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Dialogue for researchers & practitioners

*Artwork by an incarcerated
photographer, courtesy of
AMAKA N.G.O., Greece*

Editor's Welcome

by

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Dear readers of the JPER:

Welcome to the fall issue of volume 3 of the JPER.

The spring issue appeared with a focus on women in prison. [Brittnie Aiello and Krista McQueeney](#) contributed an article on the implications for understanding motherhood as a mechanism of moral identity and social control. They discussed how incarcerated mothers constructed moral identities in the face of stigma of incarceration. Following an analysis of data from participant observation and in-depth interviews with incarcerated mothers, they discuss how mothers claim moral identities by embracing the identity of incarcerated mothers to reinforce the assumptions that motherhood is compulsory and should be reserved for women with enough money and standing to give their children advantages.

Further, [Kathryn V. Stanley](#) wrote a paper for our practitioner's section on the African American church's response to the special problems of African American women who reenter the community following incarceration. She concludes her discussion by proposing shifts in perspectives and theologies that reduce barriers to successful reintegration into the community at large, and the church in particular. Maybe there are some useful thoughts to be shared with those working in other contexts and countries to guide people back into society following release?

In addition, we published part one of a more extensive contribution from [Tanya Link](#) on breaking down barriers, where she describes the planning and implementation of an Inside Out Prison Exchange Course in a jail setting. She also offers an analysis of students' course evaluation to discuss the benefits of this educational experience.

The last paper that was published focused on the mysteries of working in the reentry facilities. [Ginger Walker](#), inspired by Greene, Merleau-Ponty, and Gehring, makes the argument that correctional educators should attempt to accept that they will never fully understand the lives and perspectives of their students. She suggests that by developing comfort with mystery, the educators will still be able to focus on instruction.

For the features, we continued our tradition with publishing a short historic vignette, with the focus on Matthew Davenport Hill and the pro-prison reform in Britain in the 19th century. Do you have similar stories to share from your own country? Any story of an event or a person who contributed significantly to the development of prison education and the reentry work in your country will be most appreciated. These vignettes will be assessed for appropriateness for the journal by the Editor, and will not be taken through the more elaborated editorial process. For the vignettes, we can also offer language assistance.

We published two book reviews during the spring term as well. The first was based on "Access to education in Europe" by Paul Downes, a book that also included a discussion on access to education in prisons. Downes also presented a précis of the chapter on prison education for the readers of JPER. The second reviews the book "Incarceration nations" by Baz Dreisinger, based on her experiences from visiting prisons around the world.

This closes the second issue of the third volume. We hope you have found something to inspire your future work by reading the journal.

Arve Asbjørnsen, Lead Editor

FEATURE--VIGNETTE

Remarks on Marenko (USSR) by Dewey (USA)

by THOM GEHRING

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Probably learning earlier about the work of Anton Makarenko from writer Maxim Gorky, philosopher and educator John Dewey went to visit the Soviet prison educator and prison reformer in 1928. Dewey believed “the Russians ‘are more akin to the American people than to any other people’” (Martin, J. [2002]. *The Education of John Dewey: A Biography*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 356). Dewey went to the USSR in spite of official scrutiny of his motivations by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (Martin, 2002, p. 351). Dewey’s visit was to one of Makarenko’s schools, “a children’s Colony. . . on the estate of a former Grand Duke” near Leningrad (Dykhuizen, G. [1973]. *The life and mind of John Dewey*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, p. 236).

. . . in Peterhof—up the Neva. . . The place marks the nearest approach of the White [capitalist armies to Leningrad [during the Civil War]; the buildings were more or less ruined in the warfare. . . not yet wholly restored, since the teachers and children must do the work; there is still need in some quarters for hot water and whitewash. Two-thirds of the children are former ‘wild children,’ orphans, refugees, etc., taken from the streets. . . I have never seen. . . such a large proportion of intelligently occupied children. They were not lined up for inspection. We. . . found them engaged in their various summer occupations, gardening, bee-keeping, repairing buildings, growing flowers in a conservatory (built and now managed by a group of particularly tough boys who began by destroying everything in sight), making simple tools and agricultural implements, etc. . . their manner and attitude is. . . what stays with me—I cannot convey it; I lack the necessary literary skill. But the net impression will always remain. If the children had come from the most advantageously situated families, the scene would have been a remarkable one, unprecedented. . . When their almost unimaginable earlier history and background were taken into account, the effect was to leave me with. . . admiration for the capacities of the people from which they sprang. . . an unshakable belief in what they can accomplish. (Dewey, J. [1929]. *Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary World*. New York: New Republic, Inc., pp. 27-29)

Makarenko operated this school under the auspices of the Soviet Police. Dewey was so impressed that in 1933 he helped make a film about Makarenko’s educational ideas, which was titled after Makarenko’s main book, *The Road to Life* (three vols). Dewey introduced the film with the following remarks:

Ten years ago, every traveler in Russia came back with stories of hordes of wild children who roamed the countryside and infested the streets. They were the orphans of soldiers killed in the war, of fathers and mothers who perished in the famine after the war. You will see a picture of their old road to life, a road of vagabondage, violence, thieving. You will also see their



new road to . . . life, a road constructed by a brave band of Russian teachers. After methods of repression had failed, they gathered these children together in collective homes, they taught them cooperation, useful work, healthful recreation. Against great odds they succeeded. There are today no wild children in Russia. You will see a picture of great artistic beauty, of dramatic action and power. You will also see a record of a great historic episode. These boys are not professional actors. They were once wild children, they once lived in an actual collective. You will also see an educational lesson of the power of freedom, sympathy, work and play to redeem the juvenile delinquent; a lesson from which we too may learn

(Dewey, in Bowen, J. [1965]. *Soviet Education: Anton Makarenko and the Years of Experiment*. Madison: University of Wisconsin, p. 4).

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RESEARCH PAPER

All Aboard the Desistance Line: First Stop, Producing Prosocial Prison Attachments within an HIV Prison-Based Peer Program

by KIMBERLY COLLICA-COX
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Abstract: *This article explores the importance of social bonds in facilitating an investment in prosocial behavior amongst female prisoners working as HIV peer educators. Female prisoners can lack strong prosocial attachments to both individuals and institutions prior to incarceration. Absent this bond, little prevents the female prisoner from recidivating. Prison provides an opportunity to fashion new attachments that will assist in the reintegrative process. One way to create strong bonds of attachment, particularly for women, is through working as an HIV peer educator while incarcerated. In order to measure attachment levels, interviews were conducted with 49 female prisoners who worked in two HIV prison-based peer programs during their incarceration. Female peers developed strong attachments to one another. Such attachments were formed while incarcerated and were maintained upon release, thus serving to bolster support for newfound prosocial identities.*

Key words: *HIV Peer Programs; Attachment; Female Prisoners, Prosocial Identity*

Individuals are likely to commit crime when prosocial bonds are deficient or damaged (Hirschi, 1969), encumbering one's departure from criminal behavior. When female prisoners lack strong prosocial attachments to both individuals and institutions prior to incarceration, little prevents them from recidivating. Although this is not always the case, bonds established before incarceration can weaken during a prisoner's time away, and the longer one is incarcerated, the more likely these bonds will further deteriorate (Petersilia, 2006). If social bonds are cultivated before a prisoner's release, she has a greater chance of maintaining a crime-free lifestyle (Hepburn & Griffin, 2004; Uggen, 2000). "A particularly prominent body of literature [suggests] social bonds play a central role in the reentry process" (Rocque, Bierie, Posick, & Mackenzie, 2013, p. 210). Strong social networks and a high level of "social capital" are essential for successful reintegration for female prisoners (Reisig, Holtfreter, & Morash, 2002). Although rarely acknowledged, prison can provide an opportunity to construct new social capital that assists in the reintegrative process, even when the newly formed relationships are fostered with fellow transgressors. Prison-based programs, which typically promote prosocial behavior, can connect prisoners to other prisoners who also want to invest in a prosocial (i.e., crime-free) lifestyle. These programs can assist prisoners in the desistance process by creating an environment that promotes prosocial behavior, in addition to showing them how to serve as a source of support for one another in their new prosocial roles (Koons, Burrow, Morash, & Bynum, 1997).

This study investigates whether prosocial bonds between prisoners develop within the correctional setting by examining two non-traditional prison-based vocational programs for female offenders in New York State (NYS) – the ACE (AIDS, Counseling & Education) Program at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility (BHCF) and the CARE (Counseling, AIDS, Resource and Education) Program at Taconic Correctional Facility (TCF); both programs are centered upon HIV peer education. There is little research conducted on less traditional vocational opportunities behind bars, such as HIV/AIDS peer education programs, and there is a paucity of literature regarding whether prosocial bonds develop when working in prison-based programs.



Literature Review

U.S. Incarceration

Approximately two million people are incarcerated in prisons; upon release, 67% of prisoners will return within a three year period (Durose, Cooper & Sydner, 2014). Mass incarceration is an American endeavor that began in the 1980s with the War on Drugs, disproportionately affecting poor persons and persons of color, often for non-violent crimes (Amnesty International, 2016). Women are not immune from these statistics. In a 2006 secondary data analysis of the Bureau of Justice Statistics' (BJS) recidivism data, 60% of female offenders were rearrested after release, 40% had new convictions and 30% returned to prison (Deschenes, Owen, & Crow, 2006). Overall, women prisoners present with more needs than their male counterparts, experiencing higher rates of depression, self-destructive behavior, and other types of mental illness (Jasperson, 2010; Keaveny & Zauszniewski, 1999). Powerlessness and dependency upon the normative structure of the prison can provide additional hindrances to the rehabilitative and reintegrative success for the female prisoner (Boudin, 1993). With only five percent of the world's population, the U.S. holds 22% of its prisoners, which is further complicated by the fact that as incarceration costs increase, funding for prison-based programming substantially decreases (Amnesty International, 2016). With this in mind, utilizing limited funds for programs that are evidence-based is more important than ever before.

HIV & Prison

Although rates of HIV infection and AIDS-related deaths are in decline (Maruschak, 2015), HIV is still a major health risk for prisoners, with the rate of infection among incarcerated populations five times greater than the rate within the general community (CDC, 2016). In the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, the curiosity of prisoners about AIDS was used to help promote literacy efforts for women at BHCF (Bedford Hills Correctional Facility); prisoners were able to discuss and write about AIDS, a subject which was of great concern (Boudin, 1993). Their interest led to a play about AIDS' issues, which eventually led to the creation of the ACE Program (Boudin, 1993).

BHCF is the only maximum-security prison for women in NYS, holding approximately 800 prisoners. Taconic Correctional Facility (TCF), located across the street from BHCF, is a medium-security facility for women in NYS, holding approximately 400 prisoners¹. Both ACE and CARE, in existence since the late 1980s, were created to provide a variety of services to the incarcerated population such as support groups, education, crisis counseling, HIV testing, discharge planning, special events, professional trainings, etc. ACE peers worked in hospice (also referred to as IPC - In Patient Care) to comfort and assist prisoners who were dying from AIDS-related complications during the height of the epidemic.

The high number of AIDS related deaths among prisoners in the 1990s (in addition to the use of longer sentencing options) led to an increase in prison hospice programs (Thigpen & Hunter, 1998). With AIDS related deaths in decline, hospice availability is still vital to the prison because of its aging prison population (a direct result of longer sentencing). Research shows that at least five elements are needed for successful prison-based hospice care: "patient-centered care, an inmate volunteer model, safety and security, shared values, and teamwork" (Cloyes, Rosenkranz, Berry, Supiano, Routt, Shannon-Dorcy, & Llanque, 2016, p. 390). When compared to community-based services, prison hospice is much stricter in regard to its volunteers, who are typically other prisoners (Hoffman & Dickinson, 2011). For NYS women prisoners, hospice programming is available at BHCF, and ACE peers were permitted to work with HIV patients when little was known about transmission and when death was often within six months of diagnosis (ACE, 1998). ACE successfully used a prisoner volunteer model at the program's onset, and the women of ACE continue to help prisoners struggling with terminal illnesses. Studies find that prisoners who work/volunteer in hospice undergo positive changes in self-perception; the experience can be transformative (Cloyes, Rosenkranz, Wold, Berry, & Supiano, 2014).

Attachment

A continued commitment to positive change will require support from those who seek and maintain attachment bonds. "Attachment" refers to the emotional closeness one shares with family, peers and institutions

¹ These numbers hold true at the time of data collection. The population for New York State, like most states, has decreased considerably.

(i.e., school, place of employment or religious establishment) (Chriss, 2007). Researchers argue that when we attach to other individuals or institutions (those that promote prosocial behavior, specifically anti-criminal involvements and behavior), we are more likely to believe in prosocial rules (i.e. adherence to the penal law) and there is a greater desire to engage in prosocial behavior; this involves an investment in obtaining employment, attaining housing, and circumventing criminal associates or behavior (Chriss, 2007). In regard to prisoners, a prosocial identity means replacing one's criminal identity with a law-abiding identity; it relates to one who is ready to abandon criminal ideas, motivations, and rationalizations. These *prosocial scripts* can inspire prisoners to take a strengths-based approach, focusing on how they can contribute to their communities by identifying their positive attributes, which, in turn, helps them to achieve a sense of worth and value, both of which are important in maintaining a crime-free identity (Maruna & LeBel, 2003). Attachment damage, which often begins in adolescence as a result of delinquency or criminal involvement, affects the quality and strength of attachments in adulthood, increasing the possibility for adult offending (Chapple, Hope, & Whiteford, 2005; Cretacco, Fei Ding, & Rivera, 2010; Intravia, Jones & Piquero, 2012).

Engaging in criminal activity can destroy relationships between persons when one has a commitment to maintaining a prosocial identity; therefore, the fear of damaging these relationships helps to promote prosocial behavior. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that there are both positive and negative attachments (Belknap, 2015). Not all attachments are beneficial and criminal attachments can promote unlawful behavior (Burton, 1991; Hindelang, 1973; Sutherland, 1949). Even when strong attachments develop, it does not necessarily preclude future criminality (Rankin, 1976). In fact, there are instances where "seemingly" positive attachments exist with other persons engaged in prosocial behaviors that have no effect on criminal behavior (Terry & Freilich, 2012). It is not solely the bonds to society that serve to modify; it is their quality and strength. Those with an investment in maintaining a prosocial identity have reduced recidivism (Piquero, 2003) and those with strong attachments to others who are also invested in maintaining a prosocial identity are less likely to recidivate (MacKenzie & De Li, 2002; Rocque et al., 2013).

Most of the literature regarding the social bonding process for prisoners focuses on processes occurring after the prisoner's release (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Lopoo & Western, 2005). However, during the incarceration process, relationships, established prior to prison, can change for the worse. The stigmatization of incarceration and the negative labels that ensue can make it difficult for prisoners to establish new bonds (Laub & Sampson, 2003). The prison experience creates obstacles to maintaining old bonds, while the negative label of "criminal" makes it difficult to attach to prosocial institutions and to create new prosocial partnerships upon release (Graffam, Shinkfield, & Hardcastle, 2008; Huebner, 2007; Shinkfield & Graffam, 2009; Western, 2002).

Attachment for Girls and Women

Males and females are affected differently in regard to pathways toward, and desistance from, crime; a gender-specific understanding of pathways to crime and desistance is needed (Booth, Farrell, & Varano, 2008). Initial studies regarding social bonds and their relationship to delinquency focus exclusively on males (Belknap, 2015). Subsequent studies shed some light on its applicability to women, but findings are not unequivocal. Strong family relationships appear particularly important in controlling deviant behavior amongst adolescence girls (Belknap, 2015; Sepsi, 1974). For adults, much of the literature on attachment points to the marital bond as an aid in the desistance process (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Wyse, Harding, & Morenoff, 2014). Yet, marital bonds shape male and female behavior differently (Li & MacKenzie, 2003) and while marriage appears to enable the desistance process for men, the research on women, marriage and desistance is not as clear (Alarid, Burton, & Cullen, 2000; Cobbina, Huebner, & Berg, 2012; Thompson & Petrovic, 2009). Relationships that occur after a woman's release from prison tend to involve partners with similar criminal or addictive histories; women's relationships with men involved in crime lead to women returning to crime (Bersani, Laub, & Nieuwbeerta, 2009; Wyse et al., 2014). Marriage does not seem to have a strong effect on the formerly incarcerated woman's drug use or her level of criminal activity (O'Connell, 2003). Women leaving prison may not have the same opportunities as men to partner with spouses who engage in prosocial activities, and criminal partners are more likely to predict recidivism for women than men (Benda, 2005). It appears that marriage itself is not necessarily life altering for women; it must be with a spouse who is invested

in maintaining a prosocial identity in order to have any discernible effect on criminality.

Even while incarcerated, women are less likely than incarcerated men to have a supportive spouse, and they are more likely than their male counterparts to be responsible for child care, reunification issues and displaced children upon release (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2014). The quality of relationships, especially with family members, assists in promoting reintegration and helps to insulate women from behavior that results in re-arrest (Bahr, Armstrong, Gibbs, Harris & Fisher, 2005; Valera, Chang, Hernandez, & Cooper, 2015). Regrettably, successful reintegration is often hindered for female offenders because establishing successful and prosocial relational bonds is difficult. Even if women have strong bonds prior to incarceration, the distance and cost of maintaining contact with family members makes it difficult to remain in consistent contact and can inevitably weaken previously established relationships (Petersilia, 2006). Visitation with family and friends while incarcerated can promote the bond of attachment and reduce offending (Bales & Mears, 2008), but incarcerated women tend to receive fewer visits than men. Many women who come to prison suffer with attachment issues as a result of past trauma, broken families, abuse, neglect and psychopathologies (Belknap, 1996; Dow, 2001). Although social bonds are a vital component to reentry success, behavioral change and reduced recidivism (Bersani, et al., 2009; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Sampson, Laub & Wimer, 2006), especially at the time of release (Hepburn & Griffin, 2004; O'Connell, 2003; Piquero, 2003; Tripodi, 2010; Uggen, 2000), women are at a clear disadvantage. Yet, women, when compared to men, appear to need and have more social support from one another while incarcerated (Jiang & Winfree, 2006). The importance of having peer support in prison cannot be underestimated (Toch, 1975), especially for the woman who lacks social support outside of the prison environment. Strong social supportive networks not only assist with prison adaptation, but they aid in the reintegrative process (Cullen, 1994; Reisig et al., 2002). Strong social support, particularly through programming, can reduce the harmful effects of prison (Colvin, Cullen & Vander Ven, 2002), such as mediating feelings of hostility among releasees (Hochstetler, DeLisi, & Pratt, 2010). Empirical relationships are found between the development and maintenance of social bonds during incarceration and the subsequent risk for recidivism (Rocque et al., 2013). "It is fitting that social support [is] also linked to recidivism, desistance, and reintegration among correctional or high criminality samples" (Hochstetler et al., 2010, p. 591).

With limited prosocial attachments available, it is necessary to examine whether attachments for women prisoners can be created while incarcerated and maintained upon release to promote successful reintegration. Risk factors (i.e., separation from children, low self-esteem, prior abuse, mental illness, etc) for maladaptive behavior can be gender-specific (Celinska & Sung, 2014; Jiang & Winfree, 2006; Wright, Salisbury, & Van Voorhis, 2007). Prison can make a difference in the offenders' lives by allowing bonds to be created or reintroduced (Rocque et al., 2013), but prison can also limit the success of the desistance process by damaging bonds (Petersilia, 2003) (i.e., when factoring the costs of time, distance and finances, bonds are difficult for family members to maintain with incarcerated loved ones). Disappointingly, research often ignores the social bonding processes in prison, focusing exclusively on postrelease attachments (Rocque et al., 2013).

