

CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION'S INADEQUATE ACCESS AND POTENTIAL FOR
PRISONER GROWTH AND REHABILITATION

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ABSTRACT

Giving incarcerated individuals access to correctional education at all levels has been closely tied with the crime control ideology of the time. The ideology of crime control shifted from a “help them out” attitude to a “lock them up” attitude. Since the 1990s, there has been a growing body of research indicating the effectiveness of correctional education on post release outcomes of formerly incarcerated men and women. However, the American Consciousness shifted from rehabilitation to retribution by the mid 1980s which was punctuated by the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act in 1994. This has been especially detrimental to credit-bearing postsecondary correctional education. The past ten years have marked a shift back towards rehabilitation with the passage of the Obama-era Second Chance Pell Pilot Program and other private initiatives to give prisoners access to high quality postsecondary education. This program allowed certain colleges and universities with correctional education programs to give those prisoners access to Pell grant money. While the research indicates an up to 18% decrease in recidivism rates for those who participate in correctional education, the implementation and access to such programs within prison walls is appallingly limited. The research explores both the quantitative and qualitative literature, each implying positive effects of prison education on post release outcomes. However, my own case studies give insight into the glaring discrepancies of correctional education as the most prominent tool for rehabilitation.

You pass a beat-up metal shack enclosed in plexiglass, housing a man vigorously waving you through. The smell of freshly cut grass wafts into the van as you are slowly driven down a cracked asphalt road, not going too fast over the exaggerated speed bumps. The road leads past a clean, freshly cut lawn upon a small traffic circle enclosing a garden of flowers with a flag pole in the middle. The car stops along a tall chain-link fence adorned with razor wire. Just ten feet beyond that fence is yet another one. In the space between there's an octagonal tower crowned with a room that is more window than wall. Some windows are open, some are closed, yet you can just make out a man dressed in a forest green correctional officers uniform. You are hurried off the van and ushered toward a rolling gate. As you walk past the tower, you come upon a small dilapidated building with a covered waiting area off to its left. You enter from the front and are greeted by a stone faced officer wearing the same green as the guard in the tower. The area has church-like wooden pews on the freshly cleaned linoleum floors. Directly ahead is the only indication you are still in the twenty first century; an airport-style metal detector.

You're shuffled through a sliding chain link fence onto a small patch of aging concrete enclosed by more fence. The height of it is daunting and as you look up, you notice more razor wire topping it. You peer to your right and see the tall octagonal structure with the many-windowed room at its peak. You know the guard in the tower controls the gates because the guard to your right yells at him and the gate rolls shut behind you. Immediately following, another gate directly in front of you opens and you're pushed through onto a newly laid concrete path. In both directions, a neatly trimmed green lawn embellishes the otherwise desolate landscape. Small flowers and other meticulously kept shrubbery line the intimidating cinder block building, which you can only assume are the housing units. Ten buildings extend from a long central structure; all cinder block. You're shuffled into the square building directly in front of you. You climb a small set of concrete stairs that lead to the a large bronze-handled wooden door. Inside you are welcomed by the sight of a large dimly lit room with paintings of California

landmarks adorning the walls. Off to the right and left are two hallways with what you can only assume are offices for the warden and other administrators. As you walk through the room your shoes echo off the shiny tile floor. You exit through a door directly across from the entrance. As you pass into a small courtyard you notice it's enclosed by massive grey walls on all four sides. A concrete pathway winds slightly through a small garden that obviously doesn't get enough sunlight. To your left, you admire a rather large lemon tree giving shade to an old picnic table that must've been a brilliant green at some point but is now chipped and faded. To your right are unkempt rose bushes and other flowers. As you finish admiring the little greenery you come upon a large metal door with a barred window to its right. Inside is another correctional officer eyeing you up and down. The guard guiding you exchanges a few raunchy words with the man inside and you hear a piercing buzz indicating the door is unlocked. You have now entered the Correction Training Facility.

Inside is a small hallway ending in a large cast iron barred door. To your right is the guard's room in which the barred window outside was connected to. The officer inside hands the officer guiding you a single old fashioned key on an equally old fashioned ring. He aggressively pushes you up onto the cold concrete walls as he goes to unlock the cast iron door. The officer unlocks the door and ushers you into a larger corridor. Inside you are surprised to see a massive, colorful mural spanning the entire corridor. It depicts abstract, almost psychedelic imagery of animals, most likely native to California. As you step onto the off-red concrete floor the pungent but pleasant odor of freshly brewed coffee wafts through the air. You look down to the right and back down to your left and realize you are directly in the middle of what seems to be an infinitely long corridor. To your right you notice that the floor at the far end of the hallway is significantly higher than the floor at the far left end. About every twenty feet the corridor slopes down two feet. You assume this is for "safety" reasons as the slope lets you see everyone's comings and goings throughout the entire corridor. Another thing catches your attention, the corridor is quite lively. In each direction you see green clad officers and blue clad prisoners going about their business. Some prisoners are chatting with the officers or amongst themselves and you actually hear laughter. Prisoners are walking up and down the corridor, some pushing carts of laundry; some carrying white garbage bags full of what looks to be boxed foods, soap

and other toiletries; and some look to be carrying textbooks and notepads as if they were heading off to class. The other striking thing is nearly every single blue clad prisoner is African American, although you do see a few Latino men filling out the remainder. The guard hurries you to your left, down the corridor. As you pass three older gentlemen in state issued prison garments, they warmly smile and greet you as if you were an old acquaintance. For that moment, you forget where you are.

You walk further down the corridor past a few large metal doors with signs above them reading “Dining Hall”, “Infirmary”, and “Library”; the guard leading you stops in front of another large cast iron barred door marked with a yellow “B” painted above the door. The door is already open and you are hurried into a chain-link cage. On either side are small rooms enclosed with thick and what you assume is bullet proof glass; each with a correctional officer sitting in front of a large metal panel of switches, buttons and flashing red lights. The officer leading gives the man in the room to your right a nod and he pushes a button. You hear a piercing buzz followed by the sound of metal grinding and the large cast iron barred door slowly ascends. Your gaze follows it as it raises up and you notice the cluster of large metal gears, pulleys and chains all working in unison to lift the massive door. Your demeanor changes as the smell of body odor and hospital soap penetrate your nostrils. You are pushed into a large rectangular room three tiers high with a set of metal stairs in the middle. Your eyes are forced to focus as you’re washed in artificial fluorescent light. In the middle of the room are stainless steel circular tables with benches connected to them. Each tier has a barrier that is just hip level. You can’t help but think how easy it would be to trip or be pushed over the barrier and plummet nearly thirty feet to the floor.

The room is completely empty until you look at the tiny windows on each cell door. Primarily black and brown faces curiously peak out. A few wave but most look purely for curiosity's sake. As you make your first steps into the cell block, you look to your left where you see six shower heads and two stainless steel toilets, all in plain view with no privacy measures taken. To your right you see an open door leading to a makeshift classroom furnished with desks, a few old computers and a two decade old television set sitting up on a wall mount. On the walls you notice a few Successories posters that you can remember from your middle school

classrooms depicting images of serene nature with words like “Integrity” and “Leadership” in bold print below. As you are shuffled through the large room the officer yells “125!” and another, less ear piercing buzz sounds and the door labeled 125 clicks audibly. Before you step in, you glance the room over. It’s about ten feet deep, six feet wide and seven feet tall. On the left are two stainless steel bunk beds with cheap white mattresses on them. To your right is a toilet and a sink with a metal mirror. At the far end of the cell is a small six inch by one foot window. You slowly approach it, but as you get closer you notice its painted over white, only giving the appearance of sunlight. You try to peel the paint off but it’s painted from the outside. Then you hear the loud metallic slam as the cell door locks you in.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

The sights, smells and sounds described above are nearly universal among the massive population of incarcerated peoples in the United States. On average, the United States prison population increased 450% since 1960. The rate of increase varies from state to state, with the smallest state increase being 150%; however, the median increase is 390% (Campbell, Vogel & Williams, 2015). This is attributed to both federal and state legislation that were responding to social, civil, and political change. Coming out of World War Two, the 1950s was an era of great economic prosperity, but beginning in the 1960s the United States entered a time of social, civil and political unrest. During this period, technological innovation and globalization of the world economy created vast unemployment through the outsourcing of jobs to less expensive countries and the use of new technologies to replace less skilled work. This era also marked the second wave of feminism, the civil rights movement and the hippie counterculture movement all of which elicited punitive responses from state and federal legislators, who saw the changes happening across America as attacks on law and order and the status quo as they knew it. The rhetoric of “Law and Order” fueled the high rates of incarceration and the lack of a rehabilitative correctional system.

For the purpose of this section, mass incarceration will be analyzed in three separate eras determined by Campbell and Schoenfeld (2013). The first from 1960 to 1975 is called the

Deconstruction period. The second from 1976 to 1992 is the Contested period. And the third from 1992 to 2001 is the Reconstruction period (Campbell & Schoenfeld, 2013).

Deconstruction (1960-1975)

This era is largely described as an unsettling of the then current penal status quo or a deconstruction of old system of corrections. This is attributed in part to the changing status quo of the United States at large. A major factor in this change was the movement of jobs overseas.

“Prior to the 1970s, inner city workers with relatively little formal education could find industrial employment close to home...Manufacturing jobs were transferred by multinational corporations away from American cities to countries that lacked unions...to make matters worse, technological changes revolutionized the workplace [which] eliminated many less skilled jobs” (Alexander 2012: 50).

Poor urban communities of color were the most affected by the shrinking job market. Many unemployed workers turned to drug usage as a tool to escape the anomic feeling of not being able to be what society deems a functioning member is. During this period, drug use increased exponentially and with it came a rise in violent crime rates. Thus marking the United States first opiate epidemic. The response at the state level was to increase punitiveness by arresting drug manufacturers, dealers and users. “[In] [t]he early to mid-1960s, less than 3% of new inmates [at DC Central Detention Facility] were addicted to heroin, but beginning in 1967 growth exploded, tripling twice by 1969. By 1969, 45% of men were addicted” (Foreman 2017: 25). This was not an anomaly seen only in Washington DC but was a trend throughout all major urban centers.

Another important factor that was challenging the status quo was the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. During this time, especially in the Southern United States, African Americans and other people of color were integrating themselves into society. This was a major point of tension and many people blamed the high rates of crime on newly integrated African Americans. Much of this tension led to civil unrest among racist Americans who pushed for punitive “Law and Order” policies (Alexander, 2012). Alexander also points out that along with a large spike of unemployment leading to poverty and drug use, another contributing factor to the rising crime rate was the fact that the Baby-Boomer generation was between the ages 15-24. This

is the age demographic most likely to commit crime, so the increased crime rate could partially be explained by an increased influx of people into that demographic (Ibid). Either way, crime became the central talking point in American media and politics. In 1964, Barry Goldwater pioneered “Law and Order” rhetoric by campaigning on that platform. It was picked up by many other politicians including Richard Nixon who also made Law and Order central to his campaign as to “appeal to [the] anti-black voter” (Ehrlichman, 1970).

Law and Order and other crime control rhetoric was not only to appeal to the racist voter; in fact, it was most heavily supported by the African American community. As poorer urban communities of color were most heavily affected by rising drug use, crime rates and unemployment; the citizens living there called for heavier policing and harsher sentences for violent criminals, drug dealers and those subjecting people to gun violence. This violence seen in the black community was “hardly a thing of the past, white racist violence was being replaced by a new threat to black life...Ware said, ‘In my youth, blacks were often killed by whites, today blacks are more generally killed by blacks’”(Foreman 2017: 72-73,). “Black on Black” crime and the lack of federal, state and local attention on it was seen as most detrimental to African American communities. Therefore, these communities fought for a more punitive system.

Police departments across the United States were also responding to the unrest. The militarization of the police began in 1966 with the National Highway Safety Act, which gave police departments access to military helicopters and bolstered Special Weapons and Tactic (SWAT) teams with military style assault weapons (Parenti 2008). The next major piece of crime control legislation was the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970. This gave police departments an incentive to infiltrate communities in which they determined drug abuse was prevalent and there would be little pushback. The act was a “civil forfeiture provision authorizing the government to seize and forfeit drugs, drug manufacturing and storage equipment, and conveyances used to transport drugs” (Alexander 2012: 78). The ambiguous nature of the legislation gave departments full discretion in determining what they saw fit to seize. This meant cars or any other vehicle, homes or any living space, and any amount of cash they could find; whether or not it could be proven to be associated with drug crimes was

irrelevant. The most incentivising aspect was the department would be able to keep all said seized items for themselves.

By 1975, national concern drifted away from crime, violence and law enforcement towards more pressing economic concerns. The Republican party took a huge hit with the Watergate Scandal and Nixon's crime control agenda fell out of the political view. However, by the end of 1975, the roots of a new penal order had already been laid and the old penal order had been deconstructed.

Ten years prior, in 1965, the Higher Education Act (HEA) was implemented. This piece of legislation allowed for the expansion of the public and junior college systems. It also created what is known as "in-state tuition" to make the university closest to the student more affordable, and the Pell grant for lower income students to make college accessible to all (Wright 2001). In expanding the community college system and creating Pell grants, postsecondary correctional education grew as well. In 1965, there were only 12 postsecondary correctional education programs but by 1976, there were 237 programs nationwide. During this time enrollment peaked at 12% of all prisoners (Ibid).

