Give Us Opportunities

BEFORE YOU GIVE Us A CELL

Artwork Courtesy of Performing Statistics

FEATURE

A Note About the Cover Art

Give Us Opportunities, 2016
Artist: Tee
Digital Print

Performing Statistics is a cultural organizing project that uses art to model, imagine, and advocate for alternatives to youth incarceration. Every summer, the project creates art with a group of teens in the Richmond Juvenile Detention Center's post-dispositional program about their experiences navigating the justice system and their vision for a world without youth prisons. The artwork is then produced in a number of ways in order to reach decision-makers in the education, law enforcement, and juvenile justice systems. The project's ethos looks to young people impacted by the juvenile justice system as experts society should listen to when considering policies that most impact them. *Give Us Opportunities* was created in the summer of 2016 and speaks to the kinds of investments young people would like to see to keep them out of the system. Jobs, credible messenger mentors, culturally competent after-school programming, more supportive educational environments, and stable housing are just a few examples of the kinds of investments that come up regularly in the project's programming. In 2020, Performing Statistics will premier *No Kids in Prison*, a national touring exhibition that will amplify youth justice movements across the country and weave a national narrative of youth stories, dreams, and demands. More information about the project can be found at www.performingstatistics.org. The cover art is used with permission from ART 180.

Call it What it is: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) From Life in Prison
THOM GEHRING

In 1842 Charles Dickens' book on his tour of the United States, *American Notes*, was published. One chapter, "Philadelphia, and its Solitary Prison" was devoted to the effects of the Pennsylvania System of Prison Management (solitary confinement) on prisoners.

> On the haggard face of every man among these prisoners, the same expression sat. . . It had something of that strained attention which we see upon the faces of the blind and deaf, mingled with a kind of horror, as though they had all been secretly terrified. In every little chamber that I entered, and at every grate through which I looked, I seemed to see the same appalling countenance. It lives in my memory. . . . Parade before my eyes, a hundred men, with one among them newly released from this solitary suffering, and I would point him out. (Dickens, 1842/1957, pp. 108-109)

Solitary confinement is one of the worst things that can happen in prisons, but often the intensity of living in the general population of a prison produces what we now call PTSD. In the public mind, PTSD is associated with wartime combat. We sometimes remark on the parallels between war and corrections, as in the phrase "war on crime." Englehardt reported that:

> In times of peace the prison is, of all institutions, the most representative of war conditions. . .[because] society has thought of itself as being engaged in perpetual warfare, the enemy being the violators of its legal, social, and economic codes. . .war suggests hatred, hostility, ruthlessness, and aggression. (American Prison Association's Proceedings, 1939, pp. 25-26)

Consistent with Dickens' report, some of the difficulties that can be encountered during and after incarceration are typically described with language designed for war conditions that often linger after the battlefield.

In the American Civil War this problem was described with three different terms, each of which emphasized some characteristics more than others. The first and most common was melancholia, "A functional mental disease, characterized by gloomy thoughtfulness, ill-grounded fears, and general depression" ("Melancholia," 1971/1973, p. 1763). The second most common term was hysteria, and it had a similar definition. "A functional disturbance of the nervous system, characterized by such disorders as anaesthesia, hyperanaesthesia, convulsions, enfeeblement or perversion of the moral and intellectual faculties ("Hysteria," 1971/1973, p. 1363). The third term was insanity, "The condition of being insane; unsoundness of mind as a consequence of brain-disease; madness, lunacy" ("Insanity" 1971/1973, p. 1445).

In World War I the same condition was called shell shock "(1916): 1. any of numerous,

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often hysterical psychoneurotic conditions appearing in soldiers under fire in modern war-fare[;] shell-shocked (1918). . .2. mentally confused" ("Shell Shock," 1988, p. 1085).

In World War II the problem was sometimes called:

Combat fatigue, also called battle fatigue, or shell shock, a neurotic disorder caused by the stress involved in war. This anxiety-related disorder is charac-terized by (1) hypersensitivity to stimuli such as noises, movements, and light accompanied by overactive responses that include involuntary defensive jerk-ing or jumping (startle reactions), (2) easy irritability progressing even to acts of violence, and (3) sleep disturbances including battle dreams, nightmares, and inability to fall asleep. ("Combat Fatigue," 2016, p. 1)

Surely similar psychological experiences must persist after cruel treatment: Japanese Americans confined in internment camps, Native Americans removed from their traditional territories to reservations, former slaves after they were freed. One case in point was during the Federal occupation of Confederate states during the American Civil War.

To many members of the Federal armies of invasion during the Civil War, the plight of the freedmen seemed hardly less distressing than that of the slave. Ig-norant, homeless, ragged, and hungry, the Negroes by thousands flocked to the Union camps, creating grave problems of supply and sanitation and even ham-pering military movements. General Benjamin F. Butler, who first 'confiscated' the escaping slaves as 'contraband of war,' not only employed the Negroes as laborers but also established relief stations and schools for them." (Swint, 1966, p.1)

It is central to the work of prison education and reentry that teachers and other caregiv-ers become aware of the trauma from being exposed to treatment that is deliberately designed to hurt people. The intensity of the pain varies among nations, but prisons always hurt people. Even when the immediate experience of being hurt is removed, persons exposed to pain tend to be dislocated and unsettled, without sufficient nurture or support, terrified, and confounded. We have many terms to describe these problems when they are encountered in war, and we have to extend those original meanings to include the incarcerated and the recently released. We can still express the idea by calling it what it is in our current language: post-traumatic stress disorder.

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Lead Editor's Welcome

CORMAC BEHAN

Welcome to Volume 6, Number 2 of the *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry*. *JPER* was established to provide a place to publish research and practice in prison education. In this issue, we are delighted to have three practitioner papers showcasing the work of prison and correctional educators.

Our cover art 'Give Us Opportunities' was created by the Performing Statistics project in 2016. Performing Statistics is a cultural organizing project that uses art to model, imagine, and advocate for alternatives to youth incarceration. Performing Statistics' ethos looks to young people impacted by the juvenile justice system as experts society should listen to when considering policies that most impact them.

As always, we begin with our historical vignette from Thom Gehring. In his fascinating article, 'Call it What it is: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) From Life in Prison', Thom reminds us that we should never forget the impact of being exposed to the reality of incarceration on educators and caregivers. He argues that the intensity of the pain varies among nations, but prisons always hurt people. He challenges us to use language that describes this experience, which he concludes is "in our current language: post-traumatic stress disorder".

Dorien Brosens and her colleagues' research on participation by foreign national prisoners in the Flanders region of Belgium investigates which prison activities (e.g., cultural, educational, and health-related activities, sports, vocational training, and forensic welfare services) are available to, and accessible by, foreign national prisoners. They found that several initiatives have been taken to enhance foreign nationals' participation in prison activities and highlight the struggles that activity coordinators face in offering activities that are suitable for this section of the prison population.

Our first practitioner paper by Theresa Ochoa and colleagues is an extended practitioner paper on a university-based mentoring program that trains undergraduate students to serve as job mentors to incarcerated youth in Indiana's juvenile correctional facilities. The project, Helping Offenders Prosper through Employment (HOPE) allows undergraduate students to serve as positive role models to incarcerated youth during and after confinement to improve community re-entry. This will be of particular interest to practitioners interested in implementing peer mentoring in juvenile and correctional facilities, as well as scholars studying factors that reduce juvenile recidivism.

The practitioner paper by Terrance Hinton "'I See You Have Been Convicted of a Felony; Can You Tell Me About That?' Workforce Development Challenges for Restorative Citizens Seeking Employment" begins by reporting that after a sharp increase in the prison population in the USA in the late 20th century several states, have in the last decade, overhauled their criminal sentencing and prison structures to lower prison populations. This has resulted in

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the release of thousands of citizens and has expanded the need for re-entry services. The paper examines the barriers that these citizens, and the social workers who assist them, face in helping former prisoners find suitable and sustainable employment. Hinton explores solutions for collaboration across criminal justice and non-profit agencies for the purposes of increasing employment opportunities for what he terms 'restored' citizens returning back to the community.

Prins, Stickel, and Kaiper-Marquez's paper on family literacy programs for parents in prison argues that research on these correctional education initiatives is scant. Therefore, they hope to contribute to the nascent literature on family literacy for incarcerated parents. Using qualitative data from fathers in a rural Pennsylvania prison, who were involved in their children's literacy and education before imprisonment, they found that during incarceration they sought to continue supporting their children's learning from within prison through the Read to Your Child/Grandchild (RYCG) program. These fathers used a variety of materials (video-recorded book reading, children's books, scrapbooks) to emphasize the importance of education, literacies, and numeracy that cultivated their children's literate abilities and cognitive, academic, and socio-emotional development.

We hope you have enjoyed and were challenged by some of the papers in this volume of the *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry*. As we look forward to our next issue of *JPER*, we invite prison and correctional educators to join the conversation as we endeavor to cultivate our research outputs and develop pedagogical approaches together. I appeal to all those involved in prison education and learning to consider writing a research paper, contributing examples of best practice, writing a book review, or updating us on policies. I look forward to working with prison education researchers, prison educators and learners inside on our next edition of the *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry*.

You will also find us on Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/#!/JournalofPrisonEducationandReentry).

An Organizational Analysis of Foreign National Prisoners' Participation Possibilities in Flanders (Belgium)

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Abstract: *This mixed-method study first provides insight into the Belgian prison population — particularly foreign national prisoners — based on an analysis of the penal database SIDIS Suite (N = 10,356). Second, qualitative telephone interviews have been conducted with the activity coordinators of all Flemish and Brussels prisons (N = 17) to investigate which prison activities (e.g., cultural, educational, and health-related activities, sports, vocational training, and forensic welfare services) are available to, and accessible by, foreign national prisoners. This article demonstrates several initiatives that have been taken to enhance foreign nationals' participation in prison activities and highlights the struggles that activity coordinators face in offering activities that are suitable for this population.*

Introduction

Research on foreign national prisoners mostly focuses on their pains of imprisonment (e.g., Ugelvik & Dasa, 2018; Warr, 2016) or the problems they experience during incarceration, such as their problems in maintaining family contact, language difficulties, immigration uncertainties, and a lack of resettlement support (Barnoux & Wood, 2013; Bhui, 2009). However, up until now, only scarce attention has been paid to their opportunities to participate in prison activities (Croux, Brosens, Vandevelde & De Donder, 2018). This study explicitly aims at providing insight into the foreign national prison population in Belgium and their opportunities to participate in prison activities. For instance, previous research on prisoners in general has demonstrated that participating in educational programs allows prisoners to retain a sense of agency within the controlled and coercive prison environment (Behan, 2014), while participating in sports activities improves their physical health (Gallant, Sherry, & Nicholson, 2015) and psychological functioning (Martos-García, Devís-Devís, & Sparkes, 2009). Moreover, participating in prison activities contributes to a better dynamic security (Edgar, Jacobson, & Biggar, 2011) and reduces prisoners' involvement in disciplinary violations during their time of incarceration (Meek & Lewis, 2014).

According to various international conventions and recommendations (e.g., European Prison Rules — Council of Europe, 2006; the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, also known as the Nelson Mandela Rules — United Nations, 2015), prison activities like cultural, educational, and health-related activities, sports, vocational training, and forensic welfare services are basic human needs and rights for prisoners. In Flanders (Belgium), participation in activities in prison is a right for all prisoners (Flemish Government, 2013) and is thus implicitly a right for foreign national prisoners as well.

In Flemish prisons, for all prison activities (such as cultural, educational, and health-related activities, sports, vocational training, and forensic welfare services), the 'import model' is introduced. This implies that all services available in broader society need to be made available in Flemish prisons. Thus, the services or activities offered in prison are the equivalent of those available on the outside. For instance, the same teacher can provide courses both inside and outside prison (Brosens, 2015), public libraries have branches in local prisons, etc. Although participation is a right and not an obligation, it is important to provide participation opportunities and remove barriers to participation because non-participation is not always a conscious choice of the non-participants (Brosens, 2015).

In this study, a mixed-method design has been used to (1) analyze information about the Belgian prison population (particularly foreign national prisoners) based on an analysis of the penal database SIDIS Suite, and (2) provide insight into which activities are available for foreign national prisoners and their accessibility based on qualitative interviews with the prison activity coordinators of all Flemish and Brussels prisons.

The Foreign National Prison Population

Foreign national prisoners in Belgium are overrepresented when compared to the European average. According to the SPACE I survey, the mean percentage of foreign national prisoners in European countries was 22.1% in 2015, whereas 40.1% of the total prison population in Belgium was comprised of foreign nationals at that time (Aebi, Tiago, & Burkhardt, 2016). Despite these prevalent figures, "it is startling how little we have until recently known about foreign nationals in prison and the challenges they experience and represent. The question of foreign national has in many ways been under-researched; a knowledge 'blind spot'" (Ugelvik, 2014, p. 4). Or, as Warr (2016) argues, what happens with and to foreign national prisoners should be followed more intently.

The limited research about foreign national prisoners has mainly documented the problems they experience. For instance, they have problems in maintaining family contact, experience language difficulties, have immigration uncertainties, lack resettlement support (Barnoux & Wood, 2013; Bhui, 2007, 2009), and suffer from harsher and longer punishment (Bosworth, 2011). In addition, if foreign national prisoners do not have an official residential address in the country in which they are imprisoned, they are excluded from open custodial conditions (Turnbull & Hasselberg, 2017; van Kalmthout, Hofstee-van der Meulen, & Dünkel, 2007) and conditional release (van Kalmthout et al., 2007). These problems pose serious obstacles to their constructive participation in prison life and their gradual return to society (Durnescu et al., 2017). For instance, language barriers prevent foreign national prisoners' equitable participation in prison activities (Atabay, 2009) and many prison authorities decide not to invest in reintegration programs for this population because many foreign national prisoners choose to return to their home country after their release from prison (van Kalmthout et al., 2007).

The Organizational Structure of Activities for Foreign National Prisoners

Some European countries (i.e., Norway, the Netherlands, and the UK) have separate prisons or particular wings for foreign national citizens without the right to remain in the country (Mulgrew, 2018), while other European countries house foreigners together with national citizens (Brosens & De Donder, 2016; Ugelvik, 2014). Recent research explicitly focuses on all-foreign prisons (e.g., Mulgrew, 2018; Ugelvik & Damsa, 2018) and underscores the benefits of staying in one of these facilities. For instance, living with people who are in a similar situation (e.g., facing deportation), having access to specialist information about immigration and support available to them upon release, and not becoming frustrated by differences in national prisoners'

rights (such as the possibility to progress toward lower security facilities and their better educational rights) are benefits linked to staying in one of these facilities (Mulgrew, 2018).

Research demonstrates that all-foreign prisons make efforts to offer the best possible range of activities (Mulgrew, 2018). For instance, Kongsvinger prison in Norway differs from other prisons in the country in the sense that its educational department teaches English instead of Norwegian. This prison also has a library with books in different languages, and one of the professional librarians has Lithuanian and Russian language skills (Ugelvik, 2017). Despite all of these efforts to offer the best possible range of activities, for many all-foreign prisons, it remains difficult to reach the same standard of activities as those that are offered in other prisons, and fewer prison activities are offered due to their lower budgets. In Ter Apel (the Netherlands), for instance, this means that there are no activities in the evenings and no possibilities for weekend visitations (Mulgrew, 2018).

Belgium does not separate national and foreign national prisoners. Foreign national prisoners stay in the same prisons and in the same prison wings as national prisoners without any differences in the prison routine and activities offered. However, concerning the organization of activities for prisoners, there are differences between the Flemish (i.e., the northern region of Belgium) and the Walloon communities (i.e., the southern region). Each community is responsible for providing activities within their prisons. In Brussels, both the Flemish and the Walloon communities provide activities. In Flanders (including prisons in Brussels), there is a Decree (i.e., Flemish law) concerning 'the organization of services and assistance for prisoners,' specifying that all prisoners should have access to several activities like cultural, educational, and health-related activities, sports, vocational training, and they can make use of the forensic welfare service. This Decree makes no distinction between nationalities of prisoners and specifies that all prisoners — implicitly encompassing foreigners — should have access to those types of activities (Flemish Government, 2013). This is in line with the recommendation of the Council of Europe (2012) that foreign national prisoners should have equal access to a balanced offering of activities, suitable work and vocational training, and that exercise and recreational activities are arranged flexibly to enable foreigners to participate in a manner that respects their culture. They recommend that member states take specific measures to counteract the difficulties that foreign national prisoners might face.

Previous research in Belgian prisons has recognized that institutions' living conditions vary (e.g., in terms of the conditions of available materials, the level of overcrowding), and that there are both more liberal and authoritarian regimes resulting in different degrees of autonomy and choices for prisoners (van Zyl Smit & Snacken, 2009). All prisons in the northern region of Belgium (i.e., Flanders) are subject to the same Decree concerning 'the organization of services and assistance for prisoners,' but each prison can work out strategic options for the future through which there are substantial differences in how they put the policy regulations into practice.

Despite the efforts and regulations on international and national levels, some previous studies have shown that foreign national prisoners do not have the same opportunities to participate in prison activities as national prisoners (van Kalmthout et al., 2007). For instance, foreign national prisoners have fewer opportunities to participate in education (Brosens, De Donder, Smetcoren & Dury, 2019; Westrheim & Manger, 2014), reintegration activities (van Kalmthout et al., 2007), and vocational training (Atabay, 2009), while foreign national prisoners participate as much as national prisoners do in sports and recreational activities (van Kalmthout et al., 2007). In our study, we will focus on the participation opportunities for foreign nationals imprisoned in Flanders and Brussels from the perspective of prison activity coordinators.

Based on the preceding literature, the current study hypothesizes that although foreign national prisoners should have equal access to a balanced activity offering, prisons are confronted with difficulties in organizing and offering activities for foreign national prisoners who do not speak Dutch and those foreign nationals who do not have the right to stay in Belgium.

Methodology

The goal of this mixed-method study was twofold. First, this study aimed at analyzing information about the Belgian prison population, particularly foreign national prisoners, based on an analysis of the penal

database SIDIS Suite. This database contains administrative information about all prisoners in Belgium. Information about personal and prison-related characteristics from all people that were imprisoned in Belgium on 24 October 2017 (N = 10,356) were extracted. Second, this study aimed at providing insight into which activities were available for foreign national prisoners and what was their accessibility based on qualitative interviews with prison activity coordinators (N = 17). The aim of this article is thus to provide an answer to the following research questions:

1. What is the profile of the foreign national prisoner population in Belgium (in terms of personal characteristics and prison-related features)?

2. What activity offerings are available for foreign national prisoners in Flemish and Brussels prisons?

3. To what extent are these activity offerings accessible for foreign national prisoners (e.g., in terms of language and right of residence)?

The study was approved by the Ethical Commission in Human Sciences of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium) (reference number ECHW_134) and by the Belgian Directorate General of Penitentiaries, as the latter provided access to the penal database SIDIS Suite.

Phase 1: Analysis of the Penal Database SIDIS Suite

Permission was obtained from the Belgian Directorate General of Penitentiaries to gain access to data on the prison population included in the penal database SIDIS Suite. The following personal characteristics were extracted on 24 October 2017 (N = 10,356). Prisoner age was extracted as a continuous variable that has been recorded into a variable with six categories (1 = < 18 years; 2 = 18–25 years; 3 = 26–35 years; 4 = 36–45 years; 5 = 46–55 years; 6 = 55+). Gender was a dichotomous variable (0 = male; 1 = female). Marital status had four different answer categories (1 = unmarried; 2 = married; 3 = divorced; 4 = widowed). Concerning nationality, almost 120 different nationalities were registered in the database, which were recoded into a dichotomous variable (1 = Belgian; 2 = foreign nationality) and a variable with seven categories (1 = Belgian; 2 = African; 3 = Asian; 4 = other European; 5 = American; 6 = Oceanian; 7 = refugee). Information regarding right of residence was also extracted. This variable only related to foreign national prisoners since Belgian prisoners have the right to stay in Belgium. Foreign national prisoners could have one of three different residential statuses (1 = with the right of residence; 2 = without the right of residence; 3 = insecure status).

Besides the personal characteristics, the SIDIS Suite database also contains information about three prison-related features. First, it provides insight into which of the 36 Belgian prisons the person was detained in. These prisons were recoded into one of the three Belgian regions (1 = Flemish region; 2 = Brussels region; 3 = Walloon region). Second, the start date of the most recent period of imprisonment was used to calculate how many (continuous) months a prisoner had already been in prison. A prisoner's conviction status was also included (1 = awaiting trial; 2 = convicted; 3 = criminally irresponsible offender; 4 = other). The category 'other' was included to describe prisoners whose conditional release was suspended, those who were placed at the disposal of the sentence implementation court, and provisionally arrested prisoners, for example.

Bivariate analyses were used to make comparisons between Belgian and foreign national prisoners. Intergroup differences were evaluated using Chi-square tests for categorical variables, and a Mann–Whitney U-test was used for the only non-normally distributed continuous variable (i.e., number of months in prison). All data have been analyzed using SPSS version 25.

Phase 2: Qualitative Interviews

The first and second authors conducted 17 interviews with the coordinators of activities for all prisons in Flanders and Brussels between June and September 2017. In each prison, there was one person who coordinated the activities. The Brussels prison was spread over three locations but had only one prison activity coordinator. All 17 activity coordinators from the Flemish and Brussels prisons agreed to participate in our research. The activity coordinators are employed by the Flemish Department of Welfare and Families. Their main task is to coordinate the activity offerings concerning cultural, educational, and health-related activities,

sports, vocational training, and forensic welfare services in the local prison. To organize the prison activity offerings, they work closely with the activity organizers who are all employed by the general social services operating in Flanders.

The interviews were conducted by telephone and in Dutch. The first author translated the quotations used in this article into English. Although the accepted norm for qualitative interviews is to conduct them face-to-face, recent research underlines that telephone interviews allow respondents to feel comfortable in their natural context, and nowadays, many people are used to using a telephone as a means of communicating (Ward, Gott, & Hoare, 2015).

To engage the respondents in an in-depth discussion, the main interview questions were sent to them several weeks in advance. This process ensured that respondents understood the research objectives before the interviews took place. It also facilitated the conversation, because respondents could read the questions and prepare their thoughts beforehand. The activity coordinators could also discuss the questions with their prison's activity organizers (e.g., educational providers, sports providers, and people working for the forensic welfare service) before the interview took place in order to provide the most complete information possible.

In general, three topics were discussed: (a) information about the respondents; (b) participation initiatives for foreign national prisoners; and (c) the policy and budgetary context. This article mainly focuses on the second topic. The semi-structured interview schedule enabled the interviewers to explore additional issues mentioned by the respondents. There was considerable variation in the duration of the interviews, with the shortest interview lasting 34 minutes and the longest lasting 79 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded; the interviewers made detailed notes and an extensive summary of each interview shortly after the interview. Once all the interviews had been completed, the interview notes and summaries were analyzed by the first author, making use of a qualitative software program called MAXQDA. Audiotapes were reviewed again. A thematic analysis was performed to identify the main themes (King & Horrocks, 2010), combining a deductive (i.e., theory-driven) and inductive (i.e., data-driven) approach (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Table 1 provides an overview of the thematic categories, key terms codes, and examples from the analysis.

Table 1

Thematic Categories of the Analysis

Thematic category	Key terms	Examples
Population composition	Amount of foreign national prisoners	"Not so long ago, we analyzed our population. It turned out that we have about 35 different nationalities within a population of 170 to 180 prisoners."
	Requirements	"In Prison X, we have two foreign national prisoners among our population of 58. In Prison X, prisoners should master Dutch before they can come [to this prison], two years before their release."
Importance of language for participating in activities	Dutch activities	"We do not exclude anyone. But when the offer is language-sensitive, mastering Dutch is a requirement, and then they cannot take part. Unfortunately, that is a major part of our offerings."
	Foreign language activities	"The film discussion can be held in English or Spanish or French. The supervisor needs to speak one of these languages."
	Language-less sensitive activities	"Foreign national prisoners can participate in all sports activities. That is the advantage of sport, that it is very accessible for foreigners as language is not really a barrier."

Importance of residence status for participating in activities	Right to stay	"You can have another nationality, but you can have the right of residence. In this case, you can sign up for public housing and everything that has to do with it. In case they have the right of residence, you can apply for a monthly allowance, for instance."
	No right to stay	"Depending on the situation of the guy, we can contact or cooperate with external services or persons, like the Special Needs program."
	Insecure	"In the past, we had a project in cooperation with Organization X for prisoners with an insecure status. Not to send people back and say that they have to follow the advice of the Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs, but to let them reflect on the consequences of [the choices they made]."

Quantitative Results

During the first phase of our study, we aimed to gain insight into the Belgian prison population — particularly the foreign national prison population — based on an analysis of the penal database SIDIS Suite.

The Foreign National Prison Population

In Belgium, 10,356 individuals were in prison on 24 October 2017. Among them, 56.1% (N = 5,768) were Belgian nationals and 43.9% (N = 4,522) were foreign nationals. The foreign national prison population was very diverse in terms of citizenship. The largest groups of foreign national prisoners had a nationality of an African country (44%) or were citizens of a European country other than Belgium (42.2%). Furthermore, 10.7% had a nationality of an Asian country, 2.3% had an American nationality, and 0.8% held refugee status.

Table 2 shows that there were significant differences between the Belgian regions. The correctional institutions in the Brussels region had the largest population of foreign national prisoners (65%), while the prison population in the Flemish region consisted of 44.3% non-Belgian prisoners, and 38.4% (χ^2 = 249.438, df = 2, p = .000) of prisoners in the Walloon region were foreign nationals. Within the Flemish region, there were also large differences between correctional institutions. Some prisons almost had no foreign national prisoners (e.g., Ruiselede: 1.6%), while others had a large proportion (e.g., Mechelen: 53.7%). Remand prisons had higher rates of foreign nationals (e.g., Antwerpen and Mechelen) compared to prisons where sentences were executed (e.g., Hoogstraten and Ruiselede).

Within the population of foreign national prisoners, there was diversity in whether someone had the right of residence. The largest group, 65.2%, did not have the right to stay in Belgium and was facing deportation during or after their incarceration period, while 31.5% had the right to stay after their release. The remaining 3.3% had an insecure status, implying that they did not know yet if they could stay in Belgium or if they would be deported. In other words, the Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs still needed to make that decision. Moreover, with regard to the right of residence, differences were observed between regions and prisons. For instance, Table 2 shows that the Walloon region had more foreign national prisoners with the right of residence (37.4%) compared to the Flemish (28.6%) and Brussels regions (28.5%). The latter two regions had more prisoners without the right of residence (67.8% and 68.8%, respectively) than the Walloon region (59.3%) (χ^2 = 39.010, df = 4, p = .000).

Table 2

The Foreign National Prison Population in Belgium

Prison	Belgian prisoners (%)	Foreign national prisoners (%)	Foreign national prison population		
			With the right of residence (%)	Without the right of residence (%)	Insecure status (%)
Antwerpen	47.2	52.8	34.4	63.9	1.9
Beveren	57.7	42.3	30.2	64.3	5.6
Brugge	59.9	40.1	18.8	77.6	3.6
Dendermonde	55.8	44.2	26.1	69.6	4.3
Gent	59.2	40.8	31.7	63.4	4.9
Hasselt	54.8	45.2	35.6	60.3	4.0
Hoogstraten	84.0	16.0	96.2	3.8	0.0
Ieper	56.1	43.9	28.0	72.0	0.0
Leuven-Centraal	70.8	29.3	23.3	64.0	12.8
Leuven-Hulp	50.3	49.7	18.4	78.2	3.4
Mechelen	46.3	53.7	28.8	71.2	0.0
Merksplas	53.0	47.0	27.2	69.7	3.1
Oudenaarde	68.5	31.5	37.0	58.7	4.3
Ruiselede	98.1	1.9	100	0.0	0.0
Tongeren	0.0	100	0.0	100	0.0
Turnhout	46.3	53.7	28.1	69.3	2.6
Wortel	38.0	62.0	19.1	78.7	2.2
Subtotal Flanders	*55.7**	*44.3**	*28.3**	*68.2**	*3.5**
Berkendaal	43.7	56.3	35.0	62.5	2.5
Forest	45.9	54.1	26.1	67.4	6.5
St. Gilles	32.1	67.9	28.1	70.0	1.9
Subtotal Brussels	*35**	*65**	*28.2**	*69.2**	*2.6**
Andenne	45.6	54.4	22.0	74.0	4.0
Arlon	49.6	50.4	21.0	77.4	1.6
Dinant	82.3	17.6	22.2	66.7	11.1
Huy	81.0	19.0	56.3	43.8	0.0
Ittre	51.2	48.8	38.9	56.6	4.4
Jamioulx	56.8	43.2	32.7	63.0	4.2
Lantin	61.0	39.0	36.8	60.6	2.6
Leuze-en-Hainaut	54.0	46.0	31.9	65.2	2.9
Marche-en-Famenne	73.0	27.0	42.7	51.2	6.1
Marneffe	77.7	22.3	100.0	0.0	0.0
Mons	69.8	30.2	43.6	51.8	4.5
Namur	66.5	33.5	45.5	54.5	0.0
Nivelles	64.1	35.8	43.4	53.9	2.6
Paive	66.7	33.3	62.5	37.5	0.0
St. Hubert	82.0	18.0	66.7	30.6	2.8
Tournai	62.1	37.9	21.5	76.9	1.5
Subtotal Wallonia	*61.6**	*38.4**	*37.0**	*59.7**	*3.2**

Note: * p = 0.000

Comparison of Belgian and Foreign National Prisoners

Belgian and foreign national prisoners were compared based on a number of personal characteristics. Table 3 shows that females were less represented among the foreign national prison population (2.7%) than in the Belgian prison population (4.9%) (χ^2 = 34.365, df = 1, p = .000). With regard to marital status, foreign national prisoners were more frequently married (21.4%) as compared to Belgian prisoners (10.8%). They were also less frequently divorced or widowed (7% and 0.5%, respectively) than Belgian prisoners (9.9% and 1.2%, respectively) (χ^2 = 197.837, df = 3, p = .000).

The majority of all prisoners were aged between 26 and 35 years. This was the case for both foreign national (37.3%) and Belgian prisoners (34.2%). However, foreign national prisoners were more represented than Belgian prisoners in the larger, younger age groups until the age of 45 (93.1% versus 74.6%) (χ^2 = 168.163, df = 5, p = .000).

Table 3		
Comparison of Belgian and Foreign National Prisoners Based on Personal Characteristics		
	Belgian prisoners (%)	Foreign national prisoners (%)
Gender		
Male	95.1*	97.3*
Female	4.9*	2.7*
Marital status		
Unmarried	78.2*	71.1*
Married	10.8*	21.4*
Divorced	9.9*	7.0*
Widowed	1.2*	0.5*
Age		
< 18	0.0*	0.2*
18–25	16.5*	17.3*
26–35	34.2*	37.3*
36–45	23.9*	28.3*
46–55	16.0*	13.0*
55+	9.4*	3.8*
Note: * p = 0.000		

Belgian and foreign national prisoners were also compared based on prison-related features (see Table 4). The mean number of months in detention was one-third lower for foreign national prisoners (M = 24.32 months, SD = 34.17) than for Belgian prisoners (M = 36.66 months, SD = 53.51) (Mann–Whitney U = 11207015, p = .000). This was also reflected in their conviction status. Foreign national prisoners were more frequently awaiting trial (44.2%) than Belgian prisoners (30%), while Belgian prisoners were more frequently convicted (59.8% compared to 51.5% among the foreign national prison population). The percentage of criminally irresponsible offenders (i.e., people that are not responsible for the criminal offences they have committed due to mental or intellectual disabilities) was lower among the foreign national (3.7%) than it was among the Belgian prison population (8.4%) (χ^2 = 292.631, df = 3, p = .000).

Table 4

Comparison of Belgian and Foreign National Prisoners Based on Prison-Related Characteristics

	Belgian prisoners		Foreign national prisoners	
	%	*M*	%	*M*
Conviction status				
Awaiting trial	30.0*		44.2*	
Convicted	59.8*		51.5*	
Criminally irresponsible	8.4*		3.7*	
Other	1.9*		0.6*	
Number of months in detention		36.66*		24.32*
Note: * p = 0.000				

Qualitative Results

Recalling the quantitative results, it is important to point out that the prisons differed in terms of their population composition. The activity coordinators of the only two prisons with an open regime[1] mentioned that they had (almost) no foreign national prisoners and consequently had no offerings available for foreign national prisoners specifically. These prisons had the requirement that only people with Belgian nationality, or the right of residence who had mastered the Dutch language, could be imprisoned there because they actively prepared prisoners for their release. The remand and (more) closed prisons had a more diverse population in terms of nationality; in some of the institutions, more than half of the population had a non-Belgian nationality, comprising a large variety of nationalities. In the words of one of the activity coordinators: "Not so long ago, we made an analysis of our population. It turned out that we have about 35 different nationalities within a population of 170 to 180 prisoners" (Activity coordinator, remand prison). The number of foreign national prisoners had an immediate influence on how much attention had to be/was paid to offering activities for this target group. Almost all respondents discussed the fact that in principle no one was excluded from participating in the general activities in prison, but in practice they were confronted with difficulties in realizing participation. Several respondents emphasized that it was not nationality that diminished a prisoner's participation opportunities, but their residence status and linguistic ability were particularly linked with their level of participation in prison activities.

The Importance of Residence Status

For some activities, right of residence was a legal necessity enabling participation. This mainly related to activities that could help prisoners to prepare their life after release from prison (e.g., preparing for a job and following a part of the reintegration trajectory for newcomers):

> The residence status is the decisive factor. Nationality or language are less important. You can have another nationality and have the right of residence. In this case, you can sign yourself up for public housing and everything that has to do with it. If they have the right of residence, they can apply for a monthly allowance, for instance. Resettlement encompasses three aspects: a house, a daily activity (the preference goes to work), and an income. (Activity coordinator, prison with separate wings for people awaiting trial and convicted people)

Many activity coordinators shared the opinion that for prisoners without the right of residence, preparing for resettlement was very difficult. Almost all activity coordinators mentioned that there were no programs available to support this group. Only one coordinator indicated that they had made use of the Special Needs program of the Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs to support vulnerable people — most often people lacking criminal responsibility — during their detention period, repatriation, and sometimes also after

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[1] In Belgium, there are remand prisons and open, half-open, and closed prisons where sentences are carried out. The division between open, half-open, and closed prisons is based on the level of security (Snacken & Tournel, 2014).

being returned to the country to which they were being deported. This program enables developing a reintegration trajectory for a maximum of one year after deportation. This support did not exist for the majority of prisoners who were facing deportation.

For those who were deported directly from prison, they were first brought to one of the three prisons from which the deportations were organized. A coordinator of one of those prisons estimated that 600 to 700 deportable prisoners passed through her institution on an annual basis. These prisoners stayed for a few days and were not prepared for their release from prison. In the near future, the activity organizers of this prison will further deliberate on what can be done for this group:

> That does not mean that we will link big programs to it [this population]. It can also be that we say: we want these people to be able to make phone calls and arrange everything on the home front. We are not able to do more, I don't think. That can also be a result... But the goal is that we will think about what we can mean for this target group. (Activity coordinator, remand prison)

Besides those prisoners who faced deportation, there was a group of foreign national prisoners whose status was uncertain, implying that they did not know yet if they had the right to stay in Belgium or if they would be deported. The Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs still needed to take a formal decision on their possibility to remain in Belgium or not. In the past, one of the prisons had organized group sessions for these people to allow them to reflect on the consequences of their different options (i.e., following the advice of the Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs or not) and think about possible solutions. At the time of the interviews, these sessions were no longer being organized. For some staff members from the forensic welfare service, the input of these group sessions was now being used as 'guidelines' during their conversations with individual prisoners. Several coordinators also mentioned that some of their staff members were frequently asked questions about the right of residence, preparation for expulsion, etc. Several activity coordinators pointed out that the right of residence was also relevant for the Flemish service for employment and vocational training. This service only supports Belgian nationals or those who have the right to stay in Belgium to prepare them for a job after their release from prison. This meant that foreign national prisoners without the right to stay in Belgium and those with an insecure status could not rely on this service.

Lastly, there was also a group of foreign national prisoners who had the right to stay in Belgium. In cooperation with the agency that is responsible for the integration of newcomers in Belgium, one remand prison organized the module 'social orientation' once every year. This module was part of the integration program available on the outside. Elements including the Belgian educational system, how to find work and housing, social security, and mobility were discussed over six thematic evenings. Depending on the languages understood by the participating prisoners, those evenings were held in English and/or French. As the activity coordinator mentioned:

> They are very professional. After signing up, everyone has an individual intake conversation with the teachers. They try to clarify what they [the prisoners] expect from the informational evenings; what their specific questions are. And afterwards, they see how they can achieve these goals. These conversations take almost one hour per person, so that is quite extensive. They also talk about the personal situations of these people. Afterwards, the informational evenings take place, in English or French, or both. And after these evenings, an individual evaluation takes place. (Activity coordinator, remand prison)

At the time of the interviews, this module was offered in one of the 17 prisons, but one other activity coordinator was also considering implementing this module.

The Importance of Language

A second aspect linked with opportunities to participate in prison activities was language. The majority of the activity coordinators mentioned that nationality and the languages that prisoners had mastered could not be considered synonymous. There were foreign national prisoners who did not speak Dutch (i.e., the dominant language used in the prison), while others had mastered this language sufficiently in order to

participate in activities for which Dutch was required. In practice, activity coordinators divided activities based on the language level that was required to be able to participate. There were Dutch, foreign language, and language-less sensitive activities. This latter means that language does not play an important role. In addition, a distinction could be made between regular group activities, regular individual activities, specific group activities, and specific individual activities. 'Regular activities' implied that no explicit attention was paid to foreign national prisoners, while 'specific activities' were targeted at this population. Figure 1 provides an overview of the different combinations that existed in prisons in Flanders and Brussels. The thicker the line, the more often such activities were organized.
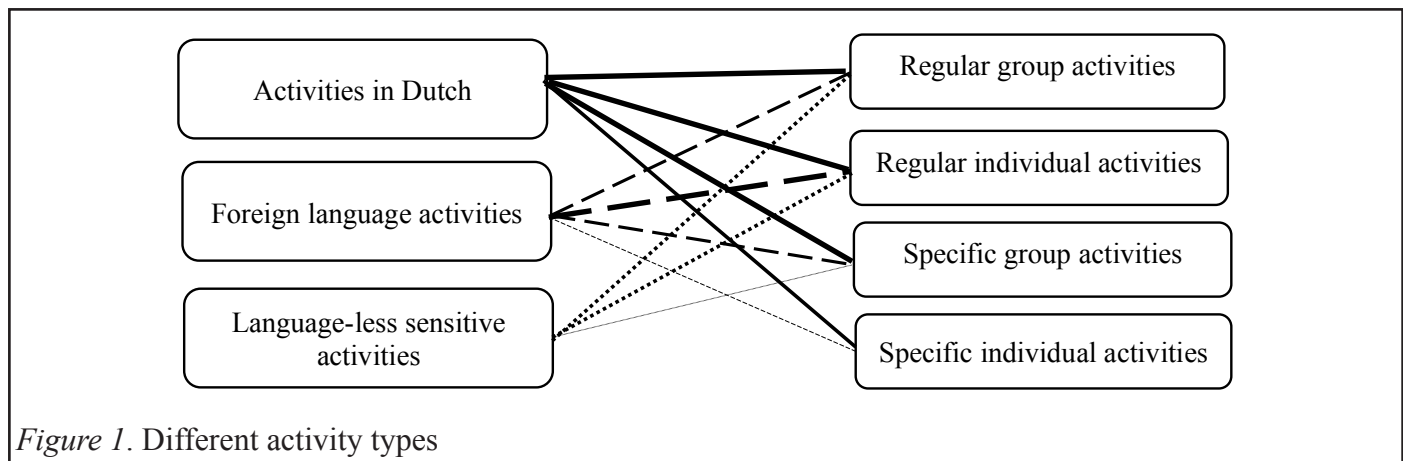
Figure 1. Different activity types

Activities in Dutch. In this part, we describe the activities that were exclusively offered in Dutch, which is the dominant language used in the prisons. The activity coordinators mentioned that the majority of the regular group and individual activities were exclusively for Dutch-speaking prisoners, in which foreign national prisoners who had not mastered Dutch could not participate. Examples of regular group activities offered by several activity coordinators were courses like 'being a parent in prison' or 'dealing with frustrations,' while regular individual activities included sessions with staff members from the forensic welfare services or centers for mental health care. If those staff members were multilingual, then foreign national prisoners could also participate. Some activity coordinators reflected that this was quite difficult to achieve for staff members from the mental health care service. Since this service guides in-depth therapeutic sessions, staff members need to have a strong command of a certain language if they want to reach non-Dutch-speaking prisoners. For instance, one activity coordinator said:

> Some of them [staff members from the mental health care service] say that they try to follow up with English- and French-speaking prisoners, but you hear that this is more difficult for them. They do in-depth conversations. To guide this as a social worker in a language that is not your mother tongue, and also with someone for whom it might not be their mother tongue either, that is hard. So, I think that it is not the same conversation [compared to when it would be in their mother tongue]. (Activity coordinator, prison with separate wings for people awaiting trial and convicted people)

In addition, the forensic welfare service in some prisons made use of telephone interpreters. Not all activity coordinators were in favor of this approach as it was not easy to practically implement due to the possible absence of telephones or the practicalities involved in requesting an interpreter. In one prison, fellow prisoners were asked to translate during conversations with the forensic welfare service. Other activity coordinators had doubts about involving other prisoners as translators because personal or confidential matters were discussed during those talks.

