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WOMEN IN PRISON: PLANNING THE GETAWAY  
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN A SOUTHERN WOMEN'S CORRECTIONAL  
INSTITUTION

by

Aimée Michelle Burgdorf

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Major: Higher and Adult Education

The University of Memphis

December 2012

## Acknowledgments

As I sit here reflecting back at the last 5 years, there are many people that deserve my acknowledgement and gratitude. I cannot imagine accomplishing all of this without the help and support of the people who were and have become pivotal in my life. First and foremost, I want to thank my family for their unwavering support and guidance during this journey. A special thanks goes to my husband, Matthew, for accompanying me on my journey of all of the trials and tribulations this dissertation has created. I also want to thank my beautiful children, Austyn, Lucas, and Devyn, for dealing with a mommy who was often stressed out, without enough sleep, and sometimes quite cranky. You three are the best things that have ever happened to me, and I want you to know that my successes are yours as well.

I need to thank my parents for, well, everything. Without the continual love and support and the occasional kick in the pants when needed, this would never have gotten finished. Thank you for instilling a love of learning in me and for being patient enough to see me finish four different degrees!

I want to thank my amazing dissertation committee. Dr. Murrell, you have been a rock for me from the time I started this degree. Your patience and guidance through the program and through this dissertation has made all the difference in the world. I can't express my appreciation for all you have done. I am proud to call you my advisor and also my friend. Dr. Wilson, I owe you a debt of gratitude for reading over the early stages of this dissertation and providing the feedback that has made me a stronger writer. I also thank you for continually pushing me and gently reminding me that I had more to offer. Dr. Vandiver, I have known you the longest and I am honored that you agreed to

be on my dissertation committee. I have always admired you as a scholar and a person and I am truly delighted that I was able to work with you on this project. Dr. Akey, you have been a blessing! Thank you for agreeing to serve on this committee with such short notice. Your comments have always been insightful and thought-provoking and I am grateful to you for all your feedback and encouragement.

I also want to thank the Department of Corrections for allowing me access to their facility and for all their help and hospitality I was shown each time I was there. The staff was incredibly friendly and accommodating. I also owe a huge debt of gratitude to the women who were interviewed for this study. Ladies, I cannot tell you how much I appreciate your honesty and candor. Everyone I spoke with was genuinely happy to help me with this project. You are all funny, caring, and creative individuals and I wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

## **Abstract**

Burgdorf, Aimée Michelle. Ed.D. The University of Memphis, December, 2012. *Women in Prison: Planning the Getaway. Vocational Education in a Southern Women's Correctional Institution.* Major Professor: Dr. Patricia Murrell

The purpose of this research was to examine the vocational programs available to female inmates incarcerated in the only female prison in a southern state, to explore these inmates' thoughts, feelings and perspectives about the programs available to them, and to determine whether these programs are unintentionally gender-biased or gender-stereotypical. Additionally, data were collected reflecting the vocational education instructors' thoughts, feelings and perspectives on their programs as well as on the inmate students enrolled in their programs.

Additionally, detailed vocational program descriptions were obtained from the facility. These documents provided information about the kinds of jobs available for each vocational program and the necessary training for employment in these jobs. Once the jobs were defined, the U.S. Census data were utilized in order to identify the percentage of women and men employed in each occupation. Those occupations identified by the Census in which women made up the dominant population (51% or above) were classified as "pink." The occupations identified by the Census in which men made up the dominant population (51% or higher) were classified as "blue."

Study participants included the instructors from the institution's vocational programs and inmates who were currently enrolled in or recently graduated from any of the vocational programs offered. This study revealed three themes common to the instructors and four themes common to the inmate students.

The themes common to the instructors were 1) genuine love and affection for the students, 2) the importance of self-esteem building, and 3) the inmate student attitudes and efforts. The themes common to the inmate students were 1) school as a preferred environment, 2) positive attitudes about instructors, 3) self-esteem, and 4) attitudes about non-traditional classes.

As the majority of the vocational programs offered at this institution are in the "pink" category, it was determined that the vocational programs offered at this institution do indeed appear to be unintentionally gender-biased or gender-stereotypical.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Americans, like most people, have different views, values and expectations of others based upon specific characteristics. Sadly, the main characteristic often used to determine these views, values, and expectations is one's gender. In fact, gender is such an important characteristic that from infancy, parents socialize children into gendered roles, often without realizing they are doing so.

Simply put, gender can be "defined as the attitudes and behaviors society or culture teaches us are masculine or feminine" (Morton, 2004, p. 83). Taylor (2003) describes gender as,

perhaps the basic dimension through which individuals perceive the social world and their place in it. Gender shapes social organization and influences how we interact with each other and even how we evaluate ourselves. Additionally, gender shapes our feelings, thoughts, and behaviors from birth to death. Children learn early on that society has different expectations and standards for girls and boys. (p. 308)

For example, one of the first questions pregnant women are asked is if they know the gender of their unborn child. The parents-to-be are thrown baby showers awash in either pink if the baby is a girl or blue if the child is a boy. Adding to the stereotypes, nurseries are often decorated solely with the gender of the newborn in mind.

Traditionally, girls are dressed in pink, given dolls to play with and are expected to be passive and dependent while boys, on the other hand, are dressed in blue, given trucks as playthings and are expected to be aggressive and independent. This kind of gendered role expectation that society so willingly endorses places nearly everything into

either a masculine or feminine category. In fact, “Gender roles are so pervasive and so taken for granted that it is difficult to recognize them as other than natural” (Rafter, 1990, p. xii).

“Society maintains a different set of normative roles for women and men, and requires of them different responsibilities and kinds of work” (Taylor, 2003, p. 300). Those who do not live up to their gendered ideals are outcasts. Even pop culture reinforces these gendered principles. For example, in the movie “Meet the Parents”, the lead male actor is employed as a nurse. His girlfriend’s parents assume several things about this man, such as a lack of masculinity and a lack of intelligence, simply based on the fact that he is employed in what has traditionally been a female occupation. In this gendered society presented in the movie, it is simply not suitable for a male to hold a job as a nurse.

Unfortunately, not even what is “appropriate” for men and women in relation to their education is off-limits. Morton (2004) writes “School experiences and teachers are important sources of gender-based expectations, and school is where much of the learning of gender-based roles occurs” (p. 86). Chapman (n.d.) states, “Teachers socialize girls towards a feminine ideal. Girls are praised for being neat, quiet, and calm whereas boys are encouraged to think independently, be active and speak up” (para. 5). Additionally, “American educators - regardless of their gender or the grade level at which they teach – continue to focus more attention on male than on female students, education expert David Sadker told 150 teachers and administrators” during a lecture Sadker gave at Cornell University (Goetz, 1996, para. 1).

The fact that gendered expectations are present even within the American education system is extremely important as there is no doubt that Americans view education as a vital part of success in this country. The U.S. Department of Education employs approximately 4,200 workers and has a \$68.6 billion budget for its stated mission “to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access” (U.S. Department of Education, n.d., para. 1). In some instances, children are enrolled in pre-school as early as three years old. Parents of elementary and secondary school children are encouraged to be involved in their children’s education through activities such as the Parent Teacher Association, parent/teacher conferences, and simply with easier and more efficient ways such as school web pages and teacher email addresses. It is easier than ever for parents to contact teachers and/or administrators, look up grades, or simply view a school calendar.

Mass media have also encouraged Americans to pursue education, sometimes without having to leave home to do so. Americans are continually flooded with information on educational opportunities through advertisements on television, e-mail, or via brochures and pamphlets. The inundation of materials promoting education leads one to believe that the future for education is not only bright, but accessible, affordable, and consists more of a “real world” value than that of the past.

Unfortunately, as much as Americans appear to value education, there is a segment of the American population that is not only lacking education, but is also often without the ability to freely pursue education. Tragically, this population is not small; instead it consists of the roughly 2.3 million adult state and federal inmates in the United

States(United States Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008). The participants in this study are from this group of people.

### **Statement and Significance of the Problem**

The United States Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that 41% of inmates in the federal and state prisons had not completed high school or its equivalent (Harlow, 2003). Comparatively, only 18% of the general population failed to complete high school or its equivalent (Harlow). Additionally, “a 1994 Arizona study found that 85% of the incarcerated population did not graduate from high school, and statistics from the U.S. Department of Education indicate that 65% of inmates are illiterate” (LoPinto, n.d., para. 1).

A lack of education can often be indicative of employment status. This can be noted in the fact that only 47.7% of inmates with less than a high school education were employed in the month previous to their arrest (Harlow, 2003). For those inmates with a GED or high school diploma, only 56.4% and 63.8% respectively were employed in the month previous to arrest (Harlow). When examining employment status prior to arrest in terms of gender, females fare worse than males. The United States Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that while 60% of female inmates were unemployed in the month prior to arrest, this was true of only 40% of male inmates (James, 2004). Additionally, of the women who did have jobs prior to arrest, two-thirds of them reported that they had never received more than \$6.50 an hour (Anyaso, 2008). Ellis, McFadden, and Colaric (2008) report that close to 37% of female inmates “had incomes of less than \$600 per month prior to arrest, and almost 30% of these women reported receiving some type of state

assistance” (p. 200). With statistics like these, it is evident that the prison population in the United States is in dire need of education and job training.

Hughes and Wilson (2004) estimate that “at least 95% of all State prisoners will be released from prison at some point” (para. 1). Therefore, simply warehousing the prison population is not only detrimental to the inmates but also to the rest of society. Given that the statistics demonstrate that both education and job skills are deficient in our prison population, it would seem that providing opportunities in both of these areas to inmates while they are in prison would be a beneficial arrangement to the inmate and to society as a whole. Tommy Douberley, the warden at Moore Haven Correctional Facility in Florida, stated, “These people are going to be returned to society. We need to make some provisions for them that when they get out they are better than when they went in” (as cited in Murphy, 2001, para. 23).

While this is a noble cause, gender role expectations exist within everything, as previously noted. Education and job training programs within prisons are no exception. Regrettably, in both the outside world as well as within prison, women’s “access to nontraditional programs [are] limited by stereotypes and other gender-based discrimination” (National Women’s Law Center, 2005, p. 10). This is important in that girls who take up traditionally female occupations can expect to earn half – or less—what they could make if they went into such traditionally male fields as auto repair, welding or engineering.... In fact, the *highest* median wage for a traditionally female category (\$14.63 for health professions) was lower than the *lowest* median wage in a traditionally male field (\$16.63 for agricultural management)” (National Women’s Law Center, p. 2).

It is likely that a study looking at education and job training programs in correctional institutions will produce important findings for the corrections community as well as for those in the field of adult education. With the current American economy in the midst of a recession and the inevitable release of those who are presently incarcerated, it is crucial that we find ways to provide inmates with the abilities and skills to support themselves and their families through legal means.

### **Research Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this research is to examine the vocational programs available to female inmates incarcerated in a southern state, to explore these inmates' thoughts, feelings and perspectives about the programs available to them, and to determine whether these programs are unintentionally gender-biased or gender-stereotypical. Additionally, data will be collected reflecting the vocational education instructors' thoughts, feelings and perspectives on their programs as well as on the inmates enrolled in their programs. Doing such research will not only determine if these programs are gender-biased or gender-stereotypical, but also uncover the reasoning behind offering certain programs to inmates based on gender. Furthermore, it is important to look at the inmates' attitudes and perceptions of the available programs to see if any changes are not just needed, but wanted. In order for any change to occur, there should be data available that support the need for change. This research has the potential to be the catalyst in developing policy changes within the prison education system.

As a focal point for the study, the research sought to answer (1) What do the female inmates at Southern Central Correctional Facility (SCCF) think and feel about the vocational education programs that are available to them? (2) What do the instructors of

these programs think and feel about the programs available at SCCF? Are these programs inadvertently gender-biased or gender-stereotypical? Secondary questions include: how do the types of vocational programs offered differ in relation to gender; are the vocational programs available to female inmates offered in gender-stereotypical occupations; what are the inmates' attitudes toward and perceptions of the available programs; how do the inmates feel about the quality and level of difficulty of the programs offered; what are the inmates' perceptions of the impact that the existing programs have had on their lives; how and why do the inmates choose one particular program over another; and what programs do inmates wish they had the opportunity to enroll in?

### **Definitions of Terms**

Behaviorism: A learning theory that suggests that all behavior is the result of prior conditioning (Elias & Merriam, 2005).

Humanism: A philosophy that argues that people are in charge of their own destinies and that behavior is not predetermined by environmental or subconscious factors (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

Inmate: A person confined to a correctional institution.

Progressivism: A view of education that suggests education should not be restricted to formalized learning; rather, it should be inclusive of all things deliberate and incidental that all societal institutions use as a way of passing on norms, values, attitudes, behaviors, wisdom, and abilities (Elias & Merriam, 2005).

Recidivism: Chronic or repeat criminal offending.



## **Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature. Chapter 3 presents the methodology used for this study. Chapter 4 discusses the findings of the study and Chapter 5 offers the conclusions and discussions about the study.

## Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

### History of Women's Prisons

Because this research is focused specifically on prison education for women, it is important that a brief historical account be included in order to understand the prison experience unique to women. This section explores both American prisons as well as those abroad, as there are many similarities. In their book on the history of imprisoned women, Dobash, Dobash, and Gutteridge (1986) state:

From the very beginning, women in prison were treated differently from men, considered more morally depraved and corrupt and in need of special, closer forms of control and confinement. They became a pariah class, separate and distinct from the ideal, chaste and morally correct women of the Victorian era and this continues even today. (p. 1)

Pollock-Byrne (1990) echoes this statement in her recount of the history of women's prisons. She asserts that:

The history of women's institutions reflects the history of women. Because women have long been thought to hold a special place in society, deviant women have been treated differently not only from their more law-abiding sisters but also from their male counterparts. In short, women offenders have been a class of people perceived as not wholly feminine but definitely not masculine either. (p. 36)

The disparity in treatment of female and male offenders has its ancestry in old English law. Under this law, men and women clearly had different rights. While both men and women were punished for crimes against social order, in response to the male-

dominated culture, “women were firmly under the control of men and their behavior judged against the male model of female submissiveness” (Pollock-Byrne, 1990, p. 38). To clarify, some actions that were considered criminal when carried out by women were either not considered criminal at all or were punished less severely when carried out by men. For example,

During certain periods in the middle ages, women could be burned to death for adultery or for murdering a spouse, whereas adultery was sometimes not considered an offense for men and the murder of a wife might not result in any prosecution. If punished, the guilty husband would be subjected to hanging only and saved the greater agony of burning. This difference reflected women’s subordinate position within the family, the state and the church”. (Dobash et al., 1986, p. 17)

Women could be punished whenever they were seen as insubordinate or non-virtuous. Women who spoke out against men, including their husbands, were “defined as public nuisances, shrews, nags and viragos” (Dobash et al., 1986, p. 19). Punishments for these offenses consisted of the ducking stool or employment of the gossip’s bridle. This bridle, sometimes called the branks,

was an iron cage placed over the head, and most examples incorporated a spike or pointed wheel that was inserted into the offender’s mouth in order to ‘pin the tongue and silence the noisiest brawler’... The common form of administering this punishment was to fasten the branks to a woman and parade her through the village, sometime chaining her to a pillar for a period of time after the procession. (Dobash et al., 1986, p. 19)

The male-privileged culture of the time allowed husbands to turn “their errant wives over to bridewells [another term for prison]” (Pollock-Byrne, 1990, p. 38). Monasteries, convents and nunneries were frequently used as a place of long term internment for women. “Women forced into convents were usually political prisoners, illegitimate, disinherited by their families and/or physically deformed or mentally defective. Fathers and husbands used convents and nunneries to dispose of their unwanted daughters and wives” (Dobash et al., 1986, p. 22).

Once incarcerated, women were still expected to perform “womanly” duties, such as cooking, sewing, and cleaning for the institution (Pollock-Byrne, 1990). However, “other uses of incarcerated women involved their sexual role” (p. 39). For example, from 1787 through 1852, the British transported their prisoners to Australia (Dobash et al., 1986).

The conditions for female transportees were much worse than those for men.

Assignment:

to households and farms was usually nothing less than forced prostitution and the factories were overcrowded, repressive establishments often operated as open brothels or forced marriage markets. In 1812, the Committee on Transportation observed that women were ‘... indiscriminately given to such of the inhabitants as demanded them, and were in general received rather as prostitutes than as servants...’ The British Government transported women for the purpose of preventing unrest among the free and convict male population by providing convict women as sexual commodities. (Dobash et al., 1986, p. 33)

During the colonial times in America, there was a more egalitarian way of life between the sexes. In order to survive, women were needed to work on the farm, thus they were treated relatively equally to men. Confinement of offenders, both male and female, was limited to the short period of time while the offender was waiting for trial. “Punishment for those convicted of a crime was swift, harsh, and frequently involved corporal punishment – such as whipping, branding, or executing – even for those offenses that we would now regard as relatively minor” (Morton, 2004, p. 5).

The Revolutionary War was followed by a period of industrialization and urbanization in America and women’s roles changed dramatically (Pollock-Byrne, 1990). Instead of being considered equal to men, women were now “expected to be ‘pure, submissive, and pious’. Those who did not fit this mold were considered more deviant than criminal men since they went against a natural order” (p. 39). Thus, these criminal women were considered to have fallen further than their male counterparts, which in turn, justified harsher punishments for female offenders (Pollock-Byrne). “The deification of the spiritually pure wife/mother brought demands for laws to punish the nonconforming women as unnatural, as the symbol of sin” (Feinman, 1982, p. 133).

Freedman (1981) stated that during this time period,

A subcategory of public order offenses, sometimes called crimes against chastity or decency, applied almost exclusively to women. ... A stricter code of female morality in the nineteenth century led to the overrepresentation of women in this category of crimes. A wide range of behavior, including lewd and lascivious carriage, stubbornness, idle and disorderly conduct, drunkenness, and vagrancy,

as well as fornication and adultery, brought women, more often than men, into conflict with law enforcers. (p. 14)

The early nineteenth century was an age of social, political, and economic reform for America. Using ideas from the Enlightenment thinkers of the late eighteenth century, criminal justice reform started under the auspice that there were more rational and humane ways in deterring crime than the use of capital punishment. Thus, the idea to develop a penitentiary was formed. The purpose of the penitentiary was not merely to detain criminals, as the jails and prisons in the past had done, but was also an attempt to reform criminals. In other words, the establishment of the penitentiary “combined the goals of punishing criminals and re-forming their characters so that they would not break the law again” (Freedman, 1981, p. 8).