The bonds created between women prisoners while incarcerated can play a role in institutional adjustment. Prison adaptation is of great concern for prison administrators as the way one adapts to the prison environment can negatively impact behavior and lead to increased disciplinary problems; maladaptive behaviors are also likely to impede reintegration (Clemmer 1940; Irwin & Cressey, 1962). Female prisoners may bond with one another through the recreation of family units (i.e., pseudo families) inside prison walls (Giallombardo, 1966.) Family creation could serve as a coping mechanism to ameliorate the pains associated with incarceration (i.e., the separation from one's family and children), and they appear to be primary in meeting and fulfilling the emotional needs of the female prisoner (DeBell, 2001; Huggins, Capeheart, & Newman, 2006; Jones, 1993; Severance, 2005). Other works find that the nature of America's female prison "pseudo family" may be evolving, and correspondingly, diminishing in importance (Fox 1984; Greer, 2000; Propper, 1982; Severance, 2005). With this in mind, a new way to create supportive networks in prison must be considered (Collica, 2010).

Since women can lack supportive networks and employment skills, prison-based programming may increase opportunities for her institutional and post release success (Bonta & Andrews, 2007). Programs are a way for women to obtain strong prosocial support during, and possibly after, incarceration (Koons et al, 1997;

Severance, 2005). However, programs need to be gender-responsive, offender specific, culturally-sensitive and address the differences between men and women in terms of their needs, behaviors and pathways to incarceration in order to be effective (Andrews & Dowden, 2007; Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2004; Bloom & Covington, 2000). "According to the pathways perspective, the confluence of trauma, substance abuse, and mental health puts women on 'pathways' to crime that are inherently different from the pathways into crime that males take" (Wright et al., 2007, p. 313). When gender-specific policies to address these differences between men and women are absent, women do not receive adequate services to help prepare them for a successful transition.

Identity shifts may be necessary to help women move away from criminal behavior, but such shifts require support (Proctor, 2009). A desire to help others and an aspiration to work in a service profession helps prisoners to transform a deviant identity into a prosocial one (Brown, 1991; Maruna, 2001; Proctor, 2009). It does not ignore the previous identity, but uses the experience from that identity (i.e., working as a counselor with offenders) to successfully adapt to a new prosocial role. For those who are formerly incarcerated, establishing strong bonds to the workplace can begin with the belief that their work allows them to achieve a higher purpose in life. This would include positions that focus on helping others, particularly those who have been through similar life experiences. Prisoners underestimate their abilities and potential (Proctor, 2009), but with support, encouragement, and positive role models, change is possible. In order to change one's trajectory, the prisoner has to come to terms with his or her criminal past and make plans for his or her law abiding future (Maruna, 2001). By helping others, they are able to reform their past, recreate their self identities, and finally accomplish a certain level of success (Lofland, 1969; Nouwen, 1972). The offender does not have to be ashamed of his or her past; he or she utilizes it as a tool to help others. In a study of female desisters in New York City, Sommers, Baskin and Fagin (1994) state, "Overall, the success of identity transformation hinges on the women's abilities to establish and maintain commitments and involvements in conventional aspects of life. As the women began to feel accepted and trusted within some conventional social circles, their determination to exit from crime was strengthened, as were their social and personal identities as noncriminals" (p. 144).

"...The evidence suggests that carefully designed and administered education and work programs can improve prisoners' institutional behavior, reduce recidivism, and promote involvement in prosocial activities after release" (Gaes, Flanagan, Motiuk, & Stewart, 1999, p. 398). Some programs appear to be more successful than others because they are separate from the rest of the facility (this minimizes distractions), they provide follow-up services (like job placement), and they provide skills that are highly marketable in today's job market (Gerber & Fritsch, 1995). In a literature review on prison education, Linden & Perry (1983) find that programs will be most successful if they are "intensive", if they can establish an "alternative community within the prison", and if they offer "post-release services to inmates" (p. 55). Prior research also lends support to the notion that releasees feel more comfortable receiving support from others who are formerly incarcerated (Eaton, 1993). Working in non-traditional prison-based programming, like ACE (AIDS, Counseling & Education) and CARE (Counseling, AIDS, Resource & Education), two HIV peer programs, can allow peers the opportunity to form prosocial relationships and attachments with one another, thereby increasing opportunities for reintegrative and rehabilitative success.

Sampling, Methods & Data

ACE & CARE

This mixed-method study design, based on the narratives of 49 women, examined the effects of two HIV prison-based peer programs on prisoner peers in NYS (New York State): The ACE Program located at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility (BHCF) and the CARE Program located at Taconic Correctional Facility (TCF). ACE educated over 3,000 women annually and CARE educated approximately 600 women annually. The programs consisted of five civilians when fully staffed: a CARE Coordinator, an ACE Coordinator, a HIV Test Counselor, a HIV Discharge Planner, and an Upstate Supervisor. The number of prisoner peers varied (anywhere from 4 to 9). Women in this sample worked for ACE/CARE for an average of 4 years, ranging from 6 months to 13 years. They were trained to provide counseling, educational workshops, and facilitate support groups. In addition, they had permission to work with specialized prison groups such as the nursery mothers, those in the behavioral health unit, those in hospice care, etc.

Prospective peer workers must have or be working toward their GED. All were required to submit a resume, successfully complete the HIV professional training series (offered by CARE/ACE), undergo two interviews (one by the program coordinator and one by the other prisoner peers), and teach a demonstration lesson. Prospective workers must have a good disciplinary record during the months directly preceding employment. Prisoners with poor records were encouraged to maintain good behavior for a few months before reapplying. Once hired, a poor disciplinary record was grounds for dismissal. Upon securing a peer position, each prisoner staff member was supervised by a civilian (either the ACE or CARE Coordinator) from a community-based organization (Women's Prison Association – WPA). Together, the civilians and prisoners not only delivered comprehensive HIV related services, they created a supportive, community-oriented environment within the prison.

Sample

The author collected data from female participants over a seven month period, yielding a sample of 49 women. The sample in this study included: (a) women incarcerated in BHCF and TCF who were currently working as peer educators for ACE or CARE at the time of the study, (b) women incarcerated in one of NYS' five female facilities (Albion, Bayview, Beacon, Bedford Hills, or Taconic²) who previously worked as peer educators for ACE/CARE or both programs, and (c) formerly incarcerated women living in the community who, during their incarceration, worked for ACE, CARE, or both programs. Since TCF is a medium-security facility, many women at BHCF who worked for ACE will work for CARE if drafted to TCF. ACE/CARE civilians also worked in both facilities. All participation in this study was voluntary (no incentives were allowed) and all interviews were conducted in private (IRB approval was obtained from the City University of NY and the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision). Forty-nine percent (n=24) of the women were formerly incarcerated and 51% (n=25) of the women were currently incarcerated at the time of data collection. Based upon extensive one-on-one semi-structured interviews with these women, the author utilized a snowball/chain referral sample to obtain additional participants³. Of the 57 women identified and located by the author as matching the study's eligibility requirements (i.e., a current/former peer worker for ACE/CARE), seven women declined to participate, and one woman, incarcerated at Albion, was unable to be interviewed, yielding a response rate of 86% (n=49). In order to maintain the confidentiality of subjects, women were asked to choose their own pseudonyms, which served as a unique identifier to describe a part of her personality.

Since women could not be randomly assigned to groups (as it would disrupt the prison's regular schedule), between group comparisons were conducted. It was hypothesized that women who worked for the program one year or more or who remained working with the program until their release would have higher levels of attachment to their ACE/CARE peers when compared to those women who worked for ACE/CARE less than one year or left the program prior to their release. It was also hypothesized that women who were responsible for the inception of the program would have greater levels of attachment to their ACE/CARE peers than those women who were not responsible for the creation of ACE/CARE.

Many questions required open-ended responses and yielded in-depth answers. The author examined common themes in answers generated by respondents, utilizing a framework analysis, managing data by case and theme (Glasser & Strauss, 1967), such as perceptions of peer support and encouragement, concerns regarding peer perception, the maintenance of mutual respect between peers, the utilization of peers to cope with stress, etc. Responses were recorded in written format by the author (tape recording was prohibited) and transcribed later that day. Categorization of responses and themes continued during transcription. It was believed that the use of both quantitative and qualitative measures would increase the validity of participants' responses and provide a fuller understanding of their experiences. To insure the validity and reliability of the

² Since the completion of this study, Bayview and Beacon Prisons were closed due to a decrease in NYS' inmate population.

³ The author worked with the creators of ACE/CARE to devise a list of all women who worked for both programs. Out of approximately 65 women identified, 49 were interviewed. Women not included were deported, deceased or unable to be located. Hence, 75% of all women who worked for both programs participated in this study. Snowball sampling, though not ideal, was the only way to locate subjects. The DOCCS (Department of Corrections and Community Supervision) does not keep records on peer workers.

questions on the interview schedule, questions were borrowed from previous researchers who extensively studied attachment (Alarid et al., 2000; Hirschi, 1969; Friedman & Rosenbaum, 1988; Lasley, 1998; Rosenbaum, 1987; Sampson & Laub, 1993; 1990; Shover, Norland, James & Thornton, 1979; Rankin, 1976). These questions were borrowed from the aforementioned authors and modified to measure attachment levels for current and formerly incarcerated women. For both sets of women, specific questions were asked measuring their levels of attachment to their ACE/CARE coworkers. To measure attachment to their peer coworkers, 14 questions were asked regarding the nature of their relationships, how they viewed their coworkers, and how they thought their coworkers viewed them (see Table One for question item statistics).⁴ To determine if some peers were more likely than other types of peers to have strong attachments to their coworkers, answers to questions on the interview schedule measuring the variable of attachment was assigned a score of one or zero by the interviewer. A score of one signified that there was a high to moderate level of attachment (positive responses), while a score of zero signified that there was a low to no level of attachment (negative responses). Institutional behavior/conduct was measured in terms of disciplinary infractions. Reintegrative success was measured via recidivism data and recidivism was measured in terms of a parole violation and/or an arrest. The adoption of a new "prosocial identity" was measured through self-perception and how participants felt they were perceived by others in their role as a peer educator.

Demographics of the sample differed slightly from the average NYS female prisoner. In this sample, whites tended to be overrepresented (33% compared to a 22% rate among the study population), and the age of participants tended to be four years older (40 years old compared to an average of 36 years old among the study population) than the average NYS female prisoner. All women had the equivalent of a high school education or higher. Many of the participants (33%; $n=16$) were charged with multiple crimes. As to their most serious charge, 49% ($n=24$) were serving time for murder or manslaughter, 31% ($n=15$) were serving time for a drug-related offense, 12% ($n=6$) were serving time for assault, and 2% were serving time for robbery ($n=1$), burglary ($n=1$), kidnapping ($n=1$), or forgery ($n=1$). For participants who were incarcerated ($n=25$), the average time served at the time of the interview was 11 years and six months. For participants who were residing in the community ($n=24$), the average time served in prison was eight years and eight months.

Prior to incarceration, subjects appeared to have attachments to family and friends, but these bonds were weakened by their behavior. Almost one-half of the women (43%; $n=21$) were unemployed prior to their incarceration. Over half (65%; $n=32$) of the sample stated that they earned less than \$10,000 per year, prior to their arrest, 59% ($n=29$) stated that they had children, and most women (73%; $n=36$) resided with a family member prior to their incarceration. Forty-nine percent ($n=24$) of the women reported sexual abuse and 45% ($n=22$) reported a history of physical abuse. Seventy-one percent ($n=35$) of the women had a history of drug use/misuse and 41% ($n=20$) exchanged sex in order to obtain drugs. Fifty-seven percent ($n=28$) reported that this was not their first offense. For releasees, 33% lived alone when they returned home and for incarcerated respondents, less than half (48%) believed they could reside with a family member/partner upon release: 24% hoped they could obtain placement in transitional housing, 16% planned to live alone, and 12% did not know where they would live. Subjects were involved in other prosocial activity while incarcerated with 86% of subjects reporting involvement in an educational program, 12% in a religious program, and 19% involved with other programs, in addition to their work with ACE/CARE.

It is important to note that most of the women were not HIV positive. Only 14% ($n=7$) were diagnosed with HIV; the remaining peers were HIV negative. When asked why they decided to work for ACE/CARE, many of the women maintained that they wanted to help others (43%; $n=21$), they wanted to educate others and learn more about HIV infection (39%; $n=19$), they had a loved one who died of AIDS-related complications (14%; $n=7$), or they wanted to lessen the stigma associated with being HIV positive (4%; $n=2$).

Findings

Perceptions of Peer-Related Support

Social support was vital to the desistance process; the support female prisoners received and the sup-

⁴ Overall, responses to open-ended questions were given a score of one if they were positive in tone and a score of zero if negative in tone. Likert statements resulting in answers such as *all*, *almost all*, *many*, *a lot*, *most* or *some* received a score of 1, while *few*, *none*, *not much* or *not at all* received a score of zero.

Table One – Quantitative Measures of Peer Attachment

Statement	Frequency					Percent					N
How would you describe your relationship with your other peer workers?	Qualitative Response Positive 100					Qualitative Response Positive 100					49 (100%)
How many of your coworkers seemed to care about how successful you were while in prison?	All	Almost All	Most	Few	None	All	Almost All	Most	Few	None	49 (100%)
How many of your coworkers seemed to care about how successful you would be after you were released from prison?	All	Almost All	Many	Few	None	All	Almost All	Many	Few	None	49 (100%)
What kind of work did your coworkers expect from you?	Excellent	Good	Fair	No Expectation		Excellent	Good	Fair	No Expectation		49 (100%)
Did you/Do you care about what your coworkers thought of you?	Cared A Lot Somewhat Not Much Not at All					Cared A Lot Somewhat Not Much Not at All					49 (100%)
Did you/Do you respect your coworkers' opinions about the important things in life?	All	Most	Some	None		All	Most	Some	None		49 (100%)
Would your coworkers in ACE/CARE be upset with you if you committed a disciplinary infraction?	Yes	Depends	No			Yes	Depends	No			49 (100%)
Would it bother you if your coworkers were upset with you?	Yes	Somewhat	No			Yes	Somewhat	No			49 (100%)
Would you say that you have/had a lot of respect for your coworkers?	A Lot	Some	None			A Lot	Some	None			49 (100%)
Did you/Do you share your thoughts and feelings with your ACE/CARE coworkers?	A Lot	Some	Very Little	Not at All		A Lot	Some	Very Little	Not at All		49 (100%)
Did you/Do you find your coworkers to be helpful to you during stressful times?	All	Most	Some	None		All	Most	Some	None		49 (100%)
Were/Are you coworkers some of your best friends?	All	Most	Some	None		All	Most	Some	None		49 (100%)
Did you/Do you feel that working in ACE/CARE was/is like having an extended family?	Yes	No				Yes	No				49 (100%)
Would your coworkers have trouble by you if you got in trouble?	All	Most	Some	None	Don't Know	All	Most	Some	None	Don't Know	49 (100%)

port female prisoners provided were equally as important in this process. In order to measure perceptions of peer-related support, participants were asked a series of questions regarding their feelings toward their coworkers. When participants were asked how they perceived their relationship with their other peer workers, all respondents (100%; n=49) answered positively, regardless of their time with either program. Many participants spoke about their ACE/CARE coworkers as being a source of support, and some referred to their coworkers as family. They recognized they would have arguments and disagreements, but that they were still very close with each other. Shyone (an ACE peer) stated:

Many of us are still great friends today. My closest and dearest friends are the women I had worked with in ACE...

In general, the women who worked for ACE/CARE appeared to share a very strong connection with

each other. Older members often served as mentors for younger members, recreating a supportive family-like structure. Volcano, an ACE peer, stated:

It was beautiful. We really had a family and some of us were closer than others but we all had each other's back. There was no other place in prison with that type of unity.

Waiting, a CARE peer, 18 years of age, acknowledged the support she received:

It was good. I was the baby. They were my mothers, my big sisters, and my aunts. Everybody had a lot of patience with me.

Promoting Success

In order to increase one's chances for success, it was necessary for others to emulate and support a similar model of success. To overcome challenges during this process, peers needed to feel that others were invested in their success and cared about what happened to them; it was another important factor in the perception of social support. Ninety-eight percent (n=48) of participants acknowledged that their coworkers seemed to care about how successful they would be while in prison. Although these questions were closed-ended (answers were based on a Likert scale), many of the women spoke openly about each question. Participants spoke about the positive encouragement given to them by their coworkers and described how this enabled them to succeed and excel in the prison environment; responses were not impacted by the length of time in either program:

There was mad love, mad love. We all watched each other grow up. If they saw you doing some thing you weren't supposed to be doing or something that could lead to trouble, they would pull your coat and say, what the hell are you doing? (Rafeequa/ACE Peer)

Ninety-eight percent (n=48) said their coworkers cared about their success after release:

We all worried about each other. They worried about every one of us when we went home. It was scary to go home because a lot of us were doing a lot of time. (Air/ACE Peer)

High expectations were placed upon the women by one another. Peer workers were asked about the type of work that was expected from them by their coworkers, with 92% (n=45) who reported "excellent or good":

We were there to do what we were supposed to do. The core group had high standards of work ethics... (Sarabanda/ACE Peer)

Concern Regarding Peer Perceptions

Attachments can be negatively affected if behavior does not conform to previously established ideas of conduct. A desire to meet these expectations could encourage prosocial behavior. When asked if they cared about what their peers thought about them, 39% (n=19) stated that they cared "a lot" and 22% (n=11) said they "somewhat" cared. These women expressed very strong opinions on the subject matter:

I cared a lot about what they thought of my work. You are only as strong as your weakest link and my work reflects on everyone. (Hopeful/ACE & CARE Peer)

I carried myself in a particular way. As an individual they knew I was outspoken and strong minded within reason. I expected them to know that and I expected them to respect me. They didn't have to agree with me and they didn't have to like me. I didn't have to agree with them and I didn't have to like them but we all had to respect one another. (Marie/ACE peer)

I cared a lot. I may not have portrayed that because I tried to act like it didn't, but it did. I really cared. (Waiting/CARE Peer)

In succeeding questions, the majority of the women stated they respected their coworkers' opinions

and they would be bothered if their coworkers were upset with them. When asked if they respected their coworkers' opinions about the important things in life, 55% (n=27) said all, 25% (n=12) said most, and 20% (n=10) said some. Even if the women did not agree with what was being said, they respected a peer's right to express her opinion:

You reserve the right to be who you are. Even if I don't like what you are saying, I respect your right to say it and I won't interfere. (Face/ACE Peer)

Since the women were very aware that their behaviors reflected upon the program, questions were asked to determine if they thought the peers would be upset with them if they committed a disciplinary infraction. Sixty-nine percent (n=34) said their peers would be upset with them, 14% (n=7) said it would depend upon the reason for the ticket, and 16% (n=8) said they would not be troubled if their peers were upset with them. Many of the women believed that prisoners would often receive tickets in prison, even if the disciplinary infraction was not justified. Their peers would be upset with them if it was a situation that could have been avoided. Whether they were right or wrong, the women believed that even if their peers were upset with their behavior, they would not relinquish their support:

We all had our share. It is easy to get a disciplinary infraction in here. You can get one for breathing wrong. You can get one because you are the victim of an officer having a bad day. (Compassionate/ACE Peer)

We would talk each other out of doing crazy things but it would depend on what it was for. If it was something stupid that I did, than yes, they would be upset with me but if I couldn't avoid it, than no. (Rose/ACE Peer)

When asked if it would bother them if their coworkers were upset with them, 59% (n=29) said yes, 8% (n=4) said somewhat, and 33% (n=16) said no. Those women who stated "yes" perceived the peers to be a family unit, whose members would not want to be upset or disappointed. The essence of the "prosocial identity" was noted in the women's perceptions of self. The view of being a role model, characteristic of a prosocial identity, was echoed several times and appeared to have a strong impact on decision making:

We were looked at as role models to others, to everybody. (Mary/ACE)

... We were seen as someone to look up to, a role model. (Sky/CARE)

For those women who stated that they would not be bothered, there was a feeling that they were responsible for their own decisions and they hoped that the peers would be understanding:

I don't know if they would be upset as much as disappointed. I would not really be upset because I would get what the hand called for. There were unwritten expectations placed on us. The women who didn't work for CARE looked up to us and the correctional staff placed expectations on us – we had privileges. (Shak/CARE Peer)

Yes. It would have bothered me more if they weren't upset with me. I would have been disappointed. (Purposed/ACE Peer)

Mutual Respect

The variable of attachment to peers was also measured by asking participants if they had a lot of respect for their ACE/CARE peers and if they shared their thoughts and feelings with them often. Sixty-five percent (n=32) of respondents stated that they had a lot of respect for their peers, 31% (n=15) stated they only had respect for some of their peers, while 4% (n=2) said they did not have any respect for their peers. Most of the women stated that even if they did not like a particular peer, they still possessed the ability to respect her and the work that she was trying to accomplish within the program:

I respected them a lot even if I didn't like them because they could reach someone that I possibly

couldn't. They were all assets to the program. (Scarlet/ACE)

I respected some of the women I worked with as people and for those that I didn't respect as people, I did respect the work that they did. (Face/ACE)

Coping With Stress through Peer-Relational Support Networks

Incarceration was extremely stressful, particularly for female prisoners, many of whom suffered emotionally because of the separation from their family and children. If stress was left unmanaged, it could have resulted in maladaptive behavior (Celinska & Sung, 2014). In order to gain a greater understanding of the types of stresses these women experienced during their incarceration, they were asked to describe the most stressful part about being in prison. Fifty-three percent (n=26) of the sample stated that the separation from family was the most difficult, particularly being separated from their children and the constant worry about their children's well being. Many of these participants also had to deal with the loss of a family member while in prison. Other participants reported that they felt powerless or they hated being locked-in, having no freedom and little privacy. Others expressed concern over the inconsistencies in the rules, being dehumanized, having to take orders, and going in front of the parole board:

The inconsistency within the prison. Five minutes ago you could do something and five minutes later you can't. (Yasmeen, ACE Peer)

Losing my mother while I was in there. (Marie/ACE & CARE Peer)

Not being able to do what I want to do and need to do. You are stagnated in here. You have no life. You're just existing. (Free/CARE Peer)

Coping with this stress and being able to talk about it with others distinguished one's prison sentence from being hard time or harder time. Having the ability to speak freely with other women in the program provided an appropriate outlet for stress and allowed them to manage their stress more effectively. Sharing one's feelings was one way to alleviate some of the associated stress. In terms of sharing their thoughts and feelings with their coworkers, 63% (n=31) said they shared a lot, 31% (n=15) said they shared some of the time, 4% (n=2) said that they shared very little, and 2% (n=1) did not share anything at all. When asked how many of their coworkers were helpful during stressful times, 30% (n=15) said all of them were helpful, 43% (n=21) said most, 25% (n=12) said some, and only 2% (n=1) said none:

They were my biggest support system when my daughter died. ... The ACE women were really there for me because it was my most difficult time. (Volcano/ACE)

Many of the women had at least one peer in ACE/CARE who they considered to be a best friend. When asked if they considered their coworkers to be some of their best friends, 8% (n=4) said all, 20% (n=10) said most, 57% (n=28) said some, and 14% (n=7) said none:

We were close friends and we were always there for each other. We spent a lot of time outside of work together. If one of us was having a stressful day, we would meet in the yard to talk about it. If one of us lost a patient, we had a sit down to talk about it. (Hopeful/ACE & CARE)

When asked if they felt like working for ACE/CARE was like having an extended family, an overwhelming majority of women (94%) (n=46) answered affirmatively; this was not affected by time spent in either program. This feeling of family was very important and something that appeared to help them through difficult periods. When asked how many of their coworkers would have stuck by them if they had gotten into any type of trouble, 35% (n=17) said all of them, 27% (n=13) said most of them, 29% (n=14) said some of them, 8% (n=4) said none of them, and 2% (n=1) said they did not know. Having peer/staff support was something the women expected; however, this support was conditional. There was the feeling that if they engaged in behavior that would jeopardize the program, they would not be entitled to staff support:

There was one crazy situation but they stuck by me. Only a few hesitated. People would stick by me

in however capable they were able to do so. (Annie/ACE Peer)

There was a very special bond between us. If anyone went to lock or was removed from the program, we gave them support. It was like a family. (W21/ACE Peer)

We would keep each other on the up and up. If someone was straying, we would say what's up, what's going on? If we had to, we would kick them out of the program. Everything about you reflected upon the program. You could not just leave the room and said that you weren't in ACE so you could do whatever you wanted. ACE followed us everywhere at every time and we had to be mindful of our behavior. (Sarabanda/ACE Peer)

Desire to Maintain Peer Relationships Upon Release

Bonds of attachment were important for successful reintegration (Valera et al., 2015). If family bonds were weak or non-existent, relationships maintained with one another could help to mitigate feelings of isolation while encouraging support for new prosocial identities. Incarcerated respondents strongly desired maintaining contact with their ACE/CARE coworkers (84%) (n=41) upon being released. When asked if they planned to keep in contact with their ACE/CARE coworkers, 4% (n=2) said they would keep in contact with all of them, 12% (n=6) said most of them, 68% (n=33) said some of them, 12% (n=6) said none of them, and 4% (n=2) said they did not know if they would maintain contact. Two respondents expressed concern that although they would like to maintain contact with their coworkers after release, they did not want to violate one of the conditions of their parole by associating with "another known felon."

Twenty-two out of 24 releasees (92%) kept in contact with their former ACE/CARE peer workers since their release. Only two peers did not maintain contact with any of their former coworkers; they said it was not intentional, and they just lost track of everyone. One of these women gave me her business card and asked me to distribute it to other former ACE members who I might be interviewing. She was anxious to reconnect with many of her peers. For the other 22 women, 18 stated they maintained contact with most of their peers and four women said they maintained contact with some of their peers. None of the women managed to stay in contact with all of their peers: 17% (n=8) maintained contact with one coworker, 29% (n=14) with two coworkers, 13% (n=6) with three coworkers, 13% (n=6) with four coworkers, 4% (n=2) with five coworkers, 4% (n=2) with six coworkers, and three women (13%) maintained contact with ten former coworkers. On average, the women spoke to their former coworkers approximately ten times per year, ranging from two women who spoke to their former coworkers weekly and five women who spoke to their coworkers only twice per year. Seventy-nine percent of releasees stated that their coworkers were still a continued source of support for them, which appeared to reinforce institutional/post release success and preservation of a prosocial lifestyle.

Overall Attachment Levels

In measuring levels of attachment quantitatively, the highest score a respondent could obtain was 14 points, while the lowest score was a zero. Overall, the score for attachment to coworkers for both groups (i.e., those who stayed with the program until their release versus those who left the program prior to their release and those who created the program versus those who did not create the program) was fairly high (mean=10.6; median=11; mode=11) (see Figure 1).⁵ Those who stayed with the program until their release had slightly higher levels of attachment to their coworkers than those who did not stay with the program until their release (average scores of 11 versus 10 respectively) (see Figure 2). When comparing those who created the program to those who were not responsible for creating the program, levels of attachment were higher for the first group

⁵ These differences, when utilizing the Mann-Whitney test, a nonparametric test to compare the means of two independent samples, where the population is not assumed to be normally distributed, did not prove to be statistically significant (*Mann-Whitney U statistic*=202; *Wilcoxon W statistic*=608). The associated *p* value of .059 was not statistically significant at the <0.0005 level. This test requires 4 assumptions: the dependent variable must be ordinal (attachment score), the independent variable must have two categorical groups (creators v non-creators or stayed with the program v left the program), there must be an independence of observations (participants can only be in one group), and the two groups are not normally distributed.

of peers (average attachment score of 12 verses 10) when compared to the latter group (see Figure 3).⁶ None of the differences between groups were statistically significant.

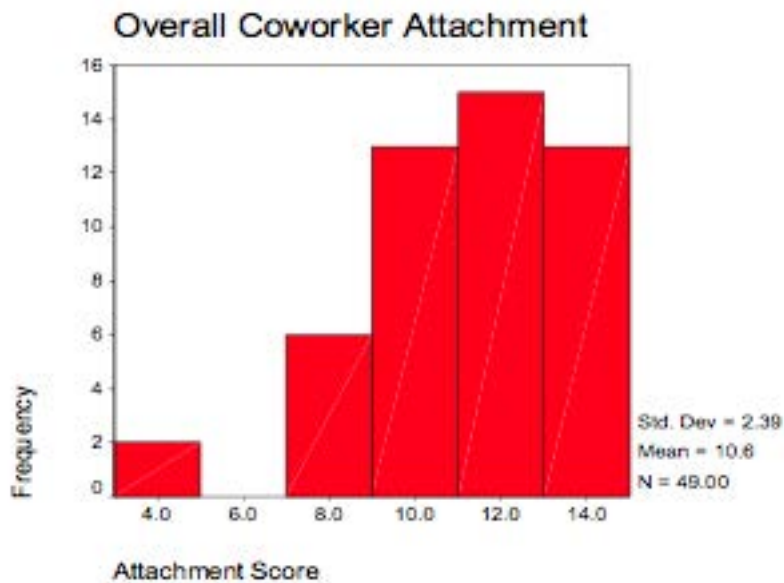


Figure 1.

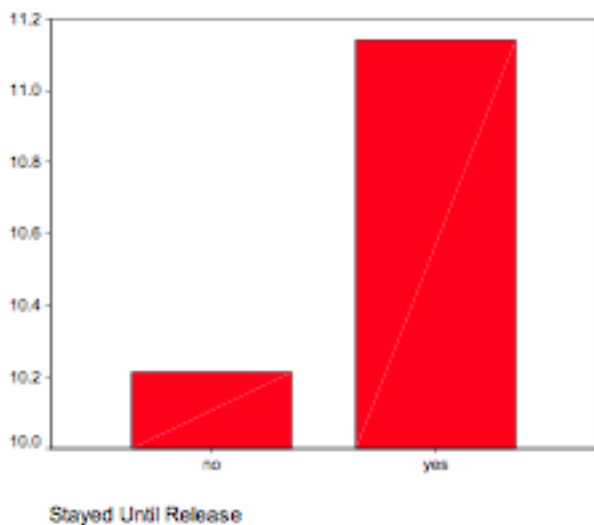


Figure 2. Attachment--stayed until release vs. leaving prior to release.

Discipline & Institutional Conduct, & Recidivism

Levels of attachment could directly affect institutional and postrelease conduct. To determine if working in ACE/CARE had an effect on the rate of tickets incurred, respondents were asked to report on the total number of tickets they received prior to and during the time they were employed with ACE/CARE. The author was unable to obtain permission to view the participants' official institutional disciplinary record and thus relied solely upon self-report data. In looking at the effect that ACE/CARE had on rates of disciplinary infractions among participants, more than one-half of participants (51%; $n=25$) had a decrease in the number of tickets they received after joining ACE/CARE. On average, the women had received 5.17 tickets prior to

⁶These differences, when utilizing the Mann-Whitney Test, did not prove to be statistically significant (Mann-Whitney U statistic=182.5; Wilcoxon W statistic=777.5). The associated p value of .110 was not statistically significant at the <0.0005 level.

working for ACE/CARE (.59 tier ones, 4.10 tier twos, .52 tier three) (tier ones are the least serious and tier

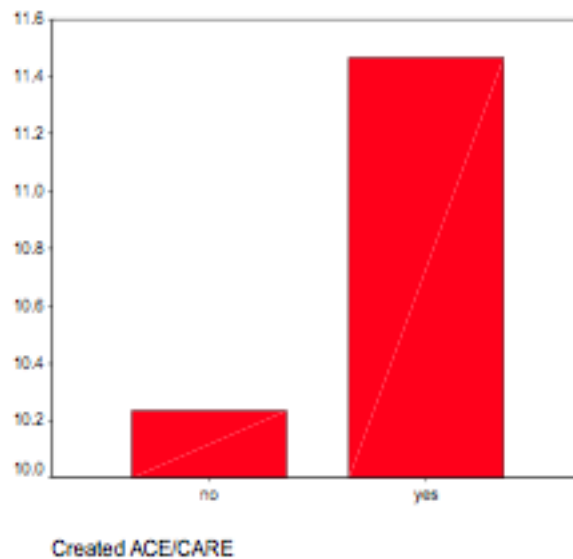


Figure 3. Attachment--program creators vs. non-creators.

threes are the most serious), and they only received, on average, 1 ticket (.95) during the time they worked for ACE/CARE (.19 tier ones, .70 tier twos, .10 tier threes).⁷

In examining the rate of postrelease success, most releasees were employed at the time of the interview (21 out of 25 women). On average, releasees were living in the community for five years (median=4 years; mode=10 years) since their release from prison, ranging from the shortest time out of prison at one year and the longest time out of prison at 15 years. Seventy-two percent (n=18) of the women worked for community-based organizations providing social services such as HIV-related services, mental health services, or substance abuse services. Studies showed that after five years of release, the possibility of recidivating was extremely improbable (Human Rights Watch, 2004). Only one of the releasees was arrested since leaving prison. Nonetheless, her transgression was quite minor and she was not violated.

The Importance of Prisoner Bonds

Interview data indicated that some women had bonds prior to prison but were able to develop another set of supportive bonds through ACE/CARE, while others had very little in terms of relationships prior to prison and relied primarily upon the bonds cultivated from ACE/CARE. In either case, ACE/CARE impacted women who had many bonds, few bonds or no bonds prior to working for ACE/CARE; all prisoners benefited from their work in these two programs. For HIV peers, work within ACE/CARE was one factor that led or could lead to their success, but confounding factors and additional support systems, even within the prison, were also important in some cases:

My support system [ACE, friends and family] and having the fundamentals I learned from ACE and the family violence program [were contributing factors to my success]. I learned coping skills. I learned that you don't start making plans about your future when you come out; it starts the first day you step inside. That's what ACE gave me. It helped me to start the transition before I even left (Sarabanda/ACE).

⁷ In conducting a pair samples T test, the associated p value of .537 (comparing tickets incurred before and during work with ACE/CARE) and the associated p value of .839 (comparing tickets incurred during and after work with ACE/CARE) were not statistically significant at the <0.0005 level.

Most women reported that they had family (n=41; 84%) and friends (n=41; 84%) who acted as a source of support for them prior to their arrest. This was not the first arrest for over half of this sample (n=28; 57%), and the majority (n=35; 71%) were using or misusing drugs and/or alcohol prior to their arrest. Approximately half (n=26; 53%) had the equivalent of a high school diploma prior to admission, and although more than half were employed (n=28; 57%), 43% (n=21) were unemployed and had no income at all. Out of those employed, the majority was employed in low level positions with 30% (n=15) making \$20,000 or less before their incarceration. If you included those with no legal income, 73% (n=36) made between \$0 and \$20,000 the year prior to their arrest.

Not all respondents lacked prosocial bonds prior to prison, but their work in ACE/CARE appeared to facilitate additional bonds for all respondents. Peer bonds worked in two distinct ways. First, for all respondents, a commitment to achieving a prosocial identity began before their employment with ACE/CARE. As discussed earlier, prisoners with poor disciplinary records and prisoners with less than a high school education were encouraged to remediate these issues and reapply. This served as a motivator for those who were interested in making a change, but that interest did not yet equate to a concrete change in their behavior. For these women, ACE/CARE created new opportunities to strengthen their desire to have a prosocial identity. During the interviews, several women (Blondie, Ten, No Excuses, Waiting, Ace and Rafeequa) specifically stated that without the opportunity to work for ACE/CARE, their disciplinary issues would have continued or worsened. Released women spoke about the impact working for ACE/CARE had on their postrelease success and its ability to facilitate the opportunity for successful reentry, while incarcerated women spoke about the impact working for ACE/CARE would have on their postrelease success and its ability to facilitate the opportunity for successful reentry. Ninety percent of the sample stated that working in ACE/CARE helped them or would help them successfully transition from prison to the community. Twenty three incarcerated women (n=88%) felt that ACE/CARE would prove to facilitate a successful transition:

It taught me how to be a counselor. Most likely when I get home, this will be the first job I get.
(Ten/ACE)

I want to continue my work with patient care. The ACE program gave me wisdom and increased knowledge that I will use on the outside (Compassionate/ACE).

Twenty-two released women (96%) attributed their post-release success to ACE/CARE. It was a common theme throughout almost all of their narratives and showed that these prosocial identities remained with them after release:

All the people I was around assisted me in the transition from prison to the community. There was a support system in place for me (Smarty/ACE).

I am now employed in the HIV field. My whole resume says HIV. I am now a facilitator working on being a case manager (Blondie/CARE).

It helped me to put job skills on my resume. I am grateful for the skills I developed which is what helped me to get a good job. It is always interesting to say that you were part of this program (Power/ACE & CARE).

It gave me the outside support I needed and I was able to access resources that I otherwise wouldn't have had. I also had experience and that experience made me marketable (Nicolette/ACE & CARE)

Second, for released women who did not have disciplinary problems prior to being with the program or who may have been working in other prison programs prior to ACE/CARE, ACE/CARE allowed them to continue to build additional prosocial bonds in a way they felt was meaningful. Regardless of other influences, they believed that ACE/CARE was an important factor in their success:

I was originally in GBS (General Business School) but I wanted to help people and didn't know how. I was able to do that through ACE. It gave me the skills I needed to use when I got home (Big Sis –

ACE/CARE)

If it were not for ACE and family violence, I would not be where I am at today. I would not be as successful as I am. I was involved with the family violence program, I had 1:1 with counselors, I was involved in support groups and I shared in ACE. I had a family in ACE and even today I miss those family dynamics. It's different in prison because you choose the people in your family. People think you don't have a choice but you do and you choose to be around them because you really care about the family you created. On the outside, you don't have a choice about who is in your family. In prison it was a choice and ACE was my family (Sarabanda/ACE)

Discussion

ACE/CARE members had very high levels of attachment to their ACE/CARE coworkers. By cultivating opportunities to create a network of supportive bonds, working in an HIV prison-based peer program may be the first stop of many on the "desistance line," eventually leading to the final destination of adopting a *newfound prosocial identity*. These peers (94%; n=46) maintained that being in ACE/CARE was like being part of a family. Older members acted as mentors for younger members and the majority of the women found peer staff to be a strong source of support for them. While incarcerated, the peers expressed that separation from family was the most stressful aspect of incarceration and being a part of ACE/CARE assisted in ameliorating these stress inducing factors. The women were able to speak openly in ACE/CARE, with 94% (n=46) of peers who reported sharing their thoughts and feelings with their coworkers. The peers had great respect for one another and they encouraged the adoption of new prosocial roles. The notion of being a role model, characteristic of a prosocial identity, was echoed several times and appeared to have a strong impact on decision making.

