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SOCRATIC PEDAGOGY, CRITICAL THINKING, MORAL REASONING
AND INMATE EDUCATION: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

by

PETER BOGHOSSIAN

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
in
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP:
CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Portland State University
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DISSERTATION APPROVAL

The abstract and dissertation of Peter Boghossian for the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership: Curriculum and Instruction were presented May 5, 2004, and accepted by the dissertation committee and the doctoral program.

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the dissertation of Peter Boghossian for the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership: Curriculum and Instruction presented May 5, 2004.

Title: Socratic Pedagogy, Critical Thinking, Moral Reasoning and Inmate Education: An Exploratory Study

This exploratory study examines the hypothesis that Socratic pedagogy is a useful tool for imparting critical thinking and moral reasoning skills to inmates. The study explores the effectiveness of a new curriculum, *Introducing Socrates*, which relies on Socratic pedagogy to achieve its objectives. The curriculum draws from the effective criminal justice research on cognitive education to determine its objectives, and then looks to the Platonic dialogues to find broad philosophical questions that tie into those objectives. The program also evaluates salient criticisms of Socratic pedagogy that are found in the educational and philosophical literature, and then isolates and evaluates constructs from these criticisms in the study.

Results of this study suggest that *Introducing Socrates* has the potential to help inmates by providing them with better options, by changing ways they

approach problems, and by ultimately giving them tools that will enable them to make better decisions. Notably, no other inmate education treatment currently available is Socratically-based, either pedagogically or with regard to the course content. This is significant because Socratically-based programs have the potential to achieve the same objectives more efficiently, more cost-effectively, and in a more engaging way. This has obvious fiscal, social and psychological benefits for communities and individuals. In sum, this ancient educational and pedagogical approach, when combined with existing corrections educational objectives, may prove to be a uniquely powerful tool to help inmates generate better options to problems and make better choices--and to thus stay out of prison.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF TABLES	v
GLOSSARY OF TERMS	vi
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION	1
The Purpose of this Study	4
II LITERATURE REVIEW	10
Corrections Education	11
Corrections: What Works and What Does Not Conclusion	
The Socratic Method	31
What Is the Socratic Method? Socratic Seminars and Truthfulness	
Socratic Constructs	39
Introduction	
Leadership, Power, and the Socratic Method	40
The Socratic Method and Educational Leadership The Traditional Classroom The Socratic Teacher and Power Positions: Who Controls What? Leadership, Power, and Goals So What? A Preemptive Rebuttal	

Leadership Questions Resolved

Socratic Pedagogy, Race, and Power: From People to Propositions	54
--	----

Introduction	
Race, Class, and Gender	
Power Dynamics	
Conclusion	

Socratic Education: Countering the Claims of Perplexity, Humiliation, and Shame	65
--	----

Perplexity?	
Coming Out of the Cave	
Humiliation, Shame, and a Broken Egg	
Conclusion	

Chapter Summary	78
---------------------------	----

III METHODS	79
--------------------------	----

Research Questions	79
------------------------------	----

Design	80
------------------	----

Objectives	82
----------------------	----

Subjects	84
--------------------	----

Subject Recruitment

Prison System	85
-------------------------	----

Course Objectives, Content, and Structure	87
---	----

Data Collection	88
---------------------------	----

Inmate Feedback Questionnaire	
Generating Options Pre- and Post-Test	
Focus Group	

		iii
	Data Analysis	93
IV	RESULTS	99
	Socratic Analysis	99
	Research Question #1	114
	Inmate Feedback Questionnaire	
	Focus Group	
	Additional Questions and Comments	
	In-Treatment Observation	
	Feedback from Prison Officials	
	Research Question #1 Summary	
	Research Question #2	134
	Generating Options Pre- and Post-Test	
	Focus Group	
	Research Question #2 Summary	
	Research Question #3	138
	Focus Group	
	In-Treatment Observation	
	Research Question #3 Summary	
	Chapter Summary	146
V	DISCUSSION	147
	Research Questions	147
	Research Question #1	
	Research Question #2	
	Research Question #3	
	Limitations	156
	Discussion	157
	MRT and R&R	172

Personal Reflection	174
Recommendations	177
Further Socratic Treatment Criminal Justice Facility Administrators Summary	
Chapter Summary	182
REFERENCES	183
APPENDICES	
A CONSENSUS LIST OF CRITICAL THINKING, COGNITIVE SKILLS AND SUB-SKILLS	201
B QUESTIONNAIRE	203
C CRITICAL THINKING CORE ELEMENTS	205
D GENERATING OPTIONS PRE- AND POST-TEST	207
E INTRODUCING SOCRATES SYLLABUS	209
F DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	212
G PRE- AND POST-TEST EVALUATIONS	214

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1	Interview Protocol	92
2	Research Questions and Evaluation	93
3	Constructs, Description, and Evaluation	95
4	Individual Critical Thinking Profile	97
5	Questionnaire Results	116
6	MRT Constructs, Objectives, and Questions	140
7	R&R Constructs, Objectives, and Questions	141

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- Conscientização: Cultivation of a critical social awareness
- Critical Thinking: “We understand critical thinking to be purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based” (APA, 1990, p. 3).
- Dialectic: The art or practice of arriving at the truth by the exchange of logical arguments
- Elenchus: Refutation and cross-examination
- Elenctic: Serving to refute
- Eristic: Given to argument or debate
- Moral Reasoning: Any reasoning about a moral issue

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The United States has the largest per capita incarceration rate in the world (MacKenzie, 2000, p. 22). In the year 2000, nearly 5 out of every 1,000 people were incarcerated in the United States (Glick, Bush, & Taymans, 2002). At the same time, 1,600 people are released from state and federal prisons every day, and these numbers are likely to increase due to budget shortfalls (Talbot, 2003, p. 97). Many of these former inmates are released without having had access to education or rehabilitation programs; their rate of recidivism is considerably higher than those who had access to educational/vocational/cognitive classes during their incarceration (Talbot, 2003, p. 98). Indications are that these problems (early release and lack of education programs) will likely worsen with increasing budget deficits, astronomical costs of fighting terrorism, and shifting state and national priorities. This is obviously problematic because of the direct financial cost of incarceration, the continued strain on the judicial system, the need for more police officers, and intangible loss to those who are victims of crime.

The poor are more likely to be arrested, denied bail, incarcerated, and given harsher sentences (Howlett, 2004). Incarceration rates are higher for

those in lower socioeconomic classes than for those from higher socioeconomic classes (Quinney, 1980; Wilson, 1987). Young black males are more likely to spend time in prison than their white counterparts (Street, 2003). Clearly, many of the factors that lead to high incarceration rates are due to structural problems such as racism, poor schooling, lack of economic opportunity, and the breakdown of the family (Fagan, 2000; Street 2003).

Multiple attempts, using a variety of approaches, have been made to both lower incarceration rates and decrease recidivism. From these attempts, we have learned that some approaches do not work. For example, we now know that the “belief that harsh treatment will be good for offenders is simply untrue” (Miller & Rollnick, 2002, p. 335) because it tends to increase resistance to treatment. Another fashionable notion that the research literature has disabused us of is that there is no relationship between incarceration rates and crime rates (Colson, 1993, ¶ 7), that is, it is false that increasing incarceration rates translates into lower crime rates.¹

We know that at least two popular treatments do not work (harsh treatment for offenders and attempts at deterrence by incarcerating more people). But what does? In the criminal justice literature, works means keeping people out of prison who have never been in prison, and making sure

¹ Colson (1993) goes on to state: Between 1980 and 1991, the incarceration rate rose by a staggering 130 percent, yet the overall crime rate remained stubbornly at an all-time high. More disturbing, violent crime as a percentage of the overall rate rose by 27 percent (¶ 7).

that former prisoners do not go back. A meta-analysis of the criminal justice literature shows that some rehabilitation programs are effective in reducing the criminal behavior of at least some offenders (MacKenzie & Hickman, 1998, chap. 1), while an increasing number of studies provide evidence for the potency of offender rehabilitation programs (Gendreau, 1996, p. 117).

Some of the most effective and widely used programs that work focus on cognitive corrections (Little & Robinson, 1988; MacKenzie & Hickman, 1998; Ross & Fabiano, 1985; Ross & Ross, 1989; Vennard, Sugg, & Hedderman, 1997a) and deal with teaching inmates rational self-analysis, self-control training, means-end reasoning, critical thinking, training in interpersonal cognitive problem-solving and social perspective-taking, with an emphasis on process (cognitive skills) as opposed to specific content (Newman, Lewis, & Beverstock, 1993). These programs have been designed around the concept that poor critical thinking and bad moral reasoning cause individuals to go to prison and to go back to prison once they have been released (Yochelson & Samenow, 1995). They teach inmates cognitive skills, critical thinking, and how to improve their reasoning (Beck, 1995; Meichenbaum, 1977; Newman et al., 1993). The basic idea behind these programs is that if an offender's cognition can be changed then his behavior will also change. Two examples of specific cognitive programs that have been empirically shown to work and that are widely used are *Moral Reconciliation Therapy* (MRT) and *Reasoning and*

Rehabilitation (R&R) (Little & Robinson, 1988; MacKenzie & Hickman, 1998; Ross & Fabiano, 1985; Ross & Ross, 1989).

The programs are somewhat similar: MRT focuses on reasoning and making the reasoning process explicit (Little, 2000, 2001; Little & Robinson, 1988; Little, Robinson, Burnette, & Swan 1999), and R&R focuses on teaching cognitive skills to offenders by changing underlying thoughts and attitudes that lead to criminal behavior (MacKenzie & Hickman, 1998). The research that contributed to these programs showed that many inmates become trapped in their lifestyles because they have an inability to understand their options and fail to make sound decisions. Often they lack important and even vital critical thinking and reasoning skills, and if they have access to these skills, they may make better decisions (Ross & Fabiano, 1985).

The Purpose of this Study

This exploratory study examines the hypothesis that Socratic pedagogy is a useful tool for imparting critical thinking skills to inmates. This ancient educational and pedagogical approach, when combined with the existing inmate educational objectives that have empirically been shown to work, may help inmates generate more options to problems and make better choices, and thus stay out of prison. This study explores the effectiveness of a new curriculum, which I call *Introducing Socrates*, to impart critical thinking and reasoning skills

(Boghossian, 2003).² While other cognitive programs like MRT and R&R have been shown to be effective, it is possible that the new curriculum is more efficient, effective, and less expensive. It has the potential to help inmates by providing them with more options, changing ways they approach problems, and ultimately helping them to lead better lives. This has obvious fiscal, social, and psychological benefits for communities and individuals.

Other corrections education treatment programs could also make this claim, and many would be justified (Aos, Phipps, Barnoski, & Lieb, 2001). But this particular study receives additional justification because, if successful, *it has virtually no associated costs*. There is no need for materials of any kind (overheads, slides, pens and papers, or even chairs). The only costs involve prisoner transport and, if duplicated, instructor remuneration. This is especially relevant given the state of the economy and projected budget deficits (Congressional Budget Office, 2003; Oregon Youth Authority Close Custody Population Forecast, 2002, p. 2). If this program is shown to be effective, then there is the potential for implementation in other states and even other correctional contexts (e.g., halfway houses, youth incarceration centers, and so on).

² *Introducing Socrates* is an inmate education curriculum that was formulated by the author. It was implemented in Columbia River Corrections Institution in Portland, Oregon, in September of 2003.

Introducing Socrates relies on Socratic pedagogy to achieve its objectives.³ Socratic pedagogy is a teaching method that the historical Socrates used that asks questions in a systematic way. The curriculum draws from the effective criminal justice research on cognitive education to determine its objectives, and then looks to the Platonic dialogues (Plato's works) to find broad philosophical questions that tie into those objectives. The program also evaluates salient criticisms of Socratic pedagogy that are found in the educational and philosophical literature, and then isolates and evaluates constructs from these criticisms in the study. None of the other treatments currently available are Socratically-based, either pedagogically or with regard to the course content. This is significant, because Socratically-based programs have the potential to achieve the same objectives more efficiently, more cost-effectively and in a more engaging way that decreases resistance in inmates.

The primary objective of *Introducing Socrates* is to teach inmates that there are effective ways to confront ideas and reason intellectually, and that by doing so they can acquire tools to enable them to make better life decisions.

³ *Introducing Socrates* comports with the learning objectives and method of treatment used at most contemporary correctional facilities in the United States, Great Britain, and Canada (*Reaching Out From Within*, 2002; Lickona, Schaps, & Lewis, 2001). It is also similar to other widely available educational treatments like *Enhanced Thinking Skills*, developed by the England and Wales Prison Service; *Think First*, developed by James McGuire; and *Aggression Replacement Training* (ART), developed by Wiltshire Probation Service. Where *Introducing Socrates* differs is in the method of instruction.

This study evaluates the program's effectiveness through examining subjects self-reports at the end of the course, by having evaluators analyze a generating options pre- and post-test, and by the researcher conducting a follow-up focus group with inmates. The study also explores the process of moral reasoning and how inmates respond to treatment. This is evaluated by an inmate feedback questionnaire and focus group 15 days after the treatment. Based upon subjects' learning experiences and recommendations, changes can be made to the program's curriculum and pedagogical approaches.

Currently, the focus of most educational programs in correctional institutions is to teach offenders skills such as active listening or how to ask a question (Glick et al., 2002, Table of Contents). While there are elements of *Introducing Socrates* that attempt to make the reasoning process explicit, most of its objectives are not accomplished by spelling out how to achieve the desired goals, such as identifying consequences, or understanding how our identities are formed. Rather, the objectives are conveyed through the teaching method. That is, inmates meet the learning objectives of the class through engaging in the process of Socratic discourse. For example, articulation, verbal self-control, and developing higher stages of moral reasoning, all objectives of *MRT*, are conveyed both through prosocial modeling of the Socratic method and through

Socratic engagement.⁴ Other objectives, such as understanding how our identities are formed, or understanding the role that pleasure-seeking plays in our lives, are achieved through specific questions found in the Platonic dialogues.

One limitation of the current inmate curricula is the supposition that people care about what is being taught to them. However, if one lacks reasoning skills, then it is unclear why one would think that reasoning is important. If one wants to teach people how to reason and think critically, then one needs to start with engaging people in ideas that matter to them. Optimally, this is not accomplished by laying foundation for what it means to reason critically and then expect inmates to just accept it as the case.

Another limitation that this program is designed to overcome is that *Introducing Socrates* curriculum never becomes stale. Unlike other programs that use, for example, the same slides, games, handouts, workbooks, no two sessions of *Introducing Socrates* are ever alike; different people make different comments, and those comments are responded to in different ways. This is advantageous because inmates could participate in repeated treatments because it would be less likely that they would be bored with a dynamic curriculum.

⁴ Prosocial modeling is a term borrowed from the sociological, psychological, and educational literature--it means having appropriate behavior demonstrated so that individuals can then model or emulate that behavior. For how this applies to corrections see Rex and Crosland's (1999) *Pro-Social Modeling and Legitimacy: Findings from Community Service*. There is also a substantial corpus of research literature that legitimizes the validity of prosocial modeling (Barton & Osborne, 1978; Eisenberg, 1977; Goldstein, 1988; Grusec, 1991).

Introducing Socrates tries to overcome these current limitations by engaging subjects in both a process and a discourse that have meaning in their lives (Miller & Baca, 2001). It does not focus solely on teaching inmates how to take their ethical lives seriously, but also teaches inmates how to engage and analyze enduring questions through prosocial modeling. Prisoners are involved in a process of positive intellectual and social engagement, where disputes are resolved through a dialectic (a glossary of terms can be found in preliminary pages) that can be used outside of the classroom.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review has three parts. The first part, Corrections Education, reviews, summarizes and briefly analyzes the relevant corrections literature. Specifically, it looks at what has been shown to work, and what does not, in corrections education. It identifies and examines two cognitive programs that have been shown to work: *Moral Reconation Therapy* and *Reasoning and Rehabilitation*. One adjunct treatment, Motivational Interviewing, is also reviewed. Finally, it briefly examines critical thinking literature and explains what is meant by critical thinking.

The second part, the Socratic method, focuses on Socratic pedagogy. It details what the Socratic method is, how it works, and what its relationship is to critical thinking. It provides actual classroom examples to illustrate Socratic principles, while outlining general Socratic guidelines.

In the third part, salient arguments for and against the use of Socratic pedagogy are examined. It summarizes and evaluates claims in the educational and philosophical literature that oppose Socratic teaching. Specifically, this section examines the role that race, power, gender, class and leadership play in Socratic training. Through focus groups and an inmate feedback questionnaire,

these abstract notions later become reified as testable constructs in this study.

The chapter ends with a brief summary.

Corrections Education

As the field of criminal justice continues to evolve, agencies are looking for innovative and effective ways of reducing recidivism by helping offenders change their criminal behavior. Alternatives to incarceration such as drug courts, restorative justice, and alternative dispute resolution are being examined by jurisdictions concerned about rising prison populations, the increasing cost of prison warehousing, and the failure of incarceration as a deterrent to criminal behavior. But, at the same time, when incarceration must be used, an increasing number of correctional jurisdictions have begun to look critically at their mandate and mission and the approaches they use to effect behavior change. Offender motivation remains a priority on the criminal justice system given the competing motives, incentives, and punishment that offenders face. (Miller & Rollnick, 2002, p. 345)

This section of the literature review provides an overview of the corrections literature as it applies to this study. It summarizes what the research shows works and does not work in correction treatments, discusses two popular and effective cognitive programs, briefly states what is meant by critical thinking, and concludes by examining motivational interviewing.

Corrections: What Works and What Does Not

The research literature shows that the following work. In the corrections literature, works is defined as programs that we [the researchers] are reasonably certain prevent crime or reduce risk factors for crime in the kinds of social

contexts in which they have been evaluated, and for which the findings should be generalizable to similar settings in other places and times (Sherman, Gottfredson, MacKenzie, Eck, Reuter, & Bushway, 2001, p. 1). Similarly, “doesn’t work” is defined as “programs that we are reasonably certain *fail* to prevent crime or reduce risk factors for crime, using the identical scientific criteria used for deciding what works” (Sherman et al., 2001, p. 1).

MacKenzie and Hickman (1998) have done extensive meta-analyses and examined what works and what does not in corrections, and they are not alone in their conclusions (Friendship, Blud, Erikson, & Travers, 2002; Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1994; Graham, 1998; Home Office, 2001; Porporino & Robinson 1992; Vennard et al., 1997b). Their meta-analyses have shown that the following work in corrections: “In-Prison Therapeutic Communities with Follow-Up Community Treatment; Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: Moral Reconciliation Therapy and Reasoning and Rehabilitation; Non-Prison Based Sex Offender Treatment Programs; Vocational Education Programs; Multi-Component Correctional Industry; Programs Community Employment Programs” (MacKenzie & Hickman, 1998, p. 1).

These programs vary tremendously in their durations, objectives, instructional approaches, underlying philosophies, and so on. Some are psychologically based and use therapy as the agent of change (In-Prison Therapeutic Communities With Follow-Up Community Treatment, Non-Prison

Based Sex Offender Treatment Programs), some are vocational and attempt to teach a real world skill to offenders (Vocational Education Programs; Multi-Component Correctional Industry; Programs Community Employment Programs), and others are cognitively based and endeavor to change the thoughts and attitudes of prisoners (*Moral Reconation Therapy* and *Reasoning and Rehabilitation*).

Within the category of what has been shown to work, two cognitive approaches stand out as exceptionally promising: *Moral Reconation Therapy* (MRT) and *Reasoning and Rehabilitation* (R&R). These programs are the two foremost cognitive behavioral therapy programs used in prison educational systems in Europe, Great Britain, the United States, and Canada. Furthermore, indications are that an increasing number of correctional facilities are using one, or both, of these educational approaches because of their effectiveness and their low cost per offender (both programs average approximately \$300 per inmate) (Aos et al., 2001, p. 30).

Cognitive approaches focus on helping offenders rethink their actions, think through alternatives, and influence behavior through thoughts and cognitions. As cognitive approaches, MRT and R&R center on helping inmates to strengthen their reasoning, and thus to reevaluate the thoughts and attitudes that lead to their criminal behavior (D'Zurilla & Goldfried, 1971; Freedman, Rosenthal, Donahoe, Schlundt, & McFall, 1978; Meichenbaum, 1977;

Porporino & Fabiano, 2000; Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross 1992; Spivack, Platt, & Shure, 1976). The research suggests “that offenders have difficulties with problem solving in particular, including problem recognition, generation of solutions, a strategy for the selection of the most appropriate solutions and an understanding of likely outcomes” (Blud & Travers, 2001, p. 252). MRT and R&R attempt to address these difficulties by concentrating on and imparting critical thinking and reasoning skills, and thus each program hopes to reduce the likelihood that once the inmates are released they will continue to make poor choices.⁵

The curriculum for both MRT and R&R is fairly similar, and the pedagogical models are fairly standard (Ross & Fabiano, 1991). Direct instruction (lecture), collaborative learning (assigning groups of inmates to work on problems with the guidance of the instructor), case study (teachers and inmates work together to examine realistic scenarios), or any other pedagogy have been shown to be appropriate learning methods to achieve the rehabilitative objectives.

Introducing Socrates draws from the cognitive approach and specifically from the MRT and R&R. The aims of *Introducing Socrates* are closely aligned

⁵ In our own community of Portland, Oregon, the *Better People* program documented the effectiveness of MRT. They were able to show a decrease in recidivism among people who participated in MRT (Boston & Meier, 2001).

with the aims of these programs—they focus on the thoughts and reasoning processes of participants.

The research literature shows the following does not work. *Introducing Socrates* was designed not only to draw from what does work, but also to avoid what does not. By looking to the literature and examining what does not work, we can learn from mistakes and errors so that they can be avoided in future treatments. The research literature shows that the following does not work in corrections:

Increased referral, monitoring, and management in the community; Correctional programs that increase control and surveillance in the community; Programs emphasizing structure, discipline and challenge (boot camps using old-style military models, juvenile wilderness programs); Program[s] emphasizing specific deterrence (shock probation and *Scared Straight*); Vague, nondirective, unstructured counseling. (MacKenzie, 2000, p. 36)

These programs vary widely in their approach to treatment, emphasis, duration, and level of community involvement. However, each of these failed approaches has a common underlying theme and even common underlying variables. They all have failed to create internal motivation in offenders, and they all place offenders in confrontational or even in harsh environments (Miller & Rollnick, 2002, pp. 9-12, 335; T. O'Connor, personal communication, January 4, 2003; F. Wesley, personal communication, March 1, 2002). Internal motivation is vital to the success of any treatment (Miller & Rollnick, 2002); internal motivation occurs when people have a desire to move themselves to

action. Internal motivation differs from external motivation in that one's reasons for acting do not stem from reward or punishment conferred by another person, body, group, or institution. People who are internally motivated have their own reasons and desires for change.

Confrontational or harsh climates (increased referral, monitoring, and management, increased control, boot camps using old-style military models, shock probation and *Scared Straight*) create resistance and adversarial relationships between the offender and the form of treatment and between the offender and those attempting the intervention (Miller & Rollnick, 2002, p. 12; F. Wesley, personal communication, March 1, 2002). This adversarial relationship removes the offenders' internal motivation to make changes, and low motivation is a common reason for treatment failure (Daley & Zuckoff, 1999, p. 22; Miller & Rollnick, 2002, pp. 9-12).

While the popular press and tabloid TV may lead us to believe that harsh treatment is beneficial for offenders and disturbed youth (Halter, 2000), the research literature shows that exactly the opposite is the case,

Humiliation, shame, guilt, and angst are not the primary engines for change, [and can] even immobilize the person, rendering change more remote. Instead, constructive behavior change seems to arise when the person connects it with something of intrinsic value, something important, something cherished. (Miller & Rollnick, 2002, p. 12)

What is critical thinking? Critical thinking is characterized as the cognitive process of forming reasoned and reflective judgments about what to believe or what to do (Facione, 2000, p. 4).

The two successful cognitive behavioral programs, MRT and R&R, both aim to improve the reasoning and critical thinking abilities of inmates, but it is not immediately evident what reasoning and critical thinking are, and how they are defined (R&R uses the term critical thinking) (Ross & Fabiano, 1991).

While it is certainly true that these concepts are difficult to define, this does not mean that there are no adequate definitions. The largest and most comprehensive study to date on critical thinking and reasoning was published by the American Philosophical Association (hereafter APA) in 1990 (the APA is the main professional organization for philosophers in the United States) (APA, 1990). While there is no evidence that the creators of MRT or R&R had access to this study, it is clear that the language and the referents are the same, and that the concepts detailed in this study provide a clear explanation about what qualities in inmates MRT, R&R, and *Introducing Socrates* wish to improve.

The study used a Delphi Technique to reach consensus about the definition of critical thinking. A Delphi Technique has a fairly simple methodology. Facione (1996) best explains the Delphi Technique methodology as it was used in this APA study:

A central investigator organizes the group and feeds them an initial question. [In this case it had to do with how college level

critical thinking should be defined so that people teaching at that level would know which skills and dispositions to cultivate in their students.] The central investigator receives all responses, summarizes them, and transmits them back to all the panelists for reactions, replies, and additional questions ... the central investigator summarizes the arguments and lets the panelists decide if they accept them or not. When consensus appears to be at hand, the central investigator proposes this and asks if people agree. If not, then points of disagreement among the experts are registered. (p. 8)

In a research project that lasted approximately two years, the APA chose their panel of experts from among “forty-six men and women ... in the United States and Canada. They represented many different scholarly disciplines in the humanities, sciences, social sciences, and education” (Facione, 1996, p. 7). Moreover, all 46 scholars were “widely recognized by their professional colleagues to have special experience and expertise in CT instruction, assessment or theory” (APA, 1990, p. 4).

At the end of the study, the experts came to a consensus about what critical thinking and reasoning are, how critical thinking can be defined, and what its core elements are. (Definitions of the core elements can be found in Appendix C.) The report describes, defines, and details the ideal critical thinker, and what the core elements of critical thinking are. (The APA’s report does not make reference to how critical thinking can be taught; it only states what it is.) The following is the consensus statement regarding critical thinking and the ideal critical thinker:

We understand critical thinking to be purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based. (APA, 1990, p. 3)⁶

Breaking this definition down may make it more clear. Critical thinking is judgment that is purposeful and self-regulatory. This judgment then results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference of evidence, concepts, methods, criteria, and contexts. This definition of critical thinking offers an ideal for teachers of *Introducing Socrates*. It puts into specific language what it means to use critical thinking.

The APA's (1990) *Delphi Report* also went on to detail what it termed central or core critical thinking skills. The consensus among the experts was that critical thinking has six core elements (see Appendix C):

1. Interpretation: comprehend and express meaning or significance
2. Analysis: identify the intended and actual inferential relationships
3. Evaluation: assess logical strength
4. Inference: draw reasonable conclusions

⁶ The same APA (1990) *Delphi Report* goes on to state, "CT is essential as a tool of inquiry. As such, CT is a liberating force in education and a powerful resource in one's personal and civic life. While not synonymous with good thinking, CT is a pervasive and self-rectifying human phenomenon. The ideal critical thinker is habitually inquisitive, well-informed, trustful of reason, open-minded, flexible, fair-minded in evaluation, honest in facing personal biases, prudent in making judgments, willing to reconsider, clear about issues, orderly in complex matters, diligent in seeking relevant information, reasonable in the selection of criteria, focuses in inquiry, and persistent in seeking results which are as precise as the subject and the circumstances of inquiry permit. Thus, educating good critical thinkers means working toward this ideal. It combines developing CT skills with nurturing those dispositions which consistently yield useful insights and which are the basis of a rational and democratic society" (p. 4).

5. Explanation: state the results and justify one's reasoning
6. Self-regulation: monitor one's cognitive activities

Each of these elements of critical thinking corresponds to some part of the consensus statement of critical thinking given in the APA's (1990) *Delphi Report* (a further breakdown of these elements can be seen in Appendix A). These six categories are considered to be core or central categories that the ideal critical thinker would possess.⁷

This study uses these core elements as a way to evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment. Both in class during the dialogue, and through scenario questions in the follow-up focus group, the researcher will evaluate whether or not inmates exhibit an implicit understanding of these core components.