Related to the specific activities (i.e., activities specifically targeted at foreign national prisoners) in Dutch, both the group and individual activities aimed at foreign national/foreign language-speaking prisoners learning the Dutch language. Several prisons offered group courses in Dutch as a second language. In some prisons, this was transformed into a course called 'Dutch on the prison floor,' in which specific prison jargon was explained: "Dutch on the prison floor, we have offered that since last school year. Actually, that is learn-

ing Dutch as a second language, but that is specifically meant to give prisoners guidelines to function inside the prison," (Activity coordinator, prison for convicted people). In one prison, an educational goal was added to the sports activities by experimenting with 'learning Dutch while sporting.' As an individual offering, several prison libraries had a so-called language point, which included dictionaries, easy-to-read Dutch books, and audiobooks with headphones.

Foreign language activities. A much smaller offering of activities was available in foreign languages (i.e., languages other than Dutch). For example, a few prisons offered regular foreign language group activities. An example was the MOOOV film festival in four prisons during which several movies in foreign languages were shown (e.g., in Arabic, French, and Spanish). Afterwards, a jury of prisoners discussed the films, mostly in different languages. Another example was the singing atelier in one prison with its exclusively Gregorian repertoire. As Gregorian was a language that no one in the prison had mastered, this activity was equally accessible for all prisoners.

A minority of the prisons also organized a proactive welcome session in groups for all newly arrived prisoners, including foreign national prisoners. Although the information provided during the welcome session was still mainly given in Dutch, activity coordinators mentioned making adaptations for foreign national prisoners such as on-the-spot translations provided by prisoners who were multilingual or using pictograms during the Dutch presentation to explain the activities offered. One prison activity coordinator explained:

> Recently, we started with a welcome session in groups. So, all prisoners who have just arrived at our prison are invited to come to our general welcome session about all our prison activities. We know that there will be a lot of foreign-speaking prisoners, so […] we have worked out a whole concept with pictograms. (Activity coordinator, remand prison)

In other prisons, the staff members of the forensic welfare service proactively welcomed all foreign-speaking prisoners during a regular individual face-to-face conversation. The activity coordinators of the prisons where this was done were positive about this approach, with the exception of one. She mentioned that after an evaluation of what was discussed during these conversations, they decided to stop. On many occasions, they could not help these foreign-speaking prisoners or those prisoners did not want to receive help. At the time of the interviews, they offered a leaflet about the procedures of the forensic welfare work service in ten different languages instead, which all newly arrived prisoners received in their cell. If any of them wanted to speak with this service, they had to contact it themselves.

Another example of a regular individual foreign language activity was that all prisons offered the possibility of borrowing materials from the library. Some prisons had an extensive collection of foreign language books, while this offering was rather limited in others. Collaborating with the local municipal library facilitated the offering of books in different languages. The prisons that did not cooperate with a local library had to make careful decisions about their budget and reflect on whether it would be worthwhile to spend money on buying books in a particular language. Different prison libraries not only offered books but also CDs and DVDs as they were less language sensitive. For instance, DVDs mostly include subtitles in different languages. Besides the regular foreign language activity offerings, there was only one prison that had a specific group foreign language offering. The prison organized the module 'social orientation' once a year (see section 'the importance of the right of residence').

Lastly, a specific individual foreign language offering was indicated by a minority of the activity coordinators in which foreign national prisoners could follow an educational course from their home country in their own language. Between January and July 2017, some prisons participated in the pilot phases of the European FORINER project through which foreign national prisoners could take a distance course from their home country. For more information about this project, see the website of Meganexus (2019).

Language-less sensitive activities. The majority of the respondents noted that language-less sensitive activities were available in prison. This did not mean that no language was needed in order to participate, but rather that a universal language could be used. The regular language-less sensitive group activity offerings

mainly consisted of sports activities. All activity coordinators shared the view that there was no language barrier to participation in these activities: "Foreign national prisoners can participate in all sports activities. That is the advantage of sport, that it is very accessible for foreigners since language is not really a barrier," (Activity coordinator, prison for convicted people).

Other language-less sensitive group activities were leisure activities such as concerts, a barbecue, or a multicultural market/workshop week during which activities around music, cooking, and sports were offered. In one prison, several sports and cultural activities were organized over one week, with each day focusing on one continent. Examples of workshops in other prisons were Chinese calligraphy, laughter yoga, and figure drawing.

In addition, many prisons also had a regular individual language-less sensitive activity offering as they offered the possibility to engage in prison work. In places where uncomplicated piecework needed to be done, mastering Dutch was not required because visual instructions could help foreign national prisoners learn the job. However, institutions differed in whether foreign national prisoners were allowed to engage in certain prison work where a level of trust and confidentiality was needed (for example, working in the visiting room, cleaning the desks of the staff, or being involved in organization activities). Some prisons only gave those tasks to Dutch-speaking prisoners, while in other institutions foreign language prisoners also engaged in them.

Another example of a regular individual language-less sensitive activity is that a few prisons offered prisoners the possibility to 'be active' in their cell during periods when the activity offerings were limited. For instance, one activity coordinator mentioned that prisoners could request sudokus, drawing, and fitness exercises during the summer. In addition, there was one prison in which there had been no group activities since June 2016 due to a shortage of prison officers. Once a month, prisoners got a 'brain-train paper' including a word search, sudoku, or labyrinth that they could make in their cell.

Lastly, a few specific language-less sensitive group activities responded to prisoners' specific cultural backgrounds. A minority of the prisons organized a Sugar Festival to celebrate the end of Ramadan:

> We have opened it up, not only to people who follow Ramadan, but to all prisoners, and then we organized a type of Sugar Festival. […] It will take place again on Tuesday and an Arabic group will perform. And then it will be explained what Ramadan means, but also what it means to fast in different cultures. There are a lot of sweets and it is a cozy gathering. (Activity coordinator, prison for convicted people)

One activity coordinator also noted that they once organized a group activity in which backgammon was played. They organized this after some Turkish prisoners informed them that they were interested in playing this game. The activity coordinators did not mention any example of specific language-less sensitive individual activities.

Discussion

The aims of the current study were to explore (1) the profile of the foreign national prison population in Belgium; (2) the activity offerings that are available for foreign national prisoners in Flemish and Brussels prisons; and (3) the extent to which these activity offerings are accessible for foreign national prisoners.

The Foreign National Prison Population in Belgium

For the first aim, we focused on administrative data from the penal database SIDIS Suite. It turned out that almost 44% of the prisoners in Belgium have a foreign nationality, which is far above the European average of 22.1% (Aebi et al., 2016). In comparison to previous research (Aebi et al., 2016; Ugelvik, 2014), our study shows that foreign nationals are overrepresented in pre-trial detention. A side note is that in these institutions, rehabilitation and reintegration activities are often not a high priority (Ugelvik, 2014). Moreover, more than 65% of the foreign national prison population in Belgium does not have the right to stay and thus faces deportation. Due to the high percentage of foreign national prisoners in Belgian prisons, their overrepresentation in pre-trial detention, and their lack of residence rights, this research aimed at gaining insight into

the availability and accessibility of prison activities for this population.

The Availability and Accessibility of Prison Activities for Foreign National Prisoners

As previous research only scantly focused on the opportunities for foreign national prisoners to participate in prison activities (Croux et al., 2018), the aim of our study is to shed light on the availability and accessibility of prison activities for foreign national prisoners. For this, we conducted 17 interviews with the activity coordinators of all the prisons in Flanders and Brussels. In Belgium, some prisons almost have no foreign national prisoners, while others are confronted with a high proportion. The latter is mainly the case for remand prisons. Consequently, the extent to which attention is paid to this group is locally determined. Although several initiatives are being taken, there are large differences between prisons, and many activity organizers are still struggling with finding effective ways to offer activities to foreign national prisoners. Activity providers working in institutions where (many) foreign national prisoners are imprisoned are confronted with two important factors to consider when organizing activities: the prisoners' right of residence and their language skills.

The importance of the right of residence. More than 65% of the foreign national prison population does not have the right to stay in Belgium and thus faces deportation. Results demonstrate that it is very difficult — or even impossible — to offer rehabilitation and reintegration preparation to those prisoners without the right to stay in Belgium. For instance, previous research has demonstrated that foreign national prisoners are frequently excluded from sentence implementation modalities that facilitate reintegration into society like day leave, semi-detention, electronic monitoring (De Ridder, 2016), or conditional release (van Kalmthout et al., 2007). Foreign national prisoners that do not have an official home address in the country in which they are imprisoned are excluded from open custodial conditions (Turnbull & Hasselberg, 2017; van Kalmthout et al., 2007). The main reasons for those exclusions are the fear of escape and not being able to make a risk assessment since prior criminal and prison records of foreign nationals are frequently unavailable (Ugelvik, 2014). Almost no foreign national prisoners without the right to stay in Belgium are actively supported during their detention period, repatriation, or after returning to the country to which they have been deported. Because of this, foreign national prisoners are perceived as potential deportees instead of potentially rehabilitated members of society, and therefore they are considered prisoners that need to be managed and expelled rather than individuals with specific needs (Ugelvik, 2014). Moreover, they face two penalties: imprisonment and deportation to their country of origin, which is often against their will (Atabay, 2009).

However, 31.5% of the foreign national prisoners have the right to stay in Belgium. For example, one remand prison organizes the course 'social orientation' in cooperation with the agency that is responsible for the integration of newcomers in Belgium. In this course, foreign national prisoners gain more knowledge about several aspects of life that can facilitate their reintegration into society (e.g., information about the Belgian educational system, how to find work and housing, and information about social security). It could be valuable to consider implementing this type of courses in all prisons that are confronted with a population of foreign national prisoners.

The importance of language. A second factor linked with a prisoner's opportunities to participate in prison activities is language. Our findings are in line with previous research that shows that foreign national prisoners experience language difficulties (Barnoux & Wood, 2013; Bhui, 2007, 2009). Since many foreign national prisoners do not speak the official language of the country in which they are detained, language courses are organized in many prisons in Flanders and Brussels. However, because learning Dutch takes some time, activity providers could promote more activities for which language proficiency is less important in order to increase non-Dutch-speaking prisoners' opportunities for participation (Croux et al., 2018).

Good practices emanating from our research results focus on organizing language-less sensitive activities (e.g., sports activities, leisure activities like concerts and barbecues, and market/workshop weeks with activities around music, cooking, and sports), or the activity 'learning Dutch while sporting.' Previous re-

search has also shown that taking part in sports activities can be helpful in the development of language skills (Doherty & Taylor, 2007). In addition, several prisons offer foreign language activities. For instance, all prisons involved in our research have a library including materials in several languages, and a minority of the prisons provide a few foreign national prisoners with the possibility to follow an educational course from their home country in their own language. Mainly for those foreign national prisoners planning to return to their home country, the possibilities of pursuing (online) distance education can be further explored (Brosens et al., 2019).

Implementation of Culturally Sensitive Interventions

If we link the organizational challenges to implement activities for foreign national prisoners to the literature on culturally sensitive interventions, we can conclude that if efforts are made to adapt the activities to the foreign national prison population, there is a major focus on surface structure interventions. Cultural sensitivity on the level of surface structures involves tailoring interventions/activities to observable, social, and behavioral characteristics (e.g., language, clothing, and music) (Hodge, Jackson, & Vaughn, 2010). Examples of such interventions revealed in our research all relate to language. Prisons offer Dutch language courses, provide library materials in different languages, organize language-less sensitive activities (such as sports or workshops about cooking or music), make use of professional telephone interpreters during individual conversations, employ professionals who speak other languages, and fellow prisoners sometimes translate conversations. Culturally sensitive interventions on the deep structure level include elements that influence the behavior of a target group (e.g., cultural, social, and environmental factors) (van Mourik, Crone, de Wolff, & Reis, 2017). Those interventions are almost non-existent in Flemish and Brussels prisons. The only exception is the course 'social orientation' in which foreign national prisoners who have the right to stay in Belgium are prepared for reintegration after their release from prison. The specific questions, expectations, and personal situations of the participating foreign national prisoners are considered. Although several scholars such as Osemene, Essien, and Egbunike (2001) and Rynne and Cassematis (2015) have appealed for more attention to be paid to cultural sensitivity in prison, we have to conclude that culturally sensitive interventions in prisons in Flanders and Brussels are rather scarce, despite the fact that almost 44% of the prison population in Belgium has a foreign nationality. Additional efforts are highly necessary to effectively implement the recommendations of the Council of Europe (2012) so that foreign national prisoners have equal access to a balanced activities offering, suitable work and vocational training, and so that exercise and recreational activities are arranged flexibly to enable foreigners to participate in a manner that respects their culture.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has some limitations that should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results. First, our research only focuses on gaining insight into the types of activities that are available for foreign national prisoners and how accessible these activities are from the perspective of activity coordinators. Since many activities in prison are closely tied to the welfare system that is available outside of prison and it is expected that many foreign national prisoners will leave the country after their incarceration period, many activities are not considered as relevant for them (Atabay, 2009; Ugelvik, 2014). From this perspective, including the perspectives of policymakers and foreign national prisoners themselves might be interesting to do in future studies. Also, the reasons why activity coordinators do or do not find it important to offer activities to foreign national prisoners might be a consideration for future research. In addition, interviews could be conducted with prison officers, teachers, prison managers, etc. to gain insight into their lived experiences.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Notwithstanding the above limitations, this study shows that an examination of the availability and accessibility of prison activities for foreign national prisoners contributes to a better understanding of the challenges, needs, and pains of this under-researched population. Foreign national prisoners are frequently overlooked in research (Ugelvik, 2014), but research shows that participating in prison activities has posi-

tive effects on retaining a sense of agency in the controlled and coercive prison environment (Behan, 2014), improves physical health (Gallant et al., 2015), and contributes to a better dynamic security in prison (Edgar et al., 2011). Therefore, policy and practice should not only pay close attention to this vulnerable group of foreign national prisoners because they have specific needs and difficulties, but also because of the positive effects that they experience by participating in prison activities. The results of this study have three implications for policy and practice. The first two relate to those prisoners without the right of residence and the third is linked with language.

First, since the majority of the foreign national prison population in Belgium does not have the right to stay in Belgium, how these prisoners can be better supported in developing a rehabilitation and reintegration trajectory in their home country should be explored. At the moment, there are almost no programs available to support this group in their reintegration abroad.

Second, although only 31.5% of the foreign national prisoners are allowed to stay in Belgium, the support offered to them in their rehabilitation and reintegration into society could still be increased. One possible way of doing this is by offering them a social orientation course in prison that is similar to what is offered for all newcomers in Belgium. For newcomers, this course is obligatory. Offering this course to prisoners will provide them with the information they need on the Belgian education system and how to find work, housing, etc., which will promote their reintegration into society.

And third, related to the issue of language, many Flemish prisons offer courses in Dutch as a second language for foreign national prisoners that do not speak Dutch. At the same time, our study reveals that the vocational training possibilities for these prisoners are limited as these courses are exclusively offered in Dutch and require a basic knowledge and understanding of the Dutch language. One option to open up the possibility for these prisoners to engage in vocational training might be to organize vocational training as an applied language course.

In conclusion, organizations offering prison activities and policy-making authorities should make additional efforts to ensure foreign national prisoners' rights to have access to a well-balanced offering of activities during their period of incarceration, taking into consideration their language difficulties and immigration uncertainties.

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Incarcerated Fathers' Experiences in the Read to Your Child/Grandchild Program: Supporting Children's Literacy, Learning, and Education

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Abstract: *In response to rising parental incarceration, some correctional facilities and outside organizations offer family literacy programs for parents in prison. However, research on these correctional education initiatives is scant. This paper uses qualitative data to analyze how 11 fathers in a rural Pennsylvania prison were involved in their children's literacy, learning, and education before and during incarceration and through the Read to Your Child/ Grandchild (RYCG) program. Before RYCG, most fathers had taken steps such as reading to children, teaching reading and math, attending parent-teacher conferences, helping with homework, and singing and rhyming—and then sought to continue supporting their children's learning from within prison. Fathers used RYCG materials (video-recorded book reading, children's book, scrapbook) to emphasize the importance of education, literacies, and numeracy. They also created personalized scrapbooks that cultivated their children's literate abilities and cognitive, academic, and socio-emotional development. This research contributes to the nascent literature on family literacy for incarcerated parents.*

Keywords: *correctional education, family literacy, incarcerated parents, literacy, reading*

Introduction

According to the most recent estimates, more than 2.7 million children in the U.S. have a parent currently in prison, and more than 5.7 million children have experienced parental incarceration during their lifetime (Gotsch, 2018). From 1991 to 2007, the number of children with mothers in state or federal prisons increased 131%, compared to 77% for children with incarcerated fathers (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008), reflecting the greater rate of maternal incarceration. In Pennsylvania, the location of this study, two-thirds of inmates in state correctional institutions (SCIs) are parents (Pennsylvania Department of Corrections [PA DOC], 2018). As more parents are imprisoned and separated from their children, correctional institutions and other organizations are increasingly offering family literacy and read-aloud programs. These programs take various forms, but generally focus on connecting parents and children through reading and other learning activities, either in person or at a distance through live video or audio or video recordings. However, empirical research on such programs is scarce.

The Read to Your Child/Grandchild (RYCG) Program offered an ideal opportunity to study fathers' perspectives of this program and how they used it to relate to their children and support their literacy, learning, and education. (We have IRB approval to use the program's real

name.) RYCG, offered "in most facilities" in Pennsylvania (PA DOC, 2019a), was designed over a decade ago to "increase the relationship between the child and adult, enhance family literacy, enrich one's life through reading and to make a positive influence stressing the importance of literacy development through a shared reading experience" (PA DOC, 2013, para. 2). The program also "serves to help establish and maintain a connection between the inmate and their children/grandchildren to enhance their relationship upon release" (PA DOC, 2019a, para. 6). These goals focus on strengthening parent-child relationships both in the present and future. Moreover, the educational goals are similar to those of family literacy programs in non-correctional settings, which focus on enhancing parents' support for children's language and literacy development (for an overview of family literacy, see e.g., Clymer, Toso, Grinder, & Sauder, 2017; Paratore, 2001; Wasik, 2012). Pennsylvania has historically provided strong funding and support for family literacy programming (Clymer et al., 2017).

RYCG participants select one or more books for their child (aged 12 or under) and are video recorded reading the book(s) aloud. Parents typically add a personal message at the beginning and/or end of the recording. The DVD and one book are sent to the child, pending the custodial caregiver's written consent. Participants can make one video per household, but children in the same household may each receive a book. Implementation differs across SCIs (e.g., parents may or may not make a scrapbook, create an artistic backdrop for the video recording, or take group classes to learn about reading to children, practice reading the book aloud, and so on). At this SCI, fathers created a scrapbook with drawings, photos, personal notes or letters, and/or photocopied pages from coloring or activity books. Participants may re-enroll as many times as the program is offered (at this SCI, about once per year).

Drawing on interview and observational data, this paper analyzes the experiences and perspectives of 11 fathers to address the following research questions: (1) How were fathers in a rural Pennsylvania prison involved in their children's literacy, learning, and education before and during their incarceration? (2) How did the fathers use the Read to Your Child/Grandchild program to support their children's literacy, learning, and education?

This study contributes to the literature on family literacy in correctional institutions, illustrating the varying degrees and multiple ways that incarcerated fathers were and continue to be involved in helping their children with literacy, numeracy, schooling, and other forms of learning, even while separated geographically and physically.

Literature Review

This section highlights relevant research on the consequences of parental incarceration for children and parents and on family literacy in correctional institutions.

Consequences of Parental Incarceration

The consequences of parental incarceration outlined below are intertwined with multiple economic and racial disparities. For example, in 2017, there were 1.49 million people in U.S. state and federal prisons (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2019a) and 745,000 in local jails (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2019b). Of this incarcerated population, 59% were Black or Latinx, compared to 29% of the U.S. population (The Sentencing Project, 2018). Consequently, children of color are disproportionately affected by parental incarceration. For example, compared to white children, Hispanic and African American children are 2.3 times and 7.5 times more likely, respectively, to have an incarcerated parent (Martin, 2017).

Parental incarceration has a range of consequences for children, including greater likelihood of becoming justice-involved (Conway & Jones, 2015), lower high school GPA (maternal incarceration only; Hagan & Foster, 2012), increased externalizing behavioral problems (Geller et al., 2012), lower non-cognitive school readiness (Haskins, 2014), decreased reading

scores (DeHart, Shapiro, & Hardin, 2017), and lower educational attainment as adults (Mears & Siennick, 2016). Children's mental health may also suffer; depending on their gender, race, and age, children of incarcerated parents are at greater risk for depression, aggression, and antisocial behaviors (Martin, 2017).

Incarceration may permanently reduce a family's economic stability, since their income can decrease by 22% during a parent's incarceration and 15% post-incarceration (Martin, 2017). This economic impact has deep implications for children with incarcerated fathers, since just over half of fathers behind bars are their children's primary economic support (Martin, 2017).

Parents also experience innumerable consequences of incarceration, including loss of contact with children and family and termination of parental rights. Given the rural location of many correctional institutions, distance from family is a chief barrier to visitations (Rabuy & Kopf, 2015). According to 2004 data, nearly two-thirds (63%) of people in state prisons lived more than 100 miles from their families, and only 26% received any visits in the previous month (Rabuy & Kopf, 2015). As such, it is imperative to understand how incarcerated parents—particularly those who live far from family—maintain relationships with their children and support their children's education, learning, and literacy during their absence.

Family Literacy in Correctional Institutions

Research on family literacy programs in non-correctional settings suggests that they can have a positive influence on children and adults. For example, family storybook reading has been found to support children's school success (Paratore, 2001); parent-child reading promotes children's writing development (Crain-Thoreson & Dale, 1999); and a meta-analysis of 29 family literacy studies (Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995) contended that "parent-preschooler reading is a necessary preparation for beginning reading instruction" (p. 17). Additionally, although parental involvement has the greatest effect on young children's literacy and education, it continues to influence educational and literacy outcomes in teenage and adult years (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). Consequently, parents and caregivers are essential for nurturing children's literacy development and educational success. However, the vast majority of family literacy research focuses on non-incarcerated individuals.

There are numerous studies on the outcomes of *parenting* programs for incarcerated parents and their relationships with children (e.g., Collica-Cox & Furst, 2018; Kampter, Teyber, Rockwood, & Drzewiecki, 2017; Troy et al., 2018), but these programs do not typically focus on reading or supporting children's literacy. Further, Muth (2018) critiques the dominant perspective of research on incarcerated parenting, which suggests that fatherhood in particular becomes dormant during incarceration and only upon release does a parent "re-enter" the family as an active participant. This framing ignores how literacy-specific practices are often an important way for incarcerated parents to maintain contact with their children (Muth, 2006).

Family literacy and read-aloud programs in correctional institutions vary in their focus and design. The New York State Education Department (NYSED) integrates family literacy into the three strands of its Instructional Delivery System Model, including academic programs, transition programs, and support services (Hudson River Center for Program Development, 2001). Each strand includes varied programming and activities. For example, within the transition programs, parent-child interactions are a central component; parents may write letters or draw pictures for their children, play literacy games or other activities during visits, or, similar to RYCG, be audio-recorded while reading a children's book.

A more common approach is to offer a stand-alone family literacy program or project. For example, reading programs such as Reading Connections in San Diego County "provide an opportunity to reestablish parental roles, reassure the children of their continued love, and encourage the children's reading behavior" (Blumberg & Griffin, 2013, p. 265). Reading Unites Families in Maryland offers a "literacy Saturday" in which fathers and children participate in

literacy activities and children select, read, and keep two books (Gardner, 2015). In "Daddy and Me," a New York Public Library Correctional Services program at Riker's Island, fathers attended librarian-led trainings and classes on children's literacy and were audio-recorded reading a children's book (Higgins, 2013). Other programs involve parents in reading books for children by phone or compact disc (Quinn-Kong, 2018). All such programs link incarcerated parents with their children through reading and other family literacy practices, with the goal of nurturing parent-child relationships and fostering literacy (Zoukis, 2017). Though these programs are seemingly beneficial for parents' and children's literacy practices, their effectiveness varies immensely and many lack empirical validation (Johnston, 2012). Moreover, research on parents' perceptions of these programs is limited.

This article builds on the few studies that have examined family literacy in correctional settings. Gadsden and colleagues (2005) found that attending a family literacy program helped improve fathers' day-to-day behavior, while Genisio (1999) asserted that family literacy participants exhibited lower recidivism rates. Muth's (2018) research shows that Hope House's "family presence" programs (including summer camps, murals, and storybook taping) enabled fathers and children to reconnect at their own pace and to reimagine how they experience "doing time." Moreover, storybook program participants committed fewer and less serious prison infractions than the comparison group (p. 165).

Similar findings have surfaced in international studies. Research on two men's prisons in the United Kingdom revealed that teaching early literacy theories enhanced fathers' involvement in their children's literacy practices and their awareness of children's development (Nutbrown et al., 2019). Incarcerated mothers in Canada saw a recorded read-aloud program as "the best opportunity women have to keep their families together" during incarceration; the program also promoted a love for reading and positive identity development for children, along with other positive outcomes (Brown, 2017, p. 38). Similarly, a comparative study of family literacy in U.S. and U.K. correctional institutions suggested that these programs had the potential to foster parent-child bonding and promote parents' and children's literacy skills (Finlay, 2014).

Methods

We used qualitative research methods to study the RYCG program, because we wanted to gain an in-depth understanding of the fathers' experiences in and perceptions of the program. A qualitative research design fulfilled five of the contributions outlined by Patton (2015): to illuminate participants' meanings, to study how things work (participants' experiences), to capture participants' stories and perspectives, to understand how systems function (e.g., correctional setting), and to understand the context (e.g., prison regulations). Specifically, we drew upon the ethnographic tradition by using observation, detailed description, interpretive interviews, and analysis of artifacts (scrapbooks) to elicit participants' emic meanings, while acknowledging our role in selecting and shaping how their stories are told (Wolcott, 1999).

Research Setting

We selected the SCI because of its active RYCG program and proximity to our university, Penn State. The rural location makes visitation difficult, particularly for those fathers from cities several hours away. This geographic distance from family accentuates the importance of programs like RYCG.

The study occurred after the summer 2018 lockdown of Pennsylvania SCIs in response to staff and inmate illness caused by synthetic drugs that entered the prisons through the mail. Consequently, inmates were restricted to their cells, mail delivery was halted, and non-legal mail was forwarded to a contractor in Florida, where mail was scanned, digitally forwarded to

the prison, and copied (Rodriquez, 2019). Book shipments from family, friends, or book donation organizations were prohibited. The lockdown lasted 12 days, but due to ensuing policy changes, research participants had less access to reading materials and received photocopies of letters and photos. In addition, we could not bring paper into the prison and the children's books that we donated to the program were shipped directly from Amazon.

Research Team and Positionality

Our all-female study team included two faculty with doctorates (Esther Prins and Anna Kaiper, both white) and two doctoral students (Tabitha Stickel, who is white, and Marolyn Machen, who is African American). None of us had previous research experience in corrections. Our collective experiences with the carceral system and currently or formerly incarcerated individuals included teaching GED® and ESL students who were on probation or previously incarcerated, working at a legal aid clinic, and providing technical support for community college courses in a SCI. They additionally involved advising doctoral students with professional or research experience in corrections, teaching a book on reading in women's prisons for a graduate seminar, incorporating content from adult and family literacy in correctional settings into other higher education classes, and learning from the experiences of friends previously incarcerated. From these starting points, all of us became interested in prison education as a way to enrich the lives of prisoners and their families.

Although our identities and life experiences differed from those of research participants, we built rapport by drawing on our experiences with teaching, interviewing, and interacting with racially and culturally diverse adult literacy and English language learners, a group that shares similarities with the fathers in this study (e.g., poor or working-class backgrounds). Participants' openness and their willingness to be interviewed, some twice, suggest that our efforts toward rapport were largely fruitful. For example, Jones commented, "I'm pretty much not a talkative guy. You got me talking a lot." Some fathers told us why they were incarcerated, even though we did not ask. Several participants thanked us for taking the time to do this research. At the informational session, Scho asked "why it was so important to y'all to come in here" to do the study. Reflecting on this exchange, he concluded the first interview by saying, "I appreciate y'all as well. I really do. It meant a lot."

Participant Recruitment and Ethical Considerations

The SCI advertised RYCG in fall 2018 via flyers on bulletin boards in each cell block. Eleven men enrolled and were approved to participate (sex offenders and people who committed a crime against their child are ineligible). In the teacher's view, RYCG attracts fathers who "already had the positive connection with their children before [and] would like to maintain it" and those who "do it to look good for parole." The demographic data suggest that RYCG participants had higher educational levels (and thus stronger literacy abilities) than the average U.S. inmate.

After the teacher gave fathers a flyer about the study, we held an informational session to describe the study purposes and procedures, answer questions, and obtain consent forms. All 11 men volunteered to participate in the study. Since we were working with a population historically exploited through research misconduct (Gostin, Vanchieri, & Pope, 2007), we attended to ethical issues such as coercion, participants' rights and consent, and reciprocity. The recruitment process enabled fathers to volunteer for the study. We emphasized that their decision to participate had no bearing on their parole or other decisions by SCI personnel and that there was no compensation. We sought to affirm participants' dignity and self-determination by honoring their decision to use a self-chosen pseudonym or their real name or nickname. In this paper, we have chosen children's pseudonyms that reflect their family's culture (e.g., most of the children of African American fathers had names that are common among African American

families; see Lieberson & Mikelson, 1995).

To express our gratitude to fathers and SCI personnel, we donated $100 of children's coloring and activity books to the program. We sent fathers a thank you letter and a certificate since these items are considered in parole hearings. Finally, we asked the teacher to share our conference presentations and research brief with participants who are still incarcerated.

Table 1 summarizes participants' characteristics, followed by a description of each father.

Table 1

Research Participants

Name	Age	Race/ Ethnicity	Highest level of education	Children's ages	# of videos made	Total time incarcerated (life-time)	First time in RYCG?
Antione	34	African American	Some HS	3, 16	1	9 years	Un-known
Brandon	35	White/ Native American	HS	5, 7	1	~3 years	No
Carl Jung	37	White	Some college	11, 19	1	~15 years	Yes
El Jefe	29	Multiracial	Bachelor's	1, 11	1	2 years	Yes
John	28	White	Some HS	4	1	20 months	Yes
Jones	35	Hispanic	GED®	4, 6	1	10 years	Yes
LaDiDaDi	31	African American	Some college	2, 12	2	5 years	Yes
Malik	40	African American	Some HS	2, 6, 6, 10	3	9 years	No
Ron	48	African American	HS	2; 7 adult children	1	15 years	No
Rundy	29	African American	Some college	3, 3	2	>3 years	Yes
Scho	36	African American	GED®	6, 6, 6, 14	4	~13 years	Yes

Antione. Antoine has two sons: a 16-year-old in a foster home and three-year-old Jaquan, who lives with his mother. Antione writes "long, deep letters" to his elder son and talks to Jaquan every day by phone. Jacquan and his mother are able to visit Antione. He made the video for Jaquan. Antione finished 11th grade before entering a juvenile detention center. He is enrolled in GED® classes and hopes to be released in 2020. Antione was the only participant who did not want to be audio-recorded. Thus, we have much less data from him compared to other participants.

Brandon. Brandon, a high school graduate with an automotive certificate, has two daughters, age five and seven, who live with their mother. This was Brandon's third time in RYCG; after his daughters received the first video, they were "stuck on the TV" (watching the DVD) and loved the children's books. After writing a poem for his girls, he began writing poems and rhymes for other incarcerated men to send their families. Brandon's dream is to

illustrate children's books; he showed his artistic skills by illustrating the scrapbook cover with a character he created. Brandon takes courses to work towards computer certification. He was released on parole after the study concluded.

Carl Jung. Carl has a 19-year-old daughter whom he has never met and an 11-year-old, Chloe, who lives in foster care in another state. He met Chloe once before and sends letters through a caseworker. For unknown reasons, Chloe's case worker did not sign the consent form to receive the DVD, but the SCI was able to send it after a judge ruled in Carl's favor. Carl has a GED® diploma and attended one year of college. He is taking a theology course through the mail. A high school teacher's encouragement sparked his interest in writing; he has published poetry in a correctional journal and a sociology professor has shared Carl's writing about prison and recidivism with students. Carl was eligible for parole in summer 2019.

El Jefe. El Jefe made the video for his one-year old son, Ajani, who was only two months when his father was incarcerated. El Jefe sees his wife and Ajani weekly, but has less contact with his 11-year-old son, who lives with the boy's mother. With a bachelor's degree in business management, El Jefe ran various businesses (recording studio, t-shirt screen printing studio, landscaping business) before incarceration. He attributed incarceration to his student loans and resulting "financial stress." El Jefe completed the pre-construction course required to enroll in the SCI carpentry courses and expected to take the forklift course. His expected release date is in 2020.

John. John and his wife have a four-year-old son, David, who attends preschool and has an Individualized Education Program (IEP). They visit John once or twice a month, but the long drive and David's young age make it difficult to visit more often. John left high school his senior year and tried attending a GED® program. He went on to manage a construction company. He is completing the Commonwealth Secondary School Diploma at the SCI and is eligible for release in summer 2020.

Jones. Jones made the video for his four-year-old daughter, Ajayla. He also has a six-year-old step-daughter. Jones described their mom as a great partner "in this time being behind the wall." He communicates with his children every day, mostly by phone; he also sends them letters and they occasionally visit. He left school in 11th grade and earned his GED® diploma and an Automotive Service Excellence certification at previous SCIs. He also participated in the InsideOut Dad® parenting program. Jones was released on parole before we conducted follow-up interviews.

LaDiDaDi. LaDiDaDi's sons Latrell (age two) and Keon (age 12) both received videos. Although the boys have different mothers, "they do a lot together" and occasionally visit their dad. LaDiDaDi graduated from a disciplinary school and later studied graphic design for a semester, drawing on his experience creating flyers for large parties. However, during his second semester he "got caught back up into the street life." He is taking a carpentry class and describes himself as a frequent reader. LaDiDaDi is eligible for parole in 2019.

Malik. Malik has four children with four mothers and describes his children, their mothers, and his wife (they have no children together) as a "big happy family," with the mothers, his wife, and children intermittently visiting him. Malik described himself as a fun-loving jokester and "goofball" with his kids. He made videos for two-year-old Zaniya, six-year-old DeShawn, and 10-year-old Shanice. (He previously participated in RYCG.) He is not involved in his fourth child's life. Malik left school when he was legally emancipated at 16; he is studying for the GED® exam and dreams of being a chef or baker. He was eligible for parole in summer 2019.

Ron. Ron has seven adult children, nine grandchildren, and a two-year old son, Omari, who lives in foster care with an aunt. Ron has never met Omari, having learned of his birth after being incarcerated, but he regularly writes him letters and previously sent him a video through RYCG. After graduating from high school, Ron attended cooking school. Although

Ron has been in jail "at least once every year since '91," his older children all graduated from high school and he is involved in his grandchildren's lives. When asked about taking courses at the SCI, Ron answered, "Nope. I just go to jail, do my time, go home."

Rundy. Rundy has two three-year old sons, Akil and Deontay, born about a day apart. He calls them at least twice a week and writes letters. Deontay is "not really social" because he "is on the lower spectrum of autism," so he typically says little on the phone. Akil has visited once, but Rundy has not seen Deontay since being incarcerated about 17 months prior. His "bond is stronger with Akil than it is with Deontay." Rundy attended one year of trade school after graduating from high school; he is currently in a printshop class and on the carpentry class waiting list. He is eligible for release in fall 2023.

Scho. Scho has four children who live with their respective mothers, though the children know and see each other. Mo'nique is 14 and Deondre, Kayla, and Nyah are six. (Scho was upset that Nyah did not receive the DVD because her mother never returned the consent form, which he attributed to her "bouncing around" and living in a hotel room.) Scho was released from a "juvenile life sentence" at 19 but left the disciplinary school without a diploma. He passed the last two GED® tests during our study and was proud to be released in spring 2019 with his GED® diploma. He hoped to surprise his children by popping out of a box.

Data Collection and Analysis

We collected data in three stages from November 2018 to February 2019. First, we observed while the teacher video-recorded fathers reading the book and adding a message. Our detailed notes described each father and the classroom setting, what fathers said to the child and mother (if applicable), book title and general content, reading style, tone, body language, and interactions with us and the teacher. Each researcher present (one or two) then typed and shared field notes with the team. The 18 videos lasted five to 70 minutes (22 minutes average). Although a few fathers stumbled over some pronunciation or more complex words, none had difficulty reading aloud.

Immediately after videotaping, one or two researchers interviewed each father in a classroom. Per SCI regulations, the teacher or principal were in the room or nearby. Although they were doing their own work, their comments during or after the interview indicated they were also listening. The participants appeared candid, since they shared details about their personal lives (both within and outside of interviews), though we realize that our roles as researchers may have unwittingly influenced their responses. To mitigate social desirability bias and reactivity threats (Salkind, 2010), we tried to be empathic, reassuring, and nonjudgmental. To check our understanding, we repeated to the participants what we heard and understood from our observations and their interview responses, and asked follow-up questions based on their responses (St. Jean, 2013). Moreover, we triangulated the data by using multiple data sources and asking follow-up interview questions based on video observations and initial interview responses (Mathison, 1988).

All but one interview (Antione) was audio-recorded and transcribed. (To enhance readability, we have removed false starts, repetitions, and some fillers from interview excerpts in this article.) Malik and Scho were interviewed two and three times, respectively, because they made multiple videos. The semi-structured interviews explored fathers' pre-incarceration backgrounds, education, and literacy practices; relationships with children and involvement in their literacy, learning, and education both before and during incarceration; and experiences in the RYCG program and ensuing reflections on the program, among other topics. Although we could not photograph the scrapbooks (cameras are not allowed inside the SCI), we took extensive notes on their contents and also asked some men to read aloud the letters they wrote to their children. Interviews lasted an average of 56 minutes. We also interviewed the teacher who implemented RYCG and the SCI principal.

We conducted follow-up interviews in February 2019. During the first interview, we asked fathers to tell the teacher if they heard back from their child about the video. One father was released shortly after the video was sent. Of the remaining 10 fathers, five contacted the teacher and four were interviewed. At the scheduled interview time, the fifth father decided not to leave his cell, even though he had been enthusiastic about RYCG and our research. The main interview topics included children's responses to the DVD, book, and scrapbook, how fathers felt about their children's reaction and RYCG overall, and what they learned from the program. Follow-up interviews lasted 38 minutes on average.

Transcripts and field notes were analyzed using content analysis (Patton, 2015). We began with codes derived from interview topics (e.g., pre-incarceration involvement in children's education) and created new codes to refine these topics and to capture other data (e.g., affordances of the video format).

Read to Your Child/Grandchild Program Components

To situate the findings, we describe the program process and details about the book, video recording, and scrapbook. Altogether, 18 videos, 19 scrapbooks, and 21 children's books were mailed to 19 children before the winter holidays.

Choosing a Book

At this SCI, RYCG included eight hours of classroom preparation before recording. Fathers chose one of two children's books out of about 500 options. The books were sorted according to the publisher's age range, which some fathers (like Scho) mentioned was important for choosing a book. Subject matter also helped guide fathers' choices, both for fathers who knew their children well and those who didn't. For instance, Carl, having only met his daughter once but recalling her mother's love of fairies, chose a book about magic and fairies, hoping his daughter might share this love with her mom. Brandon chose *Corduroy* because it was a cherished childhood book and because he read it to his daughters before being incarcerated. Malik selected *Ms. Beard Is Weird* because the content mirrored his daughter's descriptions of fifth grade. Similarly, some fathers chose books that modeled important behaviors for their children. After choosing their books, the fathers could practice reading in their cells.