"During the 1960s, the concept of rehabilitation became a dominant factor in planning and implementing correctional systems in the United States" (Ryan 1995: 60). For most prisons, correctional education was the key component in rehabilitating inmates. The main form of education that inmates could receive was vocational training; although, Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Education Development (GED) and Postsecondary Education were available as well. During the 1970s, correctional education was focused on "a broad, holistic approach which emphasize[d] changing behavior so that inmates would be law abiding, socially adjusted members of society (Hobler 1999: 102). The consensus was that vocational training was not rehabilitative enough thus the implementation of other forms of education was necessary.

Contested (1975-1992)

By the mid-1970s rehabilitation was at an all time high yet crime rates, especially violent crime, were still rising. The debate on how to handle criminal justice was unclear at the federal level. It seemed clear to policymakers that they must find a new way to grapple with crime but

were unsure of how. However, during this time period, the Nixon era sentencing practices had created massive overcrowding in prisons across the United States. It seemed necessary to state and federal legislators to limit the sentences for nonviolent offenders in order to create more space for violent criminals. “In Washington and New York, legislators implemented policies that limited sentences for nonviolent and drug offenders” (Schoenfeld & Campbell 2013: 1395). States with a tradition of fiscal conservatism followed suit and passed similar legislation that would lower prison populations, thus decreasing the necessary budget to run the facilities (Ibid). It seemed this was the logical conclusion to the ever increasing prison population and violent crime rate. This would all change with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1981.

Prior to the 1980 presidential race, Reagan had already accumulated a history of opposing minorities rights, specifically African Americans. Early in his political career, Reagan adamantly opposed both the Civil Rights Act of 1965 and the Voting Rights Act of 1966. He also saw discrimination against African Americans in every facet of life a right of the American citizen. He famously stated, “ If an individual wants to discriminate against Negroes or others...he has the right to do so” (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education No. 64 2009: 13). Although Reagan’s campaign platform was not overtly racialized, he reused Law and Order/ Crime Control rhetoric to “appeal to [the] anti-black voter” (Ehrlichman, 1970). Not only did he reintroduce crime to the forefront of public attention, he revamped and racialized Nixon’s War on Drugs. During Reagan’s presidency, profound and remarkably un-conservative policy changes began to appear that affected the poorest and most vulnerable citizens of the United States.

One such policy was a 1988 amendment to the Anti-Drug Abuse Act, which had originally passed two years prior. The amendment allotted a \$6.5 billion budget for federal law enforcement to go after drug offenders (Anti-Drug Abuse Act, 1988). The Department of Defense received \$2 million to train law enforcement, and \$3.5 million to supply departments with military gear such as armored cars, high powered weapons and body armor (Parenti, 2008). Departments were further incentivised to make drug arrests through the Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Program, which had over \$1 billion in federal money to grant to police departments that made ample drug arrests (Ibid). The bill also made the possession of five or more grams of crack cocaine (free base cocaine) warrant a minimum

sentence of five years. That amount decreased to three or more grams of crack with one prior felony conviction and one or more gram with two prior felony convictions. If an individual with two prior convictions were to be found with one gram of crack, they would face 25 years to life in prison (United States Sentencing Commission, 1995). All of which was a response to rampant drug use in poor urban communities; however, it did not seek to punish the equally rampant drug use of celebrities and other wealthy elites. This was evident in the sentencing laws around both forms of cocaine. Powdered cocaine, which was socially seen as a luxury of the wealthy, carried a five year minimum for 500 grams or more. While crack cocaine, which was socially associated with the poor African American urban communities, carried a five year minimum sentence for just five grams. Making the drug most commonly found in poor urban centers across the United States 100 times more likely to garner a five year mandatory minimum sentence than the powdered version of the same drug commonly found among the wealthy (Ibid).

When in office, Reagan framed crime “in ‘us’ against ‘them’ terms” (Schoenfeld & Campbell 2013: 1396). In his rhetoric, Reagan racialized the ‘them’ and it showed up in the bipartisan legislation passed, specifically in deciding the minimum sentences for drug possession. As a result, many of those who were arrested and incarcerated for drug crimes were poor people of color using drugs rather than selling; the exact situation state and federal legislators were trying to reverse and avoid in the late 1970s. To combat the growing prison populations, lawmakers raised billions of dollars to construct, open and operate new prisons (Schoenfeld & Campbell, 2013) Along with opening new prisons, states began adopting harsh crime control policies by imposing “statewide mandatory minimums, limited credits for good behavior, and enacting penalty enhancements for crimes involving drugs, guns and violence committed against vulnerable populations (ie. children and women)” (Ibid: 1399). As prisons expanded across the United States, they were filled predominantly with poor people of color who fell victim to Reagan’s war on people of color otherwise known as the War on Drugs.

Along with vast shift in criminal legislation, “[The] decade of the 1980s was characterized by [a] dramatic shift from the rehabilitative model of the 1970s” (Hobler 1999: 102). The ‘Nothing Works!’ mentality permeated through society. This, coupled with racialized us against them crime control legislation led to a new philosophy based on punishment and

retribution. The correctional education system was defunded and redeveloped to focus only on teaching inmates to follow directions and other 'life skills' that would benefit the prison by creating safer and more cooperative inmates (Hobler 1999 & Messemer 2011). Rather than using correctional education to empower inmates to help them feel remorse for their actions and to help them healthily reintegrate back into society, the system was used to help inmates integrate into the society within prison. For the prisons, there was no need to give inmates the skills and tools needed to succeed in American society because new legislation kept them inside for such a long period of time. It was more beneficial to have the inmates cooperate and not cause problems inside the prison, thus becoming the main focus of correctional education.

During the early 1980s, postsecondary correctional education programs rose to 350 across the United States (Wright 2001). However, the new curriculum shift seemed disadvantageous in prisoners eyes (Ibid). Postsecondary programs focused solely on the liberal arts. The programs lacked any technical classes such as math, science or engineering. The curriculum also stayed away from in-depth critical and intellectual thinking because prison officials and administrators thought it would induce riots (Wright 2001 & Hobler 1999). The shift in curriculum was the second most detrimental change to postsecondary correctional education.

Reconstruction (1992-2001)

By the 1990s, it had become politically advantageous to advocate for tough-on-crime legislation. This tough-on-crime rhetoric reconstructed the criminal justice system in America to become the most punitive system in the World. The psyche of America was thoroughly fixed on what politicians constructed to be the crime problem. This was blatantly evident in the 1988 presidential campaign. George H.W. Bush aired an advertisement featuring a man by the name of Willie Horton. The ad described Horton as "a convicted murderer who escape while on a work furlough and raped and murdered a woman in her home" (Alexander 2012: 54). The ad proceeded to blame Bush's opponent, Michael Dukakis' soft crime policies; effectively destroying his chances at the presidency. The fact that Willie Horton was an African American man was no mistake either; Bush's campaign was utilizing the racialized nature of crime fighting

perpetuated by Reagan before and during his presidency. It was indicative of the American public opinion surrounding the perceived threat of crime; an opinion engulfed in not only fear but hatred of criminals. This hatred was demonstrated with the most detrimental piece of legislation for incarceration rates and correctional education: the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (VCCLEA).

The VCCLEA was seen as an “unprecedented venture into crime fighting” (Parenti 2008: 65). The bill granted \$8.8 billion to putting more police officers on the streets, \$6 billion for states to create more comprehensive crime prevention programs and \$10 billion for construction of new prisons and expansion of old ones (Violent Crime Control & Law Enforcement Act, 1993). The bill increased penalties for drug use, sales and manufacturing on and near “drug free zones” such as schools and playgrounds. It also created 16 new capital crimes and the three strikes provision in which a third felony charge, no matter how small, incurred an up to life sentence (Parenti, 2008). The VCCLEA also created the now unconstitutional Truth in Sentencing legislation which awarded the most punitive states with money. It looked to abolish parole and keep inmates locked up for the entire duration of their sentence. States that require inmates to serve 85% or more of their sentence were rewarded (Violent Crime Control & Law Enforcement Act, 1993). The single most detrimental piece of legislation for correctional education came in its amendment to HEA of 1965 which disallowed anyone within the criminal justice system access to Pell grants. This effectively eliminated all postsecondary correctional education programs.

Just one year after the VCCLEA, there was a 40% decrease in postsecondary correctional education programs and a 44% decrease in inmate participation in the programs that remained (Wright, 2001). By 1997 there was only eight in-prison college programs, all of which survived due to private funding (Robinson & English, 2017). This was not only true for postsecondary programs but for all correctional education. As the prison population grew exponentially, education programs became a low priority. All available funding went to increasing capacity and hiring and maintaining correctional officers (Hobler, 1999). “The 1990s also brought stiffer legislation and longer prison sentences. This ‘tough on crime’ philosophy increased the costs for

housing inmates which subsequently came out of many state correctional education budgets” (Messemer, 2011: 93).

By 1998 homicide, rape and aggravated assault were at their lowest rates since 1970, 1988 and 1989 respectively; however, the United States correctional system was at unprecedented levels of incarceration with 1.9 million people in prison (US Department of Justice; UCR statistics; & Parenti, 2008). These decreasing rates of violent crime was not correlated to high rates of incarceration as even the less punitive states saw decreases in violent crime. This is seen as a failure of the reconstructed system of corrections.

2001 and Beyond

The accumulation of each separate piece of tough on crime legislation, punctuated by the VCCLEA in 1994, has led to the humanitarian crisis that is Mass Incarceration. The United States had shifted its understanding of the correctional system from one of rehabilitation to one of retribution. The public and politicians alike saw increasing punitiveness as the most appropriate response to the high crime rates of the late 1980s and early 1990s. This increased punitivity did not allow much funding for rehabilitative programs such as correctional education. America has since come to its senses and embarked on decreasing prison populations, reducing punitivity for non-violent and drug offenses and increasing access to correctional education.

Many states have since repealed or amended provisions such as “Truth in Sentencing” and “Three Strikes”. In 2012, Proposition 36 appeared on the ballot in California and was voted into law. Prop 36 was an amendment to the “Three Strikes” provision and stated, “[the] third strike must be violent to qualify for a 25 to life sentence” (Couzens & Bigelow, 2017). However, what is considered to be a violent offense is entirely up to the prosecutors and judges discretion. For example, dealing drugs could be considered a violent offense as it can be argued that drugs perpetuate violence; thus calling for a 25 to life sentence. Another change described in Prop 36 was those serving a third strike sentence may petition to reduce their sentence (Ibid). Again, the decision to reduce the sentence of a third strike felon is up to the court’s discretion.

Another indication of shifting attitudes towards corrections came in 2014 in the form of the Clemency Initiative. This initiative gave President Obama the authority to commute the

sentences of nonviolent, low level offenders without ties to gangs or cartels (US Department of Justice, 2018). In order to be eligible for clemency, the offender must have served at least ten years of his or her sentence, have no significant criminal history, have good conduct inside prison and absolutely no history of violence (Ibid). The program concluded when President Obama left office in January of 2017. By that time he had commuted the sentences of 1715 individuals (Ibid). This only provided a minimal impact on the incarcerated population in the United States but it indicated a change in attitude.

A second Obama-era program that was meant to help prisoners, reduce recidivism and increase the rehabilitative effects of prison was the Second Chance Pell Pilot Program (SCPPP). SCPPP selected “67 colleges and universities to participate in the new [program]; an experiment...to test whether participation in high quality correctional education increases after [allowing] access to financial aid for incarcerated individuals” (US Department of Justice Press Office, 2016). SCPPP allotted \$5.7 million (less than 1% of all Pell money) of Pell money for use by prisoners. The program aimed to enroll 12,000 students (Ibid). This is the most significantly positive change in correctional education since HEA of 1965. Since the program is still in affect, the effects of it on participation and recidivism are still unknown. For such a program to be implemented, there must ample evidence to prove that participation in postsecondary correctional education reduces recidivism. But what about other forms of correctional education? The research described in the rest of this thesis seeks to determine how effective secondary, postsecondary and a combination of all four (ABE, Vocational training, secondary and postsecondary) programs are at reducing recidivism and will look to understand why.

METHODOLOGY

My main research question was “What impact, if any, does correctional education have on three year recidivism rates (the most commonly used indicator for recidivism)”. I also posed the question, “Which form of correctional education has the most impact? Why?”

My meta-analysis began with a broad search within known academic search engines; SAGE Publications, EBSCOHost and JSTOR. I started with the date range; applying a range of ten years from 2008 to 2018. My search criteria included studies with “correctional education”

and “recidivism” in either the title or the abstract. Then, I scoured through many studies that fit my criteria. My first massive search was within SAGE Publications, in which most of my sample was found. I created a preliminary list of sources by briefly scanning each and making sure the measured outcome of the study was recidivism. A vast majority of the viable studies found came from *The Journal of Correctional Education*. Next most common was *The Prison Journal*. Over half of my preliminary set of studies came from the SAGE Publications search while the rest except two came from my search of EBSCOHost. Only two preliminary studies and one final study from *Economica* were found through the JSTOR search.