⁷ It is important to note that these core elements do not take place in a vacuum; they are often "employed interactively" in the reasoning process (Facione & Facione, 1998, p. 3). The following example will show how one could, for example, analyze one's interpretations or evaluate one's inferences (Facione & Facione, 1998, p. 3): After going to a movie with friends to watch "*Old Yeller*" (directed by Robert Stevenson and written by Fred Gibson), I find it to be funny while all those around me are crying. It occurs to me that it is odd that my friend and I have very different reactions to the same film, and I begin to think about why I found the film to be funny (self-regulation). I then engage in a conversation with my friend, and explain my reaction (explanation). She presents me with an alternative perspective (analysis/interpretation) and I reevaluate my thoughts about the film (interpretation/evaluation/inference). I do not necessarily have to change my opinion of the film in order to utilize the core elements of critical thinking, but critical thinking is important to help me understand better, evaluate and explain my reaction. In this example, as in most real life situations, the core elements of critical thinking were not used in isolation from one another, but were employed interactively throughout the conversation.

It is also important to note that one does not have to be an "ideal" critical thinker to utilize these core elements. Many people in their daily lives utilize one or more of these elements, yet they are not considered to be ideal critical thinkers. The ideal critical thinker, by definition, possesses the highest degree of proficiency with these skills.

Moral Reconciliation Therapy.

Thirty-one studies have evaluated the effect of MRT-treatment on adult inmate recidivism after their release. All of these found that MRT leads to lower rearrest and reincarceration rates for time periods up to a full 10 years after treatment and release. Other outcome research with adult offenders consistently indicates that MRT leads to reduced disciplinary problems in participants, enhanced employment, and lower recidivism rates with probationers, parolees, and drug court participants. Numerous studies indicate that MRT treatment leads to beneficial changes in a host of personality measures including the development of higher moral reasoning. (Little, 2002, p. 1)

MRT is an exceptionally well-researched cognitive-behavioral approach that is aimed at systematically altering and improving how offenders make decisions (Grandberry, 1998; Krueger, 1997; Little, 2001). MRT's goal is to improve offenders' reasoning and foster social, personal, and moral growth—the expectant result being that offenders will be able to make better “decisions about what they should or should not do in a given situation (for example, sell drugs or not, go to work or not)” (Correctional Counseling, 2003).

Developed in 1985 by Drs. Little and Robinson, MRT was one of the first attempts to comprehensively and systematically treat substance abusers from a purely cognitive behavioral perspective. It draws loosely from the research of a number of psychologists, notably Smothermon's (1979) theories of moral development, Erikson's (1963) work on the ego, identity development, and behavioral conditioning, Maslow's (1970, 1971) needs hierarchy, and Jung (1979, 1981).

MRT is designed to enhance ego, social, moral, interpersonal and positive behavioral growth. MRT attempts to change how offenders make a wide range of decisions and judgments, “moving subjects from hedonistic (pleasure vs. pain) reasoning levels to levels where concern for social rules and other people becomes important” (Correctional Counseling, 2003). Specifically, offenders describe their beliefs, attitudes, and behavior, quality of their current relationships, strategies for confronting problems. They then engage in a process of criticism, self-evaluation, relationship assessment, and undergo activities that appropriately enhance their egos (Brame, MacKenzie, Waggonner, & Robinson, 1996). Offenders are also “taught or conditioned to expect delayed gratification for their efforts and that ends must be evaluated not only in and of themselves but also in terms of the means required to achieve them (Little & Robinson, 1988, p. 144)” (Brame et al., 1996, ¶ 12).

Generally, MRT focuses on improving the reasoning, with an emphasis on moral reasoning, of prisoners (Little, 2000, 2001; Little & Robinson, 1988, Little et al., 1999). Specifically, MRT incorporates seven elements of treatment:

confrontation and assessment of self, assessment of current relationships, reinforcement of positive behavior, identity-formation, enhancement of self-concept, decreasing hedonistic orientation and increasing delay of gratification, and development of higher stages of moral reasoning. (Little & Robinson, 1988, p. 136).

These seven elements of treatment are the constructs that are embedded in the learning objectives for this research study.

It is believed that by focusing on these elements, MRT has been successful in reducing recidivism rates because it teaches individuals how to reason morally. This reasoning, in turn, makes people better able to choose to engage in behavior which is “right” rather than behavior which is considered to be “wrong” (MacKenzie & Hickman, 1998, chap. 6). The research literature confirms the claim that “delinquents tend to use lower levels of moral reasoning” (MacKenzie & Hickman, 1998, chap. 6), and hence the intervention is successful because it aids their ability to make right moral choices.

Reasoning and rehabilitation.

A recent Reasoning and Rehabilitation graduate says he was initially skeptical of the training, but soon changed his mind. Now I think so much more about the outcome of things he says. I'm trying to make a better life for myself and this training gave me the tools. I'm using these skills enough so that it really feels natural. That is really good, when something positive becomes part of you. (Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles, 2000, p. 1)

R&R was developed by Ross and Fabiano in 1985 as an educational program that focused on teaching cognitive skills to offenders (Pullen & English, 1994). R&R draws upon a wide corpus of research, notably the work of Meichenbaum, Chandler, Spivack, D’Zurilla and Goldfried, Goldstein and De Bono (Blud & Travers, 2001; Ross, Fabiano, & Ewles, 1988). R&R is

focused on “the way offenders think (process), rather than what they think (content)” (T3 Associates, 2002, ¶ 2).

R&R is a well researched and successful cognitive program (Fabiano, Robinson & Porporino, 1990; Lucas, Raynor, & Vanstone, 1992; Porporino, Fabiano, & Robinson, 1991a, 1991b; Robinson, 1995; Robinson, Grossman & Porporino, 1991; Ross et al., 1988) that seeks to impact the thinking of offenders, and thereby lower their risk of future offending (Fabiano, Porporino, & Robinson, 1991, p. 108). Its fundamental premise is that faulty thinking (also referred to as “cognitive deficits”) causes people to act inappropriately (McGuire, 2000), and treatment programs should focus on offenders’ thinking, not their behavior (Fabiano et al., 1991, p. 108). As two of the developers of R&R write in a later work, “how he [an offender] reasons and how he attempts to solve problems plays an important role in his criminal conduct” (Fabiano et al., 1991, p. 4).

R&R attempts to change offenders’ thinking by “uncover[ing] and address[ing] various cognitive (thinking) ‘deficits’ or ‘distortions’ ... These typically include impulsivity; egocentricity; rigid thinking; thinking rooted in the concrete rather than the abstract; and in the here and now” (Blud & Travers, 2001, p. 254). R&R

focuses on encouraging offenders to think before they act and to problem-solve; to become more sensitive to the perspective of others; to think more laterally to increase awareness of alternative sources of explanation and action and to inform their

decision-making; to learn from experience rather than reproduce problems from the past; and to look ahead, taking account of the consequences for themselves and others of what they think, say and do. (Blud & Travers, 2001, p. 254)

R&R explains criminal behavior and antisocial attitudes by reference to cognitive deficits, stating that these deficits cause an impairment in the reasoning process (Blud & Travers, 2001; Porporino & Fabiano, 2000; Ross et al., 1988). The literature hypothesizes that criminals adapt a disorganized or even barely coherent reasoning process, coupled with an antisocial lifestyle, because they are “unaware of how their thinking is propelling them into difficulties, and ... are unable to extricate themselves since they lack the skills to do so” (Porporino & Fabiano, 2000, p. 13). R&R is firmly based in the belief that cognitive deficits and faulty reasoning can be corrected, and by doing so risks of future offending will be decreased.

The first premise, that faulty thinking causes people to act in certain ways, is rooted in the idea that one cannot explain offenders' behavior by behavior alone (i.e., one needs to look to the antecedents of behavior to explain behavior). There are hosts of factors that cause one to act a certain way, including psychological, social, and even cognitive and intellectual factors. Thus, the way to address behavioral problems is not through Skinnerian behavior modification (like punishment or reward), but by addressing these deficits at a more fundamental level. This fundamental level includes teaching inmates intellectual and cognitive reasoning skills that drive behavior (Porporino

& Fabiano, 2000; Blud & Travers, 2001; Ross et al., 1988). By addressing the “how of thinking,” inmates can be more effective in changing their own behavior (McGuire, 2000). This also avoids the pitfalls of behavioral conditioning by focusing on internal motivation and removing adversarial relationships caused by punishment and the psychological effect of punishment.

Finally, in a meta-analyses of the literature, MacKenzie and Hickman (1998) write:

In an examination of correctional rehabilitation programs, Ross and Fabiano (1985) determined that successful programs shared one factor, the inclusion of an offender’s cognitions, thoughts, and attitudes as a target for change. Ross and Fabiano (1985) also found that the development of certain cognitive skills, including the ability to identify consequences of behavior, problem-solving, and ability to use means-ends reasoning, is delayed in many offenders. In response to this research, Reasoning & Rehabilitation (R&R) was developed as an educational, skills-based intervention for high-risk offenders (Ross & Fabiano, 1985) ... R&R aims to change the underlying thoughts and attitudes that lead to criminal behavior by teaching rather than treating offenders (Porporino et al., 1991). Specifically, the program aims to help offenders develop self-control, critical assessment of thinking, social skills, analysis of interpersonal problems, problem-solving, and empathy. (MacKenzie & Hickman, chap. 6)

These skills (self-control, critical assessment of thinking, social skills, analysis of interpersonal problems, problem-solving, and empathy) are also used as constructs, along with the constructs in MRT, to determine the learning objectives of *Introducing Socrates*.

Motivational interviewing.⁸ Motivational interviewing is extremely popular in inmate education programs and stressed by the Oregon Department of Corrections Volunteer Services (T. O'Connor, personal communication, January 4, 2003). Motivational interviewing is defined as "a client-centered, directive method for enhancing intrinsic motivation to change by exploring and resolving ambivalence" (Miller & Rollnick, 2002, p. 25). Motivational interviewing is not a specific treatment per se but an approach to treatment that has been shown to be extremely successful regardless of one's theoretical approach (Daley & Zukoff, 1999, p. 127). While widespread in prison treatment systems, it is not limited to correctional contexts. It has also been used in drug and alcohol programs, with adolescents, sex offenders, and with individuals with dual disorders. It has been shown to be especially effective not as a primary treatment, but as a treatment adjunct (Miller & Rollnick, 2002, pp. 27-28), that is, when used "with other treatments [it] can enhance the potency of the intervention" (Ginsburg, Mann, Rotgers, & Weekes, 2002, p. 344).

Motivational interviewing has five core components:

1. It is client-centered. "It focuses on the concerns and perspectives of the individual" (Miller & Rollnick, 2002, p. 25).

⁸ The leaders of the Oregon State Correctional education program required that I learn about motivational interviewing before *Introducing Socrates* would be accepted. While they were receptive to my program, it was important to them that *Introducing Socrates* comport with the educational objectives and agendas of the institution. Motivational interviewing is playing an increasingly important role in inmate education programs in Oregon penitentiaries.

2. It is consciously directive, that is, “the interviewer elicits and selectively reinforces chance talk and then responds to resistance in a way that is intended to diminish it” (Miller & Rollnick, 2002, p. 25).
3. “It is a method of communication rather than a set of techniques” (Miller & Rollnick, 2002, p. 25).
4. It focuses on “eliciting the person’s intrinsic motivation for change” (Miller & Rollnick, 2002, p. 25).
5. “It is focused on resolving ambivalence as a key in eliciting change” (Miller & Rollnick, 2002, p. 26).

Each of these components contributes to the overall goal of “increase[ing] the willingness of those who received the interventions to accept the seriousness of their problems and to recognize the need for change” (Daley & Zuckoff, 1999, p. 128). With the exception of number two, these components are also found in *Introducing Socrates*. *Introducing Socrates* is a client-centered method of communication that taps into internal motivation and focuses on resolving ambivalence.

One of the benefits of using motivational interviewing as an adjunct treatment is that it has been shown to be effective in brief interventions and in very brief interventions (VBI). There is no standard treatment time for what constitutes a brief or a very brief intervention. The most popular correctional

counselors in the private sector have brief treatment programs that range from 6-32 hours (Correctional Counseling, 2003). For example, in examining different approaches to treat alcohol problems, Miller and Associates discovered two interesting facts:

When they compared the empirical evidence for their effectiveness at helping people change their drinking, no approach consistently beat what they grouped together as “brief interventions.” These interventions varied in terms of how brief they really were (e.g., one session, a couple of sessions, or even a few minutes of advice from a family doctor), but in many cases they were as effective or even more effective than much more lengthy and involved interventions. (Daley & Zuckoff, 1999, p. 127)

The research literature on brief interventions shows that these findings apply to other populations besides problem drinkers, like those who suffer from depression, engage in high risk sexual behaviors, and addicts (Archibald, Chan & Wong, 1994; Bien, Miller, & Tonigan, 1993; Blanchard, Waterreus, & Mann, 1999; D’Amico & Fromme, 2000; State of New Mexico, 1999). Brief interventions using motivational interviewing as an adjunct treatment have the possibility to be extremely promising, because they emphasize the internal motivation of inmates. This is important because the treatment proposed for this study, *Introducing Socrates*, is considered to be a “brief intervention” due to the fact that takes place for a total of only 8 hours.

Conclusion

Introducing Socrates is constructed around the research conclusions that were discussed here. It builds on what the research shows works with regard to the two foremost cognitive and behavioral treatments, MRT and R&R; namely it uses their objectives and attempts to increase offenders' critical thinking ability. It also draws from a popular and effective treatment used in Oregon Corrections education, Motivational Interviewing, to attempt to generate internal motivation for change. Furthermore, it has been designed to avoid what the research has shown to be ineffective and even counterproductive, namely creating harsh, adversarial or threatening environments.

Introducing Socrates removes harsh and adversarial climates and relationships by: (a) being a volunteer program; (b) not requiring right answers; (c) not forcing inmates to memorize content; (d) being a brief intervention that inmates can choose to opt out of at any time; (e) not being sponsored by the state (the state enables *Introducing Socrates*, it does not sponsor it); (f) attempting to use inmate's internal motivation to change; and (g) not focusing on particular problems or issues of inmates (doing so may be threatening to some offenders). It works with inmates as participants, not spectators or information receptacles, in questions that have meaning in their lives. It does not punish inmates for incorrect responses because there are no incorrect responses and there is no punishment. Finally, it also fosters internal

motivation by thematically borrowing from Motivational Interviewing as an adjunct treatment (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). It provides offenders with tools that afford them the choice to use these tools if they desire to do so—there is no forced compliance.

The Socratic Method

What Is the Socratic Method?⁹

In eristic, where the prime object is to win, one is free to say anything that will give one a debating advantage. In elenchus, where the prime object is search for truth, one does not have that option. One must say what one believes, even if it will lose the debate. (Vlastos, 1994, p. 8)

Asking questions is a good way to find things out. Sesame Street

Historically, the Socratic method, found in the Platonic Dialogues, dates back more than 2,500 years. In these dialogues, the historical Socrates engages his interlocutors by going through several stages of dialogue. The stages Socrates uses can be categorized as (a) Wonder, (b) Hypothesis, (c) Elenchus (refutation and cross-examination), (d) Accept/reject the hypothesis, and, (e) Act accordingly (Dye, 1996).

In the first stage, *wonder*, Socrates poses a question, such as “What is Justice?” (*The Republic*) or “What is piety?” (*The Euthyphro*) or “What is

⁹ A version of the following section appeared in *Teaching Philosophy*, December 2002 (Boghossian, 2002b).

courage?" (*The Laches*) or "What is moderation?" (*The Charmides*) or "What is knowledge?" (*The Theaetetus*) or "What is a statesman?" (*The Statesman*) or "What is friendship?" (*The Lysis*).¹⁰ Related to the field of prison education, specific questions could be, "What is the purpose of prison?" or "What does it mean to be fair?" or "Is it important to be honest?" Often questions are asked for the purpose of further defining the idea in question; that is, the Socratic practitioner can seek definitions for the terms about which she inquired, starting with broad questions and systematically narrowing down the inquiry.

In the second stage, *hypothesis*, possible answers to the question are posed by someone other than Socrates. Using our first example, "What is Justice?," several responses could follow, such as, "Justice is what is in the interest of the stronger party," or "Justice is paying one's debts" (Plato's *Republic*). Again, situating this in the context of inmate education, possible responses to the question, "Is it important to be honest?" could be: "No, not if it means not getting your way," or "It depends on who you're interacting with and what your relationship is to them," or "Yes, because people will trust you more." This second stage is fairly straightforward, because it only deals with the response to the question; there is not evaluation of the response yet.

¹⁰ This list is in no way comprehensive; rather, it is meant to lend textual support to the wide range of dialogues and of topics that Socrates asked for the definition of a word or concept. These usually took the form of "What is X."

The third stage, which is known as the *elenchus*, rests at the heart of the historical Socrates' practice.¹¹ Through discourse, sometimes referred to as "cross-examination," Socrates generated counterexamples to the hypotheses that were just presented to him. For example, if the claim being examined was, "What is Justice?" and the hypothesis or response was, "Justice is paying one's debts," then a possible counterexample to this would be, "What if one borrows a gun from a man who later becomes a fugitive. He's wanted for murder. He approaches you and wants the gun back? Is it just to give him his gun, knowing that he will likely attempt to use it to commit another murder?" This is a counterexample, because it provides an instance or example that may make the hypothesis that was offered false.

This stage of the Socratic method has several distinct but related purposes. One purpose is to examine whether the entire set of beliefs (or a particular belief) held by his interlocutors were mutually consistent. According to Carpenter (1999), "By highlighting inconsistency, the *elenchus* would force its participants to sharpen and refine their moral concepts" (p. 7). In describing some of the other purposes of this stage, Carpenter goes on to write, "Furthermore, it would show the interlocutors the inadequacy of their ordinary moral training and it would teach them the extent to which their ordinary moral

¹¹ This is particularly true in the early Socratic dialogues. For more here, see Carpenter's (1999) *The Socratic Elenchus as a Search for Truth*.

beliefs are unstable and are in need of radical revision.” Finally, question and answer and counterexamples are the most important defining characteristics for this stage of Socratic practice.

At this point in the discourse, the counterexample is either accepted or rejected. Using our justice example, possible responses could be, “Wow, I guess you’re correct. It would be unjust to give the man his gun back even though that would be paying one’s debts. Therefore, there must be something wrong with defining justice as paying one’s debts,” or “This does not undermine the claim that justice is paying one’s debts. The gun belonged to the man, and you had an implied contract, made in good faith, that you would be returning the gun. The circumstances surrounding the return of the gun are irrelevant. Therefore the counterexample does not weaken the claim that justice is paying one’s debts.”

This segues into the fourth step, accepting or rejecting the hypothesis. If the counterexample is accepted, then Socrates brings the discussion back to the second stage and asks for another hypothesis (Dye, 1996). For example, the counterexample would be accepted by someone who said, “Yeah, you’re right. Justice can’t be paying one’s debts. What about justice being ‘giving each her or his due’?” Alternatively, the counterexample could be rejected by both parties who agree that it was neither necessary nor sufficient to undermine the hypothesis, in this case, justice as paying one’s debts. If the counterexample is

rejected, then the hypothesis is accepted as being “provisionally” true. If there are any other counterexamples that could show the hypothesis to be defective, then Socrates returns the discussion to step three. After this process of examining claims had been exhausted, then one could *act accordingly*, that is, one could act on the findings of one’s inquiry.

Hence we have a “formula” and a working definition for the Socratic method that was practiced in the Platonic dialogues by the historical Socrates.

Socratic Seminars and Truthfulness

I am simply your fellow-explorer in the search for truth, and if somebody who contradicts me is obviously right, I shall be the first to give way. Socrates in the Gorgias. (Hamilton & Huntington, 1961, p. 1165)

There are varying degrees of abstraction and types of applications of the Socratic method. There are several reasons for this: (a) there is no one single application of the method in the Platonic dialogues (Vlastos, 1994), (b) the method does not lend itself to being reduced to an exact formula (Strong, 1997), and (c) different educators conduct Socratic seminars differently. The distinctions that are made in this section are not found in the literature. They are heuristic separations designed to clarify what the Socratic method is, how it can be implemented, and what its goals could be, depending on an individual teacher’s style and objectives.

At the first “level” of sophistication,

A Socratic Seminar begins with a question, students must have the assigned text in their minds and on the table in front of them, address is polite and responsive, all should participate and support their opinions with argument—when that has been said, all has been said. There is no further method. The rest develops as living conversation. (Strong, 1997, p. 42).

At its most basic level, and at the risk of grossly oversimplifying, this is what the method is. It is an examination into a topic in which anyone is allowed to participate in the discourse, providing that they give reasons for their beliefs.¹² Many educators already use this pedagogy, or structure their learning environments in this way, but are unaware that this is fundamentally Socratic in nature.

In the next level of sophistication, the Socratic method can be understood not only as an open conversation in which participants support their ideas by argument, but as a *truth-oriented* method of understanding. “Socratic elenchus is a *search* for moral truth by question-and-answer adversary argument in which a thesis is debated only if asserted as the answerer’s own belief and is regarded as refuted only if its negation is deduced from his own beliefs” (Vlastos, 1994, p. 4). Here, however, the word “debated” can be somewhat misleading, as it is usually used in the context of an eristic and not an elenchus. As discussed above, an elenchus means a process of example or definition and then counterexample; the word “elenchus,” while technically just a stage of the

¹² For a fascinating example of the step-by-step application of the Socratic method, see Garlikov’s (2001a) *Teaching by Asking Instead of Telling*. Here Garlikov teaches young children binary arithmetic just by asking them questions in a Socratic style.

Socratic method, is often used synonymously to mean “the Socratic method.”

An eristic, however, is quite different (Abbs, 1994, p. 17). Debates, for example, are eristic because in a debate there is a winner and a loser, and one can say things one does not believe if one thinks that one can win the debate this way. This is an anathema to the way Socrates practiced the method. In Plato’s *Gorgias*, for example, Socrates asks his interlocutors if they are like him—he likes to refute or to be refuted, but prefers the latter. Socrates did not engage in discourse to win, but to find the truth.

In the elenchus specifically, and the Socratic method broadly, one *must* be truthful; one must say exactly what one believes, even if that causes one to “lose” the discussion. Truthfulness plays an extremely important role in a Socratic dialectic:

Truthfulness in dialectical inquiry functions in a similar manner to truthfulness in everyday life: the practice of communicative reason breaks down without it. It is not that the interlocutor’s speech cannot be examined, but the integrity of the speaker and his speech is violated—so he runs the risk of self-deception—and the epistemic and moral community is disrupted—so the principle of a common commitment to the truth discovered is given up. (Schmid, 1998, note 4)

The notion of a commitment to the truth rests at the core of the Socratic method. In this second formulation of the method, a thesis is debated by question and answer for the purpose of finding the truth. It is expected (and this can be explicitly stated) that all participants be honest in their responses. It can, however, achieve its goals even if participants are deceitful.

Finally, there is a stricter and more formal way to conduct Socratic seminars. Very few educators (usually professors who are teaching graduate classes in philosophy) use this more rigid structure in their classrooms. The most formal statement of the stages of the Socratic method can be seen here:

- (1) The interlocutor asserts a thesis, p , which Socrates considers false and targets for refutation.
- (2) Socrates secures agreement to further premises, say q and r (each of which may stand for a conjunct of propositions). The agreement is *ad hoc*: Socrates argues from $\{q, r\}$, not to them.
- (3) Socrates then argues, and the interlocutor agrees, that q & r entail *not- p* .
- (4) Socrates then claims that he has shown that *not- p* is true, p false. (Vlastos, 1994, p. 11)

In this explanation, letters are used to represent propositions of the speakers.

This formulation of the Socratic method is the one that is most commonly found in the Platonic dialogues and comes the closest to the way it was practiced by the historical Socrates. The basic idea here is the same as the five stages that were detailed above, but this is a more structured approach: once an interlocutor offers a thesis, Socrates shows how, upon eliciting further propositions, that initial thesis cannot be true.

Unfortunately Plato never outlined the Socratic method. Thus, there is no one correct way to conduct a Socratic seminar. This has caused some confusion in the literature (discussed below), and consequently many educators

who are curious about Socratic practice have an understandably hard time figuring out what the Socratic method is. Nevertheless, the five stages noted above (wonder, hypothesis, elenchus, accept/reject the hypothesis, act accordingly) are general principles that govern Socratic seminars.

Socratic Constructs

Introduction

Socratic pedagogy is not without controversy. Criticisms can be as diverse as calling into questions the Socratic teacher's leadership abilities, to more practical concerns of purposefully engendering a state of perplexity and shame. Often educators who wish to learn about and employ Socratic pedagogy encounter theoretical and practical criticisms. Obviously these criticisms can dissuade teachers from learning about what the Socratic method is and what its uses are, and can dissuade penal systems from adopting *Introducing Socrates*.

This section examines three distinct claims against the Socratic method: its impact on perceptions of a teacher's leadership; the role race, gender and power play in its use; and whether its goal is to induce perplexity and shame in participants. It evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of each argument. These criticisms are many of the constructs that the focus group and an inmate feedback questionnaire measure. For example, through the post-treatment follow-up, specific questions were asked that address these criticisms, such as

whether the inmates felt ashamed in class, or if they perceived their teacher as a leader. While this section argues that the more potent theoretical criticisms of Socratic pedagogy do not apply to *Introducing Socrates*, this study practically evaluates these criticisms through offenders' self-reports.

Leadership, Power, and the Socratic Method¹³

This section examines questions related to the Socratic method and perceptions of a teacher's leadership. Specifically, it asks if teachers of *Introducing Socrates* are seen as being weak or poor leaders because of the nature of Socratic pedagogy. Unlike traditional pedagogical models, Socratic practitioners do not claim to have all of the answers; in fact, they do not claim to have *any* answers. For the purpose of this particular inquiry, examples of several strong starting questions would be: Does not claiming to have answers to inmate questions adversely impact the nature of power relations in the classroom? And what is the relationship of power and leadership to the practice of *Introducing Socrates*? Is being a leader in the classroom synonymous with having answers to offenders' questions? Does not having, or at least professing to not have, answers to inmate questions adversely affect the power dynamic

¹³ A version of the following section has appeared in *Teaching Philosophy*, December 2002 (Boghossian, 2002b).

between the teacher and the inmates? Does this lack of professed knowledge undermine the teacher's role as leader?

In appropriate Socratic style, we start with questions that are relevant to our present inquiry, continue with definitions, and then examine related aspects of this topic. The thesis of this section is that *Introducing Socrates* could undermine a teacher's leadership and adversely impact power dynamics in the classroom, or not, depending upon the educational and organizational context and the goals of the teacher. To demonstrate this thesis, this section first provides definitions of power and leadership, then very briefly explicates traditional power roles in the classroom and in a corrections context, clarifies power in relation to the Socratic method, and discusses possible educational goals of a teacher. Finally, this section examines the importance of the arguments here, and shows how this then relates to the larger context of this project.

The Socratic Method and Educational Leadership

Power, leadership, and definitions. While power is a "very general and comprehensive concept," theoreticians Blau and Scott (1960) argue for a commonly agreed-upon definition. They suggest that many conceptions of power are predicated on Weber's classic definition (Blau & Scott, 1960, p. 12): "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance" (Weber, 1982, p. 83). While any

definition of power will almost necessarily be either too narrow or too general to encompass all the nuances of power, this broad definition can serve as a good starting point for our inquiry.