Creating the Scrapbook

The fathers spent most of the preparation time creating a scrapbook, an activity that tapped their creativity and imagination. The scrapbooks (construction paper covers with several pieces of blank paper inside, connected with plastic binding) included a combination of the following items: written messages or letters, photocopied activity pages (e.g., coloring), participant-created activities (e.g., house-building activity), photocopied text (e.g., famous ancestors), drawings, and original or photocopied photographs (with or without captions). Scrapbooks averaged five to 10 pages, though Carl's included 35 pages of letters, photos, and information about angels, gods, goddesses, and historical figures (e.g., Uriel, Artemis, John Quincy Adams). Some fathers sent additional items they had found, made, bought, or commissioned, such as a special feather, leather pouch, candy, card, or certificate. Aside from the occasional misspelling or minor grammatical error, none of the fathers appeared to have difficulty writing the scrapbook contents. As described below, the scrapbook allowed the fathers to build on their children's educational needs and interests and to be involved in their learning and development despite the distance.

Making the Video

When asked how they felt while making the video, fathers often detailed an emotional endeavor. Jones confided that he was "getting a little choked up" while reading the letter to his daughter. He and several other fathers described themselves as feeling "nervous" or awkward during the recording. Rundy rehearsed reading the book "over 20 times in the cell just to get ready," but despite his nerves and sweating, he "couldn't stop smiling while I was reading because I know he looking [sic] at me."

Adding a Personal Message

Fathers directly addressed their children (and sometimes the child's mother) at the beginning and/or end of the video, ranging from a few sentences to many minutes. Some fathers read these messages verbatim from the scrapbook, whereas others spoke extemporaneously. The fathers' messages included affirmations and encouragement; information about the family; apologies and explanations about their incarceration; advice and moral instruction; emphasis on the importance of education, literacy, and completing school; and/or assurances of their fathers' love, support and continued presence. For example, John expressed his pride at how helpful his son David was in his preschool class and told David to tell his mom "how great she is." Scho read a personalized letter in his four videos and offered lessons from his own life. For instance, in his teenage daughter's video, he stated, "The love I thought that I received from the streets only turned out to be pain. Always remember that real love comes from those who have your best interests at heart."

Findings

This section first describes how fathers were involved in their children's literacy, learning, and education outside of prison and then during incarceration (apart from RYCG). When reading these findings, recall that RYCG may attract fathers who are already more involved in their children's lives, although two participants had little contact with their child and three other fathers had a child who was a baby (or not yet born) when they were incarcerated. The next part elucidates how fathers used RYCG to emphasize the importance of education, to convey the value of literacies, and to tailor the scrapbook to children's educational needs and interests. The findings conclude with data on children's responses to the RYCG materials.

Involvement in Children's Literacy, Learning, and Education Outside of Prison

Fathers' participation in RYCG should be viewed in light of their previous involvement in their children's literacy, learning, and education. Nine of the 11 fathers noted varying degrees of involvement when not incarcerated (some had served two or more separate sentences).

Literacy and numeracy practices. Before entering this SCI, participants fostered their children's literacy practices in various ways. Three fathers—Jones, Brandon, and John— mentioned regularly reading with their children (in John's case, even during his wife's pregnancy). Jones noted that although he didn't do a lot of reading on his own, "I liked to read to my girls at least…three times a week" (he worked with his daughter on writing letters and spelling her name). Brandon described reading as a nightly occurrence for him and his daughters. He also recalled, "I used to take them to the library all the time."

Other fathers used—or eschewed—technology as a tool for supporting children's literacy practices. For example, Malik got his children "tablets so we could interact together and stuff on certain things," including reading. Ron had bought some of his older (now grown) daughters the Hooked on Phonics program, describing himself as: "a big kid with it….Because I get animated with the stories. Like, the voices, the sound effects. I get into the book, because it

makes them get into the book." Conversely, Brandon insisted that TV, tablets, and video games took his children "away from the outside world." Instead, he took his daughters to parks and libraries and played dress-up with them.

Some fathers mentioned additional modalities for supporting children's literacy, including singing and rhyming. Jones would sing "Eensy Weensy Spider" and "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" with his daughter. Rundy sang to his son as an infant and toddler: "I used to rap to him because I started writing music. I used to like perform my music for him." El Jefe used singing and rhyming to help his son in school, particularly with learning fractions, since "it seems like that's the only way he could memorize stuff, was through repetitiveness or being associated with a rhythmic pattern." El Jefe found that his son responded to being taught math in a "different way," just as he had when he was a child.

Scho also helped his oldest daughter with math, but used real-world examples such as teaching her "how to count money" and the "value of each bill." Similarly, LaDiDaDi related math questions to real-life problems to support his child's mathematical understanding: "I would relate these equations into…real lifestyle equations and stuff like that. And that would help him."

Education and schooling. Beyond these literacy and numeracy practices, some fathers explained how they were involved with their children's schooling. Although Scho did not read books to his daughter, he helped her with school. Each day after picking her up from school, they worked on her homework, "any little curricula activities we would do." El Jefe participated in his son's schooling by attending parent-teacher conferences. He would also "try to read certain stories that he had from class and…show him how to break down words into different syllables…I'm always trying to constantly teach him new things." LaDiDaDi discussed the importance of helping his son in school (including visiting the school to follow up on his son's behavioral problems), particularly because he did not get such support from his own parents.

Involvement in Children's Literacy, Learning, and Education While Incarcerated

During incarceration, many of the fathers tried to stay involved in their children's learning, though some struggled to do so because of distance and limited communication.

Literacy practices. According to participants, the SCI visiting room has a family area featuring children's books, games and toys, and DVDs. Since his older daughter can read, Brandon would have her pick out a book and read aloud. El Jefe utilized visits with his younger son to sing songs. He noted that although there are many books in the visitation room, it is hard to concentrate on reading in the chaotic, loud environment, with "other kids running around, playing around" and DVDs playing.

As many of the men mentioned, limited transportation and the difficulty of traveling long distances with young children make visits a challenge. Some of the fathers, then, devised other ways of supporting their children's literacy practices. Carl Jung wrote letters to his daughter, while Rundy had his sons practice their ABCs and counting on the phone. Unable to continue their pre-incarceration practice of bedtime reading, John and his family found an inventive way to support David's literacy development: David made his own small mailbox for mail from his dad. John sent his wife a weekly letter with seven flashcards for different letters of the alphabet. Each night, she put a flashcard in David's mailbox for him to discover the next day. In the first interview, John noted that they had covered the alphabet and would be starting with numbers.

Brandon supported his children's literacy by creating a book character. While in a county jail, Brandon created a character based on his dog, "Buster Brown," and drew illustrations to send his daughters. He hoped they would come up with words for his illustrations to create a book together. He expanded on this idea in RYCG by drawing Buster Brown in the scrapbook.

Education and schooling. Communication with the children's mothers was a common way that fathers stayed informed about their children's schooling. In several videos, fathers mentioned what they knew of their children's schooling, showcasing their interest in their school experiences and also encouraging them to work hard in school and continue learning. For example, Scho mentioned Kayla's struggles with addition and subtraction and Mo'nique's dislike of history. John stayed up to date on his son's education by talking with his wife and receiving Individualized Education (IE) reports on David's literacy and speech progress. These detailed reports helped John see his son through the school's perspective, and during visits or phone calls, John emphasized the weaker areas noted in the IE report.

Despite his efforts, El Jefe found it difficult to remain current with his children's education, given limited communication and the pace of children's education. Thus, El Jefe often found himself "behind on" his son's education and assignments. In our view, such limitations make the opportunity for involvement through RYCG all the more meaningful.

Supporting Children's Literacy, Learning, and Education through RYCG

This section describes how fathers used RYCG to underscore the value of education, to convey the importance of literacies and numeracy, and to tailor the scrapbook to children's educational needs and interests. The section concludes with data on how children used and responded to the RYCG materials.

Importance of education and doing well in school. To varying degrees, the fathers used the video, personal messages to their child, and scrapbook to emphasize the importance of education and schooling. In the video messages, several fathers made general comments about the value of formal education. Scho told Mo'nique to protect herself with knowledge and that education is important. Without education, he said, it's going "to get dark." He told her he passed his GED® math test and that he would take the science and social studies tests that month. As promised, Scho passed these tests before his release in spring 2019 with a GED® diploma, thus modeling the pursuit of education for his children.

In his message, Ron told Omari that he needs to do well in school, even though he is only two. "I know you will do well, and I promise it will get more exciting as you get older," Ron said. He noted that he too had to go through school, since he was made to finish by his mother and grandmother. In the interview, we asked Ron to elaborate on these remarks. He reiterated his attitude toward raising his seven now-grown children, all of whom are high school graduates: "I don't care what you do in life. School—you're gonna graduate. You've got to go to school… I pushed school. Because my mom always pushed it on me." In addition, he wanted his kids to graduate because he saw his friends struggle to find work without a high school diploma.

LaDiDaDi conveyed the value of education by reading *Class President* for his son Keon, who had behavioral problems at school. The book describes how Julio becomes a school leader. LaDiDaDi explained that "education is key….So now that Keon is getting older, I want him to focus on school….So kinda like with *Class President*, my son Keon kinda used to be like the class clown." He hoped this book would help Keon "get a different approach" or "vibe" to being a student, such as being involved with classmates, solving problems together, and showing leadership. LaDiDaDi was the only participant who explicitly linked the book's *content* to sending a message about education and learning. He underscored this message in his closing video comments: "I want you to really take heed about what the student [in the book] is going through. You know I always come to your classes regularly….Also, stay on top of your vocabulary and always read." His book choice reflected his belief that reading is "one of the cool ways to put something in somebody head, especially while they young."

In addition to inspiring his son to be a class leader and "installing" ideas in his mind, LaDiDaDi emphasized that African Americans must become educated to combat the "racial

slur" that they don't read:

> It used to be…kinda like a racial slur they used to say…Like if you wanna hide stuff from a Black person, just put it in a book. Kinda like we won't open up a book. So now it's kinda like, to break that type of chain....You're African American. You need to try to educate yourself and read a little bit more. Because you don't have to always learn from somebody. Sometimes you can just have a book and get the reading and you be learning stuff. And it just be like man, I just learned all this stuff just reading this book.

Scho encouraged his children to respect and listen to their teachers. In three videos, he imparted a variation of this advice to his six-year-old children: "Work hard in school and respect your mom, grandma, and teachers." Similarly, the message for his 14-year-old daughter stressed school, paying attention in class, and asking questions when she doesn't understand. Scho noted that she doesn't like her math teacher, but "the world is built on numbers….People can lie, but numbers don't lie." These messages and the learning activities in the scrapbooks underscored the value of learning, working hard to school, and respecting teachers.

Vehicle to convey importance of literacies. Some fathers used RYCG to convey the value of literacies, in part by modeling reading. LaDiDaDi articulated this point, stating that when you are reading in the video,

> they see, actually, you holding a book. And those images…kinda like install in their brain and they kinda stick with they thoughts of what they was thinking about. Like "Wow, that's crazy, he's holding a book and that's my dad and he was reading it for me." So it kinda encourage them to say, "I should pick a book up and read the book."

LaDiDaDi argued that children *see* their father reading a book and these images *stick* in their minds, which then *encourages* them to read.

John was the one father who explicitly taught writing in the video. At the time of the study, David had been writing his name vertically. At the end of the video John told David how "good" he was getting at his letters and that once he learns his letters, he can "put a bunch of letters together and that's a word." He then wrote D-a-v-i-d on the chalkboard, saying each letter as he wrote it. He told David that is his name and underlined it.

Finally, several fathers expressed how RYCG shaped their views and hopes for reading with their children and being involved in their education. El Jefe remarked that the program:

> did open my eyes a little bit with more reading. I don't think I ever had bedtime story time [his mom did read to him at other times]. I think those would be one of the things I would be interested in when I get home with my son.

Similarly, Jones learned that reading to your children is "important," "good for them," and "opens their imagination at an early age." He appreciated the book the teacher showed them with sample letters and items they could send to their kids and teachers, such as "a letter explaining that I'm incarcerated and I would like to be updated on her progress and where she's lacking and where she's exceeding." Following these examples, Jones wrote a letter to his daughter's preschool teacher, which would help him stay informed of her progress.

LaDiDaDi viewed the program—particularly the encouragement of reading—as a "big standout" and a way to help children stay out of prison and their fathers to "stay active" in their lives:

> Like, read to your child…that's just something that's just installed to you like, yeah, let's read to your child. Because if you really wanna stay active in your kid life and you don't want them— You going through a trial and tribulation like this while being incarcerated, you surely don't want your kid to ever have to come to the extent to you know, break the laws and stuff like that and you

know, unfortunately landing here in a prison like this. So any type of step-up tool as a father that you think that you can take advantage of, especially being incarcerated, is really decent.

In a variety of ways, then, fathers used RYCG to support their children's literacy practices and to reaffirm the importance of learning and schooling, in some cases targeting specific areas where children were struggling. The scrapbook was another way to reinforce these messages.

Tailoring the scrapbook to children's educational needs and interests. The fathers created scrapbooks that included photos (which taught children about family stories and relationships, sometimes showing relatives they had never met or rarely saw), photocopied pages from coloring books (both blank and colored by fathers), and other items described earlier. In addition, seven fathers included activities to nurture children's cognitive, academic, and socio-emotional development, tailored to their needs and interests. These items included the alphabet; math and counting; other learning activities such as matching and mazes; and activities on self-care, manners, safety, feelings, and the like. Some of these items were fathers' original creations.

John's scrapbook for David illustrated these types of content. John explained that "it's hard to get creative with things when it comes to a child when you're in prison. Because the environment sort of dampens your imagination and your creativity" and limits "exposure to my son, playing with him and stuff like that." Thus, John was initially "worried" about making a "book" in RYCG. However, the teacher offered ideas and examples, which inspired John to alternate pages of "task" (learning activities) and "pleasure" (coloring). He remarked, "I try to see what he's into right now and use that as our benefit in teaching him." For instance, John included activities that involved writing numbers, matching, calling 911, manners, feelings, and hygiene, along with two original creations (a maze and a house-building activity). The scrapbook reflected John's intimate knowledge of his son's development, such as his need to monitor emotions, interest in building, enthusiasm for numbers, and more. To reiterate messages about conduct, John gave David a certificate for being the "best son," telling him in the video that the certificate is a "high standard" and that David can be the best son by being helpful and polite.

Scho used the scrapbook to reinforce math. For his three first-graders, he wrote 1 to 100 and 100 to 1 in calligraphy-like penmanship. He explained his rationale: "I remember speaking to her [daughter] and I asked her to count and she was stumbling on her numbers….but I don't think she never practiced counting to a hundred." Since his 14-year-old was "having trouble with her math," he included math problems. By including these activities, he was "trying to think ahead a little bit as far as, you know, how I could possibly help them in any situation where, 'You remember that book I gave you? Try to look at it and study it…whenever you're having problems.'" These comments reveal that he saw the scrapbook as a teaching tool that could continuously support his children's academic growth, especially in his absence.

Other fathers included activities to stimulate learning. For instance, for 1-year-old Ajani, El Jefe colored "ABCs" and "gave them germ glasses," adding, "Maybe he can cut those out and wear those around the house. So I did some little activity like coloring pages and stuff that he can learn and actually just have fun with." El Jefe colored some of the pages (*Paw Patrol*, *Cars*, etc.) and left others blank "so he can try to mock the coloring pages that I did. So that way he has something to do [scrapbook] and something to read [children's book] and something to watch [DVD]." These comments exemplify fathers' intention to make scrapbooks that helped their children learn while having fun, particularly when combined with the video and children's book.

Fathers adjusted the scrapbook content for older children, who would have little interest in coloring, for example. Carl used the video and scrapbook to teach 11-year-old Chloe about their family lineage and famous relatives. Four of the approximately 35 pages were devoted to family history. In the video, he showed the scrapbook and read each page. After explaining that

their family is related to a notable pilgrim on the Mayflower, Carl said, "I thought you could go to school and ask your teacher about them. You can say, 'My daddy says I'm related to [famous pilgrim].' I told you we're special. We're very special.'" He then named and described three more famous relatives. The scrapbook included photocopied pictures of these historical figures and accompanying informational text.

In the interview, Carl related that he had previously written Chloe about their family history, which he "always grew up wanting to know and nobody told me." He offered personal and educational rationales for giving his daughter this information through RYCG:

> I find it important that she should know that the family tree does come from Mayflower, it does come from [name of pilgrim]. We are related to Mr. John Quincy Adams, one of the presidents who descends from [pilgrim]. And I think she should know that. Not only should she know it educationally, she should know it because what it does is, it's just gonna make her feel very, very special. And that is my job as a father, is to make her feel like the most important little girl in the world. And there's nothing else that I can do, especially with an incarceration, but to do that….Whether she takes these things and takes my advice to bring it to her fifth and sixth grade teachers is on her. But I'm giving her the fuel to burn.

Carl posited that knowing about famous ancestors would make Chloe feel special and important. Since she lives in foster care and has only met her father once, knowledge of family history is crucial for strengthening family ties and her historical and geographic rootedness. Carl tied this purpose to a second one: to provide "fuel" for her education by offering historical information that teachers could use in the classroom.

Children's responses to and uses of the materials. Four fathers reported how their children (10 in all) responded to and used the video, book, and scrapbook, based on what they heard from the child and/or the mother. These data provide more evidence of how RYCG supported children's learning and literacy (and strengthened father-child relationships, a topic for a future paper). Fathers characterized children's emotional responses with terms like "ecstatic," "loved it," and "excitement." The videos sparked laughter and tears: DeShawn told Malik, "Dad, you're funny!" whereas Kayla told Scho, "I cried the whole video, Dad."

Some of the children watched the video repeatedly. John's son David, for example, was sometimes "determined to watch the video":

> There's days where he just is like, "I want to watch the video, I want to watch dad."...And it allows me to interact with him without interacting with him, you know what I mean? While being away here. So I mean, that's a good thing.

Rundy's son Akil (age three) said, "Mom, run it again. Run it again." His mom told Rundy that Akil "just really been wanting to really, like, talk to me and see me. Because every time she tell him I'm on the phone, he be like, 'Give me the phone.' He want to talk to me." These examples illustrate how the video allowed the fathers to "interact without interacting"—to have a visible, audible presence in their children's lives.

The remainder of this section highlights how the RYCG materials stimulated literacy practices, including emergent literacy (early attempts at and knowledge of reading and writing; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Several children were especially interested in the book. Keantay's mom told Rundy, "He's walking around all the time with the book":

> When she told him that I was on the phone…he went and got the book [and] was like, "Hi, dad."…Then she said when she put the DVD on for him, first he was just sitting there, then he seen me. And she said he smiled and looked and pointed at the screen. And then he ran and got the book and started looking along with it, pointing at stuff with his mom….He tries to read along with it.

Like, he'll ask her to read it to him.

Keantay (age three) "doesn't really talk too much" because of his autism, and Rundy hadn't seen him in about 17 months and had only met him a few times. Consequently, he was especially happy about Keantay's keen interest in the book—and in knowing and talking to his dad.

Other young children displayed emergent writing. For example, David now writes his name horizontally, which John attributed to his modeling of writing in the video: "My wife said he is determined on writing, you know. Like he does everything I do on the video….I also said in the video that this is stuff that he needs to know." Similarly, Ron's son drew in the scrapbook. Ron commented, "[Omari] loves the scrapbook. They said he drew in the scrapbook; they're trying to get it sent back to me….He made some drawings. He colored in the pictures….They were like, 'Yeah, he was trying to write in it and everything.'" These examples illustrate how the program fostered emergent writing for some of the younger children.

Older, school-age children were also interested in the books. Malik reported that Shaniya was inspired by it [*Ms. Beard Is Weird*], so she started going to the library and getting more books of what I got her and stuff….She said that she actually got the fourth book [in the series] now, *Goosebumps*….She's enjoying it all the way around. Although Malik was unsure how *Ms. Beard Is Weird* led Shaniya to *Goosebumps* books, he emphasized that the book piqued her interest in reading and using the library.

Several children shared the book, scrapbook, or DVD with non-family members. Malik's son, DeShawn, "put the whole collage in his book bag and took it to school with him and all that." He especially enjoyed the family pictures, some of which he had never seen. Similarly, Scho's daughter Kayla took her book to school to read aloud during class story time. Scho's son Deondre showed the scrapbook to his football coach (the scrapbook included football-related items) and they watched the DVD together.

Finally, Scho credited the video with "pushing the communication" with 14-year-old Mo'nique: "She set up her own little email thing to where now we email each other throughout the day because she has a phone now." Their email correspondence not only strengthened their relationship, but also constituted an interactive literacy practice.

The interview data show that fathers were touched by their children's enjoyment of the packages and felt a stronger bond with them. In conclusion, this quotation from Rundy offers one father's perspective about RYCG and its connection to children's literacy and learning:

> It [sons' responses] made me feel like I want to do it again, like I want to keep doing it….It made me feel like it gives them the interest in books and stuff…. Especially when they [moms] saying that they [kids] keep looking through the book and want people to read them to them….It made me feel good. Made me feel real good.

Discussion

As the first study of the RYCG program, this research contributes to the nascent literature on family literacy programming for incarcerated parents. In contrast to traditional family literacy programs, corrections-based programs also aim to help parents overcome the geographic, material, temporal, and regulatory barriers to talking and reading with children, which are key ways to cultivate learning in home and school. To be sure, such programs are not a cure-all for repairing the staggering educational, emotional, and other harms wrought by parent-child separation. Nonetheless, family literacy initiatives like RYCG offer a tangible way that parents can be present in their children's lives during incarceration.

The findings reveal multiple forms of fathers' involvement in children's literacy, learning, and education, both within and outside of prison. Before enrolling in RYCG at this SCI, most of the fathers had already taken steps such as reading to children, teaching reading and

math, attending parent-teacher conferences, helping with homework, playing word games, and singing and rhyming—and then did what they could within the constraints of prison to support their children's learning. RYCG offered fathers a way to continue these efforts, or to initiate them with children they did not know well. As we have shown, fathers used the video, book, and scrapbook to emphasize the importance of formal education and literacies and numeracy, while also providing creative, personalized materials to nourish their children's literacy abilities and their cognitive, academic, and socio-emotional development.

We acknowledge that due to selection bias, fathers who were already more involved and had more formal education may have been more likely to enroll in RYCG, as illustrated by the participants' educational levels and the small number of participants compared to the prison population. Nonetheless, the findings suggest that these fathers' participation in RYCG built on or invoked memories of their previous family literacy endeavors. For fathers who had tenuous or incipient relationships with their children, this program allowed them to use reading and literacy as an entrée to forging a closer relationship.

Although we did not hear about all the children's responses to the packets, the available data offers compelling, preliminary evidence of how RYCG stimulated interest in literacy and practices such as emergent writing, reading, library usage, and sharing video and literacy materials with teachers, classmates, coaches, and family members. These outcomes are especially crucial for younger children, because early interest and involvement in reading and writing activities (i.e., print motivation) contribute to current and future language and literacy development (Dunst et al., 2011; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

For their part, fathers emphasized that RYCG offered a way to "interact with your kids without being there," as Malik explained. The program enabled them to be present—to provide moral, educational, and literacy support through material artifacts—despite the emotional, physical, and geographic constraints imposed by prison. These findings support Muth's (2018) argument that reentry begins in prison: parents—and fathers in particular—do not suspend parenthood during incarceration. Rather, their role is reconfigured. As such, family literacy programs like RYCG can offer a platform for incarcerated parents to enact this role, particularly by modeling and encouraging literacy and learning.

Although the study did not focus on how fathers "do time," the findings revealed that RYCG enabled fathers to invest their prison sentence with meaning by strengthening the parent-child bond and supporting their children's learning in the present. That is, RYCG afforded the opportunity to punctuate their prison sentence with a real-life purpose: to send personalized, creative, literacy-rich materials to their children. In so doing, the RYCG activities gave parents and children something to look forward to. For the fathers who provided follow-up data, RYCG triggered iterative interactions, including conversations via phone or email, children's continued use of the artifacts, and even a family visit. Although one of the program goals is to enhance parent-child relationships "upon release," the data show that these benefits can also accrue while fathers are still in prison.

The findings and limitations suggest several avenues for future research. Direct reports from family members about how family literacy materials are used would be invaluable. Research is also needed on the shorter- and longer-term consequences of correctional family literacy programs for children's educational and socio-emotional outcomes, parent-child relationships, incarcerated parents' psycho-social well-being, prison behavior, literacy practices, and reentry. In addition, program outcomes may differ depending on program design (e.g., group instruction on literacy-related topics), program participants (e.g., mothers, parents with differing racial/ethnic, educational, and social class backgrounds), and geographic location (e.g., parents in urban prisons may live closer to their children and receive more visits). International comparisons with corrections-based family literacy initiatives would also be valuable, particularly in European prisons that adhere to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of

the Child, which upholds children's right to have a relationship with their parent (Muth, 2018).

We close with a quotation from Rundy that captures how fathers saw RYCG as a way to be a "positive part" of their children's lives:

> I think that this is a really good program for people who are serious about being in they children's lives….If…your family can't get up here to see them and they can't bring their kids with them, I think this is one of the best programs to help people be not only just a part of their kid's life but a positive part of their kid's life and not just, you know, a burden.

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RESEARCH PAPER

Assessing the Aspirations and Fears of Costa Rican Youth in Long-term Correctional Confinement

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Abstract: *This study used the Possible Selves Questionnaire (PSQ) with 30 incarcerated youth in a long term juvenile correctional facility in Costa Rica. The PSQ is a self-administered survey that measures a person's aspirations and fears for the future and strategies to achieve who they wish to become and avoid becoming. Results showed that while participants reported having Expected and Feared Selves, they struggled to identify concrete strategies to reach their goals. This vulnerable, incarcerated, population faces a variety of social challenges that may hinder their ability to avoid the behavior that led to their initial incarceration once they are released from correctional confinement. Limitations of using the PSQ with Costa Rican youth are also discussed.*

Keywords: *juvenile incarceration, youth in correctional facilities, expected and feared selves, Spanish possible selves questionnaire.*

Reentry back to the community after being confined in a correctional facility is difficult for youth (Ochoa, 2016). Clark, Mathur, and Helding (2011) believe that understanding and addressing reentry is one of the most neglected aspects of improving services provided to youth sentenced to spend time in custody. Youth in correctional confinement experience a variety of social challenges which may hinder their ability to develop a successful life plan and which may make it difficult for them to identify and develop strategies to avoid the behaviors and conditions which initially led to their initial incarceration. Ochoa, Weller, and Riddle (2019) noted that correctional facilities impose a high level of structure on youth but the structure vanishes the moment the youth returns to his or her community. This sudden lack of structure leaves the youth susceptible to engaging in the same behaviors which led to initial incarceration. Furthermore, it is not only losing the structured environment which makes this population vulnerable, but also not having a concrete plan for life after incarceration which places the formerly incarcerated youth at risk to become adult criminals (Ochoa, Weller, & Riddle, 2019). This article explores the life plans of incarcerated youth in a Costa Rican juvenile correctional facility by examining the strategies they have to achieve their aspirations and avoid their pitfalls of the behaviors they fear might lead them to re-incarceration.

Juvenile Crime and Incarceration in Costa Rica

The United Nations estimates that there are about a million youth below the age of 18 in correctional confinement worldwide (Penal Reform International, 2018). Statistics for juvenile crime and incarceration are difficult to find in Costa Rica, but data about juvenile crime shows that crimes committed by young adult offenders rose from 2.9% to 43.9% in 2016 (Programa Estado de la Nación, 2017). Increases in crime among young adults are related to a combination of economic factors such as a diminishing Costa Rican middle class, low skilled workers from neighboring countries arriving to Costa Rica, as well as educational factors such as an increase in dropping out of school (Ochoa, Ovares, & Washburn, 2019). This considerable rise in reported crimes committed by young adults in Costa Rica suggests there will be a similar rise in future adult incarcerations, given that incarceration as a youth is a predictor of incarceration as an adult (VanderPyl, 2015). Therefore, it is important to understand the plans incarcerated youth have for life after incarceration, for purposes of determining the support youth will need when released from correctional confinement.

Young adults who had been confined from adolescence show an array of psychosocial vulnerabilities including significantly lower levels of self-esteem (Schaefer & Erickson, 2019). Some youth show a permanently hyperactive nervous system which causes them to be in a constant state of alarm (Jensen, 2009). Others present higher levels of behavioral reactivity (Armstrong, 2010), and still others show disorganized attachment (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004). These long term neurological and psychological effects of incarceration also affect the capacity to develop a sense of self and the capacity to imagine a better, future self. It is important to understand how incarceration impacts youths' vision of themselves for the future.

Incarceration and Possible Selves Literature

The original work on Possible Selves was conducted in the United States. The term possible self comes from the psychological concept of "self," a complex entity that mediates and negotiates behavior. Possible Selves consist of three parts. The first is a vivid vision of what one wishes or expects to become. Markus and Nurius (1986) proposed that the motivation to carry out all but the most routine and habitual actions depends on the creation of a vision in which an individual sees him or herself in a desired future end-state. Other researchers have indicated that Possible Selves are vivid images of what an individual wants to become, or expects to become in the future (Oyserman, Johnson, & James, 2011). Possible Selves are not general expectations or aspirations (e.g., be rich) nor are they merely thoughts, wishes or desires about the future (e.g., to be happy). The visions of "me with an exciting job" or "me with a happy family" are examples of more specific Possible Selves. The visions of self in the future energize and organize actions in the pursuit of that end state (Oyeserman et al., 2011).

The second component of Possible Selves is what one wishes to avoid becoming, or the Feared Self. Feared Selves are a necessary component of the Possible Selves' construct. Feared Selves represent what an adolescent wants to avoid becoming. Feared Selves, according to Zhu and Tse (2015), deter adolescents away from possible future negative selves. Oyserman and Markus (1990) found that youngsters who achieved a balance between Expected and Feared Selves were less likely to engage in delinquent behavior. In other words, success requires having goals as well as having the related fears of not achieving those goals and the fear of becoming that imagined negative feared self. An example of a Feared Self would be failing in school. Thus, a balanced Possible Self would likely have a vision of passing from 10th grade to 11th grade as well as a vision of what would happen if there was failure to pass to the 11th grade. According to research on Possible Selves, reaching one's vision is much more likely if the Expected Self has a matching Feared Self (Oyserman & Markus, 1990).

Finally, it is necessary to have a strategy or plan for achieving one's goals and vision for the future. A strategy, according to Zhu and Tse (2015), is a plan to achieve the desired goal. This plan is an important factor that increases the likelihood a youth will be able to achieve

their future vision of themselves. Concrete and specific strategies are better than vague strategies. Vague or abstract strategies do not appear to provide sufficient structure to achieve an Expected Self or avoid a Feared Self (Zhu & Tse, 2015). Oyserman, Johnson, and James (2011) found that youth from disadvantaged neighborhoods generated fewer strategies compared to their counterparts from higher socio-economic neighborhoods. Researchers studied 284 students in 8th grade (138 males and 146 females) and found that participants who had parents with higher socioeconomic status, tended to have more strategies to achieve school-focused Expected Selves, compared to peers with parents with fewer financial resources. This finding means that populations in confinement who come from high poverty neighborhoods, who also have parents with low socioeconomic status, will need more intense interventions to develop effective behavioral strategies to achieve successful academic Expected Selves.

Delinquent and incarcerated youth differ from youth not involved with the criminal justice system in the development of Possible Selves. Research on incarcerated youth indicates that this population has less conventional goals, fewer strategies, and less concrete strategies than those not involved in the criminal justice system. Oyserman and Markus (1990) administered the Possible Selves Questionnaire (PSQ), a measure designed to assess goals, fears, and strategies of 238 participants (141 males and 97 females) ranging in age from 13 to 16. Of the 238 participants, 175 were Black and 63 were White. Participants came from public schools and three different custodial settings: 108 were in public school (average age 14.3); 40 were in a community placement program (average age 14.9 years); 31 were in group homes for delinquents (average age 15.1); and 59 were in residential state training school (average age 15.6) where the average stay was 13.8 months. Oyserman and Markus (1990) found that youth in public schools and across restrictive settings were readily capable of indicating what they wanted to do in the future. Both youth in public schools and youth in restrictive settings reported wanting to be happy, to have friends, and hold a job. It is important to mention that youth in restrictive settings also indicated more unconventional expectations such as expecting to be in more trouble, being involved in crime, breaking out of training school, using drugs, and abusing alcohol. The most common Feared Self in the public-school population was not getting along with peers in school. For the populations in custody, the most common fears were being a thief or murderer. The researchers also found that youth in public schools had complementary Expected and Feared Selves in the same domain and thus achieved a greater balance between Expected and Feared selves compared to similar groups in custody. They found that most delinquent youth had less balance between Expected and Feared Selves, meaning that the Expected and Feared Selves were in different domains. Furthermore, Oyserman and Markus (1990) found that only 37% of youth in long term correctional confinement indicated a balance between their Expected and Feared Selves, compared to 81% of their non-incarcerated counterparts.

Strategies are the behaviors that link Expected and Feared Selves and which motivate youth to engage in specific actions in order to help them reach their possible selves and which help them avoid developing into their Feared Selves. However, there is a limited amount of research on the strategies incarcerated youth possess to pursue their Expected and avoid their Feared Selves (Clinkinbeard & Zohra, 2012). Clinkinbeard and Zohra (2012) administered the PSQ to 548 incarcerated youth (387 males and 159 females) in the United States ranging in age from 12 to 22 years (average age 16.49). The highest education level completed ranged from fourth to 12th grade school levels (average grade ninth). The ethnicities of the participants were 38.1% White; 19.1% mixed ethnicity; 16.3% Hispanic; 8.7% Native American or Alaskan; and 2.8% Pacific Islander. The average length of incarceration was 7.5 months for males and 4.7 months for females. The researchers found that most youth reported between two and three Expected Selves and between two and three Feared Selves. The most common Expected Selves were in the lifestyle (59%) school (54%), and holding a job (48%) domains. Results also showed that the most commonly Feared Selves were in the risky behavior (56%),

drugs and alcohol (52%), and interpersonal (42%) domains. The number of balanced selves ranged from 0-3 for males and 0-2 for girls, which was a similar percentage (36%) to those in the Oyserman and Markus (1990) sample. However, the balance between Expected and Feared Selves was in the incarceration domain. For example, a youth saw himself meeting behavioral expectations and avoiding getting into a fight for fear of extending his incarceration. That is to say, youth reported expecting to be released from incarceration (Expected Self) and wanted to avoid returning to correctional confinement (Feared Self).

Most importantly, Clinkinbeard and Zohra (2012) found that incarcerated males report-ed having 0 to 9 strategies to pursue their Expected Selves (average 2.43) and 0 to 5 strategies to avoid their Feared Selves (average 1.87). Females reported having 0 to 6 for Expected Selves (average 2.41) and 0 to 6 for Feared Selves (average 1.94). Approximately 91% reported at least one strategy to pursue their Expected Self or avoid their Feared Self. However, only 60% of the strategies for Expected Self were concrete and 52% for Feared Self were concrete. Oy-serman et al. (2011) reported similar results among youth from disadvantaged neighborhoods. They described youth as having a destination but not knowing the path to take in order to get to that destination. Since correctional confinement is intended to be rehabilitative and help youth desist from further crimes when they return to their communities, it is critical to ascertain not only what they wish to do or avoid doing, but more importantly, whether incarcerated youth have acquired strategies for change while being incarcerated.

The purpose of this research was to determine the utility of the PSQ with Costa Rican youth in long-term correctional confinement. We explored four questions: 1) What Expected and Feared Selves do incarcerated youth in Costa Rica have for their future? 2) What strategies do these incarcerated youth have to accompany their Expected and Feared Selves? 3) What, if any, differences exist between incarcerated males and females in Expected and Feared Selves? 4) Are there differences between incarcerated males and females in terms of the strategies to achieve their future goals?

Method

Description of Juvenile Facility in Costa Rica

Centro de Formación Juvenil Zurquí (CFJZ, Zurqui Juvenile Correctional Facility) is the only long-term juvenile correctional facility in Costa Rica. As such, youth from different regions of the country sentenced to long term correctional confinement are committed to this juvenile facility. Male and female residents are housed on the same grounds but separated into units. Units for males and females are separated by a wire fence. Males and females are as-signed to units depending on the type of crime they committed. There are fewer female youths incarcerated in the facility, and unless they are pregnant or have children, they are housed to-gether regardless of crime. If a female enters the facility while pregnant, she has a cell of her own within the female unit, if space allows. Once she gives birth, she is transferred to the *Casa Cuna (Nursery House)* where women with their children are separated from other incarcerated females.

Costa Rica's Justice System also places individuals ages 18 to 25 who they consider young offender population with minors (ages 14 to 17) in CFJZ to ease the problem of over-crowding in the adult facility, which is called *Centro de Atención Institucional La Reforma* (Programa Estado de la Nación, 2017). The total size of the incarcerated population in CFJZ at the time of the study was 90 (82 males; 8 females). Sixty seven of the 90 were between the ages of 18 to 25 (60 males; 7 females). The length of sentences in CFJZ range from 2 to 10 years. A small number of sentences were due to parole violations. The most common crimes for both male and female were identified as crimes against life or property, armed assault, and drug trafficking. Some incarcerated individuals, depending on the crime, transfer to an adult correctional facility when they reach the age of 18. Participants for this study were recruited from among the larger incarcerated population in CFJZ.

Participants

Thirty participants (22 males and 8 females) who were incarcerated in the CFJZ took part in the study. All male minors (22 males) and all females (8 females) in the facility were invited to participate. Twenty-three were aged 14 to 17 years (22 males, 1 female). Seven female participants were between the ages of 18-23. One female was pregnant at the time of the study and two females that participated in this research gave birth while incarcerated and were residing in the Nursery House.

Procedures

The *Possible Selves Questionnaire (*PSQ) was used to measure Expected and Feared Selves. The PSQ and coding instructions were retrieved from a free link (Oyserman, 2018). This instrument was developed to identify expectations of who youth imagine they might become, who they fear becoming, and the strategies which they imagine employing to achieve their expected goals and avoid their feared goals (Oyserman & Markus, 1990). The PSQ was validated in the United States (US) with youth who both engaged in and did not engage in risky social behavior (Oyserman & Markus, 1990), incarcerated youth in the US (Clinkinbeard & Zohra, 2012), youth from China (Zhu & Tse, 2015) and youth in Argentina (Molina, Raimundi & Gimenez, 2017).

The PSQ is a sheet of paper with three columns and consists of two parts (See Appendix B for the Spanish version). In the first part, participants are given four blank lines in the first column to list who they wish to become in the following year. The second column is a binary yes/no question asking users if they are doing anything towards achieving their goal. If the response in the second column is yes, then in the third column, subjects are asked to describe the strategy they will use to achieve their goal.

The second part of the PSQ is similar in format to the first with the exception that it directs users to indicate who they want to avoid becoming in the next year. The second column is a yes/no column asking if the subject is doing anything to work towards not becoming their feared self. Finally, the third column asks participants to indicate the strategy being used to avoid becoming the feared self. This second section identifies the user's feared self. Although the PSQ was used with a Spanish speaking population (Molina, Raimundi & Gimenez, 2017) the Spanish version of the PSQ was not available at the time of the current research which led us to develop a Spanish translation of the version described by Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, and Hart-Johnson (2004).

The translation team consisted of four native Spanish speakers. Three members of the team were Costa Rican and possessed fluency in English comprehension, one team member possessed fluency in written English expression. The fourth researcher was Mexican, was a native speaker of Spanish, and was educated and raised in the United States and therefore also possessed reading and written fluency in both English and Spanish. The Spanish translation of the PSQ was piloted in August 2018 with a population of 12 males between 14 to 17 years of age who had a history of conflicts with law enforcement, incarceration, and whose home life was economically deprived. The pilot population was enrolled at the *Instituto de Educación Integral* (Center for Integral Education) located in Las Nubes de Coronado, Costa Rica. The Spanish version of the PSQ is included as Appendix B, the English version is available from Oyzerman, 2018 (Appendix A).

Human Subjects Approval for Research was obtained from the *Universidad de Costa Rica* (University of Costa Rica) and from the juvenile correctional facility. Informed consent was signed by each person who agreed to volunteer to participate in the research study after the purpose of the study was explained to them in language understandable by a layperson. Directions to complete the self-administered questionnaire were provided by the second and third authors.