I screened 40 studies that fit my two criteria for eligibility. The first criteria was that the study be published between January 1, 2008 and December 31, 2018. The second criteria was to be sure recidivism was the measured outcome and in-prison education was the given treatment. In the next round of screening I added a new criteria, which was ensuring correctional education was the treatment administered within each study. *All* correctional education was included within this criteria. After the second round of screening, eight studies were eliminated. My final and most rigorous screening of each study involved a close reading of all 32 pieces of research. I used a modified version of the Maryland Scientific Method Scale (SMS) as my main method of determining the weight each study would have. This method of evaluation was developed by Sherman et al (1997) to test the rigor of the methodology used in scientific studies with a five point scale. Five being most rigorous and one being the least. To obtain a rating of five with the conventional scale the study is required to use Randomized Control Trials (RCTs); however, because “it would be impossible to control (and unethical to assign) whether offenders were placed in an educational class or not, it was necessary to rely on alternate sampling” (Zgoba, Haugebrook, Jenkins, 2008:383). For this reason, I altered the Maryland SMS in order to account for the inability to use Randomized Control Trials (RCTs) that dictate a score of 5 on the Maryland SMS. My scoring is as follows:

1. Lack of any sort of comparison group. No use of control variables. No effort to lessen self-selection bias (-)
2. Use of comparison group. No use of control variables. No effort to lessen self-selection bias (+)

3. Use of comparison group. Use of 1-2 control variables. No effort to lessen self-selection bias (++)
4. Use of comparison group. Use of 3-4 control variables. Use of propensity score matching or similar tool to lessen self-selection bias (+++)
5. Use of comparison group(s). Use of 4 or more control variables. Use of propensity score matching or similar tool to lessen self-selection bias (++++)

The Maryland Scientific Method Scale (SMS) was the most major factor in determining the weight each study would have but I also looked at other aspects of the study that the Maryland SMS did not account for. Other factors that garnered a positive mark were things such as whether the study's sample went across multiple states, the studies included qualitative insight, the sample was diverse, or if post release employment was discussed. I also looked at things that I determined to lessen the value of each study for my purpose. Other than a Maryland SMS score of one, things that gave the study a negative mark could be a lack of original research including but not limited to use of previously gathered data or meta-analyses. Localized samples or undiverse samples such as data from a single prison or from a single state, or data consisting of only men, women or juveniles would result in a negative mark. Lastly, if the treatment was not explicitly correctional education or the outcome was not explicitly recidivism or post-release employment, then I would award two negative marks for each.

Upon finishing the final screening, I added up the marks given. Each positive mark represented a score of +1 and each negative mark represented a score of -1. I then took the average score of each study and calculated a final score similar to a four-point grade point average. That final score determined the weight each study would have in my results. This system did not work for qualitative studies since many scored low in my modified version of the Maryland SMS. This was because most had very small samples and did not use the same methodological rigor that the quantitative or mixed method studies used. I determined that the qualitative findings were equally as valuable but since they did not fall into my system of 'grading' I gave each qualitative study a weight of 1.

I then categorized each study by their findings. The studies fell into one of three categories. The first category is that the findings of the study were consistent with my null

hypothesis (H_0), that correctional education has no effect on recidivism. The second category is that the findings rejected H_0 in which correctional education has a negative effect on recidivism, meaning it reduces rates of recidivism. The third category was that the findings of the study were inconclusive. I added up the scores of each study within their categories, then I gave each category a percentage based on all the studies in order to see the prevalence of each category of findings. I looked over the strong qualitative studies and found common themes that would that supported the quantitative data gathered.

I also attempted to find individuals previously and/ or currently incarcerated or had experience with correctional education, whether that be an educator or student. I reached out to Project Rebound at San Francisco State University. Project Rebound is a program that acts as a support system to help formerly incarcerated individuals return to school, navigate the bureaucracy of a modern university and to complete their postsecondary education. I was able to get in contact with one willing participant; however, neither I nor my participant convinced others with Project Rebound to sit down with me for an interview. My advisor reached out to the Chief of Probation with the Santa Cruz County Department of Probation. Through him I was able to find another willing participant to interview. I then reached out to one of my professors who has taught in California Department of Corrections system and was able to get an interview with her via email, and I was able to get an interview with a man serving Life Without Parole via phone.

I transcribed each interview upon completion and looked them over to find themes common to what I found in my qualitative data. Each interview gave a deeper understandings into the quantitative data.

FINDINGS

The Quantitative Data

Most studies indicated correctional education negatively impacts three year recidivism rates. The most significant predictor of a reduction in three year recidivism rates was participation in postsecondary correctional education. The meta analysis indicated an 18.15% reduction in three year recidivism rates for offenders who participated in a postsecondary correctional education program ². Postsecondary prison education programs had the most

variation in rates of reduction from 4% up to 24.9%. Participation in all correctional education (ABE, Vocational, Secondary & Postsecondary) indicated an 11.84% reduction in three year recidivism rates. Participation solely in a secondary correctional education program predicted a reduction in three year recidivism at a rate of 8.68%². Secondary in-prison programs also had a significant amount of variation in rates of reduction from 3.7% to 13%.

Over half of the studies rejected the H_0 ; these found that correctional education negatively impacted three year recidivism rates. In other words, correctional education of all types reduces rates of recidivism. Based on my modified Maryland SMS quality rating, studies that rejected my H_0 had a combined total weight of 53.3%. Other notable impacts of correctional education as described by the quantitative studies were that it is significantly cost effective. According to Sedley, Scott, Williams and Derrick (2010), “The marginal cost savings [per individual offender] were \$1555 for education programmes” (515). While only marginal it is an important point to note when discussing correctional education because cost effectiveness is a major factor in whether or not to implement in-prison education programs. Another notable impact was the increased likelihood of post-release employment. Cho and Tyler (2013) found that Florida inmates that completed ABE were 25% more likely to gain employment than those who did not participate in ABE. This was unrelated to the race of the participant. Another study indicating significant increases in post-release employment found that “post-release employment data show[ed] that 60% of offenders who earned secondary degrees in prison found employment within the first 2 years...The employment rate for offenders who earned post-secondary degrees (71%) was slightly higher than that of the prisoners in the comparison group (68%)” (Duwe & Clark 2014: 468-469).

My modified Maryland SMS quality rating gave studies that confirmed my H_0 a combined total weight of 26.6%. They concluded that correctional education has no effect on three year recidivism rates. “In a given quarter, the odds of returning back to prison for ABE participants is not statistically significantly different from those who involuntarily dropout of the program” (Cho & Tyler 2013: 998). In other words, participation in the correctional education in the Florida correctional institutions studied had no impact on recidivism rates as compared to those who failed to complete the program. Similarly, Zgoba, Haugebrook and Jenkins (2008)

concluded, “GED participation [in New Jersey correctional institutions during 1999] loses its statistical significance, leaving other variables to explain who among the sample is likely to reoffend” (382).

Similarly to the studies that confirmed the H_0 , studies that were inconclusive garnered a combined total weight of 20.1%. Much of these studies did not explicitly look at post-release outcomes but made predictions based on their findings. It was found that participation in all forms of correctional education increased confidence, maturity levels and gave students better attitudes regarding their current situation and lives to come (Meyer, Borden, Richardson & Fredricks, 2010). The authors suggested that the positive impacts previously described can improve post-release outcomes, thus reducing recidivism. However, since it was not adequately tested it remains inconclusive for all intents and purposes.

The Qualitative Data

The most common theme found among the studies was that correctional education inspired and motivated inmates to abandon crime and made them feel regret for their actions and ashamed for how they acted. Through in-depth personal interviews with past and current students of a voluntary program that gives incarcerated individuals access to in-prison postsecondary education found that “31 of 34 participants who had some postsecondary correctional education indicated that this educational experience either helped strengthen or inspire efforts to abandon crime” (Runell, 2018: 485). Individuals were inspired to abandon crime through the human connections fostered by correctional education. According to Runnell (2018), “Engagement in pro-social activities such as carceral academic courses fosters human connections” (485). Engaging in academia helps inmates distance themselves from their pasts and gives them the tools to think critically about their actions that led them to prison. The human connections created in educational courses allows the inmates to feel remorse for their actions and empathy for the people they may have hurt in the process. Pursing all forms of education while incarcerated indicates a readiness for change and “shapes alternative pathways to crime” (Runnell 2018: 484).

Participation in a postsecondary correctional education program has the most positive effect on the rehabilitation of inmates. According a participant in Runnell’s research, “You got

the people who you used to be with more. . .Now they probably feel some type of way 'cause now you're hanging out with this guy over here. But... it don't be things that're said but you could feel the difference when you're around someone" (2018: 481). This participant is describing how his participation in postsecondary correctional education gave him access to another group of individuals that positively changed how he felt. He also notes how his new group of acquaintances caused him to fall out of his old group of friends who had a negative influences on him. This falling out caused hard feelings between him and his old group of friends. However, in this way participation in correctional education offers inmates access to the tools they need to "counteract anti-social influences" (Ibid) he or she may face while incarcerated. The supportive and caring environment of the classroom allows the inmates to see themselves as equals. According to my Case Study 3, "[they see each other] as equals. On the yard they know each others crimes, gang ties, and racial affiliations, but in the class, they work together, they listen to each other, and share ideas"⁵. Such positive interactions with individuals who violently segregate themselves outside of the classroom remove group affiliation, if only for a short while in the classroom. This environment of respect and equality is vastly beneficial for the students self-esteem and overall well-being, and can translate to a more successful reintegration into society.

Case Study 1 also gave insight into this fact. The participant saw "friends who were taking college courses...wanted to stay out of trouble"³. Correctional education allows those who participate to have access to a larger and less damaging support system, through their student peers and educators. It connects inmates with like-minded individuals motivated to better themselves and continue their education rather than "working out, doing nothing, [and] wasting time"³. This was also seen in Case Study 3, in which the educator said, "I give them a fresh breath of life and energy, seeing them not as criminals but men who are largely misunderstood and deeply traumatized"⁵. The dehumanizing conditions of incarceration acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy in which they may begin to see themselves as they are treated, nothing but criminals; thus, disallowing them to heal and be rehabilitated. The atmosphere of a correctional education classroom strips away the damaging effect of prison and fosters the human connection and the respect they deserve as human beings.

According to my Case Study 1:

“Some people seek education, but some people think it’s stupid, honestly...These are ex-felons, ex-prisoners and they’re more motivated to get a job instead of seeking education, so you have people that don’t wanna go to school because they wanna get money, get paid, you know?...Like yeah they probably get paid more, a lot more than I do..., but from what I’ve seen, most of my friends who did not seek an education went back and most of them who came out who were in there with me, they all went back. And knock on wood I haven’t been back. I’m not saying that it’s because of education but education has definitely helped me out a lot”³.

My participant is not only describing correctional education but the pursuit of education, particularly postsecondary education upon release and how it reduces rates of recidivism. This is similar to the findings of Rose et al (2010) in that the effectiveness of correctional education fades overtime, particularly once the offender is released. The benefit of correctional education comes in it’s motivation to turn one’s life around and this can come in the form of continuing one’s education once he or she is released. There are only 41 regionally accredited (credits that are easily transferable) institutions that offer a four year program to inmates (Castro, Hunter, Hardison, Johnson-Ojeda, & Gould, 2018). Therefore, the majority of still vastly limited postsecondary correctional education programs allow only up to an associate’s degree, thus motivating those who participated to further their education in order to obtain a bachelor’s degree or higher upon release. However, only 10% of all state and federal prisons offer postsecondary courses through a regionally accredited school effectively disallowing hundreds of thousands of offenders access to the benefits of postsecondary correctional education (Ibid).

While evidence indicates the importance of correctional education as an effective form of rehabilitation there are discrepancies in what the literature states and the actual experiences of those who attempted to participate. According to Case Study 4, “We’re incarcerated so the very notion of prison education is an oxymoron. It’s kind of like prison medicine, those two words don’t go together because medicine is to heal and prison is to [punish and] to keep you disempowered”⁵. While these programs do exist to act as a facade to try and indicate the intention to rehabilitate, they do little to really help empower and heal those who participate. The model of corrections in the United States is still reminiscent of the retributive model perpetuated

during the late 1980s to 1990s. The policy and attitude changes at the macro level indicate a shift in the current model of corrections and [rehabilitation] in the United States; however, change at the micro level has not come yet. This is evident in the significant lack of access to correctional education. As stated earlier, only 10% of all state and federal prisons have some form of postsecondary education programs but that is not the only way prisons disallow offenders access to correctional education. The participant in Case Study 2 felt limited by the lack of access to correctional education. According to the participant:

“I just didn’t know [the subject being taught] and there was a guy there to help us through that but it was limited. I remember being limited on the, well he would come once a week, he would pull me out and basically I was the only guy in there that was trying to get his high school diploma... I really didn’t have a whole lot of educational time. I think there was one day out of the week I had access to education”⁴.

Case Study 1 also indicated limited access. He said, “During the process [of my incarceration], I did county time. So right there during county time you’re not able to [take classes]. So I did eight months there. Then I went to reception center, did another eight months there. So that’s already sixteen months”³. He was kept in a facility that didn’t have any educational programs for a significant portion of his incarceration. County jails and reception facilities do not offer access to education and these are the facilities in which many individuals begin their incarcerations.