Leadership is even more difficult to define. Unlike definitions of power, there is no universal definition of leadership (Guillermo, 1999). There are, nevertheless, two fairly clear and straightforward definitions that have gained wide acceptance:

Leadership is a function of knowing yourself, having a vision that is well communicated, building trust among colleagues and taking effective action to realize your own leadership potential. (Bennis, 1994, p. 27)

Leadership is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual ... induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers. (Gardner, 1990, p. 1)

Common threads among these definitions are vision, communication, trust, action, persuasion, and expertise. When using the term “leadership,” these basic descriptors will be used to help us more clearly identify and examine practices that fall under the rubric of leadership.¹⁴

¹⁴ It should be noted that there is nothing inherent in the nature of these traditionally accepted definitions of leadership and power that precludes leaders from being active knowledge seekers in a community of inquirers (Searle, Keeler, Sowa, Delugach, & Lukose, 1997). If traditional definitions of power center on exerting one’s will when faced with resistance, then this definition is satisfied by a leader’s asking questions, and thus exerting her power over others (Weber, 1982). In the practice of the Socratic method, the Socratic questioner partially chooses the direction of the discussion and even the topics for discussion. Privileging the person who directs the discussion over the individuals who are directed entails that the directed have less power than the director; quoting Goldhamer and Shils, Etzioni (1975) writes, “a person may be said to have power to the extent that he influences the behavior of others in accordance with his own intentions” (p. 4).

Power, leadership, and post-modernity. Even though there are some fairly straightforward definitions of power and leadership, no definitions exist in a vacuum. The “postmodern turn” (a term used to indicate the paradigm shift toward post-modernity) has yielded notions of leadership that are grounded in context, rather than in definition. Underlying intellectual themes that color perceptions of leadership dictate that the search for an overarching and totalizing theory of leadership is an illusory exercise. By realizing that context plays a vital role in understanding what it is to be a leader, the postmodern turn has shattered traditional attempts to objectively ground notions of leadership.¹⁵ This definitional, conceptual, and criteriological deconstruction of what leadership is is not just a trendy neologism of post-modern academicians, but part of a larger intellectual trend that emphasizes context and narrative over objective understanding.

Leadership is not produced by undergoing successful iterations of leadership training, by rigid adherence to “God-given laws,” or by deference to fashionable methodologies that claim to have the formula for what makes a good leader. Leadership could be as simple as picking up trash in the classroom, or as complicated as navigating a complex politically charged landscape where competing ideologies vie for influence and funding (e.g., at an inmate education

¹⁵ For Foucault, for example, there are only the effects of power. He uses the term power in a nominalist sense only, that is, the doctrine holding that abstract concepts, general terms, or universals, in this case “power,” have no objective reference but exist only as names.

meeting where proponents of vocational training and boot camps both adamant that their way is the only way).

This contemporary view of leadership helps us to understand if the Socratic practitioner can indeed be considered a leader (Hirschhorn, 1998, pp. 31-40). In the first part of this section, a more context-independent understanding of the issues could be employed: one takes the definition of a leader, then takes the definition of a Socratic practitioner, and examines similarities and differences in the definitional overlap. With an understanding not of the definitions of the terms but rather of the *context* of leadership, that is, the educational and organizational setting, one is more able to understand what is entailed in answering some of the questions posed at the beginning of this section. It could be argued that upon traditional definitions, mentioned above, those engaged in the Socratic method are not leaders. These arguments have merit. That is, it is important to understand the particular educational and organizational context where the Socratic method is practiced.

The Traditional Classroom

For instance, it will aid our understanding of the relationship between the terms “power” and “leadership” if we conceptualize them by looking at traditional student-teacher dynamics before turning to a corrections context. In traditional classroom dynamics the teacher and the text are *the* sources of

knowledge and information. Previously, it was mentioned that popular Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970, pp. 71-84) refers to this as the “banking concept” of education, where the teacher is the bank and the students are repositories who store information and then give that information back to the teacher.

In this traditional model, the idea that the teacher would not have answers to the questions undermines the legitimacy of the role of the teacher. If the overwhelming majority of teachers in a particular educational institution are using a type of banking pedagogy, and that is seen as the accepted norm, then using a more Socratic approach in the classroom could be problematic.

Borrowing from our definition of leadership above, “building trust among colleagues and taking effective action” *may* be qualities that, in this traditional educational model, the Socratic teacher is seen as lacking. Again, many factors would come into play in forming a judgment about a Socratic practitioner in this environment: the mission of the organization, the organization’s culture, the degree of openness and communication among the involved parties, and so on. Even in knowing that the traditional pedagogy is a banking one, there may still be some organizational contexts where the Socratic teacher is considered an effective leader. More information would need to be known about the particular educational context before a judgment could be made regarding perceptions of leadership.

The Socratic Teacher and Power Positions: Who Controls What?

The Socratic method stands in stark contrast to the traditional model described by Freire. There is no “banking” of information in a Socratic dialectic. The Socratic teacher asks the initial questions, and, at least ostensibly, relationships are embedded as questioner to answerer, that is, the relationships can be understood as one who asks and one who answers. In more “advanced” Socratic sessions this is somewhat more complicated because the students may also question the teacher. In these interchanges the teacher no longer controls the dialogue and is no longer in the role of questioner to answerer. At this juncture, Etzioni’s (1975) questions, “Who controls what, and what are the relationships among those who control?” (p. 159) can be very helpful in understanding notions of leadership and power as they occur in various contexts.

Because the Socratic method is not a debate, where there is a winner and a loser, this further complicates an examination into the role of power and leadership, because it is not clear “who controls what” and what it means to “exert will despite resistance.” In a debate situation, where there are winners and losers, it is fairly clear who controlled what, what their relationships are, who has the power, and what their status as leader is.

The role of the Socratic questioner could be seen as a power position because the means of power could be “embedded in the teacher’s capacity to

form useful, helpful, guiding questions” (Etzioni, 1975, p. 5), which, in turn, could lend legitimacy to the teacher. Etzioni defines power positions as “positions whose incumbents regularly have access to means of power” (p. 5). In this sense, the use of power and the role of the leader are intertwined. It can, therefore, be said that the Socratic teacher can derive power by asking questions, which in turn can legitimize her role as a leader. The “who controls what” is the teacher controlling the questions, which is an example of a power position in the broadest sense. The “relationships among those who control” would simply be that of who asks the questions and who answers (as in the Catholic catechism or Marxist ideological training).

Leadership, Power, and Goals

So clearly what it means to be a leader is dependant upon educational and organizational context, as well as a teacher’s goals. Thus, a demonstrable way to judge effective leadership is via the achievement of goals. If some of the more rigid definitions of power are maintained (where the teacher is more of an authoritarian figure who exerts his will in the face of resistance rather than an equal inquirer), then it is doubtful that a range of particular goals in the classroom could be realized. To use just one example, the “open spaces” that educator Parker Palmer (1997, p. 161) discusses could be one goal of a Socratic teacher that may be more easily achieved through Socratic pedagogy than through a more traditional teaching style where the teacher is the locus of

knowledge. These open spaces, which are places of discourse that allow creativity and intellectual freedom, are necessary to achieve a “community of truth” by allowing a community of truth seekers to do just that—seek the truth. However, this is just one example of a specific goal that a Socratic teacher may have; other goals include: fostering critical thinking, helping inmates clarify their arguments, assisting others in making probing inquiries into particular subjects, encouraging students to engage in a community-based dialogue, showing students how to ask better questions, or encouraging what Freire (1970) calls “liberatory education.”

If the goal of the teacher, fostered by the mission of the organization, is to tell students what morality to embrace, or, for example, what position to adopt on the trial of *Tennessee v. John Scopes*, 1925 (e.g., at a religious school where the institution has a rigid curriculum, like the now popularized medrasas in the Islamic world), then use of the Socratic method could undermine the teacher’s goal because the Socratic method is a way to approach provisional claims and has no necessary ideological or teleological orientation. If the Socratic method prevents a teacher’s goal from being achieved, then her status as a leader could be called into question by the organization and her students. The method itself does not support any norm or ideological agenda of the agent; instead, the method is only a way to help one clarify one’s ideas. So again we see the importance that context plays in understanding the perception and role of

a leader. Obviously, the practice of the Socratic method is not acontextual, because it can take place in various contexts: prisons, graduate schools, K-16, law school, or even at a café (Phillips, 2001).

Reasonable questions at this juncture would be the following: “If teachers do not have the answers, then what do they have? Why are they teaching without answers, and what, exactly, are their goals?”¹⁶ In short, a primary goal of the Socratic teacher is that she knows *how* to ask questions that force inmates to give reasons for their positions. In most contexts that are not ideology driven, it is the act of asking good questions and the ability to provide clear answers that have sufficient justification to merit warrant in a claim that ultimately accords the Socratic teacher both power and status as an effective leader (Plantinga, 1993a, 1993b). There could be contexts, however, that are not ideologically driven, where the Socratic practitioner is not seen as a leader (e.g., in Freire’s banking model of education).

If one does not set appropriate goals and is a poor leader (i.e., one who does not know how to ask the right questions, one who has an attachment to one’s beliefs that prevents him from assenting to superior arguments, one who does not listen well, one who uses his position in the classroom to silence other voices, one who uses ridicule to reinforce one’s status as a leader) then one is a Socratic practitioner in name only (Garlikov, 1998, p. 3). These “Socratic”

¹⁶ This does not just apply to the social sciences, but to the “hard” sciences as well.

practitioners are bad leaders because they are bad teachers, in any context. It is unclear what goals they could accomplish, and how these goals related to the Socratic method. In Etzioni's (1975, p. 9) terminology, one might say that these teachers alienate inmates from the dialectical process rather than encouraging them to participate in it by demonstrating their own commitment to it.

So What? A Preemptive Rebuttal

Why is examining this particular topic important? It is primarily important as a preemptive rebuttal. If a persuasive argument can be made that inherent in the very nature of Socratic pedagogy is the potential to undermine the teacher's leadership and adversely effect power dynamics in the classroom, then the widespread use and adoption of *Introducing Socrates* could be jeopardized and ultimately fall into desuetude.

It is important to note, however, that even if part of this supposition is granted (i.e., that upon the traditional view of comparing definitions of leadership to the Socratic practice, leadership roles are undermined by *Introducing Socrates*), then it is unclear what the exact harm of this claim would be. Is the impact that inmates would then learn less, or that traditional leadership roles would be destabilized and that would have a deleterious longitudinal impact on inmates?

For some educational theorists, notably Shor and Freire (1987), the ostensibly harmful impact of traditional leadership roles being undermined would actually be an added *benefit* of Socratic pedagogy rather than a problem. Shor and Freire believe that the conditioning mechanism for institutional oppression is formalized *because of* traditional educational roles (Marshall, 1992, p. 108). These traditional power roles reinforce the idea of inmate education oppression by calcifying inmate's deference to teachers and the role of the teacher.¹⁷ If the power dynamic is changed, and the perception of the teacher's role and the inmate/inmate education conceptions of their role changes too, then these are conditions for the possibility of *conscientização* (Freire, 1970, p. 35). The rigid roles engaged by the inmate and the teacher "prevent the awakening of critical consciousness," "liberatory education" and "empowerment," thereby act as an unyielding barrier for the possibility of social liberation (Freire, 1970).

An example of this can be seen in examining power, race and gender. Power, in a corrections context, is not just viewed as the discharging of a teacher's will upon inmates. Power also comes from having the wisdom to cede to arguments that have sufficient justification to warrant belief, no matter what

¹⁷ In other words, the deference that inmates show their teachers in the classroom acts to keep them oppressed because they exhibit the same behavior outside of the classroom, in the work force and in society.

the claim is that is being examined. What is too often overlooked is that the Socratic practitioner needs to justify her own beliefs, just as inmates do.¹⁸ So in a less obvious sense, power comes not from being “the depositor,” or knowing the answers, or even from asking the most appropriate questions, but from assenting to the best reasons, no matter who provided them (Kezar, 2000; Nehamas, 1998).

These argumentative turnarounds notwithstanding, this section has examined the claim that the use of *Introducing Socrates* undermines the leadership role of the teacher. Even if it is the case that the Socratic method undermines the leadership position of the teacher (for example, in Freire’s traditional banking model of education), then it remains unclear why this is problematic. Shor and Freire (1987) claim that if these formalized power dynamics in the classroom stand in isomorphic relationship to structural relations outside of the classroom, then these rebuttals serve to call into question any alleged disadvantages of *Introducing Socrates*.¹⁹

¹⁸ It is important to reiterate that in the Platonic dialogues the historical Socrates’ position was not privileged, i.e., his interlocutors could ask him questions, questions did not only flow from Socrates to others. In many contemporary classrooms, however, this has been distorted to privilege the instructor’s questions; students cannot ask questions of their instructor during a “Socratic” session.

¹⁹ It is not immediately apparent that there is a direct causal relationship between the power dynamics in the classroom and the power dynamics outside of the classroom. Certainly there is, as Shor and Freire (1987) suggest, some relationship between the two, but what that relationship is needs to be the subject of discussion and not presupposed or accepted by fiat.

Leadership Questions Resolved

As we have seen, the answer to the questions posed at the beginning of this section on leadership related to teacher's power roles is, "it depends on the educational and organizational context and the goal of the teacher." There is no homogeneity in inmate education programs. Different correctional systems have different goals, standards and norms that govern inmate educational programs.

Introducing Socrates would thrive, or not, depending on the larger institutional context; and the perceptions of a teacher's leadership would shine, or not, also depending on both this larger context and the personality and goals of the individual teacher. If the goal of a teacher, and perhaps the mission of the institution where she teaches, is to tell inmates what beliefs to hold, then

Introducing Socrates would not be appropriate. The adoption and use of an inappropriate tool will have a negative impact on perceptions of a teacher.

Therefore it would reflect positively on perceptions of the teacher if they choose and effectively employed a pedagogy that was appropriate for what they wanted to accomplish. If the goal of a teacher is, for example, to get inmates to critically engage the material, or to clarify their beliefs, then the Socratic method has been shown to effectively accomplish these goals.

What remains is to examine this hypothesis in practice; leadership, and an inmate's perception of a Socratic teacher's leadership, is examined in this study's inmate feedback questionnaire and in the follow-up sessions. Inmates

were asked about their experiences, thoughts and perceptions of a Socratic teacher's leadership ability. In this examination it is essential to note the organizational and institutional context in which *Introducing Socrates* occurs.

Socratic Pedagogy, Race, and Power: From People to Propositions²⁰

Leaving aside the blatant (to my eyes at least) problems of power and dominance of an elderly Greek citizen teaching a slave boy, this example [the Meno] of teaching has always left me cold.
(Rud, 1997, ¶ 18)

Introduction

The *Meno* has long been considered the paradigmatic example of the Socratic method. Here, solely by asking questions, Socrates teaches a young slave boy that the area of a large square is twice the area of a smaller one. Some scholars, however, find both the Socratic method generally, and this example specifically, to be problematic because of notions of power and the influence this may have on the participants' responses. Garlikov engaged part of the criticism that relates to the idea of respondents being logically led to given conclusions (Garlikov, 1998; Rud, 1997). However, the gap in the literature that now needs to be addressed deals with the power differential between participants and whether this could influence the interlocutor's

²⁰ A version of the following section has appeared in *Education Policy Analysis Archives* (Boghossian, 2002c).

responses in a Socratic discourse. Is it possible that Rud's criticism of Socratic pedagogy is misguided, and assent to propositions is the consequence of power dynamics rather than individuals being led to certain conclusions? This section focuses on these ideas, specifically exploring the nature of power in discourse as it relates to Socratic questioning in the context of inmate education, and show that while the criticisms definitely have merit, they are not strong enough to undermine *Introducing Socrates*.

There are two ways that power relations could impact *Introducing Socrates*, one obvious and one less obvious, if: (a) the participants respond in a certain way because they seek something other than the truth, such as approval or early probation and (b) the race, age, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and so on, of either the Socratic practitioner or of her interlocutors play a role in the discourse, that is, if arguments and counterexamples offered do not stand or fall on their own merit, but because of an intrinsic quality of the utterer. Let us now examine these and see what role, if any, they play in the successful practice of *Introducing Socrates*.

The relationship between knowledge and power in discourse has been extensively examined (Boileau, 2000; Popkewitz & Brennan, 1997). Often these criticisms focus on the more obvious abuses of power in discourse, such as individuals not being allowed into the discourse, or individuals who go into a discourse with certain assumptions about what someone can know based upon

their sex or race.²¹ These are issues in any discourse, and the first point, while admittedly important, is structural and somewhat less interesting, and consequently is not addressed here (i.e., in a corrections environment the issue of who physically gets to be in the classroom is not immediately relevant to this study because all inmates who apply are eligible). The second issue does indeed impact Socratic discourse, and surprisingly no research has explained how power dynamics impact Socratic practitioners and in a correctional context. If it is the case that truth-seeking educational communities cannot be established because of power disparities between inmates and teachers, then not just *Introducing Socrates*, but the genuineness and authenticity of all dialogical pedagogies are called into question. If the problems posed by the Socratic teacher are met with responses that have some other intent rather than to get at the truth, then Socratic pedagogy cannot be said to be genuinely truth oriented because the participants did not yield to propositions on the basis of reason.

Race, Class, and Gender

One of the presuppositions of the method is that what is at issue is the force of argument, not exogenous factors such as the race, gender, social class or incarceration time of the person who responds. But racism, sexism, and other isms do exist. And evidence shows that teacher expectations are at least

²¹ For example, in the *Symposium* Socrates asks the women and the slaves to leave the room. Or more recently, feminist epistemology claims that the sex of the knower at least partially determines what is known, what can be known, and how it becomes known.

marginally determined by these unmitigated factors (Steele, 1998, 1999). These are, at least at the present time, tragic facts of life, and of course are not particular to *Introducing Socrates*, but rather starting conditions that all educators encounter in any educational context (Levin, 2001).²²

But is *Introducing Socrates* more or less susceptible to issues of race and gender, and does this cripple, or at least negatively impact elenctic accomplishments? If, for example, an inmate's judgment as to the truth or falsity of a proposition is influenced by the white hair and upper-middle class mannerisms of the teacher, then both the Socratic process, and the conclusion it yields, could be suspect. In a classroom situation a Socratic practitioner could unconsciously discount an inmate's argument because they are, for example, of African descent.

But what is more likely, that an argument will be subconsciously discounted because of the race of the person who makes it, or that an argument, regardless of the race of the person who makes it, succeeds or fails *because of* the elenctic process? That is, in authentic Socratic practice arguments cannot be *de facto* rejected; they must be rejected because of a counterexample or by sheer force of argument. Of course anyone can intentionally disregard statements by people of a certain race, and these more obvious and even more egregious

²² The best way, if at all, these could be controlled, would be through blindly graded exams, probably utilizing a banking pedagogy where there are very specific right and wrong answers that need to be memorized and regurgitated (Freire, 1970).

instances are not at issue here because this has nothing to do with Socratic pedagogy and everything to do with blatant racism. What is at issue are people's voices being heard and their claims being answered, or not, because of who they are. Subconsciously or otherwise, of course the Socratic teacher could overlook, or give less attention to, one's claims because of one's race. One could, for example, disregard a devastating counterexample as irrelevant because one had the prejudice going into the discourse that people who are a particular race, gender, or sexual orientation could never say anything substantive. But this would not be Socratic; this would be a form of abuse that masquerades as Socratic and as such could be found in any pedagogical model. The claim here is that this is more and not less likely to be exposed in Socratic pedagogy due to the ability of rational participants to assent to true propositions; and this, in turn, is because of a rational process that removes much of the ambiguity and confusion from adjudicating claims.

The elenchus does not necessarily bring one's racial and gender assumptions to the surface, but it does force the participants to focus on the arguments and not the people who make the arguments. If there is ever a dispute, the *claim* is at issue and not the person. Because of this, it is more likely that issues of race and gender will not play a role in the discourse, as opposed to other models where there is no process for the adjudication of claims. Therefore, while race and gender play a part in all dialogical contexts,

they play less of a role in a Socratic discourse. As such racial and gender issues should not compromise the integrity of *Introducing Socrates*.

Power Dynamics

The Socratic method centers on the notion that attaining the truth is possible through discourse (Vlastos, 1994). The idea behind this is that through argument, example and counterexample, rational participants will assent to true propositions. However, this is bundled with a number of presuppositions, such as the presupposition that participants enter into the discourse freely (as opposed to being forced to enroll in *Introducing Socrates*), and that responses are being given because they are believed to be true (as opposed to being assented to because of convenience or because respondents will “get something” from their interlocutor).²³ If it is indeed the case respondents will receive some tangible benefit, or at least perceive that they will, it stands to reason that they will provide answers that they believe the Socratic practitioner wants to hear. If they provide responses for any reason other than the belief that what they say is true, then the elenchus cannot achieve its epistemological ambitions. If this is the case then it is not a trick of inference, or a “twisting” of logic, but that the respondents want to give certain answers because of something *other*

²³ Foucault would argue that one always get something from being correct in every discourse, not just restricted academic discourses. Perhaps due to the limited context it is more obvious what an inmate “gets” when he answers a question correctly. Where he stands in the power web becomes more visible. He gets a special relationship to the teacher. The teacher knows best and now he knows second best--and everyone knows that he know second best.

than logic, like approbation or a positive letter from the prison educator to the warden.

An important question then becomes whether it is the case that because of one's position as a teacher and the authority and power that come with that role, inmates in a Socratic classroom environment will assent to certain propositions that they would not otherwise agree to if they were just with their peers? It is certainly possible, because of the inmate/teacher power dynamic, prisoners would too easily permit the teacher to influence and even guide their responses. This has the obvious impact of subverting genuine educational discourse because differences in power between and among those engaged in conversation prohibit an honest exchange of ideas—and an honest exchange of ideas rests at the heart of the elenchus. For the elenchus to work, inmates need to agree or disagree with certain propositions because of their belief in their truth or falsity. So if it is the case that a proposition is offered not because it is viewed as being true, but for some other reason, then genuine discourse would seem to be inhibited. If prisoners and teachers cannot have an authentic truth-seeking classroom, or even have a genuine discourse, then one of the principal goals of Socratic pedagogy—truth-seeking—is seriously compromised.

Thus, *Introducing Socrates* may disabuse participants of more rigid notions of relations of power that are structurally embedded in traditional communicative contexts. Traditional power relations, specifically in a

corrections setting, center on both the teacher's "power position" and her privileged access to the truth (Etzioni, 1975, p. 5). But paradoxically Socratic pedagogy confuses, and to an extent even inverts, traditional power relations. The Socratic practitioner is not claiming to have all the answers. She is, in a very real sense, deriving power from the declarations of her interlocutors (if there are no claims made the Socratic questioner has nothing to proceed from). When inmates participate in a Socratic discourse, it is not immediately clear where the lines of power are. Truth is no longer the exclusive province of the teacher. Truth switches from people to propositions. In traditional discourses perceptions of truth are at least partially constructed by position, race, social and economic class, and even by aspects of appearance, like age or disability status. This reorientation of the power dynamic can be socially, intellectually, and even educationally disorienting (see limitations below).

Of course this does not negate the fact that participants in *Introducing Socrates* will respond in certain ways not because of the truth but because of a perceived benefit from a given response. It is not philosophical naïveté to claim that no matter what the reason is for one's responses, perceptions of reward may make inmates more easily led by the teacher, but it will not change either the truth of the matter or the defensibility of their claim. Perhaps this is best seen with a specific example:

An example of the latter case was in a discussion of homosexuality in an "Ethics and Society" course where many

students said that homosexuality was wrong because (the idea of) it was so disgusting. I asked them whether they thought that such disgust was a sufficient characteristic to make an action be immoral. They said it was. I asked them then to close their eyes and think about their parents having sex with each other. They all let out an even bigger groan of disgust, and said they found that idea really disgusting. So I asked whether they would have to conclude then that it was immoral for their parents ever to have (or to have had) sex with each other. They agreed it was not. Of course they then asked whether that meant I thought homosexuality was moral. My response was that whether it is or is not is simply unrelated to whether it is personally disgusting or not to anyone. I was not trying to argue in this particular case for or against the morality of homosexuality, but was merely trying to get them to see that finding an action disgusting did not justify their thinking it must be immoral just because of that. (Garlikov, 1998, ¶ 13)

In this outstanding example of the Socratic method, if students thought that their teacher did not like homosexuality, then they could easily have lied and given false statements. For example, anticipating where he was going, they could have responded that envisioning their parents having sex was not disgusting, but that it made them uncomfortable. This would still have left room for defending their claim that all things that are disgusting are immoral. But then Garlikov could have made further inquiries about other things that are disgusting, such as eating a plate of live insects, and shown that disgust is neither necessary nor sufficient to judge a thing as immoral. *In either case, no matter what their responses were, through successful elenctic inquiry a truth of the matter would have emerged.* Their claims would have withstood the elenchus, or not. The

relationship between being disgusting and being immoral would have been established, or not.

So the question then becomes, how much, if at all, an inmate's giving a response that she thinks the teacher wants to hear is going to adversely affect the truth-seeking conditions of the dialectic?²⁴ My claim is that if the elenchus is successfully applied, power relations will still impact *Introducing Socrates*, but not to such an extent as to make it an ineffective pedagogy. Not only is truth-seeking not compromised, but also other virtues such as getting inmates to think critically and engage ideas remain unscathed. In our present example, to even think so far ahead in a discourse as to be able to anticipate where it is going requires a fairly high degree of cognitive ability.²⁵ And if prisoners are not capable of this, then the issue that they would give a response because of a teacher's sentiment, or because they want to "get something," are dulled. The

²⁴ What often happens in the classroom is that a good Socratic teacher is able to prevent students from correctly guessing what she wants to hear. This is because the Socratic teacher is inquiring into the reasoning behind a position—she examining whether or not it will stand up to scrutiny. Challenging a person's reasoning tends to make the person think that his conclusion is being challenged. Individuals very quickly learn that it is difficult to figure out the teacher's position, particularly when she challenges conclusions that are contradictory to each other, one of which is supposedly what the teacher believes. But if Socratic teachers are looking for sound arguments, and if the interlocutor is able to come up with a good argument, reason (and therefore the best method we have to search for truth by using evidence to make inferences and deductions) is served even if it also pleases the teacher. But the enterprise is so difficult in most complex situations that it is hard to imagine an individual's coming up with a chain of reasoning that will withstand the teacher's scrutiny just because that student is trying to impress her or get her to like him by guessing. Guesses are not likely to do the job.

²⁵ In a personal communication, R. Garlikov (October 1, 2002) wrote, "even in the Socratic dialogues, as in classrooms, interlocutors give wrong answers that they try to support, which shows, I think, they are not just giving psychologically prompted answers, but answers they really think about the material—logically and conceptually."

idea of giving a response because of something presupposes that inmates know what that response is that they are supposed to give. Not only is it often unclear what response the teacher wants, but that does not guarantee that particular conclusions could be reached.

So then the issue becomes, what if inmates give responses not based upon the teacher's sentiment, but because they think that is the smartest response to give, and giving the smartest response means that they will earn the respect of the teacher? (That is, the smartest response may not be one that an inmate believes accords with the truth, but the one that makes him look the most intelligent; so one's motivation would not be for the truth but to look intelligent.) Well, this still would not adversely impact the discourse to such an extent that its practice would be jeopardized. Giving the best response, or at least attempting to, would relegate the truth-seeking status of the method to secondary or even tertiary significance, conveying primacy on the critical thinking aspect of the method. Depending upon the teacher's desires, this could actually be beneficial.²⁶ But this would only adversely affect (perhaps more by slowing down the discourse by taking more time to arrive at conclusions), and not endanger, the method's truth-seeking orientation.

²⁶ Though in my personal opinion this would be a heartbreaking consequence of privileging intellectual qualities over a search for and love of the truth.

Conclusion

Garlikov (1998) addressed the first part of Allen and Rud's criticism about Socratic dialogue being leading. This work has addressed and extended his response to cover general notions of power, and shown how these could impact *Introducing Socrates*. Because of the proposition-orientated nature of the elenchus, *Introducing Socrates* is not an illusory exercise where participants acquiesce to notions of truth due to power differentials. But power relations certainly do play a role in all communicative contexts, particularly corrections context, and Socratic dialogue is no exception. What is an exception, however, is that the adverse effects of power are minimalized, and the focus is shifted from people to propositions.