Once the PSQ was distributed in paper and pencil format, participants completed the

PSQ in small groups within a classroom or in their cells. Two researchers were present to proctor the administration of the PSQ and to answer any technical questions from participants. The administration of the PSQ was untimed, but it took approximately five minutes per individual to complete the questionnaire. It required ten visits to the facility to complete administration of the PSQ for the entire population of this study. Monetary incentives were not provided to participants. However, participants did receive written acknowledgment in the form of a thank you card after completing the survey.

Data Management, Coding and Analysis

Oyserman's instructions for coding the PSQ (Oyserman, 2018) were followed. Responses for Expected Selves and Feared Selves were categorized into five pre-established categories:1) Achievement; 2) Interpersonal Relationships; 3) Personality Traits; 4) Physical Health; and 5) Material Lifestyle. Coding instructions for the feared selves indicated that responses worded in negative form were categorized as negative, for example: "I hope to not get back on the streets." Responses which referred to risky and/or criminal behaviors were coded as Non-Normative. Following the instrument's instructions, goals which were not possible to accomplish within a year were not coded and were excluded from analysis. Strategies were coded as abstract or concrete. According to PSQ directions, duplicate strategies were counted as one. Also, if the same strategy was repeated it was coded as just one strategy.

We employed a combination of qualitative and descriptive methodologies to analyze results. A qualitative data analysis method by Taylor and Bogdan (1987) was used as part of the analysis. This analysis affirms that there is no division between data collectors and data coders, given that data analysis is a dynamic and creative process. Taylor and Bogdan (1987) stated that data analysis follows three phases: (1) discovery, by making sense of the observed subject; (2) coding information, which means systematizing, developing and refining data interpretation; and finally (3) relativizing data, which implies interpreting the information within the context in which it was collected. In order to analyze the information, a matrix was created using the Excel spreadsheet program. All responses where transcribed and assigned a number.

Given that this was an interdisciplinary study, with researchers trained in the disciplines of counseling, special education and psychology, each researcher reviewed and codified all answers individually, categorizing all Expected Selves and Feared Selves according to Oyserman's (2018) categories, and reviewed all reported strategies to determine whether they were concrete or abstract. Afterwards, each participant's responses were analyzed by the whole research team together, case by case. All differences in coding were discussed until consensus was achieved and, whenever necessary, we established a systematic amplification and/or clarification of the Expected and Feared Selves and the strategies. Because the researchers were from different disciplines, there were differences of opinion on how to analyze and code some responses of the youth on the PSQ. These differences of opinion were discussed until interdisciplinary consensus was achieved. In addition, we used descriptive statistics to describe the results and employed a T-test to measure the significance between Expected Selves and the Feared Selves and between Expected Selves Strategies and Feared Selves Strategies given that we had a relatively small sample of participants.

Results

Possible Selves, including expectations and fears, are believed to serve as motivators for individuals to engage in behaviors targeted toward reaching their visions of their futures. Previous scholars have approached possible selves research as cumulative, meaning that when the Expected Selves and the Feared Selves are in the same life domain, there is an increased motivational capital to achieve their future-oriented selves (Clinkinbeard & Zohra, 2012). That is, when an adolescent both has a vision of who he or she would like to become and who she or he would not like to become, they are more likely to achieve their goals. Results for each question explored are provided below. Table 1 provides results indicating the average number

of Expected and Feared Selves for the participants of this study and the strategies they reported to reach their Expected and Feared selves.

Table 1

Averages of Expected and Feared Selves, Strategies and Percentages of Balance Between Selves and Strategies by Sex

Average	Males (n=22)	Females (n=8)
Expected Selves	2.50	2.62
Strategies for Expected Selves	1.86	2.62
Feared Selves	2.13	2.12
Strategies for Feared Selves	1.54	2.12
Percentage		
Balance between Expected Selves and Feared Selves	22%	9%
Balance between Expected Selves and Strategies	60%	80%
Balance between Feared Selves and Strategies	4%	64%

In the paragraphs below we provide results for the questions: What, if any, differences exist between incarcerated males and females in Expected and Feared Selves? and Are there differences between incarcerated males and females in terms of the strategies to achieve their future goals? Results show that females reported more Expected Selves (average = 2.62) compared to the slightly fewer Expected Selves reported by males (average = 2.50). Females reported having more strategies for their Expected Selves (average = 2.62) compared to males (average = 1.86). Males reported an average of 2.13 Feared Selves, while females reported an average of 2.12 Feared Selves. Females reported having more strategies to avoid their Feared Selves (average = 2.12) compared to males who reported an average of 1.54 strategies for Feared Selves. It appeared that males and females had a similar number of Expected and Feared Selves, but women had slightly more strategies to reach their Expected Selves and, on average, to avoid their Feared Selves. The *t*-test between Expected Selves and Feared Selves for males was 0.92. The *t*-test between Expected Selves and Feared Selves for females was 0.86. Both results were statistically significant. In addition, the *t*-test for Expected Selves strategies and Feared Selves strategies, indicated a significance level of 0.73 for males. Similarly, the *t*-test for Expected Selves strategies and Feared Selves strategies indicated a significance level of 0.86 for females.

Table 1 also shows that males had a higher balance between Expected and Feared Selves (22%) compared to females who only had 9% balance between Expected and Feared Selves. However, with regards to strategies for Feared Selves, the reverse was true. Females had more balance (64%) in strategies for Feared Selves compared to males who had only 4% balance in strategies for Feared Selves. Results show that males had 60% balance between Expected Selves and the strategies to reach the Expected Selves, and females had a balance of 80% between the Expected Selves and strategies.

Table 2 shows that Expected Selves in the Achievement domain were the most common among both sexes: males (32%) and females (52%). The next two highest for men were Personality Traits (23%) and Uncodable responses (19%) while for women the next highest were Interpersonal Relations (33%) and Material Lifestyle (9%).

Table 2

Percentage of Expected Selves and Feared Selves in Male and Female Participants by Domain

	Percentage Expected Selves for Males (22)	Percentage Expected Selves for Females (8)	Percentage Feared Selves for Males (22)	Percentage Feared Selves for Females (8)
Achievement	32%	52%	2%	18%
Interpersonal relations	11%	33%	17%	18%
Personality traits	23%	0	21%	0
Physical Health	0	5%	0	6%
Material Lifestyle	11%	10%	12%	24%
Negative / Non-normative	3%	0	48%	35%
Cannot be coded	20%	0	0	0

Table 2 also shows that the highest response for Feared Selves for both male and female was Non-normative: males (48%) females (35%). The next three highest responses for males were Feared Selves in the Personality Traits domain (20%), Interpersonal Relationships (17%), and Material Lifestyle (12%). The next three highest responses for females were in the Material Lifestyle domain (23%), Achievement (17%), and Interpersonal Relationships (18%). Notably, both males and females had a similar number of responses regarding Feared Selves in Interpersonal Relationships. However, males and females differed in Material Lifestyle. Females had more fears in the Material Lifestyle domain (23%) compared to males who had 12%.

Table 3

Concrete vs. Abstract Strategies for Expected Selves and Feared Selves by Sex

Strategy	Expected Selves Strategies Males (22)		Expected Selves Strategies Females (8)		Feared Selves Strategies Males (22)		Feared Selves Strategies Females (8)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Concrete	21	46%	11	52%	16	46%	7	41%
Abstract	20	43%	9	43%	17	49%	9	53%

Table 3 provides information about the type of strategy associated with Expected Selves. Results show that the number of concrete versus abstract strategies was close to being evenly split. Males indicated 46% concrete strategies and 43% abstract strategies for Expected Selves. Likewise, results for females indicate 52% concrete versus 43% abstract strategies for Expected Selves. Results show slightly more concrete strategies for females (52%) compared to males (46%). Of note, approximately 11% of males and 5% of females indicated explicitly that they had no strategy for reaching their Expected Selves whereas the others simply left blank spaces.

Table 3 also provides information about the type of strategy associated with Feared Selves. Males indicated 45% concrete strategies and 48% abstract strategies for Feared Selves. Results for females indicated 41% concrete versus 52% abstract strategies for Feared Selves. Results show slightly more abstract strategies for females (52%) compared to males (48%). Approximately 6% of male and female participants indicated explicitly that they had no strategies for avoiding their Feared Selves.

Discussion

According to Clinkinbeard and Zohra (2012), goals are cognitive resources which when

accompanied with strategies lead to pro-social behavior. Thus, strategies are the mechanisms to reach future goals. Individuals who can see what they want to become and what they want to avoid have a higher likelihood of achieving their goals (Oyserman & Marcus, 1990). According to Clinkinbeard and Zohra (2012), individuals who have goals with concrete strategies in the same domain increase the likelihood of reaching their possible self and avoid becoming the feared self. Oyserman et al. (2011) describe possible selves as the destination and strategies as the path to that destination. Concrete strategies are those strategies that can be replicated by another person (Clinkinbeard & Zohra, 2012). Concrete, achievable, and detailed strategies are more likely to lead to actual behavior outcomes (Oyserman et al., 2004). For example, the strategy "I go to school every day" is a concrete strategy. In contrast, the strategy "learn" is abstract and unlikely to lead to actual behavior.

Notable differences between males and females were observed. Males had a higher balance between Expected and Feared Selves compared to females (22% for males and 9% for females). Differences also showed in the number of concrete strategies reported by participants. Females had a higher percentage (52%) of concrete strategies for the Expected Selves compared to males who had a lower percentage of concrete strategies for Expected Selves (46%). However, males listed a higher percentage of concrete strategies for Feared Selves (46%) compared to the 41% of concrete strategies females reported for Feared Selves. This may suggest that males have a better sense of who or what they want to avoid in the future and less about who they want to become or what they want to accomplish. According to Clinkinbeard and Zohra (2012) the differences may be developmental because the females included in this research were older than males (18-23 years vs. 14-17, respectively). Also, their increased responses regarding Feared Selves on the category of Material Lifestyle (23% in females vs. 12% in males) might be related to the fact that some of them were pregnant or had children, making those fears especially relevant. These results contrast with Clinkinbeard and Zorah's findings (2012) regarding males having more average strategies than females to pursue Expected Selves and avoid Feared Selves.

Another gender difference present in the responses was related to physical health. Males did not respond at all on the category of physical health, whereas females focused on the physical health domain. Salas (2005) had described the correlation between toxic masculinity, aggressive behaviors, and self-care. It is important to consider what is expected of males and how this socialization shapes what they focus on in the development of their life plan. For example, males might be encouraged to take more risks and to prove their strength. Their strategies towards Feared Selves seems to have to do with managing their own reactivity and aggressive behaviors. However, things that could point out their weakness are considered "less manly" (Salas, 2005), so healthcare is less of a valid concern to young men, since they associate strength with being invulnerable. Females, on the other hand, might be expected to be more vulnerable and relatable, so it makes sense that they would focus their responses on strategies to take care of themselves and others. Women in this study were less direct than men regarding their Feared Selves, approaching their Feared Selves with more abstract strategies than males.

Interpersonal relationships appear to be more important future goals for females than they are to males (33% vs. 11%, respectively). A possible explanation for this is that a number of females were pregnant or had young children living with them in the CFJZ. In addition, some of them had children who are in the care of their relatives while they finish their sentence, reflecting an urgency for acting in ways which would meet their Expected Selves. This explanation is further supported by the finding that females' strategies were more focused on interpersonal relationships. Females are socialized to consider and foster interpersonal relationships more than males (UNESCO, 2016). The domain of the strategies listed by males focused on avoiding aggressive behaviors. Females, on the other hand, listed more strategies in the relationship domains with a romantic partner or improving relationships with their children. However, oddly, males appear to fear not having interpersonal relations almost at the same

level as females (17% vs. 18%, respectively). Females identity is probably based more on their relational association with a man and with motherhood. These gender differences are relevant because, although access to education is supposed to be equal in Costa Rica for both boys and girls, boys are more likely to drop out of school (UNESCO, 2013), and violence against women, starting in adolescence, is a widespread practice and therefore and important issue in Costa Rica (UNESCO, 2016; United Nations, 2018).

In this study, the responses of youth show that both males and females struggle to identify concrete strategies for developing into their future selves. Because they do not have concrete strategies to achieve their goals, these youth in confinement are unlikely to reach their expected future aspirations. The current study shows that the majority of males and females reported having only vague strategies to avoid their Feared Selves. As such, they are less likely to succeed in school or avoid drugs, goals which were consistent with the population studied by Clinkinbeard and Zohra (2012). This is also consistent with Oyserman and Markus (1990), when they affirm that students in restrictive settings have a higher tendency to hold unconventional expectations regarding non-normative behavior. To be sure, incarceration changes youth.

Limitations and Future Research

The population in CFJZ from which participants were drawn was different from the incarcerated youth populations studied in the US in previous research (e.g., Oyserman & Markus, 1990, Clinkinbeard & Zohra, 2012). Youth incarcerated in CFJZ were committed to significantly longer sentences ranging from 2 years to 10 years compared to the shorter sentences common in US juvenile correctional facilities. In Costa Rica, it is not uncommon that a youth of 13 years of age would complete his or her sentence at the age of 20. As such, the specification in the PSQ focused on short term goals for next year were limiting because youth in CFJZ are not likely to be released within a year or even two. In addition, there was only one minor female who participated in this study, resulting in limited ability to compare results between sexes. Several of the female participants had children in prison or were pregnant. It is very possible that other uncontrolled variables influenced the results. For example, motherhood might have heightened females' awareness of their health, physical wellbeing, and desire to get along with children and romantic partners.

There were also limitations in the PSQ. Two limitations are discussed in order to offer suggestions to improve the PSQ. Currently, subjects complete questions related to expected self on one page then turn the page to list the corresponding feared self. Unless there is a theoretical reason why they are disconnected from each other, the researchers propose that the Expected and Feared Selves be listed sequentially. This change might address some of the possible working memory problems we suspected are present in the population of students in correctional confinement in CFJZ. Research in the US has consistently shown that a high number of youths in correctional confinement have identifiable learning disabilities. Another limitation of the PSQ was in the coding instruction. Answers that were negative (that is to say, which started off with "I don't want to...") were to remain uncounted. According to Table 2, the highest responses for Feared Selves for both males and females were non-normative responses: 48% for males and 35% for females. Three of the researchers noted this as a significant limitation because the Spanish language, and more specifically in Costa Rica, makes use of negatives. For example, a sentence like *"No quisiera pelear"* [I don't want to fight] was discarded because it contained the word "No." In Costa Rica, the use of the negative is common to communicate that the person wants to avoid fights. Costa Rica's language style meant that some responses were un-codable and had to be excluded from the analysis based on coding instructions. Despite these limitations, there is value in modifying the format of the PSQ by aligning the proximity of the Expected and Feared Selves. We think this modification can have significant implications in determining how it can be used with youth who have working memory deficits.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the aspirations and fears among youth in correctional confinement in Costa Rica can be ascertained through use of the PSQ by incorporating changes which, as mentioned above, consider possible educational needs and language nuances. At the service delivery level, it is important that correctional facilities for youth attempt to determine the educational needs of the incarcerated population to ensure that basic academic skills are provided should students need academic support because they have undiagnosed disabilities. An interdisciplinary assessment of the PSQ was fundamental to determine whether abstract responses had to do with limitations of the instrument, with educational needs, undiagnosed conditions, or with an individual's lack of personal strategies to develop a life plan. Identifying these particular educational needs from an interdisciplinary perspective will contribute to a better understanding of how incarcerated youth can prepare for a better future. Finally, because the sentences in Costa Rica are significantly longer, it is important that education and treatment programming while in confinement foster and nurture active engagement between educational and treatment staff given that many of these youth will have only these adults as role models in a very critical phase of their human development.

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Appendix A

Possible Selves Questionnaire

Who will you be next year? Each of us has some image or picture of what we will be like and what we want to avoid being like in the future. Think about next year -- imagine what you'll be like, and what you'll be doing next year.

- In the lines below, write what you expect you will be like and what you expect to be doing next year.

- In the space next to each expected goal, mark NO (X) if you are not currently working on that goal or doing something about that expectation and mark YES (X) if you are currently doing something to get to that expectation or goal.

- For each expected goal that you marked YES, use the space to the right to write what you are doing this year to attain that goal. Use the first space for the first expected goal, the second space for the second expected goal and so on.

Next year, I expect to be	Am I am doing something to be that way		If yes, What I am doing now to be that way next year
	NO	YES	
(P1) _____			(s1)_____
(P2) _____			(s2)_____
(P3) _____			(s3)_____
(P4) _____			(s4)_____

In addition to expectations and expected goals, we all have images or pictures of what we don't want to be like; what we don't want to do or want to avoid being. First, think a minute about ways you would **not** like to be next year -- *things you are concerned about or want to avoid being like*.

- Write those concerns or selves to-be-avoided in the lines below.

- In the space next to each concern or to-be-avoided self, mark NO (X) if you are not currently working on avoiding that concern or to-be-avoided self and mark YES (X) if you are currently doing something so this will not happen next year.

- For each concern or to-be-avoided self that you marked YES, use the space at the end of each line to write what you are doing this year to reduce the chances that this will describe you next year. Use the first space for the first concern, the second space for the second concern and so on.

Next year, I want to avoid	Am I doing something to avoid this		If yes, What I am doing now to avoid being that way next year
	NO	YES	
(P5) _____			(s5)_____
(P6) _____			(s6)_____
(P7) _____			(s7)_____
(P8) _____			(s8)_____

Appendix B

Cuestionario de los "Posibles Yo"
¿Quién soy? ¿Quién quiero ser?
Traducido y adaptado al español por Ochoa, Ovares, Meza y de Mezerville (2019)

Edad: _____ Género: _____ Grado escolar: _____

¿Quién serás el próximo año? Todos tenemos una imagen de lo que nos gustaría ser y qué queremos evitar en el futuro. Piensa en el próximo año, imagina cómo serías y qué estarás haciendo el próximo año.

- Cuadro 1: En el espacio de abajo, escribe cómo esperas ser el próximo año (propósitos)
- Cuadro 2: Al lado de cada propósito, marca con "X" en el SÍ si actualmente estás haciendo algo para alcanzarlo, o en el NO si actualmente no estás haciendo nada para alcanzarlo
- Cuadro 3: Para cada SÍ, utiliza el espacio del Cuadro 3 para escribir lo que estás haciendo en este año para alcanzar ese propósito.

Cuadro 1 El próximo año, espero ser:	**Cuadro 2** Estoy haciendo algo para ser así		**Cuadro 3** Si es así, ¿qué estoy haciendo ahora, para ser así el siguiente año?
	NO	**SI**	
1._____ _____			1._____ _____
2._____ _____			2._____ _____
3._____ _____			3._____ _____
4._____ _____			4._____ _____

Ahora, piensa por un minuto en quién no te gustaría ser el próximo año -- aspectos que te preocupan o que quieres evitar ser.

- Cuadro 1: Escribe en el Cuadro 1 lo que no te gustaría ser el próximo año.
- Cuadro 2: Al lado de cada frase, marca con "X" en el SÍ, si actualmente sí estás haciendo algo para que esto no ocurra el próximo año, o en el NO, si actualmente no estás haciendo nada para evitarlo.
- Cuadro 3: Para cada SÍ del Cuadro 2, escribe en el Cuadro 3 qué estás haciendo este año para evitar lo que no te gustaría ser el próximo año.

Cuadro 1 El próximo año, quiero evitar:	**Cuadro 2** Estoy haciendo algo para evitar esto		**Cuadro 3** Si es así, ¿qué estoy haciendo ahora, para evitar ser así el próximo año?
	NO	**SI**	
1._____ _____			1._____ _____
2._____ _____			2._____ _____
3._____ _____			3._____ _____
4._____ _____			4._____ _____

RESEARCH PAPER

"You're almost in this place that doesn't exist": The Impact of College in Prison as Understood by Formerly Incarcerated Students from the Northeastern United States

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Abstract: *This qualitative study examines the immediate and lasting impact of liberal arts higher education in prison from the perspective of former college-in-prison students from the Northeastern United States. Findings obtained through semi-structured interviews with formerly incarcerated people are presented in the following three areas: self-confidence and agency, interpersonal relationships, and capacity for civic leadership. This study further examines former students' reflections on the relationship between education and human transformation and begins to benchmark college programming with attention to the potential for such transformation. The authors identify four characteristics critical to a program's success: academic rigor, the professor's respect for students, discussion-based learning, and respectful relationships between college and prison personnel. This study contributes to the growing field of scholarship on the benefits of prison higher education beyond those captured by studies of high-level data, such as the rate of return to prison.*

Keywords: *prison education, reentry, college in prison, adult education, transformative education, qualitative methods, liberal studies, isolation, social justice*

During a break on the first day of a college-sponsored literature class taught in a Massachusetts prison, an incarcerated student stood with his professor at the coffee urn, absorbing the discussion of a poem by nineteenth century poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar. This was the first college class this student had taken. When he asked the professor if she knew where he might find a spoon to stir the prison-grade Folgers crystals into coffee, he started, suddenly realizing that neither a spoon nor any other implement that could be considered a potential weapon would be lying around in this medium-security prison. "Oh! I forgot where I was!" he exclaimed and added with a sense of wonder, "The class made me forget I was in prison."

Almost everyone who teaches college classes in a correctional facility at some point hears something similar to what this student described during his classroom break. Teaching and learning in prison, in fact, seem to depend on creating the conditions for this productive forgetting. After all, to engage educational opportunities in the most meaningful ways, many incarcerated students distance themselves from both the carceral environment and past histories with schooling that have been unproductive at best, traumatizing at worst (Appleman,

Caliguiri, & Vang, 2014; Pendleton, 1988; Werner, 1997). Indeed, teaching and learning in prison has its unique struggles and rewards and poses challenges for teachers and students that are different from those faced on a college campus. Post-secondary education in a correctional facility entails working within an institutional environment that prioritizes security, control, and containment in the name of safety, even when this limits educational opportunities. To achieve that stated mission of ensuring public safety, the institution deploys techniques of isolation and division, techniques designed to de-authorize or disempower incarcerated individuals and to prevent group formations. At best, what the institutions construe as the education or even "training" of the "inmate" is regarded as a distinct secondary aim. At worst, effective education on the inside operates in conflict with the mission and practices of corrections.

This tension between public safety and the transformations that can occur through education, often formulated in the popular imagination as a choice between the individual and the wider community, is in fact a false duality. Statistics on the high rates of recidivism for the general population, after all, make it clear that serving time generally leaves people feeling less useful, more traumatized, and thus more prone to criminal acts than before their incarceration. This qualitative study of the impact of participating in college while in prison finds that the personal transformation that can result from such participation fully supports a positive correlation between college programming in prison and increased public safety. The authors draw findings from the reflections of formerly incarcerated students on both the transformational impact of college programming and the specific aspects of programs that facilitated this individual change.

Literature Review

The most often cited metric for demonstrating the effectiveness of college in prison, indeed of any educational program offered inside, is a reduced rate of recidivism for those who participate. In the pivotal study of 1975 that fueled the era of mass incarceration that would follow, D. Lipton, R. Martison, and J. Wilks established what would soon become the widely held attitude about incarcerated people that they were wholly unamenable to training, education, or "rehabilitation" due to genetic determinants. In the 1990s, as mass incarceration ramped up, federal funding for post-secondary education in prison through Pell Grants was halted under the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act (H.R. 3355, Pub.L. 103-322), signed into law in 1994 by Bill Clinton. Since 2000, the pendulum has begun to swing back in favor of supporting educational programs with the growing shift in attitudes about U.S. incarceration rates and prison conditions. Funding for prison education programs, however, has remained scarce but recently saw a change with President Obama's Second Chance Pell Act of 2016 that effectively lifted the ban for prisoners participating in sixty seven college programs in prison in the U.S. and that has offered a second round of funding again this year. More funding also supported larger and more geographically diverse longitudinal studies that have incontrovertibly demonstrated the inverse relationship between recidivism and education.

The extensive participatory study "Changing Minds: The Impact of College in a Maximum-Security Prison" was directed by individuals at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York in partnership with several women incarcerated at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility (Fine et al., 2001). This study found that college in prison decreased recidivism rates significantly, from the average 29.9% for women without college-in-prison experience to 7.7% for those with college-in-prison experience. Changing Minds also found that college in prison saves tax payer dollars and reduces the cost and burdens of prison management for New York's Department of Correction (DOC). These findings correlated college in prison with a reduced rate of recidivism, and thus decreased cost to tax payers and the state are amplified in the often-cited 2013 RAND Corporation study, "Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education: A Meta-Analysis of Programs That Provide Education to Incarcerated Adults" (Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders & Miles). The RAND findings were drawn from a comprehensive

analysis of published and unpublished studies released between 1980 and 2011 that examined the relationship between participation in correctional education and prisoner outcomes. Looking at Adult Basic Education, vocational programming, and post-secondary programs, this meta-analysis found that "inmates who participate in correctional education programs had a 43 percent lower odds of recidivating [in the first three years after release] than those who did not. This translates to a reduction in the risk of recidivating of 13 percentage points" (Davis et al., 2013, p. 32). This is a particularly significant data point given that, as the National Institute of Justice reports, current recidivism rates within the first five years after release remain over 75% (2019).

In a study that highlighted the value of education in prison and calls for new research on the specific aspects of such programming, Runell (2016) wrote that evidence of reduced recidivism warranted "the need for more attention paid to the experiences of the prisoners taking college classes" and not simply the programming itself (p. 92). Runell's study paved the way for additional studies like this one that attend to the specific experiences of students taking college classes. Further review of recent studies on the qualitative impact of higher education in prison align with this study's finding that the most effective programs are those that authorize incarcerated students as participants in their own education. Beate Buanes Roth's 2016 study of the relationship between participation in Norwegian prison education programs and a prisoner's "academic self-efficacy" elaborated on the significance of the concept of "self-efficacy," a term Bandura (1997) defined as the "perceived ability to succeed" (p. 106) and Gist & Mitchell (1992) defined as "beliefs in one's capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands" (p. 184). Roth's major finding underscored the importance of the attitude of the learner toward themselves by arguing that academic self-efficacy is essential to academic success inside prison. Roth also suggested that self-efficacy is not global or universal but rather fostered by specific and task-related experiences. Bandura (1986) similarly located the origins of efficacy beliefs in specific "mastery experiences, vicarious experiences (role models), social or verbal persuasion, and self-interpretation of physical/emotional arousal," all, we might note, experiences that most people in prison are less likely to have in their educational histories (p. 107).

In a study of self-efficacy among students in an "Inside-Out" classroom that combined "outside" university students with "inside" incarcerated students, Allred et al. found an increase in beliefs in self-efficacy over the duration of the semester among incarcerated students ("The Inside-Out Center, 2019; Allred, Harrison, O'Connell & Martin, 2013). Allred defined self-efficacy in an academic context as referring to "subjective convictions that one can successfully carry out given academic tasks at designated levels" (p. 213), usefully distinguishing it from other forms of self-concept such as self-esteem and self-worth that measure the value one finds in oneself (Staples, Schwalbe & Gecas, 1984). Parker's study of 375 men participating in a college program in a prison in New York similarly differentiated between these modes of self-concept (1990). The results of Parker's study somewhat surprisingly suggested that although the relationship between involvement in college programs in prison and both self-esteem and social competence is significant, the relationship between such involvement and self-efficacy does not appear to be statistically significant. However, the study acknowledged that this lack of statistical significance could be due to the confounding variable length of time served, which may influence the relationships in question: how long and how consistently were subjects involved in college courses; was the program credentialed beyond course credit and cohort-based; and did the sample include people whose college experience was in the distant past. In Brasel's study of her own college-in-prison classroom, she defined the successful classroom as one that fosters students' abilities to engage in self-discovery and self-reflection, perhaps for the first time in their lives (1982). Increased skills of introspection and self-understanding, coupled with an increased ability to express care for others, becomes for us an important metric for assessing the value of the classroom experience. The qualitative study

presented here contributes to this growing field that explores the benefits of prison higher education beyond those captured by studies of high-level data, such as the rate of return to prison.

Method

Through semi-structured interviews with former college-in-prison students, this qualitative study examined the impact of higher education in prison from the perspective of formerly incarcerated men reflecting on their past experiences. The authors examined ways that these former students articulated the immediate and lasting changes brought about by their college experiences. In addition to interpreting the impact of these experiences on the individual, this study examines what specifically about the program experiences fostered this impact. To glean this information, the overarching question was twofold:

1. What can we learn about the relationship between education and human transformation from former participants' reflections on the impact of college in prison?

2. How might we imagine building educational programming inside prison with attention to the potential for such transformation?

Sample

This study entailed semi-structured interviews with 8 men, each given a pseudonym by the authors, who participated in various college degree-granting programs in medium- and maximum-security facilities in the primarily northeastern United States (see Table 1). The sample consisted of four people who identified as exclusively Black or African American, one who was also African, one Hispanic, one Native American, and one who identified exclusively as Caucasian. Before entering prison, the sample had completed a level of schooling that ranged from grade nine to community college coursework. Participants' ages at the time of the interviews in the summer and fall of 2017 ranged from twenty five to sixty seven years old. The study participants spent between two and twenty four years incarcerated, and the number of incarcerations for each participant ranged from one to three, with most participants experiencing only one incarceration. The participants' first incarceration spanned the ages between fifteen and twenty eight. At the time of the interviews, these people had released from prison anywhere from twenty two days to fourteen years beforehand. Although only one participant took enough classes while in prison to earn his college degree, two others came close, and all participated in a degree-granting program. It is important to note that any limitation on the number of courses each was able to take was not a matter of his own choosing but rather a result of prison-related, sentence-based, or college program logistics. After being released, a minimum of four participants either completed or are still continuing their degree work, three from the same colleges they affiliated with inside and two from two of the world's top-ranked or Ivy League universities.

Table 1

Summary of Study Participants

Student	Courses Taken	Education Before Incarceration	Time Served (years)	Age at Interview[a]	Race/ Ethnicity	Convictions
Lawrence	27	Less than High School	17	44	African American	1
Zahir	32	High School	13	37	Black and African	1
Eessa	4	Some College	16	49	African American	1

Morris	11	Less than High School	18	33	African American	3
Ralph	12	High School	24	54	Caucasian	1
Jamal	>25	Less than High School	9	25	Black	2
David	15	Less than High School	17	37	Black and Hispanic	1
Andy	15	Less than High School	20	67	Native American and Black	1

a. The average age at time of incarceration was 19.63 years.

The small sample size and selection process presented limitations to our findings and thus deserve comment. Most glaring, only men were included as subjects. This was partially an effect of the researchers' developing plans to create a college-in-prison program that they knew would be launched in a male facility. Additionally, when this study began, there were still very few college-in-prison programs and only one in the researchers' state. These programs tended to be small, and communication with participants post-release was inconsistent at best. Indeed, the formerly incarcerated constitute what researchers designate a "hard-to-reach" population that is likely to experience on-going and severe socio-economic strains and to be distrustful of perceived authorities, making it hard for researchers to recruit and follow participants (in the case of longitudinal studies) (Western, 2016). In many states, these factors creating communication barriers are reinforced by Department of Correction no-contact policies for volunteers, policies that prevent anyone working behind the walls, as was the case with our lead researcher, from communicating with the same people post-release.

Researchers offer several suggestions to address this specific hard-to-reach population, including snowball sampling. Accordingly, this study used several informants who assisted us with the recruiting. Without this introduction, respondents would have been difficult to identify and more hesitant to speak with a random researcher. Snowball sampling is highly networked and relies on a certain level of social security among individuals who remain connected with peers. The relative success in employment and re-entry of the majority of study participants at the time of the study may be partially an effect of this recruitment method, since remaining in communication with others is both a means to social security and its indicator. It is important to note, however, that while individual successes are mentioned – such as prestigious university, graduate, law school plans, and health care jobs – some study participants only achieved low-skilled jobs such as bus driving, and three interviewed have since stopped communicating with the researchers' network altogether. Of these three, one who had taken only one college course in prison moved and stopped communicating with the researchers and his employer before the study was completed, resulting in his removal from the study sample, shrinking it from nine to eight.

All of these barriers to sample size and recruitment limited the study's ability to provide extensive generalizable knowledge about the effects of college in prison. However, the more focused goal of this particular study was to contribute a nuanced and more in-depth discussion of personal transformation to the growing cannon of research on personal impact. Even with a small sample size, this study's focus on personal impact benefited from in-depth discussions with individuals that the sample size made possible.

Instrument and Aims

The research team identified participants through previous personal connections and through referrals by participants or staff members from different college-in-prison programs.

Interviews were completed by the same researcher and took place in a public space, most often a city library conference room. Interviews lasted between one and two hours each.

The authors set about this project hoping to learn more about how people make sense of their past college-in-prison experiences once they are out and how they feel it impacted them both while incarcerated and after release. A further aim was to understand what these men found frustrating and what they found most valuable during their program participation. What did they value most about their college program experience and what did they recommend for the development of college programming inside. To this end, the interview schedule was designed to elicit discussion on the themes described below in Table 2. These themes were coded and analyzed for concepts also included in Table 2.

Table 2

Description of Coding Scheme by Theme

Theme	Concepts and Codes
Personal Development in College Program	☐ Self-concept ☐ Relationships with faculty ☐ Relationships with family and friends outside ☐ Outlook on personal capabilities and future possibilities ☐ Experiences of re-entry and the role of college experience
Perception of Impact on Prison Culture	☐ Relationships with classmates ☐ Relationships with correctional officers and administrators ☐ Changes in ways time was spent outside of class.
Frustration with College in Prison experience	☐ Access to text and materials ☐ Academic Support
Suggestions for Improvement	☐ Pedagogy or curriculum ☐ Classroom Experience ☐ Institutional Support

The interview schedule allowed plenty of time for open discussion initiated by participants but divided the discussion into three time periods:

1. Background and pre-program involvement in education

2. Program experience

3. Program impact

The following questions are a few examples of those most participants addressed in their interview conversations:

1. What were your impressions of college before you enrolled? Did you plan to go to college before your incarceration? Once incarcerated, what were your impressions of your specific college-in-prison program before you enrolled?

2. What were you most excited about while you were in the program? What were your favorite and least favorite aspects of the experience at the time and why?

3. Did you notice any changes in your use of time and relationships with others outside of the classroom when in the program?

4. Do you ever find yourself reflecting on this experience? What do you think about

most?

5. Can you describe any changes in yourself that may have occurred as a result of your participation in the program? Do you regard yourself differently in any notable way now as a result of your participation in the college program?

The following themes were then identified and coded in interview transcripts for this report's analysis:

1. Personal development outcomes of college program involvement

2. Frustrations with college-in-prison experiences

3. Perception of impact of involvement on prison culture

4. Suggestions for program design and development

Although the sample size is small, the authors found enough significant points of saturation that we were able to draw some conclusions from the interviews about personal impact and thus to extract several guiding principles for program design and assessment. The *Results and Discussion* section includes quotations from interview subjects, organized around three major findings based on multiple participants' perspectives: no finding listed in the results section is shaped by fewer than six of the eight participants, and no finding is countered by anyone who did not support the finding explicitly. After presenting and summarizing these qualitative findings on the personal impact of educational experiences, the authors discuss how this new knowledge might be used to benchmark high quality in-prison college programming, ultimately with the hope of facilitating the development of more high quality programs. A larger separate study that provides additional information to this end was being run simultaneous to this one by researchers and practitioners through the Alliance for Higher Education in Prison (AHEP); their study, "Equity and Excellence in Practice: A Guide for Higher Education in Prison," supported many of our findings and guidelines for high quality program development, though with less qualitative and higher level data collection (AHEP, June 2019). Unlike the larger study, our study aimed to foreground the immediacy of the transformational impact of college-in-prison experiences by quoting extensively from former students.

Results and Discussion

The following results section is divided into a discussion on educational impact and a discussion on benchmarking best practices. Each section is also further subdivided.

A. Reflections on the Impact of College in Prison

The requirement that incarcerated students must navigate the ideological and psychological distances between the prison context and a college classroom (Lagemann, 2017) makes many aspects of the learning experience disorienting and difficult. However, continually traversing this in-between space also contributes to some of what makes this experience valuable for people serving time (Richard, Futrell, Ali & Klasik, 2017). Though often fraught with psychic, emotional, and sometimes physical pain, the simultaneous experience of the two worlds ultimately provides many in prison with the opportunity to undergo changes (Roth, Absjørnsen, & Mangers, 2016) that contribute to both individual and communal transformation. The authors found that successful programs were those that cultivated this transformation in three areas:

1. Student's ability to reflect and think critically about themselves

2. Student's interpersonal connections

3. Student's perceived role and sense of responsibility beyond self to society at large through a greater capacity for civic engagement

The following discussion of the three most statistically significant findings about the transformative potential of college in prison is therefore organized below under the following three

headings:

1. Self-confidence and agency
2. Interpersonal connectedness
3. Capacity for leadership

Self-Confidence and Agency

The one constant among all participants' perceptions of what they gained from the college-in-prison experience was what each called "confidence." The language of "confidence" that former students used to describe their college experiences widens the definition of academic self-efficacy beyond the scope of the important studies by Roth (2016), Parker (1990), and Gist and Mitchell (1992) to include an increased sense of self-worth as well as the joy that self-efficacy proffers. The development of this new sense of confidence seemed to begin with the competitive process of gaining a scarce slot in a college program. One participant whom the authors refer to as Jamal, a student who was younger than most and has continued his education at a top-tier university since he's been out, reported with a sense of pride, "I studied for that admissions exam all the way up to the morning of the test." Over the course of months or years, many of the participants watched as applicants were turned away from these selective programs and understood the competition was steep. Lawrence reported a sense of self-confidence that resulted from his participation in the selective college program inside: "I got to have something going on up here because I got into the Honors Society… so it does build confidence. You know, you feel like, I got this!" Another participant, Eessa, summed up, "[S]elf-esteem, you know. That's what prison education does, it gives you a sense of self-esteem." In a statement that confirms Roth's finding that academic self-efficacy builds on itself, Zahir stated, "The more you do well at [your coursework], the more it makes you feel, like I said, empowered." He continued,

> After my first semester, I got straight A's 'til I graduated because I took it seriously, and I realized I could do it. I ended up being the valedictorian of the class.… It gives you a sort of confidence and hope that you can do something with yourself when you get out.

Notably, in addition to becoming a public speaker on behalf of criminal justice reform, Zahir has since become a small business owner.

David, who has now completed his bachelor's at an Ivy League institution and has applied to law schools, understood college as the way he came to terms with being incarcerated:

> [I]t was like the world telling me, you know, no. Everything you had envisioned, that's not gonna come into fruition. And this was like, well, I have college now. I'm gonna use that to really become that person I want to be. You know, become successful… That's why I wasn't content with a ninety three. So, it was sort of competitiveness, maybe, or a little bit of a trick, maybe, that kind of pushed me to be so demanding of myself when it came to this college program.

David's experience being incarcerated was intricately related to the educational transformation he experienced, the "push" and sense of agency he developed through "competitiveness" or as a "trick" of the mind. Similarly, Morris, who has since secured a job in the healthcare field, found in his college experience an opportunity to dedicate himself and develop what he called character as well as confidence:

> The benefit that I emotionally gained … was the fact that, okay, this is *my* hard work. This is *me*, this is me putting all my effort in to see what I can get out of it. If I get a lower grade than what I'm looking for, or I don't get the results that I'm looking for, I know I put in the effort by myself. So it was building character, that personal character, and self-confidence that I was gaining.

Zahir qualified the terms of this new confidence: "[I]t's not like a delusional type of empowerment… You actually start to believe in yourself. And believing in yourself, I felt, is the ultimate step towards being whatever you want to be."

This academic self-efficacy thus extended to a wider sense of agency beyond the classroom, the ability to, in Zahir's words, "do something with yourself when you get out." More specifically, each of the study participants described a new ability to imagine a different self and a different future. Morris stated explicitly that the confidence he gained through college enabled him to imagine himself in the future: "I felt: I have something to live for now. I don't need to live for the high; I don't need to run back into the darkness." He explained further,

> What I learned in those classrooms and [from] college experience was, like, it rebuilt who I was. It's like cutting all the weeds away from the flower so the flower can grow again and be strong. My life was so damaged as a teenager, as a kid growing up. What I got from that program, and what I learned was, it put me back on my two feet. It gave me enough mental strength to be strong again, to say no to all outside influences because I know now that I can do better. I can be better.

Significantly, Morris regarded the "flower" of the self as *preceding* – rather than as a *result* of – the college experience. The flower was there all along but had simply, or not so simply, become over time buried by the tangle of "weeds," the "damage" and subsequent susceptibility to "outside influences." This former student thus framed his personal transformation as a re-discovery of his own beauty and strength through educational practices that he masterfully figures here as a cutting away.