Although the creation of the penitentiary successfully separated the genders, women did not have separate facilities; instead, the women were often still housed together in rooms or areas of a male facility, albeit away from the men. For instance, in 1825, female prisoners in New York’s Auburn State Prison

were housed not in cellblocks but in a third-floor attic above the penitentiary’s kitchen. ... Once a day a steward delivered food and removed the waste, but otherwise prisoners were left to their own devices. Their lack of protection from one another, and the psychological strain of being forced to share an overcrowded, unventilated space, sharply distinguished their care from that of the men in the nearby cellblock. (Rafter, 1990, p. 6)

Women continued to be housed together, and therefore there was also no concern about housing the sick with the healthy, the old with the young, or the first-time offenders with

the more seasoned convict. Adding to these problems was a continual lack of supervision; there was no matron hired to control and supervise the female inmates until 1832 (Rafter, 1990).

One of the reasons that women prisoners were often so neglected is the mere fact that there were so few of them. For example, in 1831 “an average of only one in twelve prisoners was female... In 1850 women constituted only 3.6 percent of the total inmates in thirty-four state and county prisons” (Freedman, 1981, p. 11). However, beginning around 1840, the numbers of female prisoners started to increase. Just in Massachusetts alone, the rate of incarceration for women per 100,000 was “under 300 in the 1840s, but [jumped] to over 400 during the 1860s” (Freedman, 1981, p. 13). “By the end of the nineteenth century, nearly every state had some place to confine women criminals” (Pollock-Byrne, 1990, p. 40).

The fact that the women prisoner population was smaller was not the only reason that they were seen as insignificant; “to many officials, women were by definition more troublesome and less able than men” (Rafter, 1990, p.12). The prevailing idea was that women were considered “the source of sexual trouble. The proximity of women was thought to drive men to the unhealthy practice of masturbation; the presence of women led to scandals when officers were discovered fostering prostitution or fathering children” (Rafter, 1990, p. 12).

It was also during this time period that women prisoners became a special interest group for a few small groups of women, mainly concentrated in Massachusetts, Indiana, and New York (Freedman, 1981). These were mainly middle-class women who were at first only visiting prisons. After spending time with the female inmates, these women

began to realize “the fallen were not as depraved as they had expected... [and] some reformers questioned the condemnation of the fallen woman” (Freedman, 1981, p. 22).

**Prison reform for women.** This was the beginning of the attitude shift toward the woman convict in America; “they began to be seen not so much as evil as misguided” (Pollock-Byrne, 1990, p. 41). This change in the perception of the female criminal was also a catalyst for reformers who wanted to better the environment of the women’s prisons.

The first woman who is heralded as the prison reformer solely concerned about the conditions in women’s prisons was Elizabeth Fry. Fry was raised in a Quaker family and followed the Quaker ideologies of “personal, paternalistic means of correction ... [whose] main instrument of reform was religion” (Dobash et al., 1986, p. 41). The Quakers were very philanthropic and involved in numerous activities that revolved around the salvation of the impoverished. One of these activities was benevolent visiting, which involved the women visiting places like asylums, hospitals, poorhouses and prisons (Dobash et al.).

In February, 1813, a group of American Quakers visited the Newgate Prison in London and they were “shocked and sickened ... by the blaspheming, fighting, dram-drinking, half-naked women” (Dobash et al., 1986, p. 42). This report convinced Fry to visit Newgate in December of the same year. What she witnessed during her visit left a strong impression on her and is said to be one of the reasons she became a pioneer in the field of prison reform (Dobash et al., 1986).

At the time, Newgate housed both women and men at all stages of the criminal justice process. Dobash et al. (1986) state:



The section for women was known at the time as ‘hell above ground’ with the women described as savages and wretches. The conditions for women prisoners were much worse than those for men. They suffered greater overcrowding since half of their allocated space of 190 square yards for 300 women and children had been appropriated by prison authorities for the confinement of upper-class prisoners of the Crown. (pp. 42-43)

Morton (2004) states that there were reports that many of the women imprisoned at Newgate were half-naked and slept on a stone floor. Morton also recounts a story in which Fry witnessed two women removing the clothes of a dead child so that they were able to dress the living children.

Fry continued to visit other bridewells and prisons and spoke about the deplorable conditions she witnessed. Pollock-Byrne (1990) writes that Fry published a manuscript in 1825 that “advocated work, training, religion, routine, manners, and continuous surveillance for female prisoners” (p. 41). Fry insisted that

prisons provide both separate women’s quarters and female attendants within them. Fearing that male guards might abuse women prisoners, and reasoning that women would provide sympathetic counsel and good examples for female inmates, Fry advised ‘It is absolutely essential to the proper order and regulation of every prison , that the female prisoners should be placed under the superintendence of officers of their own sex’. (Freedman, 1981, p. 58)

Fry’s efforts at prison reform have been credited as the vehicle that provided a separate system for female inmates in England. Prison reformers in the United States followed suit. The goals of the reformers in the United States echoed Fry’s: “to establish

separate state penal institutions for women prisoners, run by women and with the purpose of instilling feminine values in the female residents” (Pollock-Byrne, 1990, p. 42).

This notion was met with resistance primarily because the ideology at the time was that women belonged in the home and not in the public sector, much less somewhere as awful as a prison. Another rationale to the opposition of female run women’s institution was that the prison would lack a “normal, family atmosphere if men were excluded” (Pollock-Byrne, 1990, p. 42). In turn, this would challenge a male dominated society, which would result in the destruction of femininity (Pollock-Byrne).

In June of 1835, New York established the first female prison in the United States; Mount Pleasant Female Prison, located on a hill behind the infamous Sing Sing Prison. Hired as the matron of Mount Pleasant was a twenty-eight year old woman named Eliza Farnham. At the time Farnham was appointed, the prison was in the midst of a riot and the previous matron had been attacked and stripped by the inmates (Rafter, 1990). Farnham, along with assistance from Georgiana Bruce, who had resided at the utopian community known as Brook Farm, quickly restored order at the prison by utilizing both kindness and firmness with the inmates.

Freedman (1981) offers a summary of Farnham’s accomplishments during the time of her tenure at Mount Pleasant. She says,

Farnham believed in rehabilitation instead of punishment. She ended the silence rule, set up a library and a school, classified prisoners, offered incentives for good behavior, and used music, handicrafts, and entertainment to discourage criminal instincts. Instead of the Bible she read the women Dicken’s *Oliver Twist*; Margaret Fuller came to speak to inmates at Farnham’s request. (p. 48)

Farnham also attempted to “feminize” the women prisoners by allowing the female inmates to “decorate their rooms with curtains and flowers” (Pollock-Byrne, 1990, p. 43).

Unfortunately, Farnham’s methodologies incensed her contemporaries and state officials. Her critics objected to the lack of religion involved in her programs and stated that her charges lacked discipline. Although Farnham fought back, she eventually resigned from Mount Pleasant in 1847 (Rafter, 1990).

It wasn’t until the late 1800s that other states followed New York and opened separate female facilities staffed by women, and even then, Massachusetts and Indiana were the only two states to do so. During this time period, houses of refuge were built for female misdemeanants and were constructed to hold young female offenders as well. Josephine Shaw Lowell, a philanthropist and social reformer, argued that reformatories should be nothing like prisons. She claimed that a cottage system would provide “healthier surroundings, both within and after prison, [and] would permit the metamorphosis from depravity to ‘true womanhood’” (Freedman, 1981, p. 53). Thus, the Hudson House of Refuge was built in 1887 in New York and was the first female adult reformatory to use the cottage system.

The cottage system was “an architectural embodiment of the notion that criminal women could be reformed through domestic training” (Rafter, 1990, p. 33). The purpose of these cottage systems was to offer a more homelike environment; the Massachusetts Reformatory Prison for Women, built in 1877 in Framingham, had

“private rooms” which ranged from fifty to ninety square feet, slightly larger than most men’s prison quarters. Iron bedsteads and white linen, not the typical bare cot, adorned each room. Well-behaved inmates could decorate their quarters,

enjoy unbarred windows, and have wood slats instead of grating on the doors.

Room size and location was determined by a merit system, with six-by-ten-foot rooms for most and nine-by-ten-foot rooms for the honor class. (Freedman, 1981, pp. 68-69)

Lowell was influential in the formation of all three of New York's reformatories and has been noted as an instrumental player in the women's reformatory movement. However, it is interesting to note that she was a supporter of eugenics for feeble-minded and promiscuous women. She was greatly influenced by *The Jukes*, a book by Richard Dugdale, a social scientist in New York. This book was a "study of a degenerate family of criminals, drunkards, and mentally diseased persons who, Dugdale implies, were produced by promiscuous women" (Rafter, 1990, p. 44). Although Lowell was an advocate for women prisoners, she was also eager to establish institutions in New York that would prevent such promiscuous women from breeding "more of their kind" (Rafter, p. 44).

During the reform movement period of 1870-1930, "the social feminists [that were] involved in prison improvement were not inclined to pose deep challenges to prevailing social arrangements" (Rafter, 1990, p. 45). Instead, they were simply concerned with bettering the prison environment. These women fully believed that there were intrinsic differences between the sexes, thus they supported the idea of establishing all-female prisons. The belief at the time was that "criminal women would receive sympathetic care from members of their own sex" (Rafter, p. 46) without the corruption of male influences.

Reformers at this time focused on differential treatment between the sexes, arguing that reform offered the “fallen woman” the chance to redeem herself and embrace the virtues of “true womanhood”. In order to accomplish this, women needed to be retrained by women so that they could embrace their feminine roles “under the influences of womanly sympathy and nurture” (Freedman, 1981, p. 54). Domestic routines were implemented in order to provide stability for the inmates’ lives and also to “train them for proper womanly roles” (Freedman, 1981, p. 55).

Throughout the Progressive Era, women’s prison reform continued to be successful. By 1935, seventeen reformatories for women were built. However, women were still being held in non-segregated jails and prisons in many states. These women were still living in “conditions of considerable deprivation” (Rafter, 1990, p. 57).

Belknap (1996) writes that the Progressive Era brought with it a new kind of reformer. She states,

The two characteristics distinguishing this era’s reformatories were the increased professionalism of the female administrators and the incorporation of a medical model. For the first time, the reformatories were managed by educated and experienced women professionals, who put more distance between themselves and the prisoners than their predecessors had. The Progressive era was also distinguished by the establishment of physicians’, psychiatrists’, and psychologists’ roles in *classifying* offenders... . (pp. 95-96)

These female administrators had a more feminist approach than their predecessors. They remained supportive of the sex-segregated prison system that the first wave of reformers had lobbied for; however, these women “questioned the treatment of women that

encouraged them to stay in traditional roles, as these reformers had rejected such roles in their own lives” (Belknap, p. 96).

It was during this time period that reform efforts focused on providing both academic and vocational education programs to women in the reformatories. Many of the administrators argued that the types of programs that were available to women were inadequate and based on traditional “women’s work” occupations. This is further discussed in the next section.

**The downfall of the women’s reformatories.** With the passing of both the Harrison Act (1914) and the Volstead Act (1919), narcotics were outlawed and prohibition was actualized. Additionally, the resurrection of anti-prostitution action after 1917, in which the goal was to shelter American men from the evils of sexually transmitted diseases, “unleashed deeply held fears of the harlot as a threat to society...Strict enforcement of antiprostitution laws during the [First World] war included closing red-light districts and hiring vice agents to arrest potential carriers of venereal disease. As a result, courts sent thousands of women to local jails and state reformatories” (Freedman, 1981, p. 147).

Until this time, the population housed in the reformatories consisted of young offenders with minor charges. The reformatories were able to refrain from accepting the more serious offenders “because most states also operated a small women’s unit at their central state prisons, just as they had before the reformatory movement began” (Rafter, 1990, p. 81). These small custodial units were essential to the mission of the reformatories in that they enabled the reformatories to focus their efforts on youthful small-time offenders.

Unfortunately, “after 1915, the population of incarcerated women began to change, with a huge influx of incarcerated prostitutes and drug users” (Belknap, 1996, p.96). The infamous 1929 stock market crash and the subsequent Great Depression forced many states to close their women’s units at the central state prisons. Thus, the population from these institutions was relocated to the reformatories. Once this happened, “the woman’s reformatory ceased to exist in all but name” (Rafter, 1990, p. 81). It was at this point that the reformatories regressed into custodial regimes and institutions and have remained that way.

### **History of Vocational Programs for Women in Prison**

In 1645, the Dutch erected what was known as the Spinhuis. This facility was probably the first truly purpose-built penal institution for women. ... It was intended to be a paternalistic house of correction as the motto over the door attested, ‘Fear not! I do not exact vengeance for evil, but compel you to be good. My hand is stern, but my heart is kind’. (Dobash et al., 1986, p. 24)

This institution served as a model for many prison changes that developed throughout the nineteenth century. The most important element in this institution was work. The prevailing thought of the time was that continual labor would help convert the criminal and idle into productive law-abiding citizens. “Those who created the Spinhuis desired an institution that would teach girls and women ‘a suitable trade’ and by the mid-seventeenth century the London Bridewell was turning out between one hundred and two hundred trained apprentices every year” (Dobash et al., 1986, p. 24).

In 1830... the Magdalen Society of New York City opened the Magdalen Home to serve female offenders who manifested a desire to repent and assume their

proper role. The home provided vocational training in the domestic arts for those women who ‘gave evidence that true womanhood [was] really returning’ and secured employment for them as domestics in good Christian families. (Feinman, 1982, pp. 133-134)

During the nineteenth century,

women prison reformers insisted on the importance of teaching inmates some remunerative skills so that they would not be tempted to commit crimes after their release. They had suggested several types of training, including academic classes, industrial trades and domestic skills. (Freedman, 1981, p. 90)

Due to several factors, training in domestic skills ultimately became the main priority when offering programs to female inmates. Academic classes were often understaffed and had insufficient resources. Complaints about the difficulty in teaching such a diverse group of students were heralded, thus facilitating the demise of the programs. At first, institutional training programs were favored by some prison administrators. However, during the labor movement of the 1880s, there was great resistance to prison-made products. This, added to the reality that there were few employment opportunities for women in these trades on the outside, aided in these programs being discontinued as well.

In the late 1800s, there were three Northeastern reformatories for women that were structured on the cottage model; the Massachusetts Reformatory Prison in Sherborn (later known as Massachusetts Reformatory for Women), New York’s House of Refuge in Hudson, New York, and the Western House of Refuge in Albion, New York. “The three institutions aimed at training prisoners to become upright and competent homemakers. Academic, vocational, and religious training were woven together in



programs that emphasized conformity to middle-class concepts of femininity” (Rafter, 1990, p. 39).

Vocational training at the time “centered around institutional chores – cleaning, cooking, and sewing – partly out of practical necessity but *mostly because administrators believed that reform of female offenders involved making them proficient in domestic tasks* [italics added]” (Rafter, 1990, p. 39). However, there was an attempt at offering some non-gendered vocational opportunities to the women incarcerated in these institutions. A farming program was set up in Massachusetts and Albion provided gardening and farming activities in the early years. Eventually, the importance of the agricultural tasks at both of these institutions waned and the programs were discontinued.

During the Progressive period, the female administrators of the women’s prisons were more skilled and learned than their predecessors. One of the noteworthy characteristics of these

‘new women’ of the early twentieth century ... [was that they] tended to be flexible about gender roles. Many had begun to move beyond social feminism, with its strict demarcation of men’s and women’s spheres, to broader views of the tasks of which women were capable... . (Rafter, 1990, p. 65)

These reformers were also concerned with what they believed were the root causes of women’s criminality; limited opportunities available in both education and work and the lower wages women are typically paid.

What this meant within the women’s reformatories was that heavy institutional labor and farming became accentuated and that table-serving and needlework were downplayed. At the Clinton Farms Reformatory in New Jersey and at Bedford Hills in

New York, women prisoners worked at grading the earth for new construction projects and pouring concrete to create walkways (Rafter, 1990). The superintendent at Bedford Hills during this time, Katherine Davis, was

...determined to train some inmates to compete for nontraditional jobs. '[I]t is not every woman in our mixed throng,' she wrote in 1903, thinking perhaps of herself as well as her charges, 'who is adapted by nature or taste to domestic service, sewing or laundry work. In the reformatories for men, no one for a moment seriously considers limiting the trades taught to cooking and tailoring... In the reformatories for women we will never meet with a large measure of success until we ... provide training in a ... variety of lines. (Rafter, pp. 65-66)

During Davis' tenure at Bedford Hills, both academic and vocational education were stressed. Academic classes at Bedford Hills were taught by a full-time instructor. Basic skills were taught; however, inmates had the opportunity to take classes in history, geography, mechanical drawing, or current events. As a way to supplement the curriculum, Davis herself provided singing lessons and the assistant superintendent proffered gymnastics classes on a daily basis. Additionally, there were weekly lessons given by the reformatory physician in "physiology and sex hygiene" (Freedman, 1981, p. 133).

As noted previously, Davis was a big proponent of vocational education. The half of the day that was not spent in school was taken up by vocational training. Although the inmates had instruction in food preparation, laundry and cooking within their cottages, these tasks were augmented by classes in machine knitting, hat making, stenography, typing, cobbling, painting, chair caning, bookbinding, and carpentry. Davis stated that

“Our success will depend on our ability to train girls so as to enable them to earn a[n] honest livelihood” (Freedman, 1981, p. 133).