Socratic Education: Countering the Claims of Perplexity, Humiliation, and Shame

Socrates has gone out of his way to engender a state of perplexity. (Higgins, 1994, ¶ 16)

... shame and not logic is the critical tool or weapon in Socrates' elenctic refutations of his interlocutors. (Tarnopolsky, 2001, p. 1)

Do Socratic teachers attempt to perplex, humiliate and shame participants? There is a growing body of educational and philosophical literature that claims just that. Education professor Daniel Pekarsky (1994), for example, has argued in "Socratic Teaching: A Critical Assessment," that the intent of the

Socratic method is to cause participants to become perplexed and confused, and that Socratic teachers think that this is desirable. Pekarsky and others articulate a common misunderstanding of Socratic pedagogy that unfortunately has worked its way into the educational and philosophical literature (Higgins, 1994; Kahn, 1983; McKim, 1988; Rud, 1997; Tarnopolsky, 2001; White, 1983).

Specifically, the misunderstanding centers on the incorrect idea that the purpose of the Socratic method is to cause participants to become perplexed, humiliated and ashamed (often so that some greater understanding can result) (Abbs, 1994). This section counters these claims, and perplexity and shame become constructs that are examined in this study's follow-up and inmate feedback questionnaire.

It is important that these claims are addressed because they have the potential to both misdirect teachers who wish to employ Socratic pedagogy, and undermine correctional institutions that are considering offering *Introducing Socrates*. I argue, by using concrete examples, that the purpose of the Socratic method is not to cause a state of perplexity and confusion.²⁷

Perplexity?

The account offered of Socratic teaching highlights the teacher's effort to guide the student from complacently held but not yet adequately examined opinion to a state of ... perplexity.
(Pekarsky, 1994, p. 1)

²⁷ I am indebted to Socratic scholar Rick Garlikov for his assistance with this section. His patience, insights, and lengthy correspondence were invaluable.

Pekarsky (1994) and others use Plato's oft-cited example of the numbing effect of the stingray to explain what it feels like to be perplexed:

Socrates, even before I met you they told me that in plain truth you are a perplexed man yourself and reduce others to perplexity. At this moment I feel you are exercising magic and witchcraft upon me and positively laying me under your spell until I am just a mass of helplessness. If I may be flippant, I think that not only in outward appearances but in other respects as well you are exactly like the flat sting-ray that one meets in the sea. Whenever anyone comes into contact with it, it numbs him, and that is the sort of thing that you seem to be doing to me now. My mind and my lips are literally numb, and I have nothing to reply to you. Yet I have spoken about virtue hundreds of times, held forth often on the subject in front of large audiences, and very well too, or so I thought. Now I can't even say what it is. (Plato, 1969b, p. 363)

Once one undergoes a Socratic dialectic, the result is that one often becomes perplexed or "numb," as if one has been stung by a sting-ray. This claim is not at issue. What is at issue is Socrates' and teachers of *Introducing Socrates'* "active role in bringing about this state of perplexity" (Higgins, 1994). Do Socratic teachers really desire to "demolish intellectual smugness" and "induce perplexity" in inmates (Pekarsky, 1994; Rud, 1997)? Is this really the goal of *Introducing Socrates'*

Pekarsky (1994) repeatedly questions "the wisdom of leading the student from unexamined opinion to perplexity," as if this is the intent and the purpose

of the Socratic method.²⁸ He believes that Socratic teachers think that perplexity is justified because of “the critical role they are believed to play in the pursuit of truth, which itself seems to be valued primarily as a means to improving the human condition” (p. 9). Pekarsky claims that Socratic practitioners believe that “perplexity and intellectual humility have value not in themselves” (p. 9), but that perplexity has a purely instrumental value (Matthews, 1999) because it “may give rise to knowledge, and knowledge [is good] because it will improve our life [sic]” (Pekarsky, 1994, p. 10). While there is scant textual evidence offered for this assertion, those who argue against Socratic teaching often quote the above famous passage from the *Meno* (Plato cited in Pekarsky, 1994). Perhaps this rests at the heart of the misunderstanding.

The way Pekarsky (1994) uses the *Meno* and the passage he quotes is a misappropriation of the context of the dialogue. Socrates is trying to show that

²⁸ There are several compelling reasons why one would think that the historical Socrates would not wish to induce a state of perplexity in his interlocutors. In *An Apologia of the Socratic Method*, Fulkerson (1998) has addressed the notion that the purpose of Socratic teaching is to induce perplexity and confusion by an exegetical analysis of the Platonic dialogues. Writing from an historical perspective, he correctly argues that, “Pekarsky’s objections rely on a misunderstanding of the Socratic elenchus and how it is to be used” (Fulkerson, 1998, p. 13). However, because Fulkerson attempts to ground his argument in the details of Plato’s early dialogues, he neither goes far enough in explaining the fallacies in Pekarsky’s argument, nor does he make these misunderstandings accessible to those who are most likely to use Socratic pedagogy—educators who are not professional philosophers. Grounding a response in the Platonic dialogues explains why these notions are not rooted in the historical Socrates’ practice. However, it does little to help contemporary educators understand the reasons why these claims are misdirected.

knowledge is recollection (i.e., it is recollected from a previous life), and that even uneducated people like the slave boy have knowledge that they do not realize. So Socrates shows that even a slave boy can figure out a complex mathematical principle simply by being asked the right questions. At some points, the slave boy intuitively incorrectly some particular propositions. Socrates wants to show him that he has done that so that he can, *inter alia*, more readily see what is right. But Socrates' point is not to cause perplexity for its own sake, but to do a number of things, one of which is to arouse curiosity about what is right and what is true.

Finally, while *Introducing Socrates* can arouse curiosity, it is more useful in helping inmates focus on relevant features of a phenomenon in order to form a better understanding of it. For example, in the *Meno* when Socrates helps the slave boy to see some of his mistakes, he is not only showing him the errors but how he made them. In the same passage discussed here (Plato as cited in Pekarsky, 1994, p. 8), when Socrates talks about numbing the student like a stingray, he is only using the metaphor that *Meno* used. Socrates is mocking the metaphor, or more specifically, using it sarcastically. The substance of what he is saying fits what he says in the *Apology*, where he explains that he discovered what the oracle meant when it called him the wisest man in Greece—that he was the only one who realized what he did not know,

and that made him wiser than the others who held false beliefs without knowing it.

Finally, this passage characterizes the way in which those whom Socrates questioned saw what he was doing. But it is a charge that is leveled against Socrates, and not a description of how Plato or Socrates intended the method to be used or understood. Those who were questioned saw it this way because they were resistant to thinking or to following a line of reasoning no matter where it led, and they thus saw Socrates as trying to use verbal and logical trickery to confuse them. Ironically, they thought he was a Sophist. But this quotation cannot therefore stand as a description of the method as Socrates or Plato saw it, any more than “corrupting the youth of Athens” is how Socrates or Plato saw what Socrates was doing.

Coming Out of the Cave

It is not a blanket destruction of all of his beliefs that Socrates wants, but dialectic, meaningful discussion of the most serious matters. Any teacher who would seek only to destroy a pupil's beliefs is missing the point. (Fulkerson, 1998, p. 11)

There are two types of perplexity. One type of perplexity results from trying to figure out a lecture, explanation, description, and so forth, that is confusing or unclear. The other type of perplexity occurs as a consequence of engaging difficult ideas. This section addresses both types of perplexity as they relate to *Introducing Socrates*.

The main problem with claiming that the Socratic method instills perplexity is that it confuses an occasional result of the method with its purpose. The fact that some people may become perplexed and confused when the method is used to inquire about a difficult subject (or a challenging concept or a line of reasoning) does not necessarily mean that it is the method, or, more generally, *Introducing Socrates*, that caused inmates to become perplexed. It also does not necessarily mean that causing perplexity was the teacher's intent. This is a reductionist view of what actually happens as a result of an ideal elenchus. Pekarsky (1994), Higgins (1994), Rud (1997) and others make it sound as though the purpose of the Socratic method is to engender perplexity and confusion, and that there is something wrong with helping people to see they have unrealized latent assumptions or inconsistent beliefs that can be corrected.

It is certainly the case that in Socratic discourse participants can become confused and perplexed, but that is usually because a deeper examination of one's beliefs is inherently complex and difficult, like, for example, introduction to calculus. Garlikov (personal communication, January 4, 2002) related the following about one of his ex-students who wrote to him and asked for help with a calculus problem. She wrote:

Def: $\lim_{x \rightarrow a} f(x) = L$ means for all epsilon greater than zero there exists a delta greater than zero such that if the absolute value of x minus a is less than delta, the absolute value of $f(x)$ minus L is less than epsilon. Yes, this is in a high school AP Calculus class

Y our teacher says that it is the basis of all calc, and I am so lost my head is spinning. This example is not part of the Socratic method and has nothing to do with it; it is about calculus. Does this mean that calculus is only meant to perplex students and to make them feel humiliated? Of course not.²⁹

In this example the meaning of the word “limit” in calculus was confusing to the student, especially since the definition her book provided meant absolutely nothing to her. It is not the case that the author of the book used a definition *intended* to “make [her] head spin.” Rather, it was a combination of her examination of a difficult concept and an unclear explanation that made her “head spin.” The Socratic method does not necessarily cause either type of perplexity: Examining and engaging difficult concepts, or trying to figure out something that is conveyed in an unclear way, does. These are crucial distinctions.

In an authentic Socratic environment, if one were neither confused nor perplexed when initially examining a difficult concept or subject, then it is questionable that one’s subject matter was as difficult as one thought, or one’s examination as probing. In this sense, being confused and perplexed is a natural consequence of dealing with difficult concepts (Matthews, 1999).

²⁹ Garlikov’s statement reminds me of Jane Austen’s line from *Northanger Abbey* concerning historians (paraphrasing): “To be at so much trouble in filling great volumes, which ... nobody would willingly ever look into, to be labouring only for the torment of little boys and girls, always struck me as a hard fate ... and I have often wondered at the person’s courage that could sit down on purpose and do it.”

However, it is certainly the case that there are bad teachers (e.g., people who do not listen well, cannot articulate themselves clearly, become frustrated and impatient easily, move too quickly through a claim) who employ Socratic pedagogy. (Obviously there are good and bad teachers who use a range of pedagogies, and using the Socratic method does not mystically or formulaically make one a good teacher.) If one is a bad teacher then any pedagogy, content delivery method, or approach to teaching would be more likely to be unclear, and thus more likely to cause confusion and perplexity than a teaching method used by a good teacher. But the confusion that results is not something intrinsic to the Socratic method, rather, it is something intrinsic to bad teaching. Of course there are also abuses of the Socratic method (Boghossian, 2002a), and teachers who wish to exert their will to power over inmates may find fertile ground in the elenchus. It is certainly possible that teachers who wish, for whatever reason, intentionally to cause confusion or perplexity could use *Introducing Socrates*, but they could also just as easily use any other pedagogy.³⁰

Humiliation, Shame, and a Broken Egg

Asserting that individuals become humiliated and ashamed is an entirely different claim from asserting that they become perplexed (McKim, 1988; Rud,

³⁰ This is an additional reason why it is important to rebut and clarify these claims. There may be some teachers who use the Socratic method and attempt to induce perplexity. They may even ground their reasons for doing so in the literature.

1997; Tarnopolsky, 2001).³¹ There are cases where realizing one does not know something one thought one knew is an important step to finding out the truth, but that is only humiliating and shameful for one who equates beliefs with superiority or ego. For one who is simply curious about the world and about how one's mind work, finding out one has been wrong about something is not humiliating or shameful, but exciting.

Similarly, when people are shown certain mathematical or physically counterintuitive explanations, they are not usually humiliated or ashamed, but excited or delightfully surprised. For example, if one drops eggs out of second or third or fourth story windows onto a lawn, they will normally not break as long as they hit grass and not a bare spot or a stone.³² Also, if one was to tie a ribbon around the earth at the equator (assuming the earth was a smooth, round ball) and then splice in one extra yard, and smooth out the slack, so the little loop of your splice was everywhere taken up by the ribbon in a new circle, the ribbon would end up being just slightly less than six inches above the ground all around the equator. This is amazing, but true. (Adding X amount of circumference to any circle, no matter how large or how small, will add $X/6.28$ to its radius.) Only a pompous egoist becomes ashamed or humiliated

³¹ McKim (1988), Kahn (1983) and Tarnopolsky (2001) focus their criticisms on the *Gorgias*. However, their critiques can be generalized to other dialogues and to *Introducing Socrates*.

³² The counterintuitive "egg phenomena" is true. Buckminster Fuller designed geodesic domes (e.g., the Astrodome) based on the strength of the eggshell due to the way it distributes forces.

when finding out that his intuitions about such cases are mistaken. Most people think it is “neat.”

Knowing what one does not know has nothing to do with humiliation, shame or perplexity. It simply has to do with knowledge. If you are about to jump start a car with another car and battery cables, I want to make sure you know that you do not attach the negative to the negative, but that you attach the negative of the good car to the ground (frame) of the dead car. So I might say, “You know you don’t hook up the negative to the negative, don’t you?” in order to get your attention and make sure you are focused on a potential hazard. That is not a Socratic question, but it has the kind of point that some Socratic questions have, and that some lecture points have as well—to get people to see that they have some mistaken or incomplete beliefs so that they can then try to patch them up. It is not about *causing* humiliation, shame or perplexity. It is about helping people to see mistakes or errors in reasoning so they can correct them (Garlikov, 2000).

Similarly, that one would not seek truth when one mistakenly thinks one has it is not because one is smug, but because one has no reason to find out something one believes one already knows. To use the example from above, if I asked you what happens when an egg is thrown onto the lawn from a third story window, you might immediately answer that it will break. That is not true. However, my proper response to you is “That is not true,” not “You just

think you are so smart, don't you?" You do not think that you are smart, you just think that is the right answer. You do not consider knowing that eggs break when thrown out of a third story building as something that requires great intelligence. Nevertheless, you would be mistaken in this particular case. There is no reason for you to think otherwise unless someone points out your mistaken belief, or just drops the egg and shows you that it does not break. If I actually do drop the egg out the window, my point is to show you it does not break, not to make you feel humiliated or ashamed for not knowing it would not break. My point is not to humiliate you, though the egg's not breaking will confuse you if you see it, but to show you something interesting and to perhaps get you to think about how it works—which you would never have thought about before because you had no reason to think about it, not because you were smug.

This is exactly what happens in *Introducing Socrates*. A Socratic teacher, following the structure of the Socratic method, may help lead inmates to see that they have inconsistent beliefs. Of course some inmates might misinterpret this and feel ashamed that they did not have a particular piece of information, or draw the false conclusion that the teacher then thinks that they are stupid. This, however, would be a result of psychological factors that the inmate brings with him into the discourse, and unrelated to *Introducing*

Socrates. (Of course inmates may experience the same response in a lecture, but it would be more pronounced in any dialectical context.)

This does not negate the fact there are teachers who could use *Introducing Socrates* method for the sole purpose of humiliating inmates. I can only speculate as to why one would think that this is desirable: Perhaps one would do this because they buy into the popular myth that harsh treatment is good for inmates. But this is an issue of teachers who abuse their power and happen to choose the Socratic method as a vehicle to discharge their abuse. There is nothing in *Introducing Socrates* that encourages or fosters exploitation and mistreatment. Rather, something intrinsic to their position, their psychological makeup and the power relationship they have to inmates act as the conditions for the possibility of abuse.³³

Conclusion

"The [Socratic] method is intrinsically as well as extrinsically valuable; life is worth living only so long as one is examining it." (Nails, 1998, sec. 2, ¶ 3)

The goal of the Socratic method is not what many educators and philosophers think that it is. Of course some teachers who profess to use Socratic method are abusive to their students, and this mistreatment can cause problems that its detractors claim that it causes (Goldman, 1984; Guinier, Fine,

³³ It has been argued elsewhere that teachers who wish to take advantage of their students are less likely to be successful in a Socratic learning environment than in any other type of learning situation (Boghossian, 2001a).

& Balin, 1998). But it is incorrect to assert that either Socrates or a sincere Socratic teacher actually tries to elicit these states. To lead inmates to certain emotional states is not the goal of inquiry, but a possible result, or byproduct, of engaging ideas. Trying to shame or humiliate inmates has nothing to do with Socratic pedagogy, and everything to do with bad teaching.

Chapter Summary

This chapter had three parts. The first part discussed three popular treatments in corrections education, the second detailed the Socratic method, and the third discussed arguments for and against Socratic pedagogy. Specifically, the objectives of *Introducing Socrates* are based on treatments in corrections education, the treatment itself is Socratic in nature, and the arguments for and against Socratic pedagogy become testable constructs embedded in the final research question. Finally, this chapter explained and defined the essential elements for a new inmate curriculum, *Introducing Socrates*. It discussed the framework for this curriculum by detailing what has been empirically demonstrated to work in cognitive corrections programs, showed the limitations of these treatments, and pointed toward possible research questions for the design of a new treatment.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This exploratory study introduces and evaluates a cognitive skills educational program, *Introducing Socrates*, which was administered to inmates in the Oregon Department of Corrections prison system. This chapter explains the methodology of the study. Specifically, it discusses (a) the study's research questions; (b) the subjects and the prison system; (c) the course objectives, content and structure; (d) data collection; and (e) the methods of data analysis.

Research Questions

Research questions are directly related to the research objectives. They are:

1. How do inmates subjectively respond to *Introducing Socrates*? Do they feel threatened, ashamed, perplexed, motivated, empowered, question the teacher's leadership, or find the teacher's use of power inappropriate?
2. Does exposure to the Socratic method lead to a difference in the quality and quantity of options that inmates can generate in response to a specific problem or situation?

3. Do inmates exhibit an implicit understanding of the core components of critical thinking, that is, interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, self-regulation?

These research questions were informed from an amalgam of different research questions from various studies relating to inmate treatment, education and recidivism, as they optimally related to this study (English, 1993; Fabiano & Porporino, 1995; Pullen, 1996; Pullen & English, 1994; Woodward & English, 1993).

Design

This exploratory study, using 10 subjects, has both qualitative and quantitative elements. It is qualitative in that it makes and elicits subjective evaluations, and it is quantitative because it generates hard, quantifiable data. The study is designed to answer three questions: (a) How do inmates subjectively respond to *Introducing Socrates*? (b) Do inmates generate quantitatively more and qualitatively better options as a result of the treatment? (c) Do inmates exhibit an implicit understanding of the core components of critical thinking as a result of the treatment? This section explains the study's design, states why examining each question is important, and briefly discusses the method of evaluation.

The first question is important because, as explained earlier, inmate education programs are likely to fail if they are perceived as threatening, harsh, or adversarial (Daley & Zuckoff, 1999; MacKenzie, 2000; Miller & Rollnick, 2002, pp. 11-12, 335). Similarly, if inmates become motivated by the treatment, then they are more likely to use what they have learned (more likely, for example, than if they are somehow externally compelled to use what they have learned). It is important to evaluate how offenders respond to treatment, because their reactions are a preliminary and reliable method of evaluating the potential effectiveness of the treatment. Inmates' responses to *Introducing Socrates* are evaluated through an inmate feedback questionnaire (written) and a focus group (oral). Specific constructs (such as inmates' perceptions of a teacher's leadership and inmates' motivation) drawn from the educational, philosophical and corrections literature, are also similarly evaluated.

The second question of whether or not inmates generate more and better options to problems is important because, as previously discussed, the perception of a lack of options often leads to inmates feeling trapped by a lifestyle or into ways of behaving. If offenders can generate and think through more options to a problem, then they have the possibility of acting on those options, whereas not having options dooms them to habitual behavior patterns. Whether or not inmates can generate more and better options is evaluated in the generating options pre- and post-test and through a follow-up focus group.

The third and final question, whether or not inmates exhibit an implicit understanding of the core components of critical thinking, is important because, similar to the advantages noted above, becoming a critical reasoner can help inmates to think through problems. This, in turn, affords them the opportunity to apply these skills to future difficulties.

As explained and defined by the APA's (1990) *Delphi Report*, there is a very specific skill set that one needs in order to be a good critical reasoner: interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. But it is difficult to teach people how to use these skills directly, both because it is extremely boring and tedious to learn, and because it is difficult to see immediate benefits. One of the hypotheses that this study tested is whether or not offenders can be taught how to use these core critical thinking components through examining philosophical questions in a structured Socratic environment. Whether or not inmates exhibit these elements of critical thinking was subjectively evaluated by the researcher during the treatment and in the post-treatment follow-up through scoring inmates on an individual critical thinking profile.

Objectives

This study has three objectives that correspond to the three research questions. First, the study evaluates how inmates subjectively respond to a

specific cognitive educational treatment. This first objective is essential for assessing the success of *Introducing Socrates*, that is, positive experiences translate into an increased likelihood of compliance. Inmates' responses are evaluated in relation to key constructs derived from the research literature: leadership, power, and feelings of being threatened, ashamed, perplexed, motivated and enabled.

The second objective of the study is to enable inmates to leave class with a critical thinking tool set that will enable them to generate options and refine their reasoning. Ideally, after the treatment offenders will be able to generate more and better options to problems. This may hold true even if inmates choose not to enter into the discourse, because they will see the process pro-socially modeled, that is, offenders can learn how to counter claims, analyze issues, generate options, and respond just by listening to what is going on around them (Barton & Osborne, 1978; Eisenberg, 1977; Goldstein, 1988; Grusec, 1991; Rex & Crosland, 1999). By listening to the dialectic, inmates learn ways to engage ideas and formulate responses to questions, issues, and problems.

The third objective, achieved as a direct result of Socratic discussions, is to enable inmates, through their responses, to demonstrate an implicit understanding of the core elements of critical thinking: interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, self-regulation. These elements are not

explicitly taught to inmates; that is, at no point are inmates taught, for example, how to make inferences. Ideally, however, inmates will implicitly learn the core elements of critical thinking through exposure to the Socratic method.

Subjects

The subjects were 10 prisoners in the Oregon Department of Corrections' Columbia River Correctional Institution. Subjects were all male, self-selected volunteers over the age of 18. They were not asked to identify their race. Inmates were eligible to volunteer as long as they were not classified as criminally insane or prohibited from volunteering by the institution or by Oregon law. The researcher had no prior knowledge of the subjects' age, the reason(s) for their incarceration, or the types of crime they had committed. The subjects received a certificate of completion, designed by Education Program Coordinator Sharon Simovic, on the last day of treatment.

Subject Recruitment

The Oregon State Volunteer Department of Corrections office coordinated the recruiting of inmates. Thomas O'Connor, Administrator of Religious Services for the Oregon Department of Corrections (ODOC), assigned Chaplain Blix, a full-time clergy on the staff at Columbia River Corrections, to coordinate subject recruitment. Inmates were recruited by flyers that advertised

a critical thinking and philosophy class. The flyers were posted in the dorm rooms.

Initially only two subjects volunteered for *Introducing Socrates*. One hour before the class was scheduled to begin, and unbeknownst to the researcher until after the study was completed, inmates who happened to be in Education Program Coordinator Sharon Simovic's office were asked to volunteer. (The researcher was told that it was common for inmates to linger in the Education Program Office.) They were told that if they did not like the class they could quit after the first day. A total of 10 inmates volunteered for the class. No inmate quit, and all inmates attended all classes.

Prison System

Columbia River Correctional Institution is an all-male prison release center; inmates come to Columbia River in the last 6 to 9 months of their incarceration. Approximately 60% are from the Portland area. There are 500 beds; 50 beds are for inmates who have drug and alcohol problems, and 50 beds are for inmates who have mental health problems. Neither of these two groups was allowed to participate in the study due to Oregon law's prohibition on these inmates mixing with the general population.

Columbia River was chosen for three reasons. First, this was an ideal population. Specifically, because subjects would be released in less than one

year, the hope was that *Introducing Socrates* would be fresh in the subjects' minds upon their release. Moreover, because it was a short-term facility, there was the possibility that subjects would be more receptive to the treatment. Inmates serving longer sentences may not have as much reason to volunteer, and may not have been as receptive. Second, Tom O'Connor thought that the Columbia River administrators would be receptive to my program. If they were receptive to the program, then getting it adopted would be easier. (I was not privy to the behind-the-scenes negotiations for whether or not *Introducing Socrates* would be accepted). Third, a major consideration in conducting research like this is expense. Transportation from the cell to the classroom is expensive. This did not present itself as a problem because Columbia River is not a maximum security prison; inmates are free to walk around in certain sections during certain times. Therefore, I would not have to ask the state to pay for expenses related to *Introducing Socrates*. This was particularly important due to the ongoing budget crisis in Oregon. Also related to this, the area that was used as a classroom was located within the facility. This was important for both safety and liability reasons.

Introducing Socrates was held in a small enclosed institutionalized dining area that was set off from the main dining hall. The classroom had three long tables with four chairs to each table. A white board, a green dry erase marker and a flip chart were available. Both the white board and the flip chart were

used to write down initial questions, inmates' responses, and the analysis of those responses.

Course Objectives, Content, and Structure

The questions that form the content basis for the course were selected because of their relevance to all lives, and not just to the lives of prisoners. These questions are listed as Discussion Questions in Appendix F. Questions regarding how one should live (e.g., What is the best life? How much control do we have over ourselves?) have been with us for well over 2,000 years and are as pertinent today as ever. If individuals engage a discussion (either as listeners or as speakers) with questions that have meaning to them, then there is at least a possibility that they can take with them a process that is modeled as the conversation unfolds.

This process, the Socratic method, teaches prisoners how to analyze ideas, questions, issues, and claims. It does not tell inmates what to think but teaches them how to think: how to ask good questions, how to rule out poor alternatives, how to examine ideas, how to spot contradictions, and how to make better life choices. The philosophical content for *Introducing Socrates* is only a vehicle for the Socratic process. *Introducing Socrates* could still work with different philosophical questions.

The class was held for four consecutive days (Tuesday through Friday) from 2-4 pm in late September 2003 in Portland, Oregon. The class was structured in 30 minute segments, using a 25-on 5-off timetable (on day two and four, subjects took a 5-minute break). That is, every 30 minutes a new question from the Discussion Questions was examined. Questions were selected from the order in which they appear in the Discussion Questions page in Appendix F. (Additional questions were provided in the event that the selected question generated little interest, or if inmates felt uncomfortable with the question that had been selected.) After approximately 25 minutes elapsed, the researcher ended the discussion and took 5 minutes to analyze what transpired. That is, the instructor showed how the discussion fit into a broadly Socratic formula: Question, hypothesis, counterexample, and reexamination of the hypothesis (Dye, 1996). While this post-discussion analysis was not part of the historical Socrates' practice, its purpose was to help articulate and clarify how particular responses were generated.

Data Collection

There were three methods of data collection: an inmate feedback questionnaire (written), a generating options pre- and post-test (written), and a focus group (oral). All classroom conversations were tape-recorded and later transcribed.

Inmate Feedback Questionnaire

Inmates filled out a very basic inmate feedback questionnaire at the end of the class. The inmate feedback questionnaire can be seen in Appendix B. Scored on a Likert scale, offenders were asked to answer a 12-item questionnaire connected to important themes, such as if they felt motivated, threatened, empowered, and how they responded to their in-class experiences.

In the anonymous inmate feedback questionnaire the researcher looked for emerging themes that were common in the subjects' experience. Specifically, the data collected asked if inmates: (a) enjoyed their in-class experience, (b) felt that they learned something from the class, (c) would like the class to have been longer, (d) would recommend the class to others, (e) would take the class again, (f) looked at the teacher of *Introducing Socrates* as a leader, (g) looked to their teachers as leaders, (h) felt threatened by their experience, (i) felt that the teacher used his power appropriately, (j) felt ashamed, (k) felt motivated to use what they have learned, and (l) felt empowered. (Note that items (a) and (h) are categorically distinct, that is, it is possible for someone to enjoy the class and still feel threatened by it.) The results were analyzed in relation to the research questions.