The majority of structured time out of cells is dedicated to work or as my participant in Case Study 4 puts it, “Slaves”⁶, since offenders are compensated next to nothing for the manual labor they are required to do. “If you have a slave that conflicts with your school, the work takes precedence”⁶. Case Study 2 also pointed this fact out. He said, “I think one of the main things they focus on is working... So the rest of the time I had was after work so I really didn’t have a whole lot of education time”⁴. Prisons also have constant lockdowns for numerous reasons, whether they are legitimate or otherwise, thus requiring inmates to stay in their cells until the conclusion of the lockdown. According to Case Study 4:

“We get lockdowns say there’s a fight on the yard, they’re still going to run the [college] program and they say we can’t go to the program until they write their reports and we say “what about our college classes?”. “We don’t give a shit about your college program”. Ok so one day I get into one of those very situations, class is at 2:30, I tell the officer at 2:00 “can you pop the door so I can go to college?”

I realized after nineteen years in prison its best to get where you're going because you never know what's going to happen in the next minute. And so it happens, yard goes down, officer tells me "you gotta wait". I wait. 2:30 comes around... by the time I get to the door going to class, I miss forty five minutes of class" ⁶

Case Study 2 also indicated a lack of access put in place by prison officials and maintained by prison guards. He said, "I did not have access to any [educational programs for a significant duration of my last incarceration]... You had to submit a request to be able to come out of your cell... You get yard once a week and shower twice a week" ⁴. The structure of retribution and punishment makes correctional education incompatible with the whole idea of prison. This attitude is felt strongest at the micro level with the prison officers who limit the access to correctional education every chance they have.

There is also no universality among correctional education programs. This lack of connectedness between the different prisons makes actually finishing vocational training or obtaining a GED or college degree difficult for those who are constantly transferred from facility to facility. According to Ivan Kilgore, "Less than 5% of prisoners will have chance to complete, for example, a vocational trade; less than 20% will obtain a GED; less than 5% will obtain a college degree" (Kilgore, 2018: 5). These strikingly small percentages can be attributed to a number of things but a major limit on obtaining any certificate of completion or degree are transfers. According to Case Study 4:

"Now peep this, I got transferred from a maximum security to a medium security and guess what, in terms of being able to take that sociology class and continue the sociology class, I can no longer get the degree for in-person sociology class, they only allow me to take correspondence courses ... sometimes they can be better sometimes they can be worse and in the case of sociology, it's one of those classes in which you need to have the experience and interaction with the facilitator... Now when you transfer to different prisons they have different programs some don't even have a major program, they just offer the basics, like at this prison, they don't have a major program they just have the basics." ⁶

What was not mentioned by him was that some prisons may not even have a postsecondary program, thus making it even more challenging to obtain one's degree. Case Study 2 also described the problem with transfers. He said, "So I was able to go [to class] but I had to start from the beginning because they couldn't get my transcripts" ⁴. This is indicative of prison's

unwillingness to truly implement rehabilitative programs through education. It is impossible to continue on one's educational track between prisons and difficult to transfer credits from outside prison education to in-prison courses.

This lack of access dissuaded others incarcerated with the participant in Case Study 2 from pursuing education. Although the participant had limited correctional education experience, he did not return to prison within three years; however, he did not attributed this to correctional education at all. While the participants desire to learn and change was there the access to education was not. This did not stop the participant and those incarcerated with him from learning. "One of the things that we did a lot was pass along different books that would come to the library... So there were a lot of things that were read but it wasn't under the classroom setting"⁴. This unstructured form of education led the participant to finding a support system that he was unable to find in correctional education. "I picked up was the bible. That was by far the biggest thing for me that kept me grounded, kept me hopeful. It was my faith in Christ that really kept me on that straight and narrow"⁴. Religion became a major impact in his rehabilitation and up until this day he is active in ministry work. He attributed his success for the first five years after his first incarceration to the structure and support he found through his participation in religion. The participant in Case Study 1 also found a support system; however, his was through education. Near the end of his last incarceration he reached out to Project Rebound at San Francisco State who helped him reapply to the school upon his release. He is now an active member in the Project Rebound community, helping recently released ex-offenders navigate and succeed in college. The participant in Case Study 3 has been an educator for four years and an educator within the prison education system for two years. She plans to continue teaching and humanizing the men inside. She is also hoping to set up a program through the University of California, Santa Cruz that would allow the men at Salinas Valley State Prison to obtain a bachelor's degree. Unfortunately, the participant in Case Study 4's violent past has garnered him a life sentence without the possibility of parole. His self-education through extensive reading has given him a deeper understanding into the social and institutional forces that operate to oppress and exploit. Prior to his incarceration, he had nearly completed his Associates Degree and is

currently attempting to finish his degree even with institutional obstacles that stand in his way. While in prison, he has created a non-profit organization and written a book.

CONCLUSION

Discussion

In the United States and much of the rest of the world, a college education is an indication of one's drive and effort he or she is willing to put forward; therefore, participation in a postsecondary education program particularly in prison may already indicate a desire to find an alternative to crime. In other words, the individuals participating would have already been less likely to recidivate than other offenders. This might explain the disparity between the different forms of correctional education's effect on recidivism. This is not to undermine the courses taken and the skills learned while participating in postsecondary correctional education, it is just another potential explanation for why it is more effective at reducing recidivism. Either way, postsecondary correctional education is the most effective form of correctional education in reducing three year recidivism rates as compared to all other forms of correctional education. Although, just participating in any form of correctional education has an impact on an offenders likelihood to recidivate. Therefore, there must be measures taken to increase access to correctional education, especially regionally accredited postsecondary courses. Initiatives such as the SCPPP indicate shifting attitudes; however, that alone is not nearly enough to give prisoners access to the high quality education they deserve. Only 3.5% of all State and Federal prisons are affiliated with regionally accredited institutions that allow prisoners access to Pell Grant money. The shift in attitude is evident but the effect of this change will be minimal at best.

There are two variables that suggest an educational program that is successful at reducing three-year recidivism rates. The first is simply access. The study that demonstrated the largest reduction in three-year recidivism for participants of both secondary and postsecondary correctional education was conducted by Lockwood, Nally, Ho & Knutson in 2012. The research consisted of the entire population of Indiana's Department of Corrections (IDOC) who were released between 2007 to 2008. They concluded that the IDOC "effectively utilized state and federal funding to maximize the educational needs of incarcerated individuals" (Lockwood,

Nally, Ho, & Knutson, 2012: 383). During the 2007 year, 57% of the entire population of IDOC was enrolled in some sort of correctional education program (Ibid). The next, possibly more important indicator of a successful correctional education program is the engagement of students with each other and engagement of the educators with the students. Not only did IDOC effectively offer access to in-prison education, they adequately staffed well-trained teachers who encouraged intellectual engagement between the students and offered a comprehensive plan to enhance employment upon release (Ibid).

In discussing poor in-prison courses with their participants, Rose, Reschenberg & Richards (2010) found that there are “few teachers of other prison courses who really cared about student’s education” (303). This means that in order to run an effective in-prison education program it is important to higher staff who truly care about their students. Case Study 4 had similar sentiments. He said, “[There is a] lack of tentative staff. I can say during my 19 years of incarceration I’ve only known maybe two instructors in prison that I could say were honestly passionate about teaching and helping us get degrees”⁶. A lack of engagement from the educators and a lack of engagement between the students is not conducive to a successful course. According to Case Study 3, she runs her classes with these two factors in mind. She said, “[The] classroom atmosphere is a small protective bubble. Everyone lets their guard down and opens up. No masks”⁵.

An offender's family is a major motivator for choosing to enroll in correctional education or to continue his or her education upon release. Both the family unit and education itself act as a structured support system. Case study 1 supported this idea, “I was motivated. Mostly because of my family. They were there by my side the whole time... I was hungry for success... Still hungry for success”³. An offender’s family acts as a support system and a motivator for choosing education; however, correctional education itself can act as a support system for those lacking one outside. Both Case Study 2 and 4 also indicated they were motivated by their families to participate. According to my participant in Case Study 2, “I had this soft spot in my heart for my mother and I knew where she was in life with her health, she didn't deserve it and if there was anyone who deserved to be sick and ill it was me. At that point I was pleading with my creator to give me one chance here just to show that I could change my life”⁴. In turn, he chose to turn his

life around and would have chosen to participate in the correctional education program offered; however, the access was so limited he needed to find some other positive support, in which he turned to religion. The participant in Case Study 4 felt he needed to further his education so he didn't look hypocritical to his daughter, whom he was pushing to go to college. "I did these classes for the sake of my daughter. I'm telling her to go to college, so what do I look like if I'm not going to college and don't have a degree, you follow me?"⁶.

Hall and Killacky (2008) discovered similar sentiments from their participants, "[M]any students in the study were motivated to continue with their studies/ earn their GED in order to move onto other classes that could potentially earn more money for their families" (306). The communities within prisons have a preconceived notion of correctional education, in that it is the most beneficial thing one can do while incarcerated. Similarly to one's family, the reason correctional education is an effective tool for reducing recidivism rates is explained through the structure and support it provides those who participate.

The effectiveness of correctional education in reducing recidivism rates can also be explained by its role as a structured support system. Education both inside prisons and outside prisons can act as a support system separate from one's family unit. Participant 1's ability to stay out of prison was attributed to the continuation of his education upon release. However, correctional education and education in general is not the only way to find support and structure. Participant 2 found that religion added much needed structure to his life, which allowed him to turn his life around in the five years after his first release from prison. Therefore, while correctional education offers the motivation to turn one's life around, it does not offer the structure and support upon release that is needed to stay out of prison. However, what it does do, especially postsecondary correctional education, is motivate the inmates to pursue a structured environment outside the realm of organized crime, thus reducing three year recidivism rates.

Postsecondary education may also reduce recidivism rates by increasing the social capital or the value of an individual determined by society. While all forms of education increase one's social capital, postsecondary education and beyond increases it at the greatest rate. The more valuable society deems a person, the more opportunities he or she has to succeed. For example, most jobs that would allow for a person to make a career and a living out of require at least a

four year college degree. And the more education one has determines the amount of money he or she can make at said job. Now, for an ex-felon, it is much more difficult to get any sort of job that would allow for him or her to make a career out of. According to a 1976 survey of American employers, 60% of respondents indicated they would not consider hiring an employee with a criminal record (Jensen & Giegold, 1976). According to a more current data set conducted by Employers Group Research Services (2002) found that only 25% of respondents were willing to hire someone convicted of a drug related crime; that number dropped to just 1% when the hiree was convicted of a violent offense. According to Case Study 2,

“I did find a company that I worked for a little bit as a shipping and receiving technician. I did that for about a month and a half to two months before they did a background check on me and then I was released from that job”⁴.

However, beginning in 2003, there has been a growing grassroots movement called Ban The Box. Ban The Box has called for employers to eliminate the sections of hiring paperwork that ask if one has been convicted of a felony; it has a numerous amount of endorsers across the world from radio stations to law firms (ban the box campaign.org). This movement is a promising notion to those who have been convicted of a crime and are now released looking to join the workforce.

The understanding of a degree completely overlooks the power of knowledge and understanding. Unfortunately, knowledge means nothing without the coveted slip of paper that provides credentials to back up the knowledge you have. An ex-felon already has very little social capital in American society, thus it is even more imperative to pursue a higher education and actually receive that all powerful piece of paper.

Unfortunately, just having knowledge and understanding does not give an individual a legitimate platform to be taken seriously. Only when an individual has the “credentials”⁶ are they able to truly participate in the American capitalist machine that ensures a certain standard of living. Therefore, correctional education programs must not only be universal among prisons, meaning transfers will not affect one’s ability to obtain a degree, but widely accessible to all who wish to pursue his or her education. Programs such as the Second Chance Pell Pilot Program, as previously stated, indicate a positive shift in attitudes towards prisoners, prisons and rehabilitation; however, are all for naught if the structural system of prison still revolves around

the notion of retribution and punishment. Rehabilitation cannot take precedence over punishment in a system that is built upon retribution; albeit, it is possible for a small portion of the total incarcerated population to be rehabilitated upon release as suggested in this thesis. With that being said, for the majority of the men and women in the American carceral system, rehabilitation is not possible due to a lack of access, poor curriculum and uninterested educators. It seems there must be an entire reworking of the United State's system of corrections and [rehabilitation] in order to truly focus on rehabilitating those who are forced into this system. Otherwise, recidivism rates will continue to rise and the system fueled by the persecution of others will continue to thrive.

Limitations

According to the Correctional Education Guidebook, “[there is] no mechanism for centrally collecting and sharing data [on correctional education]” (Tolbert, Klein, & Pedroso, 2006: 3). For this reason there is much variation between curriculums state to state. Such variation makes it difficult to determine whether or not the effect I found correctional education to have is based on the education received. It may be possible that some inmates are just lacking a proper educator to motivate them to remove themselves from crime or vice versa.

The time periods in which the data from the studies looked at was collected is both from the Reconstruction period and Post-Reconstruction period. This indicates vastly differing forms of correctional education based on the minimal funding and complete lack of rehabilitative focus during the Reconstruction period and the increasing change seen in the Post-Reconstruction period. Therefore, there may be a difference in what was being taught inside prison classrooms and how it was being taught. This would impact the quality of education being received, thus skewing the data towards a lesser impact on recidivism.