Freedman (1981) writes:

Another of Davis’ innovations, ‘Fresh Air Treatment’, applied the Progressive era ‘back to nature’ impulse to women’s prisoners. Female criminals, Davis argued, even more than male, suffered from physical and mental deterioration. Fresh air, sunshine, and outdoor occupations would rebuild their bodies and their nervous systems. Thus, on summer evenings Bedford inmates could remain outdoors until dark. During the day they could also be found not only gardening, weeding, and planting, but also raising poultry, breeding stock, and slaughtering pigs. At first, Davis admitted it seemed to the prisoners like ‘man’s work’, but once the female officers took part, the inmates followed suit. Besides gardening and farming, they learned masonry, built a road, painted the institution, built a conduit for a new steam laundry, and harvested ice in the winter. Journalists, judges, and other visitors often marveled at the sight of women grading an embankment or draining a swamp. (p. 134)

While Katharine Davis was influential in New York, Jessie Donaldson Hodder, the superintendent at the women’s reformatory in Framingham, Massachusetts also brought forth innovative ideas to the world of prison reform. Hodder accepted the position as superintendent in 1910 and “wanted to modify institutional controls and individualize treatment” (Freedman, 1981, p. 135).

In Hodder’s first annual report, she advocated that the Massachusetts Reformatory Prison in Sherborn eliminate the word “prison” from the institution’s name. “She

succeeded in having the name changed to Massachusetts Reformatory for Women in 1911 and described ‘joyous hand-clapping’ and ‘sobs’ by the women following the ceremony” (Freedman, 1981, p. 135).

In one of her reports, Hodder noted that the facility that had been placed in her charge “had ‘standards of care, education, industrial training, individual comfort and development ... far below those for men in men’s prisons and reformatories”” (Freedman, 1981, p. 135). She asked for state funds in order to expand work-related training, replace outdated moral reform with updated academic instruction, and provide more opportunities for outdoor activities. Her goal was to transform the reformatory into an industrial education establishment for women (Freedman, 1981).

By 1915, Hodder had made some progress towards implementation of her goals. She was able to incorporate structured physical fitness programs, although her requests for a gymnasium went unheeded until 1925. She continued to request that the institution look past traditional domestic training in favor of vocational training programs for the women, but was repeatedly ignored and disregarded.

These “early reformatories did accomplish good things: they prevented sexual abuse, allowed freedom from exploitation of labor, and provided services for women such as nurseries that were only possible in centralized prisons” (Pollock-Byrne, 1990, p. 51). However, problems with overcrowding and classification continued and it has been argued that the differential treatment championed by the reformatory model “created a legacy of differential feminine care. This legacy lingers, exemplified in sexual stereotypes in work and vocational training programs and treatment of women prisoners as ‘children’” (p. 51).

## **Recent Prison Information**

“After a 700-percent increase in the U.S. prison population between 1970 and 2005, you’d think the nation would finally have run out of lawbreakers to put behind bars” (Public Safety Performance, 2007, p. ii). Not surprisingly, this trend does not seem to be slowing; rather it is estimated that within five years, the number of those incarcerated will be larger than the number of residents in Baltimore, Denver, and Atlanta combined (Public Safety Performance). Put in another perspective, the International Centre for Prison Studies (2009) estimates that the prison population rate in the United States is roughly 760 per 100,000. What this means is that “more than 1 in 100 adults is now locked up in America” (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2008, p. 5).

This trend is even more alarming when specifically looking at female inmates. A recent report written by Frost, Greene & Pranis and published by the Institute on Women and Criminal Justice (2006) states that “while women comprise just a small segment of all the people serving prison terms in the U.S., their number is rising at a far faster rate than that of men” (p. 9). Also noted in the same report is the fact that “in 1977, the U.S. imprisoned 11,212 women; by 2004, that number had ballooned to 96,125, a 757% increase” (p. 7).

The United States has mainly dealt with its increasing criminal population simply by building more prisons. With a recidivism rate hovering around 67.5%, some would argue that simply locking people up is not working to reduce crime nor is it cost-efficient (Lanagan & Levin, 2002). Over \$49 billion was spent on corrections in 2007 and that figure is expected to increase (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2008). A study put out by the Public Safety Performance Project (2007) states:

The national price tag is staggering. The projected 192,023 new prisoners – leave aside the current population of more than 1.5 million – could cost as much as \$27.5 billion: potentially a cumulative \$15 billion on new operating costs and \$12.5 billion in new construction costs by 2011. Every additional dollar spent on prisons, of course, is one dollar less that can go to preparing for the next Hurricane Katrina, educating young people, providing health care to the elderly, or repairing roads and bridges. (p. i)

With the American economy in a recession crisis, this expenditure can be perceived as unacceptable; therefore prompting questions such as how should the country then address the rising prison population? Common perception supports the belief that one of the best cost and time effective ways to combat this problem is by providing education within the prison system.

### **The Benefits of Education**

There are two key reasons why educating inmates is beneficial not only to the inmate but to the rest of society as well. First, there is an economic benefit in providing education. A 2002 study conducted by the Indiana Department of Corrections reported that offenders who received either an Associate or Bachelors degree in 2001 saved the state over \$12 million in time cuts (Chivers & Edwards-Willey, 2005). Time cuts refer to inmates who receive time off their sentences because they are enrolled in educational programs. Usually, educational programs provide inmates with “2 for 1”, meaning that inmates will get credit for two days served for every one day they are enrolled and participating in the educational program. Even after adding in the costs of teacher salaries and fringe benefits, the Indiana Department of Corrections still saved over \$6.1

million (Chivers & Edwards-Willey). It has been suggested that this would be extremely beneficial in challenging budgetary times as inmates would be eligible for release earlier (Chivers & Edwards-Willey). Earlier release of inmates could save correctional institutions millions of dollars in annual operating costs per inmate.

Additionally, “the Texas Department of Criminal Justice has indicated that improvements to the state’s correctional education system would reduce recidivism resulting in savings of \$28,000 to \$35,000 in construction costs and \$13,000 in annual operating costs per inmate” (LoPinto, n.d., Recidivism Rate section, para. 7). James Vacca (2004), a literacy instructor at New York’s Great Meadow Correctional Facility for ten years writes, “When inmates do not return to prison, the correctional education programs produce a national savings of hundreds of millions of dollars per year” (para. 7).

Simply housing inmates can be expensive, with costs ranging from \$20,000 to \$70,000 per year per inmate (Kinsella, 2004). In one Maryland study, the correctional education programs cost approximately \$2,500 while the cost of incarceration was approximately \$19,000 per inmate (Jenkins, Steurer, & Pendry, 1995). This is a cost difference of almost \$17,000 per year in educating inmates versus simply incarcerating them (Chivers & Edwards-Willey, 2005). Simply put, it is less expensive to educate inmates than it is to house them. Another study, also done in Maryland, found that “every dollar spent on education returns more than two dollars to the citizens in reduced prison costs. In Maryland, that means that last year’s \$11,700,000 annual state budget for correctional education returned at least \$23,280,000 to the state” (Steurer, Smith, & Tracy, 2001, p. 1).

As stated previously, one of the biggest components of the crime problem in the U.S. is recidivism, or chronic offending. Using the most recent recidivism data available, the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics found that of the 272,111 people released from prison in fifteen states in 1994, an estimated 67.5% were rearrested within three years (Lanagan & Levin, 2002). This growing body of literature that suggests that providing education within the prison system is one way to reduce recidivism (Chivers & Edwards-Willey, 2005; Lewis, 2006; LoPinto, n.d.; Young & Mattucci, 2006).

For example, one study looked at over 3,600 inmates who were released from Maryland, Ohio, and Minnesota correctional institutions who participated in a longitudinal study investigating education in prison. This study found that “simply attending school behind bars reduces the likelihood of re-incarceration by 29%” (Steurer, Smith, & Tracy, 2001). Additionally, the U.S. Department of Justice (2004) reported that inmates who successfully completed one or more educational programs for each six-month term of their prison sentence had a lower recidivism rate (35.5%) than those inmates who completed no courses (41.1%).

### **Vocational Education**

Writing for the National Institute of Corrections (NIC), Ryan and Woodard (1987) define vocational education as training that is “designed to provide learning experiences to develop occupational awareness, give exploratory job experiences, and develop job skills and work habits in preparation for gainful employment. Vocational training is provided through on-the-job training and related classroom experience” (p. 2). For the purposes of this study, this definition will be used.



Lahm's (2000) study on educational and vocational programs available for offenders found that almost 100% of the 474 correctional institutions studied offered general education classes. While general and adult basic education classes fulfill a definite need, vocational education programs are especially important to inmates. In a study done at the University of Oklahoma in 1988, Allen found that inmates who received vocational education had a 25% recidivism rate. Comparatively, the recidivism rate of those inmates who had not had the benefit of vocational education was 77% (Vacca, 2004).

In addition to reducing recidivism, vocational programs help provide training that is useful in the "outside world". Since many crimes are committed due to under or unemployment directly related to a lack of skills, providing vocational education within prison enables inmates to learn a trade, thereby reducing the need to reoffend (Harlow, 2003, LoPinto, n.d.). Since vocational training seeks to directly prepare workers for entry into the workforce, it is vital that this training be offered in prisons as not only a means of reducing recidivism, but also to provide inmates with rehabilitation through the means of employment.

### **Differences in Vocational Education**

Whereas vocational education seems like an ideal solution to the recidivism problem, there continues to be a debate over the kinds of vocational education available to inmates. Regrettably, the research available reveals that female inmates are being offered not only fewer but often second-rate vocational programs in relation to their male counterparts (Arditi, Goldberg, Harris, and Phelps, 1973; Case & Fasenfest, 2004; Lahm, 2000; Norton, Ciccone, & Littlefield, 1987; Rose, 2004; Winifred, 1996.). For example,

a 1973 study titled “The Sexual Segregation of American Prisons” by Arditi et al found that:

The types of [vocational] programs offered at male and female prisons are very different. Men are usually given programs in mechanical skills and physical labor, while women are offered training in clerical skills and personal services. Second, male prisons consistently offer a far greater variety of vocational programs. This disadvantage for women is compounded by the fact that male inmates are often assigned to a particular institution, at least in part, on the basis of their vocational needs. Although scale considerations may account for some of these differences, the fact that even the larger female institutions do not have more than two or three programs – and the nature of the programs that are offered – attest to the influence of sex stereotypes. (Arditi et al., 1973, pp. 1242-1243)

The Arditi et al. 1973 study notes that the average number of vocational programs offered in the sample male prisons was 10.2 whereas the average number of vocational programs offered in the sample female prisons was only 2.7. Additionally, the study pointed out that in states in which there was more than one male prison, offenders were often assigned to a facility depending on that inmate’s rehabilitative need, at least on a partial basis.

It is important to note that of the 15 states that were included in this study, each state only had *one* facility for women, thus all female inmates were housed in the only facility available to them, regardless of their rehabilitative needs, age, or type of offense (Arditi et al., 1973). Consequently, this produces a much more heterogeneous population in women’s institutions.

The Arditì et al. study also found that female inmates were only offered training in traditional female occupations such as nursing assistant, IBM keyboarding, housekeeping, garment manufacturing, food services, floral design, dental technician, clerical skills and cosmetology. The males were offered training in areas such as auto body and auto mechanics, air conditioning repair, brick masonry, building trades and maintenance, cabinetry, carpentry, chemistry, drafting, engine and appliance repair, farming, welding, steam fitting, metal work and many others. “Not only were males offered more programs, but they were offered training in programs that could potentially earn them more income upon release” (Lahm, 2000, Vocational Education section, para. 1).

Although somewhat dated, the results from the Arditì et al. study have remained static over time. The United States General Accounting Office conducted an extensive study in 1980 that revealed that women in penal institutions did not have access to many of the prison industry jobs and job training opportunities that were afforded to the men. Additionally, the vocational programs that were available to the women were often in occupations that were traditionally lower paying and routinely staffed by women (Norton et al., 1987).

In a more recent study of correctional and vocational education, Lahm (2000) found that:

...a much greater percentage of female institutions in comparison to male institutions still overwhelmingly offer training in technical/sales/administrative occupations (63.8 percent to 33.4 percent) and service occupations (80.9 percent to 70.9 percent). The technical/sales/administrative category includes vocational

training for jobs such as medical assistants, sales associates, clerical/office staff, and telemarketing. The jobs within the service category include food and laundry preparation, and other custodial duties. These findings are consistent with past research of Morash et al. (1994), which indicates that 85 percent of female institutions still offer gender-stereotyped “traditional” vocational programs. (Lahm, 2000, Results section, para. 3)

The “traditional” vocational programs to which Lahm (2000) is referring have also been called pink-collar jobs. Defined by Taylor (1986), pink-collar jobs are “traditional female occupations that have little earning potential, and/or promise of upward mobility” (p. 3). These jobs include such occupations as “child-care providers, home health aides, beauty technicians, and shop clerks” (Goldstein, 2009, para 5). The 2005-2007 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey confirms that women are the dominant gender in industries such as educational services (68.5%), and health care and social assistance (78.8%). Female dominated occupations were reported as office and administrative support occupations (74%), healthcare support occupations (88.1%), and personal care and service occupations (78.1%).

Traditional pink-collar jobs generally pay less than traditional blue-collar jobs. As pink-collar jobs refer to the traditional female occupations as stated above, blue-collar jobs refer to the traditional male occupations, or those occupations in which the majority of employees are men. While men constitute a minority in the pink collar industries, it is interesting to note that when men are employed in traditional pink collar jobs, they have a higher median income than the women employed in those fields. For example, although women dominate the health care and social assistance industry with 78.8% of the

workforce, the median income for males in that industry is \$42,497.00 while the median income for females is only \$27,169.00 (2005-2007 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey).

Gender plays a significant role in determining available career options for women in general (as is evidenced by the statistics above) and specifically within corrections, as vocational programs available, if even offered, are limited in content and availability. This disparity in availability of programs between the genders has an indirect effect on recidivism, particularly for former female inmates, as they are unlikely to find a job that will pay a living wage, thus increasing the likelihood of returning to illegal activities to support themselves and their children.

### **Adult Education Philosophies As They Relate To Correctional Education**

Humanism, behaviorism, and progressivism are three adult education philosophies that will be discussed in this section as they inform correctional education.

**Humanism.** Elias and Merriam (2005) define humanism as “a broad philosophical point of view that holds sacred the dignity and autonomy of human beings” (p. 111). In simpler terms, humanists argue that people are in charge of their own destinies and that behavior is not predetermined by environmental or subconscious factors (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Humanists also believe that people possess an innate capacity for growth and development, are intrinsically good natured and, given the chance, will strive to build a better world. “Humanistic adult educators are concerned with the development of the whole person” (Elias & Merriam, 2005, p. 111).

There are two major ideologies that have been passed down through the history of humanistic educators. First, they hold the belief that the entire purpose of education is to

cultivate each of the potentials that humans possess. Second, the critical method for achieving this purpose is to provide a respectable human bond between the student and the teacher.

If one of the goals of prison is the rehabilitation of the offender, then prison as a whole, especially the educational programs, should be humanistic in nature. If we want to reduce recidivism, it is imperative that the actions and behaviors of the offenders change. Humanists not only strive to urge an individual to grow and change, but they also emphasize the belief that these offenders *can* change their behavior and become law-abiding productive citizens.

Humanists believe that the relationship between the teacher and learner is critical to the success of the learner. This is especially important in prison as there is a negative stigma attached to the labels of “inmate”, “offender”, or “convict”. In a study on vocational education in Australian women’s prisons, Spark and Harris (2005) found that “positive relationships with [education] staff were often construed as anomalous to the rest of the women’s jail experience where they are constantly made to feel like prisoners, rather than humans” (p. 152). Additionally, they found that “in the context of the Education Centre, women feel ‘special’ and are given the opportunity to engage with others, especially staff, as people rather than numbers” (p. 152).

Although positive relationships between correctional offenders and inmates do occur, they are not the norm. In 2004, the *New York Times* featured an article titled “Mistreatment of Prisoners Is Called Routine in U.S.” which describes a multitude of incidents reflecting harmful relationships between prison guards and inmates (Butterfield, 2004). *Human Rights Watch* also published an article in 2004 which stated

In recent years, U.S. prison inmates have been beaten with fists and batons, stomped on, kicked, shot, stunned with electronic devices, doused with chemical sprays, choked, and slammed face first onto concrete floors by the officers whose job it is to guard them. Inmates have ended up with broken jaws, smashed ribs, perforated eardrums, missing teeth, burn scars - not to mention psychological scars and emotional pain. Some have died. (Human Rights Watch, 2004, para. 4)

Relations between inmates and correctional officers have been strained, to say the least. These negative experiences with correctional officers make it that much more important that correctional education students have positive relationships with the educational staff.

In a 2009 study done in Mississippi, the presence of positive relationships between correctional educators and inmates were noted. One of the student inmates stated that being in school is

the closest to being outside the fence. You're treated like a real person; you're not spoken down to...it's a big relief to be away from the building where you're treated like a criminal. You come up here, they talk to you. (Burgdorf, 2009, p. 34)

In the same study, another student inmate described her instructor as someone who "don't treat us like a number, she treats us like a person" (Burgdorf, p. 34).

**Behaviorism.** Behaviorism is "a theory of learning based upon the idea that all behaviors are acquired through conditioning. Conditioning occurs through interaction with the environment" (Cherry, 2012, para. 1). There are two types of conditioning; classical and operant. In classical conditioning, the focus is on controlling a behavior by

controlling the stimulus to the behavior. The *responses* to the stimuli are not what is important here; the responses are simply seen as either conditioned or unconditioned reflexes. The main emphasis is on the *stimuli* that evoke the responsive behavior.

Operant conditioning, on the other hand, is concerned with BOTH the stimuli and response. B.F. Skinner argued that if the response is reinforced, “it will solidify the bond to the stimulus” (Elias & Merriam, 2005, p. 88). Skinner’s theory was that the behavior is actually reinforced by its consequences. In other words, “if a behavior is reinforced, the response is more likely to occur again under similar circumstances” (p. 89). Conversely, behavior that does not receive reinforcement or reward is expected to occur less frequently or even cease completely.