Generating Options Pre- and Post-Test

Inmates were given a brief Generating Options test at the beginning and the end of the class. The test can be seen in Appendix D. The pre- and post-test helped to answer research question #3.

The test consisted of two sample questions/two sample responses, and two actual questions which were open-ended. Subjects were asked to generate a number of responses/options to a possible real-life dilemma. The researcher's original intent was for subjects to underline what they think they ought to do if they were in the described situation. However, during pre-test instructions, the research only asked the subjects to generate options and did not ask them to underline the best option. Therefore, the prisoners did not underline any options.

The purpose of the Generating Options test was to learn if inmates generated more and qualitatively better options, as a result of the treatment. If inmates could generate more and better options then this would indicate that the treatment was at least somewhat successful. While it is difficult to define "better options," at a minimum this would mean behavior that was less violent and more law abiding.

The Generating Options pre- and post-tests were given to two independent expert evaluators, an academic philosopher who specializes in moral philosophy and moral psychology, and who has experience in critical

thinking, and to a developmental psychologist with extensive experience in inmate education. They were asked to do a blind evaluation of the responses. The evaluators did not know which test was the pre-/post-test (packets were labeled "Group A" and "Group B"), and did not have access to subjects' names (subjects' names were removed from the pre- and post-test and substituted with "Subject 1," "Subject 2," and so on). They were, however, given information about the study and the research questions.

The evaluators were given basic directions with regard to scoring the test. They were told to score the exam in two ways, quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitatively, inmates' responses to the generating options pre- and post-test were scored by totaling the number of options. Qualitatively, subjective judgments were brought to bear on the types of responses, and the changes in those responses, between the pre- and the post-test. They were told to look for differences, if any, between Group A and Group B. Evaluators were then asked to present their finding in writing. No format for their comments was specified.

Focus Group

Fifteen days post-treatment, subjects participated in a 2-hour follow-up focus group. The researcher collectively interviewed all of the subjects together in the same classroom. After a brief reintroduction, inmates were asked specific interview questions, listed in order in Table 1.

Table 1
Interview Protocol

Question Number	Interview Questions
1	Should the class have been longer (i.e., gone on for more weeks and/or occupied more time in the day)?
2	How did this experience differ from your other classroom experiences?
3	Do you feel that you have more options when faced with dilemmas?
4	If I were to hold this class again, what questions would you suggest that I use, and how would you suggest that I test people's knowledge to see if they understand what is being taught?
5	What were your experiences in taking the test?
6	How did you respond to <i>Introducing Socrates</i> ? For example, were you bored, threatened, engaged, excited, indifferent, etc.?
7	Did this class help you to change the way you think about ideas?
8	Did you feel perplexed as a result of classroom conversations? If so, did this make you feel uncomfortable?
9	Did you feel ashamed, for whatever reason, in class?
10	Did <i>Introducing Socrates</i> help you to feel empowered?
11	Do you feel motivated to use what you have learned?
12	Do you look at your teachers as leaders? Did you look at this teacher as a leader?
13	Do you feel that the teacher used his power appropriately?
14	Did this class change the way that you interacted with each other?

Inmates were also asked some very brief scenario questions for the purpose of evaluating their critical thinking skills. The scenario questions were the same as those questions found in the pre- and post-test.

Finally, inmates could also use the focus group to voice their opinions about anything else relating to their experiences in-treatment.

Data Analysis

This study answers the three research questions by pre- and post-tests, a questionnaire, in-treatment observation, feedback from prison officials, and a follow-up focus group. This section details the method of data analysis.

Table 2 shows each research question and how it was evaluated.

Table 2
Research Questions and Evaluation

Category Evaluated	Research Question	Method of Evaluation
Subjective Experiences of Inmates	How do inmates subjectively respond to <i>Introducing Socrates</i> ? Do they feel threatened, ashamed, perplexed, motivated, empowered, question the teacher's leadership, find the teacher's use of power inappropriate?	Inmate Feedback Questionnaire Focus Group In-Treatment Observation Feedback From Prison Officials
Knowledge Gained as Result of Exposure to the Socratic Method	Does exposure to the Socratic method lead to a difference in the quality and quantity of options that inmates can generate in response to a specific problem or situation?	Generating Options Pre- and Post-Test Focus Group
Demonstrated Understanding of Critical Thinking Skills	Do inmates exhibit an implicit understanding of the core components of critical thinking: interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, self-regulation?	Focus Group In-Treatment Observation

The first research question, “How do inmates subjectively respond to *Introducing Socrates*,” deals with inmates’ personal responses to the treatment. Their subjective experiences were evaluated by an inmate feedback questionnaire, in-treatment observation, feedback from prison officials, and a focus group. The seven constructs that are embedded in the research questions—leadership, threatened, power, perplexed, ashamed, motivated, empowered—were similarly evaluated. Table 3 lists these constructs and shows the method of evaluation.

The second research question, “Does exposure to the Socratic method lead to a difference in the quality and quantity of options that inmates can generate in response to a specific problem or situation?,” asks if exposure to the Socratic method leads to a difference in the quality and quantity of options that inmates can generate in response to a specific problem or situation. This was evaluated two ways: in the focus group and through an individual pre- and post-test. Since the possible sample size for this study is necessarily small, the qualitative data were analyzed descriptively, not inferentially (i.e., results cannot be generalized in a probabilistic manner).

Table 3
Constructs, Description, and Evaluation

Constructs	Description	Evaluation
Leadership	What are the subjects' perceptions of a Socratic teacher's leadership ability?	Focus Group Inmate Feedback Questionnaire
Threatened	Did the subjects feel threatened?	Focus Group Inmate Feedback Questionnaire
Power	Did the instructors use his power relationship effectively and appropriately?	Focus Group Inmate Feedback Questionnaire
Perplexed	Did the subjects feel perplexed?	Focus Group Inmate Feedback Questionnaire
Ashamed	Did the subjects feel ashamed?	Focus Group Inmate Feedback Questionnaire
Motivated	Are the subjects motivated to use what they have learned?	Focus Group Inmate Feedback Questionnaire
Empowered	Do inmates feel empowered as a result of the treatment?	Focus Group Inmate Feedback Questionnaire

The pre- and the post-test were given two evaluators—a psychologist and a philosopher—for examination. The philosopher and the psychologist were not told the names of the individuals, which test was the pre- and the post-test, or what the other evaluators concluded. The evaluators stated whether or not they could determine a difference in both the number of options (they simply count

and tally the total number of options) inmates generated and the quality of their responses (a subjective measure for which there were subjective criteria). They used subjective criteria from their disciplines and from their experience to make specific evaluations of inmates' responses. After the researcher completed his evaluation of the pre- and post-test, he then examined the experts' evaluations. The researcher looked at inmates' exams and open-ended responses for (cross-disciplinary) themes, and then identified patterns across their evaluations.

The third research question asked if inmates exhibit an implicit understanding of the core components of critical thinking, as demonstrated by an analysis of their interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation of scenario questions.

To answer this third research question, "Do inmates exhibit an implicit understanding of the core components of critical thinking?" in the post-treatment follow-up the researcher asked scenario questions drawn from the generating options pre- and post-test. The researcher looked for the quality of responses, and whether or not inmates exhibited an implicit understanding of the core components of critical thinking.

Subjective judgments were then made for each inmate, and inmates were then scored on an individual critical thinking profile shown in Table 4

(individual profiles are not provided due to ethical and privacy concerns).³⁴

The results were then analyzed in terms of emerging themes.

Table 4
Individual Critical Thinking Profile

Critical Thinking Core Components	No Sign	Rudimentary	Basic	Advanced
Interpretation				
Analysis				
Evaluation				
Inference				
Explanation				
Self-regulation				

There were four possible scores that inmates could receive: No Sign, Rudimentary, Basic, or Advanced. The critical thinking research literature and definitions were used to help make these subjective evaluations (see Appendix C). “No Sign” means that there was no indication of the core component of critical thinking; “Rudimentary” indicates that the core component of critical thinking was in a very early stage of development; “Basic” means that the subject demonstrates fundamental or elementary critical thinking skills; and, “Advanced” indicates that the subject demonstrated unusual or uncommon

³⁴ Because the transcriptions of specific conversations are provided here, it would be possible to link a subject to his profile. This could have a detrimental psychological impact on the subjects if they were to read this study.

insight. For example, when applied to the critical thinking core component “inference,” the following criteria could be invoked for each of the four categories: “No Sign,” if a subject was incapable of extracting or extrapolating information from premises to a conclusion; “Rudimentary,” if a subject could accurately derive one logical conclusion from known premises; “Basic,” if a subject had a general idea of a conclusion that could follow from known premises; “Advanced,” if a subject could accurately derive one or more logical conclusions from known premises, and/or if a subject went beyond the information in the premises to derive a logical conclusion.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to present results from the implementation of *Introducing Socrates*, a study conducted at an Oregon Correctional Facility in September of 2003. The results of the study are organized by research question, starting with question #1 and concluding with question #3. Each research question is broken down and answered through various methods of data collection: research question #1 uses an Inmate Feedback Questionnaire, a Focus Group Interview Protocol. In-Treatment Observation, and Feedback from prison officials; research question #2 utilizes a Generating Options Pre- and Post-Test, and a Focus Group; research question #3 uses a Focus Group and In-Treatment Observation. At the end of each research question, a brief summary of the results is given.

Socratic Analysis

Introducing Socrates was held for four consecutive days, from September 23 through September 26, 2003, from 2-4 pm in Portland, Oregon, at the Columbia River Correctional Institution. The class was structured in 30-minute segments, using a 25-on, 5-off timetable. Every 30 minutes a new question

from the Discussion Questions (see Appendix F) was examined. Questions were selected from the order in which they appear on the Discussion Questions page. After approximately 25 minutes had elapsed, the discussion was analyzed and the reasoning process made transparent. That is, the instructor showed how each of his responses fit into a broadly Socratic formula: Question, hypothesis, counterexample, and reexamination of the hypothesis (Dye, 1996). All conversations were tape-recorded and then transcribed.

This section analyzes select conversations from *Introducing Socrates*. The objective of this section is to (a) provide a more detailed picture of how, what, and why participants learn from these discussions; (b) show how counterexamples were selected; (c) show what is occurring from a facilitator's point of view; and (d) discuss what is less apparent from reading transcripts of *Introducing Socrates*. It begins with a general overview of Socratic discussions and principles, and then uses specifics from *Introducing Socrates* to further explain educational principles.

In Socratic discussions in general, and *Introducing Socrates* specifically, there are no set or fixed questions or counterexamples. Rather, my responses were geared to the educational, intellectual, experiential, and social circumstances of the participants. In a Socratic dialogue, no one knows how the conversation will evolve, what examples will be given, what definitions will be accepted, or even how long, if ever, it will take to resolve a particular question.

Different people offer different responses to questions, and my goal in *Introducing Socrates* was not to predict participants' responses and answer them with stock replies, but to respond honestly with clear examples and definitions that fit into a broadly Socratic formula.

Socratic discussions begin with a question. In response to this question, participants may say absolutely anything or say nothing at all. There is no best way to respond to the initial question, just as there is no best way to answer the response. Answers and responses depend on the context (academic, casual conversation, prison), the participants (life experiences, relationships, moods, educational backgrounds, psychological orientations, group dynamics), and the flow of the conversation. In general, after I ask an initial question I wait a few moments until someone responds. If there are no responses, I will either offer my own definition, or offer the definition of a philosopher whose work I am familiar with, and again wait for a response. If after this there is still silence, I usually ask participants what they think about the question. (Asking what one thinks about a question is itself a question, and this can lead to a Socratic dialogue). Whatever option one chooses to take at this juncture—offering one's own definition, using a famous philosopher's definition, or asking participants what they think about the question—is usually enough to start the conversation.

The worst outcome is silence. In order for a Socratic conversation to “work,” meaning for there to be an interactive discourse, one must have some

response to proceed from. If nobody says anything, there can be no elenchus and thus no dialectic. Fortunately, there was never a point in *Introducing Socrates* where questions were met with silence. All of the subjects in this study were active participants who were fully engaged in the dialogue.

Many of the examples I used in the discussions that follow were tailored to the group I was teaching. For example, I often use examples or counterexamples drawn from world events. These examples act as a type of shared currency that people can relate to, and, specific to the context of teaching in the Columbia River Correctional Institution, most of the inmates informed me that they watch the news every morning and then again every evening. If they did not watch the news, or they were not interested in world events, then I would have chosen different examples. In the following conversation from *Introducing Socrates* we can see that political examples play a role in the discourse by serving as a common reference point.

Researcher: What is justice?

Subject 6: Standing up for what you believe in.

Researcher: What if you believe weird stuff? Like one of those lunatics who wants to kill Americans? Or what if you're a pedophile?

[A 20-second silence.]

Subject 6: I think if you can stand on your own two feet and not care what anyone else thinks about you, and you're willing to fight for it and die for it or whatever, that makes you a man. Whether it's right or not.

Researcher: So being a man would mean to be resolute in your beliefs no matter what? What if you're in the military, like in Rwanda, and you're told to butcher all these people, and you have this skewed idea of loyalty. And you stand up for what you believe, for your country or tribe or whatever, and you just start butchering civilians? Hutus' or Tutsi's or whoever. Is that just? Does that make you a man?

Subject 5: Yeah, good point. It happened in Nam [Vietnam].

Subject 5 had told me before this conversation that he was in the Vietnam War. He was also particularly enthusiastic and animated during this discussion. There was a brief pause in the conversation after this comment by Subject 5.

Researcher: So being a man or being just isn't just standing up for what you believe in, it's having true beliefs and standing up for those.

Subject 1: But your true beliefs might not be someone else's.

Subject 4: I mean, what are you talking about, society's true beliefs?

Researcher: Objectively true beliefs.

The initial question was, "What is justice?," and the response was "standing up for what you believe in ... whether it's right or not." The first examples that came to me, which happened to be examples of current or historical events, were Rwanda, the Nuremberg trials of Otto Ohlendorf and Paul Blobels, and Michael Jackson's refusal to say that pedophilia was wrong. I decided not to pursue the pedophilia line of inquiry, because it might be upsetting to some of the inmates, and I thought that the Nuremberg examples

would have been too obscure, so I went with the general counterexample of Rwanda. I was operating under the assumption that most people who watched the news had at least heard of the Rwandan genocide, even though specifics of the atrocities might be lacking.

What I was trying to do by using the counterexample of Rwanda was to show that what it is to be virtuous could not possibly be “standing up for what you believe in.” Many of the people of Rwanda stood up for what they believed in, and what they believed in, and acted upon, was slaughtering innocents. Implicit in this claim is that slaughtering innocents is not just. If they accept this claim, that it is not just to slaughter innocents even if that is what you believe, then it necessarily follows that what it is to be just cannot be standing up for what you believe in, because sometimes people stand up for, and believe in, bad things. I was not trying to aim at the conclusion that part of justice is having true beliefs and standing up for those, especially because I consider justice and belief to occupy different logical categories. I arrived at the provisional answer to the question because of the initial response that Subject 6 offered. If the initial response to the question had been different, or if I had offered my own definition and then subjected that to the elenchus, then the conclusion would have also been different. The example was effective for no other reason than securing a related response from Subject 5 that inmates

understood and responded to. This was sufficient to call the initial response, “standing up for what you believe in ... whether it’s right or not,” into question.

Beyond the specific examples used, however, in reading these transcriptions there is an element of Socratic practice that is not apparent. In my experience, being an effective Socratic facilitator entails having a certain attitudinal disposition. Part of that attitude is an intellectual propensity toward the truth. One needs to be willing to modify one’s claims/definitions/beliefs as a result of the elenctic process. If the instructor is not prepared to do so, then he or she is not engaged in a Socratic dialogue. For example, in the dialogue above, if my counterexample of Rwanda was met with effective counterexamples, and I had no persuasive response to the stronger argument, then I would have had to accept the original definition of “standing up for what you believe in ... whether it’s right or not.” Even if this made me personally or even emotionally uncomfortable, I would be morally and intellectually obligated to go back and examine my belief and the reasons for my belief. If I did not do this, then I would be engaged in a Socratic conversation for some other reason, that is, some reason that is exogenous to the truth-seeking aspect of the method. If I did this, then a key learning objective would have been reinforced, that is, the importance of reassessing one’s belief in light of new evidence. If it is the case that people feel trapped by lifestyle and habit, then the prosocial model of

changing one's beliefs publicly (especially if it is the facilitator) could act as an effective tool for life change.

This truth-seeking orientation is an often overlooked element of Socratic pedagogy, but it was continually on my mind during *Introducing Socrates*. There are many reasons for this, and one of the main reasons is that the truth-seeking element was inseparable from the educational objectives of *Introducing Socrates*. That is, to help subjects hone their moral reasoning and critical thinking skills by asking good questions, ruling out poor alternatives, examining ideas, and spotting contradictions, one needs a strong and overt current of truth that runs throughout the inquiry. Moral reasoning and critical thinking generally, and these skills specifically, are only proximal or instrumental goals. The ultimate objective is to help subjects make better life decisions and *stay out of prison*, and this is accomplished by having inmates meet certain learning objectives. If truthfulness is not embedded in the inquiry, then the integrity of the process is compromised and the Socratic method becomes a charade. Why would anyone want to act on the consequences of a process that was based on falsity and deceptiveness?

During *Introducing Socrates*, when I was asking questions, my aim was to pursue the truth, and I chose many of the examples because I believed that they would facilitate this end. In my experience, too often scholars either offer formulaic "how to" accounts of Socratic pedagogy, attempting to replicate

successful Socratic discourse with rehearsed, fungible propositions, or they focus their analysis on those educators who employ the Socratic method to bully participants into accepting certain predetermined conclusions. The truth-seeking aspect of the Socratic method is relegated to secondary or tertiary significance, or it is overlooked entirely. This is important to understand when reading these discussions. One of the primary goals of *Introducing Socrates* is to arrive at the truth, and this is primarily a function of the attitude of the facilitator.

Another important element of Socratic pedagogy is the importance of saying, or being willing to say, “I don’t know.” Being intellectually disingenuous by claiming to know when one does not can be poisonous to a Socratic environment, because participants may perceive you as manipulative or deceitful. Consequences of this could be that participants are no longer motivated to find the truth, or that they become silent, or that they alter their responses either to please or upset the facilitator, and so on. In these discussions I rarely said “I don’t know” when I was asked a question. This was partially due to the educational disparity between me and the subjects, and partially because a lifetime of Socratic training has helped me to clarify and articulate my beliefs. Nevertheless, on the occasions when I did, and because I was open to this possibility, this positively affected the environment, the dialogue, and our relationships by fostering an attitude of trust.

One reason that *Introducing Socrates* worked was because of the relationship of trust between the teacher and the subjects. If one is looking for a formula beyond a general Socratic template, a “how to” or a “How did he do that?” or “Why did he use that example there?”, then one is approaching the Socratic enterprise incorrectly.³⁵ However, just as there are no necessary responses, neither is this a mystical process where counterexamples are arrived at arbitrarily. I did my best to select counterexamples that would be effective while simultaneously reinforcing the learning objectives, but I was not always successful. I did not always select an effective counterexample, one that met a basic criterion of sufficiency for enabling one to alter or even question one’s initial hypothesis, or an example that secured agreement to further premises. For example, in the conversation below about friendship and virtue, I use the example of helping a friend dispose of a dead body. Perhaps naively I did not anticipate that anyone would say that they would help a friend dispose of a dead body, or that they would consider this a virtuous act. I was wrong. The following conversation is not nuanced; it straightforwardly shows that I did not

³⁵ It is important to be honest not merely for practical reasons like helping to ensure the communicative interaction is not tainted. There is no reason to lie or to offer responses that one would not lend one’s belief to. If one has confidence in the truthfulness of one’s beliefs then one should be confident that those beliefs will be able to withstand an elenchus. If they withstand an elenchus then they are more likely true than not; the same is true with fabricating a false claim, it is more likely to topple under elenctic inquiry. Again, these issues of truthfulness and honesty are not self-evident by reading these transcripts. But at some level I believe that participants in these intense, fast moving and even intimate discussions can sense if one has a hidden agenda.

use an effective example. It was also selected because it demonstrates how a conversation can achieve some of the learning objectives, in this instance, how to analyze ideas and, possibly, even how one could make better life decisions as a result of one's analysis. Finally, this conversation took place on day three, when a relationship of trust between the researcher and the subjects had been established. The following is the continuation of an earlier conversation about virtue:

Researcher: That relates to what we were talking about before. Our "What is it to be virtuous?" question. So?

Subject 1: My ultimate thing in my life is to always be true to my family and the people I call friends. To hold that above all else. And if I call a person my friend, you know, that takes it to a whole new level.

Researcher: What if one of your friends comes to you and says, "Dude, I've gotta dispose of this dead body, you've gotta help me."?

Here we see the first three stages of the Socratic method. It begins in *wonder*, with an initial question. In this case that question is, "What is it to be virtuous?" A *hypothesis* is then offered, "To be true to my family and the people I call my friends. To hold that above all else." This is the statement or the thesis that becomes targeted for refutation. Next, there is an attempt at an *elenchus*, a "what if" or counterexample statement or series of statements. However, in this example the "what if" statement was not sufficient to either secure agreement to further premises or to make the subject reevaluate his initial

response. Because I could not get the subject to agree to what I thought was an eminently reasonable premise, I could not secure agreement with further premises, and I could not get him to agree that the hypothesis that he offered was suspect.

Subject 1: Hey, it's simple for me, right, wrong or indifferent. If I'm calling them my friend, what do we gotta do? Where do we gotta go?

At this juncture another subject targeted the hypothesis by offering his own counterexample.

Subject 2: [To Subject 1] What if he says, "Dude, we gotta go rape this girl?" Look, I need you to hold this girl down while I rape her.

Subject 1: [to Subject 2] You're on your own, brother.

Subject 2: [to Subject 1] But he's your friend.

This was an effective counterexample because it showed the limits of friendship while calling into question the initial hypothesis. Subject 1 does not revise his hypothesis at this juncture, but clarifies what he meant.

Subject 1: Still. If I'm gonna call a person a friend, first of all, I know he's not gonna go out and rape no girl. I'm gonna make sure when I choose someone as a friend it's not gonna happen like that [snapping]. I look to my life to find a couple of friends throughout my whole life. And to be that they'd have to share some of the same virtues I hold.

Researcher: So if somebody does come to you and ask you to do something like this then they're not really your friend?

Subject 1: No.

Researcher: No? Is that right? Friends don't ask friends to dispose of dead bodies for them.

Subject 9: You don't know none of our friends.

This last comment was, perhaps, a reason why my initial "what if" was not effective. It is far from my life situation for anyone to ask me to dispose of a dead body, but it is not far from their life situations. This is also a good example of why one cannot learn the Socratic method by using "stock" or "canned" examples. What works in one context or in one conversation may not work in another.

What follows is an outstanding illustration of a counterexample. Subject 5 gave a far more effective counterexample, and even made my pedestrian example seem anemic. It was this example that was effective in causing a reevaluation of the initial response, and Subject 1 finally calls his hypothesis into question. What is interesting about this is that this is not my example. I was at a loss regarding what direction I could move the conversation, and what proposition I could offer to either call into question the hypothesis immediately, or build a case against it by securing agreement to further premises. Moreover, this is also an example of how a Socratic teacher knows that students are learning how to examine ideas by making effective counterexamples—when other students apply what they have been learning.

Subject 5: What if your best friend was married to your sister and in a rage he killed her? Then he said, "Hey, look brother I

screwed up big-time, I need you to go help me bury this body.”

Researcher: Boy, talk about what’s one instance of a thing, that’s really better than I could have ever done.

This counterexample, offered by Subject 5, ultimately dissuaded Subject 1 about the truth of his hypothesis. The conversation went on to more directly focus on the question of virtue. There was no final agreement about what virtue is and how it relates to friendship.

This example illustrates one way to examine ideas, through a systematized process of question and answer that seeks to cast doubt on claims to moral knowledge. It illustrates the examination of ideas by showing a transparent process which anyone can use. It also shows that these are not cryptic or impenetrable techniques open only to the facilitator, but all participants have access to the same tools. Finally, while these examples may seem remote or even alien, they are not out of the arena of life possibilities for the men in this study. With any luck, none of the subjects will ever be in the position to decide whether or not they will help their friends dispose of a dead body. If this situation, or one like it, does arise, however, both this conversation and this way of subjecting moral decisions to a process of scrutiny may prove to be invaluable.

Finally, at the end of each discussion we took 5 minutes to review the conversation and to analyze the process of answering questions. This was not

part of the historical Socrates' practice, but I have found it to be an effective way to reinforce student learning. In particular I focus on showing how the elenctic process achieves its epistemological ambitions; that is, how the use of counterexamples can tease out contradictions and poor alternatives, or why certain responses are better than other responses and how this ultimately helps participants gain new knowledge. Beyond these specifics, however, I use this brief period to make sure that students understand why we are using this particular process, the Socratic method, how it works, and why it matters.

The following interchange took place in the 5 minute review. I asked if there were any questions, and Subject 8 asked me for another way to "picture a counterexample." Subject 3 then supplied his own example. This brief exchange shows that Subject 3 is examining and thinking through ideas. He is relating what he is learning to his own life, and, to borrow a word used several times by the subjects, taking it "deeper."

Researcher: Another way to look at a counterexample is to ask yourself, "What's one instance of a thing that makes it false."

Subject 3: Interesting. This is kinda like what the psych test on the parole board is. Like your wallet question [The Generating Options Pre- and Post-Test].

Researcher: So what if a person finds a wallet with money in it, but he needs it to feed his family? You mean a counterexample like that?

Subject 3: Yeah, and here's a counterexample to your counterexample, "If he doesn't turn it back in, and the police pull him over, he won't be feeding his family in jail."

Researcher: Yeah, good. I didn't think about that. That's what's cool about this. It doesn't tell you what to think.

Subject 10: Yeah, it works.

This interchange also demonstrates that neither the examination of the Socratic process, nor the Socratic process itself, forces participants to arrive at particular conclusions. The Socratic method is not an ideological hammer that imposes values or beliefs on participants. It cannot tell people what conclusions they ought to hold. In this conversation I did not think of the counterexample to the counterexample, or think about the consequences of not turning in the wallet. Subject 3 did, however, and without prodding. On his own he was able to probe more deeply into the consequences of a poor alternative. The alternative in this case is having a hungry family, and the counterexample to taking the wallet as a short-term solution was taking the wallet, getting caught, and this preventing one from discharging one's longitudinal duties to one's family.

This study addresses three research questions. The results for each of the three research questions follow.

Research Question #1

How do inmates subjectively respond to Introducing Socrates? Do they feel threatened, ashamed, perplexed, motivated, empowered; do they question the teacher's leadership, or find the teacher's use of power inappropriate?

Research Question #1 was answered by analyzing data from three different sources: an Inmate Feedback Questionnaire, a Focus Group and In-Treatment Observation. For organizational purposes, the results are loosely separated into positive and negative categories. The positive categories include empowerment and motivation; the negatives are feeling threatened, ashamed and/or perplexed. A summary of these results is provided at the end of this section.

As indicated in chapter 3, this question is important because a crucial indicator of a successful treatment is the inmate's response to that treatment. Positive responses have a positive causal relationship to subjects' internal motivation. A high internal motivation, in turn, increases the likelihood of treatment compliance.

All indicators were that inmates responded well to *Introducing Socrates*. Potential negative indicators (i.e., inmates feeling threatened, ashamed, perplexed, questioning the teacher's leadership or finding his use of power to be inappropriate) were not manifest; positive indicators (i.e., inmates feeling motivated, empowered) were apparent.

Inmate Feedback Questionnaire

The Inmate Feedback Questionnaire was given to inmates at the end of treatment. The purpose of the questionnaire was to ask subjects about their subjective responses to *Introducing Socrates*. The questionnaire had 12 items,

and every inmate answered every question. The results of the questionnaire indicate that inmates responded well to the treatment.