Appendices

Meta Analysis Data

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Figure 1:

2008a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: 1 ● Qualitative Insight ● Does not use recidivism as dependent variable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● - ● + ● - 	F 0	<p>Participants viewed participation in correctional education as a version of success. Success was not simply determined by finding a job or paying the bills but doing something they enjoyed that was productive in their eyes. It also helped participants feel regretful of their prior decisions. Felt that they disappointed their families. It also motivated participants to aspire to something post release.</p>
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				Whether that was take up a trade, find a job, start a business, or continue education.
b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: N/A ● Response to previous research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● - ● - 	F 0	N/A
c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: 3 ● Large sample ● Localized Data (single state) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ++ ● + ● - 	C+ 2.3	Correctional Education (secondary) <u>is</u> a significant predictor of recidivism
2009a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: N/A ● Essay response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● - ● - 	F 0	N/A
b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: N/A ● Meta Analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● - ● - 	F 0	N/A
2010a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: 1 ● No use of control or independent variables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● - ● - 	F 0	N/A
b.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: 2 ● Multi-state ● Mixed Methods ● post -release outcomes not explicitly analyzed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● + ● + ● + ● -- 	C 2.0	Correctional Education (post secondary) <u>may</u> reduce rates of recidivism and improve post release outcomes based on higher confidence, better attitudes and higher maturity level it fosters
c.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: 2 ● Small/ localized Sample ● Qualitative Insight ● Single program analyzed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● + ● - ● + ● - 	F 0	The educational program described is vastly beneficial to both inmates and undergraduate students. However, the effect of the program fades overtime for inmates bc lack of further programs. Helped inmates see their potential as productive students. Increased self-esteem and

				fostered hope.
d.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Propensity Score Matching ● Large Sample ● Single State 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ++ ● + ● + ● - 	B- 2.7	Correctional Education (various) <i>does</i> reduce recidivism and can create economically significant cost savings
2011a.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: 2 ● Mixed methods ● Post release not considered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● + ● + ● -- 	F 0	N/A
b.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: 4 ● Large sample ● Diverse (youth) ● Single state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ++ ● + ● + ● + ● - 	B+ 3.3	Education (various) <i>significantly</i> reduces rates of recidivism among youth
2012a.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: 3 ● Large Sample ● Diverse ● Recidivism & post release employment ● Single state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ++ ● + ● + ● + ● - 	B+ 3.3	Correctional Education (secondary) <i>significantly</i> reduces rates of recidivism <i>and</i> improve likelihood of post release employment
b.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: 2 ● Qualitative insight ● Small sample ● International 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● + ● + ● - ● + 	C+ 2.3	Correctional Education (various) promotes social integration upon release, thus decreasing the likelihood of recidivating
2013a.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: 4 ● Large Sample ● Diverse ● Single State 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ++ ● + ● + ● + ● - 	B+ 3.3	Correctional Education (Adult Basic Education) improves post release employment and earnings but <i>does not</i> reduce rates of recidivism
b.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: 2 ● Mixed Methods ● Small sample 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● + ● + ● - 	D+ 1.0	A lack of access to vocational and educational

				training maintains high rates of recidivism
c.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Propensity score matching, randomized treatment & matched comparison groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ++ ● ++ 	A+	Correctional Education (various) <i>effectively</i> reduces recidivism rates
d.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: 3 ● Large sample ● Post release employment ● Recidivism not dependent variable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ++ ● + ● + ● - 	B-	Correctional Education (postsecondary) is significant predictor of post release employment and therefore whether they recidivate or not
2014a.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: 4 ● Post release employment & recidivism ● 3 to 4 year recidivism ● Data collected through outside source 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ++ ● + ● + ● + ● - 	B+	Correctional Education (secondary & postsecondary) <i>does not</i> have a significant effect on recidivism but does increase likelihood of post-release employment
b.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: 2 ● International ● Recidivism & post release employment ● Varying correctional education programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● + ● + ● + ● - 	C+	Correctional Education (various) <i>reduces</i> rates of recidivism and greatly increased likelihood of post-release employment
2015a.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: N/A ● Meta-Analysis ● Rigorous Criteria ● Comprehensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● - ● - ● + ● + 	F	N/A
b.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: 3 ● Recidivism based on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ++ ● + 	D-	Correctional education (secondary) was most

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Race Correctional Education only briefly mentioned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- 	0.7	influential predictor of post release employment and rate of recidivism
c.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maryland SMS: 1 Does not address Recidivism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - - 	F 0	N/A
2016a.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maryland SMS: 5 Mixed methods Recidivism not explicitly analyzed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ++ ++ + - 	B 3.0	Participation in correctional education (various) increased likelihood of participants to commit misconduct, which <i>may relate to higher chance</i> of recidivating
b.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maryland SMS: 1 Meta-analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - - 	F 0	N/A
c.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maryland SMS: 1 No empirical Data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - - 	F 0	N/A
d.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maryland SMS: 1 No empirical Data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - - 	F 0	N/A
2017a.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maryland SMS: 3 Large sample Reliance on secondary data sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ++ + - 	C+ 2.3	Correctional education (secondary) <i>reduces</i> rates of recidivism among Hispanic population
2018a.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maryland SMS: 2 Long Study (Many years) Reliance on secondary data sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + + - 	D+ 1.0	Lack of access to adequate Correctional Education (various) <i>increases</i> the likelihood of recidivism
b.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maryland SMS: N/A Meta-Analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - - 	F 0	N/A
c.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maryland SMS: 2 Does not look at 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + - 	F	N/A

	recidivism or post release outcomes		0	
d.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maryland SMS: 1 ● Qualitative insight ● Limited Sample (only certain people allowed to participate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● - ● + ● - 	F 0	Nearly all inmate participants indicated that their experiences with correctional education inspired them to abandon crime. It also helped them foster spiritual connections with each other and their educators. It helped the inmates distance themselves from their criminal past

Figure 2:

<i>Study</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Type of Correctional Edu.</i>	<i>Result (Reduction in Three Year Recidivism Rates)</i>
2008c	2.3	Secondary	13%
2010d	2.7	Various	31.3%
2011b	3.3	Various	15.3%
2012a	3.3	Secondary	9.7%
“”	“”	Post Secondary	24.9%
2013a	3.3	ABE	0%
2013c	4.0	Post Secondary	20.1%
2013d	2.7	Post Secondary	23.1%
“”	“”	Secondary	8.4%
2014a	3.3	Secondary	3.7%
“”	“”	Post Secondary	4%
2014b	2.3	Various	4.25%

2015b	0.7	Secondary	10.5%
“”	“”	Post Secondary	22.8%
2017a	2.3	Secondary	9.5%
2018a	1.0	Various	2.0%

Figure 3:

February 27, 2019

San Francisco State University

12:05pm

Me: Alright, so first question: age, ethnicity, gender.

Participant: My name is [omitted] and I'm 23 currently, I'm Hispanic/ Mexican and male.

Me: Marital Status? Are you married?

Participant: Proudly single!

Me: So prior to your incarceration, what was your educational background?

Participant: I had recently just graduated high school, so highschool diploma and everything. Three months later, that's when I got arrested.

Me: So that sort of answers my next question, how old were you when you were first arrested?

Participant: My first and only incarceration, I was eighteen years old.

Me: And how long were you incarcerated?

Participant: Three years. So I was released when I was twenty-one. I've been out for two years this April.

Me: So that answers my next question, any other carceral experience: none.

Participant: None at all.

Me: If you're willing to share, what were you arrested for.

Participant: Uh, sort of like robbery I guess you could say.

Me: Alright, did you seek out any educational programs on the inside?

Participant: No. Because during the process, I did county time. So right there during county time you're not able to [take classes]. So I did eight months there. Then I went to reception center, did another eight months there. So that's already sixteen months. How many months is in three years?

Me: Uh, thirty-six.

Participant: Yeah so by the time I got to where I *could* join the application thing, like join college and stuff it was too late. If I were to start the process I would only get to take like two or three units. Two classes.

Me: What was offered where you were staying? Was it a full college program or was it only certain classes?

Participant: Yeah they had correspondence colleges. So for example, they had Coastline Community College. So they offered those classes there. They actually had a good education system in there. They offered GEDs, so you could get your GED in there.

Me: So you didn't have any experience with education while incarcerated. Do you think it would've had an impact on your experience inside?

Participant: Yeah, I think people who seek education in there...there's nothing more positive. It can't be negative trying to get an education. I definitely think if I would've pursued it, it would've made my time go smoother. Instead of just like working out, doing nothing, wasting time basically. Instead I could've been productive. So for people who do seek it, I think it's very productive.

Me: Did you see people who sought it?

Participant: Yeah, definitely. I had a few friends who were taking college courses. And positive experiences, they wanted to stay out of trouble. Just get prepared for when they come out.

Me: Ok. So what was your experience upon release?

Participant: Terrifying. Yeah it's... Well I was eighteen, just out of high school with only a high school diploma, no work experience. So just coming out to the real world, you know? In there? Yeah it sucks but you know I think it sucks more out here knowing that I need to find a job, I need to do that. So I guess, becoming an adult that's what I was afraid of. Can you ask the question again? I have more to say.

Me: Yeah uh what was your experience upon release? Any specific things you'd like to talk about?

Participant: I remember having doubt in myself. Definitely doubted myself, you know like when I try to find a job they're gonna ask if I have a criminal history. And of course that always comes up. So I was definitely worried about that. But besides that, I was motivated. Mostly because of my family. They were there by my side the whole time. So motivated. I was hungry for success, you know? Still hungry for success.

Me: Did you try to apply for jobs and get declined?

Participant: Well when I got out, my parole officer pointed me to a good little program called CEO. It's Center of Employment Opportunities. So they give you a job right off the bat. Not the best paying job but it's a certified job, didn't even have to qualify or anything. Just they give you the job and while you're doing that, you're also doing classes, training to get a real job. So I did that one for about a month, month and a half, and doing the trainings, going to the weekly things and I ended up getting a job offer from Tesla. It was hard to find a job actually.

Me: Anything else you'd like to share about your experience when you were released?

Participant: I remember having doubt, like do I wanna go back to school? Because obviously I wanna make money, you know? And going full-time with school was going to be difficult with that. So I was definitely second guessing going to school. But I'm glad I made that choice to seek an education because recidivism. I'm a big supporter of education because I think education takes people away from trying to do crime and all that. I work from Project Rebound so I have

the best of both worlds. I'm a Project Rebound student but also staff so I see both sides. It's helpful. Programs like Project Rebound are sure helpful.

Me: So that leads to my next question: what led you to pursue your education once released?

Participants: Funny thing is, well not funny. But I was previously accepted [SFSU] in 2014. So I graduated high school, good grades and all and I was accepted. But of course my incarceration began so um I knew I could do it, you know? Believe in myself, just I doubted myself for a while because I was incarcerated for three years so I'd been away from school, hadn't been in a classroom, hadn't done homework in three year.

Me: And what was your experience coming back to school?

Participant: My first class I was terrified. I was like "aw man". Especially having to go from the high school scene to the college scene and having the three year gap. I guess again terrifying, I was terrified of everything. But you know, after the first class went smooth. I met the Project Rebound crew and ever since then, like I said, that program has been very helpful.

Me: Did you seek out Project Rebound? Or did they come find you?

Participant: Yes, um when I was incarcerated I heard about the program from a resource book in there. And I wrote a letter to the program asking um I wanna go back to school. And they helped me through the whole process. The funny thing is, when I wrote them, know I'm doing that job, so I receive the letters now. So I'm the one responding when someone responded to me. So that's a trip.

Me: I don't think this really pertains to you but do you think your experiences on the inside had an impact on your pursuing your education?

Participant: Yeah because people in there, some people seek education, but some people think it's stupid, honestly. Because they're like "we're degraded already". These are ex-felons, ex-prisoners and they're more motivated to get a job instead of seeking education so you have people that don't wanna go to school because they wanna get money, get paid, you know? I guess, people just trying to dissuade you from trying to do good.

Me: Did you keep in contact with friends whom you were incarcerated with?

Participant: Yeah I still keep in contact with a few people.

Me: Like people who pursued a higher education versus people who just pursued a job afterwards.

Participant: yeah I've seen both sides. Like yeah they probably get paid more, a lot more than I do since they're full time and I'm only part-time but, from what I've seen, most of my friends who did not seek an education went back and most of them who came out who were in there with me, they all went back. And knock on wood I haven't been back. I'm not saying that it's because of education but education has definitely helped me out a lot.

Me: That's all my questions. Do you have anything else you want to add or share?

Participant: Just, I just wanna keep saying about Project Rebound. Your whole research thing, I want you to keep researching that because it makes sense. People who seek education have a less

likely chance to go back. I just think it's good work you're doing so that's why I wanted to do the interview.

Me: Awesome, I really appreciate that.

Figure 4

May 24, 2019

1425 Main St. Watsonville CA

11:05

Me: Let's start with your age, ethnicity, gender and marital status.

Participant: Ok so my name is...I am 40 years old. I am married. I am a hispanic male.

Me: Alright. So prior to your incarceration, what was your educational background?

Participant: I completed eleventh grade, oops sorry excuse me, I completed tenth grade. I was kicked out of school so I tried to further my credits through adult ed after I was expelled and I tried to, well I was shy about two to three credits tops. It was something in math that hindered me and I just stopped going and I had a family.

Me: Would you mind talking about your expulsion?