There are two types of reinforcement: positive and negative. Nye explains Positive reinforcement involves the *addition* of something (a positive reinforcer) to a situation when a response is made. For example, a response may be positively reinforced if the obtaining of food, water, sexual contact, money, or praise is a consequence. Negative reinforcement involves the *removal* of something (called either a negative reinforcer or an aversive stimulus) from a situation when a response is made. For example, a response may be negatively reinforced if the removal of extreme cold or heat, a loud noise, a threat, a tedious task, or a headache is a consequence. In short, much of our behavior is conditioned because it gains us something (in the case of positive reinforcement) or because it allows us to escape or avoid something (in the case of negative reinforcement). (as cited in Elias & Merriam, 2005, p. 89)



There is some confusion as to the difference between negative reinforcement and punishment. While both negative reinforcers and punishments are things that people try to avoid, *punishment* is different in that it is used as a way to extinguish a specific behavior, whereas a negative reinforcer is simply the removal of something once a response is made.

Elias and Merriam (2005) state:

An educational system can endure the survival of individuals and of society by carefully arranging the contingencies of reinforcement to meet these ends. On the individual level, behaviorist education emphasizes the acquisition of job skills so that a person can “survive” in our society. (p. 92)

This statement is the main reason why vocational programs exist in prison; to help inmates acquire skills needed to secure legitimate employment on the outside and to prevent recidivism.

Additionally, behaviorism has been said to substantiate vocational education. In fact,

the emphasis in vocational education is on identifying the skills needed to perform in an occupation, teaching those skills, and requiring a certain standard of performance in those skills. Education in this arena of practice is concerned with the outcomes rather than the process of learning, on exit rather than entrance requirements, and on criterion-referenced evaluation rather than norm-referenced evaluation... In criterion-referenced evaluation, the learner’s progress or accomplishments are compared to a fixed standard or criterion of mastery rather than to the performance of other students. (Elias & Merriam, 2005, p. 99)

**Progressivism.** It has been argued that progressivism has had the greatest impact on the United States adult education movement (Elias & Merriam, 2005). Progressivism may also be one of the oldest philosophies in adult education that continues to be utilized. John Dewey, a noted American philosopher, was engaged in numerous aspects of the progressive movement, which included economics, politics, and social reform as well as education (Elias & Merriam, 2005). Dewey comprised well-defined phases of the progressive movement in education.

The earliest stage of progressivism primarily revolved around the idea of a learner-centered methodology in education. It has been suggested that the primary task of education was to develop the potential of the learner. This necessitated removing learners from the passivity and uniformity of traditional education. Manual training was introduced into the curriculum and an effort was made to begin the educational process by attending to the needs and interests of the learners. (Elias & Merriam, 2005, p. 55)

Vocational education in prison accomplishes this by focusing on experiential learning and by allowing student inmates to work at their own pace.

Dewey's second stage of progressivism centered around the idea that education should play an important role in social reform. Elias and Merriam (2005) describe Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (1916) as "his most endearing and influential work [which] placed education at the very heart of social reform" (p. 55). In this work, three of the seven ideas involved social issues: the dependence of growth of the mind upon participation in shared activities; the influences of the physical environment on the development of culture; and the necessity of utilizing

individual differences in desire and thinking to produce changes in society. (Elias & Merriam, 2005, p. 55)

Since vocational education in prison is one effort to reform inmates, it falls under the progressive philosophy.

Although different, these three philosophies of adult education are important when looking at prison education. This review of the literature and theoretical perspectives provide the foundation for the research questions and the methodology that will be presented in chapter 3.

This study will examine the vocational education available to women in prison, but, as this study stems from an educational standpoint, it will also explore the philosophies of adult education that have been and currently are utilized by vocational education staff.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This case study was phenomenological in nature, and falls under two separate paradigms: the advocacy/participatory philosophical paradigm and a social constructivism paradigm. Its purpose was to examine female inmates' feelings, attitudes, and perceptions of the vocational programs available at Southern Central Correctional Facility (SCCF), the only state-run female correctional facility in this southern state. Additionally, this study examined the reasons why these inmates chose to participate in vocational education. Since previous research has suggested that the typical vocational programs available to female inmates are often gender-biased or gender-stereotypical and differ significantly from the vocational programs available to male inmates, this research sought to explore this claim as well.

The case study method has been defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context ... and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin, 1984, p. 23). Because this study focused on vocational education programs currently taking place in a correctional facility in a southern state, and also because this research relied on numerous sources of data, it can be defined as a case study.

Michael Anissimov (2010) describes phenomenology as “a philosophical trend that takes the intuitive sense of conscious experience -- the ‘about-ness’ of something -- and attempts to extract or describe its fundamental essence” (para. 1). Van Manen (2000) builds on this concept and adds that phenomenology “is a descriptive (phenomenological) methodology because it wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants to let things

“speak for themselves” (para. 14). Since this research utilized in-depth interviews in order to let vocational education participants “speak for themselves” (van Manen, 2000, para. 14), it can be considered phenomenological in nature as well.

Following the advocacy/participatory philosophical paradigm, the research sought to construct an “action agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants [and] the institutions in which they live and work” (Creswell, 2007, p. 21). However, because the study relied “as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situations” (p. 20), it also falls under the social constructivist paradigm. Additionally, the research purposed “to make sense (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world” (p. 20), which is another aspect of the social constructivist paradigm.

This study utilized qualitative research methods since this is the best way to gather in-depth knowledge about the participants and their shared experiences of vocational education in a penal institution. Creswell (2007) states

We conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be explored. This exploration is needed, in turn, because of a need to...hear silenced voices...We also conduct qualitative research because we need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue. This detail can only be established by talking directly with people...and allowing them to tell their stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature. We conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study...when we want to write in a literary, flexible style that conveys stories...because we want to understand the contexts or

settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issue...to develop theories when partial or inadequate theories exist for certain populations or existing theories do not adequately capture the complexity of the problem we are explaining [and because] interactions among people...are difficult to capture with existing measures...Qualitative approaches are simply a better fit for our research problem. (p. 40)

By allowing the individuals in this study to disclose their experiences in their own words, we are able to gather richer data, thus making a qualitative study the best choice.

### **Research Site**

The State Department of Corrections (SDOC) has three state-run correctional institutions; Southern Central Correctional Facility (SCCF), Southern State Penitentiary (SSP), and South Correctional Institution (SCI). The only institution for women is Southern Central Correctional Facility (SCCF), which is where this study was conducted. However, in order to provide a clear picture of the SDOC facilities, information and demographics of all three facilities are described. Additionally, this information is supplied for comparison purposes.

#### **Southern Central Correctional Facility (SCCF I, SCCF II and SCCF III).**

The SDOC reports that SCCF is situated in a rural county in a Southern state. SCCF has the capacity to house approximately 3,500 inmates. Within the SCCF complex, there are three (3) separate areas, each with its own warden (SCCF I, SCCF II, and SCCF III). As of June 1, 2010, the total population at the SCCF complex was 3,223. The total female population at this time at SCCF was 1,176. The racial composition of this population was as follows: 48.4% African American and 50.4% White, with the remaining 1.2%

Hispanic, Native American or Asian American (MDOC, 2010, June 9). The male population housed at SCCF as of June 1, 2010, was 2,047. Of the population, 64.8% were African American, 34% were White and the remaining 1.2% Hispanic, Native American or Asian American (MDOC, 2010, June 9).

SCCF I is broken down into two separate areas. SCCF I is used for Reception and Classification, which means that anyone who is sentenced to the Southern Department of Corrections comes to SCCF I first. In order to establish classification, each inmate is asked about his or her vocational and educational history, medically screened, and given a psychiatric evaluation. This area of SCCF I also houses the Administrative Segregation Units and Buildings F and G, which house male inmates.

The second area of SCCF I is the female unit. This area houses the educational programs (both vocational and Adult Basic Education [ABE]) and has five housing units each with approximately 100 beds. However, two of those units have recently closed, so only 300 women are housed in this area of the facility. SCCF I houses women who are either enrolled in school or have jobs within the prison. This unit also houses the female population that is classified as maximum security, including women who have received a death sentence.

The other unit on the compound that houses women is SCCF II. Women housed here are either in a drug and alcohol treatment program in a pre-release program, or are not enrolled in any program and not working. Some men are housed at SCCF II as well; however, they are confined to a different area separate from the women. Men housed here are usually working on the compound. The third unit on the compound, SCCF III, houses male inmates with either medical or physical special needs. This unit also holds

the distinction of being the “first state facility to achieve American Correctional Association (ACA) accreditation” (MDOC, 2009, November 12). This is extremely important in that the accreditation with the ACA means that the institution has achieved:

the national benchmark for the effective operation of correctional systems throughout the United States. [These standards] are necessary to ensure that correctional facilities are operated professionally. They address services, programs and operations essential to good correctional management, including administrative and fiscal controls, staff training and development, physical plant, safety and emergency procedures, sanitation, food service, and rules and discipline. Standards reflect practical, up-to-date policies and procedures that safeguard the life, health and safety of staff and offenders. (American Correctional Association, n.d., para. 13)

ACA accreditation is something that a correctional institution strives to achieve.

### **Other Southern Correctional Facilities**

#### **Information and demographics at Southern State Penitentiary (SSP).**

Southern State Penitentiary (SSP) is in a centrally located county in a Southern state.

This facility has approximately 4,500 beds available in seven different units. Offenders of all custody levels, including those with a death sentence, are housed at SSP. The total population at SSP as of June 1, 2010 was 3,546 with 71.3% of the inmates identified as African American, 27.9% identified as White, with the remaining 0.7% identified as Hispanic, Native American or Asian American (MDOC, 2010, June 9).

#### **Information and demographics at South Correctional Institution (SCI).**

South Correctional Institution (SMCI) is located in a southern county in a Southern state.



SCI is this state's newest institution and has been accredited by the American Correctional Association and the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (MDOC, 2009, November 12). SCI has a capacity of approximately 3,200 beds located in 16 different housing units (MDOC, 2009, November 12). As of June 1, 2010, SCI housed 3,141 inmates with the following racial break-down: 64.9% African American, 33.3% White with the remaining 1.8% Hispanic, Native American or Asian American (MDOC, 2010, June 9).

**Racial Demographics for the Southern Department of Corrections and the State.** The total racial makeup for all of the correctional institutions was 65.2% African American, 33.5% White and 1.3% Hispanic, Native American or Asian American (MDOC, 2010, June 9). In order to fully understand the racial framework as reported for the institutions, a comparison of the racial framework for the state is helpful. The U.S. Census Bureau (2009) reports the racial makeup of the state in 2008 as follows: 60.6% White, 37.2% Black with the remaining 2.2% consisting of American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander or those reporting two or more races.

### **Participants**

Both staff members and inmates at SCCF were invited to participate in this study. Criterion-based sampling was used to determine the eligible sample population. The only criterion that was used to select staff members was employment as an instructor in a vocational program offered at the research site. The Director of Education (DOE) for the Department of Corrections recruited staff volunteers for participation in the study. The criterion used to select inmates was enrollment in or recent graduation (within one year)

from one of the vocational programs offered at the research site. The DOE, along with the vocational instructors, helped recruit inmate volunteers for this study.

Study participants were placed into one of three categories. The first category consisted of only one participant: the Director of Vocational Education programs at SCCF. Originally, the second category consisted of six participants; one instructor from each of the institution's vocational programs. However, one of the programs, Computer Repair, was suspended at the time of this research due to the fact that the instructor retired and had yet to be replaced. Additionally, setting up a time and place in which the instructor of the Cosmetology program could meet with me proved to be impractical given time constraints. Therefore, four instructors were interviewed for this study.

The third category of study participants consisted of inmates who were either currently enrolled or had recently graduated (within one year) from one of the vocational programs at SCCF. Four inmate participants were selected from each of the five operational vocational programs, which brought the total of inmate participants to twenty. However, I was fortunate enough to be able to interview three inmates who were graduates of the Computer Repair program, thus bringing the total number of study participants for this category to twenty-three. In total, the number of participants for this study was 28.

### **Institutional Documents**

Because this research also sought to address the claim that vocational programs are often gender-biased or gender-stereotypical and differ significantly from the vocational programs available to male inmates, the vocational programs available were classified into either "pink" or "blue" programs. In order to do this, detailed vocational

program descriptions were obtained from the facility (see Appendix A). These documents provided information about the kinds of jobs available for each vocational program and the necessary training for employment in these jobs. Once the jobs were defined, the US Census data was utilized in order to identify the percentage of women and men employed in each occupation. Those occupations identified by the Census in which women made up the dominant population (51% or above) were classified as “pink”. The occupations identified by the Census in which men made up the dominant population (51% or higher) were classified as “blue.”

### **Field Notes**

In order to collect the best data possible, a colleague with over twenty years’ experience as a criminal justice instructor and prison educator accompanied me and took notes during the interviews. All interviews were audio-recorded; however, written notes were also taken by the researcher and my colleague in relation to body language as this allowed us additional insight as to how the participants felt about the topics being discussed. All interviews were then transcribed and analyzed in order to identify any categories and themes that presented themselves.

In using face-to-face interviews, notes taken from both my colleague and me, and documents from the institutions relating to available vocational programs, triangulation of the data was achieved. By accomplishing triangulation, the reliability of the study was increased (Creswell, 2007).

## **Risks and Benefits to Participants**

Every research study has potential risks and benefits to its participants and this study was no exception. One such risk was that the researcher could not promise anonymity. Since there is only one women's correctional facility in this state, it is difficult for me to disguise its identity. In an attempt to ensure anonymity of the instructors, each has been assigned a pseudonym. In order to reduce the risk of recognition of the inmate participants, pseudonyms were also assigned.

This study was not designed to benefit any of the participants directly. However, this research allowed participants to express their opinions on experiences related to vocational education within prison. The results of this study may potentially help the DOC evaluate the type and quality of the vocational programs offered to their inmates. It was the hope of the researcher that this study provided invaluable insight into the current feelings, attitudes, and perceptions of the vocational programs currently available, and will thus foster communication and encourage this Southern state to commit to providing more helpful, useful, and productive vocational opportunities to the inmates within the DOC.

## **Methods of Data Collection**

As is required of all research done with human subjects, an application was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Memphis. The DOC also has a protocol to follow for any research conducted within the prisons, and appropriate forms were filed with the staff at the Department for Policy, Planning, and Research and Evaluation. After approval from both the IRB and the DOC, I contacted the DOE for DOC to further explain the nature of the study and answer any questions

regarding the study. During this phone call, I scheduled an interview at the facility at a date and time that was convenient for her. During the interview with the DOE, I scheduled additional facility visits to conduct the interviews with the staff and inmates. As there were a considerable number of study participants, several scheduled interview dates were scheduled. As the DOE is in charge of all educational programs within the DOC, she was my point of contact for this institution.

All interviews were conducted at a time and place within the facility that was convenient and comfortable for the participants and the researcher. Since this research was conducted on prison grounds, it was important that the safety of the researcher and her assistant was addressed. Due to confidentiality requirements, interviews with all participants were conducted with only the researcher, the researcher's assistant, and the participant. Neither prison guards nor any other prison personnel were permitted in the area in which the interview took place. The participant was neither handcuffed nor restrained in any other way during the interview. Due to safety concerns, all interviews took place in an area that was secluded yet also observable to prison personnel.

For consistency, all interviews followed the same protocol; however, interview questions were tailored to the specific participant being interviewed, as not all participants had the knowledge to answer all interview questions. Open-ended questions were used for all interviews (see Appendices B, C, and D). Interviews with inmates focused on the particulars of the program in which they were enrolled as well as the inmates' feelings for and perceptions of that program.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis followed procedures that have been associated with phenomenological research. Using Creswell's (2007) recommended protocol, data analysis started with the researcher's disclosure of her personal experiences with the phenomenon being studied in order to "take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination" (pp. 59-60). By doing this, the researcher attempted to bracket out her own views before continuing on to examine the views of the participants. Next, transcripts of interviews along with field notes taken during interviews were read and re-read. Doing this was helpful in two ways: first, this provided the researcher the ability to immerse herself within the data which helped foster interpretations. Second, reading and re-reading transcripts and field notes enabled the researcher to identify categories and themes. Once themes emerged, descriptions of *what* the participant experienced with regards to the phenomenon (called textural descriptions by Creswell) were recorded. As suggested by Creswell, these descriptions were provided using direct quotes from the participants. Following this, descriptions of *how* the experience occurred (referred to as structural descriptions by Creswell) were written down. As a conclusion, these two descriptions were combined in order to explain the "essence" of the experience of the phenomenon.

## **Subjectivities/Ethical and Political Considerations**

As a researcher, it is imperative that I acknowledge any inner subjectivities that I have regarding this research. I have been interested in and have been studying inequality as it relates to gender for almost 15 years. The fact that I have been doing this for so

long makes it apparent that I have a strong opinion about gender bias, regardless of the forum in which that bias exists.

I also have 10 years of experience in working in and studying criminal justice, crime, and inmates. I held the position of Assistant Director and then Director of Dismas House, a residential treatment facility for ex-offenders located in Memphis, TN, for two years. Dismas House functioned as a halfway house for men and women who were being released from prison. In order to be placed in our program, inmates had to apply to the program while they were still incarcerated. The application was lengthy and required a lot of background information. After an application was received, Dismas House staff conducted a minimum of three face-to-face interviews while the inmate was still in prison. Additionally, all inmates who applied were required to sign a waiver that allowed Dismas staff to view their prison records. In addition to the number and types of current and previous charges against an inmate, prison records also included any educational/vocational/rehabilitative programs the inmate was involved in. In the two years that I was at Dismas, I can estimate that I interviewed and checked the prison records of more than 200 inmates.

Because of the nature of the facility, Dismas staff members were on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. One of the regulations of the program was that a family-style dinner was held every night. Everyone (both residents and staff) was required to attend dinner each weekday night. With so much time spent both in correctional institutions and at the house, I developed close relationships with many of the residents. Due to this, inmates have a special place in my heart.

The research for my residency project, which is a requirement from the University of Memphis and typically serves as a pilot study for the dissertation, was conducted at SCCF in October, 2009. This research project consisted of a total of nine interviews with both staff and inmates and explored attitudes about two vocational programs that are offered there. These two programs were Computer Repair and Business Technology. Subsequently, the final project was accepted for presentation at the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences conference in February, 2010 in San Diego, California.