The items address how the trainees respond, either positively or negatively, to *Introducing Socrates*; items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11 and 12 fall broadly into the positive domain; 6, 7 and 9 into the neutral; and items 8 and 10 into the negative category. Table 5 details the results of the inmate feedback questionnaire for the 10 subjects.

Table 5
Questionnaire Results

		1	2	3	4	5
1.	I enjoyed this class	0	0	0	3	7
2.	I learned something from this class	0	0	1	6	3
3.	The class should have been longer	0	0	1	2	7
4.	I would recommend this class to others	0	0	1	1	8
5.	I would take this class again	0	0	1	2	7
6.	I looked at my teacher as a leader	2	2	4	1	1
7.	I have looked to other teachers in my life as leaders	2	2	4	1	1
8.	I felt threatened by the class	10	0	0	0	0
9.	The teacher used his power appropriately	0	0	2	7	1
10.	I felt ashamed as a result of the discussions in class	10	0	0	0	0
11.	I am motivated to use what I have learned	1	0	2	0	7
12	I feel empowered by what I have learned in class	0	0	2	3	5

Not at all=1 A little=2 Somewhat=3 A lot=4 Very much=5

In the positive category, the results of item 1 show that all inmates enjoyed class, with 7 inmates indicating that they “very much” enjoyed their classroom experience. Similarly, on item 2, all inmates learned something from class, and 9 inmates reported that they either learned “a lot” or “very much” from class. On item 4, 8 of 10 inmates reported that they would “very much” recommend class to others, with no inmates reporting “not at all.” These results were almost identical with the next question, where inmates were asked if they would “take this class again.”

Positive constructs that have been empirically correlated with decreased recidivism were manifest. Specifically, all subjects *enjoyed* the class, most were *motivated* to use what they have learned, and most would *recommend the class* to others. These are strong indications of internal motivation, signaling a high likelihood of treatment compliance.

Items 6 and 7, neutral categories dealing with teacher’s leadership, yielded identical scores. These items deal more with inmates’ conceptions of what a teacher ought to be, and are not necessarily reflective of treatment. While the results for these questions occupied every category, the mode was “somewhat.” For item 9, which deals with the teacher’s appropriate use of power, the mode was “A lot,” with no subjects indicating “Not at all,” or “A little.”

In the negative category, items 8 and 10 dealt, respectively, with inmates feeling threatened or ashamed. One hundred percent of inmates scored these items by answering “not at all” (i.e., no inmates felt threatened or ashamed by class).

There was a wide range of responses regarding how motivated subjects were (question #11). Regarding their motivation to use what they had learned, one subject responded “not at all,” two responded “somewhat” and seven responded “very much.” The reasons for this disparity came up during the Inmate Feedback Questionnaire and during class. For example, during day three, inmates were asked if they had an opportunity to use what they had learned. One subject, the subject who circled the answer indicating that he was “not at all” motivated to use what he had learned, volunteered the following story:

Subject 4: Just like the other day, with the flowers outside, they said I couldn't plant the roses. I said, “Why?” They said because they were afraid that another inmate could get thrown into the thorns and get hurt. So I told em, well, and this is your theory, right?

Researcher: Yeah.

Subject 4: OK, but we have a whole weight pile out there. Someone can take the weights and smash someone's face in, and so we can have the weight, right? He [the guard] said “Yeah, you can have the weights.” But then I said, “Well then why can't we have the flowers?”

Researcher: That's one instance of a thing that makes it false [it shows a contradiction]. That's brilliant. What did he say?

Subject 4: They bolted down the weight pile.

[Everyone laughed.]

Researcher: No, no really, what happened?

Subject 4: They bolted down the weight pile and we can't get roses.

Subject 2: Yeah, no roses and the weight pile is bolted down.

Researcher: Because of that comment?

Subject 4: Yeah.

Researcher: Are you serious?

Subject 4: Yeah.

Similarly, during day four, another subject, the subject who circled the answer indicating he was only somewhat motivated to use what he had learned, had a similar personal experience:

Subject 8: So I'm sitting in this [mandatory cognitive skills] class and the teacher just does not know what she's talking about. This guy in there is a serious car thief, and she's trying to tell him not to steal cars.

Researcher: Yeah.

Subject 8: So I figure I'd throw out some of this stuff I've learned [in *Introducing Socrates*].

Researcher: Good.

Subject 8: So I said, "What makes you think that your way is right and he's wrong?" And then she freaks out on me and s***. I said "no no, I'm being completely honest with you, why do you think your way is right and his is wrong?"

Researcher: And what did she say?

Subject 8: She thinks I'm being all confrontational.

Subject 2: And he wasn't. He really wasn't.

Researcher: I don't get why she thought that it was a problem.

Subject 1: Because the people they bring in here to teach us don't know s***. They're insecure.

Researcher: So what did she say?

Subject 8: She didn't know what to say. She just got mad at me.

In both of these cases, subjects' internal motivation to use what was learned was likely tempered, or even erased, because of negative experiences. Their negative experiences with using the Socratic method were reinforced by negative consequences. In the first case, being denied the roses *and* having the weights taken away; in the second case, having a teacher become upset because of one's questions. In other words, one's negative experiences in using the Socratic method have the potential to decrease one's internal motivation to try the techniques again because of real or perceived negative external consequences.

One issue that was raised during the Inmate Feedback Questionnaire was that many subjects' answers were contingent upon independent variables, like who was teaching the class, or if future classes would be monitored by a guard. One of the subjects told the researcher after class that he scored "somewhat" for questions #4 and #5 because, he said, "It all depends on who was teaching the class. I wouldn't want to take the class if a dick was teaching it." This

sentiment was echoed in the focus group when offenders said that who was teaching class would have a “major impact” on whether or not they liked the class.

Furthermore, one of the subjects brought up an experience in the third day of treatment when a maintenance person came into the classroom to fix a broken lock on the door. The maintenance man was in class for approximately 15 minutes, and during that time subjects were noticeably more reserved. There was not as much participation as usual, and the types of examples that were offered were not as extreme or imaginative when in the presence of a state employee. The other subjects agreed that if, for example, there were prison monitors/guards in the classroom then this would negatively affect their experience. This colored some inmates’ responses to the questionnaire, specifically with regard to questions #4 and #5, and subjects were adamant that the researcher be aware of this.

Finally, the Inmate Feedback Questionnaire had a section where inmates could write down other comments/questions they had. One hundred percent of the subjects wrote positive comments. Below are some select remarks:

I was very impressed by the way the format was delivered. It invoked deep contemplation of the contemplation of the concepts concerning [sic] virtues.

Peter, I think this class has alot [sic] good techniques on how to live a good life & should be taught on a much larger group of people.

I would really enjoy more of this type of educational opportunities [sic].

The fact that you came in here & that I had an opportunity [sic] to take this class meant [sic] a great deal to me.

Eleven different ways to say I liked it.

Summary. Several salient results from the questionnaire stand out:

100% of subjects enjoyed their classroom experience, 90% learned a lot or very much from the class, 90% would recommend it to others, 0% were threatened or ashamed, and 70% were motivated to use what they learned, while 10% were not at all motivated. With one exception, inmates gave a high score to the two constructs in the positive category, feeling empowered and motivated. Negative constructs, like feeling threatened or ashamed, were not reported.

Focus Group

The 2-hour Focus Group took place 2 weeks after the treatment. All subjects were present. The Focus Group used Interview Protocol questions and scenario questions. This section discusses the Interview Protocol questions as well as some additional questions and comments that arose during the session. The section concludes with a summary of the results.

The Focus Group started by the researcher telling the class that he wanted to learn about their experiences in *Introducing Socrates*. In the beginning of the focus group, one of the subjects commented to the researcher, "You know how we feel about it [*Introducing Socrates*], let's do more questions

[philosophical questions from the syllabus].” This was a verbalization of an attitude that was shared by most if not all subjects. In this sense, *Introducing Socrates* was a victim of its own success. Subjects knew that the researcher knew that they enjoyed the class because they explicitly told him so on numerous occasions, and they were not quite sure what the purpose of the questions was if it was already known how they felt. Subjects wanted to continue unfinished discussions. Therefore the Interview Protocol did not gather as much data as was anticipated, nor last as long. The Interview Protocol lasted fewer than 25 minutes, whereas the initial study’s design called for 90 minutes. Several of the questions did not elicit any feedback.

The fact that subjects did not want to answer the Interview Protocol questions because they wanted to revisit the treatment and cover more unanswered questions from class, does, in many ways, provide a conclusive answer to research question #1. The purpose of the Interview Protocol questions was to learn, from the subjects’ responses to a number of questions regarding their experiences in class, how they subjectively responded to the treatment after some time had elapsed. The fact that inmates were not engaged by the Interview Protocol questions *because* they instead wanted to revisit the ethical questions from class, *de facto* shows that they responded positively to treatment.

Below are the Interview Protocol questions and a summation of responses:

1. Should the class have been longer (i.e., gone on for more weeks and/or occupied more time in the day)?

Most subjects agreed that class time was about right for the objectives to be achieved, but some subjects said, objectives aside, that they would have liked more time “to go deeper” into particular questions. One subject said that “Perhaps a few more weeks would’ve been good.” Four inmates nodded their heads in agreement.

2. How did this experience differ from your other classroom experiences?

There was a strong feeling that, unlike their other classroom experiences, ideas, ways of thinking, and what to think was not “forced down [our] throat[s].” This phrase was used several times by different inmates. All subjects agreed that the class and the teacher were not similar to their other classes or other teachers. In *Introducing Socrates*, subjects reported that they had more freedom to express their ideas and, unlike their other classes, the teacher was not threatened when challenged. One subject said, “I can breathe in here.” This comment was met with head nodding.

3. Do you feel that you have more options when faced with dilemmas?

Subjects did not directly answer this question. The question did not seem to interest them. Subjects did report that they thought that they had a process to fall back on as a result of their experiences in class. Another subject commented, "Yeah, we got a two-step process that we can use now." Another subject nodded his head and said, "I see more avenues now."

4. If I were to hold this class again, what questions would you suggest that I use, and how would you suggest that I test people's knowledge to see if they understand what is being taught?

This question was a nonstarter. The only comment that was made was, "It's fine, don't worry about it."

5. What were your experiences in taking the test?

This question was also a nonstarter. Subjects said only that the Generating Options test reminded them of other tests that they had to take while in prison. When asked if this was good or bad, most subjects shrugged. I then asked if they "gamed" (i.e., give the evaluators what they were looking for) the *Introducing Socrates* test; they said no, because there was "no reason to."

6. How did you respond to *Introducing Socrates*? For example, were you bored, threatened, engaged, excited, indifferent, etc.?

Subjects reported that they "liked the class," "found it interesting," and "learned a lot" from the discussions. When asked if any of the words "bored, threatened, engaged, excited, indifferent" were applicable one subject said,

“Yeah man we liked it. It was really good, don’t worry about it.” Another subject nodded and twirled his finger to indicate “next question.”

7. Did this class help you to change the way you think about ideas?

Subjects offered a brief response to this question. Subjects reported:

Subject 10: I think on a deeper level now.

Subject 5: Yeah, deeper level.

Subject 1: I think about stuff deeper now.

When asked to elaborate on what “deeper” meant, one subject simply said, “You’re a deep dude, you know exactly what we mean.” When prodded, another subject explained: “It gives you another way to think about s***. So you’re thinking, right, and if it contradicts yourself you say, ‘man I f***** up,’ and it might not be the right thing to do. So I go back and think about what to do again.”

8. Did you feel perplexed as a result of classroom conversations? If so, did this make you feel uncomfortable?

All subjects shook their heads “no.” There was no discussion.

9. Did you feel ashamed, for whatever reason, in class?

All subjects shook their heads “no.” There was no discussion.

10. Did *Introducing Socrates* help you to feel empowered?

This question was answered with a philosophical question about what it means to feel empowered. Subjects used several examples of feeling

empowered, but claimed that the feeling was false or fleeting. In appropriate Socratic style, a subject asked, "Having a gun makes you feel empowered, but is that a good thing?"³⁶ There was no further discussion.

11. Do you feel motivated to use what you have learned?

One subject, subject #4, "no," one said that he was "unsure," and the rest of the subjects indicated by nodding their heads that they were motivated to use what they had learned. The subject who said "no" had negative experiences when he used the Socratic method (discussed in the questionnaire results above).

12. Do you look at your teachers as leaders? Did you look at this teacher as a leader?

This question started a philosophical discussion about what it means to be a leader. All of the definitions that the researcher offered, one who exerts authority, one who is a role model, one who stands up to others in the face of adversity, were met with discussion and counterexamples. There was no answer to the question; rather the subject turned it into another question: "Should one look at one's teachers as a leader?" There was no resolution to either question.

13. Do you feel that the teacher used his power appropriately?

This question did not elicit responses. An inmate said, "You're fine, next question." After that, the subjects waited for the next question.

14. Did this class change the way that you interacted with each other?

³⁶ The researcher responded, "If you're facing a homicidal maniac it is."

The response to this question was mixed. Some subjects reported that class made them “go deeper” with their classmates, while others said that the experiences in class did not change the way they interacted with each other. Two subjects reported that they “talk about this stuff all the time now [with each other].”

Additional Questions and Comments

In addition to the Interview Protocol questions, inmates were asked about what the researcher should do differently if he taught the class again, and if there was anything else that they would like to discuss.

Regarding the first question, “If the class was taught again what should be different?” The researcher was told not to go through religious services, but rather to go through the education coordinator. Because the chaplain posted flyers advertising the class, some inmates thought that “it has something to do with religion.” One subject commented, “Someone told me over lunch today, ‘Wow, if I would have known it didn’t have anything to do with religion, I would have definitely showed up’.”

Additionally, subjects said that one thing that should *not* be different was class size. In relation to their other classes, *Introducing Socrates* had fewer students. Subjects commented:

Subject: Another thing that you gotta realize is that there’s twice, three times the amount of people in there.

Researcher: Yeah.

Subject: And for a lot of people it's easier to talk in front of a small group than it is a large group; you can talk more, so you're participating more. You're learning more.

All subjects agreed that a class size of 10 was ideal.

Subjects used the remainder of time in the focus group to raise comparisons to their other "cog. classes" (cognitive classes). Six of the subjects were emphatic about wanting the researcher to know about their other educational experiences while in prison. Subjects continuously commented that the Socratic process was "so different." One subject reported:

The information they're giving you [in the other cognitive classes] is useless, it's not useless, I mean you learn tools on how to think and how to intervene in your thinking process, but what person sits and thinks out a decision through a five-step process? You don't, it's done instantaneously, you're gonna make the choice or you're not, and if you got another way of thinking like this, I mean, I don't know, it's like a two-step process instead of a five. You weigh out the differences, and if you can find a false to it then maybe it ain't the right way to go.

Subjects also wished to comment on the dogmatism that was present in their other classes. When asked if they could "bottom line" their experiences in their other classes, one subject said, "Their way is right and our way is wrong."

Summary. Subjects' failure to engage the Interview Protocol questions because they wanted to continue treatment underscores their positive response to *Introducing Socrates*. Subjects also made explicit references to "liking" the class and finding it "interesting." The negative comments that emerged during

the focus group were not aimed at *Introducing Socrates*, but at their other cognitive classes.

In-Treatment Observation

This section deals with my observations of the inmates while they were in-treatment and immediately after the treatment ended. Observations are broken down into verbal and nonverbal behaviors.

From verbal and nonverbal behaviors one can conclude that all subjects, without exception, responded positively to treatment. Subjects were animated, intense, engaged, thankful, and eager to learn.

Some examples of verbal behavior that serve as evidence for the above claim are one subject commenting, "I would rather sacrifice my yard [time] to come in here [*Introducing Socrates*]." And, when the second day of treatment ended 5 minutes early, another subject said, "We have 5 more minutes please." Also, when the class reconvened after a 15-minute fire drill on the third day of treatment, many of the subjects were upset about the interruption, and one subject stated, "I think you're gonna have to stay an extra day." Finally, on day three, before class began, the researcher was having a discussion with the chaplain in his office. One of the subjects came into the room and told the chaplain, "We'd love you to persuade him to come back here."

In addition to verbal behavior, subjects also exhibited nonverbal behavior that supports the claim that they responded positively to treatment. On the

second day of class 7 of the 10 subjects came to class with handwritten pages of notes, printed Internet encyclopedia entries and at least one dictionary entry for each question on the syllabus. Immediately before the second day of class began, one of the subjects said, "I hope you're prepared because boy I am." He had handwritten approximately 20 pages of notes in anticipation of the day's discussion. Subjects were not given any instructions about what to bring, or not to bring, to class. This was done on their own. Furthermore, class was held from 2-4 pm during particularly beautiful Oregon weather. Several inmates had an option to use time this as "yard time," meaning that they could go outside into the area between the fence and the facility. They chose to give up their yard time to attend class.

Subjects' appreciation, as evidenced by their nonverbal behavior, persisted even after the treatment had ended. Immediately after the focus group, the subjects wanted their picture taken with the instructor, and the entire class lined up for a group photo. After the first photo, the subjects requested additional shots for their cell walls. Also, when certificates were being handed out for completion of the class, the instructor also received a certificate of appreciation, signed by every member of the class. Finally, everyone in the class shook the instructor's hand twice, on the last day of class and at the end of the follow-up session. This is not common practice.

Summary. From in-treatment observation we can conclude that subjects responded positively to the treatment. The actions of the subjects, such as sacrificing yard time to attend class, or having their picture taken with the instructor, comported with their verbal reports of enjoying *Introducing Socrates*. There were no indications of negative responses to treatment.

Feedback from Prison Officials

Over the course of the treatment I had a number of conversations with prison officials. This was not something that I had planned in advance. Often this occurred because I arrived early and would wait near the classroom area, where some of the prison officials had offices. The vast majority of our conversations were about the treatment, my goals for the inmates, and their progress. Inmates frequently communicated their in-class experiences with the prison officials, and this was a useful way for me to receive indirect feedback.

The feedback from prison officials corroborated the data. The Education Program Coordinator told the researcher on day two that inmates were “really enjoying their experience in class.” She continued and commented, “They [the inmates] were tellin’ me how great this class was, and I was wondering if you’d be interested in coming back and volunteering again some other time.” Also on day three the chaplain said that he had “heard very positive things about the class,” and that “I know others want to sign up too.” This sentiment was

echoed by Tom O'Connor, Director of Religious Services for the Oregon Department of Corrections.

Research Question #1 Summary

The data collected from multiple data sources, the Inmate Feedback Questionnaire, the Focus Group Interview Protocol, and the In-Treatment Observation, all correspond and all indicate that subjects responded positively to treatment. Both subjects' behavior and their verbal and written reports indicate that they felt motivated and empowered by the treatment.

Reports of subjects having positive responses to treatment, and not having negative responses, are corroborated by their behavior. Inmates were not all volunteers, and they would not have chosen to continue treatment, or desired to get back into treatment during the focus group, if they felt ashamed or threatened. There was no indication of any negative response to the treatment.

However, subjects reported having negative and even visceral responses to previous treatments. Their accounts focused primarily on the fact that they felt that the material in their other classes was being "forced down [their] throats."

Research Question #2

Does exposure to the Socratic method lead to a difference in the quality and quantity of options that inmates can generate in response to a specific problem or situation?

Research question #2 is answered by a Generating Options Pre- and Post-Test and a Focus Group. The Generating Options Pre- and Post-Test was administered before the treatment and on the final day of the treatment. The Focus Group, held 2 weeks after the end of treatment, used realistic scenario questions to elicit responses from inmates. This section examines the results of those methods of evaluation and concludes with a summary.

Generating Options Pre- and Post-Test

A Generating Options Pre- and Post-Test was administered to subjects on the first and the last day of treatment. This test asked subjects to generate possible responses to problems that could be encountered; subjects then indicated the options that they thought should be taken. The test results were evaluated by two independent experts, both of whom have extensive academic and professional backgrounds in critical thinking and psychology. These results were analyzed for qualitative and quantitative differences between the pre- and the post-test. This section details the results of those tests. It concludes with a brief summary of the results.

The hypothesis being tested was whether or not inmates generated more options, and chose better options, after treatment than before treatment. While the word “options” was not defined for the evaluators, when I read the tests I interpreted “options” to mean words written on subjects’ tests that acted as stand-alone individual items. It should be noted that when reviewing the test, I took a narrow definition of what an option was. Any item, or group of words, that was written down as a stand-alone answer was classified as an item. To prevent evaluation bias, evaluators were not given a definition of the word “options.”

Evaluators found that subjects generated fewer options on the post-test than the pre-test, but the options that were generated on the post-test were less aggressive and more reflective. There were 107 responses on the post-test and 134 responses on the pre-test. One evaluator, Dr. Frank Wesley, found that in Group B (the post-test), subjects “have become less aggressive and have become better writers leaving out repetitive alternatives like (a) kill them with a gun, (b) kill them with a knife, (c) kill them with a shoehorn, (d) etc.” (see Appendix G). His conclusion was that while subjects generated fewer options on the post-test, they made better choices. The other evaluator, Dr. Kevin Boileau, found that on the post-test subjects were more “reflective and information-seeking,” with a “desire to get more information,” and also “less

emotionally reactive” with “substantially fewer responses that indicated anger” (Appendix G).

It is not possible to make statistical inferences that are generalizable to a larger whole, due to the small number of participants. Thematically, however, the data indicate that an important theme that emerged was that, in aggregate, fewer options were generated by subjects on the post-test, and that subjects made what evaluators deemed to be “more substantial,” “less aggressive,” and more “reflective” choices at the end of the treatment.

What was also noteworthy is how responses to the questions were classified and organized. Three of the subjects organized their responses more clearly in the post-test than in the pre-test. One of the subjects numbered his answers, and two of the subjects organized their answers categorically, that is, into groups of good, bad, or indifferent. They did not, however, make these headings explicit. Some subjects made better choices, numbered their answers, and organized their responses by category. This is particularly interesting because at no point in the discussion or in the analysis was ordering or categorizing one’s points ever stressed.

Summary. From the Generating Options Pre- and Post-Test one can conclude that inmates generate fewer but better options in response to specific problems. Subjects also wrote fewer aggressive responses on the post-test.

Focus Group

In the focus group inmates were asked a series of scenario questions, drawn directly from the Generating Options test, and responses to those questions were then evaluated. The results comport with the data from the pre- and post-test. Inmates generated fewer options to scenario questions, yet their responses were more focused, thoughtful, and reflective and, for the most part, less aggressive. Subjects were not enthusiastic about answering the scenario questions, hence more data were not acquired. Rather, they wished to use the focus group to voice concerns about their educational experiences while incarcerated. The scenario questions were discussed, though much less robustly than was hoped.

Subjects were acutely aware of *how* they could answer scenario questions. Even knowing that the researcher would challenge their responses, subjects approached the questions confidently. One subject reported, "S*** [it is] much easier now. I can rule out the negatives like that [snapping his fingers]."

Summary. Subjects were not enthusiastic about answering the scenario questions. Therefore, not as much data were accumulated as was anticipated. However, subjects were aware of how questions could be answered and reported feeling more confident in their answers. Subjects also generated fewer but better options to problems.

Research Question #2 Summary

Both the scenario questions from the Focus Group and the Generating Options tests indicate that subjects generated fewer but better options to problems. Responses on both measures were also less aggressive and more thoughtful and reflective.

Research Question #3

Do inmates exhibit an implicit understanding of the core components of critical thinking (i.e., interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, self-regulation)?

Research question #3 is answered through a Focus Group and through In-Treatment Observation. This section details the results from each method of evaluation. Because subjective judgments were brought to bear on this question, explicit and objective data were very difficult to obtain. This section concludes with a brief summary of the results.

Focus Group

During the Focus Group inmates were asked scenario questions found on the Generating Options test. Of the six core components of critical thinking (interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation), as a whole, the group scored highest on explanation, evaluation and inference.

The researcher created individual critical thinking profiles for each inmate. They were scored during and immediately after the scenario questions, and then the results were tallied. The scoring rubric had four possible categories: no sign, rudimentary, basic, and advanced. All subjects received a score for every item. For confidentiality purposes, and so that subjects numbers cannot be connected to their responses and thus to their profile, subjects designations are absent from the profile. Individual subjects' results from the profile can be seen in Table 6. All subjects were given scores of basic, rudimentary or advanced; no subject was given the score of "no sign."

When individual results were tallied, evaluation, inference, and explanation were the critical thinking categories with the highest overall scores. Table 7 shows the aggregate results of the core components of critical thinking for the focus group scenario questions.

It should be noted that the judgments that were brought to bear on scoring these categories were subjective. Scoring is not an exact science, and it does not easily lend itself to quantification. Nevertheless, it is possible to make differentiations between and among categories, and the results listed in Tables 6 and 7 are the quantifications of those differentiations.

Table 6

MRT Constructs, Objectives, and Questions

	Interpretation	Analysis	Evaluation	Inference	Explanation	Self-regulation
Subject	Rudimentary	Rudimentary	Basic	Rudimentary	Basic	Basic
Subject	Basic	Rudimentary	Basic	Rudimentary	Rudimentary	Advanced
Subject	Rudimentary	Rudimentary	Basic	Basic	Advanced	Basic
Subject	Basic	Rudimentary	Basic	Basic	Basic	Rudimentary
Subject	Basic	Rudimentary	Rudimentary	Basic	Basic	Rudimentary
Subject	Basic	Advanced	Advanced	Advanced	Basic	Rudimentary
Subject	Rudimentary	Basic	Basic	Basic	Basic	Basic
Subject	Basic	Rudimentary	Rudimentary	Basic	Basic	Rudimentary
Subject	Rudimentary	Rudimentary	Basic	Basic	Rudimentary	Advanced
Subject	Rudimentary	Basic	Advanced	Basic	Basic	Basic

Table 7

R&R Constructs, Objectives, and Questions

	No Sign	Rudimentary	Basic	Advanced
Interpretation	0	5	5	0
Analysis	0	7	3	0
Evaluation	0	2	6	2
Inference	0	2	7	1
Explanation	0	2	7	1
Self-regulation	0	4	4	2

Summary. Of the six core components of critical thinking (interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation) subjects scored highest on explanation, evaluation, and inference during the focus group scenario questions.

In-Treatment Observation

Among the six core components of critical thinking, subjects scored noticeably highest on self-regulation, and particularly one of the two subcategories of self-regulation: self-correction (see Appendices A and C). The other components of critical thinking were all present to some degree, but self-regulation was the most noticeably improved.

There was an obvious difference in the clarity and focus of responses between day one and day four. Toward the end of treatment, subjects were much more likely to listen to and respond to the suggestions/ideas of others, and

then to change their statements or even their beliefs if they felt that they were in error. This is exactly what self-regulation entails.

The following is a transcription of a conversation about the nature of virtue that illustrates, among other things, self-regulation:

Researcher: What are some virtues [you hold]?

Subject 3: My ultimate aim in my life is to always be true to my family and the people I call friends, to hold that above all else, is to my family, and if I call a person my friend, you know, that takes it to a whole different level.

Researcher: What if one of your friends comes to you and says, "Dude, I've gotta dispose of this dead body, you've gotta help me."

Subject 3: Hey, it's simple for me, right, wrong or indifferent, if I'm calling them my friend, what do we gotta do? Where do we gotta go?

Subject 7: What if he says, "Dude, we gotta go rape this girl"?

Subject 4: Yeah, look, I need you to hold this girl down while I rape her.

Subject 3: You're on your own, brother.

Subject 7: But he's your friend.

Subject 3: Still.

[A long pause.]

Subject 3: If I'm gonna call a person a friend, first of all, I know he's not gonna go out and rape no girl. I'm gonna make sure when I choose someone as a friend it's not gonna happen like that. I look to my life to find a couple of friends throughout my whole life. And to be that they'd have to share some of the same virtues I hold true.