Peers expressed concern about each other's success inside of the institution, in addition to expressing concern about each other's success after release from prison. They strongly cared about one another's opinions regarding their actions and behavior. Even after release, these women still desired to maintain a connection with their ACE/CARE peers and in essence, they wanted their peers to be proud of them. Peers had low rates of disciplinary infractions and releasees had extremely low recidivism, demonstrating reintegrative success. Overall, respondents had very high levels of attachment to coworkers (average score of 10.6 out of 14 points). Upon conducting between group comparisons, small differences were found between the groups, but none of the differences proved to be statistically significant. Even after release, these women still desired to maintain a connection with their ACE/CARE peers and relied upon their peers for support during this difficult transition. All prisoners benefited from their work in these two programs: some women had bonds prior to prison but were able to develop another set of supportive bonds through ACE/CARE, while others had very little in terms of relationships prior to prison and relied primarily upon the bonds created with their coworkers in ACE/CARE.

This program allowed female prisoners to obtain marketable job skills, enabling them to transcend traditional prison-based programs which often prepared women to work in "pink collar," underpaid employment. The subservient role of women in society was reflected within the prison environment, as prison is often a larger reflection of societal problems like racism, classism, and sexism. Since women were not afforded as many vocational and educational opportunities as men while in prison, these acquiescent roles were perpetuated by the correctional system in its failure to provide skills-equality (Moyer, 1984; Smart, 1976). Due to their smaller numbers, correctional officials were often able to rationalize circumventing the programmatic needs of female prisoners (Bonta, Pang, & Wallace-Capretta, 1995). Even today, most of the jobs that women were assigned to in the prison system focused on domestic work and did not teach the women relevant job skills, but only helped in the daily maintenance of the institution (Dobash, Dobash & Gutteridge, 1986; Pollack-Byrne, 1990). This provided no opportunity for rehabilitation or for the attainment of valuable job skills, which would have afforded them the opportunity to be able to support themselves and their family upon release (Pollack-Byrne, 1990). Seventy-two percent of releasees in this study were working in public health related fields. ACE/CARE gave women the skills to work in entry-level positions in the field of public health, where the stigma of incarceration was an asset rather than a liability. These women were experts at working

with at-risk populations. The appropriate job skills, coupled with support, provided an incentive to maintain law-abiding behavior.

Limitations

There were several limitations to the current study. First, the sample was not random since it was an already established program within the prison. Second, there was an issue of selection-bias, particularly when using snowball sampling. Nonetheless, 75% of all women who worked for both programs participated in this study. Snowball sampling, though not ideal, was the only way to locate participants. Third, there was no control group in this study. The facility was not able to provide the author with record data to serve as another method of comparison. It was also not feasible (or allowable) to have another group of inmates taken from their regularly scheduled programs to participate in a comparison group, as this would have disrupted the daily schedule of the prison facility. Rather, comparisons were made between groups. Between-group comparisons (those responsible for creating the program v those responsible for not creating program and those who stayed in the program for one year v those who did not stay for one year) did not produce statistically significant differences. In fact, no notable differences were observed, demonstrating that regardless of time spent within the program, and irrespective of one being involved in the development of the program, these programs served a beneficial purpose for female prisoners.

Implications & Future Research

The effects of non-traditional prison-based programming on prisoner attachments are encouraging. Programs like ACE/CARE benefit facilities by providing comprehensive education/counseling services free to the inmate population and by increasing overall knowledge about HIV and risky behaviors (Collica, 2002; Hammett, Harmon, & Maruschak, 1999; Keeton & Swanson, 1988). They assist in increasing self-esteem (Collica-Cox, 2015; Hammett, et al., 1999), they build supportive communities and networks (Collica, 2010; Eaton, 1993), they reduce disciplinary infractions (Collica-Cox, 2014) and they reduce recidivism by promoting viable employment opportunities for females offenders (Collica, 2013; Hammett et al., 1999). Unemployment prior to arrest, coupled with a conviction record, can seriously hinder job prospects for newly released prisoners (Richie, 2001; Uggen, 2000). By providing prisoners with strong bonds (Benda, 2005; Li & Mackenzie, 2003), employment can decrease crime at a higher rate, particularly among older prisoners (Uggen, 2000) and prolong the time between release and reoffending (Tripodi, 2010), reducing the overall chances for recidivism. Affording prisoners with the skills to obtain a career can provide the motivation necessary to maintain the desistance process (Maruna, 2001). Prosocial peers are correlated with decreased criminal activity and can serve as a mechanism to replace earlier deviant associations (Wright & Cullen, 2004). The less one associates with deviant peers, and the more one is supported by prosocial peers, the more likely one will have the support to sustain law abiding behavior.

Unfortunately, many prisons underutilize these programs (Collica, 2007; Hammett, et al., 1999). An unintended additional benefit of such programs is their ability to cultivate strong prosocial attachments with their incarcerated coworkers. These peer workers serve as a source of support for newfound prosocial identities, a vital component to rehabilitative and reintegrative success. Incarceration can increase stigma, which reduces the strength of social bonds, yet, supportive prosocial attachments can protect prisoners' feelings from the negative effects of labeling (Berger, Estwing Ferrons, & Lashley, 2001; LeBel, 2012).

Female facilities suffer from a paucity of prison programming (Belknap, 2015), and since their needs tend to be more diverse and more substantial than the needs of their male counterparts, increasing and expanding such programming is essential. If female prisoners continue to be trained in "pink collar" employment (i.e., food service, secretarial, etc), they will be unable to support themselves or their children upon release. Skills learned in traditional women's prison-based vocational programs are not marketable (Belknap, 2015). Women face many difficulties when returning home (i.e., recovery, mental health issues, medical problems, child care, post-traumatic stress disorder from abusive and violent relationships, difficulty in securing affordable housing, inadequate education, lack of employment skills or history, etc.) (Richie, 2001), but female prisoners trained in HIV peer education can and will be able to obtain substantial employment opportunities in major metropolitan cities upon release. These programs empower women to be financially independent and can serve as a stepping stone to lifetime careers in the field of public health. Women involved in these

programs are invested in working in the field of HIV, even though most are not HIV positive. These programs provide women with a new identity, which allows them to reform and reclaim their lives (Maruna, 2001).

More research should be conducted on the effects of non-traditional programming on female prisoners, particularly focusing on the ability of attachments to predict or explain female patterns of criminality. Peer programming does not have to be HIV focused; in fact, any program, when managed well, may have the ability to produce similar effects. Further study on non-traditional programs can shed light on the fact that often the program itself is not as important as the way in which the program is managed. Program management impacts a program's success and its ability to promote prosocial behavior, enhancing one's investment in social capital.

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RESEARCH PAPER

Doing time and college: An examination of carceral influences on experiences in post-secondary correctional education

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Abstract: *Imprisonment pains often accompany confinement to correctional institutions. Less is known about how related discomforts and deprivations might specifically impact the administration and receipt of post-secondary correctional education. This paper will show how encounters between incarcerated college students, other prisoners, prison educators and corrections officers can influence higher learning in correctional settings. It is based on a qualitative study and inductive analysis of data collected from interviews with 34 formerly incarcerated individuals who were also past and present members of a higher education program in the United States post-release. This research has important policy implications given that incarcerated persons who engage in productive activities such as higher education are better positioned to cope with carceral strains in legitimate ways. It can also help educators and correctional staff develop programs that account for the specific educational challenges of the prison sub-culture.*

Key words: *Imprisonment pains, postsecondary correctional education, corrections officers, prison educators*

Introduction

There is a proven link between receiving a postsecondary education in prison,¹ reduced likelihood of recidivism, and successful reentry through gainful employment and social connections (Batuik et al., 2005; Chappell, 2004; Kim & Clark, 2013). This evidence has contributed to the recent, modest growth of funding support for college programs in the United States correctional system (Anders et al., 2011; Meyer, 2013; Whiteside, 2015).² Such advancements warrant the need for more attention paid to the *experiences* of the prisoners taking college classes. Of particular import are certain institutional features and relationships that frame the administration and receipt of postsecondary education in prison (Palmer, 2012; Winterfield et al., 2009).

Imposed restrictions on movement and interactions with others are an inherent part of incarceration. This reality is often stressful and contributes to various strains for incarcerated persons. Being involved in higher education can help individuals cope with imprisonment pains, yet such educational experiences are bounded in correctional settings. In carceral environments, interactions between prisoner college students, other incarcerated persons, faculty members and corrections officers are limited to structured contacts. This can create a culture of incarceration that affects classroom life in prison (Behan, 2007).

Encounters such as these affect the pursuit of postsecondary correctional education ("postsecondary CE") (Van Gundy et al., 2013). Evidence suggests that "prior accomplishments, verbal feedback provided by significant others and vicarious learning" influence self-efficacy or one's subjective beliefs about their potential to successfully complete academic tasks (Allred, et al. 2013, p. 213; Stevens et al., 2004). This self-referential process is situational in nature and closely tied to environmental factors. If we adopt this standpoint and reflect on education in prison, it is important to remind ourselves that prisons are constructed such that they restrict the personal freedom and comforts of individuals confined to those spaces (Kaposy & Bandrauk, 2012). For instance, studying in prison can prove challenging given the noise, chaos and violence which typically characterizes correctional facilities and detracts from educational activities (Kuhlman & Ruddell, 2005).



Carceral norms thus appear to contradict “the requisites of academic culture” and potentially interfere with opportunities for educational engagement in general (Allred et al., 2013, p. 215).

Carceral Strains and Experiences in Postsecondary Correctional Education

Pains of imprisonment arise in a number of ways, including through interactions with others in carceral contexts (Johnson, 2001; Sykes, 1958; Toch, et al., 1987). Agnew’s general strain theory (GST) is useful for explaining this process. Under the GST, individuals are likely to experience strain when presented with negative stimuli, due to a failure to achieve, or loss of, positively valued stimuli. Indeed, people who develop a negative emotional state such as frustration or anger in response are more prone to engage in delinquent and criminal coping (Agnew, 2001, 2006). Some scholars suggest that the general strain theory is crucial to understanding how imprisonment pains derived from prisoner deprivations contribute to an increased risk of psychological harm, retreatism and subsequent reoffending (Blevins et al., 2010; Dye, 2010; Listwan, et al., 2010). As such, incarcerated persons might feel distressed over various elements of confinement like erratic supervision or blocked efforts to enjoy earned privileges such as involvement in higher education (Listwan, et al., 2013). Consequently, some incarcerated persons abandon legitimate goals and expectations as a coping mechanism, to avoid “chasing ‘carrots’ that might not be obtained” (Crewe, 2011, p. 458).

Less is known about the specific imprisonment pains experienced by incarcerated college students as they routinely interact with other prisoners, corrections officers and educational staff, and the strategies they use to reconcile these overlapping, yet distinct relationships. Moreover, do experiences in postsecondary CE, however fragmented, help incarcerated college students manage pains of imprisonment and associated strains? This inquiry into the value of carceral *participation* in higher education is timely and important given that often times opportunities for completion are marred by restrictions on class availability, sentence length and administrative segregation placements (Palmer, 2012). Such challenges are due in part to imposed rules, some of which are discretionary, that govern the frequency and duration of individual movements in prison facilities.

Given these institutional norms, it is no surprise that relationships between corrections officers and prisoners are at the center of incarceration experiences (Crewe, 2011; Gordon et al., 2013; Listwan, 2013). Indeed, corrections officers play a pivotal role in shaping participation in postsecondary CE through their routine exercise of broad discretionary powers, which can result in a wide range of limitations on the use of educational facilities. As previously mentioned, the transformative power of completing a higher education in carceral settings is multifaceted and well documented. “In this respect, officers are crucial in mediating the forms of psychological power that are among the main sources of hope and frustration for prisoners, especially those on longer sentences” (Crewe, 2011, p. 469; see also Sykes, 1958).

Yet, a primary function of correctional security work is to maintain prison order by deterring threats to safety posed by incarcerated individuals. Accordingly, research shows that most assaults committed by incarcerated persons against correctional staff occur during routine movements as they enter and leave designated prison areas and are asked to display identification (Gordon et al., 2013). It is possible for these and other carceral conditions to influence officer decisions about whether to allow student travel to and from classrooms. Complicating this issue is the fact that officers are not obligated to disclose the reasons behind their regular use of authority, even if it constrains participation in postsecondary CE. As a result, correctional facilities are coercive institutions where deficits in information and personal autonomy are commonplace. It is under these conditions that “prison subculture develops as a response to the afflictions and limitations of confinement” (Sykes, 1958).

The components of any given culture of incarceration might vary across institutions. Yet, feelings of mistrust often coincide with carceral interactions and contribute to prison norms, expectations and values (Behan, 2007). These circumstances present complex challenges for educators who aspire to foster nurturing learning environments within correctional education structures (Matthews, 2000). For this reason, it is common for some educators who teach in prisons to experience an “adjustment shock” at the beginning of their carceral teaching experiences which could hinder opportunities to establish a rapport with students and effectively address their educational needs (Behan, 2007; Michals & Kessler, 2015). This shock is typically accompanied by a realization of the major cultural differences existing between inside and outside students,

classrooms and administrators of education (Matthews, 2000). Indeed, correctional education systems represent a paradox created by the existence of opportunities for educational advancement that are constrained by institutional boundaries designed to repress individuals within, including those who participate in education (Van Gundy et al., 2013).

Educational instruction can be further impaired by spontaneous, and many times unexplained, decisions executed by corrections officers and prison administrators under the auspice of order maintenance. For instance, the already minimal classroom instruction time can be disrupted by corrections officers if they restrict travel to classes for a variety of different reasons including institutional lockdowns and placement in solitary confinement (Osberg & Fraley 1993). Authority figures may also exercise their power in ways that contravene engagement in postsecondary CE simply because they do not believe in the transformative capability of this educational opportunity (Wright, 1997).

Given such obstacles, there are limited opportunities for mentorship and engagement in higher education available to prisoner students who possess a genuine interest in educational advancement. In this regard, some educators encounter additional struggles related to managing carceral classrooms given threats posed by gang members, student attrition and stringent institutional rules about interactions between prisoners and faculty (Hackman, 2007). These conditions can impact the ease with which faculty are able to culturally adjust to teaching in correctional facilities and also whether they are perceived as trustworthy by incarcerated students (Wright, 2005). As such, encounters between faculty and students are multilayered: managed by prison staff and also reciprocal in nature, largely derived from mutual social learning processes that occur in classroom settings. It is apparent that these relationships are intertwined and shape experiences in postsecondary CE in complex ways.

Pursuing a higher education during incarceration can be simultaneously rewarding and painful given that it is a privilege, the conferral of which is largely subject to the will of others. This paper will enhance existing research by utilizing former prisoners' perspectives to examine the impact of relationships between prisoner college students, other incarcerated individuals, corrections officers and educators on carceral college experiences. It addresses the following research questions: In what ways do carceral strains shape the administration and receipt of postsecondary education in correctional settings? To what extent do interactions between educators, prisoners and corrections officers contribute to a culture of incarceration? How might prisoner college students utilize experiences in postsecondary education to cope with imprisonment pains and other sub-cultural elements of prison?

Data and Methods

The data were drawn from qualitative interviews with 34 individuals who had completed sentences of anywhere from 3-10 years in various state youth correctional facilities for committing a wide range of both violent and non-violent crimes. This information was collected in 2012, a time when the research participants were between one month and five years post-release. Included within this sample were 30 men, three women and one transgender person. Their ages ranged from 24 to 57, and the average age was 28. In addition, the research participants were racially diverse and self-identified in the following ways: Black (12), Biracial (7), Latino (5), White (5), Asian (3) and Middle Eastern (2). Aside from these differences, they also entered prison with varied levels of educational attainment, which ultimately determined the timing of their eligibility to begin a postsecondary CE. Accordingly, there were 26 interviewees who met the preincarceration educational requirements upon entering prison; 11 had some college experience, 12 possessed a high school diploma and three had passed the GED, or General Educational Development, test. The other eight individuals who were part of this study earned GED credentials during their incarceration. Eventually, all 34 research participants met the academic prerequisites for enrollment in carceral college classes.

The study data are based only on postsecondary CE experiences shared by 31 out of these 34 research participants. Although the other three respondents were qualified to take carceral college classes, they did not do so due to a perceived lack of institutional support for involvement in postsecondary CE. One respondent experienced challenges at a systems level in validating his high school diploma and two reported that corrections staff did not encourage and/or support prisoner participation in college. For these reasons, three research participants did not pursue college during incarceration, but did so afterwards.

At the time of this study, all research participants were former or current students at a four-year state university, referred to by the name “State University” in this essay. Their admission to this institution was facilitated through membership in a higher education program for previously incarcerated individuals. To be eligible for this program, here named “Project Achieve,” applicants had to possess a GED or high school diploma, earn at least 12 hours of transferable college coursework, maintain close to a 3.0 grade point average and not incur any major disciplinary infractions during incarceration.

Using these criteria, there were 53 potential participants consisting of past and present students enrolled in State University vis-à-vis their membership in Project Achieve. The program director provided email addresses and cell phone numbers, excluding contact information for two persons who withdrew from the program and remained out of touch. I first made phone contact with each of them and then sent a follow up email communication. This provided an initial overview of the study, outlining its purpose, the benefits and risks associated with participation, informed consent and anonymity. Actual interview responses were made anonymous through the use of pseudonyms assigned to each respondent.

Aside from the two aforementioned withdrawals, there were 17 potential participants who were not included in the study sample for other reasons, which are discussed below. I had contact information for five of these individuals, but did not reach out to them because they were either finishing their sentences at a halfway house or re-incarcerated in federal prison at the time. An administrator at the halfway house where three potential participants were staying explained that resident participation in my study was not permitted. Two persons who were in federal custody were excluded in order to avoid any possible threats to confidentiality posed by institutional infringements on communications with prisoners. Eight individuals did not respond to calls and emails, another three did not appear at their scheduled interviews, and one remained unreceptive to my attempts to reschedule a cancelled interview. The remaining 34 persons responded either by phone or email and each took part in a subsequent qualitative interview, described in more detail below.

The interviews were conducted in a quiet, convenient location on or near State University to minimize any additional travel costs for participants. Interviewees received a nominal fee of \$25, paid for through a small research grant in exchange for their participation. This involved responding to open-ended questions about their experiences in education and crime before, during and after incarceration. The data were transcribed and sorted into these main categories and then further organized into related subgroups. For purposes of this paper, research participants were asked to recount their experiences taking carceral college classes including any general challenges stemming from institutional contexts. They were not asked to describe specific problems arising from interactions with other prisoners, corrections officers or faculty. Rather, these themes emerged organically as part of an inductive analytical process, a technique that can buffer the potential for telescoping or faulty memory recall in retrospective interview responses (Carbone & Miller, 2012). Responses relevant to involvement in postsecondary education in prison were categorized into subgroups based on interactions with other prisoners, faculty and corrections officers. Logical inferences were drawn regarding the connections between carceral encounters and college experiences in prison. The research findings closely align with well-documented research on pains associated with imprisonment (Sykes, 1985; See also Cochran, et al., 2014; Listwan et al., 2013; Morris et al., 2003).