Because of these experiences as well as other research read and conducted, I may have a preconceived notion about the vocational programs offered, or not offered, to women in prison. Due to this, along with any cynicism I may have regarding the fairness of prison programs in general, there is the possibility that I may unconsciously attempt to predict or influence respondents' answers. Obviously, this allows for the possibility of misrepresentation within the study. However, in an effort to uphold the participants' "essence" of their responses, I used direct quotes from the respondents in order to maintain the validity of their words. Doing so is one way of reducing any bias I might have. Additionally, my colleague read and re-read the interview transcripts to authenticate data. Doing so provided yet another screening mechanism to ensure that the researcher's bias is in check.

I understand the limitations of this study, and am aware that this study did not conclusively answer all the research questions. This study should be considered only as a preliminary look into the feelings, attitudes, and perceptions of the vocational education programs available to the female inmates incarcerated in the only state-run female correctional facility in this southern state, as well as the reasons why these inmates chose



to participate in vocational education. It is my hope that this study will be the catalyst to a more in-depth analysis of these vocational programs in prisons.

## Chapter 4: Findings

In order to present the findings of this study, it is helpful for the reader to have knowledge of the background of the vocational programs offered at Southern Central Correctional Facility (SCCF). The next section consists of information about the vocational education staff, the types of programs available, how those programs are funded, and the process of enrolling in vocational programs at SCCF.

### Background

#### **Vocational education staff at SCCF.**

*Director of Education.* At the time of this study, Pam Smith was the Director of Education (DOE) for SCCF as well as for the Department of Corrections. Ms. Smith holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Education and a Master's degree in Counseling. She started working at SCCF as a counselor and then obtained post-secondary vocational education administrator certification from the Department of Education in order to go into the Director's position. She was the Director of Education for SCCF for about 5 years and had been acting as the Director of Education for the Department of Corrections for the past year.

*Instructors.* At SCCF, each vocational program has one instructor for each vocational program offered, for a total of six instructors. As noted previously, the Computer Repair program was non-operational during the time of this study, thus the institution only had five instructors. In order to become a vocational instructor at SCCF, a person must be certified in his or her particular field and SCCF can be the certifying institution. Ms. Smith explained the process as follows, "Vocational education requires that you can get an interim certification in your field [which]... means that we vouch for

you and say yes, you're qualified... the interim certification exists through the Department of Education to enable entities like us to get teachers."

Of the five vocational instructors, two have bachelor's degrees. The cosmetology instructor is a licensed instructor through the State Board of Cosmetology. All of the instructors have "real world" experience in their areas of expertise.

Instructor positions are posted on the DOC personnel board, which is located on the DOC website. However, in actuality, Pam Smith told me that many of the instructors have been hired as a result of word of mouth from other instructors. Ms. Smith stated that she has never had a lack of candidates willing to teach at SCCF. She says, "I feel like we have a wonderful staff here. I'm very impressed with the staff at all the prisons. Here, once they're here, they don't leave. It's their intent to retire here."

**The vocational education programs.** SCCF offers a total of six vocational programs: Business Technology, Cosmetology, Family Dynamics, Apparels and Textiles, Upholstery, and Computer Repair Technology. All of these programs were already in place when Ms. Smith became the DOE and she stated that she did not know how these programs were chosen to be the ones offered at SCCF.

**Vocational education program funding.** The State Department of Vocational Education reimburses SCCF 89% of teacher salaries and purchases equipment for the programs. The State Department of Corrections provides the additional 11% of the teacher salaries plus their benefits and purchases supplies for the programs. Ms. Smith stated that there is a certain amount of money that the Department of Education is required to spend on corrections and that they are forthcoming with the monies associated with correctional education.

**The vocational education process.** The interviews conducted with both staff and inmates explained how the vocational education process at SCCF works. There are two different methods for an inmate to become enrolled in one of the vocational programs. The standard procedure is that when an inmate decides that she wants to enroll in vocational classes, she informs her case manager that she is interested in enrolling in school. The case managers are employees of the prison system and one of their jobs is to refer inmates to school. Case managers are supposed to analyze and determine if the inmate is "appropriate" for the school. In other words, if the inmate has continual disciplinary problems, she will most likely be deemed inappropriate for school by the case manager. The case manager sends that referral for suitable inmates to the vocational school, where it is then reviewed by the vocational school counselor. However, the inmate can circumvent this process and write a letter directly to the vocational school.

The vocational school counselor compiles a list of women interested in school and the inmate then takes a shortened version of the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE). This test is given approximately every three months. It is used to determine the approximate grade point level at which the inmate is functioning. After taking the test, the inmate is asked to rank order her vocational choices. The vocational school counselor mails the inmate her score on the test and gives her a list of the vocational programs and the minimum acceptable TABE score. If the grade equivalency level is adequate to meet the program requirements, then the inmate is placed into a class if there is an opening. If there is no opening, the inmate's name will be placed on a waiting list or she will have the opportunity to choose another program. Because the programs are run on an open admission policy, there is no typical length of time that one can remain on the waiting

list. Priority consideration is given to those inmates who have the closest release dates. Since the programs are based on an open admission policy, vocational classes have inmates at every stage of the program. The most popular vocational programs are Cosmetology and Family Dynamics.

The vocational school runs on a 4 day week. Inmates attend classes Monday through Thursday from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, with 30 minute breaks for both breakfast and lunch. The capacity of the vocational school is 90, but it is not unusual for enrollment to run over. It is estimated that there are between 15 and 18 students enrolled in each vocational class at any given time. The cosmetology program has 20 slots available because the program has 20 hair stations available. Comparatively, the Adult Basic Education (ABE) program at SCCF has a capacity of 200.

### **Participant Information**

As there were different types of participants, this segment is broken down into two sections.

**Vocational School Instructors.** Four instructors at SCCF were interviewed for this study. I have broken this section down by program.

*Upholstery.* Mr. Gates\* is the Upholstery instructor, which was classified as a "blue" program. He had been employed at SCCF for 11 years and 8 months. Prior to his employment at SCCF, his background was in the furniture business, thus he bring real world experience into his position as the instructor of this program.

*Apparels and textiles.* Ms. Stabler is the Apparels and Textiles instructor, which is classified as a "pink" program. She had been employed in this position for four years. Prior to this, she was employed as a supervisor in a textiles factory.

***Family Dynamics.*** The instructor for the "pink" program of Family Dynamics is Ms. Major. She had been employed in this position for the past nine and a half years. Before becoming the instructor for Family Dynamics, she was the instructor for the Apparels and Textiles program.

***Business technology.*** Ms. Monahan is the instructor for the "pink" program of Business Technology. She had only been employed in the position for six months. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Management Information Systems and was previously employed in a management position with a railroad.

**Themes.** After analyzing the data from the instructors, I was able to identify several themes. It is in this section that I will discuss these following themes; genuine love and affection for the students, the importance of self-esteem building, and the inmate student attitudes and efforts.

***Genuine love and affection for students.*** Each of the instructors expressed a great deal of fondness and warmth for their students, not only in their words, but also in their actions. Ms. Monahan had never worked in a prison before and admitted that she was a bit apprehensive about working in a correctional institution. However, now that she was working with inmates, her attitude changed. When I asked her how she felt about her students, her eyes brightened and she broke out into a smile. She said, "Oh, I love them! Their all personalities are so different but they are so eager to learn!" She explained how she showed her students that she cared for them. She said,

I do [love them] because I feel like if I treat you like you're an inmate or a convict or whatever is they're called, that their capacity for learning is going to be just that. They're going to feel like everybody in the world is going to treat me like

this so, you know, why do I even need this? Or why would I want it? And like the first day I came in and I got a chance to speak with everyone, I told them, I said I will *not*, under any circumstances, treat you like, you know, you're number 104 whatever. I said I'm not to treat you like that. I'm going to treat you like we're in an office environment and I'm your office manager. I want everybody in here to feel like they're at work because this is ultimately what you're going to have to do when you leave. You're going to be in an office environment and you're going to have to know how to conduct yourself. I'm just the supervisor; that's all I am here. And that's how I want you to treat me. I'm just the supervisor, I'm not someone that's going to, you know, put you down or anything. I want you to feel like you're at work. So every day that you come, act like you're at work. I need you to be here on time. I need you to show up when you're supposed to be showing up. I need you to treat everyone in here like this is your coworker. And that how they act.

Mr. Gates also had an indisputable affection for his students. During his interview, he became visibly choked up at several times when he was discussing them. He told me, "I'm not here for the money. I'm here for the women in this institution." He also discussed some recent inmate transfers to a new privately run facility and seemed to be somewhat angry. He told me that the new facility had no vocational programs and that some of the inmates transferred had been his students. He was upset that they would not be able to finish their upholstery training now since they had been transferred and stated that he didn't "think it's fair to these women to yank 'em outta here and put them somewhere with no programs".

When asked how she felt about her students, Ms. Major simply responded, "I'm very comfortable around them... They give me respect." Her affection for her students comes out when she discussed what she wanted to see them achieve in her program. She said,

I want them to feel comfortable here in the class, and I make them to, you know, *enjoy* the things that we have here in the class so it won't feel like what's going on in the building. 'Cause you know we have um, we have like a sofa, we have a couch, we got a TV, we have a dinette set. Um, so it's different.

When I asked Ms. Stabler how she felt about her students, she clapped her hands together and said,

Oh, I enjoy them! I really enjoy 'em. They keeps my mind open because a lot of skills that I didn't... I don't necessarily use because when I sew, I just sew, so it's helping me with my skills because a lot of things, you know, we all have to learn at the same time. But they get different types of patterns and I have never made that pattern before so that helps me.

Like Ms. Monahan, Ms. Stabler also talked about showing the inmates that she cared about them by treating them a certain way. She said, "We treat them just like they are our coworkers, that's how we treat them. Now even though we *know* they are offenders, we don't treat them that way."

***The importance of self-esteem building.*** All of the instructors mentioned that it was not only important to teach their students the basics of the class, but that it was also imperative that the students be able to build up their self-esteem as well. When each instructor was asked about what they hoped their students got out of their classes other



than job training skills, they each responded that they wanted to see a change in the student's self-concepts. They all noted positive changes in the women who had gone through their programs.

Ms. Stabler gave me an example. She said,

Some that first come in here, they come with that hard-nosed attitude, um, [like] they could run the class, see what they'll be able to do what they wanted. But they see who I am and how I treat them and it changes. Their whole attitude changes and it's different.

Ms. Major also talked about the changes she sees in her students. She stated, When they first come in, you know, they sort of like... sort of shy. And then once they get into the program and we start having my discussions about the children and parenting, they start opening up and I think they feel, you know, comfortable, you know, talking about... Talking about their problems.

When asked what she hoped her students took away from her class, Ms. Monahan said,

Self confidence because a lot of them don't have it at all. They're so.... And I guess it's understandable, being in this situation, that they don't have that because they're constantly put down on a regular basis and they've lost all of that, you know. I don't know if they really had a lot of it before they came in but they don't have *any* now.

She also talked about incorporating self-esteem building exercises into the curriculum of the Business Technology class. One way this is done is through a portion of the class that is called "Professional Development". This aspect of the program is used to help the

women learn more about themselves, as well as the appropriate means of communication and how to present themselves. Also included in the program are interviewing skills and learning how to set priorities, how to pace oneself and how to dress in an office environment. In addition, this program covers some health related topics, such as eating balanced meals and sleeping enough.

Although the program originated in the Business Technology class, all of the instructors reported using some portion of the Professional Development program in their classes as well. This is evidence that the instructors are obviously aware of the significance of self-esteem building in prison.

*Inmate student attitudes and efforts.* While Mr. Gates was the only instructor to have experience teaching his trade in both inside the prison and out of prison, most of the instructors postulated that the attitudes and the effort put forth by their students would be different than non-incarcerated students. Mr. Gates has an interesting point of view about this in that his non-incarcerated students were separated by gender. Here, the men would build the furniture and the women would cover it. At SCCF however, the women learned *every* aspect of upholstery, including how to tear down and rebuild a piece of furniture. Mr. Gates told me that his non-incarcerated female students often challenged him when it came to sewing ability, whereas the women at SCCF rarely challenged him. He noted that his students at SCCF were very motivated and that the atmosphere in the prison was much more compassionate than it was in the free world.

Although Ms. Major has never taught her class outside of prison, she speculates that "the offenders attitudes would be so much better." I asked her why she thought that and she said,

Because... They know that, for one reason, they know that because they are here in prison and, you know, I don't have to tolerate with their attitude. And outside of here you got to put up with that students attitude, you got the parents to deal with. In here, I don't. You know, if I have a student to come in here and give me problems, I can send that student back to the building and never got to be worried about that student again.

Ms. Monahan thinks that the inmate students put forth more effort because they are thankful for the opportunity to be enrolled in school. She said,

I think because they're here [prison], they are more eager to learn. And they are putting forth more effort than the average person would that has other opportunities because a person that is just in the free world that doesn't have a felony or anything like that, they would probably not take it as serious as they do here. And therefore I mean I enjoy it so, because they do. And they just...they want more all the time.

She continued by telling me that that she feels that inmate students have more of a vested interest in being in school than some free world people do. She gave me an example of her experiences.

Even when I was in college, it was so many people that were just *in college* to be *in college*, to say, 'Okay I'm here.' Not having any expectations, not having any... Okay, I'm in college, I can say that. My parents have said you gotta go to college or you gotta get a job so I'm gonna just be a full-time student right now.

This attitude is completely different from the women who are enrolled in the vocational classes at SCCF. Ms. Monahan sums it up by saying, "The way I feel, they [the inmates] have something to truly gain."

While inmate students seem to have more to gain with vocational education, they also have more to lose if they stop attending or fail classes. If someone stops attending/fails classes in the free world, he has the opportunity to re-enroll at a later date and perhaps at a different institution. However, if an inmate does this, there is rarely another chance given for re-enrollment. In fact, if an inmate stops attending classes or is cut by the instructor, she receives a Rule Violation Report (RVR) and is subject to disciplinary sanctions.

### **Participant information**

**Inmate Students.** Sixteen students were from the "pink" classes of Apparels and Textiles, Cosmetology, Family Dynamics and Business Technology. Four students were from the "blue" class of Upholstery and there were three students interviewed from the "blue" class of Computer Repair. Two of the students interviewed had completed BOTH the Computer Repair program and the Business Technology program, so they were interviewed regarding their experiences with both programs. In this sense, I was incredibly lucky to find these two students as I was able to gather information on the similarities and differences between blue and pink classes from the same individual. This brought the total of inmate students interviewed for this study to 21.

The 21 participants in the inmate student category ranged in age from 22-52, with the majority (15) being in their 20s and 30s. Education levels of the participants varied greatly, with the lowest level of education completed being the 8th grade and the highest

level being near completion of a graduate degree (MBA). The majority of the women (8) reported that they had either finished high school or obtained a GED before being "locked up". Seven women reported that they had not finished high school at the time of their incarceration. Four women reported that they had some college education and two women stated that they had received some vocational training. Two women had received Bachelor's degrees, with one of these women stating that she was one semester away from obtaining her Master's degree in Business Administration.

The women in this study were sentenced to periods between five years and life. Two of the women were sentenced for multiple charges. Seven were serving sentences of 10 years or less, 6 were serving sentences between 15 and 20 years, 4 were serving sentences between 22 and 50 years, and 4 were serving life sentences. Offenses included exploitation of a child, robbery, child abuse, aggravated assault, sexual battery, kidnapping, burglary, manslaughter, aggravated driving under the influence, directing a minor to commit a crime, auto burglary, sale of cocaine, uttering/forgery, armed robbery, murder, capital murder, and attempted arson.

**Themes.** After identifying and categorizing the codes that presented themselves while analyzing the data, several themes regarding how the students thought and felt about the vocational programs that were offered became apparent. It is in this section that I will discuss these themes; school as a preferred environment, positive attitudes about instructors, self esteem, and attitudes about non-traditional classes.

***School as a preferred environment.*** Almost all of the participants stated that they preferred being in school as opposed to being anywhere else on the compound. In fact, several of the participants were graduates of the programs but remained as volunteer

tutors so that they could stay down at the school. The term the students used to refer to anywhere else on the compound besides school is "the building". Students emphasized that being at school gave them a peace of mind and they felt like they were treated as human beings at the school rather than as animals or "inmates". This becomes evident when looking at some of the responses given.

Lavette was a 25-year-old Black female who was a graduate of the Apparels and Textiles program and was volunteering as a tutor in the program. She said, "I would definitely rather be in school than be in the building". Jireh was a 34-year-old Black female who was a graduate of the Family Dynamics program who was also volunteering as a tutor. When talking about school, she said

When I come in that class every day, I don't feel like I'm at prison for that time that I'm here, you know, I feel... cause we have a *couch*, you know, we have the *kitchen*, then we have the sewing machines and then we have the actual classroom but for that time that I'm here I don't feel like I'm in prison. It's like I have a peace of mind, and like you said, it's a whole new feeling, you know? She's forever keepin' it decorated. We do the seasonal decorations, so it's always festive and she treat us you know, like we're not... we're not inmates when we're here. They treat us like we're real people.

She continued by telling me a story illustrating the way that inmates are treated by correctional staff members outside of the school.

Just like this morning, this officer, you know she was... we were eating and, and we have to come in like we're third graders whenever, you know... and the lady [referring to a correctional officer] this mornin', she was talkin to us real crazy

and she's only like maybe 23, 24 years old, I'll give her 25... She [referring to another inmate] was like, 'You know, we're people, we're still humans' and she [referring to the correctional officer] was like, 'Well even *animals* don't act like that and even *animals* can be trained.' And one of the girls told her, she said, 'And you had to be trained to, for this job'.... You know they look at us, some of the officers look at us like we're *nothing*. Some of them look at us like we just...we just the bottom of the barrel, you know and like I told one, I was talkin' to this officer one time and I told her, I said, 'You know, you're goin' to school' 'cause she was goin to school for nursin' so I said, 'That's a really good thing.' I said, 'Everybody that's here are just *not* bad.' I said, 'You know, I just got caught up in a bad situation, you know, my husband's been locked up since we got married, 6 months later he was locked up, he's been locked up ever since. So I got involved with this guy that was beatin' on me and we got into a fight and I pulled a gun and the gun went off and I ended up with a life sentence away from my family. But before I got locked up, I was a *nurse*.' I said, 'So just because I've got stripes don't mean that I don't have an education, or that I came from nothin'.' I said, 'You know all of us here are not *bad*, you know.' You know, 'cause she was one of those that were *real* mean at first, but after I sat down and I talked to her and she was like, 'Oh wow, you know, I didn't know this and this and that' so if, *if* they want to sit down and talk to you and learn the real you, then they treat you good, but a lot of them don't wanna do that.