- Researcher: So how 'bout this, so if somebody does come to you and ask you to do something like this, then they're not really your friend?
- Subject 3: No.
- Researcher: Isn't that right? Friends don't ask friends to dispose of dead bodies for them.
- Subject 5: You don't know none of our friends.
- Subject 7: What if your best friend was married to your sister and in rage he killed her? Then he said, "Hey look brother, I screwed up big-time. I need you to go help me burry this body."
- Researcher: Boy, talk about one instance of a thing [that makes the initial claim false], that's really better than I could have ever done. That's really one instance of a thing that makes or might make it false.
- Subject 7: And he's like totally remorseful and like crying, saying, "Dude, I don't know how to tell you this but your sister."
- Subject 3: I'd have to take a serious time out because my first reaction wouldn't be good.

The next hour the subject returned to the discussion and said that he had changed his mind (he changed his mind at the end of the conversation, but it was time for the discussion analysis and we had run out of time). He demonstrated self-regulation/self-correction not only because he modified his original idea, but because of the way in which he did so: he was interested and concerned, but changed his opinion matter-of-factly, without emotional distress. Earlier in the treatment when subjects were presented with counterexamples that challenged their original claims and beliefs, they appeared defensive or irritated.

Toward the end of the treatment, subjects were less recalcitrant, less threatened when their claims were questioned, and more willing to change their beliefs. These are all indicators of self-regulation.

Self-regulation was evident in all subjects. In-class discussions of philosophical topics, in which some examples dealt with cheating lovers and angry teens giving them the middle finger, subjects were more likely to step back, reflect on, and modify, alter or correct their statements or their hypothetical actions without being emotionally wedded to their claims. It is interesting to note that self-regulation, which had a strong presence in-treatment, may have been also present in the focus group, but there was less opportunity to demonstrate it because of the focus group's format. In the focus group, set questions were covered, and inmates were more or less in agreement with their responses. There was also a time pressure. The luxury of having 30 minutes to discuss an issue was unavailable. With these conditions, in this environment, there is little opportunity to self-regulate because there is less of a need to self-regulate when everyone is in agreement.

The other core components of critical thinking (interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation) were also present to some degree. However, beyond these categories of critical thinking, if there was something that had changed as a result of the treatment it was a meta-quality, or condition for the possibility of being able to use critical and moral reasoning skills. This

meta-quality is emotional distance and intellectual reflectivity. Before one can even get to the point where one can use critical and moral reasoning skills, one needs the necessary preconditions that allow these qualities to manifest and develop. Toward the beginning of treatment subjects were much more likely to become defensive, frustrated, or even subtly upset when counterexamples were used to call their initial responses/hypotheses into question. This was palpably different by the end of treatment. On the final day subjects were more receptive to changing their minds and less emotionally attached to their initial ideas.

Summary. All core components of critical thinking were present in all subjects to some degree. However, inmates demonstrated a high degree of self-regulation and self-correction, a subcategory of self-regulation. During in-treatment observation it was noted that subjects also became more intellectually reflective. This quality or habit is not a category of critical thinking, but was a result of the treatment.

Research Question #3 Summary

All inmates in this study exhibited an understanding of the core components of critical thinking to some extent. In the Focus Group inmates scored highest on explanation, evaluation and inference. In the Treatment Observation inmates scored highest on self-regulation and one category of self-regulation, self-correction. There was a subjective component to these measures.

Chapter Summary

In summary, subjects responded positively to treatment, generated fewer but better options on the Generating Options test, and scored higher on explanation, evaluation, inference, and self-regulation, than on interpretation and analysis. Additionally, subjects' responses on the Generating Options post-test were more reflective and less aggressive. The next chapter, Discussion, examines these results. It analyzes transcriptions of conversations to posit possible explanations for these results, and discusses other aspects of this study that may not be evident in this Results chapter.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses and interprets the results from the previous chapter. This chapter has seven parts: (a) three individual sections that briefly discuss each research question, (b) a general discussion of the results, (c) a limitations section, (d) a brief discussion of MRT and R&R as it relates to *Introducing Socrates*, (e) a brief personal reflection on my experiences, and (f) recommendations for future studies and recommendations to criminal justice administrators. The chapter ends with an overall summary.

Research Questions

The following is a discussion of the results of this study's three research questions.

Research Question #1

How do inmates subjectively respond to Introducing Socrates? Do they feel threatened, ashamed, perplexed, motivated, empowered, question the teacher's leadership, or find the teacher's use of power inappropriate?

Positive indicators that inmates enjoyed the class, felt empowered, and learned something were evident. Two negative constructs, feeling threatened or

ashamed, drawn from the educational and philosophical literature on Socratic pedagogy, either did not exist or did not surface (McKim, 1988; Rud, 1997; Tarnopolsky, 2001). Similarly, in the neutral category, questions of the teacher's leadership were also not an issue. From these results two questions present themselves: (a) What was it that inmates responded positively to, *Introducing Socrates*, or the teacher, or the experience/process?, and (b) What is the significance of all the inmates feeling at least somewhat empowered? This section briefly answers these questions.

Did inmates respond positively to the teacher, the Socratic process, or the course material? These stimuli are closely interwoven, but my speculation is that inmates responded positively to them all. This section briefly explores each of these possibilities.

First, there is no doubt that the facilitator plays a significant role in the learning process. There are many qualified Socratic educators who would have done an outstanding job teaching *Introducing Socrates*, just as there are some teachers who use the Socratic method, or any other pedagogy, to intimidate and humiliate. In addition to just using a Socratic pedagogy, I had several goals in mind when teaching the class, and one of those was transparency. By trying to be as open as possible about my beliefs, my motives, the Socratic process, and the ideas being discussed, I think that I created a transparent environment that acted as a backdrop for our discussions. In any dialogue-based pedagogy one's

motives and beliefs have a tendency to become evident rather quickly. I took responsibility, or, to borrow a term commonly used in corrections, “ownership,” of everything that happened in the class, and inmates sensed and positively responded to that.

In terms of the actual discussions, one of my goals was to provide or create a space for inmates to get involved in the discussion. I attempted to accomplish this by genuinely listening to inmates’ responses to questions, providing unthreatening but challenging counterexamples, and giving inmates an opportunity to respond to those counterexamples. This could be one reason why issues regarding the teacher’s leadership never arose, even when inmates were explicitly asked about this in the focus group. Leadership was never an issue, because inmates were fully engaged in the conversation. Their attention was not focused on the instructor. What became important were the syllabus topics. And while both of the definitions of leadership that were used above in chapter 2 (Bennis [1994] and Gardner [1990]) can apply to being a Socratic teacher in a corrections context, my role was more of a facilitator than that of a teacher in a “traditional classroom.” This, in turn, may have had an effect on their experience of class content; they may have been more receptive to the course content because of the fact that it was presented in a facilitative style that is not common in traditional classrooms.

This segues into the second issue, the Socratic process. When subject to the elenchus, which rests at the heart of the Socratic process, course material becomes more interesting because students have an opportunity to engage and participate in the issues being discussed. This engagement becomes magnified once participants see that they can make immediate gains in their understanding of a topic solely by engaging the subject in a particular way. For example, there were at least four times in class when inmates said, either to other inmates or to themselves, "Wow, that's cool." This exclamation came as a result of understanding the material after we had been engaged in a Socratic conversation. Of course, students could make similar exclamations in response to other pedagogical processes, or even when not in the classroom, but the difference here is that the exclamation came about as a result of something *they* said, or some insight *they* had, rather than something the teacher said. It is likely that this sense of engagement because of the Socratic process contributed to inmates' positive response to *Introducing Socrates* (Palmer, 1997; Reinsmith, 1997; Spitzer & Evans, 1999).

Third, I believe that inmates also positively responded to the course material. The questions that were chosen have survived for thousands of years, and they are as pertinent today as they were in Plato's time. Very rarely, however, do people have an opportunity to reflect on these larger issues in a structured environment. *Introducing Socrates* provided this environment, free

from the scrutiny of prison officials, where inmates could talk and think about these enduring questions.

There were no topics that did not elicit a response—inmates appeared to respond positively to every inquiry. There was one question, however, that was of particular interest to inmates: “If two people have contradictory beliefs about the same thing, then must someone be wrong?” This was a question that we came back to several times throughout our discussions, and inmates referenced their conclusion to this question in other discussions. I do not know why this particular question elicited so much feedback. Perhaps, and this is just speculation, if one were to answer this question as follows, “No, two people can have contradictory beliefs about the same thing, and nobody has to be wrong,” then it would be impossible to discern right from wrong. If it were impossible to discern right from wrong, then the inmates could not be said to be bad men, and thus there would be no reason for their incarceration. Of course, it also follows from this answer, which I pointed out, that there is no reason not to imprison an innocent man. Finally, it could be the case that this is just an interesting question. When I’ve asked this question in other classroom contexts, it has elicited heated discussion.

The second question regarding the significance of feeling empowered lends itself to the natural question of “What now?” This leads to a host of other questions: Does the feeling of being empowered translate into staying out of

prison? How long do inmates feel empowered (weeks, months, years)? Is a follow-up treatment necessary to reinforce the learning? Unfortunately these questions cannot be answered in this study. Beyond knowing that inmates reported feeling empowered, as a researcher it is unsatisfying not to know what the longitudinal influence of this was. What may ultimately bring meaning and even closure to these questions is continued research.

Research Question #2

Does exposure to the Socratic method lead to a difference in the quality and quantity of options that inmates can generate in response to a specific problem or situation?

My hypothesis that inmates would generate more options in response to specific problems was incorrect—inmates generated fewer but better responses. I believe that this is because they were able to weed out poorer options (APA, 1990; Blud & Travers, 2001).

When I first designed *Introducing Socrates*, my thinking was that more options translated into more possibilities, and having more possibilities was better than the contrary. As a result of the study, however, I have realized that it is not having more possibilities that is important, but rather having better categories to choose from. In one of the scenario questions, for example, if I find my “significant other having sexual relations with someone,” generating more ways to murder them (“kill them with a gun,... kill them with a knife, ...

kill them with a shoehorn”) is a practical dilemma, while having access or recourse to different modes of responding (“walk away, join in, call a friend”) provides one with the possibility of making better choices. And making better choices is, ultimately, the goal of all inmate educational programs.

Of course, I defined “options” rather narrowly and took this to mean *any* response to the question. If one were to interpret “options” more broadly, to mean, for example, not just writing down more things, but noting alternative ways of viewing the same problem, then perhaps the results could have been interpreted differently. For example, in the pre-test, even though inmates wrote more words on the paper, there were fewer categories generated. Borrowing from the example above, “[to] walk away, join in, call a friend” demonstrated more categories or alternative ways of responding to the question, rather than stating different ways that one can be murdered. This noted, however, the problem with a broad interpretation is that it necessarily included some researcher bias. That is, it is as much of an objective procedure as is possible to simply tally written responses; there is no researcher bias involved; one just counts the responses. But what constitutes a unique category is subject to some degree of researcher bias, and it is not clear that expert opinion would converge on a final result. Therefore the method of counting options, and the results that follow from that method, justify the conclusion that inmates generated fewer but better options.

Finally, exposure to the Socratic method did lead to a difference in the quality and quantity of options that inmates can generate in response to a specific problem or situation—just not in the way I had envisioned.

Research Question #3

Do inmates exhibit an implicit understanding of the core components of critical thinking (i.e., interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, self-regulation)?

Inmates do exhibit an implicit understanding of the core components of critical thinking (APA, 1990). While explanation, evaluation, and inference were noticeably manifest in the scenario questions, self-regulation (APA, 1990, p. 19) was most noticeable in during treatment (see Appendix C).

When one looks at the core components of critical thinking, one's first tendency may be to think that each component is "of equal value" to the others. However, it is possible that for certain individuals in certain life contexts some components may be more valuable than others. For example, I was struck by the improvement of self-regulation during the treatment. Specifically, toward the end of the treatment subjects would frequently change their opinions in response to various claims, or agree that they did not have enough evidence to warrant belief in their statements. I perceived this to be significant because it stood out in contrast to the more recalcitrant attitudes held by subjects at the beginning of the treatment.

While the other components of critical thinking clearly play important roles in the decision-making process, self-regulation transcends the decision-making process and extends into the realm of behavior. I suspect that many inmates got into trouble “on the outside” because of a failure, to some degree, to self-regulate. While “self-regulation” is not a term that is explicitly used in Motivational Interviewing, MRT, or R&R, Motivational Interviewing in particular does aim to help facilitators encourage clients to self-regulate. By

[S]elf-consciously monitor[ing] one’s cognitive activities, the elements used in those activities, and the results educed, particularly by applying skills in analysis and evaluation to one’s own inferential judgments with a view toward questioning, confirming, validating, or correcting either one’s reasoning or one’s results ... (APA, 1990, p. 19)

one is more likely to have a built-in mechanism to reevaluate one’s ideas and actions. Motivational Interviewing does stress the importance of responsibility and self-determined behavior, and this dovetails well with facilitators explicitly fostering self-regulation in inmates.

By emphasizing self-regulation, one is also emphasizing personal reflection, the evaluation of one’s judgments, and the correction of one’s reasoning. Self-regulation, or the ability to control and evaluate one’s cognitive activities, could be enormously useful by allowing inmates to check or evaluate their responses to events and actions (Blud & Travers, 2001; Porporino & Fabiano, 2000; Ross et al., 1988). The lack of these traits could possibly have harmful personal, social, and even legal consequences. It is a suspicion for

which I cannot offer evidence, but it may be that self-regulation will have more to do with staying out of prison than many of the other components of critical thinking.

Limitations

Introducing Socrates has the following limitations.

This was an extremely small study with a single instructor. Due to the small sample size, generalizations to a larger whole are not possible. However, this study certainly is suggestive of the possibility of future success, and introducing a curriculum like *Introducing Socrates* merits further investigation.

In the focus groups and on the questionnaire, one theme that emerged was the inmates' appreciation for the fact that the instructor *volunteered* his time. It was important to subjects that the teacher was not being paid. Being a volunteer favorably influenced the dynamic and subjects' perception of the instructor and the class. In future studies if the instructor is remunerated then this may be an issue.

It is possible that one reason for *Introducing Socrates'* success was that it was not compulsory. While offenders were "talked into" attending the first class, it was made clear that they could leave at any time. The fact that they could leave the class, unlike other classes that they were forced to attend

throughout their incarceration, might mean that they were more receptive to the information, to the class, and even to the instructor.

Inmates continuously complained about their other cognitive classes—specifically *Breaking Barriers*. In the words of one of the subjects, “These guys [the prison officials and the teachers] are trying to force this s*** down our throats. It’s a bunch of bull****.” It is possible that inmates would have the same perception of *Introducing Socrates* if it were compulsory. If *Introducing Socrates* were mandatory, then treatment effectiveness and inmates’ willingness and motivation to use what was taught could be greatly diminished.

Discussion

Introducing Socrates exceeded my expectations. Inmates did not just enjoy the class and advance their moral reasoning, but they also appeared to have a genuine intellectual and moral learning experience. What remains to be seen is if they can maintain the change, and if use of the techniques and reflection on their experiences translate into improved action, or if they allow themselves to become morally disengaged from their decision-making process.

Introducing Socrates is not a cure-all. It has the potential to provide people with a set of tools to help them make better life decisions, but it cannot offer an assurance that our least advantaged citizens will overcome the myriad

of structural problems that confront them. However, this does not make *Introducing Socrates* irrelevant or unimportant.

Given that people will be confronted with these immobile, fundamental, challenges, it is important to offer them critical thinking tools, not in spite of these structural barriers, but because of them. Because there are detrimental factors that are out of an individual's control, that is more reason, not less reason, to provide people with the tools that will enable them to better navigate options in their own lives. *Introducing Socrates* may have the potential to be one small part of a much larger design to help people overcome, and deal with, these structural issues.

Most if not all of the subjects made progress in moral reasoning that were not captured by the instruments. More than learning a process of critical thinking and moral reasoning, it is not hyperbole to say that inmates also experienced substantive changes in their moral orientations. For example, the following conversation about what type of life is the best to lead takes place in the last hour of day three. It shows a growth in moral understanding experienced by 9 of the 10 inmates. In the beginning of the discussion, 9 of the 10 subjects believe that the type of life Mother Teresa led is morally equivalent to the type of life led by Adolf Hitler. By the end of the discussion there is an agreement that not all lives are morally equivalent.

Researcher: What's the best life to lead?

Subject 5: To die with all your goals accomplished.

Researcher: Then one must have set one's sights too low.

[Inmates talk among themselves.]

Researcher: Are there certain types of lives that are better than other types of lives? Can we all agree that the life of Mother Teresa is better than the life of—

Subject 4: Hitler

Researcher: Yeah, Hitler.

[Nine inmates respond "no," one says "yes."]

At this point in the discussion it is important to note that the subjects provided the example. I did not offer Hitler's life as an example of a bad life; in fact, it did not occur to me to suggest such an extreme example. This is important because the inmates are evaluating whether or not there is a way to make a judgment about moral equivalency, and their interest is amplified because it is *their* example that they are defending—not that of the researcher. They have a vested interest in defending their claim.

Researcher: No? We can't agree to that?

Subject 7: Bulls***.

Subject 2: It depends who we're asking.

Subject 3: It's biased because it's your opinion and your opinion is always biased.

Researcher: Is the life of the tyrant the best life?

Subject 2: Depends.

Researcher: If you ask a warlord if he's a warlord he'll say no. If one really is a tyrant, one will never refer to oneself as a tyrant.

Subject 9: True.

[Subjects nod in agreement.]

Researcher: How do you make a judgment about what's right or wrong?

Subject 2: Common sense.

Subject 7: What about morals?

Researcher: I hate to plug it, but don't you have the process now [the Socratic method], counterexample, instances of a thing that make statements false, and if you can think of them then it's probably not the best idea.

Subject 10: Which is a kind of common sense.

Researcher: Yeah, codified or formalized.

Subject 5: What's the justification for being a tyrant?

Researcher: Well, my question is, is there a way to step outside and say, hm, bad to be a tyrant good to be this. You said common sense, but his common sense is different from his, and from his, and from Hitler's.

Subject 9: True.

Researcher: OK, well maybe there's not a best type of life to lead, but isn't leading certain types of lives better than leading other types of lives?

Subject 9: No.

[Nine subjects shake their heads to indicate "no."]

Researcher: You don't think so? Like [subject #4] said the other day, you don't think it's better to be kind to somebody than to be mean to them?

Subject 7: No.

Researcher: I can't even get you guys to agree to that?

[Nine inmates say no, one says yes.]

The next comments exemplify responses from people who have been steeped in the Socratic process. There is a series of counterexamples and counterexamples to those counterexamples. An additional thing to note about the discourse thus far is that five of the subjects are actively participating. What this dialogue does not show is the development of prosocial modeling (Barton & Osborne, 1978; Rex & Crosland, 1999); the other inmates are extremely attentive to the conversation, nodding their heads and indicating support for the comments of others. By the end of the conversation 8 of 10 subjects have participated, but the discourse itself stands as a Socratic model for all the subjects.

Subject 3: Isn't it false to walk through life lying? Even if you don't like that person just to make them feel better? Why not just be the way you are to every person?

Researcher: And what if you're a nasty bastard to everybody?

Subject 1: Isn't it better to be raised rich than poor?

Researcher: It's certainly better to not be raised hungry.

Subject 7: But doesn't adversity build character?

Subject 2: Would you rather be spoiled and full or starving and mean?

Researcher: Aristotle says you can't even talk about being virtuous until you have the basics: food, shelter, clothing. Unless you have food shelter and clothing the whole concept of being good doesn't make any sense.

Subject 5: Survival.

Researcher: Exactly. If you're starving then of course you're gonna steal.

Subject 5: That goes with everything.

Researcher: OK, so then we can agree that the beginnings of a good life are food, shelter and clothing.

[All the inmates nod or say "yes."]

Subject 2: Survival is everything.

Researcher: OK, so why can't we then construct another tier above that, and say food, shelter, clothing is on the bottom of our edifice, our foundation, then the next level is ...

Subject 4: Self-respect.

Again, here the subject provided the response. Subject 4 was not told that self-respect was an intrinsic good, and that a life with self-respect was better than a life without self-respect. He generated this example entirely on his own.

Researcher: Yeah, or to be a nice guy, or to have a reasonable job, or good friends, or whatever.

[The inmates talk among themselves.]

Researcher: OK, so then we can say that there are certain types of lives that are better than others.

Subject 5: Yeah, I guess so.

They arrived at this conclusion by force of reason and by reasoning from their experiences. I wanted the conversation to continue with a Socratic question that morally compared the life of Adolf Hitler to Mother Teresa, but unfortunately time ran out. Inmates were not *told* that certain types of lives were better than others, but *they arrived at this conclusion* through directed questions. After the discussion, if asked whether or not one type of life is better than another, they would undoubtedly respond “yes,” and would mean it.

A common misunderstanding of Socratic practice is that it necessarily ends in a personal revelation, or that the initial question is solved to everyone’s satisfaction. Not all discussions ended with inmates experiencing moral clarity, or causing moral and intellectual growth, but not all have to for the treatment to be considered successful. Depending on the individuals involved, and the persistence of the teacher, there may be no resolutions to questions. The following is an example of an unresolved conversation with one of the subjects during the 5-minute break in day three of the treatment:

Subject 6: You made a comment about Jesus needing to be clever.

Researcher: I was asking, was Jesus clever?

Subject 6: He chose to die. He was God incarnate. His purpose was to be the sacrificial lamb for all sinners.

Researcher: OK, so would you consider Him a greater man for having made that sacrifice?

Subject 6: Absolutely.

Researcher: OK, so what if the lesser men around Him were actually clever and prevented Him from achieving that mission?

Subject 6: The lesser men didn't want Him to achieve His purpose.

Researcher: Yeah, but if the lesser men, who were clever, prevented Him from achieving His purpose, then couldn't ya say that the virtue that He should have had was cleverness because that would have enabled Him to achieve His purpose? I mean it couldn't have been a sacrifice unless He chose it, and in order for Him to have chosen it He had to have the possibility of choosing otherwise. Therefore He could have not chosen it and failed.

Subject 6: He achieved His purpose.

Researcher: Could He have failed, or was He destined?

Subject 6: He could have failed. He had a choice.

Researcher: So then He might have needed cleverness to increase the likelihood of success.

Subject 6: Go back and read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Researcher: That doesn't answer the question.

The subject later told me, immediately before the focus group, that he had been thinking about that conversation for 2 weeks. When asked if he had come to any new conclusions, he said that he was not sure. So while the discussion did not end conclusively with an agreement on whether or not Jesus needed to be clever, or whether cleverness is a virtue, the conversation did

morally, philosophically and intellectually engage the subject. He thought about, clarified, articulated and defended—these all relate to the *Delphi Report*'s core components of critical thinking—his beliefs about a subject for which he had a great deal of passion. He also continued to think about the conversation for 2 weeks after class ended.

It is important to note that lack of a definite resolution does not mean that the discussion was useless, or that it would translate into moral ambiguity, or that the treatment was a failure. Part of what it means to have a successful treatment is to get inmates to think about and morally engage these sorts of questions, and ultimately translate this into moral action. The process of thinking about these questions, and leading more examined lives, may not just have the practical consequence of decreasing recidivism. *The act of moral engagement is itself a type of transformation*, or evolution, with profound implications for making choices about the sort of life one leads. Even if there is no definitive answer to moral and philosophical questions, the examined life is worth living, and an enormous body of corrections literature points to the fact that a reflective and contemplative life is less likely to lead to criminal behavior (Blud & Travers, 2001; D'Zurilla & Goldfried, 1971; Freedman et al., 1978; Porporino & Fabiano, 2000).

Similarly, it is also the case that Socratic conversations may not change or even challenge people's beliefs, but reinforce what is already known. This

also does not detract from the treatment, and depending on participants' interest in the subject, may still be engaging. For example, the following is the transcription of a conversation that took place on day three:

Researcher: Can a greater man be harmed by a lesser man?

Subject 7: Only physically.

Researcher: What about morally? Pure virtues [relating to an earlier discussion]. In a moral arena can a greater man be harmed by a lesser man?

Subject 7: No.

Researcher: What if the greater man is a completely virtuous man, but he's just not that smart? But the lesser man is a very clever, manipulative, and devious man? Cannot the lesser man harm the greater man?

Subject 2: If he was clever wouldn't he be the greater man?

Researcher: Is being clever a virtue?

[All the inmates nod or say "yeah."]

Subject 3: To be truly virtuous one would have to exhibit *some* standard of cleverness.

Subject 8: Yeah, we're surrounded by that every day.

[Subjects talk among themselves.]

Subject 7: A lesser man can hurt a greater man physically, but a greater man, who's virtuous, cannot be hurt any other way by a lesser man.

Subject 9: Yeah, the lesser man has no ammunition. He has nothing.

Subject 2: Yeah, physically he's able to hurt you, only then.

Researcher: So now that we've examined this we can have more confidence in our belief that a lesser man cannot harm a greater man.

In this example, while there was an agreement about the initial claim, the fact that other questions were generated from the inquiry shows that 5 of the 10 subjects were engaged. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that this conversation took place on day three. From our previous conversations on days one and two, I can state with a high degree of confidence that subjects would never have arrived at this conclusion at an earlier point in the treatment.

As these examples show, it is difficult for instruments to measure, quantify or somehow capture either developments in moral reasoning or the degree to which participants are engaged. Of course there are a multitude of subjective and ostensibly objective factors that go into making and evaluating moral assertions, critical thinking abilities, and levels of engagement. But existing instruments are not effective for making these types of evaluations due to fundamentally subjective judgments which would have to be brought to bear on the data. In this sense, the instruments used for this study were also inadequate in capturing, assessing or evaluating changes in subjects as a result of the treatment.

How does one measure the outcome of a conversation when the initial premise offered is that the life of a mass murderer is morally equivalent to one who genuinely sacrifices and works for the needy, to the conclusion that these two types of lives are not morally equivalent? Other than transcribing the

conversation and letting the readers draw their own conclusion, it is unclear that this can be measured.³⁷ From the perspective of a research study (even a study that uses qualitative methodologies) that needs clear methods of evaluation, it is an insufficient and even unsatisfying response to say that one must make judgments on the effectiveness of a treatment by reading descriptions of conversations and then invoking subjective criteria to evaluate those descriptions. Of course there are baseline indicators, like those employed here, that point to the future effectiveness of a given treatment (e.g., Do subjects respond positively?; Do subjects generate better options when faced with a problem?; Do subjects demonstrate critical thinking skills?). Ultimately, however, the best measurement may be practical: Do fewer inmates return to prison as a result of the treatment?

Whether or not this group of inmates will return to prison is an unresolved question. What is not unresolved, however, is that *Introducing Socrates* was apparently successful. The question is, why? Why did inmates

³⁷ Arguing what one ought or ought not do requires appealing to some standard. Claims are proven or justified in terms of the moral standard that is offered. The standard in ethics, determined by reasoning and analysis, is moral truth. Moral truth is synonymous with what one ought to do. But in Socratic discussions participants themselves provide the standards. Contradictions can be teased out of responses, and surely this is one way to make verifiable judgments about moral claims. This would lend itself to moral measurement using the only standard that is not overtly subject to prejudice--noncontradiction. That is, if one is never caught in a contradiction then one would receive a perfect "score". But this is not the right tool to evaluate either one's capacity for moral reasoning or one's moral understanding because different people have different standards that they offer as starting points. The less intellectually adventurous would tend to score higher because they would make weaker claims from which it is more difficult to tease out a contradiction.

report feeling empowered—empowered to act, empowered to think, and empowered to deal with personal, social and moral issues in a way that offered them hope? Why did they become intimately involved and engaged with their own ability to reflect and critically analyze problems? Why did they gain the confidence and the belief that it really was possible to author their actions and not be swept up by events beyond their control?