Participant: Yeah. So what happened was during my freshman and sophomore year I *was* playing sports, I was active in sports then I got introduced to hard drugs and a lot of partying. Started entertaining those hard drugs and going out. That took an affect on my psyche. I started getting into a lot of fights in school and it became a priority for me to get high. I ended up getting into one fight in the parking lot of Watsonville High and it was like my last straw, they were just tired of putting up with me. I wasn't really going to school anymore, it was more social like who I could socialize with and that finally did it with the principal where he basically told me I'm done. They kicked me out of the district so I couldn't go to any high school in the Paro Valley Unified School District. So I tried to do a continuation school out of Hollister and I did move further. I did good for maybe about a year and then I had my son and I just needed to go to work. Plus at the same time I didn't really stop using drugs.

Me: So did this lead up to your first incarceration?

Participant: My first incarceration happened in San Benito County. It did lead up to it. I was with some friends one night, we were drunk, one of the guys I was with decided...We decided to go rob another guy who was selling drugs. The robbery didn't turn out the way it should have. There was a family there but it was too late. We went inside the home, and he wasn't there. There turned out to be a mother and child inside the home and that was my first juvenile incarceration. Was a home invasion.

Me: How old were you when this happened?

Participant: Sixteen.

Me: And how long were you incarcerated?

Participant: This one didn't last because I wasn't an adult. There was an adult with us and he took that time. He ended up getting six months, I did maybe a little over a month. If that.

Me: And was this your only carceral experience?

Participant: No that began to take place, I mean I started getting, uh well when I was eighteen I got into some domestic issues with my girlfriend. Some DUIs, I had drug charges, some resisting arrest, drunk in public, disorderly conduct, petty theft, you know there was a whole variety of different things that took place. And at the age of I believe I was twenty five years old was when I took, well I went on a felony high speed chase and I ended up getting sixteen months in state prison. I took a deal for sixteen months. While I was there, there was a pending charge, it was a burglary charge. I came back when my sentence for state then they added an additional eight months to my sentence. That sentence lasted only four months and only extended my parole date So I paroled on June 26 of 2006. And I went in on June 2 of 2005.

Me: And was that your last carceral experience?

Participant: No. So my last one was discharging a firearm, gross negligence. It was a felon in possession of a firearm, felon in possession ammunition and I discharged a firearm, I was under the influence of methamphetamine. I had been up for three days, was disputing with my wife at the time and I left my parents house, engaged in some meth, I was using meth, and I think at that point I was already coming down. I had some issues happening where I was seeing things, and at that point in time I was in fear of my life carrying a firearm and I thought some people were after me. AND I ended up discharging a firearm thinking I was shooting at somebody and that ended up me going and getting charged. They surrounded my parents home at that point in time. I ended up surrendering, coming out. At that point in time I remember just realizing that what I had experienced was, well though there was some physical elements that were involved, it wasn't entirely all physical. It was an enhance mental psychosis that I was under, though I do not neglect the fact that there were in fact some entities involved. I just did not need to go to extreme that I went to. And plus being under the influence of meth, there is no real balance, there is no understanding of what is real and what isn't. You kinda just lose sight of all of that, and that's what happened for me.

Me: How long did that last, your incarceration last?

Participant: This last one, I fought my sentence for seven months in county jail. I ended up getting sentenced for a lower term. They sentenced me to thirty-two in state prison. I ended up, because of proposition I think is fifty-seven where you get third time, I ended up getting ten months total and so that's how long it lasted.

Me: So while you were incarcerated, at any point did you have experience with any educational programs?

Participant: Educational programs, you know in Tracy State Prison which is called DVI, I did not have access to any...

Me: They didn't have any...

Participant: No, they didn't have any education. You had to submit a request to be able to come out of your cell. You are under twenty-four hour lockdown. You get no movement...

Me: And this is for everyone?

Participant: Everyone in my cell block. So I was on the east wing, third tier. So everyone the two wings I was located on don't get to come out. You get yard once a week and a shower twice a week. And so everything gets done inside your cell. You can put in a request to have access to the library but there are no programs available for people in reception.

Me: So was this your last carceral experience?

Participant: Yes. So for me there was no access to any type of educational programs. Now reception is just a holding facility for the remaining... So once you get to see your counselor they will ship you off to another prison to finish out the remainder of your sentence. It's in those prisons where you will have access to the programs. I did have access to completing my high school diploma or GED when I inside my first time.

Me: And did you pursue that?

Participant: I did. I didn't complete it because the day that I was to parole, well I did start my adult ed while I was in prison and I would go faithfully I think it was every Wednesday and once a week for four hours. So I was able to go there but I had to start all over from the beginning because they couldn't get my transcripts. So I ended up going just so I could learn the learning experience but I was not able to complete it in my stay there.

Me: So I'm just going to ask about different courses offered, different courses that you took. So what sort of things were you learning while you were participating in your adult education?

Participant: I was learning just some basic education. I was doing science, we had an actual tutor there with us so he would help us with our geometry, help us with different things. I remember geometry being difficult for me because I hadn't really learned math. I mean I knew the basics but some of the heavier duty stuff, I just didn't know it and there was a guy there to help us through that but it was limited. I remember being limited on the, well he would come once a week, he would pull me out and basically I was the only guy in there that was trying to get his high school diploma.

Me: So would you have appreciated it if there was more access?

Participant: Absolutely. I think one of the main things they focus on is working. So while you're there you do get paid but it's a minimal amount, I think I was getting at the most seven or eight cents per day. So and then the rest of the time I had was after work so I really didn't have a whole lot of educational time. I think there was one day out of the week I had access to education.

Me: So I think you already touched upon this but what led you to pursue an education while you were inside?

Participant: While I was there I knew I was going to be there for about a year, maybe a little over and I didn't want my time to just, I wanted to do something with my time. I didn't want to just not, I think a lot of what I had as an issue in the past was not going to school, I wanted to

change some things around so when I did get out I wanted a little bit more of an advantage to be able to get a job. And even with that when I got out without having a full education I wasn't able to maintain a good solid job where I was getting good pay and that happened. I remember just wanting to fulfill my time there and be able to learn and not just be stagnant, like just going to work coming back and doing nothing during my time. So that's why I pursued that.

Me: Ok, so I think you said not many other people were looking to further their education while they were incarcerated, right? How was it seen by other inmates, you pursuing your education?

Participant: Well I'm not sure. I think a lot of people had just given up. There was this feeling, what I noticed were people without hope. They had no intention of changing who they were, and I'm not speaking for everybody but there were, the majority that did not have any desire to further their education, to further their life skills, any of that. There were some that did. I just think there was just this lack of access to it. I think how it looked, there were some people that were taking, there was another, I'm just trying to remember, it has been so long since I did it, it was in 05 and 06, I don't know. But what I think is that if they had access to different types of courses, that would be, like there are people that do, they want to further their understanding and education. I know that one of the things that we did a lot was pass along different books that would come to the library like psychology. We would pass around a lot of psychology books around, history book and we would read these. So we would pass these and further our understanding...

Me: Well that's a form of education; albeit, not formal but still...

Participant: Absolutely. So we would learn about different historical events, different survival strategies, things that we thought would be useful. One of the biggest things that was passed around was psychology. A lot of people really liked that, so a lot of psychology books were passed around, a lot of self help books were passed around, a lot of religious books were passed around, just furthering our understanding. So there were a lot of things that were read but it wasn't under the classroom setting.

Me: What was your favorite that you picked up?

Participant: So for me, one of the biggest things I picked up was the bible. That was by far the biggest thing for me that kept me grounded, kept me hopeful. It was my faith in Christ that really kept me on that straight, and made me see that I didn't want to go down that path anymore so I looked toward these moral guidelines that put me back on the right path, you know? And I vered away but on the first five years that I was out of prison, I didn't use drugs, I didn't drink, I didn't even smoke cigarettes which was a big change for me. I started a business. I started working it and started making some good money, you know? So there were some real changes that did take place in my life when I got out in 06. And then right around 2012 when I had my daughter I think the stresses of life started coming in again and I started having this reservation of going back out and partying again. And i never really fully recovered from it to the degree that I had in 05 to 06 all the way to 2012 when I was connected and plugged in with a strong support group. I

still have a support group and I am working toward that but I look back to who I was and it was truly a pinnacle point in my life. Yeah I was doing really well.

Me: So in 06 you got out. And did you go back in 2012?

Participant: I went back in 2016.

Me: And then got out in 2017?

Participant: Yes 2017.

Me: Ok. So let's go back to 2006. What really impacted that change when you got out? What were the factors that led to your most pinnacle moment in life thus far?

Participant: Sure. One of the things that took place, I was on a yard with gang members and a lot of these guys, there were some things taking place on the yard and I saw something happen to this guy and it was at this point that I knew i didn't want to be apart of it anymore. I didn't have a heart for what these other guys were doing, following these types of orders, I wasn't that person anymore. And I realize I made some bad choices in life that ended me up where I ended up but I knew in my heart that I didn't want to hurt people, I didn't want to be a part of something that was basically organized crime and I didnt want to be a part of it, although in the past I had been. I think a lot of it had to do with the fact that my mom was dying and I just wanted to show my mom that I could change my life and so that was in the back of my heart and mind so I knew that here I was making a decision to be a part of this organization and then at the same time i wanted to change so the change had to come from within so the decision came from when i saw this man hurt on the yard that I didn't want to be a part of it anymore. So I went back to my cell and I was in a cell with another man and I finally came to a place where I was scared I didn't know how to tell them I wanted out. But I did, I built up the courage to tell them I didn't want to be a part of it no more. And as a result of that decision I was threatened and greenlighted, meaning they were going to make a move on me because of the decision I made. So I did and made the decision anyway and was transferred to a different facility because of that decision but yeah so that, when I crossed that line there was no going back, I couldn't change my mind and go back, it was done, I let the cat out of the bag, and that's what happened. At that point forward I knew there was no turning back, I had to do it and do it wholeheartedly. And that's what really began my first steps to change.

Me: Did your family have any impact on that as well?

Participant: Absolutely. Yeah my mother... my dad and I at that point weren't taking, he didn't want me around because of the lifestyle I chose. My mother I would have to say, she was one of the...because I had lost everything, I didn't have... well basically it wasn't because of my children, it was my mom. I had this soft spot in my heart for my mother and I knew where she was in life with her health, she didn't deserve it and if there was anyone who deserved to be sick and ill it was me. At that point I was pleading with my creator to give me one chance here just to show that I could change my life. And so that was my plea that was from within and that was what I was motivated by. It was my mother above all that was the driving force and the change.

Me: I think we already touched upon this again but can you talk about your experience once you were released. Let's start in 2006 and then 2017.

Participant: Ok. So I was supposed to parole in February of 06 but one of the counties that I had a pending charge in came back, picked me up and I took a deal for eight more months, which I ended up doing four more. So I was released four months after February at the end of June and I ended up coming out, started looking for work I couldn't find really anything that would take a felon. I did find a company that I worked for for a little bit as a shipping and receiving technician. I did that for about a month and a half to two months before they did a background check on me and then I was released from that job, I ended up going to work for my dad temporarily, things started to get better between us and I worked for him for a little bit. I started taking bible ministry courses through Berean Bible College to further my understanding. My heart was to move down the avenue of ministry, that didn't entirely work out. But I did have the desire, I did learn a lot, it began to structure my life and good things began happening, I started to develop some really good morals and standards to live by. Things were really great in my life, then my dad's company which was a cleaning company, was just dead in the water and I asked him if I could kind of take over on that. He's like "Sure, if you want to take on all the debt". So I basically took in his debt and started marketing myself and getting out there and doing the best I could with this dead in the water company and I started to build this business and it started to prosper, take care of my family, my needs, and I paid my dad back, you know? Things were really great. I was part of a ministry, I even got clearance. I think it was after I paroled in 2008 and 09, I got clearance to go back into a correctional facility and I started doing that every Sunday at 2:00 o'clock.

Me: Ministry work?

Participant: Yeah, ministry work. So I started going into San Benito County. And I had gotten clearance and they allowed me to go back in and start with the same people I was locked up with, I'm now coming back in and sharing the gospel with them. That was a really powerful time, there were some really amazing things taking place, lives were being changed. And that all happened within a six year period, so from 2006 all the way to 2012, these things were taking place, my wife and I bought a home, I got married, I had a daughter, I started a business. I mean things were taking place and it was really amazing to watch them happen and happen so quickly.

Me: Yeah. And then you went back, so what happened with your most recent release?

Participant: So the most recent release was from Tracy State Prison, that was DVI, Dual Vocational Institute. This time around was more difficult, there were some things that were happening on the yard again and although I wasn't part of the politics I still saw some things. I started to develop a callused hardened heart toward humanity and I started to develop this within my mind, I had preached and wanted to do change and become this better person again but it wasn't long after I got out, maybe a year before I was back in drugs, and I think a lot of it had to do with the lack of being open and transparent about what was happening inside of me. I think lack of counseling, lack of council, lack of being accountable with others, all of that had a part to

play in my relapse and falling back again into that way of living. So, the good thing is I didn't have to go back to prison. I did go back to county jail, I did go back in there and sorted some things out with my wife and I ended up going into a treatment center up in Mount Madonna, which I will be speaking at today. I went in there for four months and got clean, I got five months clean and I'm trying to do the right thing again, stay on the straight and narrow again. I'm working, minimal but working, just trying to make ends meet, you know? Going to the gym, I do my daily devotionals in the morning, I pray in the morning. I just try and keep structure in my life, I'm part of my children's lives, I'm part of my wife's life, doing the best I can with what I have.

Me: Awesome!

Participant: Yeah man.