Jireh also said that staff members at the school treat the students quite differently.

She stated,

You know, just...everybody at the vocational school, you know, they treat like we're human instead of we're inmates. They treat us like *people*. You know, they'll sit down, they'll talk to us, you know, like we're people. It means a lot and you know, they don't... I know that when the officers are hired here, they're *taught* to be a certain way. But, you know, they'll get more from us if they just treated us like we're humans instead of a *number*, you know.

Tyra, a 28-year-old Black female who was currently enrolled in the Family Dynamics program, echoed Jireh's comments about the differences between being at school and in the building. When asked if she had come across any negative experiences while in the vocational program, she said,

not by the teachers. You know, the officers, they the ones, they make it hard - That's what make it hard on us... The teachers, they try to settle us, and try to have, to make us feel like we're just - in a real school, in home like. But you know when the officers come around, it's always something. They hollerin' and yellin' like we not human, like we're animals. And it's not right. And I feel that's very negative.

Tina was a 39-year-old White woman who was currently a student in the Upholstery program. She agreed with Jireh and Tyra about being treated better at school. She stated,

We are treated different down here. Once we are down here, it's almost like we're treated like people. Well, the more you treat people like people, the more they act like people. The more you treat them like animals the more they're going to act like animals.



When Tina is asked about what she feels the benefits of the Upholstery program are to her both now and in the future, she continued to talk about her preference to be at school.

She said,

I hate to say it - this is my respite. This is my peace... I'm going put it out there. Having to stay in the building with - I - I wouldn't be able to do it. I have to get out of - of hell and come up to a different level. Um, and although we are still subject to searches and uh, the same rules down here, just the fact that its air-conditioned in the summer time and you're not in a 120° heat in the building. Uh, that alone is worth the trek down here.

Jerri, a 47-year-old White woman, was a graduate of the Upholstery program and was volunteering as a tutor. When she was asked about the atmosphere of the upholstery class, she replied with one word; "Peace". When she is asked to elaborate, she stated, "It's [being at school]peaceful. In the building, its chaos." Mary, a 31-year-old Black woman enrolled in the Cosmetology program, confirmed Jerri's statement regarding the peace that being at school brings. She said,

When you come to school you have a peace, you know, you have a peace that you don't get in the building. You know, they [school staff] don't beat down all up on you, tryin' to handle you like you're an inmate. They actually handle you like you people, because we still are people, we just made mistakes... I be so joyous and so thankful, you know, to be able to just get out the building and have a peace of mind, so it just, you know, it feels good when I come to class! I be *lovin'* it!

Markei, a 24-year-old Black woman who was a graduate of the Business Technology program and a volunteer tutor, said that coming down to school is a relief for her. She told me,

I - we - loathe being in the building...it's terrible! [But] when I'm here? I don't even feel like I'm incarcerated sometimes. I love it...We come down here and we try to cooperate with each other as if we are in a business setting. We love it, and you don't feel like you're incarcerated. You have a little more freedom here. They're not saying, 'Hey inmate', or 'Hey convict, do this'. You're treated as if you are in a professional environment and we treat each other that way.

Brooke was a 36-year-old White woman enrolled in the Cosmetology program. She was another student who used the term "freedom" when talking about the school. When she talked about school, she said,

we like the *freedom* here, it's more freedom at school. You get to go out on a smoke break or a break and you get out in the open more... this right here is the best thing in prison, this school... Everything is a whole different atmosphere down at this school. Um, it's a good atmosphere. People love to come to school. They love to get up, get dressed and come to school. I don't know anything different right now that I would change, but it's a war zone back there. You know, I could change a whole lot of things back there (laughing) in the building.

Brooke also talked about the relief she felt when she began going to school and the reluctance she felt at returning to the building. She said,

when I got to school, I was like, woo, thank you, Jesus! I think I cried a week when I got into school because I was like *ahhh!* This is such a relief! I want them

to drag my class on a little longer so I don't have to go back to Quickbed [the building] when I finish.

Andi was a 28-year-old White woman who was enrolled in the Cosmetology program. She stated, "You're in prison when you are in the building... It's [the school] a total different setting".

*Positive attitudes about instructors.* When the students were asked about their experiences in the program, all of them responded with positive comments about their instructors. I have broken down this section by instructor. Information regarding the Computer Repair instructor and the former Business Technology instructor is included in this section as well since the students discussed these instructors during their interviews.

*Mr. Gates, Upholstery instructor.* Wendy was a 41-year-old Black woman who was a graduate of the Upholstery program and a volunteer tutor. She described Mr. Gates as "very helpful." She also said,

I like him cause he's cool... he makes sure that if we don't understand something, he'll be right there and he like 'Ok you do this such and such way' but he's patient. He has patience. I love him cause he's very devotional ... and like I said, if you got a problem, he's always there ... He got all of us he workin' with, you know, and we need him here, you know.

Erin, a 32-year-old White woman who was a graduate of the Upholstery program and also volunteered as a tutor, said about Mr. Gates,

To me, he is a very good man. He is a Christian man. We have a little devotional every morning before class, which I really enjoy that, you know, cause we all need that. Uh, I have no problems with him. I don't see anybody else havin' a

problem with him, even the ones with the different attitudes. It's like when they get around him, he's has such a good spirit that the evil in that, you just can't prevail.

When asked about her instructor, Jerri said, "Oh Lord, Mr. Gates' an awesome man of God. He - he's an awesome person that teaches good, you know, he don't - he teaches you the right way. He - he's respectful." Tina reiterated what Jerri said about Mr. Gates. "He is a an awesome Christian man... he's very well liked."

*Ms. Stabler, Apparels and Textiles instructor.* Cora was a 40-year-old Black woman who was a student in the Apparels and Textiles program. She told me, "It's a good class. I like everythin' about it. And we got a good teacher. Ms. Stabler, she's a real nice person, she's sweet, she help us out a lot."

Allie was a 36-year-old White woman who was also a student in the Apparels and Textiles program. When asked about Ms. Stabler, she responded, "She's a sweet lady. She's real - um, how do I say this? She's like the big mom or something." Further discussion about Ms. Stabler prompted the following response from Allie.

She will help do anything. She will help you if you need help on anything, she will help. She doesn't show favoritism or anything like that. She's a real good teacher. I mean, out of the class, I like my teacher the best.

Lavette's comments about Ms. Stabler were also very positive. She was asked how she felt about Ms. Stabler and her response was, "She's great. I love her!" I asked Lavette if she could tell me a little about Ms. Stabler and she said, "Well, first she's a Christian lady. She's real sweet. She motivates you. She gives everybody the right amount of attention to help 'em. She - uh - she just a good person all the way around."

Jeannine was a 43-year-old White woman who was a current student in the Apparels and Textiles program. She told me that she chose to enroll in this particular program because she already knew how to sew. When Jeannine was asked about Ms. Stabler, she responded, "I love her. She's a good teacher. She knows what she's doing, without a doubt. I've learned a lot from that lady." She also told me that Ms. Stabler was always willing to help her students out with anything that they needed.

*Ms. Major, Family Dynamics instructor.* Tyra referred to Ms. Major as like a mom. It seems like each day I walk in this classroom, it just - I feel like - Like a good release coming over me and I can just cope. I can just sit down and just okay, I'm fixin' to - I'm fixin' to listen to mama. Mama gonna guide us through this day. A lot of people that's here, I'mma tell you, a lot of people that's here they don't have family that looks on them whatever. Ms. Major's the type of person that she would sit there, she would talk to you. She always thinks if y'all gots any problems, come to me and then we'll talk about it. And she just a great person. She have good heart. She treat you like she want to be treated.

Jireh spoke about Ms. Major in a similar way. When asked how she feels about Ms. Major, she said,

I love her. She's like - I mean, she gave me a chance when no one - *no one* else did. And she's real nice - and down to earth. She's *almost* like an extended mother figure because - you know, if you need - if you need to talk, she'll talk to you. If you need help - because I got moved - one time, before we moved to QuickBed [an area of the building], I just got tossed out of a building and I didn't know *why*. You know, and then when I *did* find out why, you know, I was asking

her would she help me and she did, you know, she did what she could do. And I told her, I said, I *know* why I'm out, you know, I can't - I can't ever go back, you know, as long as this lady is, I can't ever go back, you know. And she really *listened* to me, you know, and that was like the first time I had ever *cried*, you know, 'cause I'm not a crier. But you know, I cried in front of her, and she was like, 'It's ok, it's ok, we gonna do what we can', you know. And it made me feel good that just, that she was willing to help me, even though there was nothing that could be done. But, and then, like the next coupla days, once I got settled in the building, she was like, 'Are you ok over there?' I was like, 'Yea'. I said, 'I was in a bad spot, but - I got moved, so it's ok'. She came - you know, she coulda just went on like nothin' ever happened or whateva' but she came back and she *asked*, you know, is it alright? So, she's one of the ones that treat us like we're human.

JoAnna was a 35-year-old White woman who was a graduate of the Family Dynamics program and a volunteer tutor. When she was asked about how she felt about her instructor, a glow came over her demeanor. She said,

Ms. Major is *sooo* good! She um, like I said, you know, she treats us like - like we're her *workers*. She makes us feel important and she um, she - she - I don't know how to explain it. We *are* her employees...like, she treats us like we're important, like she wouldn't want to lose us because a lot of these teachers are like, well, she's replaceable. There's a million people out here, I could use this tutor... And Ms. Major doesn't do that. She's - she knows that we're important and that we try really hard for her. We - we back her up or, you know - and she does the same things for us, you know, so yea. And we - we can sit and talk to

her on a level that's not about IN here, whether it be about, you know, God or church or our children or movies we've seen or - you know, she's not *just* our boss, she's our friend too, so...

*Ms. Monahan, Business Technology instructor.* When Markei talked about Ms. Monahan, the Business Technology instructor, her face lit up. She said, "We love our teachers, you know, and we come down here and we try to cooperate with each other as if we are in a business setting." When she is asked about Ms. Monahan's attitudes towards the students, she replied very simply, "She loves us." She continued

She loves us and, you know, she - if ever we have a free moment and no one's doing anything, we sit around and we jokin', and she'll tell us stories about herself and her kids and how her day was. You know, she - she tells us that she feels as if we - she doesn't have girls, she feels as if we *are* her girls, you know, and she *loves* that. She - she interacts with us as if we are not in these stripes... Yes, she's a very welcoming person and um, I don't think there's one girl in here that doesn't feel as if they can go and sit down and have a conversation with her. They're - She's very welcoming towards all of us.

Lauren was a 29-year-old White woman who was a graduate of the Business Technology class and was volunteering as a tutor there. When she was asked about Ms. Monahan, she said, "She's very laid back. She lets us be who we are, um, of course, if we have a problem, we are comfortable enough to go to her, so she's very good.

Dawn is a 22-year-old White woman who was a graduate of the Computer Repair program and the Business Technology program. She was volunteering as a tutor for the

Business Technology program. She agreed with Lauren that Ms. Monahan is "laid back" and said,

It's still the whole respect factor. The fact that she [Ms. Monahan] respects us enough to let us be the way we are around her...everyone's just like I'm just going to go ahead and do my work, because she is a very nice person, and she treat us like grown women... I think everybody likes Ms. Monahan. I mean we have like other students come to our classroom just to see her. I mean she's just such a... She's just so nice to us, you know.

*Ms. Hayes, Cosmetology instructor.* Brooke was a 36-year-old White student in the Cosmetology program. She also has very positive things to say about Ms. Hayes, the instructor in her program. She stated,

I have a really good teacher. I have an *excellent* teacher. She uh, has *helped* me - she *cares*. She *cares* so much about her students, um, that she takes that one-on-one time. We may mess up but she's - she's there to pick us back up and put us back on track. I mean, I *can't* say anything ugly about her because she's a *good* teacher. I've been to cosmetology school when I did nails, and they rushed you through it in the free world. This lady goes through - she takes her time with - we have like 16 subjects in our book, she takes our time - we may be on one chapter for 2 weeks, and we *get* it. So when we go to state board, we *know* that stuff.

Andi made similar statements about Ms. Hayes as well. When she was asked about her experiences with Ms. Hayes, she said,



It's very, very positive. She puts in a lot of time and work with us, you know. She does teach at the Hair Academy but we always come first 'cause she knows we try much harder. At the State Board, they're always praising Ms. Hayes because you know, we go up there and ace it.

Mary also talks about Ms. Hayes' dedication to her students. She said, She's excellent cause every last girl that went up to take their State Board last month, every last one of them passed so that just lets you know about her work, cause you know she's not the one goin' there and takin' the test OR doin' the floor work so therefore she - she on point.

Mary also talked about the attitude that Ms. Hayes carried into the classroom. She said Well, she's strictly about business and um, I can just look at her as just being a person that has so much compassion for people that, you know, when you, when you do wrong in the past, people always wanna bring your past and bring it against you. But she won't treat you like that. You know, so therefore, it's like she have so much love and she want us to have the best thing 'cause she know that we can. And we cannot just let our mistakes or our wrong doing that we have done in the past, you know, stop us from being successful, you know. So she, she try to let us know, look, I know what people say, but hey, you can *do* this, you can be something that you never knew that you can be so she always encouragin' us and the thing about it is it's *not* fake, it's *real*. You know, some people just gonna tell you somethin just to be tellin' you. But the things she say, it really comes from her heart because you can tell by the way she act, the way she carry herself, that everything lines up.

*Ms. Jackson, former Business Technology instructor.* Chenoa, a 27-year-old White woman, was a graduate of the Business Technology program and a volunteer for the program under Ms. Jackson. When she talked about Ms. Jackson, she said,

She is enthusiastic about us getting what we can out of here. She will...she was a slave driver with me...she was like...(making sounds like cracking whip) come on, I know you can do it (making sounds like cracking whip).

Lauren also studied under Ms. Jackson and had positive things to say about her. She acknowledged that Ms. Jackson was a tough instructor, but also said that she appreciated the fact that she had to work in the class. She said, "She was a very good instructor, Ms. Jackson." Markei also took the Business Technology course with Ms. Jackson and agreed with Lauren that Ms. Jackson was a well-liked and excellent instructor.

*Ms. Bates, former Computer Repair instructor.* Katie, a 52-year-old White woman who was a graduate of the Computer Repair program and volunteered as a tutor, spoke very highly of her former instructor. She said,

I love her to death. That's one reason I wanted to be ... up here. Ms. Bates is very easy to get along with. She's strict and she wants things done a certain way, which is fine, it needs to be that way, but she just...she treats you like you're a real person, almost like a colleague... All the teachers up here basically treat you that way.

Dawn also had very positive remarks about Ms. Bates. When she was asked about her experiences in Computer Repair, she excitedly said, "I love Ms. Bates! As an instructor, she's awesome. She was a very good person." Dawn also talked about the fact

that Ms. Bates would often bring in equipment that she had purchased for her personal use in order for her students to learn how to use the most up-to-date technology.

*Self-Esteem.* Many of the students interviewed reported an increase in not only their self-esteem but in other student's self-esteem as well. When JoAnna was asked what she thought the benefits of the Family Dynamics program were, she talked about students utilizing their newly acquired sewing skills to make things for family and friends in the free world. This sense of accomplishment increased the student's self-worth. She said

whenever they [other students] learn how to sew and they get to mail stuff to send to their own children, to their own mothers. And they'll - their families will take a picture or you know, of their kids in the outfit or their - you know, and then they'll send it back up here and we get to see it and they're so proud of themselves, you know?

Jeannine made similar statements regarding the fact that making things made her feel better about herself. She said, "Any time you make anything, like a sweater or anything, anything, and you look at it and you say, 'God, I really did this.' That is... that is cool. I did that."

Being able to make things on their own seemed to be a big self-esteem booster for the students. The instructors also pushed the students to do their best in their projects and to be proud of the work they accomplished. Tina told me a story about Mr. Gates that illustrated how important he thought it was for the students to take pride in their work. She told me,

As a matter of fact, he [Mr. Gates] was just telling us last month there used to be a little disclaimer on some of the works we can bring in a piece of furniture and you sign it and it said please understand these are amateurs it's not going to be perfect. You can get back to them and he said no, take that off because although these might be novices we're not trying to turn out novice work, we are trying to turn out professional work. You expect little, you get little. You expect more, you get more.

JoAnna stated that that many of the women in prison have a low self-esteem "because they feel thrown away". Erin was one of the students who seemed to exemplify this statement. When she talked about her experience in the Upholstery program, she said,

You actually, it helps you - man, I *really can* do this, I *can* do something, you know. Like I have had verbal abuse in my life since I was a little girl, you know. I was always told I'd never be nobody, I'd never amount to nothing and all this, and I was fat and ugly and everything but you know, getting in this class and seeing the things I can accomplish, it's like, whoa I *am* somebody, you know? I *can* do something with life.

Brooke reaffirmed JoAnna and Erin's statements about the women they were incarcerated with having a low self-esteem and told me that being in school really helped improve self-esteem. This is evident in her statement below.

You know, when people come in here, they've been beaten down so much, you know, uh, by prison guards and prison. You're nothing, you're no good, blah blah blah. You have a *purpose* when you get here. It's like people actually, they

treat you like uh, you're something, you're some *body*. Um, you're not just a prisoner anymore. You're actually, you're here to.. to do something. I *am* somebody, I can do this. You hear this at the school. 'You can do this... you can, you can pass that test. Oh, you made a *hundred, good* (clapping hands), you can do this, ok, let's work on the next thing that you can do.' Things that you didn't think that you could do, you actually can do because you've been beat down so much from guards, and uh, you're a nobody, you're nothing, blah blah blah. When you get to the school, you *are* somebody... [At] this school, ... it gives us a self-esteem about ourselves, that's the biggest part. I mean I could just start bawling right now because it is *wonderful*.