My initial answer was that the treatment appeared successful because the subjects were self-selected volunteers. However, I later learned that the subjects did not volunteer for the class, but were asked to volunteer. As previously stated, not enough inmates volunteered for the class, and it was about to be cancelled; less than one hour before the class, the education coordinator asked inmates who were milling around her office to sit in the first day of class, and if they did not like it then they could quit (those lingering in her office were not a selected group because, I was told, that this was a common practice because she was “so cool”). Thus inmates were not self-selected volunteers, and therefore self-selection played a very small part (2 out of 10 subjects) in the program’s success.³⁸

If self-selection was not responsible for engendering feelings of empowerment then what was? The men in my class left feeling empowered

³⁸ Ultimately, however, there is no way to be positive that the individuals in this study do not differ from the general inmate population at Columbia River Correctional Institution. The best evidence available leads one to the conclusion that 8 out of 10 subjects in this study were representative of the general population.

because they were treated with intellectual dignity and respect (Gendreau, 1996; Miller & Rollnick, 2002; Porporino et al., 1991a). By respect I mean that their voices were heard, and acknowledged, and responded to. They were not humiliated, made to feel uncomfortable because of their lack of a formal education, or threatened in any way. They determined the pace, depth and scope of their own treatment. They decided if they would participate, or not. Once I asked the initial open-ended question, they were then free to offer *any* response of their choosing. After the first 25 minutes of class, I told them that they could learn to do what it was that I was doing, that there was nothing special about me that enabled me to generate responses so quickly, just that I had engaged in this exercise for longer, and thus I was more proficient. I would like to say that my telling them this, and their belief in it, was a watershed moment in which they then decided that is what they wanted to learn. It was not. It was the fact that they were treated with respect and dignity that was largely responsible for their wanting to learn what I had to offer. Inmates are no different from anyone else in their desire to be treated with dignity and respect. They craved being respected because it had been denied to them, placed a high value on being treated with respect when they entered, and, in turn, responded with respect. Once this atmosphere was established, and they realized that they could do what it was that I was doing, they then demonstrated an insatiable hunger to learn.

Undoubtedly, the way they were treated had much to do with their response to the class. However, I could have treated them in the same way while attempting to engage them in some onerous and valueless process, and that would not have achieved a similar outcome. Simply treating people with respect is not enough to achieve a positive result. People need to recognize that what they are being offered has value, and perhaps when deprived of other meaningful intellectual experiences the contrast between these experiences becomes starker.

There is something in the nature of their Socratic experience that is totally unlike the underlying commonality in virtually all of their other in-prison experiences. That something is a type of freedom, freedom in a venue that rewards and not punishes the discharge of inmates' will to power. Prison, by its very nature, curtails freedom. Inmates cannot eat what they want, say what they want, go to bed when they want. The most basic things are not within their power. They can, however, think what they want, and *Introducing Socrates* provided an environment to explore, question, challenge and genuinely focus their thoughts in a way that challenged and engaged them. It must be very freeing to be in an environment that fosters and encourages intellectual and verbal freedom.

For example, during one discussion about free will versus determinism, I asked if our actions are predetermined or if we have free will. Without

exception, every inmate interpreted free will to mean “standing up to authority,” exercising resistance and being a plucky defier of the system. In *Introducing Socrates* there was no resistance, or rather if resistance was present then it was inmates who set the level, pace, and intensity of that resistance. Being in this environment was so fundamentally different from what they were accustomed to that I think they enjoyed an intellectual oasis where they were free to think and say what they wanted, without expectation or fear of punishment for saying the wrong thing.

The treatment was effective, therefore, because they were treated with respect, because they decided what their level of participation would be, because they saw intrinsic merit in learning to use Socratic techniques, because they were internally motivated to succeed in class, and because they yearned for an interesting and challenging intellectual experience.

MRT and R&R

The objectives of *Introducing Socrates* were drawn directly from the objectives of the two leading cognitive behavioral therapies: MRT (Moral Recondition Therapy) and R&R (Reasoning and Rehabilitation) (Little & Robinson, 1988; Ross & Fabiano, 1985; Ross & Ross, 1989). Ultimately, however, these two cognitive treatments played no other role in the implementation of this study. The objectives of *Introducing Socrates*, made

explicit for inmates in the syllabus, were drawn from MRT and R&R because of solid empirical evidence that they were effective in reducing recidivism (MacKenzie, 2000; MacKenzie & Hickman, 1998). That is where the similarity ended. The content, course structure, and pedagogy of *Introducing Socrates* were all dissimilar.

Inmates had taken an entire range of cognitive educational classes, and frequent and unsolicited comparisons to *Introducing Socrates* were offered. Inmates reported two main differences between *Introducing Socrates* and MRT and R&R: (a) that the instructors of these other cognitive programs were too defensive and “not really *teachers*” (when asked what this meant, one subject responded, “just because one is put in front of a classroom does not make one a teacher”); and (b) MRT and R&R curtailed their freedom of expression.

Because I did not attend their cognitive classes, I cannot comment on the quality of their instructors or their freedom of expression. However, I am in a position to comment on the class that I instructed. In many ways, comparing instructors and content of *Introducing Socrates* to the other instructors and cognitive classes was unfair. I was an enthusiastic volunteer, delighted to be there after having put in literally thousands of hours of preparation. This inevitably colored their perception. As one inmate reported, “I got a good bulls*** detector, and you ain’t bulls****ing us.” I am sure that my

enthusiasm, both for conveying a process that I believed in and for teaching this population, was evident.

Comparing the curriculum of *Introducing Socrates* and its instructor to paid inmate educators who teach classes to prisoners who are required to be there is not a just comparison. During the focus group I told inmates exactly this, and they agreed. Being compelled to sit in on a class, and having an instructor who may be less enthusiastic and less motivated, is more of an account of the state of inmate education programs than it is of the effectiveness of *Introducing Socrates*. But when I commented on the fact that the objectives from two of their other programs were identical to the objectives of *Introducing Socrates*, there were no comments. The room was silent. I had the impression that they were reflecting on the idea that the system might have been less malevolent than they had previously thought.

Finally, the research and the literature review of MRT and R&R was time well spent, and not just because of borrowed objectives. In learning about these programs, I was able to understand better the comparative statements and responses of these programs to *Introducing Socrates*.

Personal Reflection

The initial idea behind *Introducing Socrates* was that I wanted to make a contribution to the Enlightenment project. It may seem like a long stretch—

from the Enlightenment, where one had hope because one guided one's actions through reason, to exploring philosophical problems with inmates in prison. But for me, teaching in this context was a natural outgrowth of a larger intellectual commitment. I believed, and still do, that if individuals in this population can be taught an engaging and interesting process that helps them make better decisions, then this would be a testament to how reason can change anyone's life. I think my unstated speculation was correct—that if given the opportunity even those who were not empowered could and would choose to guide their lives with and through reason.

What I had not realized before this study is the importance of the role of context when using Socratic questioning techniques. In retrospect I should have realized this. Socrates was, after all, put to death for teaching and practicing the dialectic. Outside of a prison context there is a hermeneutic of charity that is naturally extended to people. Inside prisons, however, where everyone is inherently suspicious, asking questions could be perceived differently. It is far less likely that one would be given the benefit of the doubt when asking questions if one is an inmate. Prison officials, inmate educators, and even other inmates are more likely to extend a hermeneutic of suspicion to inmates because they are inmates. Perhaps naively, these isolated negative experiences, which are possible to undermine treatment compliance and even shatter one's sense of hope, were not something I was expecting.

Furthermore, from all of the literature I read there was one text in particular that taught and prepared me to make what I had to offer more effective: *Motivational Interviewing* by Miller and Rollnick (2002).

Specifically, it taught me to shift the emphasis from external motivation to internal motivation. In my college classes I often use external motivation, like assigning grades or persuading students how useful learning the material will be their careers, to encourage them to understand the material. But since reading *Motivational Interviewing* I have realized that if you want to motivate people to do something then you have to give them a reason to care about what it is that you want them to do. And this reason must be sufficiently attractive to them to make them want to pursue what it is that you want them to pursue. This may seem like an obvious point, but getting people to care about something they do not care about because of an alleged benefit is not an insignificant task. During *Introducing Socrates*, how I could internally motivate people was always in the back of my mind.

Finally, I entered into this project because of a heartfelt but abstract and elitist notion of wanting to “bring reason to the downtrodden,” and I ended up remembering why I went into teaching. Not just to cultivate a love of reason in my students, but so that *I* would be able to authentically exist in a community of truth seekers. It was a long time since I had that feeling, and a long time since I had remembered that mattered so much to me. As I leave academia, I will

pursue teaching in a corrections context. This time it will not be for the Enlightenment, or even for the downtrodden, but for myself.

Recommendations

This section is divided into two parts. First, it makes recommendations for further study using Socratic seminars as a treatment tool. Second, it offers recommendations to criminal justice facility administrators.

Further Socratic Treatment

Due to the success of this exploratory study, further research is merited. The next step is to move from an exploratory study to a longitudinal study. The pilot study would have a large n , use existing cognitive classes and mandatory sections of *Introducing Socrates* as control groups, track recidivism for a 5- or even a 10-year period, and ultimately compare recidivism in *Introducing Socrates* to control groups.

Based on feedback from subjects, some elements of treatment should not change, while others should be modified. Key elements that should not change are: (a) the same 25-on 5-off time frame for questions should be used, (b) the discussion questions should remain the same, (c) the number of subjects per class should be limited to 10, (d) excluding a follow-up, the treatment should remain a VBI, with the length and duration of the treatment being no more than four 2-hour periods (any longer than this and the treatment would not be as

cost-effective) (Correctional Counseling, 2003; Daley & Zuckoff, 1999), and (e) those classified as criminally insane should not be eligible to participate.

Elements of treatment that should change are: some sections of *Introducing Socrates* should be mandatory, if possible a minimum number of instructors should conduct all of the treatment to give consistency to the program, and the follow-up focus group should be eliminated. Ideally the treatment would be administered to inmates one month before their release. The purpose of the pilot study should be to judge the effectiveness of *Introducing Socrates* on reducing recidivism.

Criminal Justice Facility Administrators

This brief section makes two specific recommendations to criminal justice facility administrators. These recommendations are based upon the research literature and my experiences with *Introducing Socrates* during this study.

First, inmates should enjoy and be engaged by their treatment. Longitudinal analyses, like tracking recidivism, are expensive and, by definition, take time. A quick barometer of whether or not a particular treatment will “stick” is subjects’ responses to that treatment; simply, if inmates respond positively to their treatment, then there is an increased likelihood subjects being internally motivated than if they do not (Daley & Zuckoff, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan, Plant, & O’Malley, 1995). It is a necessary but not

sufficient condition that treatments not be harsh or adversarial (Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge, 1990; Daley & Zuckoff, 1999; Miller & Rollnick, 2002); and it is also important that subjects are engaged with and demonstrate an enjoyment of the particular program's content.

However, it is particularly difficult to disabuse people of what Miller and Rollnick (2002) call the "folk belief" that is "embedded in some cultures and subcultures" (p. 11). This is the belief,

change is motivated primarily by the avoidance of discomfort. If you can just make people feel bad enough, [then] they will change. Punish undesired behavior, and withdraw the pain when the unwanted behavior stops. People would be motivated to change, then by causing them to feel enough discomfort, shame, guilt, loss, threat, anxiety or humiliation. (p. 11)

Without actually witnessing a proposed treatment first-hand, it may be difficult for administrators to make judgments about the program's effectiveness, and even whether or not it aims to generate discomfort. To address this, I recommend requesting previous feedback on the program *from inmates*. If the program is exploratory and has not been offered before, then I recommend ascertaining subjects' responses to their treatment by implementing anonymous feedback questionnaires, similar to end-of-course surveys that are administered at the end of every college class. This provides inmates with an opportunity to write down and/or check boxes indicating their satisfaction with and response to their treatment. Administrators could then evaluate these surveys, discuss the results with the facilitators, and refine, modify or eliminate programs. If

programs are harsh or aim to produce discomfort, then I strongly recommend that those programs not be offered.

Second, I recommend that the structure of any program with inmates incorporate Motivational Interviewing. There are valid reasons why an increasing number of articles about Motivational Interviewing are finding their way into the broad corpus of treatment literature (Daley & Zuckoff, 1999; Ginsburg et al., 2002). The main reason is that Motivational Interviewing is effective—it produces results. Specifically, by eliciting people's internal motivation for change (Miller & Rollnick, 2002, p. 25), researchers and clinicians have produced encouraging results. My recommendation for criminal justice administrators is that when selecting which programs to fund, sponsor, promote, or administer, carefully look at the role and importance that the treatment places on subjects' internal motivation.

Specifically, a number of guiding questions could be very helpful to those implementing and evaluating programs. Are subjects externally compelled (i.e., punished or even rewarded) to comply with the objectives of the treatment? How is treatment adherence measured? Why would a subject want to enroll in the treatment? What factors, intrinsic to the treatment, would make someone *not* want to attend? Would inmates find the treatment interesting, enjoyable, engaging? What role, if any, does encouragement of self-regulation play in the treatment? In asking these questions, administrators will be in a

position to evaluate better a program's effectiveness and make judgments about whether or not it would be appropriate for their institution. The common threads here are whether or not inmates would want to attend the treatment and desire to use and apply what they learn.

Summary

Two specific and related recommendations for criminal justice facilitators were offered. First, inmates' responses to treatment are a good indicator of whether or not they will be internally motivated to follow through with what they have learned. Increased internal motivation means an increased likelihood of treatment compliance. One way to make judgments about subjects' motivation to comply is to gauge their responses to the treatment by obtaining their anonymous feedback. Second, intrinsic to the design of a treatment should be attention to and cultivation of subjects' internal motivation. When reviewing treatments, a fundamental question that criminal justice administrators should ask is "What role does motivating subjects internally play in this treatment."

Due to the success of *Introducing Socrates*, further study is recommended. The next step would be a longitudinal pilot study with a substantially larger sample size. This treatment would consist of small class sizes and be offered immediately before inmates' release into the general public.

Chapter Summary

As with many studies, *Introducing Socrates* leaves with unanswered questions, but the most important is: Are the inmates who participated in *Introducing Socrates* more likely to stay out of prison than those who did not? While this exploratory study achieved its primary objectives of answering its three research questions, no question is more important than this one. Unfortunately, this is a question that cannot be answered. However, if I am successful in implementing *Introducing Socrates* in other correctional contexts, then the results of the three research questions indicate that there will be a reduction in recidivism for those who participate.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENSUS LIST OF CRITICAL THINKING, COGNITIVE SKILLS AND SUB-SKILLS

1. Interpretation	Categorization Decoding Significance Clarifying Meaning
2. Analysis	Examining Ideas Identifying Arguments Analyzing Arguments
3. Evaluation	Assessing Claims Assessing Arguments
4. Inference	Querying Evidence Conjecturing Alternatives Drawing Conclusions
5. Explanation	Stating Results Justifying Procedures Presenting Arguments
6. Self-Regulation	Self-examination Self-correction

From the American Philosophical Association Delphi Report
(APA, 1990, p. 12)

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

Do not write your name anywhere on this paper. These answers are
 CONFIDENTIAL. *Nobody will ever connect your answers with your name.*
 Please answer the questions below.

Very much=5 A lot=4 Somewhat=3 A little=2 Not at all=1

Circle One

1. I enjoyed this class	1	2	3	4	5
2. I learned something from this class	1	2	3	4	5
3. The class should have been longer	1	2	3	4	5
4. I would recommend this class to others	1	2	3	4	5
5. I would take this class again	1	2	3	4	5
6. I looked at my teacher as a leader	1	2	3	4	5
7. I have looked to other teachers in
my life as leaders	1	2	3	4	5
8. I felt threatened by the class	1	2	3	4	5
9. The teacher used his power
appropriately	1	2	3	4	5
10. I felt ashamed as a result of
the discussions in class	1	2	3	4	5
11. I am motivated to use what I have
learned	1	2	3	4	5
12. I feel empowered by what I have
learned in class	1	2	3	4	5

Do you have anything else that you would like to add? Please feel free to use
 the back of the page if you so desire.

APPENDIX C

CRITICAL THINKING CORE ELEMENTS

Interpretation: “To comprehend and express the meaning or significance of a wide variety of experiences, situations, data, events, judgments, conventions, beliefs, rules, procedures or criteria” (APA, 1990, p. 13).

Analysis: “To identify the intended and actual inferential relationships among statements, questions, conceptions, descriptions, or other forms of representation intended to express beliefs, judgments, experiences, reasons, information, or opinions” (APA, 1990, p. 14).

Evaluation: “To assess the credibility of statements or other representations which are accounts or descriptions or a person’s perception experience, situation, judgment, belief, or opinion; and to assess the logical strength of the actual or intend[ed] inferential relationships among statements, descriptions, questions or other forms of representation” (APA, 1990, p. 15).

Inference: “To identify and secure elements needed to draw reasonable conclusions; to form conjectures and hypotheses; to consider relevant information and to educe the consequences flowing from data, statements, principles, evidence, judgments, beliefs, opinions, concepts, descriptions, questions, or other forms of representation” (APA, 1990, p. 16).

Explanation: “To state the results of one’s reasoning; to justify that reasoning in terms of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological and contextual considerations upon which one’s results were based; and to present one’s reasoning in the form of cogent arguments” (APA, 1990, p. 18).

Self-regulation: “Self-consciously to monitor one’s cognitive activities, the elements used in those activities, and the results educed, particularly by applying skills in analysis and evaluation to one’s own inferential judgments with a view toward questioning, confirming, validating, or correcting either one’s reasoning or one’s results” (APA, 1990, p. 19).

APPENDIX D

GENERATING OPTIONS PRE- AND POST-TEST

Questions

Do not write your name anywhere on this paper. These questions are **CONFIDENTIAL**. *Nobody will ever connect what you write to with your name.* Please answer the questions below to the best of your ability.

Sample question:

Fred buys groceries from a grocery store. His total comes to \$10. The clerk gives him \$1 more than he should have gotten back. What *could* he do? Then write a number of options that could be selected.

Sample responses:

- Keep the money.
- Give the money back.
- Split the difference and give him 50 cents back.

Sample question:

Sue finds someone's wallet on the floor in the women's room. It has all of her personal information in it, two credit cards, and \$50. What *could* she do? Then write a number of options that could be selected.

- Call her on the phone and ask for a reward if she gives her the wallet.
- Keep the money and toss the wallet in the trash.
- Go on a shopping spree with his credit cards.
- Call her and tell her that you have her wallet and want to give it to her.
- Sell her credit cards to someone.
- Leave the wallet there.
- Keep the money and return the wallet.

Questions:

Mike walks into his house and finds his significant other having sexual relations with someone. They are both shocked to see him. He doesn't know the other person. What *could* he do? Then write a number of options that could be selected. (*Remember, your name will NEVER be linked to what you write.*)

Jim is alone, driving to a friend's house at night. A teenager in another car cuts him off. Moments later he comes to a stoplight at the same time as the teenager. He gives him the middle finger and laughs. Nobody else is around. What could he do? Then write a number of options that could be selected. (*Remember, your name will NEVER be linked to what you write.*)

APPENDIX E

INTRODUCING SOCRATES SYLLABUS

Instructor:

Peter Boghossian

Course Description:

In this 8-hour critical thinking class we will think through some difficult questions together, articulate our responses to those questions, and assess our reasoning.

Objectives:

- Learn how to identify consequences
- Learn how to reason through a problem (problem-solving)
- Learn how to assess our thinking
- Learn how to assess our current relationships
- Learn how to articulate our ideas
- Develop higher stages of moral reasoning
- Develop verbal self-control
- Understand how our identities are formed
- Understand the roles that pleasure-seeking and gratification plays in our lives

Class Structure:

The class has two separate parts: 1) Discussion Questions, and 2) Discussion Analysis.

*Part I***Discussion Questions**

Every 25 minutes we will start with a question that is taken, in some form, from the Platonic dialogues (on occasion we may start with a reading from the dialogues). For example, a typical question could be, “How much control do we have over who we are?” We will then think through the question, and pose possible answers. I will participate in the discussion as a guide.

The discussion could take any one of a number of unexpected turns. If it does then that is okay—evaluating different responses and analyzing those responses is part of the practice of learning. Until you become accustomed to the way that issues will be discussed, this may be perceived as a lack of structure. Also, if you are used to more formal class settings where exactly what you will learn is mapped out in detail beforehand, then this way of teaching class may initially be difficult for you. This is something that you need to be aware of in our discussions.

Part II

Discussion Analysis

The next 5 minutes we will analyze the discussion. We will identify the stages and process of our reasoning, assess our thinking, and attempt to figure out how we could have been more effective both in our reasoning and in our articulation. We will use what we have learned in the next discussion.

Expectations:

This class will be intellectually challenging. But we will challenge one another by our ideas on the intellectual level rather than the personal level. We will learn in good faith and respect one another as adults, value our diversity of opinion and talents, and never demean each other by critical comments.

I have the following expectations:

- That you will be respectful of others. This does not mean that you have to agree with someone else's viewpoint, but you do need to let them speak without personally criticizing them.
- That you will ask if you have any questions, or if something is unclear. If something is bothering you, then you need to tell me.
- At times in our discussion I may say "STOP!" If I do, this means that we need to stop what we are doing, and I will direct you to write about what we are discussing.¹

What are the expectations that you have of me?

Finally

We can make this a very rewarding experience for everyone involved. It is an opportunity for us to explore issues and ideas in a way that challenges us intellectually. We will have an opportunity to think about ideas that everyone has wondered about, but few have had an opportunity to explore in depth in a classroom setting. My role is to help you articulate your thoughts and give you a process to evaluate critically your ideas. But there is only so much that I can do. Ultimately, you must take responsibility for your own learning. So perhaps our first question should be, "What does it mean to take responsibility for our learning?"

¹ There was no instance where this occurred.

APPENDIX F

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following are questions that we will be asking ourselves throughout this course. I have listed the names of where these ideas can be found in the event that you would like to read more on your own. Unless otherwise stated, all names refer to works written by Plato.

- What is it to be a man? What is it to be virtuous? (*Apology, Meno*)
- What is courage? (*Laches*)
- Do people knowingly do bad things? (*Gorgias, Protagoras, Hippias Minor*)
- What is justice? (*Republic*)
- Are people responsible for who they become? (*Republic*)
- Can a man be unjust toward himself? Can one be too modest? (Immanuel Kant's *Metaphysics of Virtue*, in the first part of the *Metaphysics of Morals*, *Gorgias*, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*)
- Why obey the law? (*Crito, Republic*)
- What's worth dying for? (*Apology, Crito*)
- When is punishment justified? (*Gorgias, Crito*)
- How important is personal responsibility? What does "character counts" mean? (*Republic, Gorgias, Republic, Laws*)
- Are customs and conventions important? What kinds of customs and conventions are there (styles, manners, laws, social class)? (*Republic*)
- What's the best life? What are the possible lives we can lead? Is the life of the tyrant the best life? (*Republic*)
- How much control do we have over who we are? (*Republic*)
- What obligations do we have toward others? (*Republic*)
- What are the claims of loyalty and friendship? (*Republic, Lysis*)
- What are our obligations toward our families? (*Republic*)
- What makes a way of life appealing to us? What attaches people to the way of life? (*Republic*)

APPENDIX G

PRE- AND POST-TEST EVALUATIONS

Evaluator: Kevin Boileau, Ph.D., J.D.

- Because of the way the answers are organized, I cannot address each subject individually. I can, however, make some general comments.
- Group A [pretest] totaled 135 responses. Group B totaled [post-test] 107 responses.
- There was a range of responses, from highly reactive and nonreflective to reflective and information seeking. On one side of the continuum there are emotionally reactive responses manifest two ways, sadness and anger (even suggestive of violence). On the other side of the continuum, the reflective, there were two types of reflection—the desire to get more information, that is, to explain or to understand, and a variation of compassion (demonstrating regard for the other). Response Group B [post-test] was clearly more reflective and less emotionally reactive. There were also substantially fewer responses that indicated anger in this group.
- The more intriguing part is that there seems to be a slight trend toward greater emotional and ethical awareness in group B [post-test] responses than in group A [pretest] responses. The trend is slight, and I think it would be interesting to enlarge the scope of this study to see if this trend would become more pronounced. Yet, with what little evidence we have here, it does appear that the following phenomena occurred in group B [pretest] responses:
- As a whole, subjects were more willing to feel their feelings instead of reacting primitively in rage. Furthermore, in group B [post-test] responses, as a whole, subjects were able to access feelings of betrayal and of being hurt. This shows a newly-found sensitivity to one's self-esteem, the beginnings of a transformation from a narcissistic self-concept to one that is more relational in scope, which is certainly the foundation of ethical reflectivity. Furthermore, and this is the most interesting element: there was a slight trend in group B [post-test] responses toward a greater need for patience and reflection. That is, as a whole, subjects started to become interested in gaining more of an explanation of what was occurring before them, and they also realized that they needed to be patient and reflect on what was happening, instead of being blindly reactive. This small germ of a space or zone of reflection is absolutely fundamental to the critical thinking process. In all fairness, we can only detect a small germ of movement here, but it does exist, and this leads me to an optimism that a

larger study could and might come up with more of a demonstration of the trends present here.

Evaluator: Frank Wesley, Ph.D.

Note: To preserve the integrity of Wesley's response, the chart and the notes that follow the chart have been kept in their original format. If the chart proves confusing, the following guide may be helpful:

- "Subj" stands for the subject's number. Each subject was assigned a number from 1 to 10.
- There were two questions on the pre- and post-test. "Question Number" indicates which of the two questions is being examined.
- Under the "Number of Responses" category, Wesley tallied up how many responses subjects wrote.
- The "Group A" and "Group B" labels are, respectively, the pre- and the post-tests.
- Under the word "Quality" Wesley compares, and makes an evaluation of, the differences between Group A and Group B for each question.
- Using Subject 1 as an example, for Question 1 on the pre-test, Subject 1 wrote nine responses, and for Question 2 Subject 1 wrote five responses. On the post-test, Subject 1 wrote seven responses for Question 1, and five responses for Question 2.
- Wesley did not provide an explanation for the numbers he jotted down below the chart.

Chart:

Subj	Question Number	Number of Responses	Group A	Number of Responses	Group B
		No	Quality	No	Quality
1		9	More Varied	7	More emphasis on forgiving, and God
		5	No Difference	5	No difference Better written and categorized (enumerated)
2	1	10	Talking and shocking and beating responses	1	Just one response, just talking
	2	9	Ignore, fight, withdraw	1	Talks
3	1	9	Fight, talk, join in	8	Join in, ignore, fight
	2	4	More Aggressive	3	Less aggressive. One new response "smile and leave"
4	1	4	Calmer response in general	4	"Throw" them out
	2	4	"Tell" them to get out	5	The added response: "fight" The other 4 the same responses
5	1	5	No Difference	5	No Difference
	2	6	One more aggressive response: "Smash up headlights"	5	One less aggressive response
6	1	6		3	Less Assaultive
	2	7		4	Same as above.

Subj	Question Number	Number of Responses	Group A	Number of Responses	Group B
		No	Quality	No	Quality
8	1	5	No difference	4	One item, the aggressive one kick the crap out of the guy is omitted in group B
	2	4		5	No difference
9	1	9	No difference	7	Less emphasis on killing More emphasis on "walk away"
	2	8		9	This alternately was highlighted No difference
10	1	10	Mostly nonaggressive responses	12	2 more nonaggressive responses
	2	8	Forgiving	8	Even a little more forgiving (e.g., "Bow in Buddhist form").

65
122
69

44
107
63

Peter: Here are some comments while reading it.

Subject 3

Question 1

Almost the same number of responses 9 and 8, but the order of response it different in group A fighting is first in group B its last-

Subject 7

Question 1

Even though there are fewer choices in group B they are more concise, and sound more "educated" to me, or less assaultive.

Question 2

Same as above. In group B fewer aggressive responses.

General Comments

Total response in group A = 134 in group B = 107. That is significantly more in A. If A was pretest then your hypothesis that the number, the mere number has not increased. But if B was your post group, then you should emphasize that they have become less aggressive and have become better writers leaving out repetitive alternatives like

- 1) kill them with gun 2) kill them with knife
- 3) kill them with shoehorn 4) etc.