The findings have limited generalizability; however, since they are based on experiences shared by former incarcerated college students, they can potentially enhance understanding about the benefits and drawbacks of participation in postsecondary education in correctional settings.

Carceral Relationships and Postsecondary Correctional Experiences

Participants in this qualitative study included 34 formerly incarcerated individuals who were past and present students in a higher education program, however only 31 had been involved in postsecondary CE. Differences in sentence length and correctional facility rules attributed to limitations on eligibility, class availability and progress toward course completion in varied ways. Nonetheless, 31 out of the 34 respondents began or in some cases resumed taking college classes during their former incarceration and in that respect shared in common recollections about the benefits and drawbacks of taking postsecondary courses in prison. An inductive analysis of their responses to open-ended questions revealed important themes about carceral relationships and postsecondary experiences in correctional settings. The data were used to draw inferences

about how a culture of incarceration influenced such interactions between incarcerated college students, their keepers, others who are kept behind bars and educators. This research also revealed specific ways that these socio-cultural prison characteristics impact involvement in postsecondary CE.

The results of this study show that encounters in postsecondary education in prison are complex, connected and often times difficult to manage. These formerly incarcerated individuals who took college courses in prison recalled feeling both frustrated by such circumstances and appreciative of the opportunity to take college classes during such a vulnerable time. Involvement in postsecondary CE was described as a temporary, figurative (mental) escape from confinement. The experience gave rise to thoughts about how continued participation in higher education might help to secure a better future post-release. Some participants entered prison with exceptional levels of pre-carcer educational attainment and for that reason were better positioned to perceive higher education as an avenue for change, enroll in college classes and focus on course content despite contextual challenges related to incarceration. Regardless, study participants described burdens and rewards associated with being a prisoner college student as integral to the experience of imprisonment and carceral interactions with other incarcerated persons, correctional staff and educators.

Experiencing Postsecondary Education in Correctional Settings

Institutional confinement is a form of coerced isolation that contributes to imprisonment pains. It takes physical, emotional, psychological and social forms. Yet, such encompassing separation and discomfort is also characterized by conditions that are conducive for engagement in postsecondary CE, given the absence of typical challenges faced by college students on the outside. All of the respondents who had previous carceral experience in higher education described their controlled movements for work and other activities as part of a daily routine. This imposed structure was, at least in theory, conducive to academic time management. For instance, Javeen referred to some struggles he faced while attending college post-release to explain that engaging in postsecondary CE was easier because:

You don't have distractions like you don't have full time job, you don't have work. You have a job assignment when you're in there but everything is scheduled. You manage your time according to timeslots....When you're home you have to pay bills, you have to work, you have a bunch of other things going on so. I feel like you have to have a certain level of determination, drive, focus. If you have that then it's easy to do.

As Javeen highlighted, involvement in structured movements during incarceration brought along an increased *potential* for engagement in postsecondary CE. It also diminished the prospect of external obstacles and concerns interfering with educational pursuits. To that end, Mike explained that incarcerated students have "all the time in the world" and from his experiences the college courses offered "weren't too challenging." Similarly, Ulysses stated that "it's easy to be in there [prison]" because "you not around your friends, there's no parties, there's no liquors, no drugs, there's no females." It is evident that incarcerated individuals are confined to artificial settings and cut off from mainstream society; these circumstances can be ripe for higher learning. As Oliver put it, "you know in that environment anything is appealing and interesting." However, the question remains as to whether the participants were truly presented with the situational opportunities and actual support needed to engage in critical aspects of higher learning such as classroom lectures and discussions. The next section will focus on carceral classroom settings, the dynamics between students and the impact on levels of engagement in course material and instruction.

Classroom Interactions Between Incarcerated College Students

Those participants who completed some postsecondary CE had served time at different state correctional facilities, yet they shared similar accounts about interactions that occurred in prison classrooms and how these features influenced academic experiences. To start, college enrollment was open to all eligible persons, which posed challenges for both prisoner students and faculty. In the correctional education system, eligibility for college classes is based on GED attainment or receipt of a high school diploma. Unlike in the outside world, there are no standardized test scores, personal statement submissions or other measures used to determine individual skill level, ability and desire to pursue a higher education. Oliver spoke directly about the implications of such comparatively lax enrollment requirements on carceral classroom dynamics. He stated "it's a little different 'cause some people are serious and some aren't. So you have the people that are jokers

you know and they're just there to be there, just to get out a little while...other people, you know take it more seriously and have respect for the teachers that come in. So there's some mix." Likewise, Yvette described the carceral classroom atmosphere as one geared more towards "playing around" because not all students seemed to take education seriously.

Victor gave specific examples of why some prisoners might choose to take college courses for reasons unrelated to a genuine interest in receiving a higher education:

Some people did it because they was bored. Other people did because they seen the bigger picture like this is my way out...this is my way away from the streets. Other guys seen it as an escape 'oh I'm gonna do college so I don't have to do these programs.' Or 'I'm gonna take college so I don't have to be in the cottage all day' or 'I'm gonna do college so I don't have to be in the CO's face...I'm getting some kind of movement.' It was like some people, the intention was not good. A lot of times you have rival gangs all in the same [classroom] so you don't know what could happen right there.

Overall, the study participants identified lack of genuine commitment to higher education and threats of gang conflict presented by some classmates as two factors that shattered idealistic views of prisons as conducive learning environments. For instance, Ever, who described the beginning of every semester as a "free for all," further explained that "nearly everybody's affiliated or associated with a gang or whatever the case may be." He recalled how these individuals served as a reminder that "you have distraction[s] all around you...you're still an inmate, you're still in prison, you still have to look over your shoulder and watch what's going on around you."

Victor too remembered that "you could just feel the tension" and even though "nothing physical ever happened," there were "subliminal [messages] thrown out" during class "and that was a little uneasy, nerve racking." He responded to this situation by keeping his distance from any students whom he believed were gang affiliated or otherwise in class to cause disruptions. Ever did the same but explained that he had to make a concerted effort to avoid negative influences and pay attention in class. As he put it, "it was your choice to engage yourself in the class and participate and everything. I sat in front, asked questions constantly, had my hand raised, always listened...tried to follow." Similarly, Ethan acknowledged that being an incarcerated college student was stressful, but he coped with that situation by remaining "in the front of the classroom, eyes on the professor, chalkboard or whatever was going on." He went on to say, "anything behind me, I didn't pay attention to [it] unless it was classroom discussion."

Coincidentally, it was during class discussions accompanied by lectures and presentations that unengaged students were likely to disrupt the focus of others who were truly interested in advancing their education. The study results also showed that prison sub-cultural influences often contributed to such behaviors. As an example, Henry explained that incarcerated students often engaged in "jailing" or exchanging verbal statements during class, in jest and for the purpose of interfering with learning processes. During his time served, he observed "jailing" occur daily and explained the potential impact on others, especially pupil bystanders like himself:

Could you imagine being in a room with a bunch of class clowns?....There's a lot of joking, a lot of class disruptions. A lot of guys in prison joke a lot they call it jailing...joking to pass the time. So a lot of times they would single somebody out and just jail on them and just make fun of them....If you're the butt of that session, don't get mad because that's how fights happen. So jailing would happen in class they would jail off the teacher and she doesn't know it's jailing...they're playing dumb when they really know the answer. You know it's so many different ways to do it.

Henry revealed that his perception about the quality of postsecondary CE began to change upon the realization that not every college enrolled prisoner was motivated to learn. As he stated, "I took it seriously, but I didn't take it as seriously as I did the first couple of days when I'm like 'I'm ready to learn, and oh here we go you're gonna 'jail' the whole time.'" Much like Henry, Marcos expected more than he received from

his carceral college education. More specifically, he thought these college classes would be administered through a “more structured, well organized...rigorous program.” Instead, Marcos discovered that “in prison it’s lax, people joking.” He used his public speaking class as an example and mentioned that “there was only four people that actually took their speeches seriously...that really tried to do well on their speeches.” Marcos expressed disappointment over the lackadaisical attitudes displayed by some of those classmates.

Albert too described jailing and academic indifference as pervasive aspects of a broader prison subculture, which strongly influenced his approach to opportunities for higher learning during incarceration. A self-proclaimed introvert, he was at first hesitant to actively participate in class activities given the likelihood that other students would make playful or hurtful comments if he were to make any mistakes. As he put it, “I’m not really a people [person]...and those classes especially in there, in prison...it’s like you’re amongst comedians. If you say the wrong thing, if you look a certain way...you know.” Regardless, Albert turned such negativity into motivation for stellar academic performance as follows: “In a way, it just made me want to... know whatever I was saying or what I was writing. It encouraged me to do better and try to perfect it in a way.”

Other respondents, including Henry and Marcos, also found ways to navigate through classroom distractions and earn good grades. Indeed there were other relevant factors besides classroom disruptions that contributed to participants’ experiences in postsecondary CE.³ Generally speaking, Javeen believed that incarcerated persons who tried to engage in college classes possessed a genuine desire to change and “a more serious outlook on life” compared to others who did not. As he further suggested, “that also played a difference in the mentality of the classroom...how people acted towards each other, towards the professor.”

Encounters Between Incarcerated College Students and Prison Educators

Overall, the research participants were motivated to successfully complete the college courses they enrolled in during incarceration, regardless of any challenges posed by other prisoners. Yet, all 31 individuals who were enrolled in college classes at that time identified interactions with professors as another salient factor in shaping levels of educational engagement, focus on classroom instruction and perceived quality of postsecondary CE received. Furthermore, these prisoner college student-faculty relationships developed in correctional institutions, where rapport was shaped by many contradictory forces. This section will cover participants’ accounts about the reciprocal nature of their interactions with educators along with how these encounters varied, influencing carceral college experiences in different ways. Indeed, as Oliver expressed, from an academic standpoint, faculty who come to teach in prisons are “not working with anything great so to speak,” yet “some are more motivated to teach and to help the students learn, and others probably they just do the minimum.”

Research participants gauged faculty members’ level of interest and sense of comfort teaching in carceral settings based on classroom interactions they had with them. Shared conversations and actions, both implicit and overt, were described as intrinsically related and influential in shaping perceptions about the quality and value of postsecondary CE received. More specifically, these formerly incarcerated individuals reported having more favorable college experiences in prison when enrolled in courses taught by professors who did not make them feel inferior or otherwise stigmatized. To that end, Yvette remembered one educator in particular who demonstrated such professional attributes and for that reason quickly gained the trust and admiration of her students:

In the classroom, with that teacher...it was no different than being in society. She didn’t judge us ‘cause we were incarcerated. Her job was to teach and she did it and the kids were overwhelmed by it. Everybody would want to stay the next period and they would cancel gym... ‘cause they used to want to learn....It was a good learning environment.

Wayne expressed the same sentiment, adding that “those [postsecondary CE] experiences where we were pushed, you know people didn’t see us as a project or students that needed to be pampered or babied” increased his confidence about pursuing a college education during incarceration.

On the other hand, taking carceral college classes taught by instructors who were seen as less focused

on stimulating academic advancement could have the opposite effect on postsecondary CE experiences. Ivan expressed disappointment over the caliber of higher education that he received on the inside. As he stated, "I definitely would want to see the professors push us a little more....I felt [that]...the professor is gonna pass most people just for showing up, doing the basic stuff." Dexter shared the same perspective, as he stated: "I don't think they actually graded upon your academic performance." Furthermore, Fred, who recalled some similar past experiences, suggested that any perceived indifference on the part of prison educators reflected the fact that those individuals "didn't really care" and were "just there getting a paycheck, an extra paycheck." As a result, these and other research participants felt less motivated to pay attention in class, complete course assignments and study for exams when professors implemented minimal to no structured curriculum standards.

An important facet of student-educator interactions were faculty approaches to teaching that were expressed through verbal exchanges, and together influenced whether prisoners felt more or less like traditional students and inspired to learn. Accordingly, Kerri characterized her relationship with a former professor during incarceration as "personal...like you had somebody who had taken the time out of their own schedule to come and do this...it made you want to try harder." She felt this way mostly because he once told her: "I think everybody should go to jail before they come to college because you guys are the most dedicated people I've ever met in my entire life." For Kerri, this encouraging statement, which was reinforced by action, motivated her to excel academically.

Jaeger also commented on the reciprocal nature of relationships between incarcerated students and faculty, noting that "the class goes according to the instructor." He remembered one teacher in particular whom students generally regarded as "just mad cool" because "he would talk about the paper, he would read with you, he would let you know what was going on outside, tell you the news or whatever...it was just that vibe off." Jaeger suggested that this time spent building a rapport with students came at a price because the "work load, it was light." Yet because students respected this teacher, classroom disruptions remained at a minimum. As Jaeger put it, "we would still bullshit but, we wouldn't do it in front of his face." Randy more readily seized opportunities to learn from prison educators who were seemingly dedicated to supporting academic growth among incarcerated students. He shared the following experience as a student in a course that he called 102: "The teachers, they talked, they shared a lot of things with me. Books, they would bring in for me and everything and...I had fun. I was having fun doing those assignments and...the grades show. I had a C in 101 and then I had a A in 102."

Fred also credited his strong academic performance in certain classes to faculty members who seemed committed to developing carceral environments that were conducive to learning. However, he explained that reaching the level of mutual trust between incarcerated students and faculty needed to help facilitate higher learning in prison was a gradual process and one constrained by carceral norms and limitations. Specifically, Fred mentioned that in his experience most prison educators are "kinda standoffish, especially at the beginning" and those that do get warmed up, "by that time...the class is over." Much like him, Albert characterized his involvement in postsecondary CE as a valuable experience, yet one that had could have been more gratifying. As he put it, "I learned some things, but I didn't learn everything that I could because the teachers...they were pressured in a way 'cause they wanna do something good for people, and in a way sometimes...they felt vulnerable."⁴

The results of this study revealed that individuals who visit prisons to teach might require some time to adjust to this temporary confinement, particularly given their susceptibility to student conflicts and discretionary decisions executed by corrections officers and facility administrators. This predicament is ironic because the time typically needed to effectively teach and forge relationships with incarcerated students is not guaranteed, but instead made inconsistent due to restricted access to enrolled classes. For example, Xander described in detail how corrections officers might use their power in ways that circumvent access to prison education and uninterrupted academic instruction. He used the following analogy to illustrate this point:

It's kinda like their [educators'] hands are tied, our hands are tied and you have the overseers. So it's like you have the watchdog, you have the inmate and you have the people coming to offer the services. So we basically gotta travel by whatever rules they have, or whatever ways they're feeling..."

As a result, he revealed that corrections officers might arbitrarily prevent prisoners from attending classes but most professors are aware of this condition and try to accommodate students who are absent. Given the well-established link between participation in postsecondary CE and post-release success, this inquiry into the role of corrections officers in shaping these educational experiences is much needed. The next section will focus on corrections officers and how they might utilize their discretion in ways that impede carceral movements and in turn, opportunities and motivation to successfully complete college classes.

Relationships Between Prisoner College Students and Corrections Officers

The 31 research participants who earned college credits during their former incarceration had varied interactions with corrections officers that were linked to their participation in postsecondary CE. Major components of these encounters were verbal opinions expressed by COs⁵ about the value of respondents' involvement in higher education and the ways in which these statements impacted the respondents' carceral educational experiences. The respondents recalled instances where corrections officers expressed these thoughts through actions that obstructed the respondents' freedom to attend college classes. Adding to this problem was the fact that corrections officers often did not explain their reasons for imposing such limitations, which fueled assumptions that the intended purpose was to exert control by thwarting educational progress.

Notably, research participants did not portray every encounter with corrections officers in a negative light. Yet, they expressed that it was atypical for COs to overtly support participation in postsecondary CE. Ivan illustrated this point in the following account:

Generally, their attitude[s] [are] pretty cynical of...anything the inmates are trying to do to benefit themselves whether its religion, education. Not every officer, but in general there seems to be an attitude of cynicism like....I mean the officers are worse than the inmates sometimes. Just their attitudes in general about life and their attitudes toward women and education and all that stuff.....It was more of like a negative vibe about it.

Similarly, Farley acknowledged that "there were some [corrections officers] that just supported us not coming back" but concluded that most "were just ignorant....they just didn't really care about you." Much like Ivan, he noted the power of institutional norms and behaviors, explaining that "the way our culture is structured, incarceration...it's not really geared toward rehabilitation....It's more geared toward just the housing prospect."

A common theme that emerged from the study results was that research participants viewed COs as being more concerned with institutionalizing prisoners rather than understanding how to support their involvement in higher education and the development of alternative pathways to crime. The data revealed that an important facet of this problem was restrictions on carceral movements, which interrupted access to classrooms and were largely perceived as arbitrarily imposed. For instance, Nate recalled that "even though there are only certain lock in times, the officers on the unit would be like 'I don't feel like watching you. Go in your cell.'" He described this as a fairly common control tactic used by corrections officers and surmised that it was allowed because they are authorized to "call a random count any time they think the numbers might be off."

Regardless of the actual reasons behind unexpected cell confinement, the result was that incarcerated students were locked in their cells during times that could have been spent inside the classroom. Marcos recounted his experience in trying to navigate custodial control over access to carceral college classes:

A lot of times I missed class because of the officers and the prison itself...sometimes they announce it [the authorization for travel to classes] later or they don't announce it....If the announcement doesn't go through, then the officer is not gonna open the door even though the officer sees people going to college.

Isaiah spoke about how these practices might also create tension between students, teachers and corrections officers, as he revealed that "when you go to school...that's an inconvenience. The cops may not wanna let you out...but I liked going to school." Furthermore, Isaiah revealed that "there was always a conflict between the education department and custody," because, for example, "if a fight may have happened earlier that day, they may try their best not to let school out....So any little thing that happens, they try to just get rid

of school.” Although Albert served time in a different correctional facility, he remembered facing similar administrative roadblocks because “they [prisoner administrators] were constantly pushing to eliminate schooling and programs and vocational shops” in order to relieve corrections officers from the burdens of managing travel back and forth to classrooms.

Overall, research participants perceived corrections officers as misusing their discretionary powers for the purpose of blocking efforts to participate and engage in postsecondary carceral education. However, Isaiah further suggested that their motives were more “cynical, like they don’t want you to learn something.... They want you to go back out there and commit a crime and come back.” As such, Ethan believed corrections officers “basically want you to stay stagnated in your mindset that jail is the thing to do” in order to more readily assimilate incarcerated persons into prison cultures. He further explained that requiring prisoners to complete daily structured routines leaves very little, if any, time for participation in postsecondary CE. Ethan illustrated this point with the following example: “correctional officers would always tell us certain things we had to do as far as lock in, what time we gotta eat, what time we gotta be up for group.... They made us tuck in our shirts, but they would never tell us to go to school.”

It is apparent that corrections officers said little, if anything to motivate respondents’ progress toward college completion, but they made up for this silence by making rude and disparaging comments about postsecondary CE to both prison educators and prisoner students. Research participants discussed how such statements exacerbated already strained prison environments. For instance, Victor asserted that COs “can’t stand education” based on comments he overheard some of them make in regards to prison based higher education. He remembered that “they would tell the teachers, ‘I don’t even know why you’re here. I don’t know why you’re working...this is not gonna get through these guys heads, you’re wasting your time..... These guys are too dumb.’”