Tyra had obtained her GED while she was in prison and that seemed to have quite an impact on her self-esteem. Not only was she encouraged by what she had accomplished, but she was driven to pursue further education at the institution.

So after I got that GED, it felt like I was just walkin' the line. Just high school - it was just - just *awesome*. It was great. And I said, I'm not gonna stop here. I said, I'm fixin' to roll over. I know they got all these good classes down here that could benefit a lot of us that's here - A lot of us female inmate's that here in this facility.

I was able to witness firsthand exactly how the Business Technology program transformed one student's self-esteem. When I interviewed Markei, she was a bright, bubbly woman who was eager to talk with me. I asked her how the professional development area of the program affected her and her answer was surprising. She said, "It affected me personally because I wasn't much of a people person before I got in this class." My stunned look made her laugh and she continued to explain. She said,

I know, right? Well, when I came to the class, I kinda stayed to myself before then, but um, I came here and I wanted to - one of my goals was to become a tutor, whether it happened or not was out of my reach or whatever, but I *wanted* to. I wanted to be able to interact more with the people, I wanted to teach, I wanted to show them what I learned, I wanted to help develop someone else so as far as personal development, I became very open and you know.

She told me that much like other students, she did not like the professional development aspect of the class when she first started. However, she realized that,

it helped. It helped in so many ways because there are things that you learn about yourself. You dig deeper into who you are and when you're sittin' there writin' it on paper... You're forced to do it, you're totally forced to like, open yourself up and be truthful about who you are as a person, you know. So who I was *then*, is uh... I'm *not* that person anymore.

Dawn was another one of the students who was not very fond of the professional development aspect of the Business Technology program when she started. She explained,

Professional development is not so much bad as it is like... Okay, like most of the American population has problems with like themselves but you *really* have that problem you come into the prison system, you know, because there's a lot of regret and a lot of remorse and a lot of things that you don't just beat yourself up about. And we go through professional development... there's a lot of 'dig down deep in there' stuff, you know?

She continued,

I mean everybody can pick out something that is wrong with them, but it also makes you pick out things about you that are good, you know like *your* values and *your* morals. You know it asks you things like that you know so you got to you know figure out... I mean everybody will learn in professional development, there is something good about them there is something worth them.

After completing professional development, Dawn appreciates what the program is designed to do. She said,

it really makes you... I mean you evaluate yourself as a person, as a professional as a... You know, as a mother. You know, every.... Because to be like, a career professional, cause it is like a technical description for that, you have to be very self-confident and very self-aware because, you know, the first impression people get of you is your attitude and your appearance. You know, so you really have to understand who you are to give off the best possible attitude, I guess is what they're trying to get it to. So, you really have to get to know yourself, and it really does make you know yourself. Which now that I have done it, I am grateful that I did it. But when I was doing it, I was like, God, I hate this.

Dawn also talked with me about noticing attitude changes in those students who had gone through the program.

I mean, a lot of people come in here not caring. This is just something for them to do so they don't have to sit in the building and all that, you know? But once they get so deep into it and so far into the program, you know, they really start feeling

like they're doing something that's worth it. So I mean they start feeling better about themselves which makes them end up changing anyway.

Lauren agreed with Markei about professional development forcing the students to look at themselves. She said "It's designed to help you look at your flaws so you can reassess who you are, so it IS a good thing, just goin' through it's a little tough." Lauren also made a persuasive argument for vocational education as a rehabilitative tool. She said,

A lot of these people had *nothing* when then came in this class and they leave with a different attitude. It's better for them, so a lot of them actually straighten *up* because of vocational programs, so in my way of thinking, it IS rehabilitative, even if prison itself is not. Prison *does not* rehabilitate anybody, I don't care *what* they say. You know, these people put you in a cell or on a block and they just leave you be, they don't, they don't care what happens to you. When you're here, you have to choose whether or not you're going to make something of your time. Andi also talked about the vocational school being rehabilitative. She commented The vocational school is awesome for us here. You're sent to prison for, I guess, rehabilitation for whatever your crime is and it seems like the state ... doesn't want to give us that. It seems like we have to fight so hard just to keep what we have here. And you know as far as us coming down here and getting an education, it's really bettering ourselves. We are setting goals and we are so ready to get out there and become somebody and show the world, you know the free world people, that we are worthy, you know, that we can do this.



An increase in self-esteem can also lead to a desire to change appearance. When I complimented Mary, a Cosmetology student, on her eye make-up, she got very animated. She told me,

And you know something? Believe it or not, before I came to prison, I would never put no eye shadow or nothin on my face, now since I been goin through cosmetology, I had got so cute with the colors and we had gone thru it.

Mary was not the only student who illustrated a heightened sense of self-worth through her appearance. In doing the pilot study, Ms. Jackson, the former Business Technology instructor, gave me an example of Cathy.

The difference in her was incredible. Like, I was afraid of her when she came into my class. She was very angry, defensive, no self-esteem, only took a bath when people in the building threw her in the shower type person and now, she's lost 100 pounds, wears make-up to school and she's working on another program. She is my first master out of this class, she got master certification. She got certification in everything she could possibly get. (Burgdorf, 2009, p. 37)

Almost all of the inmates in the pilot study reported an increase in their self-esteem as well. In talking about the Professional Development portion of the Business Technology program, Cathy stated, "I felt low self-esteem; it was like 'I really don't care'. And now it's like 'I care a little bit, not too much'." After saying this, she started laughing. Lisa reported, "My self-esteem is so much higher, so much higher than what it was before...my personality, my character, everything has changed just being in this class. It has helped me to change a lot about myself." When Carly talked about Professional Development, her eyes begin to sparkle. She said,

I wasn't used to talking about myself because I felt really insecure, but I've come to where I'm more open and I will discuss things more openly. It helps build your self-esteem and get some perspective on yourself... When I first come here I was, I had a very bad attitude. I would do things that I shouldn't do, say things that I shouldn't do, and I mean, I would cut people off really quick. I wouldn't talk to 'em or anything, and I just felt, you know, that I wasn't nothing. I would never amount to anything, you know. And I knew that I had the intelligence and I had the wisdom but I didn't think that being here I would be able to put forth all those things that I knew. But once that I went through Professional Development, I feel like, you know, I'm a walking testimony because I've spoke to so many people ever since then and I feel more open. I feel more secure about myself and I believe that even with being an ex-convict, that I can still do so many things that other people are doing. It made me feel really good about myself.

Other women in the pilot study also noted an increase in their self-esteem by acknowledging that these programs changed what value they held of themselves. For example, Anna talks about getting A+ [computer repair] certified. She said,

When I finally got certified, I actually like cried because, I know that sounds really stupid, I mean I just learned that when I really do put my mind to it, cause it seems likes all through my life, I've never gone through with anything. I've always kinda went halfway there, gave up on myself, quit, found something else to do. I guess when I graduated and finally passed the test for my certification, I was really proud. I showed myself that I could do something that I probably [would have] never done. A sense of accomplishment.

Anna is not the only one that became emotional when discussing her achievements. Lisa stated,

Once I took this class, y'all, I'm getting a little teary, once I took this class, I felt like I was a better person, now I'm more educated. I can go out there and hold my head up and say I have done something to change my life, I have helped myself out.

Patty made similar statements. When asked how she felt about her experience with Computer Repair, she said, "I feel proud of myself. I've accomplished something with my time here. It's the first thing I can say I've accomplished that's positive." Cathy reported, "[This] makes me feel like even though I was here for all this time, I've actually accomplished something better than I would have if I was, if I had never gotten this charge."

*Attitudes about blue-collar classes.* One of the questions the women were asked was, "Were there any programs that you would have liked to enroll in but were not provided at SCCF?" Overwhelmingly, the responses given were for traditional blue collar jobs such as welding, auto mechanics, brick masonry and carpentry. Katie said

I think there would be some women here that would be interested in doing stuff like carpentry and plumbing and... I mean I'm not geared that-a way, but heck, I didn't think I'd be geared for computer repair either, and I loved it, so who knows? If they had that here, I might sign up for it too. I would not be adverse to taking an auto mechanics class. If nothing else you can take care of your own vehicle and save a lot of money nowadays.

Tina said that it would be "good to have other blue collar things available." She told me she hears other women talk about their plans after they are released from prison and that,

not all if it is positive, you know, especially the ones that haven't gone to school. You know what they expect to get? The job market is atrocious out there, and that's one thing why blue collar work is better for women. Um, it's a skill that nobody can take away from them. And if you can do it, you... You're not quite into the old boy territory, but you have a little bit better chance of getting something above minimum wage that you can do.

One of the main reasons given by the participants when explaining why they were interested in traditional blue collar classes was the ability for the increased monetary compensation that these types of jobs typically offer.

Andi said she "wished" the prison had a welding program and discussed the economic benefits of blue collar work. She said,

I wish they would set up a program for women who do welding. I've dated a welder out in the free world and they make a lot of money, and it's so much fun, and me and him, he worked off shore, and they only had 2 welders. He works one shift and then this other welder comes in and he was making \$38 an hour for the first 40 hours.

Brooke told me that she has been a welding assistant making \$18 an hour before her incarceration and expressed her desire for a welding class to be offered at the prison. She told me,

I worked for the pipeline, made *excellent* money right before I got, I got arrested, I was working on the pipeline. Cause it was good money! The pipeline had come through my town and my mom owns a convenience store and I was working, and I seen, it was like two thousand people that come in our town, and I wanted to hook up on that money, I went out there and loved it! I was like, 'wow!'... The welders were making, uh, \$50 per hour plus per diem and this and that and the other and I was like, 'Shoot! If I could weld, I would be rolling!'

Mary also stated that a lot of the women she was imprisoned with would be interested in pursuing blue collar trades because working a minimum wage job wouldn't enable these women to take care of their children. She said

You know, a lot of females, they see that, you know, havin' a job at Piggly Wiggly or Burger King or somethin' like that, you know, where you have like 4 or 5 kids... that aint...Burger King aint gonna take care of them kids. So you gonna need a job that is actually payin' you enough to where you is able to give the kids what they need to have and a little left, if you know how to manage [your money].

Katie also mentioned the fact that single females often have to support a household alone. She said,

There are so many women who are single parents now that have to support their household and these vocational programs really give them something to go for when they get out there to help support, would they don't have to try to rely on a man for support which in a lot of cases is what got them in here to begin with.

Lauren stated she would have enrolled in an auto mechanics or welding class had the prison offered them. When asked why, she said, "Because number one, it's good

money. Number two, I don't mind getting dirty and I like doin' that kinda stuff. It's something that you know, I like to play with."

Markei said that she would like to see blue collar trades offered at the prison "not necessarily for me, 'cause I'm just not that type of person [laughs], but I have *so* many friends here [that would be interested in] welding... because I mean, hey there is *so* much money involved!" She also noted that she thought the women would be interested in brick laying, roofing and auto mechanics. Cora said she would have wanted to enroll in a welding program if it were available "cause you can make a lot of money doing welding."

When Tina was asked why she chose to enroll in the "blue" class of Upholstery, she stated,

I like blue collar work... And if I'm physically capable of doing [the work], it does offer something more than the minimum wage job and that's the biggest part of it.

Women have such a hard time finding anything a penny above minimum wage.

And then if you want to talk benefits, good grief.

Tina also understood the importance of having trade classes available to women who have lower educational levels than that so that they can get out and make a living wage. She talked about taking the TABE test in order to enroll in the Computer Repair program.

You have to test high enough, uh, to be able to get in. A lot of people who don't test high enough end up going to upholstery {laughs}. I hate to say it, but, um...that's one thing about blue collar jobs. You don't have to have a lot of book knowledge to be able to perform a skill. There's a woman in my class right now, I kid you not, she's uh late 40s early 50s, she is literally incapable of driving a car.

She's never had a drivers license. But when it comes down to working with her hands, she's good.

At one point, SCCF had a machine shop, but Ms. Smith informed me that it was closed due to the fact that the DOC could not populate the program. Ms. Smith couldn't give me any reasons that the DOC had difficulty enrolling women in the machine shop program because the machine shop was closed before she was employed at SCCF. However, she did have some previous experience in trying to recruit women into non-traditional occupations. She stated that the most common reasons given for women not enrolling in non-traditional courses were,

my husband or boyfriend doesn't want me to get into construction. For welding, it was I don't want to get burned, hours with children, especially on a construction site. Also [it's] not necessarily a welcoming environment for women. They know that in most cases they're going to have to be better [than the men].

However, since the women interviewed discussed the fact that they, as well as the women they were incarcerated with, would be very interested in enrolling in traditional blue collar vocational programs, it seems unlikely that there would be a problem populating these classes currently.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Discussion**

This study sought to explore the vocational programs that were available to female inmates incarcerated in a southern state's only female correctional institution. In looking at these programs, I wanted to explore the inmates' thoughts, feelings and perspectives about the programs available to them as well as attempt to determine if the programs available were unintentionally gender-biased or gender stereotypical. I also wanted to explore the vocational education instructors' thoughts, feelings and perspectives on their programs as well as on the inmates enrolled in their programs. This final chapter will be a discussion of the findings of this study and will examine how these findings relate to adult education philosophies in correctional education. Additionally, I will discuss the implications these findings have for further research.

### **Summary of Inmates' and Instructors' Thoughts, Feelings, and Perspectives of Vocational Programs**

The themes that were found relating to the inmates' thoughts, feelings and perspectives of the vocational programs were school as a preferred environment, positive attitudes about instructors, self esteem, and attitudes about non-traditional classes. The themes that were found relating to the instructors' thoughts, feelings and perspectives of the vocational programs were genuine love and affection for students, the importance of self-esteem building, and the student inmates' attitudes and efforts.

School became a preferred environment because the inmates were able to leave the "inmate" label behind, even if it was only for a few hours. They were treated like people and not simply numbers. Their crimes were not their defining characteristic when they were in school.



The attitudes of the instructors towards the students were another integral reason that school was the favored milieu. When the students were at school, they were shown care and compassion. This level of kindness was clearly lacking from other prison personnel outside of the school. It was not surprising that the students spoke very highly of and had exceptionally positive attitudes about their instructors.

Being in an atmosphere where staff are friendly, upbeat, and encouraging undoubtedly contributed to a rise in self-esteem. It is difficult to remain depressed and downtrodden when you are surrounded by people who are continually offering support and sponsorship. Additionally, the instructors' felt that building self-esteem was just as an important part of the curriculum than any of the skill sets offered in the different vocational programs.

The theme relating to the inmate student's attitudes and efforts was not surprising to me. In my experience working with ex-offenders who were on parole, the majority of them understood the consequences of *not* putting forth extra effort. In their cases, a lack of effort could result in a return to prison. In the case of the inmate students, a lack of effort could result in removal from the program, thus affecting their future potential to earn a living, stay out of prison, or earn a favorable recommendation from the parole board.

The theme relating to the attitudes about non-traditional classes was something that I was extremely curious about when I started this study. As the literature review noted, vocational programs offered for women who are incarcerated are primarily in "pink collar" occupations. Although I suspected that these programs were offered because of the gendered expectations we have regarding employment, I was unsure that

the women would show an interest in traditional "blue collar" programs. However, the women incarcerated at SCCF definitely *want* "blue collar" programs available to them.

### **Adult Education Philosophies in Correctional Education**

**Humanism.** There are numerous ways that the humanistic philosophy played out in this study. Elias and Merriam (2005) state that

the focus of humanistic education is upon the individual learner rather than a body of information... the goal of humanistic education is the development of persons - persons who are open to change and continued learning, persons who strive for self-actualization, and persons who can live together as fully functioning individuals. (p. 124)

These statements addresses the importance of shaping a human being rather than simply equipping them with a set of abilities. We can see this happening in the professional development program and self-esteem building that takes place in the vocational programs at SCCF. All of the instructors interviewed stated that they wanted their students to gain more than just the "skill sets" of the class; they wanted their students to gain self-confidence, to learn how to change their ways, and to become better people.

While the acquisition of a new skill set is important, the attainment of a new sense of self is just as vital.

Elias and Merriam (2005) state that humanism "is deeply concerned with the freedom and integrity of the individual in the face of increased bureaucratization of society and its institutions, as well as the whole gamut of human relations" (p. 113) This quote is interesting in its wording for two reasons, especially when you relate it to prison education. First, we must ask, is prison itself not the very face of "increased

bureaucratization"? When dealing with the care and custody of human beings, bureaucracy is essential in order for things to run properly. Secondly, the use of the word "freedom" is mildly ironic given the arena being dealt with in this study. There were several student inmates who used the word "freedom" when describing their feelings about being at school. The fact that the women feel free and special in a place that is the very essence of bureaucratization speaks widely to the humanistic principles in place at the school.

When talking about humanism, Elias and Merriam (2005) state that "given a loving environment and freedom to develop, human beings will grow in a manner beneficial to themselves and society in general" (p.119). Given the comments made about the school and the instructors, there is evidence that school in the prison *is* a loving environment. These women are being given the freedom to develop not only job-training skills, but also self-worth and self-confidence in a loving and supportive environment. Based on this, this is not only beneficial to themselves, but also to society, which speaks to the problem of recidivism. These women, through their education at SCCF, will "possess the power or potentiality for achieving the good life, for solving their own problems, and for developing into the best persons possible" (Elias & Merriam, p. 120).

**Behaviorism.** There are some aspects of behaviorism clearly at play as well at SCCF. The theory of operant conditioning argues that a behavior that is reinforced will be more likely to occur another time if the circumstances are analogous. On the contrary, a behavior that is not reinforced is projected to, at the least, occur less frequently or even stop completely. Additionally, operant conditioning looks at both positive and negative reinforcement, where positive reinforcement involves the *addition* of something and

negative reinforcement requires the *removal* of something. There are two ways that this theory is applicable at SCCF.