Over and over in these interviews the authors heard that the college experience expanded participants' sense of personal possibility and ambition. With his graduate degree and career in healthcare now secured, Lawrence reflected, "[College] opened up my thinking" and "gave me the feeling that I had more options." He described the way school also changed his relationship to his sense of community: "I think school just opened up like a whole other world… the things I used to see when I was younger I don't feel a part of that any more. You know, my friends from the old days…." This perception of a new self and future was consistently echoed among participants as the most characteristic and lasting effect of their prison education experiences.

Eessa, who was approaching fifty at the time of the interview, and who had served sixteen years, remembered the challenges of his own re-entry into society. He qualified both what is and what is not gained from a college program by the incarcerated student:

> Prison education isn't going to help with your parole. Your parole officer doesn't care how educated you are, he doesn't. Prison education isn't going to help you find an apartment. It doesn't deal with the tangibles of getting out. The only thing it does internally is give you the confidence to be able to face the world that's changing around you, which is huge; it's huge.

Whether college participation helps a person achieve a positive parole outcome likely depends on the individual personalities sitting on those boards, but this remains a looming question for all students eligible for a hearing. Eessa made it furthermore clear that once out on parole, the struggles of re-entering a society when one is severely restricted in civic status and employability are in no way fully mitigated by a college education. Indeed, the modifier "only" in "The only thing it does…" underscores its lack of utility in addressing the practical challenges of release and re-entry. However, feeling that you can "face the world that's changing around you" was notably valued here. This particular claim about the value of this new sense of confidence in facing what is unknown in fact resonates in many current university mission statements that pledge to provide students with the confidence and skills to face a changing world post-college as the basis of the most worthwhile of post-secondary educational benefits. In prison, however,

this ability to face the world anew is even more meaningful, as the following comment by Zahir suggested: "Education, the confidence that came with it and that tenacity, it helps you circumvent whatever difficulty you run into, and I can attest that I ran into a lot." Zahir too faced numerous challenges upon re-entering society, but he has been nonetheless highly successful in a line of work he remains proud of. The extent to which his college experiences enhanced this success are difficult to determine but, like Eessa, Zahir identifies as an effect of his educational experiences the "confidence" and "tenacity" that helped him navigate the challenges.

Interpersonal Connectedness

In coding for the themes of personal development outcomes, frustrations, impact on prison culture, and suggestions for program design and development, an additional theme emerged. Each participant foregrounded the role of *relationship-building in the prison educational experience*, a theme that ultimately grounds this study's findings about both the value of higher education in prison and the meaning of educational transformation. In the discussion below, the authors distinguish between types of relationships, those with others in the student cohort, with members of the incarcerated community generally, with family members, and with prison staff.

Relationships with Other Students. Each discussant foregrounded the role of relationships with various groups, but relationships with peers in the program was among the most frequently and energetically discussed topics in the interviews. As Lawrence reported, overcome with emotion while reflecting several years back on his college graduation outside of prison, "Wow, I came a long way, and when I walked across that stage, three or four people who also did college courses in prison walked that day." In this man's memory of walking the stage, his sense of pride extended immediately beyond the self; success was something shared, something perhaps only fully experienced through relationship. As Eessa described his group of classmates, "We were set aside. That was the gift of college in prison, the separation… it didn't make us special, but it gave us, it gave me… a sense of being greater than my circumstances." Zahir described this coincidence of the sense of community and educational transformation as follows:

> It's like a close-knit group of guys who went through the program… many
> of us have come out and some of us are still in there and we're all still like a
> band of brothers… and that never goes away I think… I mean you experience
> a metamorphosis with somebody alongside you, you kind of don't forgot that
> you both went through that together. It never, never changes.

Zahir underscored the role of relationships with peers in the very "metamorphosis" enabled by the college experience. Indeed, this sense of being in community with one's peers never leaves, even when students complete, graduate, or return home. A lasting sense of being part of a group thus appeared to be an invaluable aspect of this experience, one that, as several participants remarked, being part of this study further underscored.

Jamal similarly prioritized the relationships among fellow students as essential to the transformational capacity of college programming:

> Once the college people leave, you immediately realize you are indeed a pris-
> oner once again, and that is the social stage you occupy. But you're almost in
> this place that doesn't exist, and now you have people who can actually allow
> your voices to be heard or at least amplified in a way that's meaningful to
> bring about some changes.

This paradoxical formulation of being somewhere "that doesn't exist," somewhere that exceeds existence, describes the complex doubling of the world in prison for college students, even when "the college people leave." This new space is ultimately characterized by a change in the mode of interpersonal relating cultivated by the students themselves. After all, as Jamal explains, "now you have people who can actually allow your voices to be heard." This new

mode of relation among the college students is characterized further as "meaningful to bring about some changes," as potentially resulting in the capacity for civic leadership, this study's third major finding. As Jamal's statement suggests, once in the college program, students' relationships with their peers operate increasingly as a place of listening, where individual "voices" are "amplified" by one another. Moreover, relationships provide opportunities for individuals to reflect and reconstrue one another in ways that may "bring about some changes." While the relationships may not be wholly new, they are newly enriched and newly supported.

This sense of the community of college participants became apparent to many outside of the classroom as well: Ralph, an avid reader who has found employment through the college program he attended while serving time, reported,

> Everybody reads fiction and Stephen King, but here we are in the yard discussing different topics you never hear in the yard. It's always 'who won the game last night? Who got stabbed in B-block? Did you hear the latest legal proposal, they're gonna take away our trailer visits?' … But now we're out in the yard, but we're amongst ourselves.

For Ralph, the yard was transformed and a new community "amongst ourselves" became apparent. Eessa described the yard in similarly communal terms: "I remember walking, we had night courses… you'd be yelling across the quad about studies… because it was a shared mindset." The felt need to protect the program in the eyes of other prisoners and staff contributed to students' identification with and investment in this newly "shared mindset" cultivated by the presence of a college program. This group investment, the authors heard from all participants, contributed to the great extent to which students threw themselves into these educational experiences, took the risks required to try their hardest, and guarded any peace they found outside of class that supported their studying and success, contributing to the program success.

Relationships with Non-Students. In addition to this "shared mindset," relationships between inside students and other incarcerated people changed dramatically as a result of college. They both contributed to and served as a measure of students' transformations. "I think your relationship with other inmates changes," Zahir explained, because "you start to know them." Zahir implies that there was a new level of intimacy with others stirred by the personal development college participation inspired. He continued,

> I've had guys say, 'Every time I see you, you always walking like you have somewhere to be and I'm like, yeah, I do have somewhere to be.' … There's also people who would say, 'He thinks he's better than us,' but then there's people who would say, 'Whatever he's doing, like, it's working for him; I want to try it too.'

Antagonism from other incarcerated people was in each case taken as a sign of jealousy and ultimately unimportant to the college experience. Zahir's comment above reframe this response as he indicated that his participation in college clearly evoked hope for others and encouraged others to become interested in earning their high school equivalencies with the aim of enrolling in college. As Zahir theorized,

> [I]f people respect you and they see you doing something, a lot of times they just, they want it too …because they saw the level of respect, they saw the accomplishments, they want to do it too and then they get hooked… in a good way!

Notably, half of the men in our study independently introduced the tremendous value they found both in being mentored and in serving as unofficial mentors to others. In fact, when asked what was the most significant aspect of his college experience inside, David reported without hesitation being a mentor to others. In an effort to keep the near-adolescents serving time at the maximum-security prison "out of the yard and doing something constructive," David explained,

> We put together the 'Prison Community Awareness Program.' And we ba-
> sically were mentors for these guys and got some of them involved in the
> college program …. Some guys may be fresh out of a GED class or younger.
> [We paired] some of the younger guys with some of the guys [who] are more
> advanced.

The altruistic act of helping men get their GED's was also described by Zahir as personally meaningful: "I had selfish reasons, because it just made me feel good to help …. It was great seeing a lot of guys want to do it because they realized they don't want to be in the yard." Morris described the value of mentoring in personal terms:

> I saw myself inside of them at twenty two, twenty three years old. … I *was*
> those kids sitting in that room, looking for help but not knowing how to get
> it, and in turn ruining my life because I didn't understand my circumstances.
> The world was bigger than me, but I wanted to be bigger than it. And I tried
> to take it on. …I seen a lot of young children heading in my direction. And
> here I am trying to put a brake on it, saying, 'No listen, I'm you. You know,
> *there's only one more poor choice or decision between me and you*. Please
> don't make it because you're mad at your family... [D]on't ruin your life.'

The psychological identification Morris described as the meaningful basis of mentoring under-scores the way that building relationships with others serving time contributed significantly to the extensive personal transformation that college participation can inspire, independent of col-lege personnel. As Andrew also described: "Mentoring is what I would do with a lot of people. We'd sit outside together, in the library, in the yard, and we'd talk about a path forward. We'd talk about a path *home*." This statement captures the power of mentoring, in many senses the power of relationship, to cultivate for both mentee and mentor a new and simultaneous sense of hope, the future, and home. Certainly, being able to imagine a future outside of prison life is the first step toward getting there. This ability to imagine the future differently was seen by many participants as inspired by the relationships – the official and unofficial mentoring – that our participants valued so highly.

Relationships with Family Members. Participation in college programs also contrib-uted to an increased sense of being in community with people outside of prison, namely stu-dents' families. As Zahir theorized, "[O]ne of the things that I've always said was that prison is designed to isolate you. …[I]t's designed to break you and your family up too because of the constraints that they have to deal with in order to be able to see you." Two of our participants discussed the impact of what they learned in classes on these family relationships. Zahir ex-plained referencing the wider impact of learning the "class material:" "[W]hen you have some knowledge behind something or the historical attachment to an issue, it helps you understand it better, and I think it'll help you navigate through situations better." Because of the historical and sociological material he was learning, he developed a new ability to read critically that en-abled him to relate to his family differently. Specifically, he could look at the "roles or what's expected of people" and "was able to attribute [behaviors of his father] to his [father's] culture, his upbringing… what *he* dealt with." The impact of gaining a wider, sociological and histor-ical perspective from class materials and learning activities has the capacity to nurture some of the most important already existing relationships, those with fully or partially estranged family members. Zahir summarized the impact of his new learning: "It helped me understand my father." And this new understanding clearly reflected a new capacity for empathy. He said about his entire family: "I learned how to forgive them because you start to understand." It is hard to imagine a more important outcome of a college course than increasing the capacity for empathy, critical for any relationship but especially significant for strengthening connections with family members. This aspect of the college experience especially benefits those whose relationships with their families are additionally complicated by direct involvement with the criminal justice system.

Relationships with Prison Officials. Although generally the authors found far more consistency than inconsistency of opinion among our contributors about changes in relationships resulting from college education in prison, this was not the case when it came to discussions of relationships with prison officials. The opportunities for developing mutually respectful, and thus productive, relationships between prisoners and prison staff are different in every institution given that each facility has its own culture, rules, and traditions. As Lawrence described,

> [N]ot too much changed my relationship with the correctional staff because you have correctional staff who embrace the program -- kinda like, 'ah good you going to school' -- and then it's some other ones like 'ah, what you gonna do with that.' So …you kinda like try not to worry about others' opinions… you gotta do what's best for you.

Andrew posited a rationale for those officers who disapproved: "[T]he lower-line staff don't [see the benefit of the program], because they haven't been taught that. They don't have sensitivity training." He qualified, "[T]here are some who… would converse with you and… you would realize wow, except for the fact that he's in a uniform and I'm a prisoner, we're just two guys talking about a subject that just warrants this kind of discussion." Zahir referenced his discussions with officers who resent prisoners for receiving education through these programs:

> I've had COs [correctional officers] tell me… 'I have to pay this amount for my kids to go to school [and you get it for free].' And I said, 'You know what, you're right. … [T]he idea that you have to pay that amount for your kids … to go to school, that's another issue that needs to be dealt with at a higher level … but the second thing is, *this is not free*; some of us are paying for it with our lives.'

It is worth noting that this not uncommon point of contention with prison staff about "free" education inside occurred in the context of a conversation, a conversation instigated by the educational opportunity. Moreover, the difference in perspectives manifested as respectful dialogue rather than conflict defined by paramilitary prison codes enforced by the threat of punishment as isolation or even physical violence. On the theme of empathy, Zahir does not simply oppose the COs' position here, but rather, he acknowledges and identifies with him, enabling the CO to feel understood and consider a different perspective rather than feeling the exclusive need to press his own point.

Even if the dialogue prompted by college opportunities for people in prison involves disagreement between students and prison officials, it still appeared to contribute to the relational quality of the inside students' experience of prison beyond the college cohort and incarcerated community. Eessa registered the change in this relationship with the prison when he explained, "[Y]ou found different ways to navigate the prison system in a positive manner … you had to shift the way you dealt with COs … instead of getting angry … you had to humble yourself." Even if it was difficult, as Eessa's comment implied, membership in the college program seemed to increase one's ability to transform behaviors as a result of seeing oneself as existing simultaneously within and beyond the prison walls. And doing so could make relating to correctional officers – and other incarcerated people – easier.

Capacity for Leadership

Through their college-in-prison participation, these former students experienced increased self-confidence that resulted in, and resulted from, the development of new and changing relationships with different individuals and groups. The third most commonly discussed benefit of college in prison was a desire to give back by engaging in action that extends its positive impact beyond the scope of the individual. This new capacity to serve as a leader with altruistic and communal aims occurred even before participants were released through their participation in official and unofficial mentoring. These civic values were reported by partic-

ipants and in almost every case enacted post-incarceration. Morris, for instance, was working as a practitioner in the healthcare field, supporting low-income people, as was Lawrence, who was putting to use his master's degree in the health sciences while considering pursuing a PhD that would enable him to do more in the field of research. Andrew runs a non-profit dedicated to supporting incarcerated individuals pursuing college education. David was completing his university degree at an ivy league institution and preparing for graduate work and a career in criminal law to serve the populations most impacted by arrests. The most recently released participant, Jamal, is now completing his degree at a top-level university, situating himself for civic impact.

Each participant also regularly makes time to speak to various publics and to offer their critical analyses of incarceration, justice, and education. As Ralph reported,

> I'm trying to make an impact, trying to show that at some point, these are people who are gonna change and change forever. And this is where my argument for presenting college for prison is. … Someone can present an argument to you and you can break it down ... and I think a lot of our public doesn't do that today. … I think we are [all] poorly educated.

The college impact Ray framed as civic education: a new analytical lens enabled students to critique and thus engage with the wider world in a way that currently the uneducated or nontraditionally educated public often does not.

Conversations with our participants revealed the extent to which this civic-minded sense of responsibility for more than oneself emerged from learning through college experiences in prison. As the oldest participant, with a long perspective on criminal justice and incarceration, Andrew's historical-biographical analysis of his college-in-prison transformation demonstrated the value he places on civic involvement. He was incarcerated in an era earlier than those of the other contributors, first in the 1960s and second, after having escaped and lived freely for over 15 years, in the 1990s. Comparing his experiences inside during these two different periods of incarceration, Andrew described a shift in prison culture, one that mirrored the shift familiar outside of prison as well:

> The prison culture had changed. And for me, it was a question of how do you fit into this new particular brand of incarcerated people who were out for themselves? … When I was 18 and I went in, everybody… galvanized behind the cause, like, "we don't have rights, [the DOC is] reading our mail, we don't want you reading our mail, you're redacting our mail, you're censoring our mail, we don't want this, we don't have telephones…" So, [we] grouped up like that, and together went against the system hoping to accomplish those particular things. When I came back, it wasn't about all that. It was about "If I can steal your sneakers, I'm gonna steal your sneakers…" They were more self-centered rather than collectively-centered around the needs of the group.

Not being "collectively-centered around the needs of the group" was driven in part by a lack of role models and leaders. In his earlier period of incarceration, Andrew explained,

> [Y]ou had the Muhammad Ali, you had the Malcolm X's, you had the Martin Luther Kings, you had the Bobby Kennedys. You know what I'm saying? So you had people that were like, "This is what we do." We had the Black Panther movement [saying], "This is what we do, we fight against oppression." And even though many of the ways of fighting weren't the best ways, you had the Angela Davises… saying, "This is wrong, we don't like it, and this is all I can do to have a voice. You may not like what I'm doing, but this is the voice that I have."

Andrew's analysis assumes leaders are the critical foundation for communal or civic involvement and collective transformation, valued here over the individualism of the 1990's. He used

Angela Davis to read the agency or "voice" of the dis-empowered as dedicated to a collective and civic purpose even if "many of the ways of fighting weren't the best."

Without a sense of belonging to a collective movement for human rights, a movement for equality and legal and economic justice, many primarily poor youth then and now who have lacked those leaders have found a sense of belonging in gang "families." Andrew explains,

> Over time, as… the Andrew Youngs, as the overseers of movements, as they got older, nobody really picked up the mantle. It became the me generation, where "Gee, what do I *have* and how do I get it? Well, if I have to steal, I don't care what people think of me as long as I have those sneakers… So, with that generation, it changed, it wasn't collectivity. It was… the void after the civil rights period… You could say to a kid [in the 1990s], "Who are you follow-ing?" [He'd say,] "Well, I don't know, who should I follow?" [and he would think you meant,] "Are you a Blood or a Crip?" You know, like that. There was nothing.

The type of collectivity that values loyalty to a group over the critical capacity or ethical agency of the individual cannot provide the basis of human transformation that participants described as engendered by college-in-prison. The context offered by Andrew situates college-in-prison as an alternative to gang membership and to what he calls the "void" that followed in the af-termath of the 1960s-70s. Educational transformation thus effects both the collective and the individual voice and ethical agency. Without this integration of individuality and relationality, loyalty hardly results in the productive sense of belonging and the capacity for civic leadership that a genuinely collective aim can provide and instead often leads to the profound isolation of incarceration or even death.

B. Benchmarking College in Prison to Facilitate Individual-Collective Transformation

The educational quality of college in prison varies tremendously – and not simply based on the reputation of the college. The specific organizational processes that this study's partici-pants described as facilitating their transformations provide the basis for benchmarking some best practices for college-in-prison programming. It is worth noting here, however, the poten-tial hazards of generalizing any recommendations. After all, as Erving Goffman's theory of agency and Glenn David Macken's analysis delineated, the emergence of "selfhood" is always an effect of a tangle of specific organizational processes that can never ultimately be general-ized without denying the potential for novelty or change that might occur in a person's future. Moreover, each program has a different set of material conditions it works within, given the specific prison institutions, rules, individuals, and cultures, as well as the specific college cul-tures and variously allocated resources. Benchmarking also risks ignoring the important point that effective education on the inside is often very similar to effective education on a college campus. And yet, what we consider best practices in higher education are not necessarily pos-sible behind the walls or desirable from the perspective of a prison administration. This study identifies the most often noted program aspects that facilitate the kinds of transformations the study participants described in their reflections on impact as discussed above. Specifically, this study found that the strongest programs develop their structures and practices based on understanding the following four conclusions drawn from statements by multiple participants about the critical importance of: 1.) academic rigor 2.) the professor's respect for students 3.) discussion-based learning and 4.) a productive relationship between college and prison.

Academic Rigor

Each former student addressed the value of academic rigor, often tying this to the rela-tionship with professors. Lawrence said about his favorite class that "everybody was on edge in that class" and about the professor, "I appreciated, you know, how hard she pushed us." He described receiving a paper the professor had returned and how he would "just hold it up and look at all the green lines and corrections and 'more detail about this part' – so she really like

made you work." She "made you really go harder and want to put more and more detail into your work." Zahir similarly referred to the "classes that worked" as those "where the professors challenged us." And we heard from David that "[a]nother thing [he] very much appreciated were advanced courses." He also suggested that frequent "quizzes that involve commentary" were crucial "because I think you want to know that your students are really grasping the material." Being held accountable by the professor was something each participant referenced, in two cases with the recommendation that professors insist on participation in class and, in Lawrence's words, "pick you out if you were quiet."

Zahir reported having demanded rigorous intellectual expectations from his professors in the following way:

> If I earn an A and I [get out and] go on campus, would I have gotten the same
> grade? Or, are you putting on a little curve there because you feel sympathetic
> to that cause because I didn't go to a great school growing up, because I was in
> a poor neighborhood? Because now you're giving me a false sense of where I
> really stand in the world.

He continued, referring to his professors, "We need to know the real deal. So they assured us of that." For Zahir, the "real deal" meant knowing where he and his peers stood in relation to non-incarcerated university students. A program's insistence on rigor enabled the college-in-prison student to revise the assessment he had of his own ability going into the program. Notably, since working hard was always presented as a matter of "we," it appears to have impacted the participants' sense of the group.

Professor's Demonstrated Respect for Students

Closely related to this insistence on the value of high academic standards was the importance participants placed on the way professors saw their students' abilities. Each of our participants were very aware of professors' perceptions of them. As Eessa explained,

> What always astonished them was how smart we were, how intelligent we
> were. And the thing is, they always said here are guys who are hungry for edu-
> cation and can't get it, and then you have the privileged out there who have an
> opportunity for education and don't want it.

The value participants placed on academic rigor was clearly rooted in the value they placed on relationships between professor and student. For our participants, there was general agreement that, as Lawrence stated, "professors make the program." Each contributor recognized as central to the program's effectiveness "definitely passionate professors." Lawrence continued, "[P] eople can tell if someone is just going through the motions." Similarly, in response to being asked what made the experience so meaningful, Jamal explained, "I think it's not the material but maybe it's the instructors. Maybe they cull the best talent and bring these incredible individuals."

In addition to the respect for students' abilities communicated in professors' high academic expectations, relationships with faculty were clearly critical to the educational endeavor, the learning "content" ultimately inseparable from its method of delivery. According to Morris,

> My best teachers were the ones that never taught me what to think; they just
> taught me the ability to think, to use your own life, be creative with your own
> beliefs and your own understanding of the material… When people force you
> how to think… it places you in a box. So, my best teachers were the ones
> who… allowed me to be me.

Morris's statement reflects the importance of recognizing student independence; the student must be seen as different, not as known or even ultimately knowable, but as someone always yet to be known differently by both the professor and the student himself. Morris explained further, "You're throwing us that life raft," but the raft in these formulations is clearly a tool

with which the students save themselves, granting priority and agency once again to the student as author of his own educational transformation. "Because [the student] is putting in the work," Morris described further, "it's you…. You're gonna swim back to shore. You know, it's your hard work that's gonna do this." Professors are not figured here as the life raft, the – often white – saviors, and the best professors were those that understood this and treated students accordingly with the respect that such treatment entails.

Discussion-based Learning

As Zahir recalls, "I remember conversations more than I remember what I watched; I don't want to watch a lecture." Similarly according to Andrew, "The classes that allowed open discussion with varying points of view were great." Eessa recommended that professors "open it up for discussion and not so much lecture" and continued, "You'll really be surprised at what guys with time do to think. Discussions were lively because you didn't have the professors teach us… I mean they taught but … we had ideas just as much." Insisting on "open-ended questions" from the professor, Morris urged, "Allow the student to engage in the material the way that they do it… it challenges the teacher [and makes] the student engage with the material below the surface." Rather than simply accept information at face value, these students recognized that through discussions they were being asked to "dig." And by authorizing students in this way, the classroom facilitated transformation. Zahir analyzed discussion as follows: "[W]e were forced to challenge our own bias. Discussion forces us to kind of look within ourselves, take a look at our surroundings, and start to observe things differently… it just changes your perspective and your outlook." Individual transformation was linked with changes fostered by active student engagement in discussion.

Evaluating the significance of student-centered and specifically discussion-based education in prison from a higher analytic remove, Eessa explained,

> I think that … prisoners are always being taught without having a voice, and that was one thing about prison … it took away your voice. You don't have a voice at all. But to be able to express your opinion, to be able to share your thoughts, allows you to have a voice. So if I was going to design a program, I wouldn't want it where I'm doing the talking .... Listen to them.

This formulation serves as a valuable reminder to educators that through the interpersonal relationships built through discussion, both with the professor and at least equally critically with peers, the individual emerges with a new sense of agency and capacity for leadership. David qualified his own enthusiasm about discussion by articulating the critical role of the professor:

> Discussion is important absolutely … but should be controlled. So, you don't want one student taking control of the whole class … and if you have a guy in the room who is quiet, maybe you should call on him ... so guys don't think they can come in and just cruise through the class on a given day ... 'cause it can be that you have three guys who really control the class… and you don't want that.

The interviews made it very clear that students think a lot and feel strongly about class dynamics, which are different from those on a college campus where students may or may not know one another outside of class and can choose to be apart or get together when class is over. Given that in prison very often students know one another well, at least in certain ways, before the classroom experience commences, Andrew cautioned,

> When you put [students] in a classroom setting together … there's a lot that the teachers don't know. … Just because you're in a classroom setting, it doesn't change the prison rules. If I don't like you because [of your crime], I don't want to sit next to you… or it could be you're an opposing gang member …. That's prison code …. Let people pick their own partners.

Understanding that conflict may exist even when it is not visible in the prison classroom remains crucial for professors who will always, to some extent, be outsiders. As several participants described, the facilities and state Departments of Correction that were amenable to developing a special housing unit exclusively for the people in college seemed to go a long way toward more fully reconstructing prison culture as conducive to learning. Though unusual, collective college housing units foster spaces for discussion among cohort members. David described this in the maximum-security prison where he served time as including not only individual cells but "a dayroom" which the Deputy Superintendent had "built with tables and a little library for guys to study together." The prison administration's willingness to support opportunities for communal learning even when those involved a cultural shift and the allocation of resources were clearly advantageous in these cases. This space created a different social dynamic that facilitated even more effectively transformational experiences for students inside. Such support goes a long way toward resolving the challenges of what Jamal described as "being almost in this place that doesn't exist."

Productive Relationship Between College and Prison Personnel

The last consistent recommendation for program development that may be drawn from participants' perspectives on what facilitated genuine educational transformation is that the relationship between the college program, the prison, and the state DOC be mutually respectful. Without this, every aspect of the college program remains at risk. As Eessa explained, "You can't do it without the [prison] administration. You just can't shut them out." Simultaneously, David explained that the college must remain primarily responsible for the program because this impacts the way that incarcerated people think about the program and affects their investment. Eessa argued similarly that the college should have control over admissions: without that, the prison will potentially

> … pick favorites and then you'll isolate people; you'll separate groups or you'll cause violence because people will say, "Oh, you can get this and I can't…." If you don't open it up for all… it creates a danger for those who get in.

David explained the administration of a college-in-prison should work toward "[m]aking security feel involved, because… most of the opposition comes from the security's side." He specified later,

> [S]omeone talking in the hallway or being out of place should not result in the type of misbehavior report that has them taken out of the college program, because that results in officers being allowed to simply harass guys. You don't wanna empower them in that regard.

A productive and collaborative relationship between the college and the prison is thus critical to not only the educational experiences but also the safety of the students.

The necessity of partnership between the two institutions is especially important when it comes to organizing events that involve outsiders, such as graduations, events that support in some very important ways the educational transformations of individual students. As Eessa described the value of these events,

> Those [incarcerated] who are taking the right steps should be acknowledged… by their families and prison officials… [G]ive them that acknowledgment that plays a part to the whole self-worth aspect. There's a lot of guys who have children. And the kids seeing daddy… *that* is beneficial.

Jamal, a young father himself, suggested that colleges should create more opportunities than just graduation for this kind of community experience that involves prisoners' children, a program component that would clearly rely on the prison's willingness to recognize the value of these relationships to the parent's educational transformation. The resources and goodwill to

support educational services like these are often limited in part because their connection to education seems unclear, tangential, or "soft." The authors heard repeatedly that these events that include outsiders are critical to the mission and experience of transformational education, even if they are not explicitly accomplishing the more measurable or data-driven goal of credentialing that seat-time hours does. All of this study's participants understood that a positive relationship between corrections and college that can facilitate events such as graduations, debates, restorative justice circles, and others where visitors are brought in, was essential to the individual transformations that ultimately have enabled people to avoid returning to prison.

Summary of Results

By examining the structure and impact of college programming in prison, this qualitative study affords a unique opportunity to better understand why personal transformation occurs, what it consists of, and to re-prioritize accordingly some best practices in higher education. In examining the impact of individual participation from the perspectives of formerly incarcerated participants, the authors found the following three interrelated outcomes and sub-themes which were supported by almost every interview discussion. The most immediately and consistently reported was the increased sense of self-confidence and subsequent ability to re-imagine one's future in a more optimistic light. All study participants also recognized the transformational effect of an increased sense of interrelatedness created by the development of various relationships stemming from program participation – relationships with families, fellow students, the wider prison community including prison staff, college professors and other personnel. These relationships fostered a new sense of communal belonging and made evident a new capacity for empathy. The newly organized sense of academic efficacy and self-confidence garnered by these relationships fostered an increased sense of agency that the authors and participants have figured as a capacity for leadership stemming from a new sense of civic responsibility.

In summary, the results of our project demonstrate that college-in-prison participation facilitates the following individual changes:

1. *Increased self-confidence,* demonstrated by optimism, consideration of long-term plans, and confidence about expressing individual ideas.

2. *Increased sense of connectedness*, demonstrated by feeling included in a community, increased empathy, and an increased ability to navigate differences through dialogue.

3. *Increased leadership / civic goals*, demonstrated by a sense of collectivity and responsibility for others

Understanding more specifically how former students see their own educational transformations also provided the grounds for the articulation of three basic program development benchmarks delineated below in Table 3.

Table 3

Recommendations for High-Quality Higher Education in Prison

Recommendation	Example
Program Design	maintain academic rigor; emulate standards of college-level courses outside
Pedagogical Strategy	utilize discussion-based, reflection assignments; cultivate respect of student's ideas and independent learning/thinking; foster mentorship

Institutional Support	cultivate respect from professors; academic support; positive relationship between prison administration/staff and college administration/staff

The authors would add as an additional recommendation that maintaining a dialogue with students during and after program participation structured around personal impact and programmatic assessment both improves the program and supports the agency of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people. Education that is civically-oriented engages students as leaders of one another, leaders of themselves, and leaders of the program itself through on-going assessment. Ultimately, on-going organizational change is critical not only for participants but also for the educational and interventional quality of any college-in-prison program. Angela Davis wrote pressingly, "We have to begin to think in different ways. Our future is at stake" (2012, p. 30). The kind of work that facilitates a different future includes increased self-efficacy for incarcerated people whose voices must be recognized and "amplified," often in place of our own. This study underscores the importance of remaining in dialogue with the experts at every stage. After all, educational transformation and a new future for all occurs through just such relationships and thus involves changes in both student and teacher, prison and college, alike.

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Undergraduate Students as Job Mentors to Support Youth Transitioning from Incarceration

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Abstract: *Helping Offenders Prosper through Employment (HOPE) is a university-based mentoring program that trains undergraduate students to serve as job mentors to incarcerated youth serving a sentence in Indiana's juvenile correctional facilities. The purpose of this article is to describe HOPE's mission, principles and components, underscoring how undergraduates are prepared and serve as positive role models to incarcerated youth during and after confinement to improve community reentry. This article is intended for practitioners interested in implementing evidence-based peer mentoring in juvenile correctional facilities as well as scholars interested in the study of factors that reduce juvenile recidivism.*

Keywords: *Undergraduate mentors, incarcerated youth, reentry, transition from incarceration, HOPE mentor*

Juvenile incarceration is used as a deterrent and punishment for criminal behavior. The United States (U.S.) has one of the highest rates of juvenile incarceration in the world (Slaughter, 2018). Every year, over 500,000 youth are in detention and these statistics show that on any given day, approximately 70,000 youth are in a juvenile detention facility, group home, or a correctional facility (Slaughter, 2018). While in correctional confinement, youth must comply with stringent daily routines, including waking up at a specified time, showering on a schedule, completing daily morning chores, and eating with their cell unit peers. Furthermore, by law, youth are required to attend school as they would in their community (Ochoa, 2016). For many of these youth who have a record of suspension and expulsion from school, regular school attendance is a new experience. In addition, youth are required to complete a variety of treatment programs mandated by the sentencing juvenile courts and a team of correctional facility personnel. For example, youth sentenced with drug-related crimes may be required to attend programs offered by the correctional facility on drug rehabilitation and enroll in mental health courses. In turn, youth sentenced with gang-related crimes would likely be required to attend programs to deter gang behaviors. The daily activities and expectations of incarceration are a significant departure from home life. Complying with the demands of a highly structured routine can be challenging for incarcerated youth. Challenges or difficulties notwithstanding, Clark and Unruh (2010) pointed out that community reentry from the correctional confinement can be more difficult than incarceration.

VanderPyl (2015) argued that correctional confinement primes incarcerated youth for failure. Research has established that incarceration disrupts the normal developmental process and stigmatizes the youth

who are incarcerated (Uggen, Manza, & Thompson 2006). Burrell (2014) and Burrell and Moeser (2014) pointed out that incarceration increases the likelihood of dropping out of high school and being unemployed. Worse yet, other studies have found adverse effects of incarceration, including leading some youth to reoffend at higher rates than their non-incarcerated counterparts (Bernburg, Krohn, & Rivera, 2006; Leiber, 2002; Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino, Hollis-Peel, & Lavenberg, 2013). National rates of recidivism indicate that 55% of youth who leave correctional confinement return to incarceration (Clark, Mather, & Helding, 2011). Specifically, Indiana has a recidivism rate of 33% (Ross, 2018). It is critical to determine the factors leading to re-incarceration.

Leaving confinement without transition support or a job increases the risk of recidivism. One reason why reentry might be difficult is due to the fact that only a relatively small proportion of youth in correctional confinement are released with any sort of probation or supervision (Clark et al., 2011; Ochoa & Swank, 2018). In some states in the U.S., the only youth who receive supervision are those considered high risk of committing more crimes after release based on a criminogenic assessment. In contrast, the majority of youth leave confinement as straight discharges, which means all supervision and support services are terminated upon reentry. That is to say, the structured daily routines imposed upon the youth during incarceration vanish as soon as youth leave the facility. Ochoa and Swank (2018) found this practice to be consistent with previous research (e.g., Clark et al., 2011), which asserts that providing transition support is a critical factor to reduce youth recidivism. Clark et al. (2011) provided transition services to 4,809 youth ages 8 to 17 from two correctional facilities in the Southwest, and found that transition support, including help with resume-development and aiding in the job search process, reduced the likelihood of reoffending by 64%.

Research has consistently shown that lack of employment is the top predictor of recidivism. Lockwood and Nally (2017) concluded that individuals who are young, unemployed, and without a high school diploma are the most likely to return to correctional confinement. Being unemployed and not being able to find employment may frustrate youth, which sends them into a cycle of chronic unemployment and further criminal and illegal activities (Lipsey, 2009; Steinberg, 2007). Not only does unemployment increase the risk for criminal activities, it also reduces opportunities for youth to acquire skills to function and succeed in a work environment and to enter adulthood as responsible, law-abiding citizens (Lipsey, 2009; Steinberg, 2007). Pager (2003) asserted that many incarcerated youth leave the correctional facility under-skilled and under-employed. As such, finding mechanisms that promote the development of employment skills is of paramount importance to reduce youth recidivism (Pager, 2003).

Mentoring and Employment Are Important for Transition and Reduce Recidivism

Mentoring and employment reduce the probability of re-incarceration. Mentoring is one of the oldest forms of community-based interventions for youth, with empirical evidence confirming that the enduring mentoring relationship results in successful youth outcomes through positive, social-emotional and instrumental support (Ochoa & Swank, 2018; Schwartz, Rhodes, Spencer, & Grossman, 2013). Jones, Clark, and Quiros (2012) asserted that one of the most important roles of mentors is to help youth improve goal-setting skills and inspire hope for the future. Mentors help mobilize existing resources for mentees as they work toward their goals. They connect mentees to community resources and they keep youth focused on improving their lives. Those are all factors which are known to reduce recidivism, showing that mentors help in the rehabilitation process of youth in correctional confinement.

Efforts to reduce juvenile recidivism by providing support systems through mentoring is built on the foundation of credible messenger mentoring (Camplin, 2009; Farrall, 2004; Lopez-Humphreys & Teater, 2018). Credible messenger mentoring proposes that pairing mentees with mentors who come from the same communities and backgrounds and who have similar shared life experiences will produce positive outcomes for incarcerated youth. Under the credible messenger framework, mentors use their own life experiences to help incarcerated youth prepare to exit confinement, secure employment, and abstain from criminal and illegal activities. Studies looking at the impact of credible messenger mentoring have found improved outcomes for incarcerated youth based on increased engagement with support programs and services, improved relationships with the juvenile justice system personnel and other community stakeholders, and improved social

capital upon community reentry (Camplin, 2009; Farrall, 2004; Lopez-Humphreys & Teater, 2018).

Empirical evidence exists documenting the influential role supportive, non-parental adults have in the lives of adolescents (Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006; Sterrett, Jones, McKee, & Kincaid, 2011). DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, and Cooper (2002) and DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, and Valentine (2011) found that in the absence of a parent, the social support and consistency provided through a formal mentoring program produced positive outcomes on the social, behavioral, emotional, and academic development of incarcerated youth (DuBois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011). While the foundations of credible messenger mentoring are based on pairing incarcerated youth with mentors who have been incarcerated themselves, doing so limits the pool of motivated candidates who can serve as mentors to incarcerated youth.

In addition to the benefits of mentoring, employment also serves as a protective factor against recidivism. Some studies have found that having early and favorable work experiences in adolescence are strong predictors of developing the necessary skills to think critically, deal with conflict, accept feedback, and seek assistance when needed (Harris, Lockwood, & Mengers, 2009). In other words, favorable employment experiences are the best predictors of success for future employment. Nonetheless, many incarcerated youth return to their communities without support to find a job. Hawkins, Lattimore, Dawes, and Visher (2010) reported that youth leaving correctional confinement identified help finding a job as their most urgent need upon transitioning out of confinement.

Homeboy Industries is an example of a reentry program which assists individuals who were incarcerated acquire skills for employment. Individuals begin their employment experience at a Homeboy sponsored-employment facility with the objective of eventually gaining regular unsupported employment in their own communities. Once program objectives are met, job counselors help these employees secure employment outside of Homeboy Industries by helping them make connections and prepare for an interview (Leap, Franke, Christie, & Bonis, 2011). Similarly, Encompass Community Services provides transition services to youth on probation. Encompass' (2015) mission is to aid youth to find and maintain employment, provide life skills coaching, and link them with additional community supports. More reentry programs like Homeboy Industries and Encompass are needed. Additionally, every youth, not only youth on probation, can benefit from transition programs and mentoring support that help them gain employment when they return to their communities.

In this article, we describe the mission and principles that guided the development of a state-wide youth job mentoring program for incarcerated youth. Helping Offenders Prosper through Employment (HOPE) is a mentoring initiative for incarcerated youth that starts in the correctional facility and continues at reentry, when the youth returns to a community. We provide qualitative evidence from participants to demonstrate the impact that the HOPE mentoring program has on mentees and the undergraduates who serve as their mentors.

Mission and Principles of the HOPE Mentoring Program for Youth

HOPE is a university-based mentoring program that pairs one incarcerated youth to one undergraduate student. The mentor serves as a positive role model for the youth as he or she develops job-related skills while in correctional confinement. The same mentor also provides continued support when the youth is released to return to the community. HOPE's mission is to use employment as a tool to reduce the number of youth who come into repeated involvement with the juvenile justice system. Job mentoring support during and after incarceration prepares and supports each youth in the reentry process into their community, which increases the likelihood the youth will engage positively in the community.

The HOPE mentoring program was piloted in 2013 in the correctional facility for girls. In 2016 the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) adopted the HOPE mentoring program and HOPE was expanded to all juvenile correctional facilities in the state of Indiana. When the IDOC adopted the HOPE mentoring program, it also committed Title 1 funds to hire a youth mentoring director, signaling its high regard for the mentoring program. The HOPE mentoring program serves youth in the Pendleton, Logansport, and LaPorte Juvenile Correctional facilities. The HOPE mentoring program consists of two components: HOPE for Youth and HOPE for Home. In this article, we focus only on the mentoring program for incarcerated youth.