Furthermore, other respondents shared recollections about statements corrections officers made directly to them, about their own involvement in higher education. To start, Ever revealed that “they’re always trying to berate you for it [taking college classes]” and recalled a few telling him ‘oh, now you’re trying to go to school, just because you got locked up...you have nothing else to do.’ As Fred put it, “some of them...they don’t get mad, but they try to make fun of you” by “saying little slick comments like ‘oh, you wasn’t doing that [going to college] on the streets.’”

The research participants found it impossible to avoid such negativity as they regularly encountered corrections officers during scheduled movements throughout each day. They spoke about how these circumstances impacted their focus on academics and motivation to succeed in higher education. Ivan summed up this point, explaining that “how officers generally interact with inmates, it just carries over to whatever you’re doing and particularly when it comes to...trying to better yourself, which education is...” It is quite possible that some incarcerated students might become disengaged from higher education in response to belittling remarks and contravening actions, but the study results revealed just the opposite. For instance, Geoff noted some possible implications of unfavorable interactions between prisoners and corrections officers:

How they treat you in there....What you think the outcome is gonna be of that? It’s gonna be a small proportion that’s gonna be like nah I gotta elevate from this, I gotta stop coming back here. But, the majority like...‘I’m a con, I’ll be the best con I can be then’...because you’re not teaching them nothing besides that.

The other formerly incarcerated persons who gained some college experience during incarceration identified engagement in postsecondary CE as one way to avoid this self-fulfilling prophecy. As Ivan expressed, “I think really with a lot of guys, [they] appreciate the opportunity...being able to go to class and...just getting your mind off the bullcrap and being able to focus on something that’s beneficial like education.” Similarly, Fred explained that strained encounters he had with corrections officers just made him “want to do it [take college classes] more, improve more.” From this standpoint, the mere chance for change, presented through enrollment in carceral college classes, gave research participants a sense of hope and motivation to persevere beyond imprisonment pains.

The data revealed that involvement in postsecondary CE can provide opportunities for prisoners to

cope with the strains of incarceration in useful ways; however, certain social interactions and cultural factors were described as inherent to imprisonment and also counterproductive to advanced educational pursuits. There were 31 out of 34 research participants who earned carceral college credit(s). Their engagement in higher education depended upon interactions with other students, prison educators and corrections officers, all of whom influenced access to carceral classrooms and corresponding opportunities for academic learning. Nonetheless, respondents voluntarily took and completed college classes during their incarceration, an indication that they remained focused, at least to some extent, on higher education regardless of any distractions presented in or out of the classroom.

The study results broaden understanding of the distinct yet overlapping institutional challenges that typically accompany participation in postsecondary CE. More importantly, this research draws specific and much needed attention to some of the pains of imprisonment and outlines some of the ways in which these circumstances can be mitigated through involvement in postsecondary CE. The data demonstrates the power of higher education received during incarceration and can be used to bolster support for the current and future development of postsecondary CE programs.

Discussion

The focus of this paper was on the experiences in postsecondary CE of 31 formerly incarcerated individuals who also continued their involvement in higher education post-release. The main purpose was to explore specific ways in which imprisonment pains influenced postsecondary educational experiences in correctional settings. Central to this inquiry was understanding how such strains impacted encounters that research participants had with other students, non-students, prison educators and corrections officers during incarceration. These interactions were largely governed by institutional structures predicated upon a system of restrictive rules and procedures. Respondents characterized such circumstances as part of a culture of incarceration that both constrained and facilitated higher learning in prison.

When research participants first entered prison, they assumed that participation in postsecondary classes would be unencumbered given the disconnect from life challenges or disruptions typically faced outside of prison. Yet, after beginning a postsecondary CE, it became clear that this ideal did not accurately depict the reality of being an incarcerated college student. In prison, respondents were socially isolated and as a result their interactions with professors, corrections officers and other prisoners were important elements of their experiences in postsecondary education. These relationships emerged in controlled environments, factors that had a dichotomous impact on carceral college participation.

For example, some respondents recounted how some corrections officers made disparaging remarks about their college participation and restricted their physical movements in ways that threatened to or did contravene their efforts to attend classes. The latter further diminished the already limited time allotted for prison education. Taken together, such structural impediments also made it difficult for prison educators to build relationships with students and effectively administer academic instruction to absentees confined to their cells or administrative segregation. The data showed that this situation was further complicated by incarcerated students who were characterized as being uninterested in learning and instead focused on mocking others during class or otherwise using that time to socialize. In sum, the research participants had continuous interactions with other prisoners, prison educators and corrections officers who influenced their college experiences in both positive and negative ways.

Interestingly, all research participants remained engaged in postsecondary CE despite some challenges presented by other prisoners, professors and corrections officers. They described such hardships as inherent features of incarceration that made them feel frustrated, yet at the same time inspired them to use their involvement in postsecondary CE as an avenue for change and progress. As such, the respondents described their participation in college during incarceration as an escape from associated pains of imprisonment, albeit temporarily. However, their ambition and willingness to perceive that educational experience as valuable could be attributed to a selection bias. Eleven out of the total 31 research participants who took college classes in prison also attended college prior to incarceration. Regardless, this qualitative study gathers the perspectives of formerly incarcerated individuals to offer unique insights into the benefits and challenges of carceral

college participation including specific ways that such efforts are based on interactions with others in prison contexts.

Although these study results are grounded in theoretical frameworks, they cannot be generalized to all incarcerated college students due to the situated nature of qualitative research design. Nonetheless, the data will strengthen relevant research on postsecondary CE, which mostly centers around practitioner experiences, prison classrooms, pedagogy, and characteristics of incarcerated students (Matthews, 2000; Michals & Kessler, 2015; Montross & Montross, 1997; Wright, 2005). By comparison, this qualitative research is based on the narratives of individuals who were once incarcerated college students and in that regard can contribute to a more unique portrayal of the interrelationship between specific carceral features that influence prisoner involvement and success in postsecondary CE. The policy implications are far reaching since bringing attention to challenges that accompany participation in postsecondary CE can help improve college administration and higher learning experiences in prisons.

Notes

1. This term is used interchangeably with postsecondary CE to refer to higher education programs offered in prison for transferable college credit(s).
2. Congress banned prisoners from receiving Pell Grants with the passage of The Violent Crime Control Act of 1994. In 2015, the U.S. Education Department and Justice Department announced a new pilot program designed to reinstate Pell Grant availability for federal prisoners who pursue a higher education during incarceration.
3. Marcos and Henry were among 11 out of 34 respondents who entered prison with some college experience; an exceptional level of pre-carceral educational attainment compared to most state prisoners. Henry directly acknowledged this learning gap stating, "I was educated in the Catholic School system and I had been to college before a lot of guys. These [carceral courses] were their first [college] classes taken... I'm not the average person that goes to prison....I actually had opportunities, I had resources, I had both my parents..."
4. Albert further explained that prison faculty might feel vulnerable because they are "in a room...with 30 guys...you don't know what they're here for so...they might be a little afraid....Then you have guys that are just straight, you know gangbangers and...so they just they would go in there [classrooms] for meetings or whatever their case may be."
5. Research participants used the words "COs", "cops" and "police" as colloquial terms for corrections officers.

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RESEARCH PAPER

The relationship between prisoners' academic self-efficacy and participation in education, previous convictions, sentence length, and portion of sentence served

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Abstract: *Prison education is an important aspect of adult education. This study investigated current participation in prison education, as well as previous convictions, sentence length, and the portion of sentence served as predictors of academic self-efficacy. Survey data derived from prisoners in all Norwegian prisons provided the empirical evidence for the analyses. A principal component analysis of a 40-item academic self-efficacy questionnaire revealed self-efficacy components in literacy, mathematics, information and communications technology (ICT), and self-regulated learning. Educational participation had a positive influence on self-efficacy in both mathematics and self-regulated learning. Participants who reported no previous convictions scored higher than others on self-efficacy in mathematics, self-regulated learning, and ICT. Furthermore, the results showed that perceived efficacy in ICT decreased with longer sentence length. Portion of sentence served was not significantly related to any of the four self-efficacy components. The findings are discussed with reference to a need for mastery experiences in prison and implications for policy and practice.*

Key words: *Prison education; academic self-efficacy; sentence length; adult education*

Introduction

The aim of this study was to examine Norwegian prisoners' academic self-efficacy, and ascertain the influence that current participation in education, previous convictions, sentence length, and portion of sentence served had on their academic efficacy beliefs. Prisoners constitute a vulnerable group and their academic self-efficacy may be influenced by previous negative experiences in school, which is a common feature among prisoners (Council of Europe, 1990). Likewise, factors related to their sentence, such as sentence length and portion of sentence served may also have an impact on their academic self-efficacy. However, prisoners have the same right to education as other citizens (e.g., Council of Europe, 2006) and participation in education and other aspects of incarceration may also improve their efficacy beliefs.

Self-efficacy in academic settings

Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as the individual's perceived ability to succeed at or accomplish certain tasks. Academic self-efficacy is thus central to success in school or education and can serve as an explanatory factor for why people's achievement may differ even though they have similar knowledge and skills. The concept of self-efficacy constitutes a conceptual structure grounded in the broader framework of Bandura's social cognitive theory. In line with his definition, self-efficacy is a question of self-perception rather than the actual level of an individual's efficiency (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Self-efficacy concerns the answer to the question, "Can I do this task in this situation?" (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003, p. 120). Someone who has a high sense of self-efficacy in one area is likely to attempt a new task, whereas a person with low self-efficacy is more likely to try to avoid it. Because self-efficacy is defined as individuals' beliefs about their capabilities to produce given attainments (Bandura, 1997), it is likely that they bring with them to any challenging situation, such as a school, certain characteristics that are related to their self-efficacy. Perceived self-efficacy takes into account the influence of both external physical and social complexities and internal cognitive processes. This is concretized through Bandura's (1986) proposed origins of efficacy beliefs, which



include mastery experiences, vicarious experiences (role models), social or verbal persuasion, and self-interpretation of physical/emotional arousal. The most reliable source for appraising one's self-efficacy is that of prior mastery experiences (Bandura, 1986), which means that success enhances efficacy beliefs, while failure diminishes them. The way in which individuals interpret previous attainments and environmental conditions influences their self-beliefs, which in turn inform and alter their subsequent actions and interactions with the environment (Pajares, 1996; Schunk & Meece, 2006).

Self-efficacy is originally construed to be task or domain specific (Bandura, 2006), and has displayed a potential for extensive application in the context of educational motivation and learning. When applied to academic settings, the common term is *academic self-efficacy* – students' beliefs concerning their ability to perform academically related tasks (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003), such as solving a math problem, reading a book, writing words correctly, communicating via email or finishing schoolwork on time. The latter case refers to self-efficacy for self-regulated learning, which is another facet of academic self-efficacy, along with efficacy beliefs for subject-specific tasks. Self-efficacy for self-regulated learning has been commonly measured in educational self-efficacy research as it applies to functioning across academic subjects (Klassen & Usher, 2010).

Students' self-efficacy beliefs influence their performance in several ways. It is a consistent predictor of their pursued course of action, coping behaviors (i.e., effort, persistence, and resilience), and ultimately, their achievements (Bandura, 1997). According to Pajares (2002), the beliefs students develop about their academic capabilities help determine what they do with the knowledge and skills they have learned: "Consequently, their academic performances are, in part, the result of what they come to believe they have accomplished and can accomplish" (p. 116).

Self-efficacy in a prison context

Participation in education during incarceration can play an important role in the daily life of many prisoners and has significant consequences for resettlement on release (e.g., Nally, Lockwood, Ho, & Knutson, 2014). The idea of "prison as a positive environment for learning" (European Commission, 2011, p. 4) is wide-reaching in a European context. It is grounded in the assumption that education and training should be integrated into all aspects of the prison regime, but the application of the concept appears to vary considerably from country to country. Prisoners belong to a vulnerable group, and without skills and knowledge, there is an increased risk of exclusion from the ordinary labor market, of poverty, debt, substance abuse, and the absence of an ordinary social network. From a socio-economic point of view, low educational achievement, which is a common trait among prisoners (Eikeland, Manger, & Asbjørnsen, 2013), results in fewer opportunities in the labor market. Because of this, individuals who have served time in prison are likely to be dependent on welfare benefits and thereby increase the burden on society (e.g., Lochner & Moretti, 2004; Palmer, 2012). In a personal and social perspective, prisoners who participate in education reduce the risk of recidivism and increase their post-release employment opportunities (Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders, & Miles, 2013; Kim & Clark, 2013).

A considerable amount of research across various levels of education and at different ability levels features self-efficacy as a predictor and mediator of students' achievement, motivation and learning (Dinther, Dochy, & Segers, 2011; Pajares, 2002; Schunk & Mullen, 2012; Zimmerman, 2000). However, scant research has explored prisoners' beliefs in their academic capabilities. Prisoners, like other members of society, form their self-efficacy by interpreting information from Bandura's proposed four sources (mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social/verbal persuasion, and self-interpretation of physical/emotional arousal), of which the most powerful one, for prisoners as well, is the interpreted result of one's previous performance, or mastery experiences. The academic self-efficacy of the majority of prisoners has probably been influenced by a lack of mastery experiences but also a lack of modeling effects, minor persuasion from others, and physical symptoms that have been interpreted as signs of lacking ability. Thus, one should assume that an enhanced level of education along with mastery experiences from participation in educational activities in prison should increase their academic self-efficacy. The modeling effect may be of special importance in a prison context. When another prisoner, who the learner identifies with, performs well in school, the learner's efficacy can be enhanced. The more closely the prisoner identifies with the model, the greater the impact on efficacy beliefs.

A previous study among a selected group of prisoners in Norway revealed that educational level was a

significant factor for both reading and writing self-efficacy (Jones, Varberg, Manger, Eikeland, & Asbjørnsen, 2012), but in reviewing the literature (using ERIC, psychINFO, and Google Scholar), we found no studies that specifically examined the relationship between participation in prison education and academic self-efficacy. However, in a pre/post study on *general* self-efficacy among prisoner students and college students who jointly participated in three different prison-based Inside-Out courses, Allred, Harrison, and O'Connell (2013) found that incarcerated participants (insiders) reported significantly lower levels of self-efficacy at Time 1 and an increase at Time 2. In contrast, college students (outsiders) did not experience any shift in level of general self-efficacy across time. Also, an enquiry by Ross (2009) aiming to examine the benefits of post-secondary correctional education (PSCE) among six selected in-prison college programs in New York State and across the United States revealed that participation in prison education can have a significant psychological impact on prisoners. The impact included an increase in perceived self-efficacy towards general functional self-management abilities as described by several interviewed prisoners and previously incarcerated individuals in the study.

Participation in prison programming, including education, is regarded as a way of adapting to prison life (Dhami, Ayton, & Loewenstein, 2007), and studies have revealed that prison sentence variables, such as sentence length and portion of sentence served, are related to both participation in education and educational motives. With increasing sentence length, prisoners are found more likely to participate in education and tend to value education for reasons that can be related to future planning and competence building (Jones, Manger, Eikeland, & Asbjørnsen, 2013; Roth & Manger, 2014). Further, prisoners are found to participate to a greater extent with more time served of their current sentence (Jackson & Innes, 2000; Rose & Rose, 2014). However, a search of the literature (ERIC, psychINFO, Google Scholar) revealed no studies examining the relationship between sentence variables and academic self-efficacy. Based on the literature (Asbjørnsen, Eikeland, & Manger, 2015; Jones et al., 2012; LaRose, Gregg, Strover, Straubhaar, & Carpenter, 2007; Manger, Eikeland, & Asbjørnsen, 2013; Schunk & Pajares, 2002), gender, age, educational level, and educational challenges such as dyslexia and ADHD need to be controlled for when examining the relationship between participation in education and other prison programs, educational motives and academic self-efficacy, which will be examined in the present study. Previous convictions can also be considered as a control variable because it belongs to the story prisoners bring into the prison. In the present study, however, we will treat it as a sentence variable related to sentence length and portion of sentence served.

Prison education in Norway

In Norway, prisoners are required to participate in activities during penalty implementation, and education, prison work or programs (e.g., aggression management) are parts of the mandatory activities. Aside from the restrictions naturally accompanying deprivation, convicts have the same right to services and amenities, as well as the same obligations and responsibilities, as the population at large. The law prescribes ten years of primary or lower secondary education (age 13-16) and three to five years of upper secondary education. The upper secondary education is not an obligation, but rather a right, and has three branches (general, mercantile, and vocational). Prisons in Norway have adopted the so-called *import model* for delivery of services to the prisoners (Christie, 1970). It therefore follows that the regular school systems are to supply educational services in prison. The import model, or administrative collaboration, is working with the intention of establishing a learning environment that is as normal and open as possible within a closed system. This is also a way of making other institutions aware of their responsibilities, by indicating that they too have an obligation to assist in the return of prisoners to the community (County Governor of Hordaland, 2005). The Education Act of Norway recognizes the general right to basic schooling, and the right of those who have completed mandatory schooling (age 6 or 7 to 16) to three years of upper secondary education (1998, § 2-1, § 3-1). Also prisoners are guaranteed these rights. From 2006, there has been a steady increase in educational participation among incarcerated in Norway, ranging from a participation rate of one out of three to more than half of the prisoners in 2012 (Eikeland, Manger, & Asbjørnsen, 2009; Eikeland et al., 2013). Consequently, education has become the most important prison activity. However, more knowledge is needed on how this relates to various aspects of the prisoners' academic self-efficacy.

Research problem: The aim of the study was to examine how various aspects of the prisoners' sentence re-

late to their academic self-efficacy. Thus, we included variables that reflect important aspects of the sentence such as participation in education, sentence length, portion of sentence served, and previous convictions. The research problem is: How does participation in prison education, previous convictions, sentence length, and portion of sentence served influence prisoners' academic self-efficacy when controlled for age, gender, educational level, diagnosed reading and writing difficulties/dyslexia and ADHD? Due to a lack of research on the relationship between the described prison variables and academic self-efficacy, we may expect several possible outcomes. However, in line with previous literature, we assume that several aspects of academic self-efficacy will increase with participation in prison education, especially because such participation may increase mastery experiences. Based on the studies reviewed for this project, one could also assume that previous convictions contribute to low academic self-efficacy, but that effects of sentence length and portion of sentence served may be difficult to predict. Possible negative effects may be balanced by opportunities to use the sentence to acquire information from important sources of academic self-efficacy.

Method

Participants

The present study derives from a population-based survey of all prisoners with Norwegian citizenship over the age of 18 in Norwegian prisons (in principle, young people below the age of 18 are not incarcerated in Norway). The survey questionnaire was administered during a one-week period in October 2012. The Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security reported 2,439 prisoners having Norwegian citizenship at the time of data collection (Jan Erik Sandlie, personal communication, October 24, 2012). The participation rate of those who received the questionnaire was 52.3 per cent ($N = 1276$), of whom 94.2 percent were male and 5.8 percent were female. This sample was close to the gender distribution in the actual prison population, being 94.7 and 5.3 percent, respectively (Eikeland et al., 2013). The mean age of the respondents was 36 years ($SD = 11.6$). At time of the commitment, about half of the prisoners had mandatory school as the highest level of education they had attained. A total of 27.4 percent of the prisoners had only completed upper-secondary school or vocational education, compared to 42.0 percent of the population in Norway in 2012 (Statistics Norway, June 18, 2013), whereas twelve percent reported completion at the university or university college level, compared to 29.8 per cent of the population (Statistics Norway, June 18, 2013). The percentage of prisoners with no educational achievement was 7.2. About half the participants were sentenced to a prison term of up to 12 months, and 40.5 percent had served less than one-third of their sentence. Furthermore, 64 percent of the participants had prior convictions, one or more times, and many of them may have been incarcerated for several offences at the same time, which is normal in Norway. As the participants are all Norwegian citizens, we suppose that a great majority of those with prior convictions have been convicted and served their time in Norway, but we do not have specific information about this.

