to also complete the HAIS based on their observations of inmate–animal interactions.

The applications and focus groups are subject to the same limitation. Inmates applying for the program were likely motivated to write socially desirable statements that would promote their selection into the program. During the focus groups, the men may have wanted to give positive reports in order to please the researcher, please the staff, or ensure the program continues. This could explain the absence of any negative reports, but does not explain the particular content of their positive statements. Even if the inmates used a positive filter when making statements on their applications or in the focus groups, there are an infinite number of positive comments they could have made. Yet, there were focused themes to their reports that are relevant to men's issues. They paint a picture of a "softer"

setting, of men expressing a form of masculinity more adaptive to life with family, friends, and the community outside prison walls.

It is important to note that this research investigated a specific PAP within a prison. The participants and the setting are unique, which make the generalizability of the findings questionable. This was a sample of convenience; inmates self-selected to apply to the PAP and to participate in the research. These inmates likely differ from inmates who did not apply or participate in the research. At the very least, it is probable the participants are interested in interacting with dogs and thus may seek out more HAI than other inmates. In that case, the reports on the HAIS may be overestimations of the HAI experienced by inmates in the general population. Generalizability may be limited to similar institutions. This prison was of minimum security and all inmates had less than 5 years to serve. It is likely the environment and the inmates differ in important ways from higher security prisons housing inmates with longer or even life sentences. Research suggests PAPs are being implemented in a range of different facilities (Furst 2006, 2011) and it's important to study their impacts.

All participants had at least an eighth grade reading ability and 72.2 % had reportedly completed high school, obtained a GED, or higher degree. According to the BJS (2003), approximately 49 % of inmates in state prisons have a high school diploma or GED. Thus, the present sample may not be representative of the typical prison inmate with regard to education. It is unknown how level of education might have impacted HAI, actual or reported. The nature of this research (i.e., self-report measures) required that inmates be able to read. Future research involving observations of inmate–animal interactions could reduce this limitation, allowing for a more representative sample. An observation study would also reduce selection bias.

Conclusion

PAPs are quite prevalent in the U.S. and around the world (Furst 2006). Although still in its infancy, research suggests the programs are effective in serving the animals and the community, and may have rehabilitative effects for the inmates involved (Furst 2011). PAPs tend to employ a small number of carefully selected inmates, making it difficult to determine whether positive outcomes are truly a result of the PAP or if they are just a reflection of the healthiest inmates rising to the top (Fournier et al. 2007). The data presented here suggest inmates from the general population may also be experiencing a significant amount of interaction with animals. The men reported substantial interactions with PAP dogs, acknowledging passive, active, and intimate behaviors, including caretaking and training.

Clearly, more research is needed to fully understand the processes and outcomes of PAPs for all inmates. Ideally, research should follow an experimental design, in which prisons are randomly assigned to have a PAP or serve as a control site. Within PAP prisons, a sample of appropriate inmates could be selected and then randomized to treatment or wait-list control conditions. Research

investigating PAPs should continue to study the actual behaviors inmates engage in with the animals, including inmates from the general population as well as facility staff. Finally, since the majority of inmates are men, investigations should be sensitive to men's issues and the ways in which interacting with animals impacts healthy gender expression.

Researchers have long discussed the harsh conditions of prison and their failure to deter criminal behavior (e.g., Haney 1997). Adapting to prison often means accepting a code, aligning *with* fellow inmates and *against* the facility administration, and rejecting societal norms (Clemmer 1940). For men in particular, the prison experience means proving one's manhood through violence, dominance, and competition, as other expressions of masculinity are unacceptable (e.g., expression of a range of emotions) or unattainable (e.g., sense of accomplishment through work, sense of pride in protecting and providing for family) (Phillips 2001). Assimilating to these norms can interrupt connections to family and hinder reentry to the community when released from prison. The men in the present study reported behaviors and feelings of healthier, more complete masculinity. Although more research is needed to be certain, it seems the presence of animals in prison, whether the inmate is directly involved in a PAP or not, could serve as a buffer to taking on or perpetuating the "hardness" of prison. If so, this could be a less threatening way for men to do "softer" time, and facilitate a more adaptive transition to the community upon release.

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