Three main principles guide the HOPE mentoring program: 1) Exit Begins at Entry; 2) Collaboration; and 3) Positive and Responsive Mentoring. These three principles help address the need to begin transition-planning during intake so that youth do not fall through the cracks, to improve communication between the individuals and agencies involved in the rehabilitation of incarcerated youth, and to shift away from punishment as a main focus of rehabilitation. HOPE principles have been discussed by Ochoa et al., 2019 and reflect best-practice guidelines. For purposes of this article, each principle is discussed below:

1. Exit Begins at Entry—Preparation to reenter the community after correctional confinement should begin from the moment the juvenile enters the facility (Risler & O'Rourke, 2009). The importance of planning for the youth's release as soon as the youth begins to serve the sentence is paramount. Planning for release from the start ensures that rehabilitation programming will be focused on reentry. HOPE begins mentoring as soon as the youth enters confinement. The goal is to increase the probability that the mentoring relationship is sustained when the youth reenters the community by having the mentor be a part of rehabilitation from the start of confinement. IDOC personnel give parents information about the HOPE mentoring program during the intake process and seek parental consent to allow HOPE personnel to offer this voluntary program to youth when a mentor is available. Once a mentee is assigned to a mentor, the HOPE mentor meets with the youth one-on-one on a weekly basis in the correctional facility. At the time of release, the youth and the same mentor continue to meet in person on a weekly basis. In addition, they may have daily contact via text messaging, phone calls, or emails. The mentor serves as a bridge between the facility and the community by providing a continuity of services from the start of incarceration and when the youth reenters his or her community.

2. Collaboration—Collaboration is the second principle of the HOPE mentoring program and it is an essential ingredient for success. By design, the HOPE mentoring program is not a stand-alone program. Instead, HOPE is embedded into the activities within the correctional facility to allow mentors to assist each youth with behavioral and programmatic goals. As such, mentors serve as liaisons between the youth's teachers and the facility transition coordinator when the youth is confined. Similarly, mentors serve as liaisons between the facility, parents, and community at the time of release and in the community. The message conveyed to mentors and facility personnel is that mentors serve as extra hands and feet to help meet the programmatic goals established by and for the youth. HOPE mentors are part of the caring group of individuals looking to conspire on behalf of each youth. In the community, the mentor supports and assists the youth by connecting him or her to the community services and other individuals who can guide the youth to access existing education and employment resources. For example, the HOPE mentoring program has established a collaboration with One Heart Indiana, a faith-based organization, to connect the youth and family to services that include transportation and other related services. Essentially, HOPE works with pre-existing organizations and services to collaborate to foster youth engagement.

3. Positive and Responsive Mentoring—Positivity and responsiveness to the unique needs of the youth is central to, and the heart of, the HOPE mentoring program. HOPE mentors are encouraged to create an environment of hopefulness to inspire and encourage youth to achieve their goals. Mentors are trained with the understanding that they are not therapists, teachers, or caretakers to these youth. Mentors are reminded that their main responsibility and objective is to be a positive role model and an unconditional, non-judgmental presence during their time with the youth. This approach to interactions with youth is based on empirical evidence that shows that positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) are more effective than punitive or contingent approaches to behavioral change (Ochoa, Otero, Levy, & Deskalo, 2013). As indicated in Ochoa and Swank (2018), a HOPE mentor is encouraged to reward the socially appropriate adaptive behavior of the youth, remaining positive, consistent, patient, and respectful, regardless of

the youth's behavior. HOPE mentors do not use threats or punitive consequences when a youth cannot or will not participate in the mentoring activity. Neither HOPE mentors nor facility personnel force youth to participate in mentoring activities. As previously stated, participation in the HOPE mentoring program is voluntary and this helps reduce the likelihood of straining the mentoring relationship. In addition to positivity, HOPE mentors use a responsive approach by individualizing activities to fit each youth's needs. For example, mentoring activities for older youth might focus on practicing for a job interview, while younger youth might explore different career interests or receive help with school assignments (Ochoa & Swank, 2018).

Recruitment and Training of HOPE Mentors

HOPE mentors are recruited from any undergraduate academic field and from the different Indiana University (IU) campuses. HOPE has enlisted undergraduates majoring in criminal justice, psychology, education, sociology, school of public and environmental affairs (SPEA), nursing, and liberal studies majors from the Indiana University Bloomington, Kokomo, and Northeast campuses. Undergraduate students have unique attributes that position them to be effective role models and mentors of incarcerated youth. Age proximity is the most obvious attribute among undergraduate students that makes them credible job messengers to the incarcerated youth mentees. Because of the closeness in age and because they too are searching entry-level jobs, mentees can relate more authentically to HOPE mentors.

An example of building effective, formal mentoring programs on the foundation of credible messenger mentoring can be seen in the community service and engagement commitments of the millennial undergraduate student. Even if the HOPE mentors do not have personal experiences with the juvenile justice system, millennials represent the largest percentage of the U.S. population (Bialik & Fry, 2019), and they are a cohort with high rates of altruism and community-engaged attitudes and behaviors (Dallos & Comley-Ross, 2005; DuBois & Silverton, 2005). Collectively, millennials represent a group of individuals who have the time, resources, and civic-mindedness motivation to provide social and emotional support. Millennials can also provide authentic help with skills such as helping youth obtain a bus pass to get to an interview or providing a booklet to study for a driver's license examination because they might be engaged in those activities themselves.

One of the benefits of having a millennial undergraduate student serve as a mentor is the closeness in age between the undergraduate and the youth in confinement (Dallos & Comley-Ross, 2005; DuBois & Silverton, 2005). The similar age range between mentor and mentee provides some level of mentor credibility based on the fact that they are experiencing similar demographic transitions. Likewise, the mentor represents a peer who can provide personal experience and advice versus an adult who may appear out of touch with the social and cultural pressures facing today's youth (Bodie & Jones, 2012; Newburn & Shiner, 2006). Millennial undergraduate students represent a cohort of individuals who are resourceful, flexible, and proficient at developing pathways towards success in reaction to changing social, economic, and political climates (Bodie & Jones, 2012; Newburn & Shiner, 2006). These characteristics have the potential to positively serve the mentee because the undergraduate mentor is adept at providing advice, tools, and support that meet the needs of the incarcerated youth (Bodie & Jones, 2012; Newburn & Shiner, 2006). Finally, the traditional millennial undergraduate student has the luxury of time to fully engage and commit towards being a mentor (Blechman, 1992; Bodie & Jones, 2012; Newburn & Shiner, 2006). Thus, undergraduate students represent an untapped resource to help incarcerated youth adapt to their community upon reentry.

The process of becoming a HOPE mentor takes approximately three months. Applicants undergo background screening by both the IDOC and the university. Undergraduates who pass the initial background screening proceed to HOPE training where they learn about youth development and characteristics of youth in confinement through a set of online modules. HOPE mentor training emphasizes that the role of the undergraduate is to develop a supportive relationship with the youth and to serve as a positive role model. Part of the training requirements includes a tour of the facility and a session in which the mentor-in-training observes another mentor working with his or her mentee. The training process ends with a face-to-face meeting be

tween the new mentor and the mentoring director who presents the new mentor a resource binder with materials for activities to implement with the mentee. The lengthy and rigorous training process serves as a filter to identify and retain the most qualified and well-prepared undergraduate mentors.

Once trained, each mentor is paired with one youth for the duration of the mentoring relationship. While it might appear to be more time efficient to have one mentor paired with multiple youth to make the two-hour long trip more resource efficient, the reason behind the 1-1 pairing is to convey to the youth that s/he is special and that the mentor is at the facility only for that single youth. In addition, the 1-1 pairing conveys to the mentor that their sole focus of his or her attention is on the one youth. The one mentor to one youth approach used in HOPE has proven to be very positive. The youth feels special and the mentor is able to fully concentrate on the needs of the single youth. Each HOPE mentor is asked to commit to mentoring for a minimum of one year. However, many HOPE mentors choose to serve beyond the one-year commitment and provide high quality mentoring to youth involved with the criminal justice system.

Youth's Perception of HOPE Mentors

In this section, we include a statement by one mentee and three excerpts from weekly mentor logs to showcase the positive impact of the HOPE mentoring program for the mentees and the mentors. The following comment was written, upon our request, by one female youth who participated in the HOPE mentoring program while in confinement and found a job after she finished completing her sentence. We asked her to tell us what she thought of the HOPE program and her mentor. She responded as follows:

> At first, I was excited and nervous with my mentor since she was a new person to me. Over time, I began to trust her and get comfortable and I told myself she's probably one of the most amazing people I've ever met. I felt like I could trust her. I was always excited to see her, and I know if I needed help, I could always ask her. For me, it was the fact that it built my self-esteem and confidence and my hope for the future that I could be a better person. I felt confident that I could succeed. Some of the things we did helped me once I got home like the practice job interviews. I was scared I'd mess up, but with the help of my mentor, I overcame that. I kept in touch with my mentor and the people from the HOPE mentoring and it made me feel so good when they invited me to visit their campus to recite my poem. It gave me confidence that I can do anything. That anything can happen. It helped inspire me to keep on writing and follow my dreams. Whenever I have questions, I can always ask [my mentor] or [the Executive Director] for advice. They're so kind and helpful. I would recommend it [HOPE]. Kids with broken self-esteem, kids who feel like they need that extra push, and any kid in general could benefit from this program. HOPE helps you to see the brighter side of things. They give you hope. They show you all the possibilities and opportunities you have instead of letting you give up. They've made it fun while being able to learn at the same time.

This excerpt conveys the mentee's enthusiasm toward working with her HOPE mentor and emphasizes the mentee's sense of empowerment through the acquisition of skills necessary to obtain employment and stay engaged in her community. The mentor is described as a positive role model who was responsive to the mentee's needs and challenges of incarceration, which is an aim of the HOPE program. Moreover, the mentee indicated that other incarcerated youth could benefit from the HOPE mentoring program, which further highlights the program's positive impact.

Weekly Mentoring Logs

After each weekly visit with the mentee, mentors are required to complete a report log, in which the mentor describes the session, indicates what went well, and notes what could be improved for the following session. In this section of the article we showcase one mentor log from each of the three correctional facilities. Mentor, mentee, and facility identifying information were removed to preserve confidentiality. Below is the first weekly log between a mentor and her mentee who was in a medium security facility. Activities highlighted in this log come from a resource-binder that is provided to all HOPE mentors and includes various

employment-related activities.

Describe the session. The session began at 9 a.m. and ended at 10 a.m. We started with a reading called Perseverance: the Key to Success. I highlighted three words from the story to make sure he understood what they meant, and he seemed glad that I did that because he didn't know what they meant. He told me that he does not like reading, but he did like the reading we did today. After, we did a What Makes You Shine worksheet and he wrote about six things. Finally, we went over long-term goals and the plan to reach them. I could tell he was getting frustrated because he only knew one, which was skating as a career. I could tell that [skating] was the only thing he wanted to do but did not want to work. We discussed that he would need to get a job to sustain himself while trying to reach that goal. I knew that it was only the second time we had talked, so he didn't [completely] trust me, but that day he trusted me a little. He did not know that with a GED [General Education Degree] he could still go to college. After I told him he could, he told me of a couple of careers he wanted to do. He ended up smiling and wrote them down as long-term goals, even though he does not know which one he is interested in more.

What went well in this session? He learned that he could start in a community college with a GED. He was very excited when I told him that it was possible. He started telling me about why he would want to be a herpetologist, marine biologist, or a mortician.

What is the plan for the next session? I am planning to research the requirements of the careers that he is looking at, so he knows what to expect, and I plan on going over them next week with him.

As evidenced in this excerpt, feelings of trust are beginning to form between mentor and mentee. The mentee initially showed no interest in careers because he did not see attending college as a possibility. However, once the mentor told him he could attend college with a GED, the mentee indicated he had three possible career goals (i.e., herpetologist, marine biologist, and mortician). Given such career specificity, it is undeniable that the mentee had goals and dreams. It appears that what the youth lacked was information that dropping out of high school did not automatically prevent him from reaching a preliminary goal (i.e. attending college) that would enable him to achieve one of his three ultimate goals

The second weekly log is by a mentor about her 17-year-old male mentee who is in a high-security juvenile correctional facility.

Describe the session. I arrived at [facility] at 6:30 p.m. I had [mentee] complete a worksheet about what respect meant to him. We walked through the different types of respect and how to apply them to different people and situations. I was very proud of [mentee] in this session because he was able to articulate clearly where he needed to work on respecting others while also acknowledging the progress he has made. We continued the discussion by looking through quotes about respecting others and respecting oneself. We also talked about self-respect and self-worth, which is where [mentee] really excelled. He talked about struggling to find his self-worth, and how being incarcerated had given him the chance to re-evaluate his worth. He told me that now that he can see his own worth, he feels like he deserves more than his old life could give him and wants to do better for himself and his family. I was very impressed with how well thought-out his ideas were on this topic, and I think that he has made some incredible progress towards a healthier mental state.

What went well in this session? This was our most successful session yet, and I was very impressed with [mentee]. He was open with me about his thoughts and feelings on his self-worth and it seems that he has reached a point where he understands what he wants his life to be. We had a great discussion on why his old life doesn't reflect who he is and who he wants to be, and how changing the thought processes he uses to evaluate himself and others is a great step in the right direction. He also told me that he was proud of the "baby steps" he's been taking to improve upon his mental health, which is something that he didn't believe in before. He's starting to see the positive effects of his work, and I think he's inspired to

continue on this path.

> **What could be improved for the next session?** This session went extremely well, so much so that we ran out of time while having our discussion. [Mentee's] attention was also drastically improved from the last few sessions so there wasn't much to be improved upon.

It is noteworthy that through the discussion between mentor and mentee, the mentee recognizes improvements in his self-worth and his potential for further growth. He also notes that his old life no longer reflects the new person he is becoming, nor does it determine his future. The mentors statement about "running out of time" suggests that the mentee is invested and motivated in the weekly mentoring sessions.

The third mentor log is by a female mentor about and a young woman from the girls' juvenile correctional facility.

> **Describe the session.** The session began at 10 a.m. and ended at 11 a.m. We started the session by working on a crossword puzzle, then discussed work ethics and completed the work ethics worksheet. [Mentee] was very precise in understanding good work ethics and poor work ethics when we discussed her answers to the worksheet. We also completed Job Related Conflict Scenario #1. We ended the session by finishing the crossword puzzle as well as Appreciation: Through Her Eyes reading from Urban Dreams. Next week we plan to review work ethics and complete another job-related conflict scenario. We then plan to begin covering Learning Strategies and Social Skills: Decision Making.

> **What went well in this session?** [Mentee] notified me that she passed [behavioral] conduct this past week. Her goal is to not get a conduct [behavioral warning] for three weeks. It was great news and she is very happy and proud of herself. We still have two weeks to go, but I know she can do it.

> **What could be improved in this session?** Next time, I'd like to take in an example of a completed job application because today as we talked about work ethics, [mentee] stated that she doesn't know how to fill out a job application.

On the surface, this log is mundane. However, the fact that the mentee felt comfortable sharing her behavioral accomplishments [conduct review] with her mentor is indicative that the mentee perceived her mentor as someone who cared that the youth met a behavioral goal and would continue to be responsive to the mentee's progress in the facility. It appears the mentee sees her mentor as someone who would hold her accountable for continued good behavior. These selected excerpts make evident that the mentees value their relationship with the HOPE mentor and felt empowered by the growth resulting from the HOPE program. The continued 1-1 mentoring support during incarceration was an invaluable experience for these youth. In sum, the weekly mentoring logs portray the multidimensional nature of the mentoring relationship in which job-related activities also lend themselves to building trust and identifying continued areas of need and growth that the mentee will need upon release.

HOPE's Impact on Mentors

In addition to benefitting mentees, the HOPE mentoring program also benefits the mentors. We contacted individuals who served as HOPE mentors to ask them how being a HOPE mentor influenced their post-baccalaureate employment and educational choices. Reflections from three past HOPE mentors follow:

> **HOPE mentor #1.** After graduating from college, I decided to dedicate the next year to service before continuing higher education. I was accepted into the PULSE (Pittsburgh Urban Leadership Service Experience) program, which invites university graduates to partner with a Pittsburgh nonprofit for a year of service and leadership. I have been fortunate enough to partner with the Hockey Sticks Together Foundation as their Director of Program Development for the year, where I am doing outreach to grow their inner-city hockey program. HOPE ignited a passion in me to serve inner-city and underserved communities because all too often these populations are becoming incarcerated. HOPE transforms lives inside juve-

nile facilities and it showed me how much a difference just one person can make in someone's life, which is what I hope my work continues to do.

HOPE mentor #2. After finishing my university degree in Special Education, I decided to move to Baltimore, Maryland in order to pursue my passion to become a special education teacher for students in inner city communities. The school is focused on transitioning over-age and under-credited middle school students to high school. Most of my students have emotional behavior disabilities, and they have been expelled from their local public school due to their behavior and/or poor attendance. My work as a mentor with HOPE has provided a strong foundation where I can apply the skills that I learned working with my mentees in order to be a positive role model for students struggling to make ends meet in their inner-city neighborhoods. HOPE is the organization that allowed me to pursue my interest in working with this population of students, and I am forever indebted to HOPE for opening the door to the first step of my long career in education.

HOPE mentor #3. After graduating from my university with degrees in Psychology and Criminal Justice, I started a graduate program in Chicago furthering my education in psychology. I am currently a doctoral student studying clinical psychology with a concentration in forensics. As part of my clinical training, I was a diagnostic extern for the 19th Judicial Circuit Court at the adult probation building and juvenile detention center. This year, I provide diagnostic services at a youth center. I am also currently a therapy extern where I provide therapeutic services to adult males in a restrictive housing unit. My work as a HOPE mentor gave me the confidence to work with incarcerated individuals of all backgrounds. HOPE taught me that there is more than meets the eye in a population that is misjudged and misunderstood far too often. Being a HOPE mentor helped open my eyes to the importance of being a positive role model while providing support in ways that the individual may have never been exposed to previously.

As evident from the three statements from HOPE mentors, the mentoring program served to enhance each mentor's commitment to youth at risk for incarceration or incarcerated populations. In sum, these reflections document that the experience for the HOPE mentors has led to improved community leadership, reinforced a commitment to educating youth, and has been instrumental in looking for the potential, not the deficits, of incarcerated populations. From their perspective, HOPE mentors benefitted from participating in the program, as it enhanced their leadership skills in a direction of service and leadership, indicating that the HOPE mentoring program not only works to serve incarcerated youth, but also has a positive impact on the future of the college students.

Conclusion

Mentoring programs such as HOPE provide much needed support not only to incarcerated youth, but also have a positive impact on the future of the college students who dedicate their time and skills to improve the lives of incarcerated youth. While Indiana's rate of recidivism is currently below the national rate of 55%, the fact that more than 30% of youth return to correctional confinement warrants the development and provision of programs that target the reduction of re-incarceration. The HOPE mentoring program for youth is uniquely positioned to serve that purpose for several reasons:

- HOPE reflects a best practice guideline that indicates that reentry is a process that must begin at the start of incarceration and continue when the youth returns to his or her community;

- HOPE is responsive to the needs and goals of each youth and connects each one to a positive role model close in age with similar entry-level employment goals and commitment to social justice;

- HOPE's focus on employment reaches a wider population of youth who would otherwise run the risk of being idle when they return to their community because they are not inter

ested or ready to attend college;

- HOPE's connection to a university provides a steady source of volunteers, thus increasing the sustainability of a mentoring program.

These attributes of the HOPE mentoring program address the need to provide transition support to youth who have been incarcerated in Indiana and provide college student mentors with a rigorous mentoring experience which helps them in their career path in deciding to work in the service of youth and the community. HOPE improves reentry one youth at a time.

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PRACTICIONER PAPER

"I See You Have Been Convicted of a Felony; Can You Tell Me About That?" Workforce Development Challenges for Restorative Citizens Seeking Employment

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Abstract: *Incarceration has been an issue nationwide in the United States for decades due to policies from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s that lead to mass increases in incarceration. In the past decade, several states have overhauled their criminal sentencing and prison structure to lower prison populations. This has resulted in the release of thousands of restorative citizens and has expanded the need for reentry services. Released individuals who have been incarcerated face a number of social, political, and economic barriers that prevent them from re-entering society successfully. The inability to obtain employment is often cited as one of the most important factors that contributes to recidivism, which also has negative implications for the general public. This paper examines the barriers that restorative citizens and the social workers who assist them face in helping them find suitable and sustainable employment. The author also highlights workforce instructional methods utilized in the H.I.R.E. program that have been effective in assisting restored citizens in landing job interviews and securing employment. Finally, the author also explores solutions for collaboration across criminal justice and non-profit agencies for the purposes of increasing employment opportunities for restored citizens returning back to the community.*

Introduction

One of the main objectives of individuals reintegrating back into society after finishing their period of incarceration is finding employment. However, prior research has shown the impact that incarceration or a felony conviction can have on a person's employment prospects, which can include the attrition of basic job skills, accessibility to education, and legal barriers that prevent them from entering many licensed professions (Bucknor & Barber, 2016). The transition from prison to the community is very challenging particularly when it comes to obtaining employment. The theoretical link between unemployment, as a central risk factor, and crime is well documented, yet there are significant barriers that remain for restorative citizens upon release from prison (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Wooditch, Tang, & Taxman, 2014). With so many obstacles facing individuals who are trying to successfully reintegrate back into society, questions remain as to whether or not these existing barriers maintain external prison structures of their own.

There are a number of non-profit organizations, reentry centers, and community centers that are dedicated to assisting individuals who are coming back into the community after serving time in prison. Alvis Incorporated in Columbus, Ohio provides a number of evidence-based human service programs, including workforce development training, to individuals who have been involved in the criminal justice system. Alvis is a nonprofit human services agency with over 50 years of experience in providing highly effective treatment programs in multiple cities throughout the state of Ohio. Alvis has the mission to deliver evidence-based human service programs that empower those we serve to build successful, productive lives, reduce recidivism, and make communities safer (alvis180.org). As prisoner reentry continues to expand, workforce development has become, more than ever, a critical

component for restorative citizens' successful reintegration back into society. The workforce development specialists who work with these individuals daily are familiar with the barriers that they face upon successful reentry. Here we discuss the obstacles faced by both staff and clients in teaching workforce development within the reentry spectrum.

H.I.R.E. Program

Individuals face a number of challenges upon leaving prison, with obtaining employment being one of the most difficult. The inability to secure employment is often cited as one of the most important factors that contribute to recidivism (Schnepel, 2016; Lockwood, Nally, & Ho, 2014). A study in Illinois found that formerly incarcerated people who are employed a year after their release can have a recidivism rate as low as 16% compared to the 48% of all formerly incarcerated people who return to prison within three years (Fetsch, 2016). With employment being a major component of successful reentry, Alvis dedicates a number of resources within the workforce development department to provide clients with the necessary tools for obtaining employment.

One of our programs, H.I.R.E. (Help in Reentry Employment Education) is a workforce development training curriculum that was designed to address barriers created by an individual's criminal justice involvement. The H.I.R.E. education class takes place in two locations, at the Reeb Avenue Center located on the Southside of Columbus, Ohio and at the Alvis Community Reentry Center. The class is run by four workforce development instructors on a weekly basis, and a range of topics are covered including interviewing skills, resume writing, applications, job retention, and case management. The majority of our clients have served time in a state or federal correctional facility prior to coming to class with incarceration time served ranging anywhere from 9 months to 47 years. Our program has been very successful in providing clients with the necessary tools and skills to seek employment and obtain job related credentials. For example, out of 801 clients served through the H.I.R.E. program in 2018, 70% either obtained employment or a credential (GED Prep/Testing, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 10/30, Serve Safe, and CompTIA Certification) within 90 days. Many of these individuals have gone on to become successful leaders and entrepreneurs within their profession due to having a second opportunity. Some of our clients have either secured jobs or been promoted to supervisory roles within industries such as maintenance, carpentry, construction, warehouse, human resources, customer service, and automotive services. Through our Career Pathways Program, several of our clients have even obtained CDL's and secured employment as truck drivers. The program's success is largely due to its ability to enable people to turn their lives around through employment.

Addressing the Felony Question

Depending on the individual, preparing for a job interview can bring anxiety and stress. One of the biggest challenges facing our clients today when they first come to our class is how to answer the interview question about their background history. Therefore, providing clients with the necessary tools to obtain suitable employment is critical upon completing our program, and how to answer background questions is a central discussion topic during our class. Because the background question disqualifies so many of our clients, we address this topic the first day of class. The question we ask them is, "I see you have been convicted of a felony; can you tell me about that?" As instructors, we then approach answering the question utilizing what we call a three-step process, which involves understanding the question being asked, answering the question in a non-damaging way, and selling your skills.

Although the three-step process has proven to be an effective tool, teaching our clients how to answer background questions is a daily challenge for our workforce development team. Many of our clients can easily answer the question pertaining to the charge that led to

their incarceration, but when it comes to showcasing their own skills and what they bring to the table as a potential employee many of them struggle. The key to preparing our clients is having them understand that they do have employable skills that can be utilized in a positive way to make a stable living. Although workforce development has been challenging to teach, a number of our clients who have come through the H.I.R.E. program and utilized the three-step process have reported having great interviews and eventually obtaining stable employment.

Challenges from Employers

While our clients face obstacles in seeking employment due to their background history, workforce development instructors face similar challenges when gauging employer interest within the community. On a monthly basis, our team of workforce instructors meet with employers within the community who are seeking potential employees for their companies. One of the first questions we ask employers is if they would consider hiring individuals who have a felony in their background history. Many employers will extend second opportunities to our clients but provide low wages, while others with decent income levels tell us that company policy disqualifies any individual with a felony conviction. Others will tell us that it will ultimately depend on the charge and how comfortable they would be with hiring someone who has served prison time. Several studies have shown that disqualifying people with a criminal background has social and economic implications. One study estimated reductions in employment resulting from employment barriers for ex-prisoners cost the United States economy about $80 billion in annual Gross Domestic Product (Bucknor & Barber, 2016; Hopkins, 2018). In addition to the negative effects on the economy, restorative citizens have less economic mobility and earn less than people with no criminal background, resulting in lower income tax revenue. Consequently, as a result of low employment levels, the government may actually spend additional tax dollars on public assistance for ex-prisoners and their families since many documents receiving public assistance (Hopkins, 2018). Despite the evidence, however, employers are still reluctant to hire individuals with a criminal background history due to a number of common issues.

Employers generally have a number of concerns that influence whether or not they choose to hire anyone with a criminal history. These issues are quite common to our clients and can be seen throughout most industries in most states. Using data obtained from in-depth interviews with employers who have considered hiring people with a felony on their record in the Baltimore Metropolitan area, one phenomenological study yielded findings that perception, trust, lack of work readiness skills, negative past interactions, and media reporting played significant roles in employers' hiring decisions (Obatusin & Ritter-Williams, 2019). The study further revealed that employers recognize restorative citizens need assistance with basic workplace skills, but the risk of backlash from customer perceptions was a major concern. These findings are common barriers that still exist today for both clients and the workforce development instructors who assist them. However, we do our best to not only educate employers about our clients and their marketable skill sets, but we also note the economic benefits of hiring individuals who have a past criminal background history.

Incentives to Hire Restorative Citizens

In an attempt to incentivize employers to hire individuals with a criminal background, the Federal Bonding Program and Work Opportunity Tax Credit was created. The Federal Bonding Program is, in essence, insurance at zero cost to any employer who hires a job seeker that has a felony on their record. This program was formulated to alleviate concerns from employers who were reluctant to hire clients for fear of theft or damage. Bonds are issued from the federal government in $5,000 increments and up to possibly $25,000. Em-

ployers must reapply for the bond every 6 months (National Hire Network, 2017). The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal income tax credit that provides incentives to private, for profit businesses to hire targeted groups of job seekers with significant barriers to employment including public assistance recipients, veterans, youth, and persons with felony records. Under the WOTC program, an employer that hires someone with a felony on their record, may claim a tax credit equal to 25% of the eligible new-hire's first year wages if the individual works at least 120 hours, up to the maximum amount of $1500.77. If the individual works at least 400 hours, the employer may claim a tax credit equal to 40% of the employee's first year's wages, up to the maximum amount of $2400 (Hillyer, 2016). To be eligible for the WOTC program, the newly hired employee must have been convicted of a felony and have a hiring date that is less than one year from the last date of conviction or release from prison. The process for employers to claim the federal tax credit is relatively straightforward and involves filling out and submitting Internal Revenue Service forms within twenty-eight days of the eligible employee's start date (Hillyer, 2016). When speaking on these hiring incentives, we find that many employers are unaware of these programs. Therefore, as workforce development instructors, we always share this information with our clients and potential employers with the goal of persuading more companies to offer employment opportunities for our clients.

Conclusion

It is critical that employers continue to provide opportunities for individuals with a background history. A number of our clients possess the proper credentials and skills that lessen the burden on employers having to spend additional dollars in training.

While the decision is left to employers, it is also the collective responsibility of policymakers, reintegration teams, correctional administrators, reentry program managers, and job-readiness programs to provide and prepare individuals for life on the outside. There have been a number of discussions and strategies regarding employment within the world of reentry that have been implemented in some states. In their study of workforce opportunities for restorative citizens, Hunt et. al. (2018) said that combining job placement programs such as transitional employment, with certificates of rehabilitation or guaranteed replacement worker programs, expanding post-conviction certification programs, particularly those that verify work history, would bring additional employees to the workforce. The creation of the Certificate of Qualification for Employment (CQE) in Ohio is a credential that allows people with a previous felony or misdemeanor conviction to apply to the court to lift the collateral sanction barring them from being considered for employment in a particular field. This is another alternative that could be utilized for restorative citizens in other states if implemented correctly (Taliaferro & Pham, 2018).

Participation in the legitimate workforce has the potential to not only improve reentry outcomes, but also facilitate desistance from crime through the development of prosocial bonds and social capital (Gill & Wilson, 2017). Many of our clients can no longer work in their career fields due to the nature of their crime, which placed restrictions on obtaining the proper credentials. This not only places a financial hardship on the client, but also the family that they are now trying to support. Lifting or easing some of these restrictions through the CQE could not only provide these individuals the opportunity to obtain employment in their skill set with a livable wage, but could also provide them the opportunity to care for their family and contribute to the tax base.

In working with clients through the H.I.R.E. program, the process of obtaining employment, minimum wage jobs, low paying jobs, or jobs with no chance of advancement are also inadequate. Stable employment and jobs with a higher occupational level should be made more available to high-risk individuals, which could help reduce crime rates (Ramak-

ers, Nieuwbeerta, Wilsem, & Dirkzwager, 2017).

The last reentry strategy that should be adopted in correctional facilities is that reintegration should begin from the moment an individual is incarcerated, instead of upon release from prison. In my experience, some correctional facilities have reintegration centers where there are an abundance of resources for clients to take advantage of, while in others there is little to no training availability due to prison status, budget constraints, and inadequate staffing levels. Additional funds and programming should be allocated and available to all correctional facilities so that inmates are provided with the necessary reentry tools earlier in their sentences.

Working in reentry presents numerous challenges to administrators, staff, and our clients. In addition to finding employment, reintegrating back into society for our clients generally entails a number of other items such as education, substance abuse programming, anger management, and cognitive behavioral therapy. These additional areas of concern are an important component of successful reentry. However, obtaining suitable employment is not only a major component of reentering society, but also provides numerous benefits to our clients, their families, our communities, economy, and public safety.

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Innovative Phone-in Radio Program for Prisoners Enrolled as Students at Indira Gandhi National Open University

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Abstract: *Providing education to prisoners while in jail is a win-win situation for both prisoners and society. For prisoners, the educational experiences in jail reduce their mental strain, isolation, and stress due to incarceration and simultaneously make them employment ready after their release from prison. Education helps prisoners become fit to earn on their own, and thereby reduces the chances of returning to jail (recidivism). Therefore, through educational experiences, the government saves money on prisoners' maintenance and earns taxes from their later employment. Providing education to prisoners, especially increasing efforts to provide quality education, such as is available to common students, is needed. The 'Nagpur Experiment', wherein the student prisoners of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) at Nagpur Central Jail are provided the 'Mediated Phone in Radio Counselling' through public radio on a live radio programme is an attempt in this direction.*

Keywords: *prisoner education, radio, phone-in, IGNOU, Nagpur*

Introduction

According to Indian philosophy, "Saa Vidyaa Yaa Vimuktaye." This Sanskrit saying means "knowledge liberates from bondage." Thus, the purpose of knowledge is liberation from greed, bad feelings, sadness, etc. This knowledge should be made available to all sections of society without hindrance. In this direction, prisoners are one part of society who are deprived of several basic needs, and the development of knowledge through education is among them.

Education of prisoners is a matter of concern, as it is not given due importance in many countries. Though providing educational opportunity to prisoners is indeed the first step, creating an enabling and supporting environment for prisoners to educate themselves while in prison is the next step. This article discusses these issues with a value-added prison education activity directed by Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) at the Central Prison in the city of Nagpur (Central India). IGNOU is the premier distance education institute in India and offers free higher education to prisoners in the country. To break the isolated learning of the student prisoners at Nagpur, a phone-in radio program was started through Gyan Vani Public Radio. The details of this program are discussed in this article.

Indira Gandhi National Open University

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) is a Central (Federal) University under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. It was established by an Act of Parliament in 1985 with an objective to promote and strengthen distance education in the country. It is the premier distance education institution with the entire country (707 districts) under its jurisdiction. As of 2018, it is offering 241 academic programs that include certificates, diplomas, undergraduate degrees, postgraduate degrees, M.Phil, and Ph.D degrees. The disciplines also vary and include the general arts, humanities, social sciences, natural

sciences, medical sciences, and information technology. The programs are delivered and monitored through a National Network of 67 Regional Centers and 3,430 Learner Support Centers; these are reputed institutions with the necessary infrastructure to run the allotted courses. IGNOU enrolled 1,147,056 learners during 2018-2019 and have 3,093,583 learners on the rosters. All the degrees of IGNOU are well-recognized and are on par with other universities. IGNOU uses multiple media instruction in addition to printed self-instruction materials sent to students by speed post. The multiple media resources include an online web portal, Gyan Darshan (dedicated TV channel), and Gyan Vani (dedicated FM Radio Network).

Since its inception, IGNOU has been striving to reach out to under-served sections of society, including those in rural and forest areas, prisoners, transgender people, and commercial sex workers. It makes special efforts in bringing these groups into the higher education fold.

One such special initiative is the Bachelor's Preparatory Program (BPP). Most of the deprived groups study only in the school in their vicinity. They do not want to leave their village and travel to other towns or cities for higher studies. Also, they need to engage in labor to sustain themselves and their families. Most of their educational qualifications will be up to the 5th, 8th, or 10th grade level. Their physical, geographical, economic, or social conditions prevent them from studying further even if they have a desire to study at a later stage of life. They cannot join higher education as they have not passed the 10+2 grade exam, which is an essential prerequisite for undergraduate admissions.

Thus, IGNOU offers a bridge course to bring all such adults into higher education studies. This course is a six-month Bachelor's Preparatory Program, which is offered to anyone who is eighteen years of age; it operates without any barrier based on religion, region, economic status, or gender. The students are provided with study materials, and they have to appear for a national-level exam that consists of two papers. Those who successfully complete the exam are eligible to join the three-year BA, B.Com, BSW, or BA (tourism studies) programs of IGNOU. This BPP serves as a true gift for all those who have a desire to study further, but who would otherwise be deprived of this opportunity due to various constraints.

As part of these efforts, IGNOU has started offering free education to prisoners and has waived all sorts of fees including admission, examination, and convocation fees. For all the prisoners, self instruction study material is provided in their chosen language (English, Hindi or Marathi). The prisoners constituted 2.66% of IGNOU students from 2013-2015 (Chaudhary et al., 2014). The prisoners of Nagpur Central Jail are part of this student cohort.

Nagpur Central Jail and IGNOU Student Prisoners

Nagpur Central Jail is one of the oldest central jails in the country. The jail has been proactive in the reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners. IGNOU Nagpur Regional Center opened a special study center for prisoners there in 2010. Through various persistent efforts, the prisoners have shown a keen interest to join several programs offered by IGNOU. The efforts include "Gyan Ganga," awareness meetings, which are held regularly to motivate the prisoners to educate themselves through the free education offered by IGNOU. In these meetings, prisoners are told about the importance of IGNOU, the study methods it follows, and the recognition of degrees awarded by IGNOU for employment and further studies. They are advised to utilize their free time in jail positively and constructively by joining IGNOU Studies. This program helps them to receive a degree, which is the same as the one received by any IGNOU student outside of prison.

Other motivational educational experiences provided by IGNOU include quiz competitions, debates, and essay writing competitions, which are conducted frequently for student prisoners. Prizes are distributed by eminent personalities like Vice Chancellors and Directors of National Institutes. As a result, the cumulative student enrollment, which started at 12, today

has reached 1,018. The students include those sentenced to the death penalty and women (currently 46).

Gyan Vani FM Radio Station and the Nagpur Experiment

Prisoners are in an isolated and secluded environment removed from society. Radio is used in a few countries to broadcast programs to prisoners from the outside and to create a community within prison premises for the prisoners, so as to reduce their seclusion and feelings of isolation. The Prison Radio Project in San Francisco, Prison Radio Association (PRA) in the UK, Radio Focus in Israel, and Community Radio in Pune, Mumbai and the Central Jails of Maharashtra, India are some such initiatives that provide programs for prisoners (Ansari, 2014). The specialty of the Nagpur Radio Experiment is that prisoners are involved in a "live" broadcast on public radio where they can ask their questions. A description of the program follows.

IGNOU has a network of Gyan Vani FM Radio Stations with a dedicated education channel in different cities. Nagpur Gyan Vani resumed functioning, after a break in 2013 for administrative reasons, in December 2017. It broadcasts recorded academic programs, interviews, and "live" phone-in programs hosted by experts. Subject-specific academic sessions are also held for IGNOU students. Students who are not in prison can call the teacher in the studio and ask their questions and listen to clarifications. Whereas this resource is enjoyed by common students, students in prison were previously deprived of this opportunity due to security and other reasons.

As a result of this limitation, efforts were made to convince the prison authorities to provide FM radio in their academic auditorium, a space earmarked for academic or spiritual activities. We explained to the authorities that we had an increasing number of students, and our initiative was in tune with their objective of "reformation and rehabilitation." We explained that this unique experiment was the first of its kind and that its success would bring an associated positive image to the prison. They agreed to provide the FM radio and the auditorium, so that student prisoners could sit and listen to the questions asked by outside students and the answers given by the teacher. However, the students missed an opportunity to ask their own questions and receive clarifications.

Due to the restrictions inside the jail premises, the prisoners had no access to a telephone. By understanding these local conditions, we circumvented this difficulty by discovering an innovative mediated phone-in radio counseling program, where the prisoners did not directly use the telephone. The sessions were announced one week in advance. Student prisoners were advised to go through the relevant self-instruction study material provided and determine the clarifications they need.

Timing of the program was scheduled in consultation with the prison authorities so that attendance was ensured. To be more specific, the general phone-in program was held from 7:00 PM to 8:00 PM, but this time was not suitable for prisoners, as they were in their respective barracks before sunset. So, for prisoners, the radio programs were scheduled in the morning from 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM. Even if someone had work duty, that person could receive permission to attend the radio program.

Students submitted their doubts, questions, and clarifications on a relevant topic to the Coordinator of the IGNOU Special Study Center in the jail. Radio counseling for some common subjects of BPP (such as a preparatory course in social sciences) and BA 1st year courses (such as a foundation course in Hindi, humanities, or social sciences) were held. The average number of questions per session was three, and sometimes went up to six. Some of the questions have included: "Could you please explain the special features of the Indian Constitution?"; "What is the Citizen's Charter?"; and "What is the difference between formal and informal letters?" The students assembled in the hall to listen to the program. Then, the coordinator came to the jail office and called the Gyan Vani Radio Station Studio while the session was going live. He

would call and say that there was a question from a Nagpur Central Jail Student Prisoner and read the question. The teacher in the studio answered the query and the student prisoners sitting in the jail listened to their questions being answered. The process continued until the end of the session. The teacher concluded with what would be discussed in the next session. Due to the unique nature of this experiment, both society and the media have shown a keen interest. A recent newspaper article titled "Prisoners in Nagpur to take Radio route to excel in education; Body is trapped, Mind is free: IGNOU launches Phone in Radio Counselling to help Nagpur Central Jail Prisoners" highlighted the program (Swarajya, 2019 and Kulkarni, 2019).

It should be added that the radio program is a public media program and could also be listened to by outside students. So, outside students taking the same courses were also notified about the timing of the program. Thus, it has a wider outreach and in a sense is "reverse inclusive," because although it is primarily meant for student prisoners, it also includes public students.

This being a new experiment, the author personally interacted with student prisoners at the prison premises to listen to their feedback and suggestions for improvement. They expressed their happiness that it was becoming easier to study as their study problems are solved, that the language of teaching has become localized (otherwise study material is prepared in National level Hindi), and that they are becoming increasingly motivated for their studies. They were so interested that they wanted to increase the frequency of the program to two or three sessions per week and to extend sessions for other courses. They also wanted to broadcast the program through speakers in all barracks, because at present, only those near the radio listen.