Me: So would you ever consider furthering your education, or is that not something you'd be interested in doing this in your life?

Participant: Well I'm forty years old but I've always heard people say "it's never too late". I think my mom went back to school and got her degree, she was going to be a probation officer but she just realized that wasn't the field she wanted to go. I would love to go back! If I had the time, and... I feel like I have the discipline. I do. But yes, I feel like if I had an opportunity to go back to school and take some classes and further my education, I absolutely would. I always talk about that to my kids, about how important school and education is. My oldest son just became a park ranger, and school's very important to him. He's loving what he does and I just look at how education has been very important, and I just wish I had stuck it out. I wish I would've had some structure as a kid, a little bit more than I had and had my family really push the issue on me. I wish I had more discipline in my life; nevertheless, I recognize that it's not my parents fault, there were a lot of choices I made and at the same time I don't have to allow my children to go down that same road. I have the opportunity to be the change for my family and that's my goal. College is an important thing and it's stressed upon between my wife and I to my kids, they know that they're going to be going to college, they know we're going to do the best we can to finance that, you know?

Me: I didn't have a choice either.

Participant: Yeah, there's no choice. My wife went to college, she's a Fresno grad, a Fresno Bulldog. Yeah she has her degree, she works for the city. But yeah there's been some cool things that have been taking place.

Me: Alright. Do you have anything to add?

Participant: No Mark, that's good! I appreciate your time!

Me: I appreciate your time!

Figure 5

May 28, 2019

Via Email

Age, ethnicity, gender, marital status?

41, White (european descent), F, Married.

How long have you been teaching?

4 years

How long in a prison classroom?

2 years

What led you to teaching?

It was a childhood dream that came to life. I've always loved learning, performing, public speaking, reading, writing, socializing. I've also always had a deep desire to serve, to use my talents/gifts for the betterment of the world and teaching is the way. A constant learning, evolving.

What led you to teaching in a prison classroom?

I became interested in prisons after watching *Doing Time*, *Doing Vipassana* and I participated in a 10 day vipassana retreat. I came to realize the simple, inexpensive and profound practice of meditation is incredibly powerful and that film showed me prisoners can be rehabilitated through such method. So...I enrolled in a GRIP weekend workshop, volunteered at San Quentin as a weekly group facilitator for 2 years and then was hired by Hartnell to teach a prison sociology college level course.

How do the inmates gain access to your class? If you know, what is the administrative process to be able to join?

It's different in every prison...some go by merit so they earn their way into the class through milestone credits and showing good behavior. Other places it's first come first serve. Once you are in a program, you are guaranteed spot though so that's reassuring for the men enrolled, that they will be able to continue on through the entire degree process and program.

What do you teach? Is it different from what you teach to prisoners?

I teach sociology, intro to sociology mainly. I teach the same lesson plans and ways in which I teach students on the outside with a few differences based on accessibility to technology, research and that sort of thing.

How do you teach and do you approach it differently than teaching outside of prison?

I teach using a discussion format, lecturing a bit and doing activities to teach the material. I use groups for discussion and presenting and individual projects. I treat the men more or less like I teach my college students on the outside. They are almost all incredibly smart, eager, disciplined and engaged so each and every class is a learning journey and experience.

Are you limited in what you can and can't teach? If so, in what way?

I've never paid attention to that. I teach what comes from the heart and is part of the class material. I push the limits by teaching about the oppression and inequalities in prison but they already know that from experience.

What is the atmosphere in the classroom? Do you feel it's different from the rest of the prison? If so, how?

The classroom atmosphere is a small protective bubble. Everyone lets down their guard and opens up. No masks. It is very different from the rest of the prison.

How do the inmates view you/ your class and what they're learning?

They say really positive things. My class has changed their lives, their direction, their belief system. They feel human again, seen, heard, accepted. They learn so much about society and the structural and societal elements of their lives and crime. I've never had a bad review, they begin to love the time we spend together as do I.

How do the inmates view each other in your class?

As equals. On the yard, they know each other's crimes, gang ties, and/or racial affiliations but in the class, they work together, they listen to each other and they share ideas.

If you had to say, what impact do you have on your students?

I know I teach them about sociology and society, the many disciplines in sociology and how to use their sociological imagination but I think my real impact is how I run the class, how I treat them, how I bring outside UCSC students into the prison to share knowledge with them and how much I truly respect and see them as equals. I give them hope. I give them a fresh breath of life and energy, seeing them not as criminals but men who are largely misunderstood and deeply traumatized by their life choices and experiences.

What impact do your courses have on your students?

Mainly what I said in the first part of the sentence. Plus I have them read books like Just Mercy.

What impact do your students have on you?

I just see things much more deeply and complex by knowing their history and stories. I come to have a deep faith in human resilience, dignity and strength. I see life as flawed and tragic, unfair and cruel when I think about the criminal justice system and the prisons but then I see them as noble, silly, smart and brave when I hang out in the classroom and am simply amazed by their tenacity.

Why do you continue to do it?

Because prisons need to be abolished or at least transformed into a different kind of institution and I plan to help in that process through prison education, prison-student exchanges and much more.

Any last thoughts.

Thank you Mark! If you have more questions or need clarifying, let me know.

May 30, 2019
Via Phone call

Me: What experience did you have with educational programs during your incarcerations?

Participant: Ok. As you already indicated, you're aware I was previously incarcerated in Oklahoma?

Me: Yes.

Participant: And I guess it's best for us to start there because for my first nineteen months in county jail. It's one of those bonafide type of jails, it didn't hold over fifty people, no commissary, no radio, no nothing. And so during this time, the only thing they had on the shelves was a series of... cowboy books. And at that time, I wasn't really fond of reading, in fact, I graduated second from the bottom of my class of forty eight and probably with a 1.5 GPA, so my reading ability wasn't that great. But during that time, there were about a hundred of those cowboy books on the shelf and I read every last one of them. What I didn't realize at the time was I was increasing my ability in terms of becoming a better reader. And so what happened that changed my whole perspective about education was during that time I stumbled across a ballistics book on forensic science and so I struggled, but low and behold I found...to my freedom in terms of ballistics. And so once I wrote all this stuff out, it was some nineteen pages of notes, I actually wrote about this in my book *Domestic Genocide*. I see this lawyer, he's fresh out of law school, never tried a murder case before, he gets up in front of a jury of twelve white people who will lethally inject me if they find me guilty; be mindful, I'm twenty one years old, scared as hell. And I said let's go, "half heart, half money" as we say in the streets. And low and behold, this lawyer, when I showed them those notes, he said "hey, you mind if I make a copy of these?". I'm not realizing how sharp I really am. You know, I'm just thinking I'm this dumb kid with a 1.5 GPA, you know what I'm saying? And so low and behold he takes those notes and by the time we go to trial, everything I wrote on those notes, he uses, namely the ballistics, state medical exam reports, and contradictions wrote out, he cross examined a witness, nailed it down, hung jury, nine four acquittal, free from conviction. When I seen that, I was like "ok. The power of knowledge". You feel me?

By this time, I got time served... I do another thirteen months in the penitentiary in Oklahoma. And I run across this OG. Now this OG was one of those type of dudes notoriously known in Oklahoma area as one of the largest drug dealers, a guy I can say at one time I idolized and wanted to be. And so me and this guy are cellies. He tells me, he says, "Hey, you know, you're one helluva hustler. You know how to get money in the streets. But lemme ask you a question" and he asked me, he says, "If and when you ever make a million dollars in the streets, what're you going to do other than invest it in dope?" And I was like, he said, "What do you know about business law? What do you know about accounting, economics, all those different studies that go into business practices?" And I was honest with myself, I don't know a damn

thing about it. And he says, "Let me tell you a story". Long story short, 1977, he gets a contract for a janitorial company he owned in Inglewood California for \$250,000. He doesn't look back. He goes and buys 20-30 keys of cocaine something like that from one of his Colombian partners but here he is twenty years later, sitting in a cell, fifty five year stay, he's an old man, he said, "man I'm gonna die in prison". He tells me, "Let me tell you something, The best thing you can do when you get out, is go to college and learn how to be a legitimate businessman". And so by now you know after that whole death penalty experience, having read that book, and found the value in education, I'm listening to what my mother always told me, "You gotta go to college". And so I get out November 27, 1998 and by January 1999, I'm enrolled as a fulltime student. Yeah.

Me: Alright, well so, what were you doing in classes, what studies were you taking, and how did it affect your growth as a person?

Participant: Well, you know as a person and how it affected me as far as growthwise, it, you know in life, you know sometimes I guess you get to the point where you have enough character and courage to take that jump, you know? And you'll pull the parachute not knowing what will happen. And so those were, I guess you could say challenging times where I had to challenge myself in terms of what I could do, you know taking care of myself in the streets as opposed to working towards being someone legit and actually striving for a real goal and objective in life and so in terms of character, what that did for me sitting in these classrooms, exposed me to a world which I wasn't really familiar with. Because keep in mind, I'm in college in California and I'm around professors who have worked for Dreamworks, I'm around professors who have worked for major music studios, I'm even around some pretty impressive artists in that area in Pittsburgh where I was at. And so it was surreal for me and I was taking, I always had a love for computers, so i'm taking excel, I'm taking keyword, accounting, economics, micro and macro, business law, introduction to business and it's just amazing because as I pointed out to you before I graduated from high school barely with a 1.5 GPA and now I'm in college maintaining a 3.75. And I was awarded a scholarship in real estate development. Yeah.

Me: So, I know you were talking about how you got your best education while at Alameda county, So in what ways, in your experience, did the postsecondary education that you got, how does that fit into the whole destructive, exploitative, oppressive institutional forces that you talked about in your essay?

Participant: Ok so, in college, right so remember I'm this kid in college learning all this stuff, be minded at this time I have no radical inclinations, you know it's something innate in me that makes me say "fuck the system" but not really understanding where that comes from other than maybe some mistreatment from law enforcement. But at that time when I was in college, I was completely oblivious to the whole purpose of America's educational system. Now, what you got to understand about the educational system in terms of developing human capital. Are you familiar with the term?

Me: Yes, I am.

Participant: OK so, in terms of developing human capital, what we see throughout American Institutions primarily is the, I guess you can say for the lack of a better term manufacturing and developing of human capital to feed the various markets of the US economy. And in terms of how, after being at Alameda County, I came to start identifying because it was a few more years after that I began reading Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, I started to see how even here in prison, my education in college was geared solely towards making me an instrument in terms of developing that capital so that I could be exploited by the ruling class or the boss class, and even myself, I wasn't really focused on getting a job, I was more focused on starting my own business. So what I said in my book, I said something to the effect of "even though my mom and the OG who was in prison meant well by telling me to go to college, what they really didn't understand was that college was basically for me to be educated then exploited for gain. You follow?"

Me: Yes.

Participant: Because in terms of when you look at people in that capitalist mindframe, you don't see human beings, you see skills, capabilities and profits.

Me: Did you ever take any sociology classes?

Participant: No, again I didn't get into sociology until 2006.

Me: Yeah because that is what I'm studying and we've learned all about what you're describing and to me it seems that it goes over the system you talked about.

Participant: Right so, it was like an epiphany for like sociology, you know by 2006 I'm six years into this life sentence without the possibility of parole and I'm struggling to make sense of everything because I'm new to the California prison system, I didn't really know anybody to the exception to the dudes I've seen from the county jail, and I'm struggling to make sense of all this because I'm two thousand miles away from home so after about two years, this was 2006, of basically running around the yard, hustling pictures and cards and you know... I said, "man, I feel like I'm going ass backwards" because at that point in my life, here it is I'd come out from underneath the capital case in Oklahoma, went to college for almost two years, then was on the brink of opening my own storefront, and here it is now I'm selling cards for two dollars on the prison yard at a level four security. And I'm like "this cannot be my reality", so I had to sit back, and this is when I started reading the *Communist Manifesto*, I found sociology books left in the trash, and I'm reading all these things from Alexis de Tocqueville, there was a couple other scholars I read too, Amos Wilson was one of my most profound sociologist psychologist... I literally had hundreds of books. And now I'm reading all this sociology that just blows my mind. I'm talking to this lady who just got her doctorate in sociology and I'm telling her about how I went to school for business and all that and, I said and in studying business with the exception of economics I didn't realize how profound sociology was in terms of capitalism. And I said once I made that connection, it's like, "Oh wow". I'm looking at things through the sociological lense as they say, and I'm not knowing what the terms are, be mindful, I had to brush up on the terms, I read them but didn't really stick with me but the knowledge did. And so I took another

sociology class here in 2010 and that's when I met Megan, and she was just like "why don't you just teach the damn class?". And she was like "how did you learn all this stuff" and I explained to her the history with the Alameda County Jail, books on the tier, just being bored and picking up a damn book. And here's one thing I was blessed with, I had an uncle that I was fortunate, rest in peace, up until a couple years ago that in terms of providing support, he would buy me my packages and stuff like that but about ten years ago, seven years before he died, I asked him to stop buying me packages and start sending me books. And so now I'm getting books from Oxford University Press and some of these books are costing \$120.

Me: What, like textbooks and stuff?