The Questionnaire

The study is part of a larger study on prisoners' education, work, and skills. A self-report questionnaire was designed and contained a number of questions relating to these topics. A central aspect in the present study was the prisoners' academic self-efficacy, along with *actual* participation in prison education and different aspects of the prisoners' sentences. Common demographic variables, such as gender, age, and level of education were also requested. Additionally, we collected data on diagnosed reading and writing difficulties/dyslexia and ADHD, which have been shown to influence several aspects of prison life and prison education (Asbjørnsen et al., 2015; Jones et al., 2013).

According to Bandura (2006), "self-efficacy scales must be tailored to activity domains and assess the multifaceted ways in which efficacy beliefs operate within the selected activity domain" (p. 310). Thus, the prisoners' academic self-efficacy was assessed by means of 40 items covering particular tasks in reading, writing, mathematics, ICT, and self-regulated learning. The reading self-efficacy and writing self-efficacy items were originally adapted from Shell, Colvin, and Bruning (1995) and were applied in a previous study among prisoners in Norway (Jones et al., 2012). Reading self-efficacy contained task items (e.g., "read newspapers") and skill items (e.g., "understand the meaning of plural endings, prefixes and suffixes"). Likewise, writing self-efficacy contained task items (e.g., "write down the rules of a game") and skill items (e.g., "use words correctly in singular and plural"). The remaining segments of the scale, which covered mathematics (e.g.,

“solve equations”), ICT (e.g., “send and receive e-mails”), and self-regulated learning (e.g., “make weekly plans for schoolwork”, “take notes during a lesson”), were designed by the Bergen Cognition and Learning Group (BCLG), in line with guidelines for constructing self-efficacy scales (Bandura, 2006). The ICT items were partly adapted from a study among lower secondary school students in Norway (Manger, Eikeland, & Vold, 2009; Vold, 2007). Students use various self-regulatory learning strategies, such as planning and organizing schoolwork, taking notes during lessons and completing the work on time. Thus, some self-efficacy for self-regulated learning items were adapted from Bandura’s Children’s Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES; Bandura, 2006), while others were constructed by the BCLG. For each of the 40 items, the participants were instructed to rate their level of perceived capability to complete the proposed tasks on an 11-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 10 (*highly certain I can*). Cronbach’s α coefficient was measured to 0.97. Current participation in education was indicated with eight response options: “No, I am not taking part in any education/training”, “primary/lower secondary school”, “first year of upper secondary school”, “second year of upper secondary school”, “third year of upper secondary school”, “vocational education”, “university or university college”, and “short courses”. Aspects of the prisoners’ sentences included previous convictions, sentence length, and portion of sentence served. Previous convictions were divided into “yes” and “no” responses. Sentence length was identified through 15 options: “three month or less”, “three to six months”, “six to twelve month”, “one to two years”, “two to three years”, and so on, up to “more than twelve years”. Portion of sentence served was grouped as: “just started”, “shorter than a third”, “between a third and two-thirds”, “over two-thirds”, and “practically done”.

Furthermore, level of education had eight options: “not completed any education”, “primary school/lower secondary school”, “one year of upper secondary school”, “two years of upper secondary school”, “completed upper secondary school”, “vocational college”, “individual subjects at a university or university college”, and “a degree course at a university or university college”. Diagnosed reading and writing difficulties/dyslexia and ADHD both had three response categories: “yes, as a child”, “yes, as an adult”, and “no, never”. Finally, the respondents registered year of birth.

Procedure and ethical consideration

The Norwegian Ministry of Education has delegated the main responsibility for prison education in Norway to the County Governor of Hordaland, Department of Education. To initiate the study, one representative from this department approached each prison governor and headmaster in charge of prison education and informed them of the study’s objectives and procedures. In addition, the information was printed on the front page of the questionnaire. As instructed by the research group, the prison governor or headmaster in charge of education administered the data collection.

The study was authorized by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data, the prison authorities, and the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security. The procedure and information was also elaborated in collaboration with the Regional Committee for Medical and Health Research Ethics in Health Region 4. At the time of the survey, the prisoners were given clear written information about the study. Assurance of voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any time during completion of the questionnaire were affirmed. The printed information emphasized that participation or withdrawal would have no effect on their incarceration or treatment and opportunities in the prison. However, in line with the aim of the study, to benefit the Norwegian Ministry of Education’s further development of prison education programs, we also informed respondents that a high response rate is important because it will assure that further programs will accommodate the needs of future prisoners. In line with ethical recommendations, prisoners were not provided with incentives, as this would have placed a pressure on them to reply. The prisoners answered almost all of the questions by ticking the box(-es) that best described their situation (the only exception was age). If needed, prison personnel were available to assist the prisoners in reading the questionnaire. The questionnaires were returned without names or numbers linked to names, but were marked with a prison number.

Statistical analyses

Initial descriptive statistics were used to depict the prison populations’ characteristics. To measure the internal consistency of the academic self-efficacy scale, internal consistency reliability testing was applied by

means of Cronbach's α coefficient. Bivariate and multivariate analyses were conducted, including exploratory factor analysis to identify domains of academic self-efficacy, Pearson's correlation analysis, and multivariate linear regression analyses to assess the influence of prison sentence variables on the potential domains. Independent samples t-tests were performed to evaluate group mean differences in academic self-efficacy between (a) prison educational participants and (b) non-participants. Effect sizes for statistical differences were calculated by means of Cohen's d (Cohen, 1988). All statistical analyses were performed using the statistical package IBM SPSS Statistics, version 23.

Results

At face value, the academic self-efficacy scale provides a measure of five distinct domains of self-efficacy, namely reading, writing, mathematics, ICT, and self-regulated learning. However, both the reading and writing self-efficacy scales consist of skill and task subscales that may provide a different solution, especially since the respondents belong to an incarcerated population having varying reading and writing skills (Vacca, 2004). In addition, findings from educational research have revealed some inconsistency concerning self-efficacy for self-regulated learning as a distinct factor (Bong, 2001; Klassen & Usher, 2010), which indicate a need for further examination.

Thus, to reveal a simple structure of all items of the academic self-efficacy instrument, a principal component analysis (PCA) for the extraction of factors with varimax (orthogonal) rotation was conducted on the 1,276 respondents. This procedure does not allow for correlated factors, which is in line with the primary theory on self-efficacy (Bandura, 2006).

Based on Kaiser's eigenvalue-greater-than-one criterion (K1) and scree plot (Cattell, 1988), five components explaining 73.1 percent of the variance were initially extracted from the component analysis. The percentage of variance explained and their eigenvalues for components 1 through 5 were 48.9 (19.57), 11.2 (4.46), 6.8 (2.72), 3.6 (1.42), and 2.7 (1.07), respectively. Component 1 included all writing skill and task items and the reading skill items, whereas component 5 included only the reading task items. Hence, it was difficult to interpret and label these two components. Components 2, 3, and 4 were easily interpreted as self-efficacy in mathematics, ICT, and self-regulated learning. However, a Monte Carlo Parallel Analysis (Watkins, 2000) was performed to verify the number of components to be retained. This method is found to show the least variability and sensitivity to different factors or components, compared to other extraction methods such as the scree test and K1 (Ledesma & Valero-Mora, 2007). The parallel analysis yielded a solution of four components, as the fifth component did not reach a required eigenvalue of > 1.24 . Thus, the data were subjected to a forced four-component solution (see Table 1). The components were labeled: (1) Literacy self-efficacy, (2) Mathematics self-efficacy, (3) ICT self-efficacy, and (4) Self-efficacy for self-regulated learning. The literacy self-efficacy component included all reading task items that initially encompassed the fifth component, in addition to the reading skill items and all writing items. Based on sample size, a cut-off of 0.40 was used to identify significant factor loadings (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1995). Items that cross-loaded (loaded > 0.4 on more than one component and with a discrepancy of < 0.2 between them) were omitted from further analyses (Ferguson & Cox, 1993).

From the results, a few item cross-loadings met the removal criteria and were thus eliminated. This included one cross-loading between component 1 (literacy self-efficacy) and 2 (mathematics self-efficacy), and three cross-loadings between component 1 and 4 (self-efficacy for self-regulated learning) (see Table 1).

Subsequent to the component analysis, the retained item responses on each subscale were summarized and averaged into four subscale scores, each ranging from 0 to 10 with higher scores indicating stronger self-efficacy in the respective domains. Descriptives, correlations, and Cronbach's α coefficients for the subscales are reported in Table 2.

The results in Table 2 show the mean values on all self-efficacy subscales, with ICT self-efficacy as the highest score and mathematics self-efficacy as the lowest score. Internal consistency was satisfactory for all subscales. All correlations between them were significant and positive, and ranged from medium to large, according to Cohen's (1988) guidelines.

Table 1

Principal Component Analysis of the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale. Four-component-solution. ($N = 1154$)

Scale item	Components				h^2
	1	2	3	4	
Write words correctly based on how they are pronounced	.73	.27	.19	.27	.72
Read newspaper	.71	.12	.15	.08	.54
Use words correctly in singular and plural	.70	.36	.16	.26	.71
Read textbooks	.67	.21	.17	.30	.61
Understand the main point in a story	.67	.28	.15	.36	.67
Read letters from someone I know	.66	.06	.21	-.04	.49
Read aloud correctly	.65	.32	.12	.33	.65
Include the most important points in written work	.65	.34	.17	.42	.74
Write letters to someone I know	.63	.07	.19	.27	.52
Understand the meaning of plural endings, prefixes and suffixes	.61	.38	.10	.40	.69
Understand the meaning of all words in a book	.61	.36	.12	.39	.66
Write a summary of a book you have read	.61	.27	.14	.49	.70
Write a story of something you have experienced	.60	.17	.20	.38	.58
Use correct punctuation	.60	.35	.20	.36	.65
Read novels	.58	.19	.09	.29	.47
Write down rules of a game	.55	.30	.19	.42	.60
Do sums using fractions	.22	.85	.14	.23	.85
Solve equations	.16	.85	.16	.23	.82
Do sums using percentages	.30	.83	.12	.24	.85
Work out the interest on a loan	.20	.82	.12	.28	.81
Present measurements in a diagram	.22	.78	.19	.30	.77
Work out the volume of a cube	.19	.77	.18	.23	.72
Do sums in which you have to multiply or divide	.40	.75	.10	.20	.77
Create a budget and keep accounts	.22	.73	.18	.35	.74
Do sums in which you have to add or subtract	.48	.68	.09	.16	.73
Send photos (or other documents) as attachments to an email	.16	.13	.90	.10	.86
Download or install a program on a computer	.08	.09	.88	.04	.79
Use a memory stick or CD in a computer	.16	.12	.87	.04	.80
Send and receive emails	.21	.11	.86	.13	.82
Use a chat program (internet chatting)	.13	.04	.85	.04	.74
Use a search engine (e.g., Google) to search for information	.26	.09	.80	.12	.73
Use a computer keyboard	.21	.18	.77	.18	.70
Use a spreadsheet on a computer	.14	.40	.67	.16	.66
Pull myself together, so that I get schoolwork done	.24	.32	.10	.77	.76
Concentrate on schoolwork in a classroom	.34	.31	.10	.73	.75
Make weekly plans for school work	.31	.31	.10	.73	.73
Take notes during class	.36	.26	.12	.72	.73
Remember the contents of textbooks and lessons	.34	.34	.10	.71	.75
Complete schoolwork on time	.36	.33	.12	.68	.71
Use the library to find what I need for schoolwork	.43	.25	.13	.60	.63

Note. Varimax rotation. Italicized entries denote primary component loadings exceeding the 0.40 cut-off. Loadings in boldface indicate cross-loadings meeting removal criteria. Component 1 = Literacy self-efficacy, Component 2 = Mathematics self-efficacy, Component 3 = ICT self-efficacy, Component 4 = Self-efficacy for self-regulated learning.
 h^2 = Communalities.

Table 2

Descriptives, Correlations, and Cronbach's α Coefficients for the Academic Self-Efficacy Subscales.

Subscale	N	M	SD	α	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(1) Literacy S-E	1165	7.64	2.01	.95	1.0			
(2) Mathematics S-E	1162	6.01	2.95	.96	.66**	1.0		
(3) ICT S-E	1166	7.66	2.66	.95	.45**	.39**	1.0	
(4) S-E for self-regulated learning	1168	6.60	2.53	.93	.77**	.68**	.34**	1.0

Note. Variation in sample size is due to missing data. S-E = Self-efficacy.

** $p < .01$.

Independent-samples t-tests were utilized to compare the academic self-efficacy scores for participants ($n = 683$) and non-participants ($n = 592$) in prison education. The analyses demonstrated statistically significant score differences in favor of participants in mathematics self-efficacy (participants ($M = 6.43$, $SD = 2.85$), non-participants ($M = 5.65$, $SD = 3.04$), $t(1096) = 3.82$, $p = 0.000$, in ICT self-efficacy (participants ($M = 7.80$, $SD = 2.53$), non-participants ($M = 7.49$, $SD = 2.80$), $t(1077) = 1.93$, $p = 0.054$, and in self-efficacy for self-regulated learning (participants ($M = 6.94$, $SD = 2.23$), non-participants ($M = 6.20$, $SD = 2.79$), $t(1010) = 4.96$, $p = 0.000$. However, according to Cohen's (1988) guidelines, small effect size estimates were found

Table 3
Summary of Multivariate Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Prisoners' Self-Efficacy in Literacy, Mathematics, ICT, and Self-Regulated Learning. (N = 1276)

Variable	Literacy self-efficacy			Mathematics self-efficacy			ICT self-efficacy			Self-efficacy for self-regulated learning		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Constant	6.40	0.41		2.04	0.60		8.51	0.56		4.35	0.51	
Gender	-0.40	0.25	-0.05	0.08	0.38	0.01	-0.17	0.36	-0.02	-0.28	0.32	-0.03
Age	0.01	0.01	0.05	0.03	0.01	0.13***	-0.07	0.01	-0.33***	0.03	0.01	0.14***
Level of education	0.77	0.08	0.31***	1.38	0.12	0.37***	1.12	0.11	0.34***	0.93	0.10	0.30***
Educational participation	-0.02	0.12	-0.00	0.48	0.18	0.08**	-0.02	0.17	-0.00	0.47	0.16	0.10**
Previous conviction	-0.14	0.13	-0.03	-0.60	0.19	-0.10**	-0.53	0.18	-0.10**	-0.59	0.16	-0.12***
Sentence length	-0.01	0.02	-0.01	0.02	0.03	0.03	-0.07	0.02	-0.10**	0.01	0.02	0.01
Portion of sentence served	0.03	0.80	0.01	-0.08	0.12	-0.02	-0.02	0.11	-0.01	-0.13	0.10	-0.04
Diagnosed ADHD	-0.20	0.15	-0.04	-0.32	0.22	-0.05	0.26	0.21	0.04	-0.84	0.19	-0.14***
Diagnosed reading and writing difficulties/dyslexia	-1.65	0.15	-0.34***	-1.26	0.23	-0.17***	-0.65	0.21	-0.10**	-1.08	0.19	-0.18***
R ²	0.756			0.292			0.195			0.294		

Note. Listwise deletion.
p* < .01. *p* < .001.

in all the above cases, ranging from $d = 0.12$ to 0.31 . No statistically significant group mean differences were found in literacy self-efficacy.

In order to account for the influence of participation in prison education, previous convictions, sentence length, and portion of sentence served on the academic self-efficacy components, while controlling for other factors, four regression analyses were conducted. The self-efficacy components were entered as dependent variables in the separate analyses. Participation in prison education, previous convictions, sentence length, and portion of sentence served were entered as independent variables in each analysis. Both educational participation and previous convictions were given two values: (1) no and (2) yes. Sentence length was assigned 15 values (see section on Questionnaire). Portion of sentence served was collapsed and given three values: (1) shorter than one-third, (2) between one-third and two-thirds, and (3) over two-thirds. The following variables served as controls: Gender: (1) female and (2) male, age (a continuous variable), level of education: (1) no education, (2) primary/ lower secondary school, and 1 or 2 years of upper secondary school, (3) completed upper secondary school, or vocational education, (4) individual subjects or a degree course at a university or university college), diagnosed reading and writing difficulties/dyslexia: (1) no and (2) yes, and diagnosed ADHD: (1) no and (2) yes).

The regression results (Table 3) show the influence of each independent variable on the four self-efficacy components, with all other variables kept constant. The results revealed that educational participation had no statistically significant effect on the prisoners' self-efficacy in literacy. However, educational participants scored significantly higher on mathematics self-efficacy and self-efficacy for self-regulated learning than non-participants. In contrast to results from the independent-samples t-test, educational participants and non-participants did not differ significantly in scores on ICT self-efficacy. While previous convictions did not have any statistically significant impact on literacy self-efficacy, it appears to be significantly associated with self-efficacy in mathematics, self-regulated learning, and ICT. With no previous convictions, prisoners scored higher on these three components. Sentence length had a significant influence only on self-efficacy in ICT in which scores decrease with longer sentence length. Portion of sentence served was not significantly related to any of the self-efficacy components.

Of the control variables, age, level of education, and diagnosed reading and writing difficulties/dyslexia and ADHD were statistically significant in association with one to four of the self-efficacy components. With increasing age, the prisoners scored higher on self-efficacy in mathematics and self-regulated learning. In contrast, younger prisoners scored higher on ICT self-efficacy than older prisoners. Furthermore, with a higher educational level, prisoners scored higher on all four self-efficacy components. With respect to ADHD, prisoners with such diagnosis scored lower on self-efficacy for self-regulated learning. Lastly, the results showed that prisoners with diagnosed reading and writing difficulties/dyslexia scored lower on all self-efficacy components. Gender was not significantly related to any of the self-efficacy components.

Discussion

A number of studies show that academic self-efficacy is related to academic achievement (Komarraju & Nadler, 2013), and among prisoners it is related to participation in education (Jones, 2012). In the current study, we adapted an academic self-efficacy scale based on several authors (Jones, 2012; Manger et al., 2009; Vold, 2007) and the present authors added several items relevant for the prison education context in line with Bandura's guidelines. Pursuant to retention criteria, four forced components were calculated in a varimax rotated principal component analysis of a 40-item academic self-efficacy questionnaire: 1) literacy self-efficacy, 2) mathematic self-efficacy, 3) ICT self-efficacy, and 4) self-efficacy for self-regulated learning. The latter involve goal-directed activities that students initiate, such as concentrating on schoolwork in the classroom, making plans for the week, and completing schoolwork on time.