Conclusion

Providing educational opportunities to prisoners while in jail is a win-win situation for both prisoners and society. To create an enabling environment and multidimensional support to motivate prisoners and sustain their desire is crucial. In this direction, the present Nagpur Experiment, the innovative phone-in radio program, was undertaken. This is a simple program that can be followed anywhere in the world with minimal efforts. Radio is affordable, accessible, and simple to operate. In most cases, no external connection is needed, and even mobile phones have built-in radio. Therefore, radio can be an effective medium for communication flow from one side. It can be more effective with a two-way communication flow and the present Nagpur Experiment stands as an example for the development of this method of communication for underprivileged and underserved populations.

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PRACTITIONER PAPER

Dr. Larry Brewster and California Arts-in-Corrections:
A Case Study in Correctional Arts Research

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Abstract: *The correctional arts field is strong on supporting anecdotes but light on evidence-based research. In other words, it has more stories than numbers. One exception is the long-running California Arts-in-Corrections program (AIC). Not only does AIC have more studies demonstrating benefit, all but one of those studies were conducted by Dr. Larry Brewster, currently of the University of San Francisco. This case study tells the story of how that body of research came to exist. It juxtaposes the importance of having evidence-based research on correctional arts programs with the challenges of conducting such research. Readers will gain an understanding of how correctional arts can benefit rehabilitation and reentry initiatives for prisoners as well as how rigorous research can aid that effort. This article lays the groundwork for discussion on how an important avenue for rehabilitation and reentry can be developed by making sure the field has numbers to match the stories.*

Keywords: *Arts-in-Corrections, correctional arts, evidence-based research*

Arts programs exist widely and sporadically, if not consistently, in U.S. correctional settings (jail, prison, probation/parole). Given the impermanent nature of many of these programs, it is virtually impossible to gauge exactly how many actually exist. The Justice Arts Coalition lists more than 350 around the nation. No doubt, there could be both additions and subtractions on any given day, not to mention small individual programs that are never formally acknowledged. Regardless, when asked, many — if not most — correctional arts practitioners will quickly tell you that these programs are "successful." These conclusions are typically based on the transformation of a specific individual. Moving as many of these accounts are, they are like most assessments of the success, or not, of arts-in-corrections programs in the U.S.: they rarely rise above the anecdotal. The YouthARTS Development Handbook (1998) pointed out that despite the existence of hundreds of programs for at-risk youth, "very few rigorous evaluations of such programs have been conducted. Instead, arts agencies have relied on anecdotal evidence of program success to leverage the re-sources needed to support their arts programs for at-risk youth" (p. 123). Similarly, Rachel Marie-Crane Williams writes in Teaching the Arts Behind Bars (2003), "There are many successful arts-in-corrections programs across the United States and elsewhere. Many of these programs have never been evaluated, their outcomes have never been measured, and their history has never been documented" (p. 167). While this is true in the United States, it is less the case in Europe, Australia, and other parts of the world.

Although more studies have been published since those two remarks, the trend still largely holds true. Various explanations have been put forward: fear of negative results; lack of resources or perceived lack of resources, and "methodological paralysis" (YouthARTS Handbook, 2001, p. 127). While a well-done evaluation can provide justification for continued or increased funding, as well as point an organization toward better use of existing resources, such a project is also a major undertaking. Many correctional arts programs simply do not

have the longevity or staff to initiate such a project. The research the field does have tends to be patchwork, says Grady Hillman, prison arts pioneer and co-author (with this author) of the Prison Arts Resource Project, a compilation of all evidence-based studies conducted on U.S. correctional arts programs. "This reflects the nature of the programs: male, female, done in different states with different correctional cultures. It reflects what was available in terms of getting information," he said (personal communication, Nov. 30, 2018).

One program, however, stands in stark contrast to the trend. The California Arts-in-Corrections (AIC) program, directed by the nonprofit William James Association, is the longest running correctional arts program in the United States and also has the most research behind it. Six studies of AIC document its effectiveness in a variety of outcomes, from saving money and reducing recidivism, to enhancing self-esteem and cultivating skills. All but one can be traced back to one researcher, Dr. Larry Brewster, currently emeritus professor at the University of San Francisco (USF), who produced the evaluations over a period of 35 years. It is unusual not only to have such a long-lasting program, but also to have so many rigorous evaluations and to have the lion's share come from one interested researcher. As part of my research, I interviewed Dr. Larry Brewster on October 11, 2018 and January 7, 2020; all of his quotations are a result of these personal communications.

The number and quality of formal AIC program evaluations have become their own success story in the field of correctional arts. Practitioners and administrators still rely on Brewster's seminal cost-benefit analysis, completed in 1983, to highlight the value of correctional arts programs. "An Evaluation of the Arts-In-Corrections Program of the California Department of Corrections," published by the William James Association, is the first and still the only study of its kind in the United States.

Eloise Smith, arts visionary at the William James Association, first contacted Brewster in 1982, Brewster recalled. She had founded the Prison Arts Program, a precursor to AIC, in 1977 to broaden the number of individuals exposed to what she called "that mysterious life-enhancing process we call the arts, a realm in which patient application and vivid imagination so often produce magic," according to the William James website. With funding from the San Francisco Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council, and the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Smith set up a pilot project at the California Medical Facility at Vacaville which had expanded to five more facilities by the time Brewster got involved. Smith had seen with her own eyes the program's dramatic effect on participants, but didn't have any persuasive "hard evidence." Her idea was to produce a traditional cost-benefit analysis of the Prison Arts Project and take those numbers and charts to the California legislature and California Department of Corrections (CDC) to prove the value of the program.

"They were seeking more state support," said Brewster. "They wanted to go into all of the state prisons at that time. I think there were 16 or 17." At the time, Brewster was a junior faculty member in the political science department at San Jose State University, pursuing tenure and running a small consulting business on the side. "I don't know how they heard about me, I think mainly because I was so cheap," said Brewster with characteristic self-deprecation.

Brewster had always loved and appreciated the arts but certainly did not consider himself an artist — more of a "numbers man." He also had never been inside a prison and had never given them much thought, either positive or negative. He accepted the assignment. In truth, Brewster was more prepared than he will admit, having just completed a cost-benefit study for the RAND Corporation on victim witness programs in Arizona. "The model for my research in evaluating AIC was taken largely from the work I had just completed with the RAND Corporation," he said.

Brewster selected four facilities for the 1983 evaluation - the original Vacaville site and three others - and looked at costs and benefits from three perspectives: social, taxpayer and individual (p. 5). Not only did Brewster have relatively unfettered access to the data he needed,

he was able to personally visit each of the prisons and interview participants, artist-facilitators, administrators, and CDC staff.

The final report, published in 1983, documented $228,522 in measurable social benefits offsetting a cost to the California Department of Corrections of $162,790 (p. 41). Many of those savings came from fewer disciplinary events among AIC participants, as high as 65.7 percent fewer than the general prison population, depending on the facility (p. 29). This, in turn, had slashed disciplinary administration time by 4,553 hours and related costs by $77,406 (p. 29). The report also noted some of the program's qualitative benefits, notably, that it was "a possible first step of integration into the community [for inmate-artists], improved self-confidence and self-esteem, and improved community institution relations" (p. 41), exactly what Eloise Smith had intended when she started the program.

That ended Brewster's involvement with AIC for 25 years, and marked the end of most research on the program. (One study on AIC conducted by the California CDC and published in 1987 found reduced recidivism among program participants. Brewster was not involved with that evaluation.) "Back in 1983, I was a junior faculty trying to get tenure," said Brewster. "I was focused on teaching, research, service. Then I eventually did get tenure, then I got recruited into administration, and I was doing climbing-up-the-ladder stuff."

Then one fall day in 2007, Brewster found himself sitting in his office at the University of San Francisco metaphorically drumming his fingers. He had just resigned his position as Dean of the College of Professional Studies, capping a successful, 30-year career in teaching and administration. He had indeed climbed the ladder. Now he was casting around for a research project to carry him through the next years, along with his return to teaching. So far, nothing was coming to mind, and he welcomed the distraction of a ringing phone. The voice on the other end belonged to Laurie Brooks, who had been executive director of the William James Association since 2001. Brewster knew of her but had never met or talked to her. In fact, this was the first contact he had had with William James since the cost-benefit report was published in 1983.

Brooks wanted to invite Brewster to the 30th anniversary party of Arts-in-Corrections. "You're our rock star," she told him. This was news to Brewster, who describes himself as old, bald, and unable to "play a lick or sing a note." Brooks explained that the 1983 report not only procured state-wide funding for arts in all the California prisons, it was influential in other states as well.

When Brewster finished the report three decades before, Eloise Smith had taken the cost-benefit analysis to the California state legislature and had indeed succeeded in getting funds to open operations in every state prison. The report had been widely disseminated in the field, and unbeknownst to Brewster, was commonly referred to as "The Brewster Report." He went to the party in Santa Cruz. The connections made and renewed at the celebration would inadvertently set off a second "golden age" in AIC research. It would also make clear Brewster's personal path for the coming decade and beyond.

The year 2007, it turned out, was a bittersweet time to celebrate AIC's birthday. Yes, the program had lasted an astounding 30 years, but in January of 2003, the California Department of Corrections (recently renamed the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation) had cut funding due to the state's well-publicized fiscal woes. AIC, one of many victims of California's budget crisis, was still operating, but on a vastly reduced scale. "I learned at the celebration that they were concerned about the future of the arts program which had been so successful and was considered one of the best models of prison arts programming in the country," said Brewster.

But in AIC's funding cuts, Brewster saw an opportunity to not only support AIC but to occupy him for at least the next year. "You know, I'm back to faculty," Brewster told Brooks and Jack Bowers, chair of the board of directors of the Prison Arts Project. "I'm looking for

projects to work on, and I'm happy to work pro bono," (The 1983 report is the only AIC study Brewster has been paid for, he stated.) Brooks and Bowers accepted. Brewster's first thought was to replicate the cost-benefit analysis which had had such a dramatic impact in 1983, but he quickly realized it was no longer feasible. "It was no longer apples to apples," he said. Not only was there a different level of programming than 25 years earlier, new privacy laws made it nearly impossible for Brewster to get the data he would need. "I had access to inmate files back in 1983 that I never would have access to in today's world," said Brewster.

Brewster quickly realized, though, that there was a goldmine of information completely outside CDC jurisdiction. "I got to thinking, this is a 30-year-old program, so I asked Laurie, 'Surely there are people out of prison who went through this program. Would you know how to reach them?'" Brooks provided a list. This time, Brewster decided to "do a qualitative study and interview past participants and have them reflect back on what the program meant to them while incarcerated and, equally or more importantly, what it has meant to them since their release." The 1983 "numbers" evaluation was an anomaly in the world of correctional arts evaluations in another way, being heavily quantitative. Most of the 62 evidence-based correctional arts evaluations conduced since the 1970s, when research in the field began, tilted towards qualitative analysis, as described in the Prison Arts Resource Project (2014/2019).

Brewster spent his sabbatical year not in his USF office but driving up and down the state of California interviewing former inmate-artists. "When I first started the process, I thought I'd be lucky if anyone would talk with me, or maybe do a 15-20-minute interview at most, [but] I always had my tape recorder hoping they would let me tape them," Brewster recalled. To his surprise, "Every one of them let me talk with them. Every one let me tape the interview. The average length was two-and-a-half hours. One guy, we went on for four hours. I ran out of tape."

The marathon four-hour interview was with Willy, an accomplished artist and illustrator who had spent 30 years in prison. Toward the end of the interview, Willy turned the tables and asked Brewster how he was doing. Those were the years Brewster was trying to write a children's book on Tourette's syndrome, which both he and his father suffer from. It was not going well. "I said actually, I'm really depressed. I've been trying to write this book. I can't do it. It's no good. I wish I were as creative as you," Brewster recalls. "[Willy] said, 'That's alright.' He started coaching and counseling me. I said "Maybe I need to go to prison and I can become creative." Willy responded. "It's helped a lot of people, but I don't advise it. There are other ways to do it."

Willy and the other former artist-inmates (16 in all) revealed that participation in the AIC program had enhanced their self-esteem, work ethic, discipline and identity as artists. All interviewees had successfully completed parole (astonishing given the 65 percent recidivism rate in California reported by the California Innocence Project) and 31 percent (5 of the 16) self-identified as artists, earning all or part of their living through art. Brewster produced two studies resulting from the research. *A Qualitative Study of the California Arts-in-Corrections Program* was published by William James in 2010. A second study, "The California Arts-in-Corrections Music Programme: A Qualitative Study" was published the same year in the *International Journal of Community Music*.

Laurie Brooks and Alma Robinson, Executive Director of California Lawyers for the Arts, took the results to Sacramento hoping to secure more funding for the suffering program but this time had no luck. In fact, the situation at AIC had taken a step backwards. The same year the two qualitative studies were published (2010), the state of California withdrew all funding from AIC. Thanks to private funding, though, William James continued to employ artists at one institution, San Quentin. "Qualitative research by itself doesn't persuade [legislators] as numbers do," Brewster said. Nevertheless, the evaluative base supporting AIC in particular and correctional arts in general was growing.

The interviews and evaluations had taken up Brewster's sabbatical year, and more, but he was not finished. He said:

> I'm now hooked in totally to the AIC program and the folks. I couldn't think of a better gift than to work with these dedicated and talented artists at William James and the people they hired to deliver these programs. I [also] came to know so many really wonderful artists in prison, humans in prison. Many of them are lifers who are now very different people than when they came to prison in their late teens or early 20s having committed murder. So many others were in just because of drugs and not a violent act. I started to open my eyes more fully to the injustices of the criminal justice system and started writing about that more generally independent of art. It just took me down a road that gave my life meaning.

Brewster was now devoting about 80 percent of his time working on behalf of AIC, and Brooks and Robinson were continuing their advocacy as well. They managed to secure enough grant money from private sources for several pilot arts programs in different facilities. In addition to these pilot programs, Brewster expanded his evaluation to include other well-respected prison theater and arts programs. They are: The Actors' Gang, first started as a drama program at California Rehabilitation Center Norco; Marin Shakespeare, initially offered as a classic theater program at San Quentin; the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission, which provided programming at New Folsom State Prison.

"These were kind of miniature AIC programs that allowed me to do pre- and post-surveys, observational research, interviews, and secondary data – a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods," Brewster said. Brewster once again gained access to artist-inmates still behind bars. He used the Life Effectiveness Questionnaire (LEQ). Specifically, Brewster measured time management, social competence, achievement motivation, intellectual flexibility, emotional control, active initiative, and self-confidence in 110 adult male inmates at the four institutions with pilot programs.

"California Prison Arts: A Quantitative Evaluation" was published in the *Justice Policy Journal* in 2014. The report found positive correlations between participation in arts programs and all of the specified endpoints. In addition, self-reported disciplinary reports declined, and 61 percent of those who participated in AIC for five or more years reported improved behavior. "The study and reports were eventually presented to the state oversight committee," said Brewster. "It's a panel of researchers that are charged with reviewing all research related to the Department of Corrections and so my research was some of that. I made a presentation to this committee."

In 2013, just prior to actual publication, the California legislature allocated an initial $2.5 million to reboot AIC. As of this writing, the program has been allocated at least $8 million annually. "We are back in every prison [35] but not in a robust way. We're not offering the widest range of arts programs but we are in every prison," said Brewster. "Who knows what the future budget will look like. Right now, we're re-funded so this program is permanently back in the budget. The artists are being hired."

Arts in corrections programs have expanded into county jails, and Brewster has spearheaded the County Jails Project, a qualitative–quantitative study of arts programs in jails sponsored by California Lawyers for the Arts and William James. This research presents entirely new methodological challenges given that jail populations tend to be highly transitory, unlike prison populations. The multi-year project is assessing behavioral and attitudinal changes among AIC participants in county jails throughout California. Initial results in 2016, and revised results appearing in 2018, were overwhelmingly positive.

The longevity and success of the California Arts-in-Corrections programs must be attributed in some measure, perhaps in large measure, to long-standing efforts to produce ev-

idence-based research. This ever-growing body of research continues to propel the program forward. In December of 2019, California Lawyers for the Arts announced that it had received a $60,000 grant from the U.S. National Endowment for the Arts to replicate evidence-based demonstration projects in correctional facilities in Louisiana, Michigan, New York, Ohio and Texas. The first demonstration project — in New York — has already begun. Evaluations will be based on pre- and post-surveys provided by students participating in 12-week art classes. Brewster feels a "next step" in correctional arts research is to measure the explanatory power of six theories that have been tested via focus groups. "I think it is important to explicitly artic-ulate and measure the relevance and explanatory power of the six theories: we think help to ex-plain why the arts programs consistently yield positive evaluation results." Those six theories are Cognitive Behavioral, Social Learning, Resilience, Social Capital, Performance Theories and Desistance. The four top contenders for AIC programs, according to Brewster, are Social Learning, Social Capital, Resilience and Desistance. "Desistance theory supports the Good Lives model, which we think deserves further investigation as a theory/model for explaining positive outcomes in prison fine arts programs," he said.

Despite its track record in producing evidence-based research, California AIC high-lights the considerable challenges facing researchers in correctional settings. It also illustrates an instructive lesson in persistence and flexibility. As Charles Darwin learned, species (and perhaps correctional arts research could be considered its own species) survive and thrive de-pending on how adaptable they are. The California evidence largely reflects methodologies which were possible at the time. In 1983, Brewster had access to data which enabled him to perform a rigorous cost-benefit analysis, a type of study usually ranked towards the top of the research-methodology hierarchy. Institutional rules inside and among correctional facilities changed, and later studies were forced to rely on qualitative or combined qualitative-quanti-tative data more from individual participants and less reflective of institutional information. Correctional arts administrators, practitioners, and funders cry for "proof" of effectiveness. Brewster and other researchers have continued to provide such proof, because they have been able to adapt to the often whimsical and inexplicable circumstances in the U.S. justice system.

Given the hurdles, one could argue that any research on correctional arts programs is positive. While certainly randomized, controlled, double-blind studies are still the gold stan-dard in any field, these are rarely possible in jails, prisons, or among probationers and parolees. Other methodologies, however, are possible and the number of methodologies available to both novice and veteran researchers is expanding, whether these be quantitative, qualitative or mixed. All of these methods have been employed in the compendium of California (and U.S.) AIC research. In the case of California, success bred success with research leading to continua-tion and even expansion of programs leading to more research, more program triumphs, and so on. Practitioners and administrators should not be afraid to explore available methodologies, to undertake their own research, and add to the body of evidence which justifies correctional arts programs, which previous evidence-based research has shown can cut costs, reduce recidivism, bolster confidence, and contribute to the success of offenders when free of the walls of the jus-tice system.

Brewster is now officially retired from USF, though still teaching, and he said he will probably never "retire" from AIC. He considers himself one of the lucky ones, blessed with the opportunity to work with so many extraordinary people inside and outside prison walls. "I'm not an especially religious person," he said. "I'm a spiritual person, and I couldn't help but think that this was all kind of meant to be in some weird way. Laurie literally called me within a month or two of stepping down as Dean. They gave me a year's sabbatical to get retuned and retrained to teach, and so I had all this time to resurrect AIC's program evaluation."

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The Prison Education Project in Scotland

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Abstract: *The Prison Education Project (PEP) is the largest prison education program of its kind in the United States. With the assistance of 2,400 university student and faculty volunteers, PEP has served approximately 7,000 inmates in 14 correctional facilities in California since 2011. By providing academic, life skills, and career development programming, PEP aims to educate, empower, and transform the lives of incarcerated individuals. Since 2014, this program has taken a group of veteran volunteers to an international destination to teach courses in prisons in Uganda, England, and Scotland. This article will focus on the PEP-Scotland experience. Eleven PEP instructors traveled to Edinburgh, Scotland to teach courses in HMP Addiewell. There were 10 African American and one Asian American instructors on the PEP team. Nearly 100% of the inmates in their classes were white. This added an interesting dynamic to the experience. There were eleven 105-minute courses taught over a five-day period. This article will briefly discuss the genesis of this project, the content of the courses that were taught, the international prison education movement, the spirit of volunteerism, and the post-course outcome data. At the end of the courses, the in-custody students were given a survey, which contained three closed-ended questions and one open-ended question. The in-custody students' responses to the open-ended survey question describe this experience in ways in which this author could not--with vivid clarity, depth, and breadth.*

Keywords: *Prison Education Project, Scottish Prison Service, HMP Addiewell*

Introduction

The Prison Education Project (PEP) was founded in 2011. With the assistance of 2,400 university student and faculty volunteers, PEP has served approximately 7,000 incarcerated individuals in 14 correctional facilities in California. PEP has become the largest prison education program of its kind in the United States. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and PEP have embraced a progressive and innovative approach to supplementing and expanding educational opportunities for in-custody students. By providing academic, life skills, and career development programming, PEP aims to educate, empower, and transform the lives of incarcerated individuals. The goal of PEP is to create a "Prison-to-School Pipeline" and provide in-custody students with the cognitive tools necessary to function as productive citizens. Our multi-layered approach enhances human development, reduces recidivism, saves resources, and allows participants to ultimately contribute to the economic and civic life of California.

Since 2014, each summer PEP takes a group of veteran volunteers to an international destination to volunteer in a prison: Uganda, England, and Scotland. Each of these international experiences has given PEP volunteers a chance to increase the breadth and depth of their knowledge on the dynamics of prison education from a comparative perspective. In order to be eligible to participate in the international prison education program, volunteers must have committed to at least two PEP semesters. The international excursion is a reward for this com-

mitment to the prison education cause.

During May of 2019, I took a group of California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, students to London on a study abroad trip, during which they volunteered for London-based non-profit organizations for one week. During this time, I was invited by L.J. Flanders, the formerly incarcerated author of the book *Cell Workout*, to visit Her Majesty's Prison Addiewell. I met him at the Brixton facility on our visit there the year before. I visited the Addiewell facility with Flanders to watch him demonstrate his *Cell Workout* routines. I saw this as an opportunity to engage the Addiewell staff about bringing a group of PEP volunteers to the facility to teach later that summer. I asked, and their education staff enthusiastically said, "Yes." However, months before our scheduled visit, there was mayhem at Addiewell. The prison had garnered the attention of the BBC and other news outlets for violent attacks on staff, drug raids on warders' homes, the attempted murder of a senior officer, as well as tensions between prisoners (McKay, 2019).

This chaos took place on the non-education wings of the facility, and I decided to take my volunteers to the Addiewell facility and focus strictly on educating, empowering, and inspiring the in-custody students. Three of the volunteers were previously incarcerated in some of the most violent prisons in America. The others had volunteered in some of the most chaotic prisons in California. Given the recent mayhem in Addiewell, the eleven volunteers that traveled there to teach were the ideal instructors, because their previous experiences in these settings made them fearless. The Addiewell education staff placed some of their incarcerated students with the most intransigent behavior in the PEP classes, and even this population was moved and transformed by our instructors.

One of the most interesting dynamics of this experience was the racial dynamics. There were ten African Americans and one Asian American instructor. Almost 100% of the in-custody students in Addiewell were white. There seemed to be a bond with the in-custody students and the instructors around the theme of oppression. Being incarcerated, they are oppressed and they seemed to be keenly aware of the historic oppression of African Americans in the U.S. In fact, there was a poster display in one of the Addiewell classrooms that meticulously explained the triangular slave trade. In their gym and art classroom hung paintings of black icons such as Muhammad Ali, Tupac Shakur, Jimi Hendrix, Bob Marley, Nelson Mandela, and Usain Bolt. I had the opportunity to sit in all of the classes and the in-custody students displayed no resistance to being taught by this group. The in-custody students actually signed up for the "Hip-Hop Culture" course because they were intrigued by this musical art form, which was created by young blacks from the inner-cities of the United States.

The Scottish Prison Service and HMP Addiewell

The motto of the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) is "Unlocking Potential Transforming Lives." SPS was established in 1993 by the Scottish government. An SPS Framework Document was written by Scottish Ministers, which outlines the objectives and the resources of Scottish prisons. The SPS is legally required to deliver custodial and rehabilitative services to their incarcerated population. The principal objective of SPS is to:

> Contribute to making Scotland Safer by Protecting the Public and Reducing Reoffending. The SPS aims to achieve this by ensuring delivery of secure custody, safe and ordered prisons, decent standards of care and opportunities for prisoners to develop in a way that help them reintegrate into the community on release. (Scottish Prison Service, 2019)

Prison education in Scottish prisons is contracted by SPS to external providers. In the context of post-secondary education, contracts are given to Colleges of Further Education, which specialize in vocational education. New College Lanarkshire and Fife College hold the contracts to provide post-compulsory education in the prison for SPS. The contracts mandate

that these colleges provide literacy and mathematics, health and wellbeing, expressive arts and social studies, and information communication technology courses (Galloway, 2016).

There are 13 publicly managed prisons and two privately managed prisons in Scotland. HMP Addiewell is one of the privately managed prisons. It is managed by Sodexo under the authority of the Scottish Prison Service. The facility was built in 2008 and houses all levels of incarcerated individuals. Addiewell houses 700 adult males. It is located between the country's two biggest cities, Glasgow and Edinburgh. When it was built, Addiewell was the only correctional facility in Scotland that was dedicated to education. Sodexo is mandated by the SPS to offer 40 hours "purposeful activity" courses per week. These courses are divided into three main categories: Learning and Skills, Jobs, and Programmed Interventions. In-custody students receive a modest payment for attending classes. According to the prison's homepage:

> Addiewell is designed as a 'learning' prison, where offenders can address their offending behaviour and the circumstances which led to their imprisonment. The learning aspect aims to improve their employability prospects, their wellbeing, and community support networks, leading to a reduction in reoffending. (Scottish Prison Service, Addiewell, 2019)

In January 2019, the Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, found the relationship between the staff to be "positive and respectful," and she stated that the prison is "well poised for its next era." Her major criticism of Addiewell was the shortage in staffing. It is challenging to retain staff at Addiewell (BBC News, 2019).

We found the Addiewell education staff to be the consummate professionals. They had established respectful relations with the in-custody population and created a wholesome learning environment for them to transform themselves.

In terms of the logistics of the PEP-Scotland initiative, I emailed a group of PEP veterans inviting them to sign up for PEP-Scotland. There were eleven veterans who signed up. These individuals were instructed on the dates of the trip and of the mandatory orientation in Edinburgh. They each secured their own lodging. The Addiewell education staff wanted the PEP team to teach 105-minute courses in the facility twice per day for five days. We agreed that the most useful and exciting courses would be: "Introduction to Soft Skills," "Self-Empowerment," "Creative Expression," and "Hip-Hop Culture." Flyers containing an outline of the different courses were given to the in-custody population in Addiewell so that they could sign up. The following is an overview of the things that were taught in the facility:

Introduction to Soft Skills: Communication Skills, Nonverbal Communication, Conflict Resolution, Emotional Intelligence, Adaptability, Problem-Solving, Critical Observation

Self-Empowerment: Self-Care, Reading, Writing, Journaling, Soft Skills, Forgiveness of Others and Self, Introspection, Reflection, Meditation, Positivity

Creative Expression: Self-Expression, Creativity, Artistic Practice, Expressing Impulsive Thoughts Through Art, Brainstorming, Imagination, Giving Shape to Ideas

Hip-Hop Culture: The History of Hip-Hop, The Art of Storytelling, Spoken Word, Lyrics & Politics, Battle Rapping, Conscious Rap, Metaphors, Simile, Hyperbole

The instructors taught six courses from 10:00-11:45 a.m. and five courses from 13:20-14:45. There were three Soft Skills courses, a Hip-Hop course, a Creative Expression, and a Self-Empowerment course taught in the morning. For the later session, there were two Soft Skills courses, a Self-Empowerment, a Creative Expression, and a Hip-Hop course taught.

At the end of the courses, the in-custody students were given a survey, which contained three closed-ended questions and one open-ended question. The in-custody students' responses to the open-ended survey question describe this experience with vivid clarity, depth, and breadth.

Outcomes

The "Introduction to Soft Skills" data are the aggregate responses of five courses taught. The Self-Empowerment, Creative Expression, and Hip-Hop course data are the aggregate responses of two courses taught. There as an open-ended response from each person that completed the survey. The author included a selection of responses – per course[1] –.

Figure 1

*PEP-Scotland: Introduction to Soft Skills, HMP Addiewell, Summer 2019*
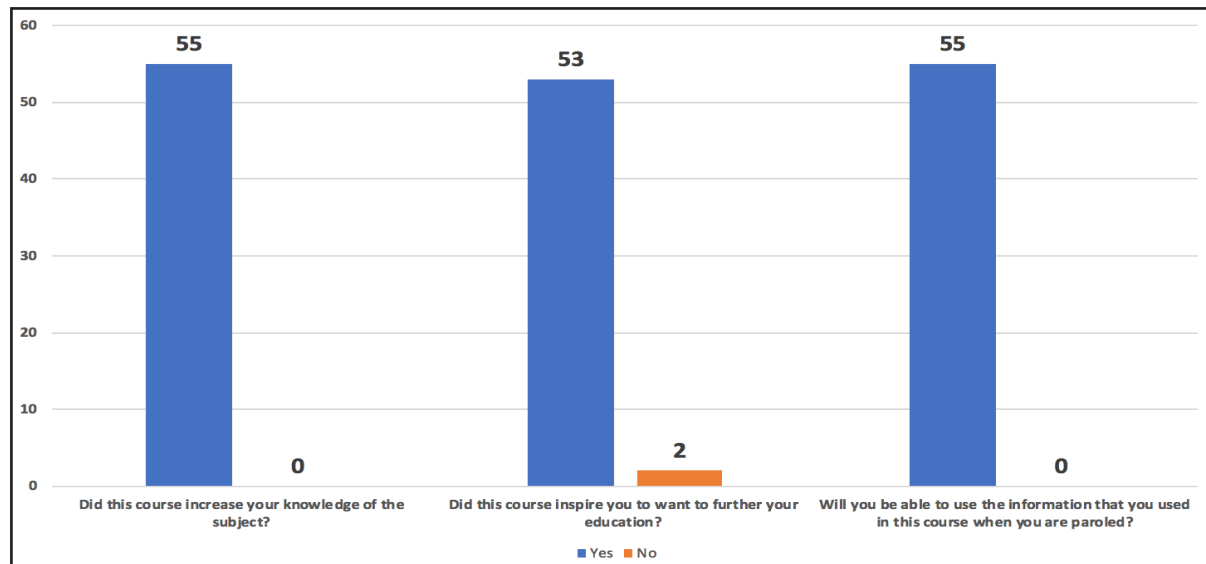
Introduction to Soft Skills Post-Course Comments

- "I really enjoyed this course. The instructors were really inspiring. They taught things that will help me move forward and better my life. Thank you."

- "Yes, I really liked this course, and I think it will help other prisoners as it has helped me."

- "I thought this course was really good. It opened my mind to how I am as a person. It was good to look at my strengths and weaknesses. Great Course, Great Teachers, Much Respect!"

- "I will take a lot away from this experience and use it to my benefit when I am released into the community. Thanks for the help."

- "I think it was great and I think prisons should do more of these types of classes in the future because I learned more about myself doing the color chart thing and I was amazed my personality was all the colors: blue, green, orange, gold—unbelievable."

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1 View the full survey results.
http://www.prisoneducationproject.org/PEPScotlandSurveyData2019.pdf

Figure 2

*PEP-Scotland: Self-Empowerment, HMP Addiewell, Summer 2019*
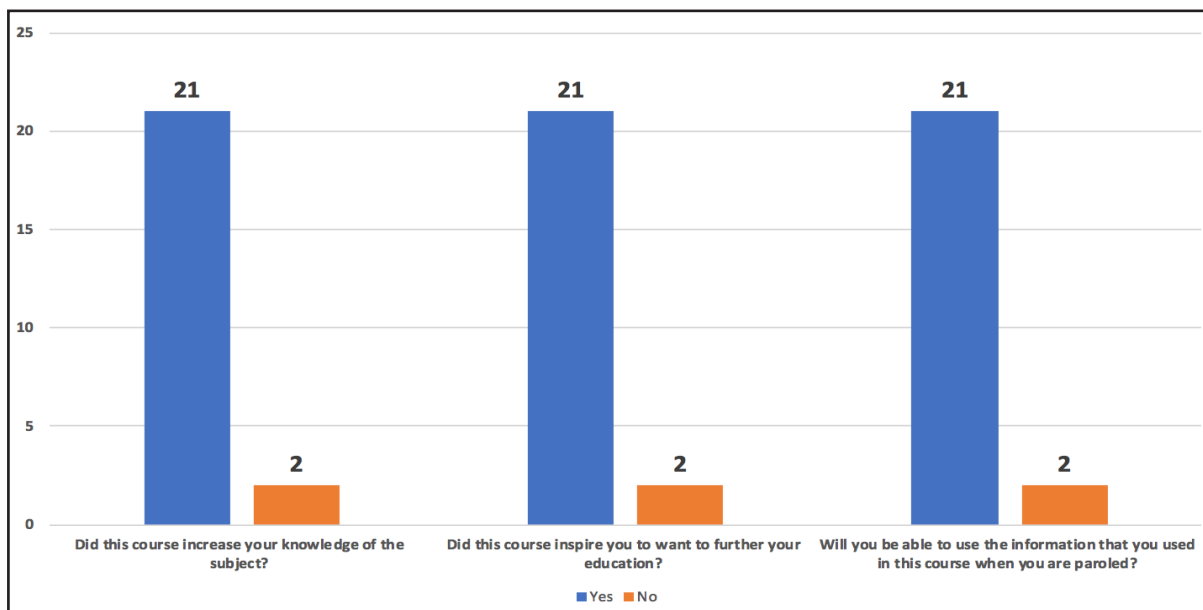
Self-Empowerment Post-Course Comments

- "This course is very interesting. It has helped me to be a little more selfish of me. It has taught me to love myself and those around me, and to have more confidence in myself. Also, to believe in myself more and it's going to help me grow. Believe in my dreams. To help me change and grow as a person."

- "I think this class encourages self-reflection, self-evaluation, in a non-biased manner with necessary and essential life skills to help further individual development in areas we all need to be more self-conscious of…inducing self-empowerment."

- "Too short; more interaction. Also, the programme seems reactive so on that basis what plans (if any) does the programme have in public awareness, education, and policy development with governments?"

- "This week has been so good e.g. communication, problem-solving, team work, and information to help with the future."

Figure 3

*PEP-Scotland: Creative Expression, HMP Addiewell, Summer 2019*
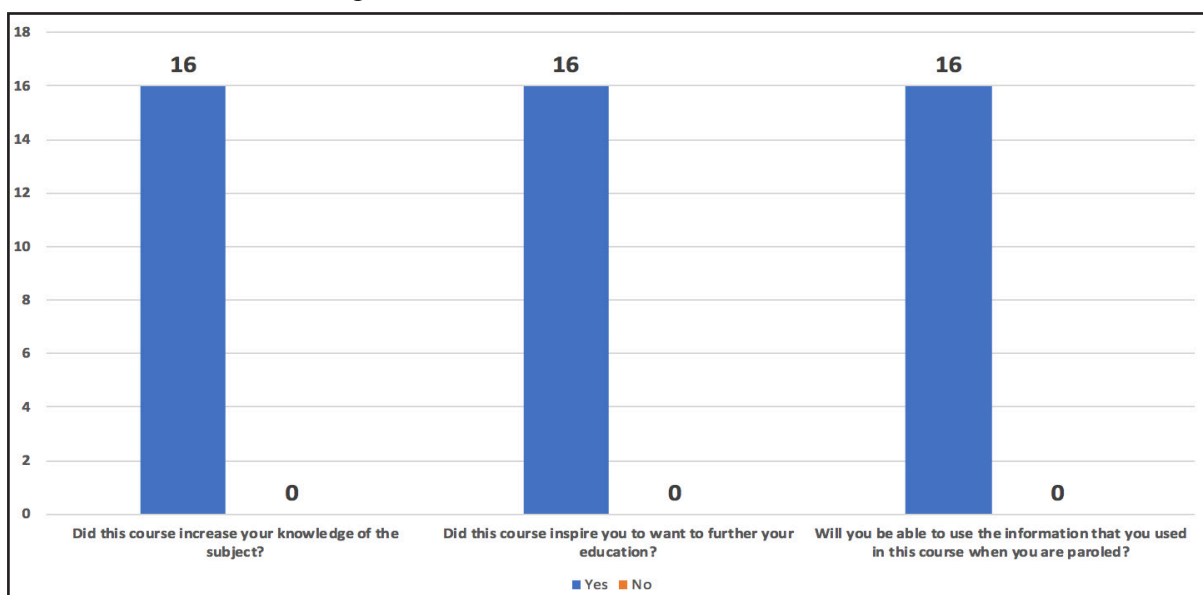
Creative Expression Post-Course Comments

- "I think this course was good, as I am not all that good at expressing my feelings and talking about them and putting my feelings on paper. Thanks."

- "I found this course to be inspirational. I learned a lot about myself."

- "Very interesting and inspiring. People like you guys are the best in society simply for caring and giving inmates both a chance and the benefit of the doubt."

- "I think this was a very friendly and heartfelt course. It showed that the people cared and they inspired me to care more. Thank you to you and all of your team."

- "I learned so much about myself and where my strengths lay and how to improve my weaknesses. The teachers were first class and I hope they return soon."

Figure 4

PEP-Scotland: Hip-Hop Culture, HMP Addiewell, Summer 2019
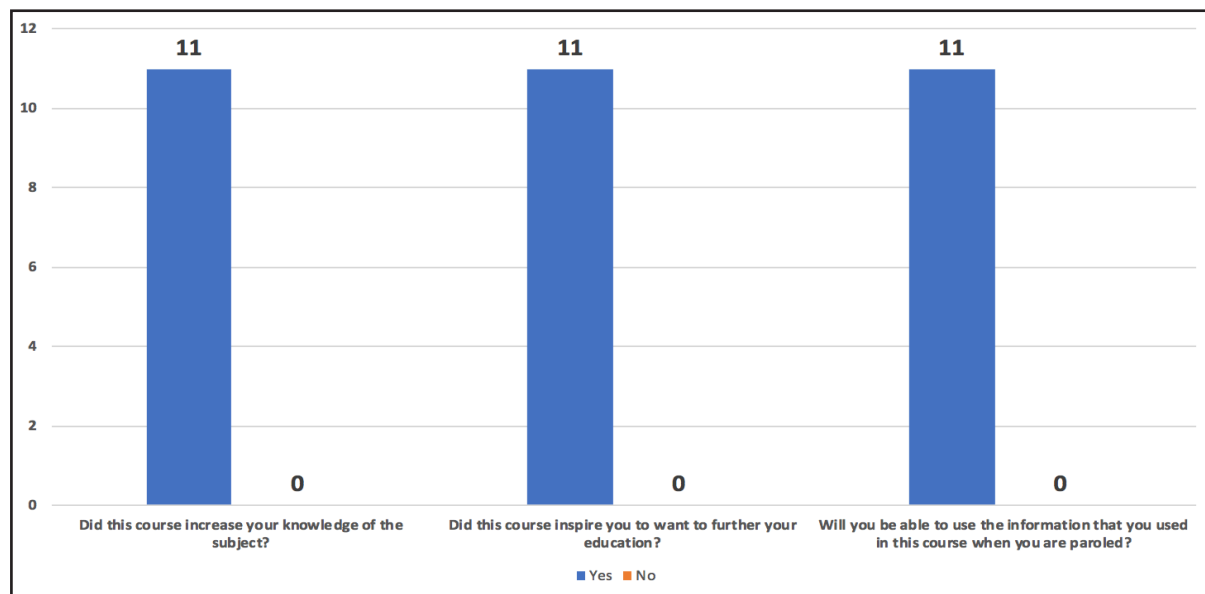
Hip-Hop Culture Post-Course Comments

- "The class was brilliant and the teachers were inspirational and a pleasure to work with."

- "I really enjoyed this course. I feel this is something that should be done in jails across Scotland. Very good—10/10."

- "Fantastic. Your energy is awesome. I enjoyed your style of teaching and you taught me much. I know we'll cross paths again! Kindest Regards."

- "It was really good. Good fun and interesting."

- "The course was positive, good, and relaxing."

<div align="center">

Conclusion

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The "Reciprocal Reflex" and the "Feedback Loop" are present in the in-custody students' responses to the courses that were taught. A few of our PEP-Scotland instructors cried when they read about the impact that their course had on the in-custody students. The meaningful feedback will surely motivate many of them to return to Addiewell with the next PEP-Scotland team and to focus on having the same deep impact.

PEP volunteers used the power of words to transform. Words are the most powerful way in which we can transform the internal human condition. If we doubt the transformative power of words, we should ask ourselves how we feel when someone compliments, congratulates, or praises us for an accomplishment. Words have the capacity to empower and transform the incarcerated population into being more confident, more inspired, and more hopeful about

their future.