Participant: Yeah, I'm getting the *Understanding Social Networks*, I'm getting the, oh man it was so many books, *Law, Order in Society*, *Sociological Introduction*, I'm getting, let's think of another title, it was one, oh *Identity Theory* about the whole structural makeup of structural symbolic interactionism. Yeah. So I'm reading all this stuff and I'm paying 50, 60, 100 dollars a books and I was highlighting everything and it's not like, see this is the thing between the difference in learning in a sterile college environment as I say opposed to learning it in prison, I'm sure you'd read it somewhere in my writings I say, "When you learn in prison, it's one of those things where you're learning out of an instinctive thrust to survive the social, political, and economic forces that have locked you up mentally and physically", so it's a whole different type of motivation. So it's like you develop this type of photographic or photogenic memory where you read a book, I can damn near quote everything from it, I mean not verbatim but as you can see, I know all this stuff.

Me: Yes. So this kind of moves into my next question. What was your experience with actual, structured correctional education?

Participant: None.

Me: None at all?

Participant: None at all, well, I would say I recently started taking college courses to complete me associate's degree...

Me: And how has your experience been with that?

Participant: To be honest with you, these courses here in prison are not like courses at college. You gotta remember, we're incarcerated so the very notion of prison education is an oxymoron. It's kind of like prison medicine, those two words don't go together because medicine is to heal and prison is to what?

Me: Retribution and punishment.

Participant: Yes, so when you think about prison and education, I hear this all the time, why would the administration want to empower you with the knowledge that you could potentially use against them?

Me: To keep you docile and mold you in the image of what they want.

Participant: Exactly. To keep you disempowered. So with the exception of probably Megan's sociology class, and even with that that was just the introduction, I don't think a lot of guys

really understood because, be mindful, again I didn't just already take the class, I actually read every book in the back the book listed. I mean not literally but it was a lot of books and I pointed some things out to Megan. It was a guy, who was this guy, Herbert Spencer. She's talking about Herbert Spencer one day and I say, "Did you know Herbert Spencer was the guy who put forth the notion of survival of the fittest?" And I say, "Did you know that didn't really have a thing to do with nature and animals but for races and people?" He wrote a book called *Savage to Nigger* or something like that.

Me: Yeah, I think I've read some of his stuff.

Participant: Yeah and her mouth kinda dropped when I said that, that's when she must've figured out that I know more than what is in the book and the people she was talking about.

Me: So why did you pursue these classes then?

Participant: To be honest with you, I guess I recognized that in American Society, well first and foremost, I did these classes for the sake of my daughter. I'm telling her to go to college, so what do I look like if I'm not going to college and don't have a degree, you follow me? And then secondly, and equally as important, I realized in American Society, you familiar with the term credentialism.

Me: Yeah.

Participant: Everybody is someone because you have a credential to show you know something.

Me: Yeah, kinda like social capital.

Participant: Yeah. And so right now, I guess if it wasn't for like writing a book and starting a nonprofit and a lot of the other stuff I do, who would take me seriously? So as my cousin recently pointed out, if you get some letters behind you, I think you're going to be pretty damn dangerous. Because then you'd have a level of credibility. And they can't say he's some crackpot out of prison who's read a few books and thinks he knows a few things.

Me: Yeah, now you have a legitimate voice.

Participant: Yeah so I guess you can say those are the two reasons why I took classes. Aside of the degree and all that, I really don't have a, I mean granted, I'll feel proud the day I do have it, I think it's an accomplishment. But the reality is, I know that a degree in society with a conviction is worth about as much as a piece of toilet paper. So it's the knowledge and the experience that I'm looking for in order to hopefully open up some doors for me to be able to get into certain places so I can have more opportunities like I have now with you to talk to even more students and you know say, hey look, I'm not saying don't go to college, I'm not saying don't go and get your degree, I'm saying take that degree and get some experience and talk to some people who got a little experience under their belt so you can see that textbooks, it ain't all black and white.

Me: Yeah, ok. What kind of access is there to correctional education at all levels in your experience?

Participant: And when you say access do you mean GED, Associate's degree?

Me: Well more like how can someone go from sitting in a cell to sitting in a classroom, what's that process like and is it available to everyone?

Participant: Ok so you listened to the interviews on the *Rhetoric of Prison Rehabilitation*?

Me: Yes.

Participant: I'm going to, well will you see Megan in the future in the next couple of weeks?

Me: Yeah I'll see her on Tuesday.

Participant: Well, I'm going to put something in the mail for you on Sunday... So in terms of how you go through that process, man look, I've never seen so much bullshit in my life. Ok cuz see the objective is you're supposed to be rehabilitating us and giving us access to programs in which you allow us to become better citizens and educate us but as I pointed out to you earlier, the oxymoron the very notion of prison education is. There are so many restrictions in terms of what type of time you serve, what prison you're at, what security level you are, all of these things play into the question of whether you're eligible to partake in the programs, and that's not to mention if you don't have a GED. Now be mindful, coming into this place you'd think of all places it'd be easy for you to get your GED. But because of lockdowns, because of a lack of tentative staff, I can honestly say that during my nineteen years of incarceration I've only known maybe one or two instructors in the prison that I could say we're honestly passionate about teaching and helping us get our degrees. Most of these teachers come and kick their feet up and just push paperwork around. It's worse than in a continuation school. And this paper I want to send you on the *Rhetoric of Prison Rehabilitation* is the actual transcribed paper, in that I talk about work conflicts, when I say work I mean slaves. Yeah if you have a slave that conflicts with your school the work takes precedence. They have to keep their quotas. If you get transferred to another prison, now peep this, I got transferred from a maximum security to a medium security and guess what, in terms of being able to take that sociology class and continue the sociology class, I can no longer get the degree for in-person sociology class, they only allow me to take correspondence courses and I don't know if you ever took correspondence classes but sometimes they can be better sometimes they can be worse and in the case of sociology, it's one of those classes in which you need to have the experience and interaction with the facilitator. Math classes you could correspondence all day but sociology there are discussion, presentation all those things you develop in person class that you don't get the opportunity to do with the correspondence. Now when you transfer to different prisons they have different programs some don't even have a major program, they just offer the basics, like at this prison, they don't have a major program they just have the basics.

Me: So does that mean you can only get general education classes and not get an actual degree?

Participant: Exactly. Yeah and so the other things I said, lockdowns, transfers, work conflicts... Another thing is, I can actually apply for my associates degree through Los Medanos College that I took when I was on the streets, the problem is since I'm LWOP, I can't access certain parts of the prison where they offer in person classes for excel, Microsoft and computer class so all computer programs are out for me at this prison. I have security restrictions to areas where they hold the in person college computer classes.

Me: And where are you staying right now, in terms of prison?

Participant: I'm at Solano.

Me: Is that universal across all prisons? If you're serving life without parole you just can't access certain classes?

Participant: No, no. It's prison to prison. So you would think that coming down from maximum to medium security with no conduct slips that I would be eligible to partake in other programs, but the reality of it is, I had more access at the maximum security yard to take more courses than I do on the medium security yard.

Me: And why do you think that is?

Participant: Because of our sentence... Let me be clear about this, they still let me take some in person classes that are held in areas where I'm cleared to go, but in other areas, where the computer classes are at, because they're behind a fence and up a hill, all LWOPs are restricted.

Me: So you have some of these in person classes through some sort of postsecondary program, and how has that impacted your experience there?

Participant: In prison?

Me: Yeah.

Participant: Oh man, you said how has it impacted my experience in prison?

Me: Yeah like positive, negative?

Participant: So I'd have to say more negative than positive and I'm going to tell you why. So first of all you have to understand that most correctional officers don't have a postsecondary education, so how do you think it would make them feel if a prisoner is getting his education and becoming smarter than him?...So what do you think they do in terms of creating, how can I say this, trying to deter us from taking these classes?...Yeah it's a whole lotta shit going on. So lemme give you an example, lockdowns. We get lockdowns say there's a fight on the yard, they're still going to run the program and they so we can go to the program until they write their reports and we say "what about our college classes?". "We don't give a shit about your college program". Ok so one day I get into one of those very situations, class is at 2:30, I tell the officer at 2:00 "can you pop the door so I can go to college?" I realized nineteen years in prison its best to get where you're going because you never know what's going to happen in the next minute. And so it happens, yard goes down, officer tells me "you gotta wait". I wait. 2:30 comes around... by the time I get to the door going to class, I miss forty five minutes of class, when I get to the door to class the officer asks me why I'm late... I tell him what went down... [he insults him].

And there's been times when textbooks come up missing, computers get destroyed and they blame it on prisoners, I mean this is all the type of things they do. I've seen this stuff happen and I'm not saying this stuff for the sake of saying it, I'm saying it because this an everyday reality in prison. The officers feel like, "Why am I paying my taxes for you to get educated, you don't deserve that." So they do everything in their will to try and deter that, from getting an education. Whether it be restricting you from an area, refusing to get you supplies in terms of having your books on time because all of that stuff has to come through the correctional custody

staff, I've seen it all, I've seen them hold books for two months into the course and you get your books the last month of the course.

Me: It's so backwards.

Participant: It is backwards, it is. Because see people in society think when they see all these positive commercials about CDC that they think they're actually making a sincere effort, but let me say this, that may be what's going on at the top in Sacramento, but by the time they get the orders down here at the bottom, it's like you got some dude who has no college education, a high school diploma if that and all he's thinking about is maintaining the order of the prison at the expense of the law or any educational reform... that's why if you read our essay's we put rehabilitation in brackets lowercase and that's why we do it because it's a joke. So let's go back to what I was saying, human capital, if the name of the game is capital and objective is to you more... in terms of skills and capabilities you should see some of the outdated stuff they're giving us in here.

Me: In terms of what? Textbooks and such?

Participant: In terms of textbooks, in terms of vocational trades, I mean who's welding steel in 2019. So where in the hell is the code writing classes? You follow me? And why won't they give you code writing classes? Because you'll become smarter than them and you'll be able to figure out how to mess around and do something.

Me: How do you think these correctional institutions could create and implement programs to actually develop one's character and to actually rehabilitate them?

Participant: So to answer your question. When you think in terms of sociology and understand structural conditions... it's difficult for me to say that under the current structural conditions of prisons that you can actually create an environment that would be conducive to rehabilitating someone, that for one has to come from within that person, they have to want to change. But let's just say for the sake of entertaining the questions that I was to say I think it would be for one based on an individual basis because when you go on CDC's department of rehabilitation website it says your counselor assesses you for what programs you need to take and be available for, it's not to say they don't do that. But it's like look, you got a guy like me who walks into the prison system in 2004, I got forty nine credits in college, high school diploma, job history, what're you going to offer me? Maybe something with anger management, ok. Maybe if I had substance abuse problems, sure. But you gotta remember under the current structural conditions that are oppressive, that's creating more pain, more turmoil and more chaos in my life because now I'm cut off from my support base. What can they do? They had a special on 60 Minutes on the prisons in Germany. And what the deal was in Germany, they created an incentive program where if you had a life sentence, you could work your way back into society in twenty years. And what you had to do of course there were steps and educational requirements and it's not to say they don't have all that stuff here, but there's really no incentive at the end of the road in terms of if I do all they ask me to do that doesn't guarantee I get out of prison... In prison they strip you of your autonomy and so when they set up the structural environment in the prison

system they allowed the prisoner to maintain his autonomy... and within these twenty years it allowed him to earn his freedom. And I'll be the first person to tell you that that is the last thing they want in the United States. And when I say they I'm not talking about society, they are generally in the dark when it comes to prisons, it's the prison administrators they have a vested interest in maintaining the retributive approach to justice because that's what's paying retirement pensions, you follow me?

If you look at that interview about Germany's prisons, you'll see the structural systems I would say you have to put into place in order to assist the prisoner to maintain his humanity. Because everything that goes on in the prisons in the United States is dehumanizing, it's the whole concept of social death... everything is done symbolically in terms of symbolic interactionism, is done to strip you of the notion of your former self as a human being. So you have to change that. Because let's be honest here, most of us wind up in prison because we have already been dehumanized through certain circumstances that desensitize through violence and crime ridden communities where the norms are not in sync with conventional norms of society, so we come to a place like prison to compound that dehumanization which makes us more of what were before we came in here and so I can honestly say while we are having this conversation you're saying the best side of me, there are aspects to me that are not too goddamn good. That has been a result of my dehumanization and desensitization. I've been so desensitized that when my mother died two months ago, I didn't even shed a tear...But that's just how prison is, it desensitizes you it disconnects you from your family and your other human bonds and it becomes a struggle to try and hold onto.

Me: Did you have any experience learning that in any sterile classroom setting?

Participant: No, no. Even going into Megan's class, now be mindful this was an introduction to sociology class and you can't expect students to really develop the sociological imagination after three months of reading a textbook. That's, I think what we have to look at here is the process in which it takes, you're talking about years and years of observational study. Educational experience. So my sociological imagination I believe began early on in my younger life because I lived in the country on a farm as I would point out to my peers here in prison, I had to be conscious about everything around because there were snakes in the pond. I lived in the underserved communities where there were snakes out there in the bushes, you get what I'm saying? Yeah so, you start to see all these things but it's not until you come into the formal training that you start identifying the structural symbolic interactionism of why you interact and respond to a stop sign, you know because of the meaning that is associated with it. So no, to answer your question I don't think I have gained any type of sociological perspective from sitting in the classroom, other than maybe defining the terms.

Me: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Participant: No, I would like to get a copy of your dissertation when you're done with it.

Me: OK, it's not a dissertation, just my undergrad thesis but yeah I will send it over.

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