In contrast to what was reported by Shell et al. (1995), the reading and writing items were all included in a literacy self-efficacy component. There may be several explanations for this. First, reading and spelling skills are found to be impaired in a large proportion of prisoners in Norway. Second, Norwegian is a language with shallow orthography but complex phoneme structure (Seymour, 2008), which may lead to an increased probability of compensated skills in adults with dyslexia, and this may result in a minor difference in the perception of reading skills and spelling skills. In addition, "writing impairments" in Norway are usually

understood as “spelling problems”. Such issues may result in a difference in the contrast between literacy tasks and skills compared to what has been found in English language samples (Georgiou, Parrila, & Papadopoulos, 2008). Further, a high correlation was observed between self-efficacy in literacy and mathematics, suggesting that these domains share some common aspects. According to theory, there is a likelihood for covariation between efficacy beliefs in distinct domains that share similar sub-skills, or when development of skills in dissimilar domains are socially structured and acquired together, such as academic skills in the educational context (Bandura, 2006). “Commonality of sub-skills and covariation of development will yield generality” (Bandura, 1989, p. 732). Results from various studies lend support for cross-domain correlations in academic self-efficacy in the present study (e.g., Bong, 1998; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). Moreover, efficacy beliefs for self-regulated learning appeared to be related to both literacy and mathematics self-efficacy. Although correlations do not make causality, the finding can be seen in light of Zimmerman et al. (1992), who found, through path analysis, that students’ self-efficacy for self-regulated learning influenced their efficacy beliefs for mastering various academic subjects (e.g., mathematics, science, reading and writing), which in turn had an effect on academic achievement. Thus, along these lines, to achieve academically, students need not only efficacy-beliefs to perform, but also beliefs in their capability to apply adaptive learning strategies (Jøet, Usher, & Bressoux, 2011). This may help clarifying the correlative processes between self-efficacy for self-regulated learning and efficacy beliefs in literacy and mathematics, as found in the present study.

Important variables considered in the study were educational participation, previous convictions, sentence length, and portion of sentence served. Initial t-test results revealed a difference between educational participants and non-participants with respect to academic self-efficacy in which participants had better outcomes in terms of efficacy beliefs in self-regulated learning, mathematics and ICT. Because self-efficacy judgements influence the choices people make (Pajares, 2003), the extent of academic self-efficacy may thus serve as a determinant for participation or non-participation in education. In line with this, non-participants may have refrained from educational activities due to initially lower academic self-efficacy than educational participants had. Alternatively, prisoners may have developed a stronger sense of self-efficacy in various academic areas during participation, such as self-regulated learning and mathematics. Both assumptions are probably relevant, as academic self-efficacy may be both a determinant for enrolment and an effect of participation. The differences between participants and non-participants were small, however, in terms of Cohen’s effect size measures. In addition, no significant difference was found between participants and non-participants in literacy self-efficacy. Other studies (Eikeland et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2012) among incarcerated individuals have reported no association between self-reported reading skills and participation in prison education. This may indicate that previously educationally disadvantaged prisoners see both new opportunities and different standards of comparison than outside prison. Behind bars, they can undoubtedly compare themselves with individuals who have similar learning problems, which is in line with “the frame of reference hypothesis” (Marsh & Parker, 1984).

We used multivariate linear regressions to study how participation in education, previous convictions, sentence length, and portion of sentence served may predict academic self-efficacy. In the analyses, we controlled for commonly used background variables that could influence such beliefs (gender, age, educational level, ADHD, reading and writing difficulties/dyslexia). Participation in education had a positive influence on self-efficacy in both mathematics and self-regulated learning. However, in contrast to the initial t-test result, the effect of participation in education on ICT self-efficacy disappeared after controlling for relevant variables related to academic self-efficacy. Participation in education together with previous convictions, sentence length, and portion of sentence served did not influence prisoners’ literacy self-efficacy.

A possible explanation of the non-significant effect of participation in education on ICT self-efficacy may be prisoners’ inadequate access to ICT equipment, whether they participate in prison education or not. A shortage of ICT equipment was stated as the major cause of problems related to the educational activities by prisoners in all five Nordic countries (Eikeland et al., 2009). Alternatively, the prisoners’ fairly high mean score on ICT self-efficacy may have created a ceiling effect which reduces the chance for a significant difference between participants and non-participants, or we may need measuring items requiring a higher capability level to distinguish between different categories of participants. Participants who reported no previous convictions scored higher on self-efficacy in mathematics, ICT and self-regulated learning. One may speculate

that individuals who have previously been convicted may have more complex problems, including drug abuse, lower socio-economic status and lower education than first-time convicted individuals. For ICT self-efficacy, a possible explanation may be that prisoners without previous convictions have been exposed to the latest developments in ICT to a larger degree than recidivists. Further, the results showed that the prisoners' sentence length influences their ICT self-efficacy in which perceived efficacy increased with shorter sentence length. The explanation may be that while in prison, individuals have limited access to ICT, which may have adverse effects on the prisoners' ICT self-efficacy as it limits their opportunity for authentic mastery experiences within this area. Based on a tenable inference that prisoners serving longer sentences on average have spent more time in prison than prisoners with shorter sentences, a reasonable presumption is that long-term prisoners are more prone to report lower self-efficacy as a resulting consequence of inadequate training of ICT skills. A study by Poelmans, Truyen, and Stockman (2012) of 195 students in higher education found a significant correlation between the students' global ICT skills and computer self-efficacy, indicating the importance of proper training. The prisoners were asked how much of their sentence they had served so far, but the portion of sentence served was not significantly related to any of the self-efficacy components.

Age, level of education, diagnosed reading and writing difficulties/dyslexia, and ADHD were significantly associated with one to three of the self-efficacy components. The prisoners scored higher on self-efficacy in mathematics and self-regulated learning with increasing age. One possible explanation is that with increasing distance from former schooling, their efficacy beliefs will be less affected. A positive relationship between age and academic self-efficacy among prisoners was also reported by Jones et al. (2013). In contrast, younger prisoners scored higher on ICT self-efficacy than older prisoners. A plausible explanation is that younger prisoners have had better access to computer technology from childhood, in school and outside school, than older prisoners. Further, with higher educational level, the prisoners scored higher on mathematics self-efficacy, ICT self-efficacy and self-efficacy for self-regulated learning. Such findings are in line with former studies which show that academic self-efficacy is significantly and directly related to academic performance and educational level (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001; Jones, 2012). Several studies show that ADHD has a negative impact on education and employment (Barkley, Fischer, Smallish, & Fletcher, 2006; Mannuzza, Klein, Bessler, Malloy, & Hynes, 1997). This may reduce the opportunities for mastery experiences and thus have a negative influence on academic self-efficacy. However, prisoners with such diagnosis did not score lower on the self-efficacy components other than self-efficacy for self-regulated learning. The results also showed that prisoners with diagnosed reading and writing difficulties/dyslexia scored lower on all self-efficacy components, which is in line with similar studies in the prison population (Jones, 2012). Contrary to this, there is some evidence that students with learning difficulties overestimate their writing self-efficacy but not their mathematics self-efficacy (Klassen, 2002).

Gender was not significantly related to any of the self-efficacy components among the prisoners. In comparison, a recent meta-analysis of students in general identified an overall effect size of 0.08, favoring males, which is a small difference according to Cohen's guidelines. However, females exhibited higher language self-efficacy than males, while males displayed higher mathematics and computer self-efficacy than females (Huang, 2013)

Limitations of the study

Despite the study's contribution to the prison education literature, it has several limitations. For some of the variables, we relied on retrospective self-reports, and there were no sources of corroborative information such as official records on educational background and sentence length. It is known that when asked to rate their weaknesses in questionnaires, respondents tend to underestimate (Olsen, 2001; Samuelsson, Gustavsson, Herkner, & Lundberg, 2000). Prisoners' academic self-efficacy was also analyzed via self-reported data, which were not compared to their actual mastery of tasks in literacy, mathematics, ICT or self-regulated learning. Overall, the prisoners in the current study rated their academic self-efficacy as moderate to high. One would assume that many prisoners hold low academic efficacy beliefs, partly due to the history of poor mastery experiences in school. However, according to research findings, some individuals generally tend to overrate their academic self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 1996), and this was confirmed in Klassen's (2002) review of the literature on the self-efficacy beliefs of students with learning difficulties. Earlier in the

discussion, we referred to the frame of reference hypothesis (Marsh & Parker, 1984). The hypothesis is based on the assumptions that individuals compare their own academic abilities with the abilities of other individuals within their reference group and use this relativistic impression as a basis for forming their self-concept. According to Bandura (1997), self-concept, which is a composite view of oneself, largely reflects people's beliefs in their personal efficacy. Although we have data on prisoners' current participation in education, we lack data on a variety of sources, such as prior and present mastery experiences that may contribute to the prediction of academic self-efficacy in a prison context. We recommend that future studies address these limitations. Also, we lack good studies on how prisoners' academic self-efficacy can be enhanced. Although academic self-efficacy is theorized to be improved in *any context* by providing learners with mastery experiences, role models, social or verbal persuasion, and a classroom climate that does not make them anxious or worried, the lack of studies in a prison learning environment calls for further examination.

Practical implications

Previous studies (e.g., Davis et al., 2013; Kim & Clark, 2013) have shown that prison education reduces recidivism. Although we do not have similar studies on the relationship between participation in prison education and recidivism in Norway, a positive relationship between academic self-efficacy and achievement in school has been revealed (Dinther et al., 2011; Pajares, 1996; Zimmerman, 2000). Academic self-efficacy is essential to academic success. It sustains motivation and promotes learning. Apparently, academic self-efficacy may be of indirect importance for post-release success and consequently lower recidivism. Based on the research they have reviewed, Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003) recommend that teachers should help students maintain relatively high but accurate self-efficacy, provide them with challenging academic tasks that they can achieve with effort, foster the belief that competence or ability is changeable, and finally promote their domain-specific self-efficacy beliefs rather than global self-esteem. Self-efficacy is increased when students adopt short-term goals, are taught to use specific learning strategies, and receive rewards based on achievement, not just engagement, because achievement rewards signal increasing competence (Graham & Weiner, 1996). Thus, an important pedagogical implication emerging from the findings is that prison staff should take seriously their share of the responsibility in enhancing the academic self-efficacy of the prisoners. In particular, prisoners with prior convictions who have a lower level of education and do not participate in prison education need to be empowered with resources that can boost their self-efficacy. Although the mean ICT self-efficacy score was in the higher range, the findings may indicate that inadequate equipment puts prisoners at a competitive disadvantage after release and that the prison authorities must quickly solve the discrepancy between prison security routines and the need of prisoners involved in educational activities to use ICT equipment in their studies. The period of incarceration is an opportunity for prison teachers to take steps to improve prisoners' academic self-efficacy, including their ICT self-efficacy, and especially the self-efficacy of prisoners who have learning challenges due to ADHD and reading and writing difficulties. Better education will likely contribute towards improving the prospect for successful reintegration into the society. Also, prison staff and prison educators should be aware that prisoners' academic self-efficacy may serve as an important guiding factor for their own decision to enroll in education or not. Thus, assessment of academic self-efficacy can provide important guidelines for educational staffs' academic supervision in a prison context.

In spite of its limitations, the present study has important implications for further research and for prison education in practice. It shows that participation in educational activities has an influence on prisoners' academic self-efficacy. In addition, the prison staff and the prison educators should be aware of the aspects of the sentence that can affect prisoners' self-efficacy and thus their learning and future return to a life without crime. The results have particular implications for the planning of learning activities that can promote mastery experiences in all areas of academic skills, including learning activities for prisoners with previous convictions and low education.

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PRACTITIONER PAPER

Calling things by their name: Anand rejuvenates the Mahá-Bhárat

by R.C.S
P.I. Neuwegein

Abstract: *R.C.S., one of the editors of P.I. Neuwegein's newsletter, gives an overview of the work of a fellow prisoner in the jail, which consists of the translation and adaptation to modern times of the Mahá-Bhárat. This is a notable achievement in this prison's environment and will be of interest to other prisoners and prison educators who might want to draw comparisons, conclusions, and other ideas about it.*

Key words: *Prison education; Mahá-Bhárat*

I am always keen to write about the most accomplished and brilliant initiatives carried out by our fellow detainees, and the work outlined in this article is one of the most inspiring. After getting to know Anand, I decided immediately his work needed to be known by everyone in the prison system because it is an extraordinary success story. Before starting his sentence Anand had no prior interest in Hindu mythology but while reading the Mahabharata in jail it became the focus of his life. "It's Mahá-Bhárat¹, not Mahabharata!" he explains. "People read corrected versions that have been translated from Sanskrit into English and they all make the mistake of misspelling most of the names in the book. I want this to change so that we can start calling everyone in the saga in the proper ways." And that is only the beginning of the project.

Anand is a Hindu from Surinam, and he surely knows his Mahá-Bhárat inside out. He has become one of the greatest experts in the epical Indian masterpiece in the Netherlands so it may come as a surprise to find him serving time in the Neuwegein Penitentiary. But while there, he has undertaken a "Magna Opus" that is every bit as massive and as challenging as the original Mahá-Bhárat. Anand is translating it into Dutch. And not only that, he is doing it in everyday language so it is understandable by all, adding footnotes and comments, including a introduction that is a book by itself, "sideways exploring" the Bhagavad Gita and finding suitable illustrations, maps and other references. The end result will be a 5000+ page, 18 book collection that will shape the way that the Mahá-Bhárat is understood by the Dutch speaking community. Scholars, seculars and buffs alike will at last have the final weapon to gain the best insight into Hindu culture and that is no mean feat.

The Mahá-Bhárat came to Anand by chance while serving his long sentence. "It was not something that was intended at first. I have a Hindu background and the initial curiosity turned me back into re-reading the book. It was then when I discovered that there were many inconsistencies, lots of mistakes, and that everything, from the names to some of the situations, were poorly redacted or even not understandable. We have to see things in perspective; the book is extremely long and old, in some versions with more than 5000 pages written more than 5000 years ago in a 1000 year span. We, in Europe, work primarily with Sanskrit and English translations edited in Victorian times. It is bound to be inconsistent". This situation triggered something in him, and from that moment he knew what he wanted to do. "I thought I could make a better translation into Dutch, one that could sort out most of those inconsistencies, and retain all its core values while at the same time making it easier to read and more understandable in today's prose. Since then I haven't looked back. The

¹ A Sanskrit epic poem of ancient India. It is an important source of information on the development of Hinduism between 400 bce and 200 ce and is regarded as both a religious text about dharma (Hindu moral law) and a history. It is the longest epic poem ever written, with over 200,000 individual verse lines and long prose passages. About 1.8 million words in total, the Mahá-Bhárat is roughly ten times the length of the Iliad and the Odyssey combined.



Mahá-Bhárat is hugely challenging, but I can see in the book answers to many of life's situations, I can see in the book wise words of advice. It reflects so many of our history as a human society it never ceases to surprise me."

The scale of the project is daunting. It is measured in years and volumes, and Anand's life now practically revolves around it. "I work every day, for many hours, and I enjoy every minute of it. In my cell when I have to be inside and in the Education Department all the other times and where I even have a dedicated computer. I am now working on the introduction, which has taken me more than a year to complete, and on four of the 18 volumes. You should expect at least another ten years before most of the text is ready. Until then the Mahá-Bhárat will be very much in the centre of my life". Certainly, this means that we are looking at a life project to be continued when he is released and he already has plans; "I want to dig deeper into Hindu traditions and culture. I see myself working and helping in my local temple, and putting my experience in the Mahá-Bhárat at the service of the community and the scholars."

Anand faces other challenges too because publishing his work will be a big task in itself. He knows that to reach the maximum amount of Dutch readers he has to plan ahead with the times; "I think that the scale of the project means that I will have to release an electronic edition together with the standard paper one. Everything, from the fonts and spacing to the illustrations will be unique to my version. I am already looking at several publishing options with the help of my children, who by the way have always fully supported me. Besides, I am also looking forward to a prior release because I am working on a special introduction to the book and its characters as a standalone volume and that may happen sooner than I expected."

The Mahá-Bhárat has given a purpose to Anand's time spent in prison. "I was a very busy man outside, and I needed to have something to do in prison that made sense so that I would not go with the normal prison flow and fade away. This project has balanced me and at the same time given me the strength that is helping me in getting through this prison time. I can't conceive my life anymore without the Mahá-Bhárat; it has been a life changing experience. This also shows that reintegration is not limited to the usual prison options that you have to find your own way. There is nothing wrong with being a singularity; we can all find something that motivates us even if that something is not in the trodden path."

The project has had full support of the prison education team in Nieuwegein. "From the beginning I have had all the help from them and from the prison staff. I need a lot of extra research, books and media and I have never had any problem in getting them", says Anand. All the teachers help him and serve as "proof readers". Anand is not satisfied if when they are reading they do not completely understand every chapter, and countless hours are spent sometime in a triple translation effort, with parts in English that have to be doubly filtered before they can be deemed to be fit for purpose. He is also setting an excellent example for other inmates because his effort proves that the importance of prison education and support should not be limited to the standard offerings; and that big things can be accomplished even in the harshest environments.

I would like to give the final word to Anand: "We should always remember that things are not always what you think. For example, in the Mahá-Bhárat, the character of Karan is universally thought to be the bad guy. But, he is not. This surprised me at the beginning but now it has shed a whole different light in the way I see the book, and I know I still have many surprises awaiting me. After all the end is very far away!"

R.C.S. serves as an editor of P.I. Neuwegein's newsletter at P.I. Neuwegein, a 480 cell capacity male Prison and Correctional Facility located in Nieuwegein, Netherlands.

Annet Bakker is the chairperson of the European Prison Education Association.

Freedom is a state of mind

by Loco
P.I. Neuwegein

Abstract: *Artwork by Loco, an incarcerated artist at P.I. Neuwegein, The Netherlands.*

Key words: *Prison education; art education*

In this piece of prison art Loco touches one of the most revered subjects: the juxtaposition of freedom and individuality in the most extreme environments. Turning one notch up his impressive nib pen technique his drawing excels in conveying the message of inner and outer freedom, in the unique way that can only be expressed from a situation of inner and outer seclusion. The overall picture synthesizes his experience in comic book illustration and his interest in formal 20th century revisionism and pop art. He drinks from the fountains of Crumb, Esher, Lloyd, Haring and Lichtenstein, but with an added darkness that reminisces more of a tortured Scarfe. His cinema cues are also obvious: his revered idols Burton, Sayadian and Murnau come out of the woodwork in the intriguing contrasts and shadow treatments.

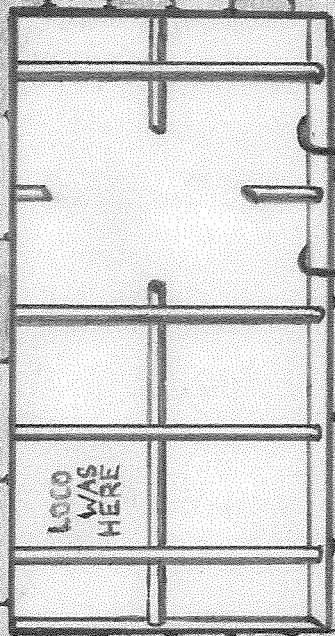
On a more detailed viewing hidden clues and places, some too familiar to other prisoners, some genuinely individual, appear on the forefront. The bullet, the anarchy as an irreverent pose, the night monster turned guard, the gang tattoo, the woman are all there to complement the idea that there is a parallel between the inner and outer liberties ever so evident when you are detained.

Pete Sinfield once said: "We all live in a prison, but some of us are lucky, our prison cell has windows". Loco proves to us once again that we are closer to this than what we might think.

--R.C.S.



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The greatest form of control is where you think you're
dictated. One form of dictatorship is being in a
The other one is sitting in a prison cell but you

Freedom is a state of mind

free when you're being fundamentally manipulated at
prison cell and you can see the bars and touch it,
can't see the bars so you think you're free,

2015