In the prisons such as Addiewell, when volunteers do not have access to an overhead projector, PowerPoint presentations, or the internet, they have their words. And, it is these words that have the extraordinary potential to educate, empower, and enlighten the incarcerated population. Beyond the academic content presented by the volunteers, it is the power of other exchanges that inspire the incarcerated population. The greetings, acknowledgments, and affirmations of a job well done validate the in-custody students and the volunteers in a priceless way. This is an example of how words help to create an exciting and dynamic learning environment that is based on reciprocity.

In thinking about ways to motivate volunteers with limited resources, it is important for leaders to think about the importance of words. If they are used in a careful and thoughtful way, these words can do what money cannot do, which is transform the spirit and soul of people.

PEP-Scotland was an extraordinary experience for the Addiewell staff, PEP instructors, and in-custody students. The experience transcended trivial differences such as race and nationality. It was inspirational to witness how an intense, collective focus on human development could have such phenomenal impact on everyone involved.

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Teaching in a Total Institution:
Toward a Pedagogy of Care in Prison Classrooms

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Abstract: *This paper argues that a pedagogy of care can help reduce some of the human damage caused by incarceration. Rather than casting incarcerated men and women outside of the moral community and turning prisoners into a "them," a pedagogy of care promotes inclusion and the creation of human connections. Recognizing prisoners' humanity helps to dissolve some of the effects of institutionalization and may foster rehabilitation. Instead of limiting teachers to providers of information, as a traditional classroom expects, a pedagogy of care elevates teachers to human constituents of a learning community. This paper outlines a pedagogy of care in the teaching of college mathematics in medium and maximum-security prisons. It is based upon knowledge gained through 15 years of teaching in traditional college classrooms and seven years in prisons. The basic components of the pedagogy of care covered in this paper include communicating to students that learning matters, fostering high expectations, creating a welcoming space, and engaging student interest.*

Keywords: *college-in-prison, pedagogy-of-care, STEM*

> The practice of care occurs in relationships, and the educator is the subject responsible for ensuring that care permeates the relationship, then a core task of pedagogical reflection is identifying the relational postures which shape good and right care—that is, care which facilitates the flourishing of the human being. (Mortari, 2016, p. 455)

Teaching for seven years in three medium and maximum-security prisons has taught me that prisoner-students, like students in my more traditional classes, respond exceedingly well to kindness and care. To state that these students thrive in a classroom environment in which they are treated like human beings, may seem, at best, a statement of the obvious, and at worst, an offense. However, it is easy to gloss over the fact that what is often at stake in prisons is humanity itself. This became obvious to me when I entered prison to teach for the first time.

The College Program

The elite prison college program I taught for had a standard of excellence not seen in the previous university and community colleges I worked in. The program had very high standards and a non-conventional college selection. They attempted to make these college classrooms the true satellite pilot that could be modeled by other college programs who wished to engage the work of college in prison. Their main goal was not to treat incarcerated students differently but to treat them as they did their students on campus. The program believes all students deserve an education.

As I walked into the facility and handed over my belongings, it was obvious that the correction officers were not thrilled that I was there to teach. They searched my bag and had me walk through a metal detector. Then I sat in the lobby until there was "clearance," a security

designation indicating that walking through the hallways is allowed at that time. Later I would learn that "clearance" does not always happen; there were times other professors and I had to leave without teaching. In general, the corrections officers, during the orientation process, painted a picture that characterized prisoners as manipulative sociopaths.

Unfortunately, no matter how eager the students were to learn, there were some prison logistics that inserted themselves into the classroom from day one. Students often came very late, and had to leave very early, due to lockdowns and other prison movement rules. The conditions were difficult and unpredictable: it was constantly either very hot or very cold, and even finding chalk was challenging. However, none of that diminished the fact that the students were a captive audience, eager to learn.

The Classroom

Education is one way to reconnect incarcerated individuals with the moral community, and it has been argued that the pedagogy or andragogy of care is an effective way of maximizing educational outcomes (Knowles, 1988).

The classroom was immediately welcoming. Teaching in prison is like no other experience. The students were usually waiting, and sometimes working on a problem on the board, when I arrived. There were times where they could not make class because of mandatory callouts or if someone got in trouble and was not allowed to return for a while. Students got in trouble for infractions such as having a pencil in the dining hall, and the prison didn't care if they were missing a test or important material. The students cared, however, and were so attentive, unlike some of the other students in colleges and universities I had encountered. Math is cumulative, and it is important to first understand the basics like multiplication, addition, subtraction and fractions. However, most of all, it is critical to make students feel secure enough to succeed.

For older students, researchers emphasize the importance of learning that responds to what students already know to start in a place of emotional comfort and then grow their knowledge through challenge. Sometimes students do not have past experience to contribute to the meaning-making. In this case, the emotional hook becomes especially important (Goralnik, et al., 2012, p. 415).

The classes taught ranged from developmental math (basic algebra) to three hundred level college courses, real and complex analysis. The students went from basic knowledge of mathematics to high-level courses, such as discrete math and linear algebra in some cases. The students returned home after serving their sentences and have been in contact with me.

Most students, prior to my class, had strong backgrounds in the liberal arts in this competitive liberal arts program. We are conditioned to believe that prisoners are uneducated and lack the skills to be successful in difficult college-level courses. Most students I came across in the prison were products of underfunded, overpopulated, public schools, not citizens with low IQ's, as society conditions many to believe. I am always in awe of how we don't expect a certain group of individuals to be articulate and how readily these students disproved that stereotype.

Background

"The rates of imprisonment in the United States are very much intertwined with race and class" (Haney, 2012, p. 2). It is important to note that 66% of upstate New York inmates come from neighborhoods in New York City (Christian, 2005). New York's poor urban neighborhoods have an educational income gap of $358 per student and a $549 five minority gap per student (Arroyo, 2008). As Robert Moses and Charles Cobb, the authors of *Radical Equation*, say minority students in poor urban school districts have continuously been tracked out of math, and many lose access to opportunity through segregation in mathematics classes (Lad-

son-Billings, 1997).

Education

Although there are many articles that point to the value of prison education, in terms of recidivism and job prospects after prison; few articles on prison education have discussed pedagogical methods in prison classrooms (Matthews, 2000). Prison education is almost exclusively discussed in terms of reentry and recidivism, never pedagogy (Esperian, 2010). While education reduces recidivism by as much as 40%, "college education during incarceration has the greatest impact" in reducing recidivism (Davis, 2013; Hall, 2015). Furthermore, much of the research on the pedagogy of care has focused only on its implementation for students in grades K-12 (Mcbee, 2007). This practitioner piece suggests that the total institutional aspects of prison, combined with the barriers of math education, make a pedagogy of care a highly effective form of teaching, particularly in a prison classroom.

Care and Math in Prison Classrooms

This section offers a look into a prison classroom where care and compassion play a big role in the learning experience. It discusses methods and techniques used to teach not only a tough subject, but also to teach effectively in difficult settings.

Creating a Welcoming Space

When it comes to creating a classroom environment, my natural disposition is welcoming, and I take it into the classroom with me. My formerly incarcerated students often point out that their math courses with me represented a space within the prison that allowed them to momentarily forget that they were in prison, temporarily leaving the total institution. For these students, and any marginalized students, a welcoming environment starts with being treated like their thoughts and ideas matter. That is a space I work hard to create for students in all my classroom settings, and the students respond well to it. For instance, one former student commented that the prison classroom experience "humanized us by providing a space to express ourselves in a way we could not normally do in prison." In order to create a welcoming space, I have found several practices to be essential.

One practice I began implementing on the very first day of any class was endeavoring to foster a personal connection with each student. When the students come into class, I feel it is important to acknowledge them, to say good morning or good evening, and to ask them how they are doing. I always strive to do this in a welcoming tone, and I think it is imperative to make eye contact with each student as I greet them. Over time, I also make sure to learn each student's name and to use their names when greeting them (Larson, 2015). I find this to be especially important in a prison setting where inmates are literally identified by numbers. It is also vital to be sincere in these interactions with students. I have found that students seem to recognize my sincerity when I remember details about them and their lives that they brought up in class and then ask them about these details.

I also firmly believe that it is essential to creating a welcoming space to share some of my own personal experiences with my students. The students and I are constantly sharing stories: stories of prior math classes, or of helping their children in math. We also break to discuss current events, but many of the students' favorite break is story time. Story time is taking a break from the monotony of math class to share stories. The students, when exhausted or frustrated, would say, "hey professor, it's story time." We would break to tell a story or a joke and then return to the lesson plan feeling renewed. This technique relaxed students and met them on a common ground.

My experience in prison has taught me that these simple strategies help to make the students feel welcomed in the classroom. A student commented, "This welcoming space helped me to not worry what level I was on, and asking questions was not intimidating. Then we could

get a better understanding and build on our mathematical maturity."

Communicating High Expectations Combined with Learning Matters

One practice that worked very well in communicating high expectations was to lead students to the correct answer by trial and error. If the students were headed in the wrong direction, and I asked guided questions, then the students could often self-correct. This level of critical thinking was of the utmost importance in creating strong mathematical backgrounds and a sense of accomplishment.

Another practice which has been highly effective is to tell all my students they are A students; it's up to them to keep the A or to receive a lower grade. This practice created a space of high expectations that included a belief in their abilities, rather than a professor that says "you all have an F; it is up to you to prove yourself." The professor that says the latter doesn't appear to start off with a strong belief in students' abilities.

These particular students had a love for learning that actually made it easy to communicate high expectations. I continuously found myself comparing these students to my university students. This dimension of pedagogy of care was also a lot easier for another reason: my incarcerated students had no preconceived notions about what was considered too difficult. This allowed me to raise the bar, constantly asking them to prove theorems and derive formulas, which always appeared to be a daunting task at the university, but not in this environment.

A certain personality and love for the subject drew students into the same cast: always engaging and wanting more. My students follow me, and I hold their attention as I finish a new concept or long problem with reciting "ahhchhaaaaaa," in a high-pitched key. The enthusiasm I bring to class is what has always engaged my students and created a recipe for success. When students perceive the genuine concern and care of their professor, they not only enjoy the class, they thrive.

The assignments the students received in the prison classroom were much more challenging than those in the university or community college for two reasons. The first reason was I had high expectations, and the second was that I saw there wasn't a barrier found in a traditional classroom setting. This barrier would be the belief that the material was hard before even attempting the problem because of previous rumors. As a professor you often hear, "everyone says trigonometry is so difficult," which instantly convinces students that a task is hard. Nobody in the prison classroom came into calculus two hearing the rumors that calculus two is the hardest 100 level class. Instead, they came armed to learn, and therefore, I could expect more enthusiasm than fear. Since these students had no preconceived notions, we would prove all the theorems that I would skip over in a university or college classroom outside the prison.

"The space that professor Wolf created made us lose our math anxiety, and I could, for the first time ever, actually enjoy learning math," a comment from a student who has always struggled with math. This pedagogy allows a professor to demonstrate the patience and determination to see each of her students grasp the mathematical concepts. It allows the process of taking the time to sit down with individual students and personally walk them through the process. Oftentimes, it aids in relating complex concepts in terms that may be more easily grasped by students having difficulties, thus making them feel that education matters and to create a welcoming environment. The most entertaining part of creating a welcoming environment was shared moments of acknowledgment that led to an aha moment. Our classroom took us out of the confines of the prison walls to an important, happy place where students felt that not only did learning matter and high expectations were key, but a relaxing calm space gave them the desire to transform their mathematical knowledge.

An important aspect of helping students learn mathematics is math esteem; math esteem helps you believe in your abilities (Wolf, 2015). "Growing up, I was always intimidated by math. It was like a complicated puzzle that you either could or couldn't solve innately. There was this idea of being or not being a 'math person,'" but through believing in him, and provid-

ing a safe, welcoming, engaging, and inviting environment, this student went on to take four hundred level complex analysis.

> As a 34-year-old, I found myself in a college-in-prison program tinkering with the idea of taking math courses beyond the required college algebra course I had already completed. Although I was both nervous and anxious when I started pre-calculus with the professor, she quickly extinguished my fears by pragmatically demonstrating that math, like any other discipline, is learned and honed through practice...[I] felt invited, and safe, and most of all loved. And more than simply teaching me math, she invited me to join her in the practice of math. She didn't simply give me methods, approaches, and answers to math problems; she helped me discover those methods, approaches and answers.

My students often told me how they were so engaged, they worked late hours as a group solving problems and helping the less advanced students.

> More importantly, she was a master at identifying when I was grappling with a mathematical concept and swiftly explored alternative approaches to ensure I got it. With that said, for me, the professor's most valuable attribute as a teacher was making sure that I never felt like I was in the dark as a student.

This student is now a successful member of the 21st-century workforce, and the time he spent engaging in mathematics furthered his ability to think critically.

Engaging Students

When it comes to engaging students in the classroom, experience has taught me that interaction between students, and with diverse subjects, leads to engagement in learning math. Incarcerated students' curiosity made it easy to enact a pedagogy of care. These particular students had no preconceived notions as to the difficulty these topics, thus reducing the impact fear would have. In comparison, many students in traditional mathematics classrooms say, "oh, everyone says this is so hard," therefore reducing their self efficacy before even getting started. Students in the prison come without these fears, which is not only refreshing, but allows the professor to go way beyond what levels are normally possible in a traditional classroom.

Another way to increase engagement is through club involvement. My students joined a math club I started and became dedicated to attending the meetings. In these meetings, students discussed math history and participated in learning new math tricks that immersed students more fully in the subject.

If you are comfortable in a classroom, and with your students, then the class will be OK. "Lauren, it's story time," the students would say, and we would break from the rigor of solving for x, and I would talk about one of my children, or the drive to get there that day, or current events, or social activism. Your students are more than just vehicles to accept knowledge, and they know or perceive when the connection is real and when you are sincere in your admiration and respect.

The pedagogy of care is a fairly new concept, however, caring in the classroom is as old as the first formal institutions themselves (Bartell, 2011). It is a fairly recent pedagogy that helps professors like myself explain my teaching philosophies and classroom tactics. I try to engage my students, and at the same time, I try not to be condescending. I also make it clear that I am also a student: always learning, growing, and capable of making mistakes. A former student said, "It is so refreshing that the teacher makes mistakes and admits she makes mistakes." In addition, this warm and caring environment was two-sided. During the semester, the students would assign reading materials to me, and I read all of their recommendations, including books by Michel Foucault, Loey Wacquant, and *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*. Our professor-student relationship was a give and take.

Conclusion

In the classroom, the students were able to leave the institution of prison behind for the two or three-hour block and were transported to another place. A place where they wanted to create a better life, and a place that the professor was able to show compassion and admiration, and know them personally, not just as a number in a cold harsh space. I encouraged the students to believe in themselves and to be critical thinkers. Mathematics is a beautiful subject, and I enjoy sharing that beauty with my beloved students. Instead of dwelling on the professors and teachers that don't or won't care, we must change the climate into one that is a warm, safe, and loving place.

The conclusion of this practitioner paper is to share this experience as creating a way that people who are disenfranchised can not only learn, but be made to feel human. This particular pedagogy could transform all disenfranchised teaching environments, and potentially even the playing field, for those in urban school districts that are not given the same advantages or funding. Teaching with care, in a total institution where the students are sheltered from warmth and nurturing, gives the students the ability to feel whole, thus forging through the constraints and achieving great success. When you are in prison, you are viewed as a number, and that is how you are supposed to feel; human interaction and professors that genuinely care make it easier to succeed.

Looking Back

A total institution makes a person a number, void of self-identity. The pedagogy of caring takes an instructor out of the traditional way of teaching which allows students to prosper and develop knowing that you are wholeheartedly rooting for their success. One imperative technique is to allow students to realize there is more than one way to solve a problem, therefore not limiting their creativity (Furner & Duffy, 2002). That first semester taught me so much about myself and how to not just try and show compassion, but to really feel that belief in one another can help your students achieve greatness. Many of these beginning algebra students went on to take calculus. At the beginning of class, we would discuss what was on our minds, it was my way of supporting self-expression and sharing before we went into the lesson.

An Update on Some of the Students

Of the eight students that were followed, they are all home and living successful lives. There has been no recidivism amongst these eight men, and they all have high-powered jobs. One of my former students wrote a book and owns a computer programing business, and he also runs a non-profit to help families of incarcerated individuals. He attributes math, and the respect of his professor, as a strong pillar of his foundation in his success upon reentry. This particular student wrote in his book that "the high expectations this professor had bestowed on us, made me achieve more success; she explained how biased math is against marginalized students, and it made me strive harder."

Another student, who is a program associate at a large non-profit, said that math has helped him organize data, tasks, and even thoughts, in a more systematic way. He would not have even gone on to study mathematics had it not been for the compassionate care the professor showed for her students. Another student is program manager at a large non-profit bail fund, where he also claims that the sheer kindness of professors helped him become who he is today. In his spare time, he works with youth to keep them out of trouble. The fourth student is special assistant to the directors of a non-profit private college prison program. This particular student earned several degrees while incarcerated, because those moments of intellect, combined with compassion of the professor, took him away from the total institution environment.

Noddings (1988) said:

A relational ethic is rooted in and dependent on natural caring. Instead of

striving away from affection and toward behaving always out of duty as Kant has prescribed, one acting from a perspective of caring moves consciously in the other direction; that is, he or she calls on a sense of obligation in order to stimulate natural caring. [It] energizes the giver as well as the receiver…From the perspective of caring, the growth of those cared for is a matter of central importance. (p. 221)

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PRACTITIONER PAPER

National Novel Writing Month Behind Bars: A Road Map for NaNoWriMo at FCI-Elkton

JASON KAHLER

Abstract: *Writers and students at Federal Correctional Institution-Elkton use low-tech strategies to participate in National Novel Writing Month. Prisoners reflect on the challenges and power of participating in an entirely prisoner-led event. Over the span of a six-week course, students earn programming credit by responding to prompts, working on their novels, and reporting word totals and goals. The author positions himself as a researcher, practitioner, scholar, and prisoner, who balanced the needs of good teaching and positive educational experiences with the realities of working in a prison as a prisoner.*

Keywords: *prison writing, pedagogy, teaching, National Novel Writing Month*

In 2017, I self-surrendered to Federal Correctional Institution-Elkton, where I would stay for two and a half years as an inmate. I worked at Elkton as a tutor in the GED program. Like me, my tutor partner was an English major in college, and like me, he's a writer. Chris has completed a number of novels since coming to prison. I've started plenty in my life, but never finished, and one day in class, I mentioned I was considering using National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) as motivation for writing my novel, *The Day the Freshman Class Float Exploded*, a humorous book about a monster-movie-obsessed teenager who finds himself involved in his school's Homecoming activities.

Chris said he was interested in giving NaNoWriMo a try, too, and so we issued each other friendly challenges. Elkton has a small but solid community of writers, and word got out about our plans. Other writers became interested. At the same time as these discussions were taking place, the United States Congress was debating legislation named The First Step Act. Though the bill's details were unclear then, we were confident that some of the provisions rewarded programming credit. Chris and I thought that guys who were writing books deserved credit for educational programming. For NaNoWriMo participants to get credit, we'd need to operate through the Adult Continuing Education program (ACE) housed in the Education Department. The staff member in charge of ACE gave us his blessing, and the first NaNoWriMo@Elkton began.

What follows is a description of our "un-class," the structures we needed to put in place, the challenges and success our writers experienced, and a reflection on the event overall. By most measures, even if not all of the books were finished, NaNoWriMo@Elkton was successful and repeatable across other institutions.

Situating Scholarship and Writing in Prison

Pedagogy scholarship has a distinguished history of including teaching narratives and reflections of teacher-scholars who use their own classrooms as their laboratories. My scholarship in this regard is no different, including my dissertation and some of my work since graduation. While many people have written as teachers within prison, overwhelmingly, those teachers could leave after class, heading for homes outside of the prison walls. Given my status

at the time of my teaching at Elkton and the writing of most of this paper, I must situate myself as a teacher-scholar-prisoner, and that offers new opportunities and unexpected pressures.

My experience coordinating NaNoWriMo@Elkton is necessarily a narrative told "from the inside." Scholarship discussing writing in prison is almost exclusively positioned from the outside looking through the bars. In his blog post on the National Novel Writing Month website, prison volunteer and author Neal Lemery (2017) voices this subjectivity, "Writing in Prison?" he wrote, "I wondered how anyone could manage it." Simply—and to be fair, Mr. Lemery comes to understand this—prisoners learn to write in prison because they have no other choice.

Even this essay, written on the inside, was written while fighting through all the challenges that the NaNoWriMo@Elkton participants describe in their reflections. I find myself not only the observer of a study, but also a subject, and while part of me wants to configure myself as something different than the other event participants (as a result of my education and experience as a sort of "super-prisoner"), my work was produced on the same paper with the same pens on the same hard metal benches as the rest of the Elkton writers. I will, until my release date, always be an Elkton prisoner. Even now, after leaving, I find myself wondering about the men I met at Elkton, especially my students, and wondering how outside-world events might be affecting them. Perhaps, despite all my efforts and intentions, it will be some time before I have completely left Elkton. If ever.

This difficulty is made obvious in the slippage of voice I can't avoid while writing and editing this essay. You'll see me writing as *in* Elkton, and you'll see me writing from *home*. I've decided to let these slippages persist, and I hope they give some insight into the processes behind this essay.

As I worked on this piece, inside the prison and out, I felt the pressure of making sure that whatever I wrote could not be used against me or other Elkton writers. That's a motive that most scholars (especially tenured scholars) never face. Most scholars in the United States cannot be shipped to live somewhere dangerous as a result of their work, no matter how positive that work might be. This project went smoothly, and was all the right kinds of productive that should make observers of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) proud, but still, I felt the pangs of fear that perhaps this work would be judged by criteria beyond its truthfulness or ability to make an audience think about prison writing in a new way.

How will Elkton look in this reflection? Its staff? Its prisoners? And, if this work reaches an audience beyond its walls, what kinds of responses might ensue inside the walls? The advice my father gave me for my time here rings in my ears as I write: "Stay out of the bright lights." Don't attract attention. Just get home.

But I admit the urge to tell the story of the stories is strong. Like all good scholarship, then, this piece will describe the truth. Because getting consent from fellow prisoners is challenging—and depending on how you read the BOP policies, against regulations—student responses will be generalized. Though the FCI-Elkton staff was supportive of both our NaNoWriMo@Elkton event and the writing of this essay, their endorsement beyond permission to run our event is not meant to be implied.

National Novel Writing Month Background

National Novel Writing Month began in 1999, centered around Internet forums. Though recent years have seen the NaNoWriMo organization stretch their impact into the real world through their camps and library partnerships, the event remains, at its core, an online experience, meant to combat the isolation many writers feel while working. On its website, the organization proclaims "your story matters," an idea that resonates with prisoners, who feel that they are at the lowest tier of society, but crave the opportunity to build a world outside of walls and mistakes that can contribute to intellectual and cultural growth.

Background of Adult Continuing Education Classes

The education programs offered through the BOP are outlined in Program Statement 5300.21. This Program Statement (2002) mandates that the BOP "affords inmates the opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills through academic, occupation and leisure-time activities." The Program Statement includes continuing education opportunities in a list of required offerings that also includes General Educational Development (GED), English-as-a-Second Language (ESL), library services, and parenting and recreation programs.

Students enroll in ACE classes primarily for three reasons. Some students are interested in the content of the class. This seems especially true for business classes which regularly meet their maximum allowed enrollment. Another reason for enrolling in an ACE class is to occupy the time at prison. There are prisoners who enroll in an ACE class every day of the week, just to have something to do. Finally, ACE classes count as programming. Prisoners are evaluated by how much programming they complete during their time, and these evaluations can influence a prisoner's custody score, which can dictate the sort of institution at which the prisoner is housed.

Programming has recently taken new importance in Federal prisons with the 2018 passing of the First Step Act. In this legislation, prisoners are granted bonuses for good time and residential re-entry center (halfway house) time after meeting certain requirements which may include programming. As of February 2020, the BOP has made few decisions regarding the specific application of the law's provisions, including deciding which—if any—ACE classes meet the law's description of applicable programming. The law's wording grants the BOP hundreds of days to evaluate programs and to implement all of its provisions, but prisoners at Elkton have already began discussing various programming opportunities in the hope that they will count toward the law's benefits.

An Analog Internet

National Novel Writing Month is a creature of the Internet, where it was born and continues to flourish despite recent incursion of NaNoWriMo into the "meatspace." Participants register, post, respond, and interact online. The appeal of NaNoWriMo, in part, is the creation of a writing community that allows writers to break through the isolation of the blank screen. The challenge of a word count is a shared experience.

Prison is a shared experience, too; our NaNoWriMo@Elkton writers were already comfortable with the "Us vs. The World" attitude that communal participatory events can foster. One of our goals was to build a space for a positive, nurturing community that allowed for the same kinds of interactions as the world-wide National Novel Writing Month. Early on, with help from someone outside the prison, we looked for an official NaNoWriMo Prison Program. If one exists, we couldn't find it.

But the real issue for our community-building efforts was our inability to access the Internet. Prisoners at FCI-Elkton have no access to the Internet, and nearly zero opportunities to use a computer at all. A true, complete NaNoWriMo experience would be impossible to reproduce within the seclusion of our prison. Without the Internet, then, we'd never become full participants in the National Novel Writing experience. (Theoretically, prisoners with help on the outside could always mail their work, have someone else post on their behalf, and receive relayed feedback. This, of course, is unrealistic in all but the most ideal circumstances.)

Our solution was to build an analog Internet in our prison library. National Novel Writing Month had its electronic bulletin board system; NaNoWriMo@Elkton had a bulletin board. They had digital postings; we had a blue folder at the circulation desk. They had the shared community of a thousand eyes on their work; we would have a couple of volunteers and participant prompts on hard copy. Our analog Internet would never reach the entire world, though prison can grow to encompass the entire world for prisoners without outside ties. We'd reach who we could.

NaNoWriMo@Elkton was fortunate to have the support of the staff member in charge of the library, and the prisoner librarians who facilitated our writers' check-ins. We commandeered half of the library bulletin board for NaNoWriMo@Elkton announcements, making our existence public, like an Internet site. Writers "logged-in" by checking for prompts placed in the blue folder at the library desk, and used the folder to drop-off their work, the meatspace version of making a post. Several times a week, I collected responses and recorded the names of who was participating. Writer responses were added to the bulletin board, most-notably when writers provided the titles for their books-in-progress. The space in front of the bulletin board was often crowded with guys reading our writers' book titles.

We didn't need computers to publicize our event, brag about our success on the "Words Written" tote board or build a community of writers. In retrospect, I wonder if our success in working around the administration's ban of the Internet is helpful or hurtful toward prisoners' future educational goals because we proved we didn't "need" computers to have a meaningful experience. That obviously isn't the case for guys looking to enroll in college courses or other similar enrichment activities, and opportunities for courses via mail are extremely limited.

Practice

We announced NaNoWriMo@Elkton to the prisoner population via electronic bulletin board announcement that directed participants to register in the library. There, writers were given a short packet that described the event.

We broke two molds from the start. National Novel Writing Month takes place in November, but ACE classes last for 16 weeks. To get programming credit, we'd need to extend our activities. Actual book writing still occurred in November–that's when it happens, after all— but we'd include extra weeks of prompts and activities both before and after November. Additionally, our "class" would not meet.

Like our online counterparts, we'd work on our own and "log-on" by signing in and dropping off work at the folder in library. In my letters home, I called NaNoWriMo@ Elkton an "unclass," but really, our program was much more like the online classes I'd taught at the university than it wasn't. I knew the participants through their names, numbers, and writing, but not their faces. (It allowed for two fun interactions where guys on the yard and I recognized each other from the name tags on our uniforms.)

The writers signed in at the folder, picked up new participant prompts, and left behind the prior week's response. The folder was never stolen, never vandalized, though occasionally some fake names (of various levels of cleverness and vulgarity) were left on the sign-in sheets, I suspect by librarians with a bit too much time on their hands.

NaNoWriMo@Elkton began with writers receiving a Participant Information Guide. It was simple background, some explanation, and an attempt to capture the voice of enthusiasm:

> Welcome to NaNoWriMo@ Elkton! What started as a challenge between two tutors here at FCI-Elkton has grown into something much larger, and way cooler!

> NaNoWriMo is an annual worldwide event. The challenge is simple: write a novel in November. Our event will stretch over 16 weeks, but the challenge is still the same. We will write our books in November. No starting early! That would be cheating.

> To get program credit for participating, you'll need to submit responses to prompts and reflections. You'll pick those up on Mondays, and return them by the next Monday.

> If you have any questions, track down Jason Kahler (an afternoon tutor here in education). Now grab Participant Prompt #1 and get going! Good luck!

The information guide tried to address one of the biggest obstacles in conducting an event like this: participant communications with the coordinator of the event. I was fortunate to have a job here in the prison that lent me a little visibility and a little accessibility. Had this been a typical online class, students would have simply emailed me with questions. Prisoners cannot email each other, so I needed to rely on the much more analog approach of running into people in the hallway.

Most of the questions revolved around when we were meeting (we weren't) and if finishing the book was mandatory for receiving credit (it wasn't). I quickly decided to "allow" other types of writing because several prisoners indicated a desire to work on memoirs, and one was writing a business book. These projects matched the spirit of National Novel Writing Month, though not the name, and I supported them enthusiastically.

Several writers asked about prison staff reading their submissions. I reminded the writers that staff could access everything we have at any time, and their books would be no exception. Some writers specifically asked about including mature content in the projects. I advised against it. Happily, none of the submissions ever included any elements that even remotely could have gotten someone at Elkton in trouble.

Participant Prompt #1 asked the writers to explain why they'd decided to start NaNoWriMo@Elkton. Twenty-seven men offered their responses, and I took a quotation from each and put them all on our library bulletin board. (Writers were allowed to opt-out of the public sharing by indicating "Please do not share" on their response.) The answers to that first prompt included allusions to motivation, freedom, stories, and a desire to make good use of the time here in prison. Time is the one resource we have in abundance at prison, and perhaps the resource least-available to writers outside of a prison. Our writers were, to a man, optimistic in these first responses, and of the participants who'd signed in for that first week, 100% of them returned Prompt #1. It was a good start: 27 writers. Frankly, the possibility of receiving 27 books to read and reflect on was daunting. Chris, my tutor partner who was part of NaNoWriMo@Elkton from the beginning, generously volunteered to help read finished books.

Responding to finished books only was one of the concessions I'd made to the open scope of our event. In a classroom setting, the number of potential manuscripts is limited by the physical space of the room. Since we didn't have physical constraints, we were forced to focus our revision suggestions to completed projects. Offering "in progress" feedback would be an important change for future NaNoWriMo@Elkton events.

Our second participant prompt asked the writers to predict the challenges they'd encounter in writing their books. Again, 100% of the 27 registered writers responded. These answers to the prompt highlighted what most outsiders probably would expect about the everyday struggles of prison life: lack of resources for either research, supplies, quiet, a physical space to sit and do the work of a writer. "The work of a writer." It seems for the future we need to consider more what a writer at work looks like. History has countless examples of writers working in the worst of circumstances, and future participants of NaNoWriMo@Elkton could be reminded better that books don't need computers, the best paper, or a favorite brand of pen to be written. I was impressed again, though, and often throughout of event, by just how "regular" our writers were. I remembered all the excuses I've made over the years for not writing. I remembered the times, when dissertation deadlines loomed largest, that I absolutely *needed* to dust behind my bookcases. How many of our writers here rearranged their lockers rather than scrape out a few hundred words?

Participant Prompt #3 included a short lesson about genre and a pretest. At FCI-Elkton, all ACE classes must include pretests. The pretests are then revisited as posttests, the notion being that students will fail the first test, learn through the process of taking the class, and then pass the second test. Our pretest anticipated some of the material that would later appear in prompts. As expected, writers did not do well on the pretest.

Additionally, participants were asked to provide the titles of their book projects and explain the genre in which they were working. Our writers focused mostly on fantasy and science-fiction, two of the most-popular sections of FCI-Elkton's library. But other genres were robustly represented: thriller, comedy, memoir, how-to, adventure, Christian, drama and paranormal. I posted their titles on our board, with a theater-marquee-style "Coming Soon" announcement.

In their descriptions of their books, writers often stated they wanted to straddle genres. This isn't surprising: in the genre lesson, I had mentioned how the original *Star Trek* series had been pitched as a Western in space. Our participants also positioned their books within broader series they had planned. This also isn't surprising. Book series are in constant rotation in our library here, and the longer the series—no matter the genre—the more popular the books tend to be. These books are typically sci-fi/fantasy/paranormal novels, and our participants seemed interested in writing what they were reading.

Participant Prompt #4 signaled the beginning of actual novel writing (it was finally November). Prompt #4 reminded participants to complete a weekly check-in, leave word counts, and contained a request for questions. The few questions I received were turned into tips that I posted on our bulletin board.

The prompt also implored the writers to keep things simple. The prompt mentioned *On Writing* by Stephen King (2000), especially his belief that novels have three parts: narration, description, dialogue. I promised some dialogue pointers later, but for Prompt #4, I wanted the writers to think of their stories in the most basic shape possible. I worried that the writers would construct elaborate backstories and world-building rules before/without ever constructing a narrative. To that end, I challenged them to be able to distill the backstory into one simple sentence, and I provided the following examples:

Magic is real and kids go to school to learn how to use it.

Captain Ahab will go to any length to kill the whale that took his leg.

A country lawyer must fight racism to defend an innocent man while his kids fixate on their weird neighbor.

Several of our writers told me they appreciated the exercise of pushing their stories into these simple summaries. It kept them focused on plot and character development. I've found that the writers here tend to put a lot of energy into building the rules of their worlds. Perhaps it's a symptom of all the role-playing games we play in prison: build the world and sprinkle in all the fun fiddly bits, and someone else will provide the power of narrative. We needed our participants to remember they were at all times both the player and the dungeon master.

Participant Prompt #5 assumed we had all started writing. Participants began reporting word counts (they were encouraged to give ballpark calculations and not spend valuable writing time counting words). This prompt was mostly a short lesson on dialogue. Dialogue should always be doing at least one of two things, I told our writers: reveal character or move plot. Our writers were asked to avoid putting exposition in dialogue, and to avoid verb for "said" that might be distracting. Finally, they were directed to describe accents instead of trying to write them phonically. Participant Prompts #6, #7, and #8 were all just check-ins and word count reports. Number eight did include an allusion to comic book legend Stan Lee, who had recently passed away. In the prompt, I mentioned that in an obituary I read that Lee nearly left comics early on, disillusioned with the stories he was pushed to write. According to an obituary, Lee's wife suggested he write the stories he'd like to read. It was good advice for all writers.

Our ninth participant prompt was the final prompt in November, and the manuscripts were due the next week. With Participant Prompt #10, we shifted to reflections on the event. Number ten asked participants to think about what contributed to our writers' success, and what contributed to breaking any progress. Though I considered any progress—indeed, any at-

tempt— to be successful, most of the writers who didn't finish books expressed disappointment in not finishing. (After reading those responses, I really celebrated our shared word count total, planning, and even the most futile attempts at our novels.) The writers reported that time played heavily in both their successes and challenges. One thing that many outsiders don't understand about prison is that some of us do find ways to lead busy full lives within the walls. Work can be full-time. We find other responsibilities. Daily chores like laundry, dishes and hygiene take longer per task than they do at home. For others, however, the days are largely empty. Time is an asset to exploit. So time appeared as the major contributing factor for both success and "failure."

Our writers continued to bemoan the lack of access to technology, and they cited the challenge of working without a word processor as a major stumbling block. Privacy and physical space also were important concerns. It's hard to find a place at FCI-Elkton to be alone with your thoughts. It's hard to preserve works-in-progress as collections of mismatched pieces of paper tucked into lockers.

Participant Prompts #11 and #12 discussed publishing and literary agents. These lessons originated from questions I'd received from participants about the various publishing avenues and copyright matters. Our writers were, to my mind, needlessly worried about their work being stolen, a paranoia perhaps understandable considering people will steal the toilet paper you've left on your locker top here.

Despite concerns about intellectual property theft, our writers expressed excitement over the prospects of seeing their work in print. They also feared being judged. (Again, perhaps understandable paranoia.)

Participant Prompt #13 asked writers to suggest changes to our event. "Computers" appeared on nearly all the responses. "More practical publishing advice" was mentioned frequently, as was the suggestion that nothing be changed. All of the suggestions for change were marvelously outward-looking. These writers were thinking about the place of their work in the greater world. A profit-motive existed, certainly, but I was impressed by how much our writers focused on the desire to merely be heard somewhere. The same sentiments appeared in many of their final written reflections.

Participant Prompt #14 asked our writers to think about how being in prison affects them as writers beyond the physical limitations. Time, once again, plays its part here. Writers remarked on how prison has gifted—"blessed" was used more than once—them with an opportunity for introspection. They've thought about their writing, and they've thought about themselves. Prison writers understand pain because they've caused it, and because they feel it.

Our writers also reported how many of them have become better readers since coming to prison. Once again, our library is a powerful influence in the lives of the prisoners at FCI-Elkton.

By the end of NaNoWriMo@Elkton, about 15 writers were still regularly checking in. Seventeen writers received ACE class programming credit, and five completed manuscripts were submitted and received comments from either Chris or myself.

As a group we wrote 478,460 words—not counting responses to participant prompts.

Reflections and Directions

How do you measure the success of NaNoWriMo@Elkton? The number of books completed by participants: 5. The total number of words written by its writers: nearly half a million. The number of men who received programming credit through their participation: 17. In prison, we think about numbers a lot.

Returning to the purposes of ACE classes, though, those numbers fail to tell the complete story of our successes. For 16 weeks, up to as many as 30 men were given positive outlets

for the nervous energy and anxiety that prison life generates. They learned the value of planning large projects, of making decisions based on long-term goals. For most prisoners, criminal behavior was a result of short-term thinking. Angling efforts elsewhere is a significant powerful improvement. We can't claim that NaNoWriMo@Elkton will stop people from reoffending, but trying to write a book can't hurt.

Our efforts highlight the deficiencies within rehabilitation services at FCI-Elkton. Most obvious is the almost complete lack of access to technology. A prison of nearly 2,000 prisoners holds fewer than two dozen computers, many of which are frequently broken, all of which are behind two locked doors, none of which allow for simple word processing or basic Internet access. We cannot expect the men who leave here to have the fundamental technological literacy that productive, non-offending members of society possess. I have students in my GED classes who have never been in the same room as an iPhone. Eight typewriter kiosks are just insufficient to prepare them for life beyond prison.

FCI-Elkton lacks an atmosphere that encourages innovation. I want to stress that staff supported our NaNoWriMo@Elkton event, but most of that support materialized in a hands-off approach. In prison, that's often the best we can hope for. No doubt, my role as a GED tutor made efforts to begin and maintain our event much easier than it would have been if my job assignment was elsewhere. In an environment where getting photocopies can be challenging or impossible, the staff's familiarity with me and my efforts as a tutor absolutely expedited the processes to get what we needed for our program.

I was saddened to learn that National Novel Writing Month has no formal outreach into prisons. Hopefully, as the event expands further and further off the Internet, some efforts can be directed toward writers behind bars. If the writers of NaNoWriMo@Elkton are any indication, there is room for growth, and given the space, some quality work will result. Even without the use of the Internet, one can envision completed-book exchanges between facilities, traveling libraries of prison-written novels crisscrossing the country, book awards for incarcerated novelists, and much more. As with everything proposed for the benefit of people inside of prisons, these programs would require effort, funding and the force of will to make them happen.

I will end on two personal notes.

As this essay was revised and submitted for publication, the novel coronavirus pandemic began impacting life worldwide. As of this writing, eight prisoners at FCI-Elkton have died of the virus, the most deaths at any federal institution. Among the deaths is a friend of mine, a man we called Grandpa Dave. His death was announced by the BOP in a press release that included his age, his offense, his punishment, and his pre-existing medical conditions that made him more vulnerable to the virus. It didn't mention his family, his faith, his service, or the fact that he always remembered his friends' birthdays. Even, and perhaps especially, his friends in prison. Stories matter.

And no, *The Day the Freshman Class Float Exploded* isn't finished. My novel succumbed to the pressures that kill many books-in-progress. Writing momentum was gobbled- up by the strain of daily responsibilities. My neck was sore from hunching over the desk in my cube. Other priorities grew more pressing. Our NaNoWriMo@Elkton writers, myself included, succeeded and failed like all the National Novel Writing Month participants across the globe. In many ways—in most ways—the men at FCI-Elkton are just like everyone else.

Written or not, that's a story worth telling.

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