First, since being at the school was preferable to being in the building, the student inmates were less likely to do anything to jeopardize their time spent at the school. Thus, "good" behavior was being reinforced. This is important in prison but it has real world applicability as well. Reinforcement of desired behavior is essential in a prison environment, but it is also necessary in a work setting as well. Whereas undesirable behavior at the school could earn a dismissal from the opportunity to further participate in vocational education, adverse conduct in a work setting could result in a termination of employment.

Second, if negative reinforcement is the *removal* of something when a response is made, I would argue that the removal of the label "prisoner" or "inmate", even if it's just for the short time the students are at school, could be considered a negative reinforcer. Keep in mind that a negative reinforcer is *not* the same thing as a punishment in that a negative reinforcer "generates behavior in the same way as a positive reinforcer does" whereas a punishment is simply used to extinguish a behavior (Elias & Merriam, 2005, p. 90). "Negative reinforcement strengthens a behavior because a negative condition [being labeled an inmate or prisoner] is stopped or avoided as a consequence of the behavior [going to school]" (Maricopa Center for Learning and Instruction, 1999, para. 6). Students *want* to be at school in order to *avoid* or escape the terms of "prisoner", "inmate" or "convict". This makes it a negative reinforcer *for* being at school.

Behaviorists believe that "education ... should reinforce cooperation and interdependence... Education should produce people who can work with one another to

design and build a society that minimizes suffering and maximizes the chances of survival" (Elias & Merriam, 2005, p. 92). Cooperation and interdependence were noted in two ways at SCCF; first, students often ask each other for help and in fact, volunteer tutors are employed in each program for this purpose, and second, groups discussion occurs in which students help other students work out problems.

Behaviorists also state that,

the student role in behavioral education is active rather than passive. The environment is arranged in such a way that certain student behaviors are emitted. It is essential that students act so that their behavior can be reinforced. A student has learned something if there is a change in behavior, and if his or her response occurs again under similar circumstances. (Elias & Merriam, 2005, p. 93)

There was a change in student behavior as related to their self-esteem, as was noted by both faculty and student responses. If it is a true that a student has learned something if there is a change in her behavior, then these students *have* learned something as there has been noticeable changes in their behavior. This is also true in relation to the positive reinforcement that the student receives from numerous sources; instructors at the school who continue to tell the student that they "can do it"; other student inmates who help each other acquire and sharpen new skill sets; and friends and family who are recipients of gifts that have been made by the inmate and who "ooh" and "aah" over the accomplishments achieved.

**Progressivism.** This approach to education stresses that "there is a need for guidance and direction of the learner that makes the teacher more important than in the traditional education... Individuals achieve freedom as they master the tools of learning

that are available" (Elias & Merriam, 2005, p. 56). Once again, it is interesting that the term "freedom" is used here. Becoming skilled in one of the vocational occupations enables the inmate to achieve "freedom" in numerous ways; she becomes free from a lack of skills or employment, she could possibly obtain "real" freedom from being incarcerated via early release, and she potentially gains the freedom from re-incarceration because she has the tools to survive without committing crimes.

Progressivism, as it relates specifically to adult education, advocates for a wider view of education. When people think of education, they often picture official institutions of learning. However, those with a progressive view of education argue that education should not be restricted to formalized learning; rather, it should be inclusive of all things deliberate and incidental that all societal institutions use as a way of passing on norms, values, attitudes, behaviors, wisdom, and abilities (Elias & Merriam, 2005). Unfortunately, this usually does not translate into positive learning for those who are incarcerated. Working with ex-offenders, I was often told that a prison experience simply helped the inmate become a "better criminal" rather than teaching and encouraging non-criminal behavior.

However, because the educators within the prison system are aware that both society and environment help shape learning, the school within a prison is usually differently structured both physically and mentally than the remainder of the prison. I was able to see evidence of this at SCCF. For example, each classroom was set up in a way that encouraged interaction between the inmates and instructors. While each instructor had an office, they all maintained an "open door" policy that allowed the

inmates the freedom to interact with the instructors without restraint. Furthermore, the inmates reported feeling calmer and less stressed while at school.

Additionally, the progressives contend that education should be a life-long process and place emphasis on the totality of the experience. Education should be a renovation and reformation of experiences that will subsequently inform our ability to make future decisions. This is vital particularly in prison education in that it allows for the "reprogramming" of an inmate, which is crucial to reduce recidivism.

### **Implications for Prison Education**

I believe that this study has produced some important findings that are relevant to the improvement of prison education. This study supported the previous research that suggested that vocational programs offered to incarcerated women are typically "pink collar" programs. However, this study brought to light the fact that the women in this correctional institution are interested in enrolling in "blue collar" programs, such as welding, auto mechanics, and carpentry. These programs have been offered only to the incarcerated men in this southern state, and there seems to be no indication that they will be offered to the women at any point in the future.

One of the reasons given for a lack of "blue collar" programs in the women's facility was a previous problem in populating these programs. In talking with the inmate students, this does not seem as if it would be a problem at the current time. In fact, the women I spoke with were eager to enroll in "blue collar" programs.

It is my hope that this study will be a piece of concrete evidence that the vocational school can use to show the Department of Corrections that exploring the creation of other vocational programs for the women who are incarcerated in this state is

warranted. Furthermore, using the excuses of a lack of interest or problems with populating the programs as an argument against the establishment of "blue collar" programs will no longer be acceptable.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research on vocational education for incarcerated women could be shaped from this study in two ways. This study uncovered a desire for "blue collar" vocational programs, but this study was obviously done at only one institution in one state. It would be interesting to replicate this study at different women's institutions throughout the United States to see if the attitudes and desire for "blue collar" vocational programs are present elsewhere. Secondly, this research revealed a link between enrollment in a vocational program and an increased sense of self-esteem. Future research exploring this link would be interesting.

### **Conclusion**

When I first started talking about doing this study, several people asked me why I wanted to look at vocational education in women's prisons. As I explained before, I have a special place in my heart for those who are incarcerated. Unfortunately, they are a population that not a lot of people want to work with. We expect offenders to "learn their lesson" by doing time in a correctional facility, yet we do not offer instruction on how to function as a law-abiding citizen once they are released.

As previous research has suggested, education is one of the ways that we are able to combat the problem of recidivism. However, the literature also proposes that the education available for men and women is different, which led me to my current thinking on this situation. By not offering female offenders the education that will enable them to



obtain employment that pays a living wage upon their release, we are perpetuating a cycle of poverty and thus a cycle of crime.

In summary, the vocational programs offered at SCCF do indeed appear to be unintentionally gender-biased or gender-stereotypical; the majority of the programs offered fall within traditionally "pink collar" occupations. While the inmates are very pleased with both the instructors and the programs, they are frustrated at the lack of non-traditional programs available to them.

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## Appendix A

### **Cosmetology - 20 Students**

**1500 hours - 15-16 months to complete**

**Class meets from 0800 to 1600 M-TH**

Cosmetology involves the art and science of all facets of beauty culture. Cosmetology skills include the ability to stop there to get the client, to create nail art, to apply makeup, and to effectively give advice to the client. The science of cosmetology teaches the chemical makeup of products used and the effect they have on the hair .

A cosmetology student has to learn to use chemicals such as perm solution, hair color, bleach, and hair relaxers. The cosmetology student has to learn how to cut and style hair to complement the client's features.

The Mississippi State Board of Cosmetology approves the cosmetology program, and the students are required to pass the state examination in order to receive a license to practice cosmetology.

#### **Minimum criteria**

- High school diploma/high school equivalency diploma  
10.0+ grade equivalency on TABE

### **Upholstery - 15 students**

**1200 hours - 12 – 13 months to complete**

**Class meets from 0800 to 1600 M-TH**

This program is designed to develop mastery of upholstery skills. The area of instruction include foundation/body work, covering, finishing, trimming, and cushioning. Students must master the skills needed to utilize measuring devices, to lay out and cut parts for wooden frames, to fasten wood products with fasteners and/or glue, and to reinforce joints. Power tools, hand tools, staple guns, and sewing machines must be used.

The curriculum includes repairing and covering furniture, automobile seats, and boat seats in order to prepare students for work in sewing factories, furniture manufacturing plants, upholstery shops, or for beginning an independent entrepreneurial business of their own.

#### **Minimum criteria**

- 4.0+ grade equivalency on TABE

### **Computer Repair – 16 students**

**1200 hours - 12 – 13 months to complete**

**Class meets 0800 to 1600 M-TH**

This program is designed to teach students the fundamentals of computer hardware repair. Skills would include diagnostic techniques to determine the capabilities of a computer. It would also include replacement of malfunctioning parts such as a hard drive, modem, motherboard, floppy drive, and installation of needed hardware and software to make the computer conform to industry standards. This class is not an open entry/open exit class. Preference is given to students who have completed Business Technology. A+ certification is a course goal.

#### **Minimum criteria**

- 10.5+ grade equivalency on TABE

### **Family Dynamics – 15 students**

**1200 hours - 12 – 13 months to complete**

**Class meets 0800 to 1600 M-TH**

The CMCF family dynamics program serves inmates who are approaching their release date. The focus is similar to a home economics class, that the curriculum is broader. Curriculum components include cooking, sewing, value clarification, parenting skills, communicable disease awareness, nutrition, money management, and other general household duties. This program is designed to increase self-esteem, work ethics, domestic abilities, and emotional well-being of the inmate and her family.

#### **Minimum criteria**

- 4.0+ grade equivalency on TABE

### **Apparel and Textiles – 16 students**

**1200 hours - 12 – 13 months to complete**

**Class meets 0800 to 1600 M-TH**

This program is designed to teach students and marketable skill in order for them to obtain gainful employment in the apparel or textile industry. The areas of study include instruction in using and maintaining seven types of machines as well as sewing operations such as needle trade techniques, cutting room operation, and entrepreneurship.

Upon completion of this course, individual will be able to operate machines to join, gather, hem, reinforce, or decorate articles and to serge edges to prevent raveling an alterations.

#### **Minimum criteria**

- 4.0+ grade equivalency on TABE

## Appendix B

### Interview Questions - Director

1. What is your background and how did you come into this position?
2. Describe the procedure and rationale for deciding which vocational programs are offered and which are not.
3. What is the process for obtaining funding for the vocational programs offered?
4. How many women in the institution are enrolled in the different types of programs offered at this institution?
  - Probes: How many in vocational programs? In each specific vocational program? How does this compare to the women enrolled in educational programs?
  - Break down by race? For both vocational and educational? How many women in the educational programs are mandated to be there through the courts?
    - Does there seem to be better motivation to attend programs based on race? Does one race participate more than another?
5. Describe the admissions process for vocational education.
  - Probes: Are admissions standards different depending on the program? Are the women able to choose which program they want? Is there a waiting list? If so, what is the typical wait time?
6. Tell me about your instructors.
  - Probes: How do you recruit? Is there difficulty getting instructors who are willing to teach in a penal facility? Do instructors typically work full or part time? What are the qualifications to become an instructor? Are instructors certified in their fields? Who is the certifying body?
7. What do you think the future of vocational programs in prison holds?
  - What happened to the computer repair program? Do you have an expected date to re-open the program? Is there still interest in the program?
  - How many vocational programs can the students enroll in? Is there a limitation as to how many programs they are able to complete?

## Appendix C

### Interview Questions – Instructors

1. What is your background and how did you come into this position?
2. Tell me how you came to be an instructor in a women's penal facility.
  - Probes: Are you full or part-time? If part-time, do you have other employment? If so, what?
3. Describe a typical day in your class.
  - Probes: How do you feel about your students?
4. To what other populations have you taught this class?
5. What are the similarities/differences in teaching this class to inmates vs. non-inmates? Men vs. women (if applicable)
  - Probes: who is easier to teach?
6. What do you hope your students get out of your class?
7. Do you think that your students will be able to obtain employment in this field when they are released?
  - Can you provide a vehicle for job placement when your students are released? What is expected of you?
8. What are your expectations of your students? Do these expectations differ from those of non-inmates?
9. What do you think the future of vocational programs in prison holds?
10. Is there anything else related to the vocational education in prison that I have not touched on that you would like to discuss?

## Appendix D

### Interview Questions - Inmates

Demographic info:

- Age
  - Race
  - Highest grade/educational level completed before prison
  - Educational qualifications gained IN prison? (Yes/No/In progress)
    - i. What type?
  - Type of offense (person/property)
  - Sentence length
1. Why did you choose to participate in a vocational program while incarcerated?
  2. Which vocational program are you currently or have you been enrolled in? Was this your first choice? If not, what was?
  3. Please tell me how/why you chose this program.
  4. What are your expectations of this program? Anything other than job-training?
    - What were your aims/goals?
    - Were they achieved?
    - What was your favorite aspect of the program?
    - What was your least favorite aspect of the program?
    - What are the benefits?
    - Are there any negative aspects of this program?
  5. Can you tell me about your experiences in this program? What was good? What was bad? How do you feel about your instructors? The quality of the class? The difficulty of the class?
  6. Were there any programs that you would have liked to enroll in but were not provided? What were they and why would you prefer that program?
  7. Was there anything that made it difficult for you to enroll in the educational program of your choice? Can you describe it?
  8. Would you recommend this program to others? Why or why not?
  9. Is there anything you would like to change about the prison's education program?
  10. Is there anything else related to the vocational education you are receiving here that I have not touched on that you would like to discuss?

## Appendix E

### Consent to Participate in Research

One of the biggest components of the crime problem in the U.S. is recidivism, or chronic offending. It is estimated that 67.5% of people released from prison will reoffend within three (3) years. There are a number of studies that suggest that providing education within the prison system is one way to reduce recidivism. Since vocational training seeks to directly prepare workers for entry into the workforce, it is vital that this training be offered in prisons.

The purpose of this research is to two-fold. First, we want to explore the types of vocational education programs that are available to inmates in Mississippi penal institutions. Secondly, we are interested in looking at the inmate's perceptions of the vocational programs available to them.

The following information is being provided to make you aware of any issues related to the research for which you are asked to participate. If you participate in this research study, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview. In these interviews, we may ask you about your personal demographics, educational and work history. You will also be asked a series of open-ended questions focused on your experiences with the vocational programs offered in one of the three participating correctional facilities run by the Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC). There are no "right" or "wrong" answers to these questions; we are simply interested in your thoughts and feelings regarding vocational education within the MDOC.

All of your information will be strictly confidential within the limits allowed by law. Any records related to this research will be kept in a secure location with access available only to the researcher and her faculty advisor. Any reference to participants involved in this research will be made through the use of pseudonyms. Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate in whole or in part without any penalty. Discontinuation of participation at any time will have no negative consequences. The finished product of this study will be a journal article submitted for publication and/or presented at a scholarly conference.

Again, participation is completely voluntary, and there will be no compensation for your participation. You should feel free to ask any questions regarding the research at any time. If you have any questions throughout the process, you can contact your vocational instructor and s/he will refer your questions to the researcher, Aimée Burgdorf. If there are any questions or concerns related to your rights, you may contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at 901-678-2533.

Authorization: I have read/listened to the above information and I have decided to participate in the research study. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may refuse to participate in whole or in part without any penalty.

**I agree to participate in this study. My signature below indicates that I understand all aspects of this research and that I have received a copy of this consent form.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix F

### Consent to Participate in Research

There are a lot of studies that say that education in prison is one way that will help people to stop committing any other crimes and stay out of prison. This study is going to look only at one type of education that is offered in prison - vocational education, or job-training school. Vocational school helps people learn to do a certain type of job. This kind of school is important because it helps the people who are locked up get a job when they get out. We want to see what kinds of vocational programs there are at CMCF. We also want to know how the women feel about the vocational school at CMCF.

This paper will explain the types of things we will ask you during our study. It is very important that you understand that you do NOT have to help us with the study. Nothing bad will happen if you can decide that you don't want to help with the study.

If you decide to help us with this study, the people who are doing the study will sit down and talk with you about the job-training courses they have in CMCF. The only people that will be in the room during the talk will be you and the people doing the study.

The interviews will be tape recorded so that the researcher will have a way to remember everything that was said. The ONLY person that will have access to the tapes will be the researcher. She will be the only person that will listen to them, and once the information from the interview is written down, the tapes will be erased. These tapes will be kept in a very safe place that only the researcher and her faculty advisor will be able to access.

There will also be notes taken by the researcher during the interview. These notes will help the interviewer to remember important things you say during your interview. Again, the ONLY person that will have access to these notes is the researcher. These notes will be kept in a very safe place that only the researcher and her faculty advisor will be able to access.

In these interviews, we may ask you questions about your age and race, as well as about any previous education you had before you were locked up. You may also be asked about your sentence length and what type of charge you are locked up for. You DO NOT have to be specific about your charge; we only want to know if the charge is property or person-based.

The interview questions will be about your experiences in the vocational education programs you have participated in since you have been locked up at CMCF. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers. We just want to know what your thoughts and feelings are about the vocational education programs that are offered at CMCF. The questions will be open-ended, which means you can answer them however you want.



It is required by law that any information that the researcher collects be kept strictly confidential. As we said before, no one will be listening to the tapes or reading the notes except the researcher. We will never use your real name or any other information that could be used to identify you; we will use a fake name that you may create, if you want.

Remember, your participation in this research is voluntary, which means you are allowed to stop at any time, if you want. There will not be any penalties for NOT completing the research or for not wanting to participate. Also, there is no reward for participating in this research.

If you have any questions at any time during the interview, please feel free to ask the researcher. If you have questions for the researcher after she has left, you can tell your vocational teacher and she will pass those questions on to the researcher, Aimée Burgdorf. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please inform your vocational instructor and s/he will contact the Chair of Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects.

The information you provide will be used to write an academic paper that will be either presented at an academic conference or submitted to an academic journal for publication.

Authorization: I have read and/or listened to the all of the information provided in this document and I have decided to participate in this research study. I understand that my participation is totally voluntary and that I can stop my participation at any time without consequences

**I agree to participate in this study. My signature below says that I understand the how the research will be conducted and how it will be used. I also understand that I will receive a copy of this consent form.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date